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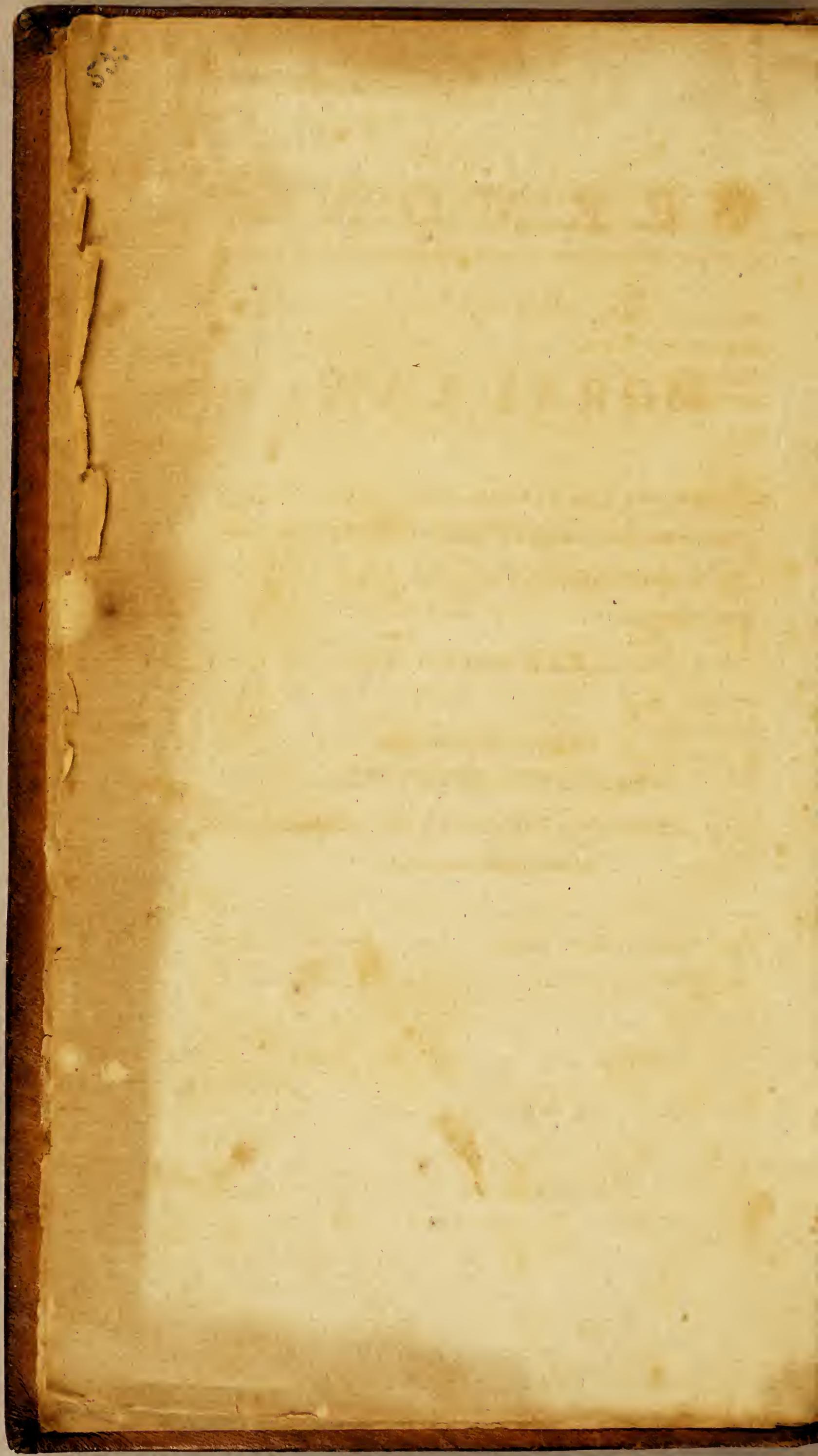
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S E R M O N S

ON THE

M O R A L L A W ;

ELUCIDATING THE NATURE, EXTENT AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE VARIOUS SOCIAL AND DIVINE VIRTUES, COMPRISED IN THAT SUMMARY OF UNIVERSAL DUTY—AND ON THE CONNECTION OF THE MORAL LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

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BY DAVID M'CLURE,

Minister of the First Church in East-Windsor;

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The Law of the Lord is perfect.

Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.

XX

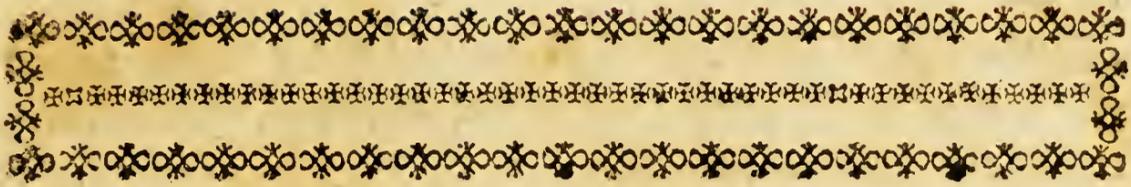
H A R T F O R D :

FROM THE PRESS OF

B E A C H A N D J O N E S.

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1795.



I N T R O D U C T I O N.

RELIGION, consisting in the knowledge and worship of God, is the distinguishing characteristic of man, from the other inhabitants of the earth. The brutal creation bear a resemblance to him in a species of reason, adapted to their condition. But no traces of religion are to be found among them. They neither know God, or worship him. In this specific difference of capacity; man is dignified, and raised above the beasts that perish, and assimulated to the angels of heaven, and was made originally but little lower than they. And with them, it is the purpose of the divine goodness, he shall finally and forever associate in the sublimer knowledge and services of the celestial world.

BY the fatal apostacy, the glorious crown of righteousness fell from our head; and man naturally likes not to retain God in his knowledge. In consequence of the merciful purpose of God in our redemption, the rich and various means, which the wisdom and goodness of God hath appointed for our restoration to duty and happiness, excite the devoutest admiration, gratitude and obedience of every serious mind. Among these may be reckoned as none of the least, that natural sense of right and wrong, of good and evil in conduct, in many branches of duty, which the mind instantaneously perceives, and also that

essential and immutable difference between them, which we arrive at the more perfect knowledge of, by the exercise of the rational faculties.

BUT an authority superior to our instinctive perception, or rational investigation, is necessary to command effectually, our obedience. This superior authority is no other than the **WILL OF GOD**. This is the alone perfect and sufficient foundation of all moral obligation, duty and obedience.

OUR moral sense or natural conscience, and reasonings on the nature of duty, of right and wrong, and of virtue and vice, are liable to be perverted by various prejudices, passions and appetites. And this hath ever been the case, where the divine will has not been expressly revealed.

WITH faculties unhappily controlled by a depraved nature, the wisest men of pagan antiquity, greatly erred in their systems of ethics. While they professedly sought to know God and duty, they wandered further from him.

THEIR precepts and example gave currency to many vices, which they falsely named virtues; and many of the virtues of the unadulterated religion of nature, and of the evangelic system, they proudly rejected. Ambition and revenge, were accounted commendable virtues. To the divine virtues of forgiveness of injuries, meekness, and humility, they were strangers. Fraud and dishonesty were held in repute among the Spartans and Egyptians, and robbery among the Arabians. The enlightened Romans and Grecians practised obscene and cruel rites, in honor of their Gods. Their choicest amusements were the savage spectacle of men combating with wild beasts, and devoured by them; and gladiators falling by mutual slaughter, in their theatres. Nations exposed

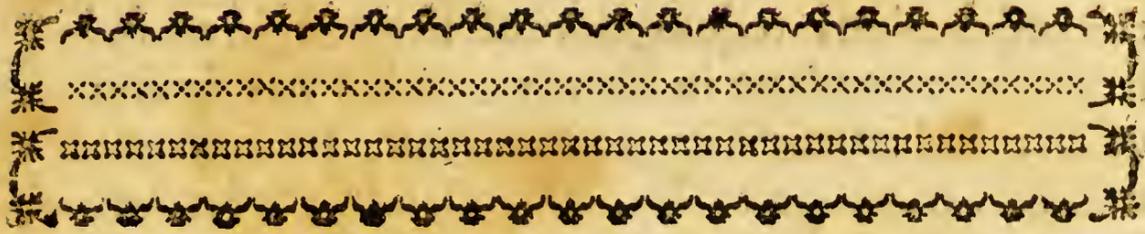
their aged and helpless, and their deformed infants, to be devoured by beasts of prey.

THEIR ideas of the acceptable worship of God, were as absurd and impure, as their morality was defective and pernicious. If we look back to the manners of the age in which the moral law was revealed, we shall see the nations, lying in still more deplorable darkness and vice.

SUCH being the melancholy condition of human nature, the wisdom and goodness of the Deity was seen in the republication of the great system of natural religion, for the instruction of all generations.

THE following discourses were delivered, in the course of several months, to the beloved people of the author's pastoral charge. In their publication, he trusts, that he is not prompted by the vain opinion of merit in the execution of them, but by a sincere desire, that they may afford spiritual edification to some of his fellow christians, and inquirers after truth and salvation, benefit the rising generation, and serve the common cause of virtue and religion. Let us love God's law and keep it, for blessed are all they who do his commandments.

East-Windsor, Connecticut,
December, 1794.



S E R M O N I:

GOD the supreme Lawgiver of the Universe, and
his covenant relation to his Church.

EXODUS xx, 1 and 2.

*And God spake all these words saying; I am the Lord
thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of
Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

A SOLEMNITY, expressive of the authority
and condescension of the supreme Lawgiver,
introduces the weighty precepts of his holy law. A
law of universal and perpetual obligation, and re-
vealed for the benefit and practice of all nations and
generations.

WHILE our thoughts are invited to this divine
system of duty, let our devoutest meditations hum-
bly invoke the father of lights, in the language of
the pious prophet of former ages, "O Lord, open
thou our eyes, that we may behold wonderful
things out of thy Law."

THE words of the text have an immediate refer-
ence to the special providence of God, displayed in

the miraculous redemption of the people of Israel, from their bondage in Egypt. This was figurative of our redemption by Jesus Christ, from the more dreadful bondage of sin, and all our spiritual foes, and admittance to the promised, purchased inheritance, in the heavenly world.

FROM the death of Joseph, to the delivery of the Law at Sinai, was about one hundred and sixty yeas. In which space of time, the descendents of Jacob had marvellously increased. They had long endured the most grievous oppressions from the Egyptians; but God was mindful of his covenant with their pious ancestor Abraham, and raised up, from the midst of them, a deliverer. Within a few weeks after their passage thro' the Red Sea, they arrived at Mount Sinai, called also Horeb, where God proclaimed with awful solemn majesty, the moral law.

THE knowledge of the one true God, and of the moral law given to man at his creation, by the corrupt passions and vices of men, were greatly obscured, and in danger of being nearly extinguished. They had in all parts of the earth, greatly corrupted their ways, and perverted original revelations to the Patriarchs, handed down by oral tradition. It was necessary that the knowledge of the true God and his laws, should be again revived. And God chose the nation of Israel as the repository of that knowledge, because from them was to arise, the promised Saviour, who was to enlighten Jews and Gentiles, and in whom all nations should be blessed.

A SYSTEM of ecclesiastic and civil laws were given, at the same time. They were wisely calculated to preserve the Hebrews from the idolatrous practices,

and the licentious manners, of other nations,—to keep alive the hope and expectation of the promised Saviour, and to preserve their national church and commonwealth, until that important period.

THE moral law, because of its superior excellence and universal obligation, was first revealed, and ushered in with a solemnity and grandeur, exceeding any thing which the world had ever beheld.

GOD called Moses up into the mount and directed him to prepare the people for the awful solemnity. “And on the third day, in the morning, there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people in the camp, trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended up on it in a fire, and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.”

STRUCK with the profoundest awe, at the amazing glory which attended a descending God, the people retired from the foot of the mount; and holy Moses who had often familiarly conversed with God, could scarce sustain the sight.

THUS God prepared the minds of men to receive his holy laws.

THE solemn declaration of Jehovah, which introduces the precepts of the moral law, contains several most important truths, to some of which, with humble dependence on the divine assistance, we will now attend. As,

B

1. GOD is the supreme Legislator of the Universe.
2. THAT his church, or professing worshippers are introduced into a special covenant relation to God, and laid under inviolable obligations of obedience, to his whole revealed will.
3. THAT he is the almighty and merciful Redeemer of men.

THRO' these divisions of this subject, I shall occasionally, illustrate the nature and obligations of the moral law in general, as comprised in the ten commandments.

WHEN God proclaims himself, "I am the Lord," he expresses his absolute and supreme authority and right to command the obedience of his rational creatures, to his revealed will. He is the Jehovah, the *I am*, who is from all everlasting, without beginning or ending, inhabiting eternity. From whom all creatures and things have derived their existence. He who made all things is alone equal to the great work of universal government. As his knowledge is infinite he is perfectly acquainted with the capacities and wants of his creatures, and can prescribe to them rules and laws exactly suited to their powers, capacities and condition. And his infinite goodness will forever incline him to do according to this dictate of his wisdom. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

ALL creatures depend on God for their continuance, and for all those favorable circumstances, which make existence desirable. And in his wisdom and goodness alone must we confide for all the good things which we hope for in future life, and through-

out the endless periods of our immortal existence. Since then we are thus dependent on God, his right to us, and to our perpetual love, gratitude and obedience is most absolute. In God we live and move and have our being.

SINCE the unhappy apostacy mankind are disinclined to keep the holy laws of God. By nature and practice we are alas, the servants of sin. Our guilt and misery arises from our co-operation with evil spirits in the cause of an unnatural rebellion against the pure laws of our creator. We like not to retain God in our knowledge. To bring us back to our loyalty and love, God has been pleased to denounce dreadful punishments on the breakers of his law, and glorious rewards to the obedient. His laws operate on our hopes and fears, to deter us from sin as the greatest misery, and to persuade us to obedience, as our chief happiness.

AWFUL sanctions, the terrors of justice, surround the holy laws delivered at Sinai. We see the face of an angry God, and feel ourselves guilty and condemned, but at the same time we discover the divine mercy amidst all the terror, shining with comfort on all the penitent and obedient.

MOSES, just before his death, reminds the people of that awful majesty, which had been displayed at the revelation of the law, which had made so deep an impression on his mind, as time could not efface. "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir. He shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand went a fiery law." To this same event also the psalmist seems to refer Psalm 18th. "The earth shook and trembled, the foundations of the hills moved,

He bowed the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under his feet. He rode upon a Cherub, yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. His pavilion round about him, were dark waters, and thick clouds of the sky. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the highest gave his voice; hail-stones and coals of fire.”

“ The deep mouth'd thunder rends the vaulted sky ;
 “ All nature trembles.
 “ Deep groans the earth, her utmost regions groan.
 “ And lo ! on Sinai's top descends the God,
 “ That wrapt in tempest, trembled as he trod.
 “ Flame, smoke and whirlwind clothe its awful brow,
 “ While earthquake heaves the groaning base below.”

THUS solemn and awful were the displays of the greatness and justice of Jehovah, at the publication of the Law; but more solemn and awful, still will be the scene when at the last great day, the Law shall be executed on those who have not kept it, nor fled for refuge to the righteousness revealed by the gospel.

BEFORE the law, the will of God had been revealed from time to time, usually by the ministration of Angels. But at Mount Sinai, the Deity himself appeared in a visible glory. When the eternal law of piety and righteousness,—a law established on immutable principles, the moral law, which St. Paul defines, holy, just and good, was to be revealed to a whole nation, and by them transmitted to all generations of men; the Deity did not commit this business to the agency of the greatest angel in heaven, but himself speaks and writes the commandments of the law on two plates of stone. Significant emblem of the heart hardened by sin; and of the necessity of heavenly grace, to inscribe God's law

* The Law given at Sinai. An American Poem.

upon our minds in such living impressions, that we shall love and keep it. "Take from us, O Lord, the heart of stone, and give us an heart of flesh, and impress in lively characters, thy pure laws there!"

THE laws were deposited in the Ark, which was divinely appointed to be a type of Christ; and this signified, that he only could perfectly keep the law; who said, "I delight to do thy will, O God, yea thy law is within my heart." They were wrote on stone to teach us their perpetual obligation. They were divided into two tables. The first respects the duties which we owe to God, and contains four precepts. The other table contains six, and they relate to the duties which we owe to our fellow men, and the government and regulation of our thoughts, appetites and passions.

WE have no account of any written law until the time of Moses. The first laws of God to man, committed to writing was the moral law, and wrote by God himself. They were preserved thro' many generations, in the sacred Ark.

THAT it was God, and not an Angel, who delivered the moral law, appears from his claiming those attributes which belong to God only. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and sin; and who will by no means clear the guilty." It is probable it was God the son, even he by whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth, whether visible or invisible; and to whom, the scriptures assure us, all government and judgment are committed.

THE apostle says the law was received by the disposition of angels. By which, is to be understood, that a host of angels, the celestial retinue of God, attended him at the delivery of the law. And probably by their agency, the mountain was covered with awful thunders and lightnings; and the same glorious hosts will attend Christ to judgment, and be the executors of the sentences, which will be passed upon men and angels.

GOD is the fountain of justice and righteousness and every perfection. The moral law is a transcript of these, and demands of us, an imitation of the moral perfections of God; that we should be holy, and just and good, because God is. For without a conformity to him, we are unqualified for communion with him or the enjoyment of his special favor. The tenor of this law is, "*He who continueth in all things written therein, shall live.*" He shall enjoy the love and friendship of God, and possess an immortal life. And the penalty annexed to disobedience is, "*The soul that sinneth shall die; For cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in this law to do them.*" He shall fall under the displeasure of God, and suffer the execution of temporal and eternal death. For a single wilful transgression is an offence against the whole law, and the supreme lawgiver, and contains the principle of disobedience to every particular precept.

THE law is spiritual, and demands the perfect homage of the soul, as well as external obedience. God is a spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. Our obedience to all the holy precepts of God's law, those which respect our fellow men as well as our Maker, must flow from a good principle; a principle of love and

loyalty to God. Without this qualification, all obedience is essentially defective. His commandments are exceeding broad. They extend to the heart. They demand purity, truth and the sincerity of love there. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God searcheth the heart. The law essentially consists in love. It was a law in the heart of man in innocency and during that short period, he perfectly kept it. He loved God with all his heart, and loved the creatures which God had made, according to the degrees of worth and loveliness, which he saw in them. In doing this, he acted up to the dictates of right reason, which is but another name for the moral law. But by the fatal apostacy man lost both the ability and the inclination to obey the law perfectly. By one man sin entered into the world, and human nature is depraved. The law, says the apostle, is spiritual, but we are carnal. We are all gone out of the way. There is none who does good in the sight of the law, no not one. It hath concluded all under sin and condemnation.

THE law demands a personal and perfect obedience from every man. Jesus Christ perfectly obeyed the law in the room of the disobedient, yet men are not thereby excused from the obligations of a personal and perfect obedience. The obedience however, of the best of men is deficient. For there is not a just man upon earth, who liveth and sinneth not. But the sincere, tho' imperfect obedience of believers is accepted, on account of the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one who believeth. He magnified the law and made it honorable, and God is reconcilable to men, thro' his blessed mediation. We come

II. To speak of the special covenant relation to God, into which believers are introduced, and their obligations of obedience. God was pleased to admit into a covenant relation his professing worshippers, or the members of his church on earth, and stiles himself their God, saying I am *thy* God. Individual persons or people have in all ages been admitted into this covenant relation. This grace was shewn to Adam—to Abel—to Noah, and to Abraham, and to the descendants of Jacob. The whole nation of the Hebrews were admitted at Sinai. The tenor of this covenant of grace is, “I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” The covenant of grace has been one and the same from the beginning. All the faithful from Adam to Abraham were admitted to the privileges of it. He was their God and they his people in a sense that did not apply to others. And the covenant of grace into which righteous men were admitted in early ages, is the same as that into which believers are now admitted. The principle differences were mere circumstantials, and the chief of these were, that they believed in a Saviour to come, and we believe in him already come. The gospel, says St. Paul, was preached to Abraham. He saw Christ’s day, by faith, and rejoiced in the Saviour. Believers are called the children of Abraham, because they are justified by the same faith, by which that Patriarch was saved, and entitled to the same spiritual blessings of pardon, sanctification, perseverance in grace and immortal glory.

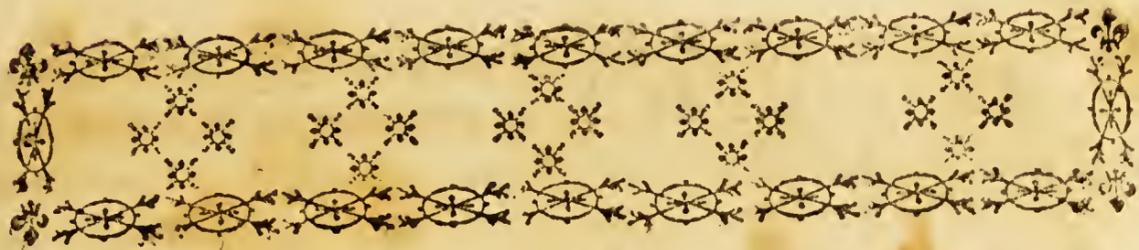
THE Most High admitted the whole nation of Israel, to the possession and enjoyment of all the external signs, seals and privileges of the covenant of grace, altho’ none but the righteous or regenerate were entitled to the special saving blessings of the covenant. They were received into covenant at Si-

hai. God called himself their God, and them his people; and they promised allegiance to him. He received them upon the ground of their profession, as their public judge, altho' as the searcher of hearts, he knew that multitudes of them were insincere, and inwardly the servants of sin, as afterwards appeared by their murmurs and rebellions. The most high has herein given example to his ministers and churches in all ages, that in the admission of persons into the church, and to the enjoyment of special ordinances, they are to proceed upon the ground of public credible evidence. When the church was under the immediate care of Jehovah, we find that persons were admitted upon a profession of faith and allegiance, who were hypocritical and in the bonds of iniquity, as impious Korah and his associates. And when the church was about to be formed upon the plan of the gospel, Jesus Christ, who knew what was in man, received an hypocritical Judas, the secret servant of sin and Satan, among the number of his immediate disciples.

THE church on earth is composed of professing believers. The separation between the true and false, will be made at the end of the world. The harvest, says our Lord is the end of the world; when false professors, like the tares will be cast out, and the true, like the golden wheat, be gathered into the granery of eternal life. It is the earnest desire and labor of the faithful, perfectly to keep the commandments of God. But they experience their inability by reason of the power of sin. This is their greatest burden in this house of their pilgrimage; and feeling its malignant influence, they ardently long for deliverance, saying with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" Faith looks to Christ,

the captain of our salvation for aid, saying, "thanks
be to God who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord
Jesus Christ."

A M E N.



S E R M O N II.

GOD the merciful Redeemer of men.

EXODUS XX. 1 and 2.

And God spake all these words saying; I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

IN further discoursing on this solemn declaration of the supreme Lawgiver of the Universe, I am

III. To shew that God is the Almighty and merciful Redeemer of men. The redemption of Israel from the slavery of Egypt, their sufferings and preservation thro' the Red Sea and the wilderness, and their happy settlement in the land of promise, were divinely designed as shadows or types of good things to come, and a sure earnest to the ancient church, of a more glorious redemption by Jesus Christ.

THE watchful providence of God over the Jewish commonwealth, is particularly recorded, by divine direction, because it contained the only church of God on earth. It was marvellously preserved, as was the ark of Noah, floating on the waters of the deluge. They both imbosomed this precious treasure. God has set up a holy kingdom in this rebel-

lions province of his dominions, and wonderfully guards it from the opposing powers of this world, and all the powers of darkness.

It was a great deliverance which God wrought for his ancient church, when in spite of Egypt and all her horned gods, he conducted from the house of bondage, that vast body of defenceless people encumbered with the spoils of their oppressors; and led them thro' the wilderness like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

THEY experienced a like wonderful redemption from captivity in Babylon; and God often appeared on their side, when nations were ready to swallow them up. They were the special charge of heaven, until the promised and long expected Messiah and Saviour of Jews and Gentiles came, and accomplished that glorious redemption, which now gladdens the christian people and nations of the earth.

THE redemption of Israel from Egypt was spiritually typical of our redemption from the servitude of sin and Satan, and all our woes. The blessed Mediator redeems us from spiritual Egypt, the kingdom of darkness, and will conduct the faithful thro' the Red Seas of sufferings, and the darkness and temptations of this world, to the heavenly Canaan. That it was designed as a lively figure of this, may be infered from frequent allusions in the scriptures and from the declaration of the divine spirit, by the father of the harbinger of Jesus. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies;—to perform the mercy promised to our

fathers; and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life."

THE great design of our redemption from sin and condemnation is, that we should serve God in holiness and righteousness, and keep his commandments. This great redemption comprises sundry invaluable blessings, the most important of which were shadowed forth by the redemption of Israel.

For

I. JESUS Christ redeems his people from the bondage of sin and the tyranny of spiritual foes. The sacred oracles give us a melancholy description of man's moral state, and the deep depravity of our nature; and our own experience confirms it. Man has risen up in rebellion against his Creator; by nature the servant of sin and confederate with evil spirits, in opposing the holy laws and government of God. The same hatred of holiness and of God which exists in fallen angels is in man, tho' probably in a less degree. Therefore our Lord tells the Jews that they were the children of the devil, for wicked men do the works of that evil spirit. And are we by nature better than they? The same evil propensities and lusts and opposition to the pure laws of God, reign naturally in all hearts. God restrains the wrath and wickedness of some, and changes by effectual grace, the hearts of others and they become his willing and obedient servants. The dreadful depravity of our nature, is a humbling doctrine. And upon the plan of the gospel it is necessary that we be deeply sensible of it, in order

to repentance and salvation. Without this, we shall not be disposed to fly to Christ for refuge from the curses of the broken law, and the wrath to come. All who so do, the Almighty and merciful Redeemer delivers from the reign of sin and the power of evil spirits. They are translated from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God's dear son, and serve him in holiness and righteousness. In them, the captain of our salvation destroys the dominion of him who has the power of death. They are no longer his willing subjects; they are freed from this spiritual Pharaoh and all his hosts, and renounce his service forever. And he that is born of God cannot sin, as once he did, with deliberate willingness, for he is made free in Christ. Satan rages to loose his prey, but rages in vain, for Christ is their Almighty Redeemer. "You, says St. Paul to the Ephesians, hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But God 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 Christ."

2. Jesus Christ redeems his people from the condemnation and curse of the law. He was a sin offering for us and bore the curse due to man's disobedience. The moral law demanding sinless obedience pronounces a curse on him that transgresses; "curled is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them." All men have transgressed

and fallen under the dreadful sentence. But the covenant of grace provides a remedy, when the covenant of works could find none. For help is laid on one mighty to save, who died the accursed death of the cross; and there is now no condemnation to them, who are in Christ Jesus. By him the law is satisfied and salvation is given; and God can now be just and the justifier of the ungodly.

3. He redeems them from the burthensome and costly rituals of the mosaic dispensation. This was a yoke of bondage, placed upon the church in its minority; but the yoke of Christ is easy and his burden is light. The bloody rites, the costly offerings and the bodily services have given place to a milder dispensation, simple, rational, pure and spiritual. The true worshippers now worship the father in spirit and in truth.

THE establishment of gospel churches and ordinances had been foretold. "From the rising of the sun, says Malachi, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense, the incense of public prayer and praise, shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name shall be great among the Gentiles." In the simplicity of the gospel and the beauties of holiness, God is now worshiped in the churches which are according to the pure and perfect plan established by Christ, and his inspired apostles.

AND to carry on the work of the sanctification and perseverance of his church and people, all needful assistances are given by their Redeemer. Some of these, and which we are to receive as a precious legacy from him, are the christian sabbath

—the evangelic ministry and ordinances—various providences, and the light and consolations of the divine spirit. By these the holy kingdom of Jesus is maintained, and will be perpetuated and enlarged until the end of the world.

4. HE redeems his people from the servile fear of death, and from future misery, and will introduce them to a glorious and immortal inheritance.

To the impenitent sinner, whom the holy law condemns, the prospect of death, the judgment and eternity is covered with dreadful terrors, and nothing but faith in a living Redeemer can remove the awful gloom, and inspire the mind with fortitude and peace on its entrance on eternal scenes. The righteous have hope in death, for Christ redeems them from the wrath to come and hath assured them that they shall live and reign with him forever.

Thus the redemption of Israel from Egypt, and their establishment in the promised land, was to the ancient church, significant of a more glorious redemption to be accomplished in due time by Jesus Christ.

SOME REFLECTIONS, arising from this important subject will conclude.

I. As the moral law contained in the decalogue, is the law of our nature, or right reason, and founded in love to God and mankind, it is of universal obligation, and a law to us as well as to the ancient Jews. Our Lord has incorporated it with the gospel, and taught us our obligations to keep it. He came not to destroy the law. He has comprised the ten commandments of the law in love to God and men.

The first commandment or table of the law is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, might and mind. And the second commandment or table of the law is, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. This is the sum of the commandments, and what the light of nature teaches, and is a law inscribed upon the heart. And those who have not the written law, feel its force; as appears by the reasoning of St. Paul, Romans second chapter, where he asserts that the reasonings and works of the Gentiles, shew the law to be written upon their hearts. In the gospel of Matthew, our Lord, in his exposition of the precepts of the moral law, rescues it from the corrupt and false glosses of Jewish interpreters, and establishes it upon its original principles of benevolence and justice. For the Jews had introduced many precepts and practices subversive of the law, under the pretence of their obtaining justification by the works of the law.

THE sincere christian who strives to keep this holy law, yet finds that in many things he offends, and in all things comes short of that perfect obedience which it demands. He depends not therefore on his own works, for by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified. The meretorious ground of his dependance is the alone spotless and universal obedience of him, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

II. LET our obedience to God's commandments be such as he will approve. That it may be so, it must be according to his word. The whole duty which God requires of us, we are conscientiously to do. Let us do what we do from a right principle, a principle of supreme love to God, for this is the first

requirement of the law. The Lord searcheth the heart, to give to every one according to his works. The works of the heart, the principle or disposition which prompts our actions and doings, renders our works good or evil in the view of the Deity. O may our hearts be right with God; and let them not be far from him, while we draw nigh to him, in profession.

OUR obedience, sirs, to be acceptable must be universal. Let us not then presume to pick and chuse among God's commandments, as did the Pharisees, only such as suit our interests or convenience. We have reason to suspect that religious zeal which confines itself to the duties of one table of the law, to the neglect of the other. Let us not vainly imagine, on the one hand, that a zealous observance of external duty to God in religious worship, will atone for the omission of the duties which we owe to men; nor on the other hand, that punctual justice honesty and charity to men, will excuse for the omission of the duties of piety and devotion to God. The same authority commands our obedience to both tables of the law. Neither let us deceive ourselves with the imagination, that our external obedience to all the precepts of both tables of the law, will be accepted, while we indulge the lust of covetousness which is idolatry, or the love of ourselves, or our own interest and happiness as the ruling motive of our obedience. Let the love of God, be ever the animating principle, and then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect to all God's commandments.

LET none imagine that because Christ has perfectly obeyed the law for our salvation, that therefore we are excused from the obligations of a person-

al and perfect obedience. "Does faith make void the law?" So far from this it establishes our perpetual obedience to it. For Christ hath taught us by his obedience, that the law is holy, just and good, and worthy to be obeyed. Let us adore that wisdom and grace which has provided a divine Redeemer, who has rendered that perfect obedience to the law which we were unable to do, and opened a way for mercy to flow to offenders.

III. A consideration of the majesty and condescension of God, who has revealed to us his holy laws and taught us all that he requireth of us, ought powerfully to constrain us to obedience. It is Jehovah the universal king who made all worlds, and ruleth them in infinite wisdom and goodness, who commands our obedience, who mercifully prescribes to us those laws, by which our hearts and lives are to be regulated. When therefore he says by his holy word, to each soul of us, "ye shall keep my commandments and do them;" let our hearts in filial obedience and lowly dependance reply, "Thy commandments, O Lord, will we keep." Let us fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

THE law which we are entering upon the consideration of, is most excellent and divine. It is the great law of reason, and exactly suited to our nature condition and connections, as the creatures of God, as his offending subjects, as accountable and immortal. It also considers us in a state of society, and gives general rules of universal behaviour, in all possible circumstances. It is spiritual as well as external, and extends to the thoughts and emotions of the heart. Its precepts are concise and plain, various and copious, wrapping together in epitome our

whole duty. Let us, sirs, inscribe them upon our hearts and practise them in our lives.

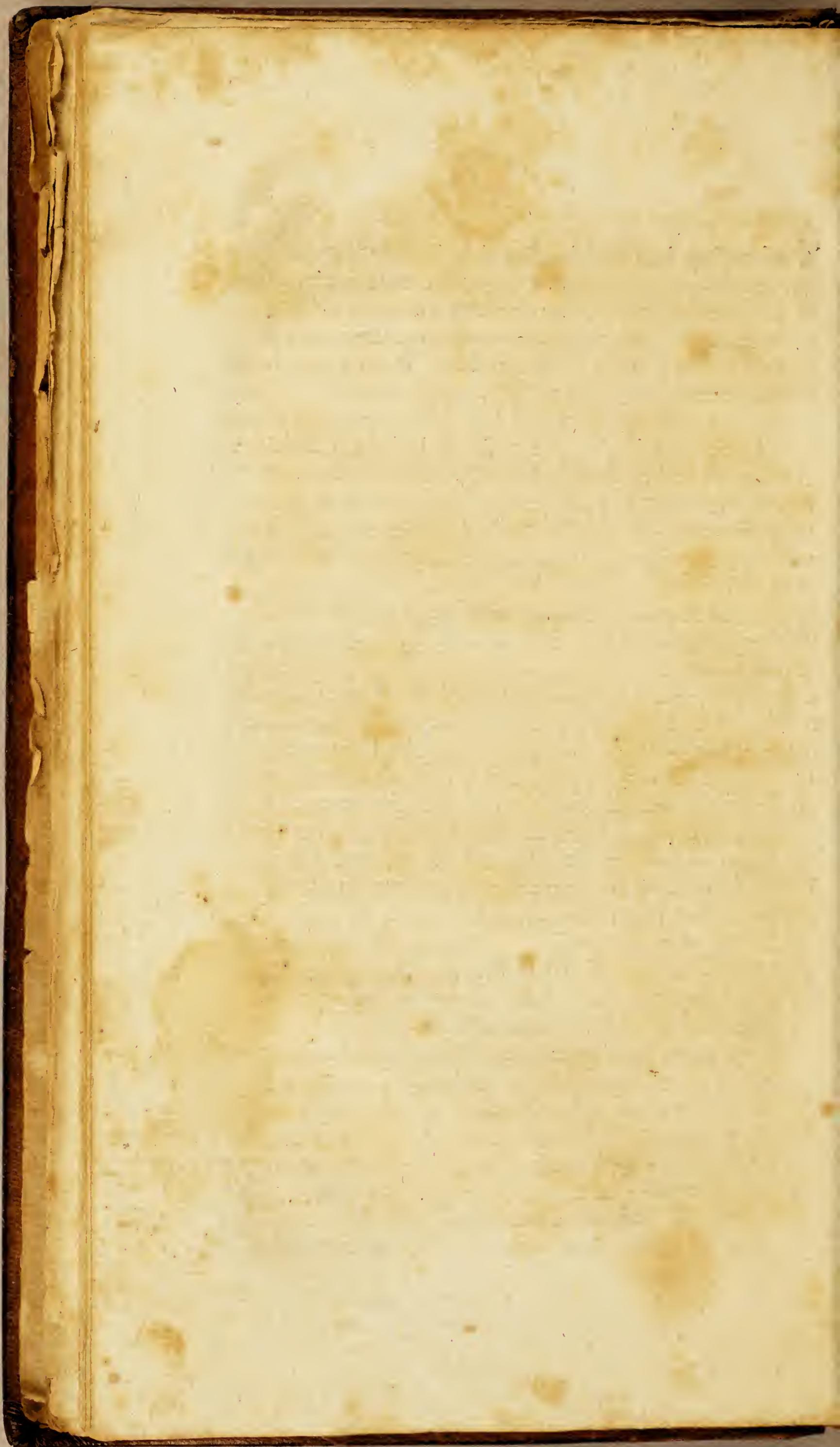
We learn the privileges of those who stand in a covenant relation to God, and whose God is the Lord. The privileges of the church of God on earth are much every way, chiefly because that unto them are committed the oracles of God, the holy law and the blessed gospel—the christian sabbath and ordinances; the convincing, reforming and sanctifying influences of the divine spirit, and the hope of eternal life.

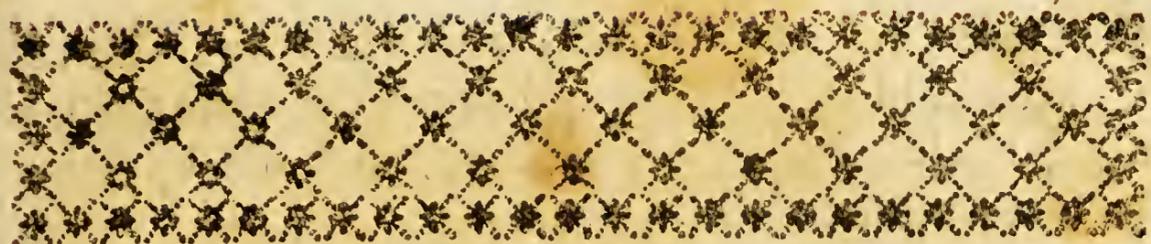
THE great design of the perfect holy law, is to prepare us for gospel blessings. By the law is the knowledge of sin. It acquaints us with our guilt and danger, our helpless and hopeless condition. It hath concluded us all under sin and condemnation. It teaches us the dreadful terrors which will attend the execution of its sentence. It proclaims its curses in thunder, lightning and flaming ruin upon the transgressors, that all hope of life, from the covenant of works may be cut off, and the sinner compelled to escape for protection to the covenant of grace, the all perfect and finished righteousness of the blessed Redeemer. “The law was added because of transgression,” or to teach us that we are verily guilty before God, and that thro’ the weakness of the flesh, we cannot satisfy or perfectly keep it, and thus serve as a school-master to lead us to Christ. This good office it performs, in the hands of the divine spirit, shewing us that it is a holy and perfect law, and that we cannot keep it, that it is a good law, and must be kept, that it is a just law and must be satisfied. The knowledge of the law is necessary to all men, for their salvation. To the unbelieving, the impenitent, and the bold

transgressor, it proclaims in dreadful accents, the wrath of God, due to sin. It is the means sanctified in the hand of the divine spirit to convince of sin, of righteousness and the judgement to come. And the righteous man is by it instructed in all duty to God and men.

THE sinner who has not embraced, by a cordial repentance and humble faith the righteousness of Christ tendered to him, in the covenant of grace, remains under the condemnation of the covenant of works, and without a reformation, must endure its dreadful wrath. O sirs, knowing the terrors of the law, let us be persuaded now to prepare for that day, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall again descend, with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, when not only mount Sinai, but every mountain of our globe shall burn as a furnace at his presence, and the elements melt with fervent heat, when he shall come to execute the law upon them who have not kept it, nor obeyed his gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power; when he shall come, to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe.

A M E N.





S E R M O N III.

The existence and perfections of GOD;

PRECEPT FIRST.

EXODUS XX. 3.

Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

THIS comprehensive sentence, is the first precept or commandment of the law of nature and revelation; and teaches us that Jehovah is the one only God, whom all rational beings are supremely to love, worship and obey. The moral obligations of this law are equally binding on individual persons of all nations and generations, on account of the infinite excellency and perfection of the Deity, and because he is the alone creator and upholder of all things, and on his absolute goodness we are totally dependant for all the good and happiness which we need or hope for throughout the endless periods of our existence.

It is observable that almost all the duties which mankind owe to God and to one another, are in the decalogue forcibly expressed by negative precepts. They forbid every species and every degree of evil of thought and behaviour. And when one virtue or duty is commanded all the virtues and duties of

the same kind are included; and when one vice or sin is forbidden, all vices and sins of the same species are included in the prohibition, and the opposite virtues commanded.

THE text forbids our having any other as the object of our homage, love and obedience, but God alone. "Tho' there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in him." The principal design of this first precept of the law is to teach us the object of religious worship. In the illustration of this important article, under the guidance of the text, by the divine assistance, I shall lay before you very briefly,

1. SOME of the proofs and evidences which the light of nature and revelation give of the existence of one God.
2. THAT religious worship is due to God alone.
3. THE nature and guilt of idolatry.

THE existence of God is the foundation and first principle of religion and therefore the first precept of this divine law proclaims his existence. He is "the God not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," and the God of universal nature; who made the heavens and the earth, and all their hosts; eternal, selfexisting, uncreated, underived; infinite in all perfection, most powerful, wise and good; most holy, immutable, just and true, omniscient, every where present, and infinitely happy; the alone almighty preserver and governor of all things; whose providence is intimately conversant in all events, directing, permitting and overruling all

things for his own glory and the happiness of the universe. Hence also we are taught that God is a spirit uncompounded; and who filleth all places; the constant witness of our thoughts and conduct; and the supreme and righteous judge, who distributes rewards and punishments among his creatures according to their respective moral characters; and that to love, worship and please God, is man's only duty; that his favor is our supreme happiness, and his displeasure the greatest evil which creatures can suffer. This is the God whose existence is here declared, and whom we are commanded to have as our God; and to esteem, love and obey as the greatest, wisest and best of beings.

THE existence of God is a natural principle and a dictate of the common sense of mankind. It is one of those luminous truths with which the rational mind is naturally and necessarily impressed. The certainty of this truth, that there is a God, we arrive at the knowledge of, by an impression of natural conscience, or an intuitive perception, as well as by a chain of reasoning. The untutored savage, feels a more lively impression of the existence of God, the creator and ruler of all things, than the philosopher so called, who labors to divest himself of this natural principle. So dear and evident is this great truth, that we do not find throughout divine revelation, any arguments expressly deduced to prove the existence of God, altho' there are many declarations of the unity of God, in opposition to the polytheism of the pagan nations. No miracle was ever wrought to convince an atheist; for he whose heart can reject the natural impression of this truth, is prepared to reject all kinds of evidence, and is given over to the judgment of a reprobate mind. It is our duty and felicity to have our minds ever impressed with a live-

ly and solemn sense of the existence and perfections of God. The knowledge of God is the life of the soul. "This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God." It is the fountain of divine science. And altho' "by searching we cannot find out God, or the almighty to perfection," yet it is most necessary for us to strive to know so much as we are capable, of the character, the ways and the laws of the ever blessed God.

I. THE unity of God, or that there is but one God, is a doctrine taught by the law of nature, and abundantly confirmed by revelation. One being infinite in all perfection is sufficient for the production of all things. The supposition of more Gods than one, is inconsistent with infinite perfection of either; for the infinite power and perfection of one, would limit and circumscribe the power and perfection of the other. The creator of the universe must be perfect in all the attributes of Deity, infinite and unbounded in eternity, immensity and power, and uncontroled in his sovereign will. But this could not be the case, were there more Gods than one.

II. THE works of creation prove the existence of one God. As the universe could not give itself existence, it must be the work of an almighty first cause, the fountain of intelligence, self-existing, eternal, infinitely powerful, wise and good. The wisdom and design which appear in the works of creation and of providence, so far as we are able to discover, shew that they are the work of an intelligent being. This appears in the fitness of things to the ends and purposes for which they are made. We discover the traces of admirable wisdom in the regular and successive revolutions of the heavenly bodies—in the necessary and grateful vicissitudes of the seasons of the year, and of day and night;—in the uniform or-

der and harmony of the laws of nature, and the due proportion which creatures and things bear to each other, and to the places and conditions assigned them. They teach us that the world and all things therein are the production of the power, the skill, and the goodness of a being, perfect in knowledge and wisdom.

To communicate happiness to creatures appears to be one chief end of the Deity in the creation. "His tender mercies are on all his works," demanding the united acknowledgement, gratitude and love of all intelligences. This unity of design proves the Universe to be the production of an infinitely benevolent and perfect being.

III. THE first idea which strikes the mind in the contemplation of creation is that of *power*, great beyond all conception. St. Paul mentions this as the first evidence in creation of the existence of God — Creation thro' all her works, proclaims this attribute. It is seen and understood by the things which are made, even his *eternal power*. Should a rational being arise at once into life, perfect in all his faculties, and look up and around him, upon the works of God; should he see the sun, that vast body of light and heat, rising in the east, travelling thro' the sky, and when sunk in the west, see the moon succeeding, with paler rays; — should he raise his eyes to the shining stars, contemplate their number, their order and amazing distance; illuminating probably other inhabited systems; his mind would be filled with awful admiration at the amazing grandeur of the solemn scene. How august is this Universe! How great the power which created it!

THE greatest exertions of human power appear little and despicable, placed in contrast with the

proofs which this earth itself gives of the power of God. The largest cities and most magnificent buildings, reared by the united labor of miriads, are diminished in the view of the lofty mountains, raising their heads to the clouds—the majestic rivers, running thro' continents—or the vast oceans which roll around the globe. He whose single strength cannot raise a massy stone from the earth, must be amazed at the power of God, who formed the mountains and spread abroad the plains, and scooped the basons of the seas; who placed the sun and planets in their stations, and moves their inconceivable magnitudes in their regular orbits.

IV. THE works of creation proclaim the wisdom of God. Wisdom ever proceeds in her works with some good design, and uses the best means for its accomplishment. To display the glorious perfections of the Deity, and to communicate happiness to the intelligent universe, appear to be two principal purposes of God in creation. The heavens and the earth proclaim his glorious perfections, and God is good unto all. Our limited capacities can form but very imperfect conceptions of the wisdom of the Deity. We are lost in admiration at the multitude of his operations; and we see but a small part of the plans of the divine mind: But we see enough to satisfy us, that a wisdom unsearchable and infinite, planned the universe, and presides over all, demanding our devoutest adoration and praise. As the wisdom of an intelligent mind appears in the works of creation, we hence infer that they came not by chance. For chance is nothing, and can produce nothing. The wonderful formation of the great as well as minute creatures and things which compose the universe, and the ample provision made for their conservation, pro-

claim the infinite and unbounded wisdom of their great original. When we discover wisdom or skill in the contrivance of any work, we conclude that the maker thereof was wise. We refer the praise of wisdom to him and not to the workmanship. In this sense must men be understood, when they say that nature is wise, or good; that is, that the author of nature is so. As a finished and well proportioned house, proves the skill of him who made it, so does the world proclaim the divine skill of the Creator. What unsearchable wonders of wisdom appear in the organization of all animals, from the elephant down to the smallest insect! How wonderful are their natures and qualities adapted to their respective conditions! From the full store house of his bounty, all animals on the earth, in the air and sea, are abundantly fed. "The eyes of all, O Lord, wait upon thee, and thou satisfiest their wants! O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all!"

V. THE works of creation and providence proclaim the goodness of God. Without goodness there can be no wisdom. But these two attributes sweetly unite and gloriously harmonize in all the works and ways of God. The suitable and plentiful provision made for the existence and comfort of all animals, which inhabit the regions of the air—the element of water,—or which live on the dry land, teach us, that as all creatures are derived from God, on his rich bounty they also depend, for their constant preservation. The earth is a well accommodated habitation for man and beast. The sea is a store house of provision for its finny tenants. And from thence the clouds receive the vapors, which wafted over the earth distil in dews and rains to refresh the dry ground and make it fruitful, and

to feed the numerous springs and rivers, which water the earth and support and comfort its inhabitants.

How expressive of the goodness and the wisdom of God, is the creation of the element of *air*; and happily adapted to the life and conveniency of man and all living things; thro' which its winged tenants the fowls, fly speedily from danger, or seek their food; and how well fitted to their element, are the forms and lightness of their bodies.

THE air and water are adapted to promote a friendly intercourse among all the inhabitants of the earth; and to waft the productions of different climes, for the mutual comfort of mankind. The element of air is most necessary for respiration, and without it, all living creatures would cease their existence. And thro' this medium we receive the rays of light and sounds.

THE *sun* is a glorious evidence of the munificence of the Deity. As the representative of the goodness of the Creator, it diffuses life and warmth and gladness, among all the works of God on earth. By the appointment of its Creator. "He cometh out of his chambers in the east, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." His constant presence would overpower our senses with light and heat, and therefore he withdraws gradually every day, and leaves us to the calm silence of the night, that our natures may have opportunity to rest from the labours and fatigues of the day, and recruit their exhausted spirits. That we may not be oppressed with total darkness in his absence, the mild moon and twinkling stars, shed upon us their cheering light.

THE earth is a mass of lifeless matter. It cannot will or move, and could not give itself existence. But *man* is himself, a world of wonders in miniature, proclaiming the author divine. "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." What wonders of divine skill appear in the organization of every member of the human body! It is not my design, were I capable of it, to discant anatomically on the various admirable properties of this animated machine; or to point out the nice arrangement, symmetry, mutual dependences and connection of all its organs, limbs and members. I shall notice only a few particulars, to excite our devout gratitude and praise to God, who made us.

I. THE *erect form* which is given to man, strikes us with pleasing admiration, and shews the superiority given to man, over the beasts of the earth, who are prone to the ground. The *feet*, the supporters of the body, are curiously wrought as with elastic springs, to help forward its motion, and support in their sockets its weight. The *head* raised aloft, and by its position and defence most out of danger, contains the curious organs of sensation, and the brain the seat of intelligence, strongly guarded by a helmet of bone. The *eyes* are endowed with a power to look up on the heavens, and contemplate the works of God. Strange that this liquid ball, which contains but a few drops of water, should be able to take in a world of objects, and measure their distances and magnitudes. The *ear* receives and distinguishes sounds, and the *tongue* utters speech, the true images of the thoughts and emotions of the mind. Whence have these little organs these amazing powers? It is God who gives the eye to see, the ear to hear, the tongue to speak. The *knees* bend forward to teach man to prostrate himself in

humble adoration; the *arms* endowed with a circular motion, to rise with the thoughts in devout admiration to the creator, and well adapted to all the various purposes of life and motion. Tho' our limbs and senses are obedient to the will, and seem to move and act by a simple volition; yet there is a life within us which acts without our volition, and independent on us; that is, the constant motion of the *heart* and *bowels*, and the surprizing circulation of the *blood*, thro' all the smallest veins. What power, but the power of God, keeps alive, and in motion within us, this mass of fluid and fleshly substance? It lives and moves by his constant agency. Taken out of the body, it is in a moment dead, and motionless as a stone. "In God we live and move and breathe." Let our bodies with all their powers be consecrated to him:

2. STILL more surprizing wonders strike us, in the contemplation of the rational *soul*, mysteriously united to, and operating with the body. We find an existence within us, hidden from our sight and senses, endowed with the power of thought, reflection, and judgement, which can recal past times and transactions, and send forward its thoughts to ages to come; possessed of a capacity to know the will of God,—with a consciousness of the desert of moral conduct; that feels inward approbation and peace, at good and right conduct, and self condemnation and blame on doing ill; that has a consciousness of dependence on God, and obligations to please him; that hopes for his favour as the greatest happiness, and dreads his displeasure, as the greatest calamity. From whence do we derive those two natures, so differently constituted, and yet so nearly connected, and mutually operating, with all the wonderful and inexplicable powers of each, but from him who is

emphatically the “former of our bodies and the father of our spirits?” I am conscious of my own existence, but I know that neither myself, nor any creature could give it, and thence infer that God exists, from whom I derived my being, and by whose constant agency I am preserved.

THE majestic oak springing from the tender acorn—each spire of grass, and drop of water—the smallest insect, and the light atom, which floats in the beams of the sun, and each creature and thing in the universe, as to their essence and properties, contain mysteries, which baffle the studious investigation of the brightest genius. Creation thro’ all her works proclaims a God.

WE infer the existence of God from his works. To trace effects to their cause, in the language of logicians, is reasoning *a posteriori*. And altho’ other more abstract modes of reasoning might be used to illustrate this great truth, yet this method is chosen because most obvious and intelligible, and sufficient to afford compleat satisfaction to every mind. And this method infinite wisdom has chosen for universal instruction. The heavens and the earth, and every creature is, as an open volume, in which the being and perfections of God are seen and understood. All things are full of him. The evidences of the existence and perfections of God, from the works of creation and providence, are calculated to fill our minds with devout affections, with admiration, gratitude, filial fear and love, rather than to gratify our curious speculation. Yet must we strive to obtain the excellent knowledge of God, that we may serve him acceptably. To us who are favored with the superior light of revelation, it may seem strange that mankind in all ages, should have gone into

F.

the belief and worship of more Gods than one, since the doctrine of one almighty Creator, is so clearly demonstrated, by the works of creation and providence. An inspired apostle gives a solution to this, and acquaints us, that the guilt of polytheism originated in the depravity of the human heart. That its vicious propensities and lusts over powered the dictates of reason. That mankind loved not the character of the true God, as discovered in his works, and therefore formed to themselves imaginary Gods, suited to their own depraved inclinations. "They were without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: They changed the glory of the incorruptable God, into an image, and the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed forever."

It should also be observed, that altho' many Gods were worshipped before the coming of Christ, yet some of the wise men among the nations, who studied more attentively the works of God, believed in the unity of the Deity. Plato among the Greeks professed this, and his disciple Socrates, was put to death for teaching the doctrine of one God. But the faith of Philosophers was weak, because they had not the positive declarations of revelation: and however well they thought and wrote, yet generally went into the abominable idolatries of their countrymen.

SOME have also thought that a misapprehension of some passages in the book of Geneses, might originate in early ages, the notion of a plurality of Gods. In the first sentence in the bible, there is an intima-

tion of divine personalities, in social union in Deity. "In the beginning, Elohim (gods in the plural number) created the heaven and the earth." But the verb *created* being in the singular, shews that the divine personalities are, tho' incomprehensible by us, united in one God. The same thing is observable in the account of the creation of man; "Let *us* make man, in *our* image, after *our* likenesses." And on the transgression; "Behold the man is become as one of *us*." And also at the building of Babel; "Let *us* go down, and there confound their language." If this mode of speech, is not to be understood agreeably to the custom of eastern monarchs, who commonly used the plural for the singular number; we have then in the beginning of the sacred volume, a faint intimation of the doctrine of the trinity; a doctrine more fully asserted and explained in the new testament. Divine revelation abundantly confirms the inference drawn from the uniform and perfect works of creation and providence, that there is but one God. "The Gods of the heathen, are vanity and a lie. There is none that can deliver out of my hand; I have made the earth and created man upon it; I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens; I am the Lord who maketh all things; besides me there is no God. Who," in the sublime style of inspiration, "stretched out the heavens as a curtain, who laid the beams of his chambers in the waters, and maketh the clouds his chariot; who laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be removed forever; who covereth it with the deep as with a garment; who causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth bread out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man;

who appointeth the moon for seasons and the sun knoweth his going down, who maketh darkness and it is night, who hath measured the waters in the hallow of his hand and meted out the heavens with a span, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance; who setteth in the circle of the heavens, and the inhabitants of the world are as the drop of the bucket."

THUS have we taken into consideration, some of the most obvious and satisfactory evidences of the existence and perfections of God. I shall conclude this important division of the subject, with one or two

REFLECTIONS.

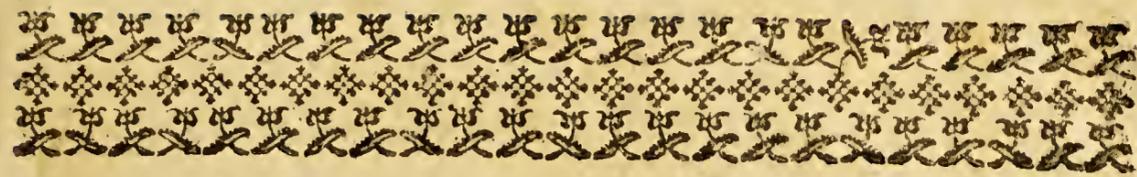
I. IF, first, any thing in the works and ways of God, in creation or providence, should at any time appear to our limited understanding, inconsistent with perfect wisdom and goodness, let us reject the thought; because it originates in our blindness, and total incapacity to comprehend the works and plans of infinite perfection, rectitude and goodness. Let us not impiously arraign the proceedings of infinite wisdom at the bar of human reason and folly; but with filial confidence and joy, in the darkest dispensations, let us resort to that universal truth, taught in the volumes of nature and revelation, *That the Creator and Judge of all worlds does right.* For all that God has done, or will do, is infinitely wisest and best. And tho' clouds and darkness may be round about him, unerring judgement and goodness, are the stability of his works and government.

II. THE ways by which God is pleased to reveal to us the knowledge of himself, are divinely excel-

lent and various. Let them be the profitable and pleasing subjects of our constant and prayerful study and meditation. The heavens declare his glorious greatness, and the earth is full of his goodness. But in the revelation of his holy law and gospel, "we read his name in fairer lines." Let us see God in all his works, and may our minds be filled with a pleasing and awful sense of his presence: whose presence surrounds us and pervades our essence. Let us strive to obtain a knowledge of the nature and perfections, the works of laws, of the ever blessed God; for the knowledge of him, constitutes the happiness and joy of angels, and all holy intelligences. Let us seek the favour and protection of this almighty being, in whose favour is our life. The majesty of God, as displayed in his works, have a tendency to impress our minds with a suitable humble sense of our littleness, and unworthy of his mercies. "When I look up to the heavens and consider them as the work of thy hands, Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him;" that thou visitest him every morning, and triest him every moment! But the contemplation of the frame of the universe, and all the wonders of creation, cannot give the soul a saving knowledge of the blessed Creator. It is the office of the divine spirit to remove our darkness, and so reveal to us the father, in the attractions of his love and mercy, in the Saviour, as to give us a title to the inheritance of eternal life. And to every penitent enquirer after God, this saving knowledge and grace are given. "O Thou great and ever blessed Jehovah, who at the beginning didst command the light to shine out of darkness; who in thy sovereign power and goodness didst say, let there be light, and there was light, shine into our benighted hearts, and give us to discover thy amiable and awful glories, as they are revealed in the

person of thy son, our almighty and merciful Savi-
our," to whom be glory, world without end,

A M E N.



S E R M O N IV.

God the alone object of religious worship,—The nature and guilt of Idolatry.

EXODUS XX. 3.

Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

I AM now,

II. To invite your attention to this great truth and duty,—*That God is the alone object of our religious worship.* The command, that we shall have no other God before Jehovah, is very expressive, and implies that we must have a God; and that our God must be the only living and true God; and that no creature or thing should be preferred or esteemed equally, or worthy to be compared to him, as the chiefest object of our knowledge, of our supreme love, homage and obedience.

THIS precept is placed the first of God's laws to man, to teach us the object to whom our thoughts are first to be directed, to whom our powers are to be forever consecrated, and whose will is our only sufficient rule of duty and felicity.

I. God is the supreme object of our religious homage and worship, because he is the only true God. To us there is but one God, the father of all. “The Gods of the heathen are vanity and a

lie; the work of men's hands, and of their vain imaginations. As God alone possesses all possible perfection, infinite in power, wisdom and goodness; the first, the greatest and best, and only source of all being, perfection and happiness, he is alone worthy of the profoundest homage, worship and love of his creatures. Whatever of goodness, usefulness or happiness are found among the works of creation, are derived from God, the source of all good. We form some imperfect idea of God, by combining in our imagination, all those excellencies and perfections, which we discover among creatures, and attribute them to him, and conceive of them as existing in him in the highest possible degree, of which our thoughts are capable. But alas, how poor and imperfect are our best thoughts of God! They fall infinitely below the height of his exalted nature and character; for the being and perfections of God are incomprehensible by finite minds. It is high we cannot attain unto it. "God is in heaven and we are on earth." As heaven is high above the earth, so are his nature and attributes and ways far above our thoughts. It is but a small portion of his character, which we can know. The wonders of his being, eternal, self-existing, underived, and his adorable attributes, works and government, will forever afford to holy beings, a still enlarging and extending field of knowledge, admiration and praise, thro' all eternal ages. As religious worship implies the intire consecration of ourselves to the being whom we worship; that our best hopes and trust and love, our life and time and services be wholly and forever dedicated to him, we hence infer that none but God alone is the proper object of these; since he alone is the source of all being and perfection.

2. God is the object of our religious worship, because we are entirely dependent on him. We

are his absolute property, by right of creation, and constant preservation. No servant is so dependent on his master, or child on its parent for bread, as every creature is dependent on God, the universal proprietor. It was his goodness which gave us existence. His infinite happiness could receive no accession from creatures. As we are dependent on God for the existence which we possess, and for all the rich and various provision made for our temporal comfort, on his unmerited bounty and mercy, we depend for all our hopes of future and immortal life and happiness, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. By whose blessed mediation, our existence was redeemed from the sentence of death, and a new state of trial allowed us, that by repentance before God, and a living principle of faith in the almighty redeemer, producing the holy fruits of obedience, we may obtain, thro' the mercy of God, the inheritance of immortal life. Thus our supreme love, homage and obedience to God are demanded, by the right of creation, preservation and redemption.

3. God demands our exclusive worship, because he will not suffer a rival in our hearts. We must have none before, or besides him. He will not allow us to give that honor and homage to another. His first law to man demands our whole heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" with all our powers, our bodies and our spirits, which are his. "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other Gods and worship them." They violate this holy commandment, who love life, or the world and the goods and enjoyments thereof, more than God. We come,

3. To speak of the nature and guilt of Idolatry. As mankind are naturally inclined to depart from

the knowledge and worship of God, he is pleased to caution and guard us against this sin, by prohibiting in this first precept our having any other, as the object of our supreme love and obedience; or paying those divine honors to any other, which are due to him. Idolatry is loving and serving any creature more than God. This sin may be considered in a threefold view. As,

- I. WHEN some other object besides God is worshipped, as God.
- II. WHEN an image or symbol is worshipped, as a representative of God.
- III. WHEN our love and dependence are placed upon creatures, to the neglect of God.

THE first of these is the grossest kind of idolatry. And it is this kind of idolatry which almost universally prevailed in early ages. The Babylonians appear to be the first who gave the lead to this kind of worship; and set up temples; and erected images in them; paid divine honors to many false and imaginary gods. From them it spread into Egypt, and other parts of the world. The sensual taste of men chose gods whom they could see, and first began to pay divine worship to those creatures and things, which were most beneficial. Hence originated the worship of the sun, moon and planets; and this idolatry was common in almost all the east, especially the worship of the sun. For this is the most glorious representative of the power and goodness of the Creator, of all his works, and the most necessary and beneficial to mankind. The worship of this glorious luminary, was the most excusable kind of idolatry, (if any excuse may be admitted in the case) of all the idolatrous rites of the

heathen, since it is the brightest emblem of the Deity, among things created. || But it is no more than one of the works of God, and men are most inexcusable, in giving those divine honors to a creature, which the light of nature taught them were due, only to the Creator.

THE Israelites, in the reign of impious and vicious kings, fell into the idolatrous practices of neighbouring nations. They erected magnificent temples, and consecrated groves and horses and chariots, to the sun and moon, to the planets, and all the hosts of heaven. A malicious and cruel deity Moloch, was worshipped, by offering living children in sacrifice. The false gods of the nations, the scriptures condemn, by the name of *abominations*. Thus we read of Astaroth, the abominations of the Zidonians,—Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites,—Milcom of the Ammonites,—Dagon of the Philistines,—Baal, the abomination of the Syrians.

IDOL gods were exceedingly multiplied. Every nation had its principal god, and each province, town and family, its subordinate, tutelary deity. And in the days of Moses, the earth was overrun with this stupid and profane abomination. And the effect of idolatry, was the prevalence of all manner of vice. Forfaking the knowledge and worship of the true God, there was nothing to restrain the passions and lusts of the human heart. Forming gods to their own depraved taste, they imagined that they must be pleased with such licentious ways, as were pleasing to themselves. Filthy rites were performed, in

|| So bright, with such a wealth of glory stor'd,
'Twere sin in heathen, not to have ador'd.

honor of their lascivious gods and goddesses. Virgins were prostituted in their temples ; and the God of intemperence and of lust, worshipped in a manner suited to their characters, and all manner of beastly vices prevailed. The condemnation of the sin of idolatry, is therefore placed at the beginning of the moral law, as the greatest sin of which mankind can be guilty. Idolatry prevailed not only among the most ignorant, but the most learned nations. The Egyptians were celebrated for political wisdom and human science, yet were most addicted to this gross and impious superstition, and exceeded all nations in the number and meanness of their gods. They worshipped a living calf, in magnificent temples, as their chief god ; and paid divine honors to cats and crocodiles, and other vile animals, and even to the vegetables which grew in their gardens, and devoured the gods whom they adored. O sacred folly, and blind impiety ! Left to the guidance of depraved passions and propensities, how fruitful is the heart of man, in evasions to loose the knowledge and reject the worship of the one only high and holy God, the former of all things !

II. ANOTHER species of idolatry is, worshipping God by images, symbols, or visible representations. God is a spirit ; he is not comprehended by our senses. Altho' the works of creation and providence, and the word of God, proclaim his being and perfections, yet we see not God with our bodily sight. But men have invented images, figures and pictures to represent the invisible Jehovah, and worshipped them. The difference between this kind of idolatry and that just mentioned is, that this professes to worship the true God in the image, the other worships an image, to the exclusion of the true God. One is the worship of some creature instead

of God, the other is the worship of God in or with a creature. This branch of Pagan idolatry has been revived and practiced, many ages, in the church of Rome. There they pay divine honors to the bread and wine in the eucharists, absurdly imagining that those elements are converted into the real body and blood of Christ. They worship the supposed wood of the cross and numerous relicks; the images of angels, saints, apostles and the virgin Mary. Tho' they alledge that they worship not the images, but the holy beings represented by them, yet this worship, according to their own justification of it, is expressly and severely prohibited, both in the first and second precepts of the law. But as this branch of idolatry will with greater propriety come into consideration under the next precept, I shall not anticipate it, but conclude this division of the subject, with shewing the folly, guilt and misery, of the idolatry here condemned.

To us it may well appear strange, that mankind should so grossly mistake the object of religious worship, and lose the knowledge of God, and pay those divine honors to creatures, which are to God.— They were sincere in their worship; they confided in the power of idol gods to help them, in times of trouble. How fervent were the worshippers of Baal, in the days of Elijah! But since God has given to mankind in all ages such clear evidences of his being and perfections, can we wonder at the manifestations of his wrath against idolaters, that he should, and in righteous judgment, withdraw from them, his restraining and saving grace; and give them up to reprobation, and to work all kinds of wickedness with greediness, and thus ripen themselves for an aggravated condemnation. Such idolaters shut their eyes against the light, choosing darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

As idolatry is the first and greatest sin of which mankind can be guilty; God has inflicted on gross idolaters, the severest spiritual judgments; as St. Paul observes was the case with the pagan world. "Who, because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, and changed the glory of the incorruptable God, into an image made like to corruptable man, and to birds, and four footed beasts and creeping things; wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, thro' the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature, more than the creator, who is blessed forever. For this cause God gave them up to the vile affections;—and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind; being filled with all unrighteousness,—hateful, and hating one another."

We come lastly, to speak of a species of idolatry different from those now mentioned; an idolatry alas, but too common at the present day, and of which we are all no doubt, in a greater or less degree chargable; it is a *spiritual idolatry*, in which the mind and affections are placed on the world, and the things of the world, as the chief good and happiness of the soul.

This is a secret kind of idolatry, oftentimes so hidden, as not to be discerned by ourselves, and much less by others. An evil that mixes itself with our daily labors,—with our relative and social duties, with our religious professions, and devotional exercises. For if God is not constantly and forever the

chief object of our love, our desire, our trust, our hope and our happiness; our hearts are not right, and we are chargable with the sin of loving and serving ourselves, or the creature, more than we ought, and are guilty of spiritual idolatry. God as the first and greatest being, demands our supreme love and obedience; if then,

1. WE strive to please, or fear to offend, any creature though the most powerful, created being, more than to please God, his holy law condemns us therein, for he is higher than the highest and demands our highest regard. No creature or thing ought to command our highest and most profound obedience, love and fear. These should ever have God for their object. "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but fear him who is able to destroy, both body and soul in hell."

God is the sovereign Creator and proprietor of us and all things, and we cannot be under equal obligations to any other, and therefore, should fear, serve and obey him, first and before all others.

WE are constantly in the presence of Jehovah, our sovereign Creator and merciful redeemer, and ought ever to bear on our minds, a solemn sense of his presence, and of our obligations, and dependence; and if we love, esteem, or reverence any creature, more than God at any time, we offend, and are chargable with idolatry.

2. WE are also guilty of idolatry, when we love ourselves supremely; when *self* is the object that we seek principally to serve and please. God was the supreme object of man's love and complacency, at

the creation, but at the fall, the deity was dethroned from the human heart, and the idol self, was set up as the chief object of love and complacency; so that now in his fallen state, man is a "lover of himself, more than a lover of God." Divine grace dethrones this idol, and restores the soul to God. How great and offensive must this sin be in the sight of God, that the creature should prefer himself to God, and serve and please himself, tho' a worthless, offending, helpless creature rather than God, the blessed creator?

THIS selfish disposition in the sinner, would incline him, to bring the whole Universe to his will and pleasure, since his own interest and happiness is the chief object of his wishes and desires; yea, he would make the deity subservient to his will and pleasure, had he power, and dethrone the sovereign of the Universe. Dreadful thought! yet must this be indeed the state of the sinner, who loves himself more than God. What impious idolatry then are all they chargable with, in whose heart true love to God, is not found?

3. It is idolatry to love the world more than God. To pursue after the wealth, the honors and pleasures thereof, as the chief good and happiness, is vile idolatry. It is placing this perishable world and the goods of it in the place of God. It is making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, and serving mammon the God of this world, with the best affections. The apostle condemns covetousness as idolatry. The lover of this world's goods, placing his affections supremely upon them, and pursuing them as his highest happiness, in the sight of God, is no doubt as guilty of idolatry, as the pagan, who worships the sun or the moon,

yea, the pagan is less criminal, because the object is more worthy.

How many then are guilty of the sin of idolatry, and of having other gods, besides the only true Jehovah? All those who are depending on any thing short of Christ for salvation, or a sincere repentance, and forsaking of their sins, and a humble and cordial reliance on the righteousness of their saviour, are setting up a saviour of their own, in opposition to God, and so are chargable with the sin of idolatry. All those who reject the revelation of the divine will, teaching men the way of duty and happiness, and profess to take their scanty reason, and their interpretation of the law of nature as their guide to happiness, set up their own will in opposition to the will of God revealed in the gospel of his son, and are guilty of idolatry. In a word, all those who love not God supremely, and delight to honor, serve and obey him, fall under the condemnation of this first great law of our rational nature.

SOME REFLECTIONS on this subject will conclude.

I. WE are taught that God alone is the supreme object of our religious worship, love and obedience. Let us strive to know, worship, and serve no other God. He is the infinite Jehovah, who has given us life and being, in whose hands are all our ways; who has given us his son, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," to enlighten and sanctify us, and to redeem us from all our woes, and raise us to immortal felicity.

WHAT obligations are we under for such infinite kindness, shewn even to the evil, and unthankful?

H

If infinite excellence,—if almighty power,—if unbounded goodness, and spotless purity and perfection, are worthy our supreme love and obedience, then do we owe them to God. If we derive our being from God,—if his constant and merciful providence continually supplies our wants,—if when we had fallen, and become liable to suffer the pains of endless punishment, his mercy interposed, and laid help on one mighty to save; if it is the will of God that none of us should perish, but that we all might inherit eternal life; and rich provision is now made for our redemption; we hence infer that we ought to love, serve, worship, obey and please God, for this has his unmerited love and grace, shewn to us. To love him because he first loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins, when we were most unworthy; vile and deserving the pains of hell.

II. We hence infer our obligations to our Lord Jesus Christ, thro' whom there is access to God, even the father: By his blessed mediation, he hath brought about reconciliation; thro' whom with humble boldness, and filial confidence, we may approach the throne of grace, and implore grace to help us, in every time of need. Divine honors belong to the son; and it is no idolatry to worship him, for he is one with the father, whom the holy angels worship, and who received divine worship from men, even when he condescended to call himself the son of man.

WHEN none of the sons of the mighty, none of those morning stars, the holy angels, the sons of God by adoption, were equal to the arduous work of man's redemption, it pleased the uncreated and eternal son of the father, to veil his glories in

humanity, and become a sufferer, "and a man of sorrows, that he might, by tasting death for us, deliver us from death, and from him that hath the power of death, that is the devil, and bring us nigh to God even the father, of whom are all things, and we in him."

III. LET us then labor to secure an interest in his righteousness, that we may be saved from the wrath to come, and "serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire." It is thro' Christ, that we come to God acceptably. Our worship and obedience to God will not find acceptance, but only in the name and mediation of his son. "There is no other name given among men, whereby we can be saved."

IN our unrenewed and unholy state by nature, we cannot worship God acceptably. A new heart must be given us, and a new spirit put within us, would we have God for our God, and acceptably serve him.

As necessary to this, the gospel of the blessed Saviour exhorts us to repentance for sin, and conversion to God, which consists in the heart: turning from all idols, to the love, the worship, and service of God. Grace makes a great change in the mind, breaking it off from a sinful conformity to this world, and transforming us into a resemblance of Christ, enlightning us into the knowledge of God, and inclining us to keep his laws with all our heart.

THAT worship, sirs, that God demands of us is spiritual, it is the worship, love and obedience of the soul. The Lord searcheth the heart, he demands truth and sincerity there. "The sacrifice of the Lord are a broken spirit," a heart humble,

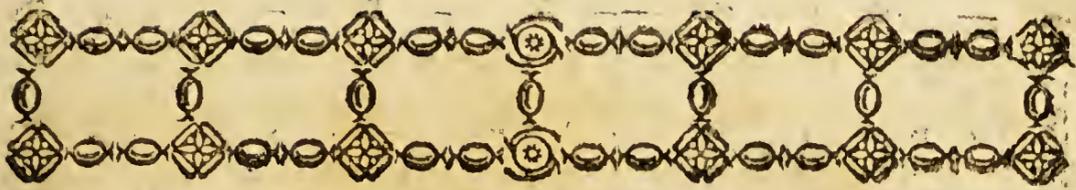
holy, teachable and heavenly. Without this, the external obedience that we pay in outward forms of worship, are of no avail. "For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things," having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Let us not "draw nigh to him in profession, while our hearts are far from him."

LET us oft repair to the throne of grace, for the true worshipper of God, and observer of his law, will be much in prayer, conscious of his own blindness in spiritual things, he will come to the fountain of light, that the eyes of his understanding being enlightened, "he may know and approve, what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of the Lord. And if any man lack wisdom, let him, ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not."

IV. WE learn the unhappy and dangerous condition of those who are ignorant of God; "who live without God in the world." We read of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts," or in any of them. Their condition in the future world will be miserable beyond conception; for the supreme Judge of the world will condemn those "who know not God, to everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord." There can be no saving knowledge of God, but thro' Jesus Christ his son. "For this is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." They whose minds are conformed to the law of God, and to the gospel of his son, who renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously and godly in the world, will thro' the grace and mercy of God in Christ, be admitted to eternal life.

LASTLY, let us all in truth and sincerity, and with all our hearts, honor, worship and serve the only true God, who has graciously revealed to us in the gospel by his son, more clearly the knowledge of his character, and our whole duty than was revealed in ancient times. Let us continually meditate on his being and perfections, and “in the multitude of our thoughts, may the comforts of God, delight our souls.” Let us worship him by our lips and our lives, by secret and public devotion, prayer and praise; and by consecrating our souls and their immortal powers, our life, our time, our studies, pursuits and talents, to his service and glory,—whom to serve and worship, in truth and sincerity, is our chief and highest duty; in whose favor is immortal life. He hath commanded us to have no other god; let our hearts reply, this God is *our* God, and him only will we love and serve, now and evermore.

A M E N:



S E R M O N V.

The Christian ritual, or the manner in which God
is to be worshipped.

P R E C E P T S E C O N D.

EXODUS xx. 4, 5 and 6.

*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or
any likeness of any thing, that is in heaven above, or
that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water,
under the earth.*

*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve
them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visit-
ing the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the
third and fourth generation of them that hate me;*

*And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love
me, and keep my commandments.*

IT is observable in the pages of inspiration, as
was suggested in a preceding discourse, that
when a sin or vice is forbidden, the opposite virtue
or duty is commanded, tho' it may not be expressly
mentioned. That this is the case with the precepts
of this divine law, is manifest by the reason of
things, the tenor of revelation, and by the expo-
sition given of them, by our infallible teacher,
who came to fulfil the law, as recorded by the
evangelist Matthew. Thus the prohibition of

false gods in the first precept, as forcibly obliges us to know, worship love and obey the true God, as it condemns our trusting in, or worshipping false gods; and in the second, the prohibition of worshipping God by images, requires that we worship him agreeably to his holy and spiritual nature. This precept bears a near resemblance to the first. The difference is, that the first teaches us that God is the alone rightful *object* of our worship, and that this glory he will not allow us to give to any other; and the second teaches us, the *manner* in which we are to worship and serve him. God forbids us to worship him by images, figures, statutes, pictures, or any visible resemblance of the works of nature or art; for nothing can be made or formed, worthily to represent the infinite and immense Jehovah, the eternal and invisible spirit. We are hence to infer that God is to be worshipped by our spirits, as well as externally. For the law demanding our obedience, is spiritual, extending to the exercises of the heart, demanding truth and sincerity there. "God is a spirit, and the true worshippers, worship the father in spirit and in truth." It is proper for us to notice the wisdom of the supreme lawgiver, in the arrangement of the precepts. The most solemn and important are first delivered. The greatest sin of which mankind can be guilty, is first forbidden; the sin of having a false god, in whom to place our trust; and the first and greatest duty and felicity of rational creatures required, which is our having the true God for our God, our portion and happiness. The next greatest duty is to worship and serve the true God acceptably; and the next greatest sin, is dividing our worship, love and obedience between God and creatures, or worshipping him in or by images. And the sin forbidden and duties required in the second precept, are greater than those of the

third, and those of the third, than those of the fourth. A similar gradation of relative duties towards our fellow men *is observable* in the second table of this divine law.

AWFUL penalties are annexed to the sin here forbidden. "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation of them that hate God." What is proposed is,

I. SOME further incidental remarks on that species of idolatrous worship, here forbidden.

II. THE nature and qualifications of that true and acceptable worship, which God hath appointed.

III. AN explanation of the penalty of this law; "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children."

IV. THE motives to animate us to the true and acceptable worship of God, contained in the promise, "shewing mercy to thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

I. THE reason given why God shall not be worshipped by images, is that no image can represent him. Images are material, local and perishable; and God is a spirit, eternal, omnipresent, and incorruptable. Our thoughts are lost in the contemplation of his immensity. To form an image of God, is to degrade the glory and dignity of his nature and perfections; and is contrary to his express will. All images or figures of the deity, formed either by our imaginations or by the hands of men, fall infinitely short of the divine original, and tend to divest the mind of those pure and sublime concep-

tions which we ought ever to have of God, as a being uncompounded, invisible, omnipresent.— They are impious attempts to bring down the Deity to the level of our comprehension.

2. ANOTHER reason of the prohibition is, the danger of our giving those divine honors to the image, rather than to God. And this hath been the case. Images were probably first invented, that the minds of men might by them be more solemnly affected with a sense of the presence of God. And associating in their idea, the special presence of God in the image, they imperceptably fell into the worship of the image itself, as God, or the sensible representative of some of his attributes.

THE heathen have fixed upon various objects or images, because of some supposed likeness in them, to him whom they professed to worship. Using these to excite their devotion they have by an easy transition gone on to worship the image with God, and finally to terminate their worship on the senseless object. Thus pagans in former times, and papists at the present day, bow down to images and figures of the Deity. The Grecians and Romans worshipped the supreme being, in the image and name of Jupiter, and also various subordinate deities, as representatives of the providences and perfections of God, or as appointed to preside over the affairs and the employments of men, in different parts of the universe.

WE have a remarkable instance of this senseless worship of images, even among the learned Ephesians, in the days of the apostles. Demetrius, a zealous idolater, accused the apostle, “saying, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people,

saying that they be no gods which are made with hands,—so that the great goddess Diana is in danger of being despised, whom all Asia, and the world worshippeth. And they cried out, for the space of two hours, great is Diana of the Ephesians,—what man is there that knoweth not, how that the city of the Ephesians, is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image that fell down from Jupiter ?”

OUR Celtic and Saxon ancestors were idolatrous worshippers of images. They worshipped the idol *Woden*, the imaginary God of battles, on Wednesday, (from whom the day derives its name.) And the idol *Thor*, the god of thunder, on Thursday: And they worshipped God by images, or deities of their own imagination, for a considerable time after Christ came; and were among the last of the pagan nations, within the bounds of the ancient Roman empire, who renounced the worship of idols, and embraced the christian faith.

It is a remarkable fact, confirmed by authentic historians, that by the preaching of the apostles, the idolatrous oracles of the heathen nations, in Europe and Asia, from whence, evil spirits, by the mouths of false prophets had issued orders and predictions, were silenced and struck dumb; and their temples, soon after were forsaken, or converted into churches of Christ. This was a wonderful display of the power of Christ, over the powers of darkness, and the accomplishment of one design of his divine mission, who came to destroy the works and the visible worship of the devil. A specimen of this power he had given to his disciples before his ascension, when they returned to Christ, from

the mission on which he had sent them to preach, rejoicing at the success, "saying Lord, even the devils are subject to us, thro' thy name."

THE worship of invisible beings by images, however covered with the pretence of honoring God by them, was in reality, the grand instrument by which Satan maintained a visible kingdom on earth, ruling in the children of disobedience. But the light of the gospel shone into his dark retreats, and his kingdom fell, as with lightning from heaven. After several ages had elapsed, the folly and wickedness of pagan idolatry was revived in the church of Rome. There they canonize and worship dead men, and some who had been infamous for vice, or had no other merit, but that of being benefactors to the Romish superstition. They worship the image of the virgin Mary, the apostles and angels, paying divine honors to them, as protectors and mediators. Thus by degrading the blessed and only mediator, and by setting up idols and themselves above God; and by the traffic of indulgences in all manner of sins, they have evinced themselves, to be indeed the "mother of abominations, and the antichrist, whom God will destroy, with the brightness of his appearing."

DEVIATIONS from the pure and spiritual law of divine worship to the one only true God, are solemnly forbidden. *Thou shalt not make unto thee, any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above; either the sun, moon, planets or stars, or of birds,—the idol gods of the Chaldeans and eastern nations. Or in the earth beneath; as dead men, four-footed beasts, serpents and the like,—the idol Gods of the Egyptians. Or in the waters under the earth; as crocodiles and fishes; the latter was worshipped by the*

Canaanites, and the former by the Egyptians. By this particular prohibition, it pleased God to guard the ancient church, from the idolatrous ways of surrounding nations. Images are not forbidden, except such as were designed as representations of spiritual things and objects of religious worship; as appears by the command to make a brazen serpent, and the figures of Cherubims, and the brazen bulls at the temple built by Solomon. Christians are not forbidden to make decent images, statutes or pictures of persons or things. But any picture or image intended to represent the incomprehensible Jehovah, is at all times prohibited, as impious. As a reason to enforce the observance of this precept, Moses reminds the people of Israel, that they saw no manner of similitude of God at Sinai, and that they only heard a voice, from the midst of the awful and glorious scene, that covered the mount.

THE prophet Elijah, by a solemn irony, ridicules the worship of Baal, and their god. The prophet Isaiah in the same strain, severely censures the folly of idol-worship. "The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms;—the carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he marketh it with a line, and compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man. He planteth an ash and the rain doth nourish it, with part of it he kindleth a fire, and baketh bread; with part of it he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he falleth down before it, and prayeth unto it, and saith deliver me, for thou art my God."

THIS precept forbids us to give that love and dependence to any creature which belongs only to God, who is a jealous God, speaking after the man-

ner of men, and who will not suffer a rival in our hearts. This command therefore respects our disposition of hearts, as well as our external homage. We come,

II. To speak of the nature and qualities of that true and acceptable worship, which God hath appointed. We are to worship God spiritually, as well as externally, and in a way and manner agreeably to his holy nature, and revealed will. No worship, can be acceptable to God, but such as he hath directed. His will discovered by the light of nature, but especially by the clearer light of revelation, is our only guide, in this interesting enquiry. Wherewith shall guilty offenders come acceptably before God, and bow themselves before the Most High? is an enquiry, which receives a satisfactory answer, only from the revealed will of God. The wisest heathen were in the dark as to this important matter; and knew not how to approach the holy presence of God, with acceptance. But the holy scriptures have revealed to us the will of God, and the way of our acceptance by the righteousness and mediation of Jesus Christ. There we are taught the necessity of a humble, teachable and resigned spirit, willing to know and practice the will of God. That to worship him to acceptance, we must renounce all sinful lusts, passions and appetites, as sensuality, pride, envy, censoriousness and the love of this world, and that our hearts be pure, sincere, and filled with the love of God, and of mankind. And that to worship him acceptably, we must come in the way of grace revealed in the gospel, expecting audience and acceptance only in the name, and thro' the merits and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.—
 “He is the way, the truth and the life; and none cometh to the father, but by him.”

1. A necessary qualification of our acceptance with God in our worship of him, is a humble sense and confession of unworthiness. That of ourselves we have not any righteousness, goodness or merit to claim his favourable notice,—that we are fallen, guilty offenders against his holy law, and are justly condemned to suffer its awful curses, that the law is holy, just and good, but that we are unholy, unrighteous and vile. The important and requisite qualification of the sinners acceptance with God, is a consciousness of unworthiness and a sense of dependence on the rich mercy of God in the redeemer.

“ Let not conscience make you linger,
 “ Nor of fitness fondly dream ;
 “ All the fitness he requireth,
 “ Is to feel your need of him.”

The sinner before he has this preparation of heart to worship God acceptably, may imagine that he has need of nothing, but upon the plan of the covenant of grace, he must be indeed convinced that he is poor and miserable, as to his spiritual condition, before he will be disposed to prize the remedy which grace has provided for the guilty and helpless. He must renounce his own goodness, as having no merit to justify him, and feel his dependence on the divine plan of sovereign grace which gives all the glory of his salvation to God. Christ came, not to call the righteous, or those who are righteous in their own apprehension, but sinners, who are indeed sensible that they are sinners to repentance and salvation. But this is a condition which crosses the natural pride of the human heart, and disposes men to resist the convictions of the divine spirit, and their own salvation. The sinner turns from the sight of his own deformity, as seen in the glass of the law, and chooses not to view himself as a guilty criminal

in the presence of God, and in a hopeless and helpless condition. But without this discovery realized, there can be no salvation, for the sinner will not be disposed to receive with humble gratitude the salvation which the gospel proclaims, unless sensible that he shall perish without it. This submission of the soul to the plan of grace in our salvation, is therefore much insisted on in the gospel as requisite to acceptance with God, who "exalts and gives grace to the humble, but abases the proud."

2. CONNECTED with this discovery of ourselves, is a sincere repentance of sin before God and a sincere reformation of heart and life. That state of mind before mentioned prepares the way for this. Conviction of impotency and unrighteousness is necessary to repentance. We must first be conscious that we have offended,—and that we are unable to redeem ourselves from condemnation, before we shall be disposed to confess and forsake sin, and implore forgiveness. And to create in us this right disposition, the goodness of God to sinners, hath furnished us with a rich variety of means, happily calculated to accomplish the end,—such as the holy scriptures, sabbaths, ordinances—providences—the admonitions of conscience and the operations of the divine spirit on our minds. This heavenly agent is divinely commissioned, by his powerful influence on the mind, to convince of sin, of righteousness and the judgment to come; and to make the instrumental means of light and grace effectual to the sinners repentance and conversion. This he does by setting before the mind the terrors of the law, broken by transgression; convincing the sinner that he has offended, and fallen under the sentence of condemnation, and this prepares the subject.

3. To resort to Jesus Christ the divinely appointed saviour of sinners, and to commit himself to him, confiding in his finished and all-sufficient righteousness for acceptance with God, and a title to eternal life. The acceptable worshipper believes in God; "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is;" and without faith it is impossible to please him: Without such an operative faith in God, as comprehends the knowledge of, and love to his character and laws, our external devotion is but a lifeless form. Connected with a saving, operative faith in God, as merciful to sinners, is faith in Jesus Christ, by whom we have access to the father. He is the only mediator between God and man, and the soul prepared for salvation confides in him, reposing its immortal interests in his hand, on whom the father hath laid, help, mighty to save. "Ye believe in God," says our Lord to his disciples, "believe also in me." We are justified and saved only on account of his perfect righteousness, for whose sake a holy God heareth and accepteth sinners. And to entitle us to the present and everlasting benefits of that righteousness, it is necessary upon the plan of the gospel, that we believe in Jesus Christ, or gratefully and without reserve, confide in him as the "Lord our righteousness." For he has magnified the law which we have transgressed, and which we cannot satisfy; and the benefits and blessings of that righteousness are offered to all, and conveyed to them who *believe* in him. And none but those who believe are qualified to possess that blessedness.

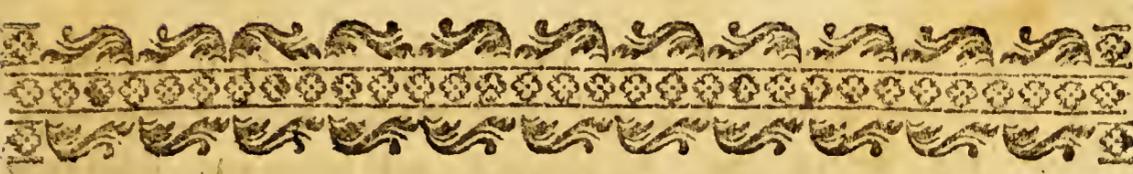
THE scriptures teach us, that saving faith in God, and in our divine saviour is an effect of an important and surprising change; called "a new heart, a new spirit, and a being born again." These figurate terms do not imply that any new faculty is given,

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or physical change made as to the essential powers of the soul, but that the change is in the disposition of the mind towards spiritual objects. The subject of this grace has a new taste for spiritual enjoyments. Sin is offensive and hateful, and holiness lovely and desirable. The mind thus rightly disposed to the objects which religion presents to its view, may be said to be born into a new world of spiritual life, objects and enjoyments. Old things are passed away and behold all things are new. The new exercises of heart, in consequence of these right views of God, and of the Saviour, are expressed in the gospel, by coming to Christ,—believing and trusting in him,—receiving Christ,—hungering and thirsting after righteousness,—putting off the old man with his deeds which are corrupt, and putting on the new man, which after God, or in conformity to him, is created in holiness and righteousness. That faith in Christ which justifies is a living and operative principle, producing purity of heart and the works of holy obedience. These justify the believers faith and prove it evangelical, and confirm his hope in Christ. The design of their redemption from the dominion of sin and from the condemnation of the law, is that they should serve God in newness of spirit, and be a peculiar people, to the praise of him, who hath called them out of darkness into marvellous light. “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as children of the light.”

THIS preparation, first, is most necessary for us, upon the plan of the covenant of grace, would we hope to serve and worship a holy God, with acceptance. Let us then with earnest and persevering importunity, humbly look up to the father of lights, from whom cometh down all good and perfect gifts;

that he would give us a new heart and grace,
whereby we may worship and serve him acceptably
with reverence and love and Godly fear, now and
evermore,

A M E N:



S E R M O N VI.

The Christian ritual, or the manner in which God is to be worshipped;—explanation of the penalty, and of the promise, annexed to the second precept of the law.

EXODUS xx. 4, 5 and 6.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing, that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

HAVING in the preceeding discourse, established the foundation of acceptable worship, in the heart renewed after the image of God, by a holy principle, producing the good works of repentance, faith and universal obedience; we now proceed to shew in sundry particulars, the nature of that religious worship of God, which is commanded, by the moral and evangelical law.

I. PRAYER is a moral and religious duty; our

absolute dependence on God, for all that we possess or enjoy, and for all that good and happiness which we hope for, in time, and forever, teaches us to acknowledge God in all our ways, and in all his mercies and providences, towards ourselves and others. The light of nature teaches men to acknowledge, with gratitude to God, their dependence, for in him we live and move and have our being; and to present constantly the tribute of thanksgiving and praise, for all mercies; and since especially we have offended God by sin, that we humbly confess to God our sins, and implore his merciful forgiveness.

We are, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make known our request to God. "I exhort," says St. Paul, "therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men,—for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

2. READING, preaching and hearing the word of God, is a part of that religious worship, which God hath appointed. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God hath appointed stated, and regular attendance, on his word and ordinances, as the ordinary way of obtaining spiritual and saving knowledge. He meets his sincere worshippers and blesses them in his house of prayer. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, where full assemblies meet to pray and praise and hear," more than all the private dwellings of Jacob. The apostles of Christ, went abroad among the nations, preached the word of salvation, and gathered churches to Christ, among idolatrous

gentiles. The establishment of christian churches, among the nations had been predicted by ancient prophets. "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the gentiles, and in every place incense (of prayer and praise) shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen." God has appointed, that in these assemblies we hear his word with reverence, and receive it with love and obedience.— "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil."

3. PRAISING God in sacred psalmody is an ordinance of public and social worship; and without this animating part, public worship is languid and lifeless. With holy elevation of soul, and solemn and cheerful voices, we are to celebrate the goodness and greatness of Jehovah. "Singing and making melody in our hearts unto the Lord." Our Lord and the disciples, at the conclusion of the sacramental supper, sang an hymn. Public worship is with propriety introduced with psalmody. "Enter his courts with singing. Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

4. THE sacred ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, constitute a solemn part of public worship. Christ sent out his apostles to baptize all nations, believing parents and children "in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy ghost;" and instituted the holy supper, to be obser-

ved in the church, as a lively emblem of his atonement by the sacrifice of himself for sin, and of the efficacy of his mediation, and hath promised his presence and blessings with his ministers and churches, in the administration of these ordinances, to the end of the world. These ordinances are to be celebrated in the public assembly; that by the baptism of water, the congregation may be reminded of the solemn obligations of their covenant with God, and the necessity of purification from daily offences, by the cleansing virtue of the blood of sprinkling, which cleanses from all sin. And that by the sacrament of bread and wine, their hearts may be duly affected with the boundless love of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he shewed to us, in laying down his life for us, when he made his life an offering for sin, and bore the curse of the law, even the death of the cross, that we might obtain life and glory in heaven. This ordinance shews also the necessity of our receiving Christ by faith and feeding on him, as the life and nourishment of our souls. "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ? And the cup which we partake is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" Every friend of Jesus, is bound to partake of this memorial of our merciful Lord and Saviour. A principle of gratitude should bring us to his table, who has provided a feast for our souls; and his affectionate command, "This do in remembrance of me," leaves us without excuse, if we absent ourselves.

• THESE two are the principal ceremonial or positive rites of the gospel church, happily delivered from the burdensome bloody and costly rites of the ancient church. "The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light."

5. THE blessing at the conclusion of public worship, is also a part of the same. The Most High, appointed Aaron and his sons, to bless the congregation. And this the apostles also did in the christian churches. And they usually conclude their epistles to the churches, with a sacred benediction. These are a summary of the several parts of public social worship, which God hath appointed to be observed in his church, and whose institutions we are to observe always, for the glory of God, and the furtherance of our own salvation, by the means appointed and blessed, for the conveyance of spiritual blessings, to the sincere enquirer, from the God of all grace and consolation, who hath promised to “make his people joyful, in his house of prayer.”

6. It is the will of God, that we worship him by prayer, in secret and in family devotion. In the duty of secret prayer, our Lord hath directed us,—“When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy father, who seeth in secret, and who will reward thee openly.” The duty and advantages of constancy in prayer, or our being ever in an habitual praying temper, he has taught us in the parable of the importunate widow, and the unjust judge; “saying, men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” In every condition and occurrence of life, the habit of the soul should be towards God, sending up its desires in pious ejaculations to him, who hears the softest whispers of the soul, and satisfies the desires of the mind, that piously rests on him.

THE worship of God in families is a divine ordinance. We have family mercies to implore—family sins to confess, and family blessings, that demand the sacrifice of praise. And with family devotion,

family instruction, counsel and correction, are divinely instituted.

Most honorable was the encomium which, the Most High was pleased to give to the pious patriarch Abraham,—“ I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgement.”

THE morning and the evening sacrifice was appointed under the law, and the morality or fitness of the appointment remains, in full force under the gospel. In the scriptures, prayerless families are classed with the heathen, and fall under the same condemnation with idolatrous pagans. “ Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen who know thee not, and upon the families, that call not upon thy name.” Tho’ God pours temporal blessings into the lap of families, who neither know, nor acknowledge him; they are but providential gifts, they come not in covenant mercy, and if ungratefully received, will eventually prove curses, instead of blessings. For the goodness of God to men is intended to lead them to repentance.

THE worship which we are to render to God has its foundation in the heart. It is the worship of the spirit. This is a worship and service suitable to the nature of the great object of our devotion, and for us, as spiritual and rational beings, to pay. God is a spirit, from whom our spiritual nature is derived, and we must worship him with our spirits, in truth and sincerity. To worship God acceptably comprehends a knowledge of God, a belief in his word, a submission to his authority, a devotion of all the powers of body and mind to him, and an earnest

disposition to glorify him in our bodies, and our spirits which are his. It implies a supreme love to God—fidelity in his service, and purity of intention; conscious of his presence, our obligations, and accountableness to him.

God regards the disposition of the heart in all our professions and services, more than our external obedience. That his people may present to him this inward spiritual homage, he hath graciously promised, that he will give them, “a new heart and put his spirit within them; and cause them to walk in his statutes, and write his law upon their hearts.” The prayer of the heart only is accepted. It is the aspirations of a pious soul. The sacrifice, which God accepts, is a sincere, contrite spirit. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” The prayer of Hannah at the temple, met with gracious acceptance, tho’ it was only the breathings of her fervent mind, for her voice was not heard. The Pharisee at the same place, had not the spirit of prayer. His prayer arose not, from a sense of spiritual want. But the prayer of the Publican was accepted, because it was the sincere desire of a soul, humbled before God, by a sense of unworthiness, believing in the mercy and justice of God. We must therefore draw nigh to God with the heart, would we hope for audience and acceptance. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication, in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.” These remarks respecting the temper and state of the mind, in the exercises of religion apply to every duty and service, which we offer to God. Our prayers, our preaching, and hearing, and attendance on ordinances, must be done spiritually, would we hope for acceptance, with a holy God, the searcher of hearts. The accepta-

ble worshipper, can with humble confidence, with St. Paul, appeal to him, saying, "God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit, in the gospel of his son." "He," says our Lord, "who heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them," who receives them into his heart and practises them in his life, "is like a wise man who built his house upon a rock." Our songs of praise must be spiritual as well as vocal. "Singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord." The sacraments we are to attend upon, and receive with devotion of soul. As baptism is an outward sign of inward purity, it requires the worship of the spirit, the graces of faith, sincerity and purity, in him who dedicates himself, or his offspring to God, in that ordinance. And in our attendance on the Lord's supper, we are to examine ourselves, whether our hearts are right with God, and to know our spiritual state, that we may discern the Lord's body, and spiritually feed on him, the bread of life and the water of life.

Thus all parts of public worship are to be performed with our spirits, as unto the Lord. By what has been said, on the spirituality of devotion, let none imagine that a personal attendance and service, are not required. For we are to serve God with our bodies, as well as our spirits. This is evident from the nature of the several branches of instituted worship, as well as the express declaration of scripture. From the preaching of the word, — public prayer and praise, and the administration of the sacraments, and the institution of the sabbath for the public worship of God, our personal attendance and homage, are made necessary.

OUR worship of God, must be performed according to his word, or agreeably to his appointment. As all parts of the sacred tabernacle, were to be made after the pattern which was shewn to Moses on the Mount, so all parts of our religious worship, both as to the disposition of heart, and external observance, must be according to those rules and directions, which God hath given us in his word. Any deviation from them is sinful and idolatrous. So far as we depart from the perfect rule given for our direction, our worship degenerates into human invention and idolatry. Persons are in danger of this sin, who disregard the divine directions, in faith, in manners, and modes of worship, and follow the dictates of their own fancy and impulses. Having no certain guide, they wander in endless mazes of error. And altho' such evil-worshippers may be sincere in their devotions, their sincerity will not sanctify their errors, or excuse their disobedience to the divine will. And the reason is, that the truth may be found, if men are disposed with sincere and unprejudiced minds to enquire after it. "If any man," says our Lord, "will do his will," in truth and sincerity, so far as he already knows the will of God, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether it be of men." A mind open to conviction, and impartially enquiring after truth, will not be in danger of embracing any essential errors.

PERSONS are sometimes sincere and zealous in great errors; and their sincerity and zeal will not excuse them from blame and punishment. The worshippers of false gods were zealous and sincere in their idolatrous practices. How fervent were the worshippers of Baal in calling upon their imaginary gods? and the people of Ephesus, in the worship of

their great goddess Diana? But could their sincerity extenuate the crime of worshipping and serving a creature, instead of the Creator? The Israelites were sincere, in the worship of the golden calf in the wilderness; but heavy judgments fell upon them for their idolatry. The worshippers of images, crucifixes, saints and angels, in the church of Rome, are sincere and devout, in the adoration of them; but God hath rejected them for this impious idolatry. "They say they are jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." Paul before his conversion was sincere, in his zealous opposition to Christ, and persecution of his disciples; but when his prejudices were removed and his mind opened to embrace the truth, he condemned himself as having done most wickedly, as a "blasphemer and injurious."

Tho' pagan idolaters were sincere in their worship of false gods, yet the divine spirit hath assured us, that "the things which the gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God." Hence we infer the greatness of that moral disorder, which sin hath brought upon mankind, which so awfully darkens the reason, perverts the judgement, and corrupts the passions, that without divine assistance, we know not our duty, and the necessity of a revelation to enlighten our darkened minds, and of effectual grace, to overcome the opposition of our hearts to the pure knowledge of God, and that spiritual worship and service, which is suitable to his holy perfections and will. We come,

III. To an explanation of the penalty of this divine law, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children."

SOME would be ready to conclude that this sanction of the law is an impeachment of justice, and inconsistent with the declaration of God by the prophet, (Ezekiel xviii, 20.) "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Tho' there is a seeming opposition here, a few considerations may serve to reconcile them.

1. THE evils threatened to the children of idolaters, are not spiritual but temporal calamities or judgements. God would display this token of anger against idolatry, in the view of the world, to teach men how great a sin it is. But tho' temporal judgements were to fall upon the children of idolaters, we are,

2. To consider, they are the merciful means, by the blessing of God, of reforming the children of such transgressors. For judgements are commissioned to reform, and turn men to righteousness, or,

3. God calls to account the children of idolaters, for their own sins; which justice in God, is in part caused by the sins of their fathers; so that the children are not punished for their fathers' sins, but their own; which however, would not have been so severely punished with temporal judgements, had not their fathers transgressed.

4. CHILDREN being part of the parents in their transgression, it is proper that they should feel the effects of their iniquities. As when a rebel against his country forfeits his life, his children necessarily partake in the punishment, by the loss of honor

and estate. It is also agreeable to the law of nature, that the children should partake of the effects, of the virtues or vices of their parents. Thus the children of temperate and virtuous parents, are commonly healthy, honorable and useful, in the world, and the children of debauched, intemperate and vicious parents, feel the melancholy effects of their parents' crimes. And thus good or evil descends, by a law of our nature, without any impeachment of the justice of providence.

5. THE threatenng implies, that the children themselves practice the evil ways of their fathers, and thus fill up the measure of their own, and their fathers' sins, and ripen themselves for judgement. Thus our Lord pronounces the judgements of heaven upon that generation, who walked in the evil ways of their fathers, who had killed the prophets; and says that of them, should be required the innocent blood which had been shed, for ages past, because they inherited the murderous tempers of their fathers. Thus awful denunciations of judgements, are threatened to restrain men from sin, that foreseeing the evil consequences to follow, not only on themselves but on their unborn posterity, they may have powerful motives of all kinds to fear God, and keep his commandments. I will add, that there is an exemption from the threatenng to those children of vicious parents, who shun their fathers' crimes, and observe God's law. (Ezekiel xviii, 14.) "If he begat a son that seeth all his fathers' sins, which he hath done, and considereth them, and doth not such like,—he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live."

THE last thing to be considered is, the motives to invite us, to the true and acceptable worship of

God, contained in the promise, “ shewing mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” Here we may notice the great extent of the mercy of God, beyond his justice. “ Visiting iniquity to the *third* and *fourth* generation,—but shewing mercy to thousands, to the latest generations of them that love God and keep his commandments.”

THIS gracious promise gives an inviting motive to parents, to maintain the knowledge and worship of their God and saviour in their own hearts, and families, and places where they dwell. God will reward their pious zeal, with blessings temporal and eternal. From pious families, his providence usually takes those who are honored with distinguished usefulness in the world. While the posterity of accursed Cain perished in the flood, and the descendants of an undutiful Ham, and of a profane Esau, felt the effects of their fathers impieties, the descendants of pious Abraham, of venerable Jacob, and holy Job, were distinguished with the blessings of heaven. The same conduct, a just and merciful God, appears to manifest towards the people and families of the earth, at the present day. The posterity of the wicked and idolatrous nations and families, still suffer his frowns; and the posterity of the people and families, who maintained his pure worship and laws, in ages past, are still blessed. With gratitude to a promise-performing-God, suffer me to mention, the apparent fulfilment of this gracious promise to us, the descendants of the pious settlers, of some of these states, who loved God, and kept his holy commandments. Has not God shewed mercy, first, to us, unparalled in the history of the world, even as he shewed mercy to the descendants of Israel? Like them, our fathers received the law

in this wilderness, (when they were few in number and strangers in the land) not from Mount Sinai, but from Mount Zion, and the uncorrupted word of God. Here they erected the true church according to the pattern of the gospel, and sincerity kept the ordinances and commandments of their God. Let us with unfeigned gratitude, acknowledge the kindness of God to them, and to us their degenerate posterity, since God hath shewed us such signal mercies in things temporal and spiritual. At the same time a holy fear becomes us, lest by our ingratitude and crimes—our spiritual idolatry—our neglect, and contempt of the word, worship, ordinances and commandments of God, our Saviour, we forfeit the favorable protection of our God, and the God of our fathers, and ripen ourselves for an aggravated condemnation.

THUS having considered the nature of that worship and homage which God requires of us, and which our duty, our interest and felicity, invite us to render to him, I shall conclude with a few

REFLECTIONS.

1. WE learn the great evil and guilt of all kinds of idolatry. Let us guard against every species of this sin, which is the greatest of evils, and worship and love and serve God in truth and sincerity. Let us not, by idolizing ourselves, or the dearest earthly enjoyments, provoke the dreadful vengeance of a jealous God. He is pleased to receive his people into the bonds of a marriage covenant, and demands that we cleave to him in love, loyalty and obedience.

THEY provoke God to jealousy and wrath, who disregard his first and great command, and love him not with all the heart; but place their best love and delight, on the perishable goods and enjoyments of this life, and idolize the creatures. Let us, sirs, guard against this spiritual idolatry, nor suffer our souls to rest in the perishable goods of this world. In this enlightened age, we may not be in great danger of the *gross* idolatry of worshipping images; yet are not multitudes really guilty of spiritual idolatry, in the sight of God? Let us shun the sin of that *covetousness*, or love of riches, which is *idolatry*. "For the love of money, for its own sake, is the root of all evil." If that is an idol upon which our love and dependence are placed, then all they are idolaters, who trust in uncertain riches, and deserve no better treasure than gold and silver; "who say to the gold thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence." A person is as guilty of idolatry, in the sight of God, who puts his trust in bags of gold and silver, as he would be, should he cast them into an image, and worship it.

THEY whose chief happiness is in the gratification of animal and sensual appetites and lusts, "whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things," are criminal idolaters. All they whose supreme happiness consists in houses, and lands, goods and flocks and herds; in children, companions and friends; or in the pursuit and enjoyment of the honors and grandeurs, the amusements and pleasures of life; fall under the condemnation of this law; and without repentance and reformation, must suffer the wrath of an offended God.

2. LET our subject admonish us, of the necessity of a daily and serious examination of the principle of

our professions and obedience. Is the love of God the great and powerful principle of action? Do we love him for his whole revealed character, as a God of holiness and justice, as well as goodness; striving to be conformed to him in these perfections, to be holy and merciful as our almighty father in heaven? Does our love to God produce its genuine good fruits of loyalty and obedience, a willing, cheerful, persevering and universal obedience? God has promised blessedness to them who *love him* and *keep his commandments*. And to keep his commandments and do them, is the proof of our love. If we have not this evidence, we have not the love of God reigning in us; but fall under the condemnation of idolatrous lovers of this world, of sin, and lovers of ourselves, more than lovers of God.

But happy is the man whose heart condemns him not, in this enquiry. Who knows he loves God with all his heart, and whose hope and trust and joy the Lord is. Who with the disciple of Jesus, can appeal to the searcher of all hearts, in truth and sincerity, saying, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And with the royal psalmist, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is nothing upon earth, that I desire besides thee? As the heart panteth after the water-brook, so panteth my soul, after thee, O God."

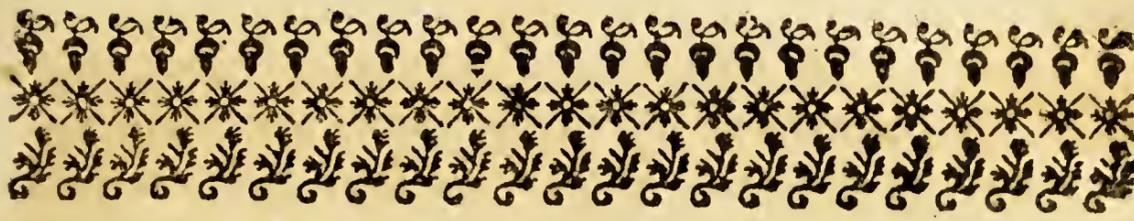
3. We infer that it is the duty of all men to worship God. It is a dictate of the law of nature, and a precept of revelation. Even wicked men, by attendance on the public shorship of God, may obtain the grace of conversion. The gospel was first preached to unregenerate men, and to those of this discription it is still to be preached, and it is their duty to attend and hear, as for their lives. "For

How shall they believe on him, of whom they have not heard? Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The heathen of Ninevah will rise up in the judgment, and condemn those who, having the means of knowledge and salvation, use them not.

4. OUR subject should serve to excite our thankfulness to God, that he hath not suffered us to grope and perish in the darkness of paganism; but hath caused the light of the gospel to shine upon us. "Let us look to the rock, whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence we were digged." Let us open our eyes with gratitude and joy, to the "day-spring from on high which hath visited us, who once sat in darkness, and the shadow of death, without God and without hope in the world." O may we bring forth the fruits of praise and love, to the honor and glory of him who hath redeemed us.

LASTLY, let us cultivate an habitual sense of a present God; whose presence, providence and protection and goodness continually surround us. And especially, in all our solemn approaches to God in ordinances, let no atheistical thoughts intrude upon our devotion. In all our attendance upon the sacred institutions of God's worship, in our closet, in our families, and in the house of God, may the life and power of religion, reign in all our hearts, and regulate our lives. And through the rich grace of our divine Saviour may we obtain that mercy, which is promised to them, who love God and keep his commandments.

A M E N.



S E R M O N VII.

The vice of prophaneness—The lawfulness of oaths.

P R E C E P T T H I R D.

EXODUS xx. 7.

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

THIS solemn precept is connected with the two preceding, and teaches us, that we should ever habituate ourselves to think and speak of God, with the profoundest reverence and submission : and that we should feel the same sacred awe on our minds, in receiving the notices of his will, revealed to us by his word, his works, his ordinances and providences, and by his holy spirit.

As the second precept teaches us the way and manner, in which it is the will of God that we should worship him, *this* shews us, that our worship must be paid with that profound reverence and love, which are due from creatures to their creator, in all their transactions with him ; and that we also have a solemn sense of obligations to God, and accountability to him in all our intercourse with mankind. The sanction annexed to this precept, restraining men from an irreverent use of the name of God, should impress all minds with holy caution and fear;

left at any time, they treat the name of God, and all that is comprehended in his name, with irreverence and profanity. “*For the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.*” All profaneness is forbidden, by the prohibition of taking God’s name in vain. Let us,

1. INQUIRE what it is to profane the name of God.

2. SHEW the evil and guilt of this sin.

3. THE opposite virtues.

IN the illustration of the first division of this discourse, it will be proper to explain, what is meant by the *name* of God, and what it is to profane his name.

THE *name* of God, is frequently used in the scriptures for God himself, and is expressive of his absolute existence, or his being and perfections. “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; that is, the glory which is due to him as God. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together. Then began men to call on the name of the Lord. The Lord proclaimed the name of the Lord. I am the Lord, that is my name. I will sanctify my name, and make my holy name known in the midst of my people.” Perhaps the general phrase *name*, may be used for God, because no particular word, can convey an adequate idea, of his glorious and incomprehensible nature.

It is sometimes used to convey to us, the knowledge of what he is pleased to reveal of himself, so far as may be necessary to regulate our conceptions

of his most holy nature and will, and of our duty. At the second writing of the law, the Most High said, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord,—I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious ;—and the Lord proclaimed his name, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." When God commissioned Moses to deliver Israel from the house of bondage, he called himself by the comprehensive names, *I am*, and *I am, that I am* ; which titles are most expressive of his absolute being and perfections. It is used for the infinite greatness and majesty of God : "In Judah God is known, his name is great in Israel." For his glorious perfections displayed in the works of creation and providence : "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth !" For the purposes of his grace and mercy towards mankind by Jesus Christ : "I have, says our Lord, manifested thy name, to the men, which thou gavest me out of the world." For the gospel ; of Saint Paul, it is said ; "he is a chosen vessel to bear my name among the Gentiles." For the promises of grace, to believers : "let them that love thy name be joyful in thee." For the worship of God, and the divine ordinances : "I purpose, says Solomon, to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God." And to his father David, God had said ; "thy son, whom I shall set upon thy throne, he shall build an house to my name : " or for my worship, in prayer and praise, and in reading and hearing my word.

Thus the *name* of the Lord, is used for the Lord himself, and signifies all that God is, and all those things which he is pleased to reveal to us, concern-

ing his holy nature, character, ways, laws, and will; and is a phrase most expressive and comprehensive.

To profane, or take in vain the name of God, is to think or speak of God irreverently, or to treat his holy names or titles, his works, his word, his ordinances and providences, with levity. As mankind are in danger of this sin, by reason of the temptations of a depraved nature, of a profane world, and the great enemy of God and our salvation; in danger of transgressing this holy commandment, either in our thoughts, our speech or behaviour; and thereby provoking and meriting the wrath and vengeance of a holy God; we will consider in what instances and circumstances particularly, the name of God is profaned. It is profaned,

I. WHEN God is mentioned with levity, irreverence or needlessly in common discourse. "Holy and reverend is his name." God is to be had in reverence by his creatures, and we should ever think and speak of him, with utmost seriousness, and the profoundest respect. It is a melancholy evidence of the depravity of human nature, and of the alienation of the heart from God, that among certain classes of people, the name of God, is blasphemously profaned, in their common and idle discourse. Multitudes impiously presume to appeal to God, and swear by him who liveth forever, to the truth of their inconsiderate and passionate conversation.

A reverence of the name of God is not usually lost at once: but the vice of profaneness is gradually contracted, until it becomes a confirmed habit. An idea of the majesty, holiness and justice of God,

received by the works and word of God, and impressed upon the conscience, naturally inspires the mind, with a solemn awe, at the name of God. It is this impression of God on the mind, which guards and restrains men from the commission of sins and transgressions, which their vicious hearts, would prompt them to commit, could they erase from their thoughts, his awful and glorious being and attributes, and a future state of retribution. But persons by indulging themselves to speak of God, and sacred institutions, in a light and airy manner, finally contract a habit, of bold and unblushing profaneness. Against this God-provoking crime, this precept of the law, solemnly cautions men. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain." The name of God is profaned when it is needlessly mentioned, as well as when uttered in light and trifling discourse, and on common occasions. It ought never to be mentioned, except when the occasion is weighty and solemn, and for our own, and the edification of others. To use the name of God to confirm or attest our trifling discourse, is an act of most daring familiarity and impudence: but to use it to attest a falsehood, is the most criminal profaneness and impiety; and unless the mercies of God, through the blessed mediator, to penitent profane sinners, were infinite, such bold transgressors could not expect forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. How daring and provoking is it, for an insignificant mortal, and child of the dust, to invoke the God of truth, to witness to a lie? Against the temptations to this awful sin, the pious prophet Agur prays: "Give me neither poverty, nor riches;—lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

THAT which makes the vice of profane swearing, more criminal than other sins, is the remarkable circumstance, that it is commonly committed without a temptation. Other vices have each their peculiar temptations, to persuade and impel men to transgress the laws of God, and of society. But what advantage does the profane person propose to himself, by this crime? There is neither the prospect of honor, profit or pleasure, those great springs of action, to induce the sin. The vice of avarice, has the prospect of gain and wealth, for its object. Intemperance and lewdness; the gratification of sensual appetite, and fleshly lusts. Fraud and dishonesty; the possession of the property of others. Slander and falsehood; the malicious pleasure of revenge. But what temptation can there be, to profane the name of God, or treat with levity, the character and attributes, of that high and holy being? It is, as one observes, to catch at the devil's naked hook: there is not the bait of a temptation to invite. It is a vice indicative of the deep depravity of the human heart, and of hatred of God. O detestable and ruinous fruit of sin!

It is an affront to serious men; who are wounded and grieved, to hear the name of their God, whom they fear and love, treated with profanity. It is a violation of the laws of decency and good breeding; and a vice beneath the character of a gentleman, and is mostly to be found among the lower classes. It would be happy for the peace and comfort of society, and the benefit of the rising generation, were this shocking vice universally banished from conversation. That person must be very indifferent to virtue, who has not resolution to resist it. It is evident that the profane person has little regard for God, when the presence of any of his fel-

low men, whom he regards, or fears to disoblige, will restrain him, altho' the knowledge of God's presence, will not. But every profane person is a practical atheist: he does not believe in the being or presence of God, nor the threatnings of his word.

2. God's name is profaned by unlawful oaths, vows and promises; and also by the violation of lawful solemn promises and vows. A lawful oath is a religious act, in which is contained the acknowledgment of the existence and presence of God, as a witness and judge, and an appeal to him for the truth of what is spoken; and an implicit imprecation of his justice upon him who shall knowingly utter falsehood. Before lawful courts, it is usually accompanied with lifting up the hand towards heaven, in a way of solemn appeal to God. It is the most speedy and sure method, which human wisdom can devise, to come to the knowledge of facts, in which the welfare of society is concerned. It proceeds upon the principle, that no person will knowingly utter falsehood; but conscientiously declare the truth, when he thus solemnly appeals to God. In so serious a transaction, it becomes a person, to cultivate the deepest reverence of God, and sacred regard to truth, lest by inattention or misrepresentation, he pervert justice, and draw down upon himself, the anger of that dread being, who will not hold him guiltless, who sins by falsehood and perjury. Let a solemn caution guard those, who are about to appeal to God, by oath, in any matter.

It is a profanation of the name of God, to swear or promise rashly, and without due consideration: as did Herod when, probably heated with wine, he promised with an oath, to give to Herodias, whatever she should ask. It is a great sin to make a rash

or unlawful vow, but a greater sin to keep it. Herod's oath was foolish and criminal; but his crime was greater when to accomplish it; he murdered an innocent and holy man. "And the king was sorry; nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them that sat at meat with him, he sent and beheaded John in prison." The oath or promise was unlawful, and therefore not binding. The obligations of duty to God and man, should restrain men from unlawful vows, or excite them to repentance of them, when made; and to refrain from the performance. The vow of Jephtha also was rash and unlawful: He promised more than he had a lawful right to do.

THE wise men of the east, who came to worship the new-born Saviour, did right in their non compliance with the promise, which the bloody minded Herod, had extorted from them; when instead of returning to Jerusalem, they went into their own country, another way. We have an instance of unlawful promises, in the men who bound themselves by an oath, that they would neither eat, nor drink, until they had killed Paul. All promises or oaths in things unlawful and injurious to others, are not binding: but are disannuled by a prior and superior law, which obliges us to promise and do, only such things as are lawful, and agreeable to the moral law, or to the express will of God. It is the duty of a person who has made a rash or sinful promise or vow, sincerely to repent thereof before God, and to make restitution to men, so far as he may have thereby injured any.

THE inference from these remarks is, that unlawful promises and vows, are not to be made, or kept. But when persons solemnly vow or promise, things lawful at the time, and afterwards it appears, that

the performance will be detrimental to the promiser, still his solemn promise is binding. Thus the righteous man is described; "tho' he sweareth to his own hurt, he changeth not." We may also infer that unlawful promises extorted by violence or duress, are not obligatory.

A question connected with this last observation, meets this subject; but which may not be so easy to resolve, which is; Whether a person in captivity, may lawfully promise allegiance, to an enemy, in time of war? The solution of this question, depends upon the nature and extent of the promise, or oath required. If it requires, that he shall behave himself as a peaceful and dutiful subject of the government, and the civil laws of society; he may lawfully promise so to do; because there is no human power superior to controul him, and because his person is in their hands. To this conduct, the most High directs the people of Israel in captivity in Babylon. "Seek the peace of the city, whether I have caused you to be carried away captives: and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace." But if it is required of him to assist personally, in the *destruction* of the property or lives, of his countrymen and friends; that he may not lawfully do: because his obligations to *preserve* them, are prior and superior, to his obligations to an enemy. Neither is it lawful for a person to utter a known falsehood, nor to abjure the true religion, for the most flattering prospects of favor or advantage, or even the saving of life itself: For the moral law of God to men, has infinitely superior obligations to any human authority. In such cases, men must obey God, rather than man: and solemnly attend to that declaration of our Lord to his disciples, to fear that high and holy being, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

LAWFUL promises and vows are such as are agreeable to the revealed will of God; and are sacredly binding: unlawful promises and vows, are such as are contrary thereto, and are not binding.

AN objection, some suppose, is found against oaths in general, in the declaration of our Saviour, the supreme lawgiver of the christian church, in his exposition of this precept, Mathew fifth. "Again ye have heard, that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

NEITHER shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

BUT let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil."

Two things are observable in those words: first, that profane swearing, was a fashionable vice among the Jews; and secondly, the swearing here condemned, was not solemn oaths, before a lawful judge or court. That the vice of profane swearing, is what our Lord here condemns, appears from the nature and objects of the oaths, it was swearing by heaven, by Jerusalem, by the earth, by the head, and probably by the members of the body, as by the eyes and the like, as is common among the profane lower classes of people, at this day. And altho' the name of God, was not mentioned in those common and vulgar oaths; yet our Lord assures us, that this

sacred precept of the law, is transgressed by them ; since there is implied in them, an appeal to God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, of the body, and all its limbs and members. By his creatures God makes himself known, and his presence is in, and with them. To swear by them, is to swear by the Creator ; according to that rule, “ when men swear, they swear by the greater.”

OUR Lord does not condemn lawful oaths ; but condemns the corrupt doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, who taught that it was not unlawful to swear by creatures, provided the name of God was not mentioned. All petty oaths, so called, as when persons in common discourse exclaim, Lord, Christ, by faith, conscience, or salvation ; tho' seemingly modest oaths, yet are condemned, as profaning God's name ; since all creatures and properties of creatures, are his. Against this sinful and indecent custom, the command of Christ is given, “ swear not at all.” That the oaths condemned, were such as were mixed in common conversation, appears from their being mentioned as mingled with their daily communication. “ Let your communication be yea, and nay.” The affirmation of yes, and no, is sufficient in common conversation. A sacred regard to truth and duty makes any stronger declarations, or appeals to God, or creatures, unnecessary and sinful. The person who interlards his discourse, with profane exclamations and oaths, to gain belief, evidences that he has not a regard to truth, in common affirmations ; and that he has a suspicion in his own breast, that he ought not to be believed ; and by swearing impeaches his own veracity. And indeed you can have no confidence in his regard to truth, since by profane swearing, he shews that he

has no regard to the God of truth, and the avenger of falsehood.

THIS vice, condemned by our Lord, is also condemned by the apostle James : “ But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath : but let your yea, be yea ; and your nay, nay.” These words are nearly a repetition of the sentence delivered by our Lord, already mentioned. The apostle adds, “ lest ye fall into condemnation.” The condemnation alluded to, is the awful penalty of this precept : “ the Lord will not hold him guiltless.”

FROM an erroneous interpretation of these texts, some sects of christians, have altogether refused to take an oath, in civil courts. That oaths are lawful and sometimes necessary, appears not inconsistent with the precepts of the moral law ; but are agreeable to the will of God, revealed in both the old and new testament.

By the judicial law, which God gave to Israel at Sinai, it was allowed, to a person, in some cases, suspected of a crime, to clear himself by a solemn oath. God condescended to give a promise to the patriarch Abraham, and to confirm it by an oath ; that by these two immutable witnesses, the promise and oath, he, and all believers might have strong consolation, in the certain expectation of the fulfilment of the divine promises. We here see that the nature and design of an oath, is to confirm the truth spoken ; and as it concerns the Deity, the certainty of the fulfilment of the things promised. It was the will of God, that the church of Israel, should ratify their covenant with him by an oath. “ And thou

Thalt swear the Lord liveth in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness."

RESPECTING the christian's duty, in this solemn act, the apostle says, Hebrews sixth, "For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation, is to them an end of all strife." Such being the nature and salutary effects of a solemn oath,—to discover truth,—to clear the innocent—to convict the guilty, and to put a stop to the progress of unhappy contentions; the christian, who rightly knows his duty, will not refuse it, when demanded by lawful authority. But it is to be lamented, that the frequent repetition of oaths, tends to lessen their solemnity, and defeat the good end of their institution; and that it is but too common to administer, and take them, without due consideration.

God's name is wickedly profaned, when persons wish evil and destruction upon themselves, or others. Profane swearers wish awful judgments and damnation upon themselves; as tho' they accused God of injustice, in delaying to execute vengeance upon them; as tho' their damnation lingered. Dreadful impiety! Persons are liable to the judgment of this law, who wish evil in their hearts, to any. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Were the golden rule of the gospel, of wishing and doing to others, "as ye would that others should to you," in universal practice; all wrath and profaneness would be banished, and the blessings of christian love and peace abound.

God's name is profaned, when persons think or speak with irreverence, or scornfully, of divine insti-

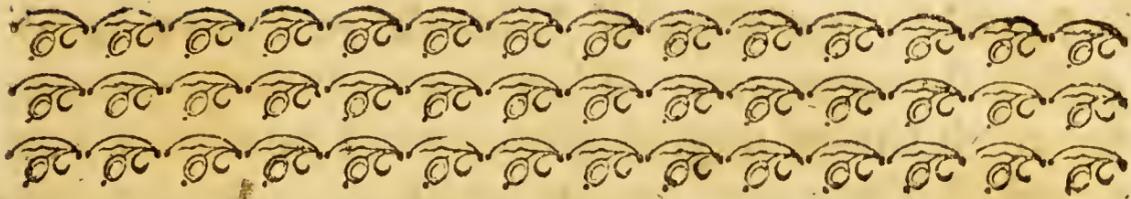
tutions ; when they esteem the sabbath, the sacraments, and the duties of public and social worship, as things of trifling importance ; when they scoff at the doctrines of grace ; and hate and despise the ministers and advocates of religion, on account of their work and profession ; and when they use the scriptures, in a way of profane wit and drollery. The name of God is profaned, when persons pervert the scriptures, to countenance false doctrines and worship, or to justify immoral practices ; when they wrest the scriptures, in perverse disputings, to their own condemnation ; when persons are irreverent and inattentive, in their attendance on the worship and ordinances of God ; when they have but the form, and deny the power of godliness ; when they profess religion to obtain a reputation, or to hide their covetousness and crimes, that by an appearance of sanctity, they may more successfully defraud the innocent. Against persons of this description, our Lord pronounces heavy woes, assuring them, that they shall receive greater damnation than others.

God's name is profaned by those who abuse the good creatures, which God hath given for their support and comfort, in the indulgence of sensual appetites and lusts ; it is profaned by cruelty towards the brutal creation ; and by sporting in the misery and death of innocent animals. Let us, my brethren, sacredly guard against these and all other transgressions, by which, a holy God is offended and profaned. May the rising generation, cherish an habitual, daily impression upon their minds of a present God ; who will be had in reverence by his creatures ; and fearing the transgression of this divine precept, " let no corrupt communication, harbour in your heart, or proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying. Let us

walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof."

AND may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all, always.

A M E N.



S E R M O N VIII.

The guilt and danger of profane finners—the virtues opposite to profaneness.

EXODUS xx. 7.

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

WE have already explained what is to be understood by the *name* of God ; and what it is to profane his name. That this comprehensive term is used to express the existence, the nature and attributes of Deity ; all that he is in himself, and all that he is pleased to communicate of the knowledge of his most holy will, to his creatures. And that to profane the name of God, is to think or speak irreverently of him ; or to behave towards God, in any or all the methods of the communications of his will, in a manner unsuitable, to the majesty of God, and his authority over us, and our obligations to him. We come,

2. To speak of the great evil and guilt of the sin of profaneness.

1. PROFANE finners are exposed to the wrath and judgments of almighty God, both in this life, and in the life to come. They cast off the fear and love of God, are rebels against his holy laws, forfeit the

favourable protection of Jehovah, and provoke his dreadful vengeance. They have chosen some idol to which their supreme affection and pursuits are devoted. They love not the true God, nor reverence his authority. The language of the proud heart of the profane is, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him? He shall not reign over us. Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords, his laws, and commandments, from us."

AGAINST such proud and impious sinners, we must reasonably expect, that the dreadful curses of the law, are pointed; and that "God will not hold them guiltless." And tho' thro' the forbearance of God, they may escape remarkable judgments in this life, the holy scriptures assure us, that awful aggravated punishments, is reserved for them, in the future world of wo. Tho' they prosper in iniquity; tho' they who provoke God by profaneness and impiety, are increased, and loaded with prosperity, it is to them a curse, rather than a blessing; for "they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

HUMAN laws cannot reach all the transgressions of this law: profaneness, perjury and blasphemy, frequently escape adequate punishment in this world. Laws are incompetent, and men reluctant to punish such dreadful sins, whose malignity is levelled primarily against God. The just punishment of these crimes, is reserved to God, to whom vengeance belongs. But one salutary end of the institution of magistracy, is the suppression of the crimes of profaneness: and much, no doubt, could be done, to discountenance this detestable vice, most injurious to society, were magistrates in general, inspired with greater zeal for God, and fortitude in duty.

It is however to be acknowledged, with gratitude to heaven, that in this part of the country, we are blessed with many respectable characters of this honorable profession, who support the dignity of their office; who are a terror to evil doers, and of whom, profane sinners stand in awe.

2. PROFANENESS is a vice, ruinous to the morals of a people. It is almost universally attended with other immoralities. The profane swearer, is regardless of promises and of the truth; he is false, proud, heady and contentious. He seeks his own interest or pleasure, as his chief good, and sacrifices the interests and happiness of men, when opportunities offer, to himself. He speaks evil of dignities, and sets his mouth against heaven: for having cast off the fear of God, he regards not man. And what bond can restrain him, who boldly defies the laws of God and of society? What principle has he at heart, impeling him to the cultivation of the moral virtues? His example is hurtful and pernicious. He is a bad father, a bad son, a bad master, a bad servant and a bad subject. While treason against civil government is punished in this life, treason against God, will be punished in the life to come, by him who will recompence wrath to his enemies.

3. PROFANE persons sometimes meet with some awful stroke of divine indignation, in this world, as a punishment of this crime, and a prelude to more dreadful punishment in the eternal world. As we see in the instance of a profane Cain, on whom God set a mark, as the victim of his justice, and doomed him to wander a vagabond on the earth, shunned and detested by men. In the profane sinners of the old world, who mocked at the solemn warnings from heaven; until desolation to the

uttermoſt came upon them. In the impious ſcoffers at godlineſs, in the cities of the plain; overwhelmed by ſtorms of fiery vengeance. In a profane Eſau, a hardened Pharaoh, a proud Nebuchadnezer, and a bloody Herod; and in the inſtance of the ungodly and profane people of the Jewish nation, among whom the vice of profaneneſs reigned; who diſpiſed the prophets of the Lord and divine ordinances, and filled up the meaſure of their crimes by the crucifixion of Jeſus, and impiouſly imprecated the divine vengeance to fall upon them. And upon them, the juſt wrath of God has fallen, from the days of our Saviour and his apoſtles. For this cauſe, the once favoured and fertile land of Judea, now mourns under the curſe of barrenneſs and barbarians; and the people of that nation, have become a “hiſſing and bye word in the earth,” and outcaſts among the nations. They are a living evidence to all the earth, of the wrath and judgments of Almighty God, due to all profane perſons and people.

For the crimes condemned by this divine precept, they were once doomed to long captivity in Babylon, and now to a wandering life of anxiety and wretchedneſs, over the earth. “Seeing ye deſpiſed the oath, by breaking the covenant, ye ſhall not eſcape. Thus ſaith the Lord, as I live, ſurely my oath, that he hath deſpiſed, and my covenant that he hath broken, will I recompence upon his own head, and I will bring him to Babylon and plead with him there, for his treſpaſſes that he hath treſpaſſed againſt me.” This life is a ſtate of trial and retribution to nations. They are puniſhed or prospered accordingly as they obſerve the immutable laws of morality and the doctrines of revelation. And the reaſon of this economy is,

that nations, as such, have no future existence. The social ties, which combine nations, are dissolved, by death. The righteous Governor of the world, therefore hath established a rule of conduct towards them, according to their general national character. He hath established the invariable connection of national righteousness and prosperity; and of sin and ruin, agreeable to a solemn declaration of the most High, applied to all nations, in all ages, recorded in the eighteenth chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah. In some instances God has displayed in a wonderful manner, the visible tokens of his favour, towards a righteous and holy nation; and dreadful destroying judgments, upon a people ripened for ruin. But the case is otherwise with individual persons. The righteous man sometimes suffers for his righteousness, and the wicked are prosperous. This has been thought by some, an argument against the justice of providence. And it would be, were there not a future state of retribution, in which the righteous will be gloriously recompenced, for their perseverance in faith and patience in afflictions; and the profane abusers of the divine goodness, justly punished.

BUT the wisdom of God in his moral government of the world, has connected a certain degree of reward to virtue in this life, and of punishment to vice; and thus gives to men, by the light of reason, a sure argument, that invariable justice governs the world, and that men will receive in the future world, a recompence, according to their characters. Thus the vice of falsehood is followed with the loss of credit,—fraud and dishonesty, by infamy,—intemperence and sensuality, by the entailment of diseases and untimely death,—and profaneness by the loss of influence and reputation, and the con-

tempt of good men. These tokens of heaven's disapprobation of vice, are expressive monitions, of greater punishments, which await bold transgressors, when they shall have finished their state of trial for eternity.

BUT a pleasing reward, the anticipation of future happiness, attends a life of virtue and piety. The righteous man is honored and loved, by the wise and good: the profane person is feared and contemned. The righteous man has peace of mind, confiding in God, tho' his outward condition may be distressing: the profane person has perplexity and trouble of conscience, tho' his worldly circumstances may be prosperous.

PROFANE persons, tho' apparently bold, are in reality great cowards: they are profane in a calm, but devout in a storm,—they are impious in prosperity, and mean in adversity,—they blaspheme God, but are afraid of men. Their happiness is in appearance, and not real. Unless hardened beyond reproof, they feel at times the dreadful accusations of an awakened conscience; and “destruction from God is a terror to them” They are believers in the prospect of death, but infidels in health. An impious Belshazzar profanes the sacred vessels of the sanctuary, in mid-night revelling; but his limbs trembled and smote together, at the discovery of the divine hand, writing his doom. The ways and works of the profane will not eventually prosper. The most high hath said, “The curse shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him, that sweareth falsely by my name.” If profane sinners escape temporal judgments, they have reason to fear the infliction of judgments more dreadful, even spiritual judgments, of hardness of

heart, and the divine dereliction, placing them even in this life, beyond the calls of mercy and salvation, and dooming them to remediless destruction.

THE imprecations of profane sinners, and their works are sometimes retaliated upon them. "As they have done, so God hath requited them." Or, in the prophetic stile of the psalmist, "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he clothed himself with cursing, like as a garment, so let it come unto his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, let it be unto him, as the garment that covereth him."

WITH lively emotions of compassion and sorrow, let us leave the profane transgressor, to his own conscience and to God, and enquire,

LASTLY, what are those virtues and duties, which are opposite to the sins prohibited. The opposite of the profanation of God's name, is to reverence or sanctify it. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Our Lord hath taught us, the duties commanded in this precept, in the first petition, of the divinely comprehensive form of prayer, "*hallowed be thy name.*"

1. IT implies the duty of meditating on God, with reverend and devout exercises of heart, and looking to him with humble and adoring importunity, for all that light and grace which are necessary, to our forming just and true conceptions, of his adorable character, perfections and will. God is the greatest and most glorious being in the universe, and we sanctify his name, when we make him the chief object of our thoughts, our study, and

our love. We should meditate on God, as that glorious being, by whose power and goodness we, and all creatures enjoy, each moment of existence, and on whose favor we are to depend, for its continuance, and for all that good which shall be needful, to make our future existence, desirable and happy. It implies that we speak of God, with devout sentiments, of fear and love. That whenever we express his name, his perfections, works and word, that it be always in serious discourse, or on solemn occasions.

2. It implies that we readily and cheerfully obey the notices of his will. The will of God, relative to our duty, is communicated to us, by rich and plentiful means. The existence, the majesty, the wisdom and beneficence of God, are displayed in the works of creation and providence; and many of the virtues of morality and righteousness towards men, and of piety and devotion towards God, are discoverable from these sources, and from the divine impressions on the natural conscience; but the sacred scriptures give us more true and exalted conceptions of God, and juster notions of our condition, dependence and obligations, than all other means of information, which heaven hath given to mankind.

ALTHO' the works of creation proclaim the majesty and the goodness of God: yet the sun, moon and stars, do not preach the gospel, or teach guilty sinners, the way of their acceptance with a holy God; how he will be worshipped, or how they may be saved from condemnation, and possess eternal life and felicity. For these luminous and joyful discoveries, for want of which, the wisest heathen wandered in darkness, perplexed with errors; for these discoveries we are indebted to divine revelation, emphatical-

ly called "the word of God, which can make us wise to salvation." There we have line upon line, and precept upon precept, to guide us in the paths of peace and holiness, unto eternal life. We are to receive the bible as a most precious message from God, containing the whole duty of man; to read, hear and meditate upon its blessed contents, with that seriousness, love and devotion which it demands from us; and make it the profitable and pleasing subject of our daily meditation. We sanctify God in and by his word, when with prayerful hearts, divested of prejudice, we enquire at those holy oracles, what is truth? and conform our faith and practice wholly to its sacred precepts. For the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; and the gospel of Jesus, can make the simple wise to salvation.

3. We are devoutly to wait on God in all the ways of his appointment, to obtain the saving benefits of his grace. The ordinances of the sabbath, the ministration of the gospel, the sacraments and prayer, are to be observed by us, with seriousness, solemnity, gratitude and praise; imploring the blessing of God upon them, to our comfort and salvation: for they are instrumental means, divinely ordained, for this end. If our hearts are opened to instruction, they will be sanctified to us, to increase our knowledge of God and of duty, to establish and confirm our faith in the divine promises, and invigorate our hope, and love and zeal; to purify our hearts from sin, and assimilate us to a holy resemblance of him, who hath called us out of the darkness and guilt of our fallen state, into the marvellous light of his spiritual and everlasting kingdom.

4. We are to sanctify God, by meditation upon the glorious works of creation and providence, and

adoring him for all the wonderful displays of his greatness, his wisdom and goodness therein. "His works are marvellous, sought out by all them, that have pleasure in them." In the contemplation of the starry heavens, and those works of the almighty which come within the compass of our knowledge, the serious mind will be filled, with admiration, and the heart warmed with love and reverence of the creator, from whom the hosts of heaven came, and whose adorable perfections are manifested in them. We are to reverence God in his providences; by gratitude and praise for mercies, for protections and deliverances: to acknowledge his hand in all events which happen to us, humbly submitting to afflictive dispensations, as wise and just and good, and committing ourselves at all times to his holy keeping.

5. We sanctify the name of God, by sincere repentance of sin, and confession to God, and a willing and cheerful submission of our souls to the method of our salvation by Jesus Christ. The gift of Christ to redeem us, is the richest gift of heaven to men. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Thanks be to God for this unspeakable gift. The Saviour comes to redeem us from sin, and all our wo, and to raise the believing and obedient, to distinguished honors and felicity, in the heavenly world. A proper sense of the mercy of God herein, will excite the pious mind to reverence and adore the divine goodness, which remembered us in our low estate, and sent his son to save us. We are to reverence God, by an enlightened zeal to maintain his pure worship and ordinances, in opposition to errors, from every quarter; and "to stand fast in the light and liberty of

the gospel; visiting the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil; and supporting a lively faith in God our Saviour, which obtains the victory, and overcometh the world."

WE will close this subject, with a few

REFLECTIONS.

I. It is matter of grief to good men to hear or see the name of God profaned, either in that more restrained sense, to which common speech confines the profanation of the name of God or that more extensive sense, to which the latitude of the precept extends. As a subject honors his sovereign, and a child his father; and are offended when their name and character are abused, so the faithful servant of God, is wounded at the profane speeches, and ungodly lives of sinners. "I beheld, says the psalmist, the transgressors, and was grieved, because they keep not thy law." Their grief arises from two causes, one is their regard for God, and zeal for his glory; and the other, the dreadful guilt which profane sinners heap upon themselves, whereby they are preparing for hastening dreadful punishment. A sacred zeal for the honor of God, whose ordinances were profaned by unlawful traffic, excited our Lord, to drive from the inclosures of the holy temple, those mercenary sinners, who had polluted it. A degree of the like pure zeal for God, and the ordinances of the gospel, inspires every pious mind. They esteem the sabbath a delight, and its ordinances holy and honorable; striving to maintain the beauty of holiness, in the services of God, and their Saviour. They are edified and pleased to see others walking in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and honoring their

christian profession, by lives of sobriety, righteousness and godliness. They are grieved to see the house and ordinances of God neglected, and his name profaned, by the unhallowed lips and lives of men. This regard to divine ordinances is, first, a test of your love and loyalty to God. If you are the friends of God, you will honor his institutions, and by your good example, will strive to have all men glorify your father in heaven. Oppressed with a distressing siege in Jerusalem, a pious Hezekiah, was more grieved at the blasphemous speeches of the enemy, against God, than any other calamity. The honor of God was dear to him. It is a sure evidence of a child of God, to be troubled at the dishonor which sin does to God, especially the sin of profaning his name, his worship, his word, his ordinances, and the bounties of his providence.— Have you this filial temper? Is the honour of God, your heavenly father, near your heart? When you behold the transgressors, the profane, the intemperate, the irreligious and immoral, are you grieved, because they transgress the good and holy laws of your God? Do you sincerely pity them, and by all prudent ways, endeavour to reclaim them to virtue, and to God? Remember for your encouragement, that he that converteth a soul, from the error of his ways, shall save from death, and hide a multitude of sins.

2. This subject sounds a dreadful alarm to profane sinners. “God will not hold them guiltless.” The wrath of God, is now revealed from heaven, in terrible accents, in the curses of his law, against the profane abusers of his name and grace; but more dreadful will be the terrors of its execution on them. O that they were wise, to consider the awful justice of that glorious being, whose name is their

sport, whose authority they now despise, and whose incensed vengeance they must endure! That by timely repentance and reformation, they may escape the wrath to come, upon the finally impenitent.

CURSING and swearing is emphatically called the language of hell. That dismal region resounds with blasphemies against God, and mutual horrid accusations and curses. Let none of you, sirs, cherish this infernal fire. The profane sinner carries a hell in miniature in his own breast; and oaths and curses are as the smoke of the bottomless pit, issuing out of his mouth. As he loved cursing, it will come upon him, and the curses of this fiery law, will fall upon him, thro' hopeless ages. The profane person like Esau, will be rejected of God. Too late will he see his folly: but will find no place for repentance, tho' like him, he should seek it carefully, with tears. By the dreadful increase of this sin, the land mourneth. Multitudes of the rising generation lisp the language of profanity. They take it by imitation from their superiors in age. How melancholy the thought, that in any instances, children catch this vice from their parents. That those who are in the place of God, to their children, to teach them to reverence the name and worship of God, yet do by their example, teach them to profane his name. O ye profane parents, will it alleviate your future torments, that you have brought your children, and others to that world of misery? The guilt and punishment of your own sins, and the sins of others, will lie dreadfully upon you, an insupportable weight, sinking you down in the gulf of eternal errors. A holy God, provoked by this heaven-daring impiety, has threatened, that he will cause his fury to come, to take vengeance. Will profane sinners provoke the Lord to wrath? Are

they stronger than he? An alarming consideration, attends this vice, which is, that it hardens the heart, and fortifies it against conviction of the truth, and thus prevents the sinners salvation, and seals his dreadful doom.

FINALLY, my brethren, let us habituate our minds to a solemn reverence of God. Let him be in all our thoughts, for on him we continually depend, and to him, we must give account of all our thoughts, our speech and behaviour; and from his unerring tribunal, we must receive a sentence for eternity, according to our characters.

MAY the solemn and momentous scenes of eternity, on which we shall speedily enter, powerfully restrain from all irreverent and profane speech and behaviour, towards our almighty Creator and Judge, whom all creatures are bound to fear, to love and serve, with all their powers, thro' all periods of their existence; who is able to save the souls who sanctify his name, and to destroy profane sinners, both body and soul in hell.

WHEN the ungodly and profane, shall be confounded with conscious guilt, and overwhelmed with wrath divine, those who fear God, and keep his commandments, will be joyful in his salvation, and praise and honor and worship him forever.

A M E N.



S E R M O N IX.

The Divine institution of the Sabbath.—The advantages derived from the religious observance of the Sabbath.

P R E C E P T F O U R T H.

EXODUS XX. 8, 9, 10, 11.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

THIS divine precept of the moral law, points out the proportion of time, consecrated to the immediate worship of God, and special religious duties. The first commandment of the decalogue teaches us the *object* of religious worship; the second the *manner* of our worship; the third, the consideration, reverence and solemnity, which becomes us in all our meditations on God, and approaches to him in deity; and the fourth, the proportion of

our time, to be employed in the religious duties of meditation, secret devotion, and in public and social worship, and the reasons for the appointment of one day in seven, consecrated to the immediate worship of God.

WHAT is proposed, from this last precept of the first table of the moral law, is

- I. To speak of the original institution of the sabbath.
- II. THE benefits derived from the religious observance of the sabbath.
- III. THAT the observance of the sabbath is a gospel ordinance; and to explain the special duties required, and how they are to be performed.

I. THE sabbath was instituted by Jehovah, immediately upon the finishing the glorious works of creation. In the second chapter of Genesis, its original institution is recorded. "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it, he had rested from all his works, which God created and made."

ADAM and Eve were created on the sixth day, and God appointed the succeeding seventh day, as a day of holy rest, and religious solemnity and joy. God blessed and sanctified the sabbath. It was made for man's edification and comfort in God. It was first kept by our innocent primeval parents in Paradise: The holy angels assisting, and uniting with them, in the celebration of the praises of the glorious Creator. And what a solemn joyful day to them, who but the day before, came from nothing

into existence, perfect in stature, and in understanding, with hearts that beat responsive, in wonder, gratitude and love to God, for all his glory and goodness, displayed around them, and upon them! The sun has never rose upon such a happy pair. In all the charms of innocence, and blooming youth and beauty, on that sacred morning, they beheld for the first time, with raptures of holy joy, light dawning in the east, and the sun arising mild and glorious; and their new formed tongues broke forth in exclamations and songs of praise to their Creator. All things were new to them, and excited their profoundest, devout admiration and love. They saw and adored the wisdom and goodness of God, in their own creation, and in all his stupendous works on the earth and heavens. The material creation, seemed to them to confess God, as its author, in silent, but expressive language. And the living creatures, birds and beasts, pleased with their new existence, praised God in various harmonious notes and sounds. And Adam was as the priest of creation, to praise God, for them. The holy angels united with our first parents, in the celebration of the high praises of God, for all his wonderful works of power and goodness, on that holy day. Then those morning stars, the sons of God, sang together, and shouted for joy.

THE most high having sanctified the day, as a season of religious solemnity and sacred joy, probably on the first sabbath, condescended to give to the parents of mankind, some special tokens of his presence in Paradise, and directions for the observance of the day, for their edification and comfort, and his own glory. Never was a sabbath so devoutly and joyfully observed: For man was then but little lower than the angels in intelligence and dignity.

possessing the image of his maker, in holiness and rectitude. But we have reason, alas, to conclude that it was the last, as well as first sabbath, which has ever been kept in perfect purity, innocency and happiness. O ye highly favored, yet unhappy parents of the human race, how soon, thro' the frailty of your nature, and the subtle enmity of the foe of God and man, too soon, did ye loose the crown of innocency, and fall as Lucifer, son of the morning. But if the earthly paradise was lost by the first Adam, yet blessed be God, a celestial paradise is found, by the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ; and the fallen sons of men are now invited to enter its blissful and immortal bowers.

THE history of the transactions of the first ages of the world, are summarily comprised in a few pages, by Moses, the inspired historian, & thro' the long period of two thousand five hundred years, from the creation, to the deliverance from Egypt, there is no express mention of the sabbath. But we have reason to conclude that it was observed agreeably to the original institution, by pious patriarchs and the church, without much interruption, to that time. Adam, no doubt, taught his children to keep it. There is an intimation that Cain and Abel worshipped God by sacrifice, on that day. It is mentioned that in *process of time*, they brought an offering unto the Lord: or as it may be translated, *at the end of the days*, that is on the sabbath. The ancient saints and patriarchs publicly worshipped God, and as to the manner and season, no doubt, agreeably to the divine direction. And that time was the sabbath, which God took care early to ordain, as a blessed mean of preserving the knowledge of the true God, and original revelations.

It is evident that the sabbath was known and observed before the delivery of the law at Sinai. Mention is made of it soon after Israel's leaving Egypt, as a thing known to them. "To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord,—so the people rested on the seventh day." This was probably the seventh day in succession from their coming out of Egypt, and that day might happen on the sabbath, or else the sabbath was re-instituted, in commemoration of that great deliverance. Altho' in the text the reason given for the observance of the sabbath, is God's resting from his works, the seventh day, yet in Deuteronomy, in which the decalogue is repeated, another reason is given, which was the wonderful deliverance which God wrought for the people of Israel, in their redemption from Egypt. "Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it,—and remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God, brought thee out thence, thro' a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." The sabbath was originally, instituted to commemorate the work of creation; but here to commemorate the redemption of the church of God, from the tyranny of Pharaoh and the slavery of Egypt; figurative of our redemption from sin: and possibly the day was changed from the seventh, to the day of that deliverance. "The Lord blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it." It is not said that the seventh, but the *sabbath day* was blessed and sanctified. And which day of the week this shall be, depends upon the positive will of him who is Lord of the sabbath. The moral obligation of the law remains unalterable, but the particular day is a positive institution, and therefore might be changed, and some other day instituted, in commemoration

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moration of some great deliverance, as that of the church of Israel from Egypt.

THIS was so wonderful an event as it respected the church and the world, that God commanded them to alter the beginning of their civil year in conformity to it. And with equal propriety might the day of the sabbath be altered; and that without disannulling the commemoration of the works of creation. It is called *sabbath*, which signifies a holy rest, not only a cessation from secular business, but a ceasing from the servitude of sin; and spending the day in the active service of God, and the duties of religion. It is a day which God has in a special manner blessed and sanctified, for religious purposes. It is to be sanctified by us, or kept holy, because it is a figure of the heavenly rest; and is given as a pledge of the holy and everlasting sabbath of rest, in the heavenly world. There were other days of religious festival appointed to be observed by the Jewish church, which are sometimes called sabbaths, as the passover, in commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt, and typical of our redemption, by Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, by whose blood we are saved from wrath to come:—the feast of tabernacles, in remembrance of the miraculous preservation of the church in the wilderness; and the annual days of atonement for sin. There was also the sabbatical year: for every seventh year the land lay untilled. There was neither sowing, nor harvesting that year. God gave therein, constant proof of his special superintending providence over his church, and taught them their dependence. The great increase of the ground, during the six preceding years, afforded an abundant supply for the seventh.

THE religious observance of the sabbath, or a

seventh part of time, is both a moral and positive law. That it is a moral law, or a law necessarily resulting from the reason and fitness of things, appears,

1. IN its being given with the other precepts of the law, all of which are of a moral kind. It was given by Jehovah with utmost solemnity, and inscribed on stone as a perpetual law. The ceremonial laws were repealed on their accomplishment by Jesus Christ. They had respect to him and to the gospel church, and therefore vanished when they had accomplished the end of their institution. But the weekly sabbath remains in force, because it is typical of the heavenly rest. It was not therefore abolished by the gospel dispensation, as the ceremonial laws were. As these laws and observances were shadows of good things to come, and were not set aside until those good things did come: so the weekly sabbath, being a shadow of the heavenly rest, will not be set aside, until the end of the world, when the everlasting sabbatism of the church of the redeemed, will commence.

2. THAT the institution of the sabbath is a moral law appears, from the obligations of creatures to worship God. And in order to this a certain time or season must be set apart. As mankind are mutually dependent and united in society, and as societies receive blessings from God, it is proper that they should worship God together in a social state. As the light of nature, or a principle of gratitude, obliges us, as individuals, to acknowledge our dependance and obligations to God, for personal mercies, the same principles oblige us so to do, in public or social worship. Heathen people offer to God, public sacrifices of thanksgiving and atonement. Natural gratitude invites to the one, and conscious guilt impels them to the other. The sabbath is an institution calculated and intended, to increase our

knowledge of God and duty, and the promotion of our mutual edification comfort and salvation. And God is more visibly glorified by worshipping assemblies, than private devotion. As God is glorified, and our knowledge and salvation promoted by the ordinance of public worship, on the sabbath, we hence infer its obligation, because these are the two principle ends of our existence. The law of the sabbath is a positive law, so far as it prescribes the proportion of time, to be consecrated to the duties of religion. God was pleased to ordain a seventh part of our time. We may admire the wisdom and goodness of God in this. Had it been the eighth or tenth, or twentieth day, we should have been more liable to lose a sense of God, and the practical influence of religion; and had it been oftner than one day in seven, it would have interfered with the necessary duties, of our temporal life.

THUS the sabbath is a moral law, as it requires the public and social worship of almighty God, and is necessary to our knowledge of God and duty, and our spiritual and eternal happiness. All that is positive in its institution, is the designation of the day, or the proportion of time consecrated to its observance. It is necessary that the divine authority should designate the time, for were it left to the option of mankind, a diversity of days would be observed, by different societies and people, and the good effects of its institution lost in a great degree, and perhaps totally. Impressed with a sense of duty to God, and of the wisdom of the institution, christian legislatures, have universally, by human laws established the observance of the sabbath. They have found the great utility of it to society, and to the order, peace and happiness of mankind. And its happy influence on society, was probably one design of our merciful Creator, in its institution. So we come,

II. To shew the advantages of the religious observance of the sabbath.

ALL God's ordinances are wise and merciful, and intended for the best good and happiness of mankind. This is especially the case in the ordinance of the sabbath. It is happily calculated for the best interests of mankind, in this world, and in the world to come. Civil laws, with all the necessary pains and penalties of disobedience, cannot so effectually preserve the order, the harmony and happiness of society, or restrain from immorality, as the religious observance of the sabbath. And the reason is, that this divine institution, as it immediately respects God, takes hold of the conscience, and regulates the principle of action, the life and conversation. But it is principally designed, to train up mankind, by divine instruction, for the pure and perfect society of the heavenly world, and for the everlasting, holy and joyful sabbath, promised to the faithful. A consideration of a few particulars will explain the wisdom of the institution and advantages of the observance of the sabbath.

I. THE human frame requires rest from the fatigues of labour, one day in seven. It is necessary to recruit the exhausted strength, and spirits of the laborious part of our species, that with renewed strength and cheerfulness, man may go forth to his work and labour, thro' six days of the week. The Israelites were commanded, not only to cease from labor, but to exact none from their servants, or any under their care. They were to recal to remembrance, their rigorous servitude in Egypt, which they were compelled to perform on the sabbath, and all days, to their extreme grief.

To the humane, it is a pleasing consideration, that this day is favourable to the comfort of the

brutal creatures. They enjoy a rest. They labor in the service of mankind, six days of the week, and many of them meet with hard and cruel usage, from their unmerciful owners. They are subjected to the vanity and caprice of men, not willingly; and groan for deliverance. It is to them a merciful law. "On the seventh day, thou shalt rest, that thine ox, and thine ass may rest, and that thy servant, and the stranger, may be refreshed." The rest of the sabbath is not a detriment to men's temporal interest: but on the contrary is promotive of it, as it affords renewed vigor to man and beast, to pursue the labours of the week. Labor without cessation would destroy the health and shorten the lives of men.

2. It cherishes and supports the kind and social affections. Tho' men may disagree in all other points, they are united with a few exceptions, in the religious observance of the sabbath. A whole people meeting together, at the place and season appointed, to pay their acknowledgments of duty and obedience to God, sensible of their wants and dependence on God, and their mutual dependence also upon each other, and imploring the divine mercies for themselves, their friends and fellow men; necessarily unites men in bonds of mutual benevolence and love. To assemble, by the command of God, upon his holy day, to receive his blessing, to contemplate the glories of his perfections and works, to hear the solemn and sublime truths and duties revealed in his word, and to offer up devout supplications in prayer and praise, and standing as in the immediate presence of the creator and parent of the universe, and father of spirits, and the common benefactor of mankind, upon whose bounty and blessing all are equally and forever dependant: an in-

stitution like this must effect every heart, which is not uncommonly depraved, with noble and elevated sentiments, eradicate each low and malevolent thought, and inspire the soul with a benevolence of disposition, towards his fellow worshippers, and all mankind.

3. PUBLIC worship is a public school of knowledge and virtue. The doctrines and practical principles of natural and revealed religion, are explained and enforced upon the consciences of men, in our worshipping assemblies, on the sabbath. Its institution habituates our minds to a consciousness of the existence, the presence and perfections of God, and our accountableness to him. It impresses upon us the certainty of a state of final and eternal retribution, of felicity or misery, according to our moral character. The Bible is the sacred oracle of the sabbath, and in the ministration of it, we are taught all that the Lord our God requires of us. What are those special duties which we owe to God, to one another, and to ourselves.

By the religious observance of this day, we arrive at the knowledge of the end of our creation, and the attainment of virtue and durable happiness. A future state of existence is a natural principle, but almost extinguished among the rude nations of the world, by the prevalence of various lusts and passions. The ordinance of the sabbath is necessary to keep alive this principle, and to call it into exercise. And where it is observed, people shew its happy fruits in the practice of the duties of piety and righteousness.— The institution preserves the morals of a people, disposing them to things true, just, honest and of good report. The enemies of revealed religion, those wise philosophers of this world, have conceded to its

advocates, the utility and advantages of the sabbath, as it respects the order and happiness of society.

THE observance of the sabbath is necessary to uphold visible religion and morality. This is confirmed by reason and observation. In those places in which the sabbath is not religiously observed, ignorance, ill manners and vices abound. The inhabitants are generally idle, profane and contentious, and ripen themselves for divine corrections. Those who reject divine institutions, and the worship and fear of God, are destitute of an efficient principle of righteousness towards men. "For they who fear not God, neither will they regard man." Persons of this description, have no restraint from the supreme pursuit of their own interest or pleasure; and to the accomplishment of their selfish purposes, all things are made subservient. A selfish disposition absorbs the judgment and the passions, and they are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

It is a solemn consideration, which should particularly arrest the serious attention of parents; that a vicious and ungodly life usually commences with the profanation of the sabbath. And on the other hand, those who have been taught from early life, to attend to the sacred duties of this day, have generally retained a regard to virtue and religion, thro' life. Allow me to mention, what has been often observed, that of the small number of criminals, who have come to untimely deaths, by the hand of public justice in this part of the country, perhaps the greater part, have dated the beginning of the crimes, which brought them there, from their neglect and profanation of the sabbath, in younger life.

As serious parents would shudder at the thought

of their children's growing up in ignorance of God, and becoming examples of vice and misery in this world, and of perdition in the world to come; as they should fear lest the guilt of their blood, be required at their hands, to whom God has committed their children as a solemn charge, to be educated to know, to love and serve him forever: as they wish them to be good, useful and happy in life, and blessed beyond the grave; they will not neglect to teach them by precept and example, the solemn and important duty of remembering and keeping the holy sabbath.

THE ancient christians called the sabbath the queen of days, and choicest of the seven, because God has consecrated it, as the medium of spiritual and heavenly blessings; because the soul is purified and elevated by the study and contemplation of the sublimest and best objects, attains to the knowledge and dignity of its nature, and enjoys the manifestations of the love and mercies of God, who makes his children joyful in his house of prayer.

I shall now conclude this discourse, with asking your serious attention and earnest enquiry, after those spiritual privileges and heavenly blessings, which God gives to those who with pious believing souls, sanctify his holy day. The ordinances of this day are the special mean of communicating to our souls, the blessings of eternal salvation. God has sanctified and blessed the day to this end. He honors the ordinances of his appointment. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the private dwellings of his people." There he meets the sinner, with illuminating and convincing influences of his word and spirit, and turns his feet from the path of death and ruin, into the way of holiness and life. The humble soul convinced of sin and in-

quiring for salvation, there hears the voice of pardoning mercy, saying, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." There the sincere believer, finds light and direction in duty, his faith confirmed, his hopes and consolations revived, and his soul filled with a divine peace, and some happy earnest of the unclouded joys, which are laid up for the just, beyond the vale of death.

SINCE God has graciously instituted the holy sabbath, as a special season of grace and salvation, and made it our duty to observe it; let us, my friends and fellow-worshippers, most gladly and gratefully improve the golden season, with humble dependence on heavenly grace, and not neglect the assembling of ourselves together, for our edification and comfort in holiness, unto eternal life, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

A M E N.



S E R M O N X.

The Lord's Day, or the Christian Sabbath—the manner of observing it.

EXODUS XX. 8, 9, 10, 11.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

I AM now to shew that the religious observance of the sabbath, is an ordinance of the gospel—to explain the special duties of the christian sabbath, and the acceptable manner of performing them.

As the resurrection of Jesus Christ, was the glorious finishing act of redemption, and in its miraculous nature, its connection with antecedent predictions, and subsequent events, more than all things else, confirmed the divinity of his mission, and almighty power to save; the apostles and disciples, by divine direction, instituted the day, on the morning of which, he rose from the dead, to be observed, in honor of their risen Lord. And altho' there is no express precept in the gospel, for the change from the seventh, to the first day of the week, *their example* is a sufficient warrant, and in all respects tantamount to a positive precept; because in all things relative to the establishment of the christian church and worship, they were divinely directed.

FROM the creation, to the redemption of the church of God from Egypt, the seventh day was ob-

served as the sabbath : but after that, Moses the inspired lawgiver of the Jewish church, gives another reason for the sabbath, which was the redemption of Israel. And probably its date was established at that great event. When our Lord Jesus Christ had finished the work of redemption, a work more glorious than the creation of the material universe, and of which the deliverance of Israel, was a lively type or figure, the apostles and primitive disciples changed the sabbath, to the day of his resurrection. And that day, the first day of the week, has been invariably kept by the body of the christian church, from the days of the apostles, to the present time. Several things mentioned in the gospel history shew that the day was changed.

I. THE apostles and disciples immediately after our Lord's resurrection, began the custom of assembling together, for the purposes of religious worship, upon the first day of the week. And with the change of the day, the name was changed from *sabbath* to *Lord's day*, in commemoration of the triumphant resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ himself was pleased to sanctify it, by his personal appearance, and meeting with his disciples on that day, repeatedly before his ascension. On the day on which he arose, he appeared to his assembled disciples and blessed them. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said unto them, peace be unto you." Again they assembled on the succeeding first day of the week, and Jesus met with them, and blessed them. During the forty days of his continuance on earth, after his resurrection, he usually appeared to his disciples, assembled for religious worship, on the first day of the week. And

no doubt they received his express direction, to observe it forever, as the day of the solemn and joyful solemnities of the christian church. And when we reflect on the glory and greatness of the work accomplished, by the resurrection of Christ, we see abundant cause, why the day should be made the christian sabbath. The wonderful nature of this work, the blessed and extensive effects and benefits of it, in the redemption of a lost world, bringing "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to men;" and the divine greatness of the agent, renders it altogether a work exceeding in glory, any thing which has come to our knowledge. And the day which compleated this work, and "saw the Lord arise," merits to be honored as the day of our religious solemnities, the holy jubilee of the christian church: a day which the Lord hath made, and in which we will be glad, with sacred joy and wonder, gratitude and praise.

AFTER our Lord's ascension, the apostles and the christian church kept the first day as the sabbath. St. Paul on his way to Macedonia, visited the christians at Troas, and there abode seven days, "and upon the *first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them.*" That they met stately, and by divine appointment on that day, further appears from the first epistle to the Corinthians. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye, upon the *first day* of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." These examples teach us that the day of our Lord's resurrection, was the sabbath of the disciples and primitive christians. It was sanctified by the wonderful effusions of the holy spi-

rit on the disciples. I was, says St. John, in the spirit, on the *Lord's day*. The day was named *sunday*, by pagan nations, because on that day, they worshipped the sun. And for another reason it was sometimes called by the same name by christians, even because on that day, the glorious sun of righteousness arose from the dead.

2. IN the fourth chapter of the Hebrews, the apostle speaks of the change of the sabbath from the patriarchal, to the christian, by the name of a *rest*. That the prophetic psalmist, in the ninety fifth psalm, speaks of a future rest to be given to the church of God; which rest could not mean the seventh day of the creation, nor the rest of the earthly Canaan, because these were past, ages before, he therefore speaks of a rest to come, which no doubt is intended primarily of the heavenly rest, but inclusively, the rest of the christian sabbath. This will appear by a careful attention to the reasoning of the apostle. "For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he, (the psalmist) not have spoken afterwards of *another day*. There remaineth therefore, a (sabbatismos) a sabbath, or rest to the people of God." That the weekly sabbath is included, and that the day is the resurrection of Christ, appears by the words following. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works as God did from his." The "certain day, limited" for the future rest of believers, of which the psalmist speaks, by the argument of the apostle, points out the day on which Jesus Christ finished the work of redemption, or the christian sabbath, typical of the heavenly rest. For then he was released from all the demands which the law had against him, as the substitute of offenders, having "finished the work, which he came to do." And to celebrate the glo-

rious work of redemption is now the special business of the sabbath, not however excluding the celebration of the wonderful works of creation, and the deliverances wrought for the church, in ancient and later times.

3. THE redeemer of his church claims the prerogative of establishing the day, which we are to observe. *The son of man is Lord, even of the sabbath,* "To him shall every knee bow and every tongue confess." As the ancient sabbath was a sign between Jehovah and the church of Israel, that the Creator of the heavens and the earth was their God, and they his people: so the christian sabbath, is now also a sign, or testimonial that Jesus Christ is the almighty redeemer of his people, whom they are to worship.

4. THE sabbath is a moral law, and therefore not set aside by the gospel dispensation as the ceremonial laws were. To the arguments already adduced in support of its moral obligation, we may observe that it was instituted in paradise, before a saviour was promised or needed, and therefore was neither mosaic, nor ceremonial, nor typical of Christ, in its original institution. The ends to be answered by it, are moral; the refreshment of our nature from the burdens of life, and our increase in knowledge and piety, and the celebration of the wonderful works of God, in creation and redemption. It is a perpetual law. Our Lord addressing his disciples on the destruction which was to come on Jerusalem, which happened in about forty years after his ascension, directs them to pray that their flight from the impending desolation might not be on the sabbath day.

It appears by the writings of St. Paul, and of the fathers who lived in or near the age of the apostles, that some jewish christians, observed both the jewish and christian sabbath.* But the jewish sabbath came gradually into disuse, and the christian was soon universally observed, by jews and gentiles.

HAVING thus seen that the Lord's day, is divinely instituted as the christian sabbath; it is an inquiry of great importance.

2. WHAT are its special duties, and the manner of their acceptable performance. By the mild dispensation of the gospel, brought to the world by Jesus Christ, the christian church, are not obliged to observe the sabbath with so much strictness and rigor, as were the ancient church. Some things of small consequence on other days, if done on the sabbath, were capitally punished. The strict and rigid discipline of the sabbath, was imposed upon the jews, because of their small attainments in spiritual understanding, and because they were a people of an untoward and disobedient temper. They were strictly forbidden imposing any work upon their children, servants and cattle on the sabbath; because they were a people eager to accumulate wealth, and would otherwise have obliged them to unremitting servitude. The sabbath was therefore strictly and mercifully instituted, that all orders and conditions, might enjoy a respite from extreme service, and a favorable season, for religious knowledge, contemplation and devotion.

* IGNATIUS, who lived in the apostolic age, exhorts the Jewish christians, to keep the Lord's day, as the sabbath of the christian church. And Justin Martyr, who lived soon after Ignatius, asserts that it was the practice of christians universally, to assemble the first, or Lord's day, to pray, to hear the word, receive the sacraments and devoutly sing God's praises.

THE christian sabbath demands a more rational spiritual and sublime service, and is exempted from the mortifying severity and discipline of the mosaic. "For the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light." But to obtain, by the blessing of God, the moral and divine purposes of its institution.

1. A cessation from worldly labour and secular employments is necessary. It is a day not only of rest from labor, but of active service, in the duties of public and social worship, and of private devotion. Those worldly thoughts, plans and works, which are lawful on week days, are unlawful on the sabbath; because an indulgence of them, would defeat the blessed ends of its institution, which are principally that God may be visibly and publicly glorified on earth, and our knowledge and salvation promoted. Six days are allowed us, for worldly labor, and they are abundantly sufficient for all the purposes of health and subsistence, but a seventh part of our time, is consecrated to the Lord, to be employed in his worship, and to our spiritual edification and comfort. Christians are bound to remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. "Take heed to yourselves that ye bear no (unnecessary) burdens on the sabbath day—neither do ye any work, but hallow the sabbath, as I commanded your fathers." We are commanded to rest from our works, as God rested from his. As that was a holy rest, so should ours be. It is not a rest of sloth or idleness, as some profane sinners imagine, and use it accordingly. The brutes observe the day better than such thoughtless persons. Tho' the body is excused from worldly labour, the mind has much to do, in devout meditation, reading, hearing, prayer and praise. The bodily exercise required on the sabbath is easy: to meet and unite with the wor-

shippers of God in the sanctuary, and attend the duties of devotion in the family, and in secret. Works of charity and mercy are to be done on the sabbath, as well as other days. Our Lord gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, strength to the decrepid, and health to the sick on the sabbath. And passing thro' a corn field, his disciples gathered the ears of corn, rubbing them in their hands, and eat them, to satisfy hunger. The captious and superstitious pharisees objected, that Christ profaned the sabbath by his works of mercy. Our Lord condescended to vindicate his good works, by the example of God the father, "saying my father worketh hitherto, and I work." God works by his holy preserving and sustaining providence, supplying the wants of his creatures, on the sabbath, and our Lord imitated the divine example, in works of mercy, on the sabbath.

To determine the lawfulness of doing any work on the sabbath, which comes under the name of *necessity*, must be taken into consideration, the expediency of the work, the length of time necessary to do it, and the conscience of the person, enlightened by the word of God.

WORKS or actions, sinful on other days, are more sinful committed on the sabbath; because the day being the Lord's in a peculiar sense, and to be employed in holy duties, the guilt of sinful actions, is thereby greatly increased. All sins of omission as well as sins of commission, are to be sacredly guarded against on the sabbath. That we may meet with acceptance with God, in the assemblies of his worshippers, and have our hearts prepared to wait upon him, according to the preparation of the sanctuary, and worship him, in the beauties of holiness; We are,

1. To prepare for the Lord's day, by finishing the business of the week, as far as may be, in the week, that our thoughts may not be distracted with worldly cares, and

2. By previous meditation on the duties and services of the approaching sabbath, and preparing our hearts for them, that so it may be a happy season of rest and comfort to our souls. We should go to the house of God with a praying frame of spirit, humbly imploring the presence and blessing of God, on our purposes to worship and obey him, and to receive the instructions of his will in all duty,—that he would pour out upon us, and upon our fellow-worshippers, the spirit of grace and supplication—afford his spirit and blessing in the ministration of the word and ordinances, that they may be attended with light and comfort, and that it may be a good day to our souls. That the sacred duties and services of the day, may be our delight; the sweetest recreation, and refreshment of our spirits, in this house of our pilgrimage, in the way to our heavenly rest. And when the public exercises of the day are finished, our religious duties are not ended: for we are then especially to guard against the insinuating temptations of the world, and of our own hearts, lest we loose that solemn and devout frame of spirit, and those pious resolutions in duty, which the exercises of the day are designed to beget in us: that we cherish those good and pious affections towards God, and mankind and spiritual objects, which the word and spirit of God hath impressed on our minds, and close the day by a humble and joyful dedication of ourselves to God, and our divine Saviour.

The whole day is to be kept as holy time. A whole day, the seventh part of time, was consecra-

ted at the creation. And altho' the day was changed, it was not abridged. It is a moral law, and of perpetual obligation. The importance of the precept is taught us, by the emphatical word *remember*: and shews us that the holy and profitable duties of the Lord's day, should be the pleasing subject of our thoughts, thro' the days of the week; that we meditate upon it before it comes, and recal it to mind after it is past, that so the good fruits of this blessed institution, may abide in our hearts, and appear in our lives. We learn from the practice of the apostles and primitive christians, that the distribution of charity or alms to the necessities of the faints, and the poor, is a duty of love and mercy, on the sabbath, and an offering pleasing to God.

THE sabbath is profaned by the neglect of serious consideration, and preparation for its approach—by spending the day or any part of it in idleness in the house, or in sauntering abroad, or in the fields—by wasting its sacred morning in sleep, on which Jesus arose early for our salvation.—It is profaned by devising plans of worldly business—by settling accounts—writing letters—and reading books which have not a relation to the business of the day. It is profaned by those who absent themselves, from the worship and ordinances of the day, for trifling reasons—by those who excuse themselves with the plea, that they can read good books at home; thus despising the house of God, and setting their own wisdom above the wisdom of God, who has established his church as the ground and pillar of the truth. Can such proud and wilful neglecters, expect the blessing of God? Will their idle pleas avail at the bar of final and eternal judgment? It is profaned by those who are hypocritical, who externally worship, while their heart goeth after their covetousness, or their sensual

pleasures,—by those who indulge themselves in inattention and drowsiness, in time of public worship—by those who pride themselves in pomp and gay cloathing—or attend because it is a fashionable custom. To these descriptions of thoughtless, irreligious worshippers, are addressed the words of Christ, “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying this people draweth nigh to me, with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”

For our encouragement to sanctify the sabbath there are precious promises, of blessings spiritual and temporal. God richly recompences the people who honor him on earth, in the conscientious observance of his sacred day. The heathen who worship not God, perish under his frowns; but his visible covenant people, he builds up and blesses. Then do we improve the sabbath most profitably, when we devoutly use its holy ordinances, as the divine channel of communication of spiritual blessings. On the morning of this day Jesus Christ finished the work of our redemption, and on this day we are especially encouraged to ask and seek for the saving benefits of his grace, in pardon, justification, peace and acceptance with God, and a title to the high privileges of adopted children, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. All those happy souls who ask with humble penitence, and unfeigned faith, have the promise that they shall obtain; and the almighty father of mercies will make them joyful in his house of prayer. I will conclude with one or two

REFLECTIONS.

1. How kind and condescending is our God, in giving us a holy sabbath, in the services of which, he

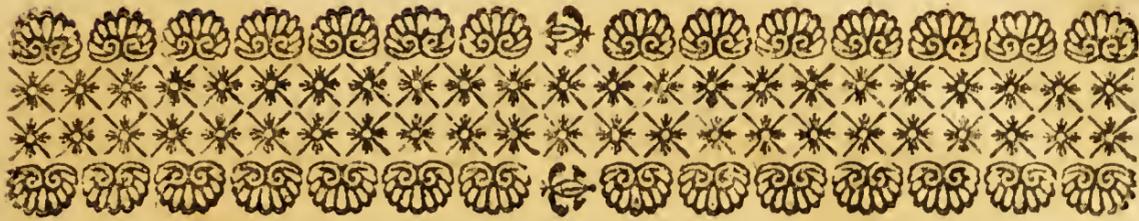
has made it our immediate duty to attend to the solemn and momentous concerns of our salvation! Our advantages, fellow christians are much every way, but chiefly because God hath committed unto us, the sacred oracles, and the holy sabbath. We come into the immediate presence of the almighty and universal parent and judge of our spirits, and worship at the footstool of the creator of all worlds. How solemn and sublime the holy institution! A congregation of united worshippers, sending up one heart and voice in adoration and praise, to the Lord of all, acknowledging their dependence and unworthiness, imploring blessings, and presenting the offering of grateful hearts, for all his boundless mercies, thro' a glorious redeemer, and with solemn attention, receiving his will that they may obey him; is the most affecting and glorious spectacle this world can give, and a distant resemblance, of the state and employments of angels and saints in heaven, who perpetually worship around the throne of God and of the lamb.

LET us shew our regard for God and zeal for his worship, by our persevering attendance, on the ordinances of the Lord's day. Let our hearts rejoice and be glad, when they say, "come let us go up to the house of the Lord, our feet shall stand within thy gates O Jerusalem." Let us carefully examine our hearts, whether we profit by the institutions of the Lord's day. Do we find that it is good to draw near to God, and that one day spent in communion with God in ordinances, is more profitable and pleasing, than all the pleasures of the world? Does each succeeding sabbath, bring us nearer to our heavenly rest, by assisting us to make progressive advances in holiness? Are we glad at the return of the sabbath, and opportunities for devout meditation? Are our

faith and fortitude, our hope and love increased? While we ask for mercy and forgiveness, can we also feel pitiful to our greatest enemies, forgive and pray for them? These are some of the blessed spiritual fruits, of a devout observance of the Lord's day. To heads of families is this holy law particularly given. Sanctify the sabbath, O parents, in the little assemblies of your families. Bring them to the house of God, and teach them the knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. Examine how they profit, and teach them to profit. Instruct, catechise and pray with them, and for them. Habituate their tender minds to the duties of devotion. Engage and press them into the service of their redeemer, with the resolution of pious Joshua, "As for me, and my house we will serve the Lord." And God will bless your pious labour. Multitudes of profane sinners, on death beds, have mourned with unavailing sorrows, the neglect and profanation of the sabbath.

LASTLY, let christians particularly remember Jesus Christ on this day, whose triumphs over death, the grave, and all our spiritual foes, we celebrate with grateful and pious joy. He hath ceased from his work, and entered into his rest. And when, O believer, the labours of the week days of life are done, you will also enter into the everlasting sabbath of rest, which remaineth for the people of God.

THE unbelieving Jews could not enter into the earthly Canaan, thro' unbelief, tho' they had so valiant a leader as Joshua; O may none of us, thro' unbelief, fail of the heavenly rest, under the conduct of Jesus, the great captain of our salvation.— To him who hath loved us, and washed us in his own blood, let our sabbaths be consecrated, and to him be glory and salvation, in all the churches, and throughout all ages. A M E N.



S E R M O N XI.

Filial obedience—parental duty.

P R E C E P T F I F T H.

EXODUS XX. 12.

Honor thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

THE first table of the moral law begins with the duties which we owe to God ; the second, with the duties which are due to our natural parents. Next to God, our parents claim our reverence, love and obedience. They are in God's stead to children. As parents and children are mutually dependent on God ; children are especially dependent on their parents.

THIS precept is the most important of those of the second table of the law, and therefore placed first : for to him, who fulfils the obligations of filial piety, the duties which he owes to mankind, which are enumerated in the succeeding laws of the decalogue, will be easy and pleasant. For he who is loving and dutiful to his parents, will be just, righteous and merciful to mankind. And on the other hand a disregard of parental authority, and an ungrateful neglect and abuse of parents, is the fullest proof of a depraved and vicious heart, prepared when op-

portunities and temptations invite, for the perpetration of all those crimes, which the remaining precepts solemnly prohibit, by the severest penalties.

FILIAL piety is the basis of all social and relative duties and virtues. It forms a habit from youthful days, which temptations to wickedness cannot easily eradicate. As filial obedience begins in infancy and continues thro' life, the Deity is pleased to give it a place at the head of all those duties which we owe to mankind. Other moral obligations are included in this precept, and grafted on the stock of filial piety. They will be noticed in their order. I shall attempt to shew, the obligations and duties of children to their parents—The duties of parents to their children—The various social and relative duties of life—And the animating motives to filial piety, contained in the promise which God hath given to them who honor their parents.

“HONOR thy father and thy mother.” The word honor, in this place is of extensive signification, and implies that we reverence and love their persons, obey their lawful commands, and labor to promote their interests and happiness, by all suitable means. It comprehends all the duties and offices of filial piety. The word is also used to express the duties which we owe to our civil rulers, the political fathers of the people. The command “*honor the king,*” implies all the duties which men owe to the government, which they are under. It is used to express the mutual duties and obligations of mankind in all social relations.—“Render to all their due, tribute to whom tribute, (is due) *honor to whom honor.*”

THE obedience of children to parents, has ob-

tained the name of *filial piety*, because if faithfully done, and from a right principle, it is an important branch of that religion, which is good and acceptable to God, and which he will graciously and abundantly reward.

I. THE duty of children to parents, is to reverence and love their persons. They should cherish a cordial regard for them and express it, by all suitable words and actions. Altho' their parents may not be so worthy as others, yet are children bound to shew them greater respect than others. This obligation is not disannulled, altho' the parents might be vicious and profane. For, under God, they are the authors of their existence. Had it not been for them, children would never have been. They have tenderly cherished and cared for them in their infantile helpless days, and reared them up to youth and manhood. The obligations are still greater to worthy and virtuous parents, because children have received more kindness and favors from them. In childhood, in youth, and before children arrive to the age of discretion, or to act for themselves, they are under the absolute government of their parents, and are to obey them in all things, except in things immoral or sinful. And after they have attained to the age of manhood and are in a capacity to act for themselves, they are still bound to respect and reverence them, and seek their comfort and happiness in all respects. They are obliged to conform themselves to the rules and regulations of their fathers' family; to bear their proportion of labor for the support of the family: and when the parents become helpless by age or infirmity, they are to provide for them; to strive to make their condition as comfortable as may be, by kind and tender behaviour and dutiful expressions; to bear

with their infirmities, and their unfashionable behaviour, and ways, tho' contrary to the notions of children. A principle of gratitude to parents for all their former kindnesses, and the laws of christianity, oblige children to this duty. And those infirmities which frequently attend old age, children above all others ought to bear with meekness and patience; for if parents, broken by age and infirmities, do not meet with that indulgence, from their children which their condition requires, they cannot expect to find it from any others. There is in children a natural affection and gratitude towards their parents, which prompts them to support and comfort them in old age. Those who treat their helpless parents with neglect and disrespect, are condemned by the world as void of every human and generous principle, as violaters of the moral and christian law, in one of its most important precepts, and as brutes in human shape.

FILIAL piety is seen in the most amiable light, when children exert every kind office to raise and comfort their parents, when by the providence of God they are overwhelmed with poverty, sickness or other afflictions.

How nobly did this virtue appear in the conduct of the pious youth Joseph in Egypt, towards his venerable and afflicted father Jacob! Tho' exalted to all the honors of earthly grandeur, he was not unmindful of his aged father, suffering the horrors of famine in a distant land. With child-like love and tenderness he sent for him, brought him down to Egypt, fed him with bread, and comforted his declining years. It was no doubt the happiest circumstance of his life, that God gave him that opportunity to comfort his helpless parent, and support his tottering steps down the hill of life.

THE dutiful child is not ashamed of the low condition of his parent in the world. His respect and reverence are not lessened. He endeavours by all laudable means to better his condition, and is most grieved, when it is not in his power to afford relief. We have an example of dutiful reverence to a parent, in King Solomon, to his aged mother. She came to ask a favor of the King, her son "and the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself to her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother: and she sat on his right hand." 1 Kings ii, 19. For his filial piety, and other virtues, heaven remarkably blessed and prospered him. The reverse of this we see in the treatment which aged Noah, in an unguarded hour, received from his profane son Ham. The divine displeasure followed on the heels of his undutifulness, and the curse of heaven fell upon him and his remote posterity. God blessed the two elder brothers Shem and Japhet, for their respect to their unhappy father.

2. It is the duty of children to receive and obey the councils and instructions, and to submit to the reproofs and corrections of parents. Parents have lived longer in the world, and have passed thro' those trying scenes of life, thro' which their children have to pass; they are therefore qualified to guide them. They may have tasted the bitter fruits of youthful inexperience and folly, and smarted under the wounds of the sins of their youth, until they turned their feet into the paths of rectitude and virtue. Or if they have happily, thro' the restraining grace and good providence of God, escaped the snares of temptations, they have seen the rocks on which others have made shipwreck, and are therefore skilful pilots, to those who have just launched

on the sea of life, strangers to the dangers of the ocean over which they are to shape their course.

PARENTS who have known by sweet experience, the pleasures of early piety, can recommend to the young a life of religion, as their chief ornament, dignity and security : and their councils will be recommended by the efficacy of a good example. Wisdom should dwell with years ; and happy is the youth who profits by the instructions and virtuous example of his parents. Thus did a wise and pious Moses, whose youth had been formed by the maxims of religion, the only true and durable wisdom. " He harkened to the voice of his father-in-law Jethro," and found much advantage and comfort in following the advice of his wiser parent.

CHILDREN are meekly to submit to parental correction, for their faults. They are to consider that the task is painful to the affectionate parent ; and their good and happiness is the motive and the measure of correction and the severity of discipline. " We have had fathers of the flesh, who corrected us, and we did them reverence." Children are carefully to avoid a repetition of those faults which deserve correction, and to please their parents in all dutiful and virtuous behaviour.

3. It is the duty of children to obey all lawful commands of their parents. As children are dependent on their parents, they are subjected to their lawful authority. This law of nature is enforced by the precepts of christianity. " Children obey your parents in all things ; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." While children are under the government of parents, implicit filial obedience is due, whether they command them to do this, or the

other labor or service. They are to come or go at the parents bidding. Obedience to all the commands of parents, is to be understood with the restriction of things lawful. Children are not to obey, if a parent should be so unnatural as to command any thing unlawful or sinful, as to steal, to lie, to profane the name of God, and the like. Neither are they to obey, if commanded to abstain from those duties or labors which God has commanded, such as reading the scriptures, prayer, attendance on public worship and the like. They are not to obey in these cases, because the authority of God is above the authority of parents, and we are to obey God rather than man, in all cases in which those authorities interfere. The apostle qualifies the general rule of filial duty, "with things which are good and right and well pleasing to God:" and in such things the parents' authority is absolute. "Children obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." It is right or agreeable to the light of nature. It must be "in the Lord," or agreeable to his revealed will.

In obeying parental authority, all meekness and submission are to be shewn; without murmuring, gainsaying or contradiction. Children are to pay a willing and cheerful obedience; performing all filial duty, heartily as unto the Lord, considering their parents as in God's stead to them. The apostle speaks of children's reverencing their parents, even when they correct them. "They corrected us, and we did them reverence." Thus children are taught their obligation to obey with fidelity and cheerfulness all lawful commands, and submissively to yield to the reproofs and corrections of their parents.

4. It is their duty to provide for their parents. Gratitude obliges them to make all suitable returns

for the love, the care, the watchfulness and kindness which parents have bestowed on them. They should administer to their temporal wants whenever their circumstances call for it. The obligations of children both to their father and their mother, are equally binding, and to be fulfilled equally to both. Children can never requite them for their kindness, either the father's, in providing for them when young, weak and helpless; or the mother's, for all her pains, anxieties and sorrows; the sleepless hours, and watchings, the homely offices done for them, and all her ceaseless cares and labors for them thro' all periods of infancy and childhood. To them, under God, they owe their life and health, food, raiment and education: and nature teaches them that when such friends and benefactors, are reduced either by the accidents of providence, to poverty and dependence, or when disabled by the infirmities of age, to provide for their own comfort, that support and comfort should be liberally and cheerfully afforded them by their children. Thus a pious Joseph nourished his aged father in Egypt, in a time of famine. The ancient Jews had a saying, that children ought to work with their hands to provide for their parents, and to beg for them when they have nothing of their own to give.

CHILDREN are to provide for the comfort of parents when sick—when deprived of reason and helpless. The consolation of aged people depends much upon the duty and kindness of children towards them. It is more to them than earthly enjoyments, and next to those divine consolations which religion gives, in the hope of a better life beyond the vale of death. We have a remarkable instance of filial duty and affection, in the two daughters-in-law of Naomi, particularly in a virtuous Ruth, towards her afflicted

and disconsolate parent. “ She said to her mother, whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried, and nought but death shall part me and thee.” The duty of providing for parents extends to children-in-law, and to grandchildren. Of the grandson of Naomi, it is said, “ he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law which loveth thee, who is better to thee, than seven sons, hath borne him.”

CHILDREN ought to put the most favorable construction upon the words and actions of parents—to vindicate their reputation—defend them from injuries—and not willingly see or hear any thing to their disadvantage. The two sons of Noah when their father overtaken with wine, exposed his nakedness, took a garment, and with filial reverence, went backward and covered him. And for this instance of duty, God blessed and prospered them.

OUR Lord reproves and condemns the injurious and vile conduct of the jews in their neglect of their aged helpless parents. The law of Moses had decreed that children should provide for them; but they found means hypocritically to evade the law. By consecrating a small part of their interest to the use of the temple, their pharasaical teachers dissolved them from filial obligation. “ They transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition; for God commanded saying, honor thy father and thy mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say whosoever shall say to his father or mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honor not (does

not provide for) his father, or his mother, he shall be free." Thus by the injurious law of their *corban*, they excused themselves from this great natural duty. Let us now,

2. INQUIRE what are the duties of parents to their children.

1. IN the helpless stages of infancy, the whole care of children is devolved on the parents. They are part of them, and to be loved and cherished as their own flesh. God commits them to parents, and plants in their nature the strong ties of affection, and sends the nutritious aliment into the mother's breast to feed them. To her their tender age is especially committed; and the father is bound to provide for the mother and the child. The author of nature has implanted this natural affection in the parents' breast, attaching to them, by indissoluble bonds, their helpless offspring. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Rare indeed are instances of such unnatural neglect.

2. As soon as children are capable of being taught, the parents duty is to instil into their opening minds, the lessons of instruction in knowledge and virtue. Truth and duty should be early taught them, both by precept and example. In plain and familiar language adapted to their understanding, they are to be in the knowledge of God, the universal creator and parent—the knowledge of themselves—their unhappy condition by sin—the nature and necessity of repentance—prayer and obedience—the merciful provision made for their salvation by Jesus Christ, and other important and plain truths necessary to their salvation. They are to be in-

structed repeatedly, and with patient perseverance, that the principles of useful knowledge, virtue and piety may be established in their minds, and produce their good and useful fruit in their future life. The salutary effects of early instruction are lasting. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The foundation of a virtuous and useful life is laid in childhood. The blessing of God, on early instruction, parents are encouraged to hope for: and for that blessing should they with pious ardor pray, while they labor to fulfil this duty to their beloved offspring. "Fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

3. It is the parents duty to reclaim their children from faults and follies, by reproof and correction. A propensity to transgress the laws of duty, and resist the salutary restraints of religion and virtue, alas, but too generally appears in our first entrance into this depraved world. "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it from him." On the appearance of a vicious inclination in children, the rod should accompany reproof. "The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame." Correction should be tempered with wisdom; and never administered hastily, or to gratify the parent's sudden and passionate resentment. The child should first be convinced of his fault, and the justice of his punishment, and that it is the effect, not of passion, but of reason and love.

In the most pious and eminent families on sacred record, instruction and government were maintained. Of the illustrious family of Abraham, the Most

High gives this commendation, "He will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the ways of the Lord and do justice and judgment." By too great indulgence at the vices of his sons, the judgments of heaven fell heavily on the house of Eli.

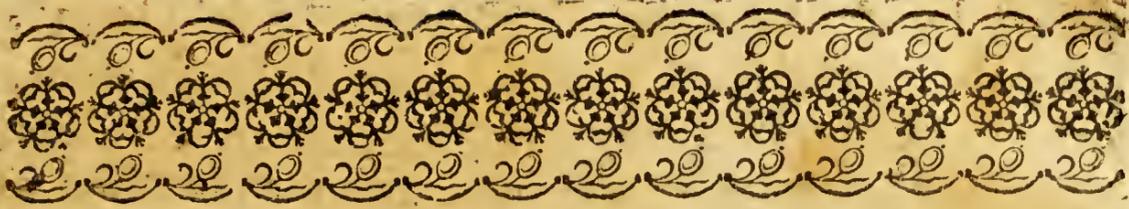
AFTER training up their children in knowledge and virtue, and the duties which they owe to God and to mankind; thus qualifying them, by the blessing of God to be good and useful, parents are to assist them, according to their ability, in some comfortable and useful profession or employment—in the world. And in doing this they should consult the genius and inclinations of children, and put them into such a course of life, as shall afford the best prospect of their serving their generation to God's acceptance.

PARENTS who neglect to provide, in the best manner in their power for their children's usefulness in this life, and for their immortal happiness are condemned by an inspired apostle. "If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." The obligations of parents extend to children in law, and to adopted children, equally with their own.

BUT the principal care and labor of parents should be to save the souls of their beloved offspring. To qualify them for the adoption of children into the family of God, and household of faith; that at the last great day, when parents with their children shall be assembled before the throne of universal judgment, and give up their account to God, they may be able to say, thro' divine grace attending and suc-

ceeding their pious labors, for their salvation, " here Lord, are we and the children which thou hast given us." May it please God of his mercy to grant that this may be the happy condition of all of us parents and children, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the almighty lover of the children of men ; to whom be honor and glory now and ever.

A M E N.



S E R M O N XII.

Various social and relative virtues,—motives to filial obedience.

EXODUS XX. 12.

Honor thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

IN this comprehensive precept, the duty of children to their parents is commanded : this is however but one important particular of many duties intended ; and is placed at the head of other relative obligations, because it is the most weighty of any, especially as it prepares men for the faithful performance of all relative duty to mankind.

He who loves and honors his parents, is likely to do well in all the relations of life. Having shewn the mutual duties of parents and children, let us now,

3. **I**NQUIRE into the nature and obligations of other important, relative and social connections. Allow me to mention,

1. **T**HE mutual duties which combine the marriage relation, and exist between the husband and the wife. As benevolence or virtuous love is the

principle of all relative duty, and the fulfilling the whole of this table of the law, it appears in no one connection in life, more important and necessary, than in the intimate and endearing connection of husband and wife. The tenderest love and kindest usage, is due from the husband to the wife. To her should be given all willing and cheerful assistance, to alleviate her troubles and bear her sorrows; and by good example and wise instructions to assist in the promotion of her happiness in this life, and her salvation in the life to come. By the marriage covenant they are one, and are to love one another as they love themselves. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives even as their own bodies, he that loveth his wife, loveth himself." Their interests and their cares are mutually one. By the merciful Creator, the woman was given to the man, as a comfort and relief from the gloom of solitude, when it was found "not good for man to be alone." The wife should therefore be received and loved by her husband, as a gift from heaven; and "he who findeth a wife, a virtuous wife, obtaineth a blessing from God." Forfaking all others, the husband is bound to the wife, by the law of the marriage covenant, which is founded in the law of nature, and made a precept of the christian religion. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." A union of persons in this relation, should ever be attended with an union of affection, and with increasing love and kindness, that the marriage state may be happy and a blessing to the parties. "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth, let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe,—and be thou always ravished with her love." It is the duty of the husband to take the lead in the

religious exercises and government of the family.
 “ Likewise ye husbands dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.”

THE duty of the wife is to love and reverence her husband; and promote his interest, comfort and happiness. That the happiness of mankind might be increased an help meet was given to man, at the creation. Personal and perpetual love and fidelity are mutually pledged in the marriage covenant, and the wife expressly promises obedience to the husband. “ Nature, says one, may have made and left the sexes of the human species, nearly equal, in their faculties and perfectly so in their rights; but to guard against those competitions, which an equality, or a contested superiority, is almost sure to produce, the christian religion enjoins upon the wife that obedience which she promises, and in terms so peremptory and absolute, that it seems to extend to every thing not criminal, or not entirely inconsistent with the woman’s happiness.”

THE mahometan and pagan systems of religion and morality, give the power of tyrants to husbands; and place the wife in a degrading state of servitude. But the christian morality which is founded in love, places the wife in a happy condition, and makes her the companion and friend of the husband. It demands obedience only in all things lawful: and this mild superiority was originally signified by *his* priority of creation, and by the woman’s being taken out of him, and given to him as a companion and assistant, and by his superior strength of body and fortitude of mind, fitting him for the arduous labors of

life. The more christianized a people are, the happier is the condition of the women. "Wives be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they may be won by the conversation of the wives, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear, whose adorning,—let it be the hidden man of the heart, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in old time, the holy women also who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord; whose daughters ye are, so long as ye do well."

THE character of a virtuous wife is drawn by a masterly hand, in the book of proverbs. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her;—she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hand. She is like the merchant's ships, she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night and giveth meat to her household;—with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard;—she layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff;—she stretcheth out her hand to the poor and to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household for they are clothed in scarlet. Her husband is known among the elders of the land. Strength and honor are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also and he praiseth her."

IN the government and religious order and duties of the family, it is necessary that the parties be a

greed and united. But the principal mutual duties of this relation, are to assist each other, in the best manner to serve their generation to God's acceptance; to be married in the Lord, and serve him as heirs of the grace of life, and expectants of future glory; that so their virtuous love, may be the commencement of a pure and immortal friendship, in the celestial world.

2. The mutual duties of rulers and subjects.— The duties of magistrates are the establishment of wise and salutary laws, and the impartial administration of justice. Rulers are called God's ministers, and are appointed to rule and judge in righteousness. The magistrate's commission is comprised in the declaration of an ancient king, 2 Chronicles 19. "He set judges in the land, and said unto them take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment,— wherefore let the fear of the Lord be upon you, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts." The magistrate's duty is not confined wholly to legislation, and distributive justice; it comprehends also all suitable labors for the establishments of morality and religion; for without the sanctions of these civil government and order are not easily maintained. A people who are destitute of the practical knowledge of God and accountableness to him, and of a future retribution, are destitute of an efficient principle of moral conduct in society. "They who fear not God, neither will they regard man." Morality founded in the principles of religion, is the best security of civil government. Good morals are more efficacious than good laws. The supreme ruler of nations honors and prospers a people who worship him and obey his immutable

laws, and casts down the thrones and governments which reject them. He hath established an immutable connection between public virtue and public happiness, and between public vice and misery. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the ruin of a people." Magistrates are to defend the people from external enemies, and from domestic internal factions; to guard the peace and advance the public prosperity. They are to be exemplary in all virtue, going before others in all good works: to deliver the oppressed, shield the innocent, defend the helpless, and restrain and punish the vicious and rebellious. They are appointed for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them who do well. As civil government is a divine ordinance, magistrates are called gods in the sacred writing, to denote that they act as the vicegerents of the supreme ruler of the world, and that they are to conform themselves to his revealed will; mindful of their accountability to him, for the high trust reposed in them. Under this impression, justice will be administered in mercy, and righteousness be the stability of the times.

THE duties of subjects or people to rulers are, subjection to lawful authority, and ready obedience to all good and salutary laws. It is an important precept of the christian religion, that "every soul be subject to the higher powers, for the powers that be are ordained of God. Render to all their due: tribute to whom tribute, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Speak not evil of dignities." In the execution of the arduous duties of their office, people are to afford to their rulers all willing assistance and concurrence in all things necessary for the good and welfare of the community; and to offer up fervent prayers to God for them, that they may

be endued with wisdom, fortitude and fidelity. "I exhort, says St. Paul, that prayers and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty." It is the duty of the people to support their civil rulers, that they may devote their time and abilities to the public.

3. THERE are special duties resulting from the relation of ministers and people. The special duties of the ministers of the gospel are fidelity in all ministerial offices, and zeal to promote the edification and salvation of the people over whom the Holy Ghost, hath made them overseers. To labor in this work, by faith, by purity, by prayer, by preaching, and by private instruction; ever mindful of their accountability to their Lord and Redeemer, whose servants they are, and who has appointed them to this work. And to this work they are wholly to give themselves, that their profiting may appear.

THE duties of people towards their ministers, are to hear and receive, with all readiness, the gospel dispensed by them, striving to profit thereby;—to pray for their fidelity and success in the gospel ministry, and to follow them so far as they are followers of Christ. To the ministers of religion, who devote their studies and life to the edification and salvation of men, all in whom the spirit of the gospel reigns, will be disposed, heartily, to administer to their temporal support. The ignorant and avaricious only, will refuse their equitable proportion, to maintain an institution calculated to promote universal knowledge & happiness; but designed principally to promote the salvation of the souls of men. The blessed founder of the christian church and ministry hath said, Luke x, "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

4. THE obligations of masters to servants are, justice and kindness towards them ; providing for their temporal comfort and eternal happiness ; kind acceptance of their faithful services ; not threatening or severely correcting for smaller faults, remembering that they themselves are the servants of Christ, and have many faults which need forgiveness. " Ye masters, doing the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your master is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him." It is the master's duty to set before his servants and those under his care an example of virtue and religion, and to enforce by daily instruction and authority, the knowledge and fear of God, and resolve with that valiant faint and soldier Joshua, that they shall serve the Lord. Allowing and encouraging servants to worship God both publicly and in secret ; and restraining and correcting all instances of vice and irreligion. It is the duty of servants to honor and obey their masters, with fidelity. " Exhort servants to please their masters well in all things, shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Tho' servants may meet with hard usage, and be compelled to unpleasant labor, they are meekly to bear the burden from a sense of duty to God. And tho' servants to masters on earth, they should renounce the more grievous servitude of sin, and earnestly seek to be made free in Christ, with that blessed and everlasting freedom from sin and condemnation, which he gives to all, without respect of persons, who believe in him and do his commandments.

THE duties of the rich towards the poor, are compassion and charity, distributing to the wants of the needy, and administering consolation to the afflicted. The duties of the poor towards their be-

nefactors, are gratitude and their prayers for them :
 of the aged towards the young, are condescension,
 counsel and direction in duty : of the young towards
 the aged, are reverence and obedience to their in-
 structions, and readiness to afford them assistance in
 every office of kindness, when the wants of the aged
 demand their help. The duty of superiors in know-
 ledge and honors, is "condescension to men of low
 degree" : and of equals, mutual love and benevo-
 lence. These important relative and social duties,
 the great law of nature and revelation obliges us to
 do and practise towards others ; although they
 should neglect to practise them towards us. Our
 duty is to be done, tho' others neglect theirs. The
 great commandment of the law, "to love our neigh-
 bor as ourselves," will incline us so to do. "And
 as ye would that men should do unto you, do ye e-
 ven so to them." We are,

LASTLY, To consider the animating motive to
 enforce the important duties of filial piety, contain-
 ed in the promise annexed to this commandment.
 "That thy days may be long on the land which the
 Lord thy God giveth thee." This is a special pro-
 mise to filial obedience. Health and long life, to
 those who honor their parents. The blessings pro-
 mised in former ages to the obedient, were princi-
 pally promises of temporal blessings, as health,
 peace, affluence and longevity : but the gospel pro-
 mise's more valuable blessings ; the blessings of the
 covenant of grace ; and yet in that merciful cove-
 nant temporal blessings are also included, and given
 to the righteous ; so far as they shall be necessary for
 their best good, and the glory of God. "For god-
 liness had the promise of the life which now is, and
 of that which is to come." Under the present dis-
 pensation, altho' children who honor their parents

are not infallably assured of long life; yet are they assured of other blessings more valuable, in exchange. If the promise of long life was in a manner peculiar to obedient children under the law; still we have ground to conclude, that under the gospel dispensation, the lives of obedient children are prolonged beyond those of the disobedient and profane. Some read the promise in the original, "That they, thy parents, may prolong thy days." Parents by their prayers and blessing on obedient children, are instrumental of drawing down blessings from heaven upon them, as long life, usefulness, honor and happiness. Those who now obey their parents in the Lord, if they do not always enjoy long life, yet the loss, if it may be called a loss, shall be made up to them, in blessings more valuable: and such persons are commonly more useful, respected and beloved while they live, and lamented when dead. "For honorable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years: but wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age."* And filial piety will be gloriously recompensed in heaven.

THIS is called the first commandment with promise. It is the first promise made to the observance of a particular precept. The second precept contains a general promise to them who love God and keep all his commandments: but *this* promises a special blessing to those who keep it.

KINGS, Magistrates, ministers, the aged, masters, and instructors of youth, as well as natural parents, in the sacred scriptures are called fathers; and subjects, people, the young, servants and pupils, are called children; and the mutual obligations and

* Wisdom of Solomon, iv. 8, 9. † Ephesians, vi. 2.

duties of these respective relations, are summarily comprised in this divine precept; and justify the extent and latitude in which it is here explained. Let this subject be improved in a few inferences.

1. As the obligation of children to parents is placed at the head of all moral and relative duty to men, we infer the great importance of filial obedience; that children should love their parents, cheerfully obey all their lawful commands, and seek their interest, comfort and happiness in all respects. Allow me, dear children and youth, to invite and urge you to the constant observance of the sacred duties which are due to your parents. They are of the utmost importance to your honor and happiness, and to the comfort of your parents. "Hearken ye children to the instructions of a father, and attend to know understanding." Experience and wisdom are to be expected from your parents, and you are favored by heaven, in that you have such affectionate and faithful guides to direct you in knowledge and virtue. Those whose names are mentioned with approbation in the sacred pages, were dutiful and affectionate to their parents. Jacob the son of Isaac attended to the wishes of his pious parents, in his settlement in the world, and comforted them; as did also his pious father. The behaviour of Esau was the reverse, and procured him the character of a profane person. Joseph was a most dutiful son, and God highly honored and prospered him. Above all, let me propose to your imitation the example of the blessed Jesus, who in the days of his childhood and youth, was subject to his earthly parents. He has given you a bright pattern of filial piety, in love and obedience. He also wrought with his own hands in the days of youth, to support himself and them,

ALTHO' you can never make an equal return of love and obedience to your parents, for all their care and kindness towards you, yet let it be your earnest endeavour to recompense them. Shew your gratitude to them, by your zeal to please them. Shun all occasions of grief to them; and let them have the pleasure to see the good fruits of their labors and cares for you, in your good and virtuous conversation. For they can have no greater joy in this world, than to see you walking in the truth.

DISOBEDIENCE to parents is a dreadful evidence of a degenerate and wicked heart, and of a person's ripening for all manner of evil and ruin. It is classed by the apostle with unthankfulness and unmercifulness, and other crimes; "and they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The curse of heaven will fall on such, either in this world, or the world to come. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it:—his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness."

It has been just remarked that those who have been loving and dutiful to parents, God has usually prospered in the world, and themselves also blessed, with dutiful children, and with the riches of heavenly grace. And that those on the other hand, who have been disobedient and cruel to parents, have been punished with children like themselves. As then, children and youth, you would enjoy the approbation of your own minds,—the blessings of your parents,—the esteem of the virtuous and good,—usefulness in life,—comfort in old age and peace in death, and the plaudit of your righteous and merciful judge, love and practise the duties which

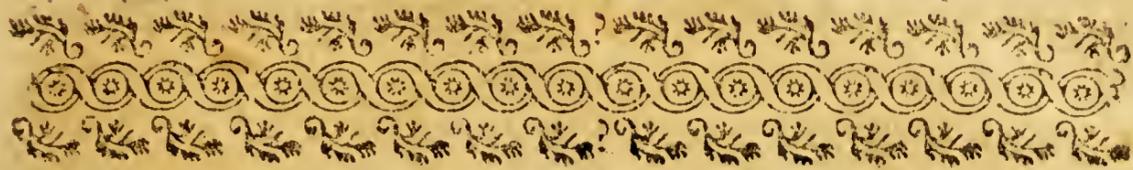
you owe to your parents, and “obey them in the Lord.”

2. If such are the obligations of children to parents, equally important are the obligations of parents. On them devolves the two-fold obligation, to recompense the tender love and care of parents to them, in their's towards their own children; and to “train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” To you, honored parents, God has committed an important charge. To you he hath given children to be educated for him, in virtuous knowledge and the fear of God,—to be qualified for a useful life, and for the holy and happy condition of the children of your father in heaven. Their reputation and usefulness in life, under God, depend much on your faithful instructions and good example; and on you may also depend their happy condition in the other world. If you strive to promote their salvation, you have gracious encouragement, that the seeds of pious instruction shall be watered with heavenly grace, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life. As you wish their present and immortal happiness; be persevering in your labors to guide them in the paths of religion. Follow your instructions until you see the good fruits, in their virtuous lives. Awful will be the condemnation of those parents who have neglected the souls of their children, or by their ill example drawn them to wickedness and ruin. “Their blood will be required at their hands.” It will appear that altho’ they were capable of being taught their obligations to God, you suffered them to grow up in ignorance of him; tho’ they had precious souls to be saved, you suffered them to be lost. What mutual, dreadful accusations will irreligious parents and children retort upon each other, in that world of wo, which is prepared

for the ungodly. How dreadful the employment, of the days of miserable existence, through ages of hopeless end.

BUT on the other hand, peaceful is the exit of the pious parent, who has labored to secure the salvation of his children. His labor is with the Lord, and his reward in heaven. Having done his duty towards them, as a faithful parent, by the assistance of grace, how must his happiness in heaven be increased, when there he shall find that his labor was not in vain; when his children shall be "his crown of joy, and rise up and call him blessed."— Impressed with a solemn belief of a speedy entrance upon one or the other of these momentous scenes, let us, parents and children, humbly look to God, imploring his efficacious grace, that we may so fulfil the duties of these relations as to obtain acceptance, thro' Jesus Christ.

To conclude: let it, sirs, be our daily care and labor, to do, with all good conscience, in the fear of God, the duties of the several relations which we sustain towards our fellow men. And may we serve our generation well, by the will and grace of God, whether we are parents, or children,—brethren or sisters,—magistrates or subjects,—preachers or hearers,—masters or servants,—rich or poor,—superiors, inferiors or equals: remembering that death will speedily dissolve these connexions, when "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," to give account how we have done our duty in them: that we may give it with joy, and be accepted as good and faithful servants, may it please God of his mercy to grant, for the sake of Jesus our Lord, who hath loved the children of men, and to whom be praises everlasting. A M E N.



S E R M O N XIII.

The duty and the means of preserving life,—the
opposite vices.

P R E C E P T S I X T H.

EXODUS XX. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THIS is a short, but comprehensive precept, and like the other negative precepts of the law involves the duties opposed to the sin prohibited. It forbids the taking of life, either our own, or the life of others; and comprehends the duty of pursuing all lawful and suitable means to preserve life. It is to be understood with the restriction of unlawful putting to death: for the law of nature justifies taking away life in certain cases, and the precepts of christianity do not disannul that law.

As this precept forbids unjustly putting to death, it necessarily forbids those evil passions, or actions, which have a direct or remote tendency to the perpetration of this great sin. And on the other hand it demands the cultivation of those benevolent and friendly affections towards our fellow men, which are necessary to make life desirable and happy. It regulates all our thoughts, words and actions in our intercourse with mankind. It is a law given by the omniscient searcher of hearts, who demands goodness and rectitude of principle and thought, as well

as propriety and benevolence of behaviour. That it is thus extensive and spiritual as well as external, appears from the exposition given of it by our Lord, Matthew 6. "Whosoever is angry with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment." And "whosoever, says St. John, hateth his brother is a murderer." For it is unrestrained indulgence of the malignant passions of anger, hatred and revenge which impels to the perpetration of this enormous crime. This precept then respects the due government of our passions and appetites, as well as our words and actions. As it restrains the irascible passions, it also condemns all wrathful expressions and actions, all contentions, wounding, duelling and the like brutal behaviour. As all sinful dispositions and actions tending to destroy life, are forbidden, the practice of the opposite virtues are commanded. I shall attempt to explain and illustrate this precept, by considering,

1. THE duty of using all suitable means to preserve life.

2. THE unlawfulness of taking away our own, or the life of others.

3. THE duty of self government, and of bringing under the subjection of religion, our spirits, passions and appetites, and the cultivation of the opposite virtues.

1. WE are to employ all lawful means to preserve our own life, by using with moderation and temperance, the bounties of providence, in the nourishment and life of the body.

THE gifts of nature are liberally dispensed for the support of life. The soil, the sea, the air and the

elements, are all laboring to prepare food and cloathing and comforts for mankind. But the exertions of men are necessary to bring to maturity and perfection the means of a comfortable subsistence: and by the sweat of his face, man is to get his bread. A certain proportion of food is necessary for the life of the body: more than this is excess and intemperence. The wants of nature are few and are easily supplied: a luxurious appetite creates many artificial ones, and is not easily gratified. Health is preserved by temperence. It is also necessary to protect our bodies from the extremes of heat and cold and storms, by suitable cloathing; and in sickness to use proper means and medicine, for the restoration of health. The bounties of providence designed for the health and life of the body, are in numerous instances by the abuse of them, the means of destroying them. Diseases and untimely death are commonly among the unhappy effects of intemperence. Self-preservation is a natural principle, and a law of revelation. "No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it." Man is, by his Creator, in some degree committed to his own keeping, and the means of preserving life are within his reach. There are many dangers in life, in which the interference of others can afford him no assistance, and under providence, he must depend upon his own exertions. And in the use of the supports of life, he cannot make use of the aid of others.

THERE are however certain exempt cases in which duty to God obliges to hazard life, and even to resign or take it away. These are necessary self-defence,—lawful war,—and in the cause of religion, in times of persecution. When one is attacked and life aimed at, if the person cannot escape, he may lawfully take the life of the murderer. The reason

of this is, that the preservation of his own life, is committed to him as the first object of his care. The christian religion teaches us the duty of preserving our own life, when in danger from an enemy, by all prudent and lawful means. When the enemies of Paul combined to take his life, he used proper means to preserve it. He sought that protection from authority which is the design of the institution of government to afford to the subject.

In lawful defensive war, persons are obliged to hazard the lives of others, as well as their own. When men rise up violently to destroy the lives and properties of others, they may be lawfully resisted and destroyed. If they act the part of furious beasts of prey, like beasts of prey, they are to be destroyed. But this is lawful only in necessary self-defence, and when all other means of preservation have failed.

THERE have been instances of persons who have sacrificed their own lives to save the life of others. "Peradventure, for a good man, one would even dare to die."

It is also a duty for a person to resign his life for the cause of God, or in defence of the true religion. When a person is not permitted to live, unless he will renounce the worship of God, or abjure the true religion, it is his duty to submit to death. This was the fiery trial to which the ancient worthies, and the martyrs in former and later ages submitted. They were tortured not accepting deliverance. They sealed their testimony to the truth with their blood, and esteemed the sufferings of death, of small account compared with the glory that awaited them in heaven. To such are addressed the animating words of Christ, "Fear not them that kill the

body, but are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. For he who saveth his life, shall loose it ; and he who looseth his life for my sake and the gospel shall find it." As the love of God is a good infinitely preferable to life, life is to be willingly sacrificed in the competition, whenever he is pleased to permit persecution to rage.

2. MEN may not lawfully take away their own lives by laying violent hands on themselves. The precept, thou shalt not kill, which perhaps with greater propriety might be translated *thou shalt do no murder*, equally prohibits the taking our own life and the life of others. No condition of sufferings can justify an impatient wishing for death, and much less the putting a period to life. Suicide and whatever tends to hasten death, is forbidden by his precept. God has appointed to us our station in this life, and we are not to dismiss ourselves, but wait the appointed time. The suicide is chargable with the aggravated guilt of murder. His fear of present or future sufferings in life, hurry him to the horrid crime, and prove him to be of a dastardly spirit. His deliberately rushing into eternity for refuge from trouble, argues his great impiety, and bold defiance of the authority and justice of God. Shall a deserter be punished with death by the hands of men ? what will then be his condition, who deserts his station in this world, and appears in the awful presence of his maker, unsummoned and unprepared : He appears before him in the very act of insulting him, and without the possibility of repentance. The condition of such an enormous offender we can neither express or imagine. From troubles here, and which for ought he knew, might be but of short duration, where scenes are continu-

ally shifting, he plunges into that world of misery, to which rebels against God, and all murderers are doomed. Thus perished king Saul, falling upon his own sword, on Mount Gilboa, too cowardly to bear a reverse of fortune; and thus fell Judas, that he might go to that place for which his crimes had prepared him.

From the charge of the guilt of suicide, we must exempt that ancient soldier and servant of God, Sampson. His case was peculiar. His cruel enemies and the enemies of God had him in their hands. They had put out his eyes and insulted him in his misery. From the circumstances of his death, it appears that he was divinely directed as to the manner of it; that by his voluntary death he might prevent the philistines from inflicting one more cruel, do valiently in the overthrow of those whom God had doomed to destruction, stop the triumphs of the daughters of the uncircumcised, over one of the faithful servants of God, and expose the vanity of their Idol deities. God wrought a miracle, to make his death glorious and useful. He is ranked by the apostle, among the worthies who died in faith, the circumstances of it, must therefore have been by divine direction. In the same light we are also to understand the trying act of the patriarch Abraham, in obedience to the command of God, about to offer up his only son in sacrifice. In this mysterious affair, the faith and obedience of Abraham was most marvellous, and so was also the resignation of Isaac. He voluntarily submitted to be slain. His age and strength could have successfully resisted; but persuaded that it was the will of God, he bowed his head, patient as a lamb, upon the alter, waiting the fatal stroke: and the father when he drew the knife and was on the point of plunging it into the heart of his son, loved him as his own soul, and gladly would have died for him.

THIS marvellous action was designed to shew the patriarch and the ancient church, in a lively figure, the death of Christ the promised Saviour. Abraham's slaying his son was to express the almighty father giving his beloved son to die, to atone for the sins of men; and the submission of Isaac, the patient resignation of Jesus to death. *Then* the gospel was preached to Abraham,--*then* he saw in lively vision "the day of Christ, and was glad." He believed in God and in the certain advent of the Messiah, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. I shall only add here, that the ram miraculously caught in the thicket and offered in sacrifice, in the room of Isaac, was designed to signify God's acceptance of the sacrifices of animals until the advent of the great sacrifice for sin, as perpetual memorials to his ancient church of that glorious event.

God is the proprietor of the lives of his creatures, and may consistently with his goodness and justice, make use of one to take away the life of another; as he uses natural means or second causes, to bring to a period the lives of his creatures.

2. WE are to preserve the lives of our fellow men, by all such friendly and benevolent means, as tend to promote their health, their peace and worldly condition; by guarding them from injuries and wrongs, by administering comfort to the afflicted—cloathing to the naked—food to the famishing—medicine and nourishment to the sick, and help to the helpless of all ages and conditions. The obligations of preserving the lives of others appears,

1. IN that mankind are made for society. "It is not good for man to be alone." If it was lawful for one man to take the life of another, for any or every

cause, a general and universal massacre would take place; for the right of one so to do, would be the right of all, and the world would become a slaughter house of desolation and field of blood. It is evident that since mankind are placed together, by their creator, on the earth, it is his will that they should be mutually helpful and beneficial. We therefore find that we are dependent on each other for assistance and society, to our comfortable existence here, and defence against the many accidents and evils of life: the helpless infant is dependent on the parent, and the sick and infirm, on those who have ability to relieve them.

MANKIND are dependent on each other, not only for the attainment of the means of a comfortable existence in life, but for that knowledge and assistance which are requisite to their spiritual and immortal happiness. *This* is the life of the soul, infinitely important, and of more value than this temporary life. Ignorance and vice are the death of the soul: but in the knowledge and love of God, consists its spiritual and eternal life. The salvation of the soul, is worthy the name of life. This present existence will speedily close; but the life of the soul, will never cease.

THE principle which impels us to preserve the present life of ourself and others, should more powerfully impel us to secure and preserve this better life.— For what shall it profit a man, if he should prolong the days of this vain life to its utmost bounds, and gain the whole world, and lose an immortal life?— This life is the one thing needful, and which the light of nature and the precepts of the gospel, teach us to seek first and last, as our chief duty and felicity. They are chargeable with the guilt of murdering their

own souls, who continue in ignorance of God, of the Saviour, & the truths & duties of revelation, while the means of knowledge and grace are at hand. They are guilty of destroying the souls of others, who suffer those under their care to grow up in ignorance and wickedness, or hinder their salvation by their pernicious example. *They* preserve the life of their precious souls who strive to know God and their duty; who love God in sincerity, and believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and do his commandments. *They* preserve the life of the souls of others, who are instrumental of leading them in the paths of virtue and religion, to the knowledge of God and our almighty Saviour.

2. **THEY** who neglect to preserve the lives of others by all suitable means in their power, must be considered as accessory to their death: and guilty of a species of murder. The principle which inclines us to preserve our own life, should compel us to preserve the life of others. For the law of nature and revelation has made it our duty to “love our neighbor as ourselves.” This divine law, our blessed Lord hath illustrated by his own example, as the pattern of our imitation; even that mankind should love one another with the same love which they have for themselves. The love which we bear to ourselves, which powerfully excites us to use all possible means to preserve life,—to shun things hurtful and dangerous to our own life and happiness, we are to put in exercise towards our fellow men, in like circumstances. And by the same principle of benevolence to others, we are also bound to seek their spiritual edification, and eternal happiness, by all the means and advantages which God hath put into our hands.

THIS great moral law of universal love to mankind,

which was wonderfully displayed in the life and death of Christ, is much insisted on by numerous precepts and examples in the gospel. Without that charity to our fellow men, which powerfully inclines us in our respective relative and social connections, to do good and seek the temporal and eternal happiness of others, an inspired apostle assures us, that we are nothing. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. Follow after charity. By love serve one another: for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Were this principle of uncorrupted religion, in universal use, mankind would do no injury knowingly; but be disposed to promote the interests and happiness of others as their own. The miseries which men suffer from their own follies and crimes, and which are brought upon men by their fellow men, would be no more, and security, quietness and peace universally abound. But as this is not the condition of man in his present state of degeneracy from God and duty; it is necessary that laws and punishments should be the resort, to restrain men from crimes. While the corrupt passions of men overcome the dictates of enlightened reason, and break the laws of God and society, cases will arise in which it is thought lawful to take away life; some instances of which have been already mentioned, on which a few additional observations will be made.—Such instances are, just self-defence against assassins, —lawful defensive war,—and the execution of civil justice.

1. HE who suffers himself to be killed, when there is not a possibility of escaping death, except by the death of the assassin, is chargeable with the guilt of not preserving his own life, and in effect also, of valy

ing the life of the murderer more than his own, which he is not obliged to do. Such a sudden assault justifying the slaying an enemy, is on the supposition, that the assaulted has not opportunity to escape, or appeal to the magistrate; or those means of defence which the laws have provided. On the same principle we are to defend the life of our neighbor or fellow men, when attacked by assassins.

2. THE law of nature justifies slaying an enemy in a just defensive war. The law of self-preservation which justifies an individual, in slaying his enemy in the defence of his own life, makes it the duty of people to destroy the lives of public enemies, when their own cannot otherwise be preserved. Christian rulers have in all ages deemed it a duty to resist with armed violence, the destroyers of nations. But before this extremity is resorted to, a people ought to be well satisfied that the war is just and necessary, and that all prudent and pacific measures have been used, and have failed. It is to be lamented that mankind, have so universally discovered a promptitude for war; and too frequently plunged into the dreadful gulf, to gratify a spirit of unforgiving revenge, or mean ambition, or avaricious plunder. The precious lives of myriads of the human race have been sacrificed upon this all devouring altar.

“ O why will kings forget that they are men ?

“ And men that they are brethren ?”

An inspired apostle traces this evil to its source: “ From whence come wars and fightings ? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members ?”

THAT war is just, in certain cases, appears in that the Most High himself, commanded the Israelites to

war against the Midianites and destroy them. And a curse is denounced against him, that kept back his sword from blood. In such cases the peaceable religion of the Saviour does not forbid it. To his disciples he says, "he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." Christians have a right to self-defence. His disciples carried arms to defend themselves from enemies, as appears by one of them drawing his sword to defend Christ at the time of his surrendry of himself to his persecutors. The necessary duty of self-defence, is consistent with his declaration, that "they who use the sword, shall also perish by the sword:" which has, no doubt, reference to offensive wars, or wars as they are commonly managed.

Its lawfulness further appears, from the very proper exhortation which his harbinger, John, gave to the soldiers who came to his baptism, and asked, "And what shall we do?" that is, that we may be qualified subjects of the kingdom of the Messiah. Had their profession been sinful, it was of the last importance that they should know it. John answered them, "do violence to no man,—accuse no man falsely,—and be content with your wages." He cautions them against the peculiar temptations attending the profession of arms; but does not condemn the profession lawfully used. It is indeed a great calamity that men are sometimes forced to the dreadful trade of war, in self-defence: for while they resist their enemies, they hazard their own life, and the innocent and oppressed fall in battle, as well as their guilty oppressors. Happy would it be for individuals as well as nations, did that direction of the apostle suitably impress all minds, "As much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men."

THE mode of warfare which the people of Israel carried on against the nations of Canaan, was singular: They destroyed promiscuously, the prisoners, women, children and the aged. The apology for this is, that they acted by a divine commission. The people of Canaan had ripened themselves for destruction, by their enormous wickedness, like the people of Sodom. And God made use of the Israelites as a scourge to destroy them, as unfit longer to live; as he sometimes makes use of earthquakes and other judgments to destroy men.

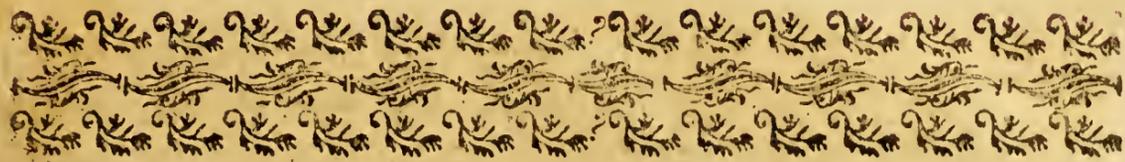
To these exceptions from the text, may be added the lawfulness of taking away the life of criminals, by the hand of public justice. One end of the institution of civil government, is to be "a terror to evil doers." It is said to be a dictate of the law of nature that murderers should be put to death. It was a judicial law given to Israel, "Thou shalt not suffer a murderer to live." Some humane advocates for the mitigation of the severity of capital punishments, have however, doubted of the lawfulness of taking away the life of a man, even for murder. They assert that as the *judicial* laws of the jews were local and temporary, they are not now obligatory: and that as a man has not power over his own life, he cannot convey to society a power to take it away. But to this it is replied, that as an individual has a lawful right, (as has been already shewn) to destroy his murderer; on his death, that right devolves to the society, and they may lawfully use it, for the safety of the public. If a punishment could be devised more efficacious to restrain from the commission of this dreadful crime; it would be the dictate of wisdom to adopt it. Less can be said in justification of taking life for lesser crimes, as theft, forgery and the like.

THE commutation of the punishment of death, for solitary confinement and constant labor, which some legislatures have adopted is a dictate of mercy as well as justice. And as it gives offenders an opportunity to reflect upon their crimes and to reform; it is to be hoped will be more effectual to restrain bold transgressors, than even the punishment of death.*

THAT we may shun even the appearance of evil, and maintain a conscience void of offence, both towards God and also towards men, may it please God of his mercy to grant, for Jesus' sake.

A M E N.

* The legislatures of Massachusetts and Connecticut have adopted this humane and wise method of punishment. Felons are confined, some for life, and others for terms proportioned to the nature of their crimes. In Connecticut, a deep opening into the bowels of a mountain in the town of Simsbury, was formerly made for the purpose of digging copper ore. It is now a prison for criminals, into which they are shut down at night and let up in the morning. They nearly defray the expence of their keeping by the manufacture of nails.



S E R M O N X I V .

The great guilt of taking away life,—the duty of self government,—of the passions and appetites.

EXODUS XX. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

THIS precept forbids private or personal revenge for any real or imaginary injury. Whether a person prompted by a malicious spirit of revenge wishes mischief to another, or by secret arts aims at the destruction of his comfort or life, he is a murderer, in the sight of God, and falls under the condemnation of this law. Unrestrained anger leads to the commission of this greatest crime of man against man. And as such, it has annexed to it, the most shameful, dreadful punishment: universal horror and untimely death, from the hands of men, and the wrath of almighty God, in the world to come. So we come,

2. To shew the great and aggravated guilt of this sin. So precious in the sight of God is the life of man, that in the laws delivered to the jews, the ox or other beast, that had killed a man, was to be put to death, and its flesh to be held in abomination. The reason given in that law, why one man may not put another to death, is, that in the image of God, made he man. There was something divine, originally in man, and his life is sacred. Man's

life here, is the beginning and the preparation of an existence, which will probably be commensurate in duration, with the existence of the eternal Jehovah. He, who deprives another of life, is guilty of the greatest robbery towards God,—injustice and cruelty towards a fellow immortal, the highest offence against society,—and the greatest folly and madness towards himself.

1. THE murderer is guilty of robbery towards God. All creatures are the absolute property of God. In him they live, and move, and have their being; and God only, has a right to dispose of their lives. He alone may kill or keep alive, and without his permission and direction, none may lawfully deprive another of life. He who takes the life of another, boldly attempts to take him out of the hands of God, out of whose hands, none can deliver. It is robbing God of a subject, a child, a servant whom he hath sent into this world, and to whom he hath assigned his work and labor, during an appointed time.

2. It is an act of the greatest injustice and cruelty towards a fellow creature: as it deprives him of that life which his creator gave him, and which he only can rightly take away. It is an injury for which the offender can make no satisfaction. It cuts off the sufferer from the possession of life and all his earthly comforts. It is an injury great beyond all calculation, as it deprives him of the time and advantages of preparing for death and eternal scenes, and it may be preventing of his eternal salvation. He is suddenly deprived of an opportunity of making his peace with God. It is an irreparable injury to the friends of the deceased, as it deprives them of a brother, a father, a son, on whom perhaps they depended for sup-

port. It is a violation of that law of our nature which obliges us to love our fellow men and to do them good and not evil, and pursue their peace and happiness.

3. It is an high handed offence against society, as it deprives the community of a member; and against magistracy and the laws of the community.— It is to wrest the sword of justice from the hand of authority, and trample upon human and divine laws.

4. THE murderer is guilty of the greatest folly and madness towards himself. He does himself, eventually a greater injury, if possible, than is done to the sufferer. He destroys his own peace and happiness, plants the daggers of self torment within him, and feels a thousand wounds, for the wound which he hath given: he seeks for death as a refuge, and plunges into hell.

OTHER public crimes against the laws of God and society are punished according to their demerit: but the special justice, and wrath of God and man, are executed upon such great offenders. The blood of Abel cried to heaven from the ground, demanding vengeance. It has a voice which is heard to heaven, and which also makes the conscience of the murderer hear and tremble. Human justice usually overtakes such dreadful sinners in this world. “As they have done to others, so God hath requited them.” Such is the horror of mind following the commission of this crime, that murderers have sometimes sought relief by a public confession, and surrender of themselves into the hands of justice. The lashes of a tormenting conscience have extorted a confession of guilt and a wish for death. “Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, and hearken to my speech: for I

have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt." And the first murderer Cain, under the pressure of terrors of conscience, exclaims, "my punishment is greater than I can bear." Their thoughts are continually disturbed with the recollection of the unnatural deed, and the imaginary ghost of the sufferer, and the terrors of the almighty distract them. Thus dreadful is the guilt of taking the life of another, and equally dreadful is the crime of taking away one's own life. The crime of suicide, is loaded with the aggravations just mentioned, and with this additional evil to the criminal, that it cuts him off from all opportunity of repentance for that great sin; for after death there is no room for repentance.

THE laws of God have penalties annexed to them, of punishments in this world; but as the self-murderer puts himself beyond the reach of punishment here, it remains to be taken cognizance of in the other world. This crime therefore is not expressly mentioned, altho' it is included in the precept under consideration. And this precept is broken whether a person deprives himself, or another of life; and perhaps the first is the greatest crime, because the most unnatural of the two. The guilt of this sin depends on a person's being in the possession and exercise of reason, and wilfully and deliberately committing it. Whether it is done in the heat and intoxication of passion, or as the effect of malice aforethought, it is murder, in the view of the moral law; altho' it may be considered very differently, in the view of the civil law. Where a person is accidentally the cause of the death of another, having not an intention of injury, such a death, called chance medley, comes not under the condemnation of this law. When this however happened under the law of

Moses, the accidental man-slayer, was obliged to fly to the nearest city of refuge, and there continue until the death of the High Priest; designed perhaps to teach that this sin, which might be committed, thro' want of due care and attention, as well as all others sins, were to be atoned for by the death of Jesus, our great High Priest, who was to come into the world. To the question whether a murderer can be saved; it may be replied, that we have ground to conclude, that but few of this description are saved. For they whose hearts are so hardened against their fellow men, are also hardened against God. Altho' to teach us the greatness of the divine mercy, and that we are not to limit the power and grace of God, we find on sacred record, that there are instances of murderers to whom the grace of repentance was given, and they obtained mercy: as David and Paul, and some of the murderers of Jesus. But it is also to be considered that some of these did it ignorantly, and thro' blind zeal for God; or the force of impetuous lusts and temptations. We come,

LASTLY, to the consideration of the great duty of self-government, and bringing our spirits, our appetites and passions into subjection to the principles of religion, that thro' grace we may be guarded from all advances towards the sins prohibited, and cultivate the opposite virtues.

WITHOUT the aid of assisting grace, our depraved hearts, alas, too readily cherish the malignant passions of anger and revenge, against those who injure us. If these passions exist in the heart and are cherished there, altho' they do not break out into acts of violence, yet are they a transgression of this law in the sight of God, who demands of us, love

and kindness towards the persons of our fellow-men, and even to our greatest enemies. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you love your enemies and do good to them that persecute you." By this meek and forgiving spirit and disposition, are we to prove ourselves to be the children of God, and that we ourselves have obtained thro' his abounding mercy, the forgiveness of our offences.

I. In the government of our passions in our intercourse with mankind, our first duty is to suppress sinful anger. Our blessed Lord, in explaining this precept of the law, Matthew fifth, hath solemnly declared that causeless anger is a violation of it. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill:—but I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment." It also forbids all rash and unguarded expressions. Anger is sinful when it exists without cause; when it boils in the heart and seeks revenge: when it terminates on the person of the offender, rather than on the sin. The Apostle directs christians to govern the passion of anger: "be ye angry and sin not." This implies that all anger is not sin, or that there is sometimes occasion for a just and sinless anger; and also the danger which we are in, of permitting justifiable anger against the sins and vices of men, to run to such an extreme as makes it criminal: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." For by indulgence it will terminate in revenge. We are carefully to watch and guard our passions, lest our lawful anger and detestation against the wickedness of others should become criminal. Anger is justifiable only when sin is its object; when it shews a proper resentment at the

conduct of the wicked and profane, either against God,—the honor of religion,—and their injurious treatment of ourselves or others. Sinless anger in these cases is attended with pity to the person of the offender, and a disposition to seek his best good. Jesus prayed for his murderers, “father forgive them.” He reprov'd his disciples for their sinful anger, when on his passing with them, thro' an inhospitable village of the Samaritans, the inhabitants offer'd him an affront, which the disciples greatly resent'd; and ask'd his permission for fire to fall from heaven and destroy them. Jesus reprov'd them, saying, “ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.”

UNDER the regulation of a religious principle, anger is lawful, as when the honor of God, or of religion; our own, or the reputation, interests or lives of others, are injured by the wickedness of men. It is a religious duty in such cases, to manifest a proper resentment; but anger is sinful when it cherishes revenge. Revenge seeks the destruction of the offender, rather than his reformation, and is most opposite to a religious temper. “For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” Unrestrained anger is furious and hateful; it degrades the dignity of a man to the condition of a wild beast. See a man in the paroxysm of this infernal passion: his body swells with inward rage seeking for vent: deathlike paleness or flaming redness disfigure his face; his eyes dart fire, and seem to start from their sockets; his teeth gnash; his jaws foam; his sight grows dim, and his hearing deafens; his parched throat utters hoarse and broken sentences; his hands clench and strike together with involuntary violence; his feet stamp the ground; his soul is a whirlwind,

agitating his whole frame, and laying waste his reason and senses, and spreading desolation and death around him. Such a creature is more fit for a house of correction, than the society of men. “The reflection calculated above all others, to allay that haughtiness of temper, which is ever finding out provocations, and which renders anger so impetuous, is that which the gospel proposes; namely, that we ourselves are, or shortly shall be, supplicants for mercy and pardon at the judgment seat of God. Imagine our secret sins disclosed and brought to light; imagine us thus exposed, trembling under the hand of God; casting ourselves on his compassion, crying out for mercy; imagine such a creature talking of satisfaction and revenge, refusing to be intreated, disdainingly to forgive; extreme to mark and to resent what is done amiss; imagine, says one, this, and you can hardly feign to yourself an instance of more unnatural and impious arrogance.”*

THE person who cultivates a peaceable and forgiving disposition, will cautiously shun contentions and litigations: he will recede and give up to his adversary some things which he might lawfully claim, rather than contend; and study for peace, rather than insist on extreme right. The compensation which a person commonly receives for the labor of contending much at law with his neighbors, are mortifying attendance,—loss of precious time,—the agitation of passions, hope and fear, hatred and revenge,—his moral sense of right and wrong, truth and falsehood,—the loss of credit,—the hatred and contempt of good men,—the wasting of his property by every flesh law suit which he engages in—the

* Bennet's letters:

entailment of beggery to his family, and probably endless ruin to himself.

THIS precept enjoins the government of the animal appetites; for by the intemperate indulgence of these, those criminal passions are inflamed, which impel men to injure others and themselves. It demands moderation and temperance in diet, and condemns gluttony and drunkenness. Drunkenness is the source of innumerable evils. Of all the arts which men have invented to degrade themselves, this is the most effectual. Its effects, when it becomes a settled habit, are fatal. It deprives a person of his reason, the perfection and glory of man; reduces him to a breathing carcase without a soul, and to a level with the brute that perisheth. This sin disqualifies a person for society and the necessary labors and duties of life. Some of the ancient philosophers, sometimes permitted their slaves to get intoxicated, that their children, by seeing the odious vice, might early learn to detest it. And what a despicable figure does the drunkard make? his drowsy eyes stupidly stare,—“his tongue falters—his lips quiver—his hands shake,”—his knees bend under the weight of his wreathing body,—his stomach heaves,—but decency forbids the description. But the most melancholy consideration, is that as the rational faculties are stupified by a habit of intemperance, the person cannot be made to see the evil and ruinous nature and effects of this vice. It is the source of contention and wounds without cause, and untimely death. The person who by intoxication deprives himself of reason, is justly punished for the crimes committed in that condition; because he had the power of refraining from intoxicating drink. All other fleshly lusts which destroy the peace, health and life of ourselves and others, are

forbidden by this precept; which also makes it our duty to cultivate and practise the opposite virtues; as benevolence, meekness, mercy and forgiveness towards others, and temperance and sobriety towards ourselves.

THE government of the tongue is an important, moral, and religious duty. It is a little member; but capable of doing much good or harm. It is the outlet of the passions, and should ever be under the controul of discretion. "Speak evil of no man," is a general rule of government for the tongue. All slander and evil speaking are severely prohibited by the moral and divine law. This vice is repeatedly reprobated in the new testament, and the practise of a kind and benevolent speech and behaviour forcibly recommended. The moral social and relative duties of life, this precept obliges us to practise from the threefold consideration of duty to God, to mankind, and ourselves. "Be patient towards all men; see that none render evil for evil to any man. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." These are coals which will not burn him, but melt him down into kindness, if he possesses the spirit of a man.

Thus have we considered the nature and guilt of the sins prohibited by this precept, and our obligations to preserve the life, the health and happiness of ourselves and our fellow-men. Before I conclude, I would remark that the precept, "thou shalt not kill," is a general precept, and to be understood of our fellow-men; yet also, does it include the prohi-

bition of killing wantonly and for sport, any innocent animal. The great proprietor of his creatures, has given us permission to kill any of the animals of the air, the earth and sea, which are necessary for our food and nourishment; and without such permission, it would be unlawful for us to put any of them to death, except in defence of our own lives. Let us guard against every degree of cruelty and inhumanity towards the inferior creatures which God hath subjected to the dominion of man.

REFLECTIONS.

1. We infer the great obligations of the law of self-government over our passions and appetites; and that we indulge in nothing, whereby we may disqualify ourselves from serving our generation, by the will of God, in the best manner of which we are capable. It teaches us the duty of preserving the life, the health and comfort of our fellow-men, and doing all in our power to promote their eternal happiness. And that we cultivate such a life of sobriety, righteousness and godliness, as shall, thro' the mercy and grace of God our Saviour, qualify us for acceptance with him, and felicity after death. Under this impression, we shall sacredly guard, however powerful temptations may assault us, against all those excesses of our passions and appetites, which disqualify us for answering the great purposes of our life, and the security of the temporal and eternal happiness of ourselves and others.

LET a firm persuasion of the equity and goodness of the administration of the divine government, silence every disquieting thought at our worldly condition, calm our agitated passions, and inspire us with resignation and hope, even when providences

are dark and threatenng. Let not the flattering charms of wealth or pleasure hinder our profiting, in the best manner, by the word and the instrumental means of grace. Let us cultivate a lively gratitude to God for all his mercies, and suitable returns for kindneses received from our fellow-men, and a meek and forgiving spirit towards our enemies.

LET us, above all things, beware of the guilt of destroying our own souls, or the souls of others, by ignorance and neglect of the means of divine knowledge and salvation. Let the subject be improved as a solemn warning to those, who by their ill example, are the destroyers of the souls of those around them; who are so far from doing good in the places where they are, that they are the undoers of men, by their infidel principles, their profaneness, intemperence, contentious and hateful tempers. "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, wasting and destruction are in their paths." They are the children of Apollion, the destroyer, and their damnation slumbereth not.

LET me affectionately exhort those who are in younger life, to shun the ways of sin and death, and choose the pleasing and profitable paths of virtue, which lead to glory and felicity. Mortify the fleshly and unmanly appetites. Indulge not the irascible passions, they will strengthen with years. If you are wrathful when young, your passions will be a torment to you, and intolerable to others, when you are old. Beware of the vice of intemperance, which, like that of revengeful anger, becomes by indulgence a confirmed habit, from which, instances of reformation are not often seen. The gross vio-

lation of this divine law, is commonly the fruit of one or both these ruinous vices.

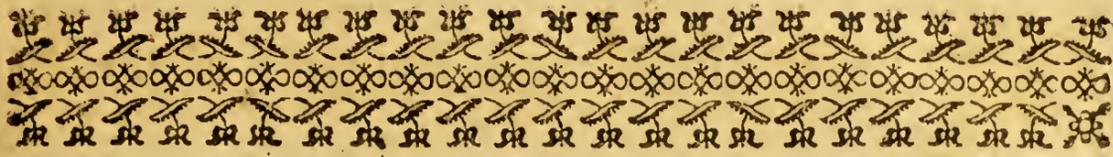
THIS subject shews the guilt and madness of the practice of duelling. It has its origin, not in honor ; but in pride ; not in forgiveness, but revenge ; not in humanity, but cruelty. In this dishonorable rencounter, the innocent are equally exposed to fall, as the guilty.

FINALLY, brethren, let us always cherish, and heartily shew a benevolent, meek and forgiving temper towards all men : and while we feel a suitable resentment at the vices of others, and prosecute offenders against men, from a sense of duty to God, let us pity their persons, in the merciful and forgiving spirit of the religion of Jesus ; remembering that we ourselves are also offenders against God. Merciful Lord !

“ That pity I to others shew,
“ That pity shew to me.”

“ Let every man be slow to wrath. He that ruleth his spirit is greater than him that taketh a city. If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. Follow peace with all men ; be at peace among yourselves ; and may the God of peace, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, thro' Jesus Christ.”

A M E N.



S E R M O N XV.

The virtue of chastity—the guilt and evils attending the violation of chastity.

P R E C E P T S E V E N T H.

EXODUS XX. 14.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

THIS concise law respects the virtue and duty of chastity. By our Saviour's exposition of it, we are taught that it is a very extensive law, and given to regulate the emotions and passions of the mind, as well as the external behaviour.

THE gross sin of adultery only is mentioned ; but the precept infolds all collateral and subordinate sins of the same species, as fornication, polygamy, uncleanness, lascivious thoughts and emotions of the heart, obscene speech and indecent dalliance and familiarity ; and all those things which are contrary to that purity of mind, and body, modest speech and innocent behaviour which is the ornament and glory of both sexes. This subject is important as it is delicate ; it shall be my endeavour to treat it with a becoming modest plainness. And may a discovery of the guilt and danger of the sin prohibited in all its branches, excite an abhorrence of it ; and the profits and pleasures of the virtue of chastity of tho't, speech and behaviour, invite to the love and practice of the amiable virtues implicated in this prohibition, Allow me,

1. To speak of the nature and guilt of the sin prohibited.

2. THE duty of guarding against temptations to this sin.

3. THE advantages and pleasures attending the virtue of chastity.

THE obligations of mankind to the virtue of chastity, is enforced by a solemn prohibition of the opposite vice. This as well as other moral duties are delivered in negative precepts, forbidding sins, because of the proclivity of our depraved nature to leap the bounds of duty, rather than to practise it. Hence our obligations to practise the positive duties are more forcibly taught and felt, than they would be, by positive precepts. They are included in the prohibition of evil doing. The sin here condemned is the source of manifold evils to the transgressor and to society. Our blessed Lord in his divine exposition of the decalogue,* has taught us that this law extends to the thoughts and desires of the heart, as well as to external behaviour: and as it demands purity of thought, it destroys the evil at its source. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." In the consideration of the sins forbidden by this law, let us pass by those enormous violations of it which brought down the wrath of heaven upon the ancient people of the plains, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The same beastly lusts were also practised by the more polished pagans of Greece and Rome; when men and women leaving

* *Matthew vi.*

the natural use of the sexes, burned in lust one towards another. These outrageous violations of chastity are not fit to be named among christians.

I. ADULTERY is forbidden. In the sacred scriptures the terms adultery and fornication are sometimes used promiscuously, in other places a distinction is observed. Adultery is the criminal commerce of the sexes, where one or both, are in the marriage state. This sin is a violation of the vow of fidelity and a dissolution of the marriage covenant. It is an irreparable damage to the injured party, and attended with extensive evils to society. It destroys esteem and confidence between the husband and wife, and poisons the sources of domestic happiness. It fastens the guilt of perjury on the conscience of the offender, and has generally been held in abhorrence, even by uncivilized nations. The judicial law of the theocracy made the punishment of this crime capital.— Both the adulterer and adulteress were to be put to death.* The jews with an insidious design brought one convicted of this crime to Jesus,|| saying, “master, Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?” It may be asked why Jesus did not also condemn her, and approve of her execution? To this it is replied, that the accusers were the enemies of Christ, and came with the ensnaring design of engaging him in a controversy with the civil authority, to whom it belonged to take cognizance of the crime. Christ assumed not the office of a civil magistrate or judge, and therefore said to the woman, “neither do I condemn thee;” but adds “go and sin no more:” by which, although he neither acquitted or condemned her as judge in such matters, yet reminds her of her great sin, and the necessity of repentance and reformation.

* *Leviticus xx.*

|| *John viii.*

2. THIS precept forbids the sin of polygamy. As divine providence, hath made the sexes nearly equal in number, hence the law of nature, teaches the duty and propriety of one man and one woman only uniting in the marriage relation. This duty is plainly taught by that divine providence, which, at the creation made but one woman for Adam, and united them as one in the marriage covenant. Since the sexes are equal, to multiply wives would be an injury to those who must necessarily be deprived of any,—degrade the female character, and introduce discord and divisions in families.

I am aware that the examples of some of the patriarchs, both before and after the delivery of the law, has been alledged in justification of polygamy; Abraham and Jacob, David, Solomon and others, had each a plurality of wives. They were eminent men and favorites of heaven. If the practice was a violation of the law of nature, why was it permitted, and why not expressly disallowed? To this it may be replied, that altho' there was no express revelation in early times relative to this matter, yet that it was wrong, as before observed, might have been infered from the creation of the original pair, and the equal number of the sexes, in all ages; and God might suffer this evil, as he suffered the jews to put away their wives for various inferior causes, because of the hardness of men's hearts, and their incapacity, in those ages of infancy in knowledge, to receive a more pure law. When our Saviour condemned the custom of the jews in putting away their wives for every cause, and marrying others, he refers them, for correction of this sin, to the original institution of marriage, saying, "it was not so from the beginning." Had the institution of polygamy been lawful, it would seem never more

needed than at the creation, when a world was to be populated: but God then created but one woman for one man. "For this cause, shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife." Our duty, in many things, is to be deduced by inference from the ordering of providence, and the conduct of the Deity towards men; although nothing is expressly revealed.

THE moral evil of this practice was also to be learned from its unhappy tendency to excite the envious and malevolent passions and clashing interests of various wives and children of one husband. And they who indulged themselves in this liberty, usually smarted for their libidinous pleasures, in the discord of their compound families. This we find in the contentions of Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael in the family of Abraham: and the brethren of Joseph, in the family of Jacob. Similar unhappy effects sprung from the same cause, in the families of David and Solomon. The faults of pious men are recorded in the bible, not for our imitation; but warning. Polygamy was a sin which was then winked at; but now would be criminal; because, by divine revelation, it is forbidden.

3. INCEST is a sin condemned by this law. This crime can be committed only by those who are of near affinity or consanguinity; as between parents and children, brothers and sisters. The laws of Moses particularly prohibit marriage between near blood relatives. One design of this law was to guard the chastity of the members of a family, who being accustomed to habits of intimacy, might be induced to transgress the laws of chastity, did not the divine authority interpose, and forbid the marriage connection. Another reason of this law may

be to extend and enlarge the benevolence of mankind by the union of different and distant families in the marriage relation.

LEGISLATURES of nations have established different laws regulating this important contract. Expositors of the judicial law of Moses, have also differently understood the law, relative to the marriage of brother and sister-in-law; Leviticus eighteenth: "Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, besides the other in her life time." A degree of obscurity covers this passage, which has puzzled expositors. Some suppose the woman taken is the natural sister of the wife, and that the husband is forbidden to marry her, while his wife, her sister, is still living; and that the law does not forbid him to marry her after the decease of his wife. Some understand by sister a near or distant relative, agreeably to the latitude in which the terms sister and brother are sometimes used, and that the precept condemns polygamy, especially when a man resorts to it with the malicious design to vex and punish the wife: a different reading of the original is given, "Thou shalt not take one wife to another, to vex her." But on the other hand, it is observed, that the law condemns marriages between relatives less nearly allied; as between a man and his brother's widow, verse sixteenth. Altho' we find this law was in one case dispensed with. To marry a half sister, is also prohibited. — Perhaps we shall not be in an error, if we understand some of the precepts of the levitical law relating to the marriage of corelatives, as political rather than moral precepts, and as calculated with peculiar reference to the œconomy of that dispensation, until the coming of Christ. But whether the precept relating to the marriage of the wife's sister, or the

husband's brother, is of this kind, I will not undertake to determine. The law of nature teaches us that marriages of such near consanguinity as tend to introduce confusion in families and society, are unlawful. The glory of God and the happiness of mankind are the great end of the institution of marriage.

4. FORNICATION is a violation of this precept of the law. It is a sin committed by two unmarried persons of the opposite sexes. The evils consequent on fornication, are great to society, and to the parties.

1. As to society. The well being and happiness of society depends on the well ordering and education of families. But the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, as it is a discouragement to marriage, defeats the good institution of family order. A great incentive to honorable marriage is allayed by a lawless intercourse, and the community is deprived of those advantages which it derives from the lawful marriage of its members and the orderly education of families. Its evil effects are extensive and pernicious, as it destroys the moral principle, and throws down the barriers against other vices. The criminal intercourse of the sexes, is the beginning of an irregular and abandoned life; for it incapacitates the mind to discern (in many important cases) the difference between right and wrong, and good and evil in moral conduct. By habitude in this vice, the mind becomes fleshly, and sottish to the things which are "lovely, just, honest and of good report." He who casts off a regard to his own chastity, and the chastity of the female, on the preservation of which depends her reputation, peace and comfort in the world, contemns the law of nature and order of society; and is destitute of the reverence and fear of

God. Let the libertine reflect a moment on the consequences; should this vicious irregularity become common and universal. What a disordered world of sensuality, confusion and misery, would it produce? The enkindled wrath of heaven did once interpose to purge the earth from this dreadful pollution. The transgressor, perhaps, deceives himself with the imagination, that his example can do but little harm; but it is a false and vain imagination; since it is a vice ruinous to individuals, destructive of the order and peace of families, and injurious to society.

2. Its evils are great to the parties. To be seduced from the paths of chastity is, especially to the female, an irreparable injury. Chastity is the ornament and dignity of the female character. The loss of it, is the loss of reputation and peace. It deprives them of the prospect of an advantageous and honorable marriage, which they once had reason to expect. It lowers them in their own, and the esteem of their virtuous acquaintance. And altho' they may obtain on repentance, forgiveness with God, yet a censorious world will not forgive. The wound rankles in their own breast, and the recollection is painful. It is a grief and dishonor to the family and friends of the unfortunate female, but especially to the virtuous parent. The heart bleeds at the loss of the virtue of a beloved child. It is an injury which wealth cannot repair. Great is the importance and dignity of female chastity, to their honor and usefulness in life and peace in death. Let the fair daughters sacredly guard this amiable and dignified virtue, by avoiding a needless display of real or fictitious charms inviting loose desires, and may they cultivate a meekness of spirit and modesty of deportment, which can never fail to recommend them to the deserving, the wise and the good.

THE sin of the guilty seducer, who destroys the innocence and chastity of the virtuous female, is great. The malignity and hurtful consequences of this sin reach to limits beyond calculation; involving the ruin of a virtuous female, depriving the community of a valuable head of a family, and giving a lasting wound to friends. And should the female under the pressure of this misfortune, take to abandoned courses, and perish eternally, the guilt of her ruin will fall upon the head of the criminal seducer. Capital punishments have been inflicted on crimes less enormous, than the crime of seduction. The number of bold transgressors of this class, would probably be small, were they, when known, shunned and discountenanced by the virtuous fair, with that neglect and contempt which crimes against female chastity justly merit.

3. THE violations of this command are ruinous to the bodies and souls of men. Some have fallen victims to this sin in the midst of life. "Many strong men have been cast down by it." And many females who might have lived virtuous, useful and honorable in the world, have been outcasts of society and perished in want and infamy.

THIS crime was awfully common among the ancient nations of Canaan; for which sin, as expressed by the prophet, the land vomitted out its inhabitants. It was also the prevailing sin of the heathen nations who once inhabited the favored regions where we now dwell, and on account of which the besom of destruction hath swept them away.

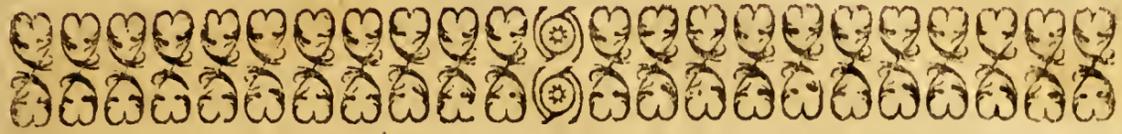
THE apostle mentions this sin as committed against the body. "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doth is without the body." Other sins against

men are external ; they reach and terminate upon others ; “ but he that commiteth fornication, sinneth against his own body.” It is a crime committed against himself.

THAT our Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed our bodies as well as our souls, should be to us a most persuasive motive to use them as holy temples for the residence of his blessed spirit ; and the members thereof as instruments of righteousness, of chastity and every virtue.

THIS vice is ruinous to the souls of men. “ The carnal mind is enmity against God ; and to be carnally minded is death.” There is no sin equal to this to detach the heart from God, and harden it against the duties of religion. It is insensible to conviction of the truth, and dead to the duties of piety. “ She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth.” “ Whoso commiteth adultery, lacketh understanding : he that doth it destroys his own soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get : and his reproach shall not be wiped away. The house of this sin, is the way to hell, and goeth down to the chambers of death.”

It is a sin, perhaps beyond any other sin, efficacious to prevent the good effects of the means of grace, in the salvation of the souls of men. In vain do the terrors of God's broken law, sound the dreadful peal of vengeance on the sensual mind. In vain do the mercies of a bleeding Saviour call such sinners to repentance and salvation ; for this unclean sin indulged, takes away the heart from God, and from an awakened sensibility to future and eternal scenes. From every defiling sin, may the mercy of God preserve us pure and blameless, thro' Jesus Christ. A M E N.



S E R M O N XVI.

Watchfulness against temptations to the violation of chastity,—the amiableness of this virtue.

EXODUS XX. 14.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

HAVING spoken of the nature and consequences of the complicated sin, prohibited by this precept, we come

2. To the consideration of the duty and necessity of watchfulness against all enticements and temptations thereto. While in the body, persons are to expect that the virtue of chastity will be attacked, either by the emotions of sin within, or temptations from without. God has made it our duty, and our own peace and purity of mind require, that, with persevering constancy, we resist all temptations to every degree of the sin forbidden, and love and practice the opposite virtues; and gracious encouragement is given, that perseverance, in the virtuous conflict, shall be crowned with unspeakable profit and pleasure. To this trial of virtue, the young in life are especially called. May the minds of blooming youth be fortified with the principles of virtue and religion; with the love and fear of God, and reverence of the divine authority. This principle happily established in the heart, will be the most effectual security against this and every known transgression of the divine law, and the animating

motive to universal duty. Temptations to this sin arise,

1. FROM the evil propensities of the heart. This is the fountain of all evil. "From within, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication."—The depraved, unrestrained heart, cherishes this and other defiling lusts. Christians are directed to mortify their affections that are upon the earth, and which, reign in our earthly sensual nature, and all the propensities thereto. Every virtuous mind is enlisted in this warfare, combating every fleshly lust that wars against its inward purity and peace. In the conflict with these bosom enemies he will not desist until victory is obtained, and death release him from the field. He who strives with persevering watchfulness, against the unholy desires of the flesh and the mind, will be happily secure from the great transgression. He keeps under the body, beating down, with the arms of faith and prayer, every fleshly lust, and bringing all its power under subjection to the purity of the religion of Jesus: he will triumph at the conclusion, saying, thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. To guard against the advances of this sin, is to avoid all those things which affect the senses or imagination with impure images, and throw their luscious and poisonous effects upon the unguarded passions. Of this kind are all wanton songs, immodest pictures, and books of obscenity. They offend against the laws of decency; and the young unguarded heart is in danger of receiving the impression of loose and vicious thought. Novels, plays and theatrical exhibitions, which adorn vice in the stolen attire of virtue, are hurtful to morals. They give

the inexperienced false notions of real life, and of virtue and vice; and lead to ruin.

3. WANTON dalliance, and indecent familiarity of the sexes,—“chambering and wontonness,” are classed by the Apostle, with the gross sins of drunkenness, envyings and strife, and are to be equally avoided, by every one who would preserve purity and peace of mind.

THE commonness of the sin of fornication, is perhaps pleaded by some as an extenuation of its guilt. But the commonness of a sin increases its guilt, and more speedily brings down the aggravated doom. “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat.” Tho’ sinners join hand in hand, to keep each other in countenance, in guilt; yet will the judgements of the almighty find them out.—Tho’ the class of bold transgressors is numerous; yet the place of punishment is broad and large. Associates in guilt will afford to each other no soothing comfort, when the terrors of the almighty shall wound their spirits; or his wrath overwhelm them, in the world to come. The commonness of the sin of uncleanness, did not ward off the storms of fiery vengeance, from the cities of the plains; and companions in guilt will be mutual tormentors in hell.—There the rich man, in vain, petitioned that his brethren might not come to that place of torment. He dreaded the society of the once jovial companions of his sins.

THE tempter of souls suggests that fornication is a secret sin and will not be known. Conscious of guilt, the transgressor seeks to hide this sin from the eyes of the world; but persisting in it, glories in his shame, with unblushing impudence. But tho’ con-

cealed from men; it cannot be concealed from the omniscient eye of God: to whom the night shineth as the day. Tho' "the eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying no eye shall see me;" yet cannot the thickest darkness hide him from that all seeing eye, which will bring all his works into judgment. This sin is a bold defiance of a present God, who says to the transgressor, "even I know, and am witness, saith the Lord." A dreadful witness, in that day when the unclean transgressor's sins shall be brought to light, in the view of angels and men; "when he shall walk naked, and they see his shame."

THE abandoned woman is represented by Solomon, as using with shameless hypocrisy, the mask of religion to draw, to her fatal snares, the unsuspecting youth. "I discerned among the youths, a young man, void of understanding, passing thro' the streets, he went the way to her house; in the twilight in the evening of the dark night; and behold there met him a woman in the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart. So she caught him and kissed him, and with an impudent face, said unto him, I have peace-offerings with me, this day have I paid my vows.—Come, let us solace ourselves with love. He goeth after her as an ox goeth to the slaughter, and a fool to the correction of the stocks: till a dart strike thro' his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."*

ANOTHER temptation attending this sin is that it may be repented of, before death. This is a presumptuous plea; because the transgressor knows not that God will give him a space for repentance; it is

a deceitful plea; because it is the nature of this sin to harden the heart. The mind becomes sensual, and is in danger of total reprobation; and to reform and live virtuously, it has no understanding. They mourn at the last, because they have hated instruction, and cast off the fear of God. Thus God in righteous judgment hath cast off sinners of this class, "even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

To him who overcometh the allurements of the fleshly mind, and walks in the spirit, in a pure and unblamable life, is the promise of the favorable protection and blessing of God, in this life, and eternal honors in the world to come: "but the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and whoremongers shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone."

Thus the sin which this precept condemns, is the source of complicated and numerous evils; and ought to be shunned as a most ruinous vice, by all who would prize the favor of almighty God the purity and peace of their own minds, and their eternal happiness. We have seen that it is destructive of the order and happiness of society, that it opens the door to almost every other transgression, and is usually followed with a profane and abandoned life. It is a sin which defiles and hardens the conscience, and dooms the impenitent to the incensed vengeance of almighty God.

As a remedy against the sins of fornication, and every degree of violation of this divine precept, God has been pleased to ordain marriage: "marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled." It is also a divine command.

THE advantages and comforts of the connubial connections are great and the blessing of heaven attends the institution; especially on those "who marry in the Lord," or enter into that state, with a lively sense of their dependence on God, and accountability to him. By this institution the increase and happiness of mankind, the order of society, the virtuous education of families, the stability of government, and encouragements to industry and every social virtue, are promoted. But the most important end of this sacred institution is that the husband and the wife may mutually assist each other in honoring God on earth, and preparing for that blessed and holy society in heaven, "where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are equal unto the angels, being the children of God." I am,

LASTLY, to speak of the advantages and pleasures attendant on the virtue of chastity. The profits and pleasures of a life of chastity are opposed to the loss and miseries of a life of lewdness. Chastity is the most ornamental and amiable virtue of the fair. Purity of mind and modesty of behaviour, which adorn the female character, an inspired apostle earnestly recommends: especially to women who profess the pure religion of Jesus: "That women also adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety." By this virtue, that honorable and unspotted reputation is acquired, which, especially to the female, is more valuable than riches, and fairer than rubies. To men of virtue and worth, it is a recommendation preferable to honorable pedigree or wealth. It has elevated women from cottages to thrones, and to the love and veneration of all. The vicious, themselves, reverence female chastity, and are abashed in its presence. To preserve this treasure, every occasion and incite-

ment to impure desires; all association and familiarity with vicious characters, are to be shunned; and the purest principles for regulating the thoughts and behaviour, imbibed and cultivated.

THE person who is fearful of offending, and desirous to please his maker, and preserve the peace and dignity of his own mind, will not only totally abstain from the grosser crimes of adultery and fornication; but from every degree of uncleanness, either with himself or others; and maintain his body in sanctification and honor. And in the conjugal state, will use its lawful enjoyments with that moderation and temperance, for which it was instituted; and not as an incentive, but a remedy to lasciviousness. "It restrains says one, not only from grosser acts; but sets a guard upon the eyes, the hands, the tongue and the imagination." It is a virtue which keeps the passions and faculties of the body in due subjection to reason and religion, and preserves purity and peace in the inner man. The thoughts are raised above low and inferior pleasures, and the soul enobled by the contemplation of the purest and sublimest objects, and by daily prayer and communion with the father of spirits. I shall conclude with some inferences from this subject.

I. WE learn the importance and amiableness of the virtue of chastity; and the necessity of preserving and cherishing purity of thought, speech and behaviour, at all times and on all occasions. And that to guard against the violation of this pure virtue, the avenues of the heart must be shut and barred against every impure desire. "Keep thy heart," is the direction given us, "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Say to every intruding lustful thought, "be gone; thou art an of-

fence to me. I cannot allow thee room in my heart and be innocent. Thou comest as a deceitful guest to betray and ruin me." The mind thus resolute in virtue, humbly depending on the aids of grace, will maintain its integrity, and rejoice in victory, over its most subtle and dangerous enemy.

WHEN exposed by the enticements of the vicious, the temptations of the world, or the propensities of a depraved nature; it behoves persons to be particularly watchful over themselves, and resist the beginnings of this sin. They should renew as in the presence of God, their virtuous resolutions, and seek for aid from heaven; as did that pious man Job; saying "I have made a covenant with mine eyes, why then should I look upon a maid?"

2. To guard against all degrees of this sin, persons should shun idleness. Idleness is the foe of chastity, and every virtue. Diligence in business, as it finds employment for time and the thoughts, is a preventative of this sin. By idleness, fell the king of Israel into this sin; and by the same fault fell also the fair Dinah, the daughter of Israel.*

Avoid intemperance in meats and drinks. It fans and kindles unholy desires. Use the enjoyments of life with moderation and gratitude. "Wo to them that tarry long at the wine, and go to seek mixed drinks, for thine eyes shall look upon strange women, and thine heart shall speak lewd things."

IDLENESS and intemperance are vices nearly allied, they lead to lasciviousness; they brought ruin upon Sodom. "Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread and abundance

*Genesis xxxiv.

of idleness was in her, and in her daughters."—
These were also the crimes of the old world. They
were drowned in intemperance and lust, and were
destroyed with a flood of waters.

3. THIS subject, in the extensive view which we
have taken of it, is interesting to persons of all cha-
racters and ages, but to none more than those who
are in blooming days of youth, whose imaginations
are ardent in the expectations of the pleasures of life.
To you, younger brethren and friends, allow me to
address a few words of benevolent advice, the dictate
of a sincere desire for your temporal welfare and eter-
nal happiness. To preserve your virtue undefiled,
and secure you from every defiling sin, let me direct
your thoughts to God, your constant dependence,
and obligations to him. Be much in prayer to the
God and guide of your youthful days, that his effi-
cacious grace and all animating goodness, may
guard you especially from the sin, in all its branches
which this holy law disallows, and enable you to pre-
serve a virgin chastity in all your thoughts and in all
your behaviour. By living near to God in youth,
you will preserve a pure mind in a pure body, and
keep your garments unspotted from the world and
the flesh. You will happily know the blessedness
of "the pure and undefiled, who walk in the law of
the Lord."

By exercising yourselves in the duties of piety, in
reading, meditation and prayer, you will sweetly ex-
perience the fulfilment of his gracious promise, "to
keep them in all their way who commit themselves
to him." Make the word of God your study; and
the divine and animating promises scattered thro'
the sacred volume, the pleasing subject of your de-
vout and daily meditation. "When wisdom enter-
eth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto

thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee, to deliver thee from the way of evil men,—and from the strange woman that flattereth with her words, which forsaketh the guide of her youth and forgetteth the covenant of her God, for her house inclineth unto death :—that thou mayest walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous.”

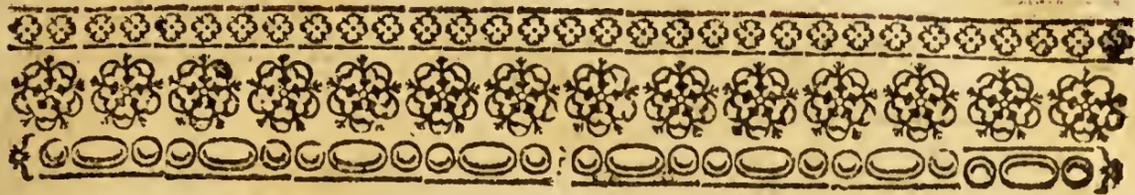
LET a solemn sense of the presence of God, be deeply and perpetually impressed upon your minds, as the most powerful security against transgression.— Thus fortified by a principle of virtue, tho' assaulted, as was once a pious Joseph in the house of Potipher; with christian heroism you will overcome; saying, “how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” Thus guarded against this defiling sin, you will readily shun all indecent familiarity and every degree of wantonness. You will maintain a modesty and manliness of deportment, and chastity in all your thoughts and conversation. And may it please God, who liberally dispenses his grace to them that ask, to strengthen your youthful resolutions in the ways of innocency and virtue, that so you may be happily qualified for a useful life, comfort in old age, serenity in death, and felicity immortal beyond the grave.

WHILE I would faithfully warn the youth, in the language of the apostle, to “flee fornication,” and all degrees of unchastity; and affectionately invite them to the practice of virtue; I cannot refrain from expressing a fear, that in too many instances the guilt of the more scandalous violations of this divine law, by those in younger life, lies at the door of the negligent parents: Who, like indulgent Eli, suffer their children to be vile without reproof. Are there not families in this christian land, in which the name of

God is rarely mentioned, except in profane discourse, and his worship unknown—in which children are suffered to grow up in ignorance of the duties of religion, and in the practice of vice; in idleness, in night walking, and other vices which lead on to the great transgression. Let parents recollect that children are committed to them as a solemn charge;—and that if they loose salvation by their neglect, their souls will be required at their hands.

MAY the lessons of wisdom find welcome access to all our minds, and the grace of God preserve us from evil. May the rising generation consecrate their youthful vigor of body and mind, to the honor of him who died for them and hath called them into his holy kingdom: and O most divine and affectionate Saviour! who will say at the last day, to his faithful friends, “He that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” In the hope of this blessedness, with humble dependance on his efficacious grace, let us keep his commandments with a pure heart and unblamable life, through Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Redeemer.

A M E N.



S E R M O N XVII.

The nature of property,—dishonesty and fraud.

P R E C E P T E I G H T H.

EXODUS XX. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

THIS precept of the law immediately respects the worldly property of mankind. It implies that it is the will of God that men should have property, which they may exclusively call their own.—It is his gift to men, to possess, use and enjoy, in the way and manner which he hath been pleased to direct, which are for his glory, and the good and happiness of ourselves and others. “Thou shalt not steal.” Thou shalt not, by fraud or violence deprive another of his lawful possessions; or take his property without his consent. This law has a primary effect to personal and private property. The consent of the owner, in certain cases, is dispensed with, when the public good makes it necessary to invade personal property; but the moral law obliges the public to make compensation. This precept equally enforces the positive obligations of justice and kindness, in endeavors to secure and preserve the goods and property of others. All the good qualities included in the terms honesty, benevolence and kindness, in all our intercourse with mankind, are contained in the intention of this law. In the explanation of the moral duties comprised in it, I shall speak,

1. OF the nature of that property which we are forbidden to invade.
2. THE guilt of unlawfully invading the property of others, or misusing our own.
3. THE duty of preserving and promoting the property and interests of our fellow men.

1. MEN have temporal or worldly property, which ought to be sacredly guarded from invasion and plunder. All property or whatever men may call their own, is from God the supreme proprietor of all things; by whose creating power and providence, all things are brought from nothing and preserved. All things being the absolute property of God, his right to dispose of them to whom he pleases, is uncontrolled. He gives earthly goods to men. He hath set the bounds of our habitation, and divided to nations and to individuals their inheritance. By express revelation, the Most High gave to the descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan; and mount Seir, to the children of Esau. Men do not however, come into the possession of territory or worldly property by revelation; but by the favour of providence, according to the order of nature and the laws of society. Men being invested with property, by the ordering of providence, for their subsistence, comfort and usefulness; have an exclusive right thereto, and no one may dispossess another of the goods which he has lawfully acquired. The possession of individual property is necessary to the subsistence of mankind, and the welfare of society. Were all property in common, all things would be in confusion,—the strong would every where dispossess the weak, and universal languor and idleness prevail. That the laborer should be entitled to the

fruits of his industry, is a powerful motive to personal exertion and enterprise.

THERE are various modes or means of obtaining the rightful possession of property, as by inheritance, will, gift, purchase, industry and enterprise in some lawful calling. What a man obtains in these ways, he holds, under God, as his own. They are to be used and employed by him, agreeably to the will of the sovereign proprietor, who bestows them. It is robbery in another to take possession, without the consent of the owner. Every man, however, who enters into or enjoys the advantages of society, gives his consent, either personally or otherwise, that his property shall contribute, according to certain rules, established to the support of the civil, moral and religious institutions of society; because by these his property is secured from invasion, and his injuries redressed.

THERE are other properties which men enjoy, and of which they may not be dispoiled, such as, a good name, which is more valuable than riches,—of their opportunities to do good to mankind,—of their liberty and peace, and right to worship God, according to their own consciences, & the advantages which providence gives to men for their progress in useful knowledge and their eternal salvation. He who abridges or deprives others of these, is a violator of this law. Men become the rightful owners of goods acquired by lawful means, and the moral law, and the laws of society, give them a title to the sole and absolute use of them. Every man has a right to do as he pleases with his property, provided he does not counteract the benevolent purposes of providence in the application of its gifts.

THEFT in its gross sense is taking the goods of a man by violence. By the judicial laws of Moses the man who killed a thief breaking into his house in the night, was not punished. This crime is next to murder in guilt. The person who is attacked in the dark and silent hours devoted to repose, has not the advantage of defending himself or his property. An aversion to labour, or to honest industry, is commonly the motive to the crimes of theft and robbery. No industrious person need suffer thro' want in this land; where there are all possible encouragements to industry in labor, and the means of a comfortable subsistence plentiful and abundant. The punishment of confinement and labor, for those who live by plunder on the goods of others, is a punishment most suitable and salutary. Suitable for such criminals, because it counteracts their ruling vice, which is idleness; and most salutary to the community, because those who have commenced hostility against mankind, ought not to go at large. This thought introduces,

2. THE consideration of the guilt of unlawfully invading the property of others, and of misusing our own. Those are evils which, this precept principally intends to prevent and remedy.

PROPERTY is a trust which the supreme proprietor has committed to the possessor, to be used as he has directed, and to be accounted for, with other talents, to him who gave it. No one may lawfully take from another that trustment. It is an invasion of the prerogative of the Deity, who gives or takes away. "It is the blessing of the Lord that maketh rich;" and his providence only may rightfully take back the goods committed to men. I shall mention in sundry particulars the ways or means by which this divine law is broken.

1. By taking advantage of the ignorance, or necessities of others, to make gain. This is a wicked "oppression of the poor and him that hath no helper." To overreach another in trade or business, is not only an act of dishonesty and fraud committed against one who is less knowing or suspicious; but a criminal perversion of those superior abilities which are given to him, who commits the injury. It is an act of ingratitude to God, and injustice to man. To make gain of the necessities of those who are in straits thro' want, is an act of robbery and cruelty.— It is impiety towards God and unmercifulness to men. Next to the sin of oppression, is that of refusing compassion and aid to those, who by the divine providence are in suffering circumstances. "If a brother or a sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" It is a solemn consideration, which should arrest the attention of all men, that our Lord, in his description of the final condemnation to be passed upon the wicked, makes the withholding of compassion and alms from our suffering brethren, and especially from the poor of the household of faith, the cause of that condemnation. "Then shall the judge say unto them on the left hand, depart from me,—For I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink: a stranger and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison and ye visited me not."

2. This precept condemns unlawful usury. The Jews were forbidden to exact usury of each other, altho' they were allowed to take it of other people, who resided among them, for the purpose of traffic.

The sin consists not in demanding usury or interest, but in exacting more than is just and equitable. It also condemns monopolizing the provisions necessary to the support of life. This is making an artificial scarcity, that the engrosser may make great gain. Joseph, in Egypt, being divinely warned of an approaching famine of seven years continuance, wisely expended the treasures of the kingdom, during seven preceding years of plenty, to purchase the produce of the land. He was influenced so to do, not by the mean and mercenary motive of enriching himself, but the generous and noble principle of saving a nation from the horrors of famine. In the years of scarcity, he liberally dealt out the treasures which he had accumulated, and made a people joyful in the midst of a distressing judgment. Far different from this, is the case of that selfish mortal, who purchases up the necessaries of life, with a view to make a scarcity, which providence never intended, that he may grasp the wealth and substance of others.

3. THIS law is broken by persons wasting their goods by idleness, intemperance and prodigality. Worldly goods are a treasure which God commits to men, as stewards, to be used for good and useful purposes. They are a talent for which men must give account. They are not to be expended in the excessive gratification of the flesh or fancy. No man has an *absolute* right to do as his pleasure may dictate, even with his own. In the use and improvement of his goods, his duty is to consult the pleasure of him, from whose providence he received them, that the apostle says of christians, "ye are not your own;" may be said of men's wealth and goods, "they are not your's." They are bought by the blood of Christ, and for his sake, are intrusted to you, to use and employ, to the glory of the giver,

your own and the best good of others. As men are to glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits which are God's; so also are they to glorify him in their worldly goods, which are his also. He then who wastes his property by idleness, intemperance and other vices, is chargable with embezzling his Lord's goods, robbing himself, his family and fellow men. He who created food to satisfy the hungry multitude, taught his disciples œconomy, saying, "gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." The misimprovers of the gifts and bounties of providence, deprive themselves of the comfortable enjoyment of them, and of the means of communicating comfort to others, and reduce themselves to wretchedness. "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man. He that loveth strong drink shall not be rich. The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall cloth a man with rags."

PERSONS are liable to injure themselves or others by rashly adventuring in trade,—by becoming sureties for others,—by lavishing property in the gratification of the pride of dress, building, equipage and the ostentatious parade of life. A large proportion of precious time and expence are too often bestowed on the superfluities of life. Whatever is beyond the point of decency and convenience, in the mode of living, is a criminal waste of property. It is bestowing on things of small consequence, that which might be usefully employed. The superfluities of the rich and gay, would make comfortable the families of want and sorrow; and be an offering acceptable to him, who hath commanded us to do good and to communicate; with the assurance that with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

On the other hand, this precept is violated by

those who rob themselves and families, of those enjoyments of life which God hath given them, thro' a penurious and avaricious disposition. Who, in the midst of plenty, starve themselves, lest at some future time, they should come to want. This is that sin of covetousness, which the apostle calls idolatry. It is a criminal distrust of divine providence; and is an evil more often found among the rich than the poor; and must be considered as a curse attending the inordinate love of money. To pine over plenty, and suffer thro' fear of suffering, is ingratitude to heaven, and contrary to present experience of its bountifulness. This is the despicable condition of the miser, who broods over his wealth, and fears a thousand wants; who clothes himself in rags, and denies his body its proper nourishments, and dies poor in the midst of opulence. He leaves his hoarded treasures, when he can hold them no longer, to those who feel no gratitude for his memory. "There is, says Solomon, that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. Bountifulness is as a fruitful garden and mercifulness endureth forever." A covetous disposition is a source of unhappiness, to the person who indulges it, and to others. The temptations arising from a redundancy of wealth, as well as of distressing poverty, were foreseen by the wise and pious prophet Agur, who in prayer to God, says, "*give me neither poverty, nor riches, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain.*" That excessive anxiety for the goods of this world, which robs the sons of men of peace and rest, was one of the evils which the royal preacher saw under the sun. "There is one alone and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labor, neither is his eye

satisfied with riches, neither saith he, for whom do I labor and bereave my soul of good."

4. THIS precept is violated by litigious law suits. In this way, there is frequently robbery committed on men's goods, reputation and peace. It is lawful for a christian to appeal to justice and the laws, for protection from the lawless, and the restitution of right. "For the law is good if a man use it lawfully." But this necessary institution is abused when persons under the shelter of law, injure others in unjust prosecutions, which it may not be in the power of the law to detect: in harassing the patience of others by appeals and delays, with a view of forcing them to unreasonable terms. This is robbing by legal forms, and is one of the worst species of theft, because it is sheltered from punishment or restitution. The apostle reproveth the christians at Corinth for their contentions at law; and recommends to them rather to suffer wrong, than contend; or to leave their controversies to the decision of impartial arbitrators in the church.

ON the christian's right to seek a redress of injuries by appealing to the laws of the country, I would notice an objection which is alledged by some, founded on the words of Christ, Matthew 5, and which are thought to forbid going to law in any case. "Resist not evil. But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man shall sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Two things are evident here, one is, the duty of christians to bear injuries with meekness; the other, that these are proverbial phrases, and not to be understood literally. And it also appears that the losses were in smaller matters. It is better to give a coat for peace, than by contending, to loose all one's clothes. It is a

duty to give up things of small value, rather than contend at law. And it was the duty of christians, in those times especially, with patient meekness to suffer loss; for they were the objects of the hatred and persecutions of Jews and Gentiles; and there was but a slender prospect of their obtaining justice, by appealing to the courts of their personal enemies. That the phrase of turning the other cheek to him that smites, was proverbial, and designed to recommend in general the virtue of meekness, is evident from our Lord's example, who when he was unjustly smitten on the cheek, by one of the officers, reproved him for the injury, saying, "if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?" And saint Paul, when unjustly smitten by command of the high priest resented the indignity, and pronounces upon him a prophetic judgment. We hence conclude that our Lord forbids a spirit of litigation among christians; but does not deprive them of the privileges of society, in the redress of insufferable injuries. This explanation of our Saviour's words may serve as an answer to a like objection, from a passage in 1 Corinthians v. 7. "Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust and not before the saints?" This refers to differences which may be accommodated by judicious neighbors. "I speak to your shame. Is it so that there is not a wise man among you, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? This is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Too much of this, to the scandal to the christian profession, yet remains among the professed disciples of the meek and patient Jesus. "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened

not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously.

5. ALL the dishonest arts and tricks of jugglers and fortune-tellers, who deceive and defraud ; are condemned by this law. They who fear God, will shun their impious ways. They are the works of darkness. The entrance of true religion into the heart, will detect and expel these wicked arts. " Many of them which used curious arts, brought their books together and burned them before all men." This law also condemns the non-performance of promises, where promises are lawful, and persons have ability to fulfil ;—running in debt without the prospect of payment ; and delays of payment to laborers and creditors. " Owe no man any thing." All bribery in judgment, and partiality in decisions, between men ; all those kind of professions which are supported by the vices and follies of men ; all gambling and sports of chance, in which property is hazarded, are condemned by this law. It forbids withholding support from the government under which we live, and from the worship of God, and public moral and religious institutions. It condemns all perjury, forgery and couzenage ; all fraudulent alienation of things devoted to charitable and sacred uses ; concealing lost goods and embezzling the property of others ; partaking of dishonest gains or stolen goods, and all those ways which tend to the injury of our neighbor, either in his person, his property or reputation.

LASTLY : It condemns man-stealing. This is the worst and most criminal species of theft. Common theft robs a man of his property ; but this robs him of himself. The thief, takes not only the goods of a man, but the man himself ; and makes gain by

the barter of human flesh. The slave-trade, so called, comes under this condemnation. To the scandal of the christian religion, this unnatural and cruel traffic, has been practised by European nations and their colonies, more than two centuries, and is not yet abolished. Thousands of the unhappy children of Africa, our equals by nature, are dragged from their native lands, loaded with irons, and crowded into floating prisons: and during a long voyage, across the Atlantic, are subjected to all manner of sufferings and death. They are exposed to sale, and bought, and made to submit to the severest toil, and tortured, at the pleasure of their cruel masters. They pine away in a foreign land, and their hard bondage is continually embittered, with the recollection of the liberties and pleasures of their native country, and all the tender sympathies of domestic life, forever fled from them. Death comes to them, a welcome refuge. Thousands are annually imported. While the people of this our favored land, double their numbers in a few years, the imported Africans in the colonies decrease, and the race would soon be extinct, were there not continual accessions to supply the deficiency. Enlightened people of Europe and America, what injuries have you or your fathers received, to justify your cruel severity to those unfortunate defenceless people? Humanity and religion drop a tear over you, ye degenerate christians who deal in the "merchandize of slaves and souls of men."

THE universal parent of his creatures, "who has made of one blood all nations, to dwell in all the earth," and given them equal natural rights, is no respecter of persons. His divine law has classed men-stealers, and those who participate in this crime, among the most enormous offenders. "The law

is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, the ungodly and sinners,—for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, and for men-stealers.”* From this and every species of dishonesty and oppression, may the grace of God preserve us.

A M E N.

* Such is the ardent thirst of wealth in the heart of man, that reasons drawn from the principles of humanity and religion, make but feeble impression on those who receive gain from this traffic. We are therefore in the course of events, called to contemplate with astonishment, the wisdom as well as the severity of a righteous providence, in the method now taken to convince them of the enormity of this practice. In some of the most populous colonies in the Indies, the injured slaves have become the dreadful scourges of the divine vengeance, on their oppressors. Thousands of families, who once lived delicately, on the tears and groans of slaves, have become victims to their vengeance, and fled, many to this continent, or other places, for safety.

To the honor of humanity and our native country, slavery is abolished in these northern states ; and within a few years, by a solemn decree of our general government, it will cease forever throughout the nation. The powerful republic of France have also abolished slavery ; and generous efforts have been made in the British parliament to put a stop to the African slave-trade. “ Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” May this ancient prediction speedily receive its full and final accomplishment, and the children of Ham enjoy the blessings of civilization and the religion of Jesus !

S E R M O N XVIII.

The virtue and advantages of honesty,—the duty of promoting the interests of our fellow men, in all respects.

EXODUS xx. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

WE have considered the nature and guilt of the sins prohibited by this divine precept. Let me now, invite your consideration,

3. To the positive duties which it enjoins. Its positive duties are, to preserve the properties and promote the interests of our fellow men, by all lawful means. The precept, “thou shalt not steal,” requires not only a total abstinence from the sins forbidden, and which have been enumerated; but like the other negative precept, it commands the opposite duties and virtues: that men should be, not only negatively virtuous, and do no harm, but that they be positively good, beneficent and useful. The property of our fellow men, to which this law primarily relates, respects their *persons*, their *wealth* and *reputation*. These comprehend all the worldly goods of men, and which we are to preserve and defend, as we would our own.

1. HONESTY is a virtue, which we are sacredly to observe, in all our dealings with men. It is directly opposed to the vice of knavery, which prompts

persons to take advantage of others. Let us, says St. Paul, walk honestly as in the day. "In all things willing to live honestly." The honest man is conscientious in his dealings with others, and would do them no injury, altho' his present interest might be increased thereby. He is the same in all his commerce with mankind, whether in secret or in public. He would rather suffer loss himself, than defraud another; even tho' the fraud could be concealed from the knowledge of the world. By this principle, the upright man is distinguished from the artful and designing. The latter will not hesitate to take an advantage of another, when it can be done without a discovery. The honest man is the same in all conditions. He will do his neighbor no wrong.

2. THE moral and the christian law concur in demanding of men, that they do to others as they would that others should do to them. "As ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them." This is the golden rule of universal righteousness towards men. It directs us to deal with others, as we are conscious, they ought to deal with us. It is comprehensive and intelligible and calculated for daily use. It implies that we allow ourselves a moment's consideration, and imagine ourselves in the condition of him, with whom we have to do, and impartially ask ourselves, what we ought to expect, and then do accordingly. Were this most just rule in universal use, all fraud, oppression, cruelty and unrighteousness would cease, and the good fruits of justice and beneficence abound. Our love to ourselves would be the rule and measure of our conduct to others; and men would have no more inclination to injure others, than themselves. Self-love powerfully influences a man to preserve his own life, his property and reputation, his comfort

and happiness. The same principle should also powerfully influence us to preserve these best interests of our neighbor. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is the great commandment of the law.

OUR Lord, by a parable,* has in a lively manner, exemplified the great guilt of the sin prohibited by this precept, and the amiableness of the opposite virtue. In answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." The wounded traveller looked up to these as kind angels from heaven, come to bind up his wounds and recal to life, his departing spirit: for they were his countrymen, and ministers of peace, and preachers of mercy. But alas, they turned their faces from the piteous spectacle, and passed by on the other side. "Compassionate Saviour! are there any of thy ministers so lost to the tenderness of sympathy and pity! They are unworthy the sacred office, and dishonor thy benevolent religion." But compassion and kindness are sometimes found, where they are least expected. "But a certain Samaritan," whose nation was hostile to the Jews, "as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him he had compassion on him; and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast and bro't him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two-pence,†

* Luke 10.

† A roman penny was about one seventh of a dollar.

and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee." The good Samaritan saw in the wounded Jew, a fellow creature, a brother in distress. And he hastened to his relief. He did, as he would that another should do to him, in like circumstances. By this parable our Lord has taught us, that there is no man, but what is our neighbour: whether he be our countryman or a foreigner. And that when a fellow creature is in distress, and lies at our mercy, we are to do our utmost to relieve him, even tho' an enemy; and one, whose political or religious creed may be altogether opposite to our own.

FROM this example, enforced by the short, but extensive command of Jesus, "go thou and do likewise;" may we learn the practice, and imbibe the lovely spirit of his religion, who in his life and death displayed the virtues of an unbounded philanthropy. He is himself the good Samaritan, who came into the wilderness of this world, to seek and save them that are lost. Who finds us on the highway of danger and death, who delivers us out of the hands of our spiritual foes, those robbers of our peace and murderers of souls. Who has compassion on us, and binds up the wounds of sin and guilt, pouring into the troubled soul, the oil of grace, and the wine of divine consolation, who gives deliverance to captives and freedom to them that are bound. Who pays for our healing, with his own blood, and raises us from the lowest state of wretchedness, and carries us in the arms of his redeeming love and mercy, to the celestial mansions.

3. THIS law requires of us fidelity in every trust reposed in us. Whatever duty is confided to us to

erty fraudulently taken. He who has a just apprehension of his obligation to God, will be disposed to make all reasonable satisfaction for an injury done to another, of whatever kind the injury may be. When convinced of the sin of injustice, most free and cordial was the confession of the Publican Zaccheus, & his resolution to make ample satisfaction, to all to whom he had been unjust. "He stood and said, if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold." It is a dictate of the immutable law of righteousness, that he who wrongs another, either in his person, property or character, should repair the injury, by full confession and restitution. If the injury is secret, there are ways which the offender may take to restore and make restitution, without making it publicly known. Tho' the party who is injured in his property be dead, yet the injurious person may not keep it, because it is not his. He may do well to distribute it to the poor. The transgressor of this law, is first to confess to God, his sin, imploring forgiveness, and nextly to make satisfaction to the party injured. In vain will the transgressor expect peace and comfort, while he retains the goods of others, or refuses to satisfy. Conscious guilt breaks his peace, and the terrors of God's broken law alarm his fears. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," and practise the pure laws of justice and mercy.

As the material world is kept together, by the laws of attraction, and the heavenly bodies revolve around each other in admirable order, beauty and usefulness; so the moral world is to be kept together by the attractive principle of love

and benevolence. Material bodies would dissolve & be scattered & lost in the boundless universe, were a principle of repulsion inherent in every particle of matter. And were universal injustice and wrong to prevail, society would dissolve and the human race no more exist. The selfish man, who builds his interest on the ruin of his fellow men, may hence see the evil of his conduct, should injustice and robbery become universal. In this deplorable condition of the world all men would arm against all men, and every man's hand be turned against his neighbor.

As the evils forbidden by this precept are attended with personal and universal ruin, we infer the obligations of men to cultivate the opposite virtues of honesty, kindness, mercifulness, forgiveness, and every good disposition and action, which tends to advance the interests and happiness of mankind, and the exercise of that love, that worketh no ill to our neighbour.

LASTLY, the duty of promoting the spiritual edification and salvation of our fellow-men, is required by this law. The love of our neighbor as ourselves, will dispose us heartily to seek his interests in all respects; and as his salvation is the greatest, to promote it, will be an object of the most ardent desire and labor of every one, whose heart is rightly affected towards his fellow men. Do we esteem it a moral and sacred duty to guard the person, the property and character of our neighbor, and shall we esteem it a duty of less importance, to secure his eternal happiness, by every wise and benevolent means in our power? By good example, by friendly instruction, warn-

ing, direction and prayer? Earnestly desiring that when he shall leave this world's goods at death, his soul may be happy: that he may possess those spiritual riches, of which death and the grave cannot deprive him, but which will forever increase in value? And that when his earthly possessions fail him, he may be received into those everlasting habitations, which the Almighty and merciful redeemer gives to every believing and obedient disciple. Unless we sincerely desire, and labor to promote the salvation of the souls of men, we are destitute of that true and extensive love to them, which the law of God demands from us; because this is the best interest, & the sublimest happiness, of which they are capable. Compared to which, their temporal prosperity, and the possession and enjoyment of the whole world, are but of trifling importance. "For what shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Having shewn in sundry particulars, the sins prohibited, and the duties demanded by this general precept, let me invite you to some Reflections.

I. WE see the guilt and danger of an inordinate love of riches. It is the root of all evil. The source of injustice, dishonesty, theft and robbery. "Love not the world neither the things of the world." To cherish an ardent thirst for the goods and possessions of this life, opens the door for manifold temptations. "He that maketh haste to be rich, hath an evil eye. He shall not be innocent." Through the prevalence of a selfish spirit, he will be tempted to do his neighbor wrong. They who pursue riches, as the first and greatest object of happiness, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish & hurt.

ful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

2. WE infer the ruinous nature and consequences of the crime of theft. It is a violation of the laws of God and of society; of justice, truth, honesty and charity; and most disgraceful and hurtful to the criminal. The grosser kinds of theft, as public robbery; the more refined kind, as taking advantage of the wants or ignorance of others: and the more secret theft, which clandestinely takes or embezzles the goods of others, & every species of dishonesty, in our commerce with mankind, are condemned. "Let him that stole, steal no more." Let him humble himself before God, and make restitution to those he has injured. This sin especially requires repentance towards God, because the thief boldly assumes the divine prerogative, and takes from others the goods which God has committed to them. It is an act of great impiety, as well as injustice. The daring breakers of this law of righteousness, are destitute of the fear of God, and unalarmed at the threatened terrors of his wrath. God hath pronounced a wide wasting curse on this sin. "It shall enter into the house of the thief,"—it shall pursue him into his most secret retirement—"It shall remain in the midst of his house and shall consume it with the timber thereof, & the stones thereof." Shame and loss usually attend this vice, in *this* life, and eternal punishment awaits it in the next. The unjust possessor of other men's goods, is deprived of peace and satisfaction in the use of them. An accusing conscience spoils his enjoyment. Belshazzar trembled at an impious feast, while he drank wine in the golden bowls, stolen from the temple of Jehovah. What con-

solation did the thief Judas find, in the thirty pieces of silver, to obtain which, he robbed his Lord of life? Ill-gotten riches tormented his conscience. He sought to find peace, by restoring them. In vain he threw them at the feet of the partners of his crime. They derided him in his sorrows. Horror of conscience will come upon those who live and die in this sin.

THIS crime is commonly discovered. It begins in secret, but is at last brought to light. The reason is, that a repetition of this sin, hardens and emboldens the sinner. If he is once successful, and escapes undetected, he is encouraged to repeat the transgression, until it becomes a habit, & so open and frequent, that it is easily discovered. Though like Judas, who was a thief, persons of this character, may for a season pass undiscovered, yet will their iniquity find them out. They are hateful to God and men. Mankind readily pursue and punish a thief, because he is a common foe. No trust or confidence can be reposed in him. He is feared and shunned: and when it is no longer safe to suffer him to go at large, he is secluded from society; or finishes a miserable life by an ignominious death. The guilt of his crimes follow him, beyond death. Unworthy to live on earth, he will be shut out from the society of the spirits of just men, and condemned to the prison of eternal darkness and despair, where peculiar wrath awaits the enemies of God and man.

3. LET this subject be improved in a way of examination of our own hearts; whether we have in daily exercise that benevolent principle, towards our fellow men, which inclines us to seek their good, prosperity and happiness, in all respects.

Have we, sirs, such a love to our neighbor, as disposes us to rejoice in his prosperity, and to promote, as far as it may be in our power, his temporal and eternal interests? Altho' we decrease, do we rejoice at his increase, & feel not the emotion of envy and sorrow? The benevolent spirit of the religion of Jesus will dispose you to rejoice with them that rejoice; as well as weep, with them that weep. Does your love to your neighbor extend to the great interests of their souls, and dispose you to use all proper means to assist them to secure their salvation? By sorrow for the sins of others, by friendly admonition in the spirit of meekness, and by fervent prayer, that God would give them repentance unto life? Are you grieved when you behold the transgressors, because God is dishonored, and the transgressors exposed to awful punishment? Unless you thus love the souls of men, & seek their spiritual and eternal happiness, you have no true love to their persons. Suffer not sin then upon a brother for whom Christ died. Strive to bring him to the knowledge of the ever-blessed God and Saviour. In this way you will promote his best, his immortal interests, and incline him also to practise the duties of righteousness towards men: for he who loves God will love his neighbor also,

4. Of the sin which this subject condemns, children and youth, are especially in danger. A principle of selfishness, and a disposition to engross the goods of others, are often discovered in early life. A dishonest principle uncontroled in childhood, is in danger of growing into an unconquerable habit. Those unhappy persons who have been brought to public punishment and death, for the crimes of theft and robbery, have common-

ly been of that class of families, in which dishonesty in childhood, has met with unrestrained indulgence. This vice brings parents to shame, and children to ruin.

Let me affectionately warn children and youth against taking the smallest property from others. Gross theft springs from small beginnings. Those who have arrived to the height of this enormous vice, began with pilfering small things. Conscience reproved, but a repetition of the sin, hardened the conscience, and they went on to more bold transgressions. As the water that finds but a small opening in the dam, soon wears it away and carries all before it; so this sin indulged speedily hurries the transgressor down to ruin. To public shame and untimely death, and to the dreadful wrath of almighty God.

REMEDIES against temptations to the sins, against which we are warned by this law, are such as the following, diligence in profitable and useful employments, from early life. Idleness is the nurse of this, and every vice. "Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labor working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Some ancient legislatures, obliged parents to have their children educated, and taught some useful mechanic art, to prevent the temptations arising from idleness, and to form them to the virtues of honesty and fidelity in business. Let temptations to this sin be resisted, by earnest prayer to the author of grace,—by mortification to the world,—by the cultivation of a heavenly temper,—and placing the affections on celestial riches. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth &

rust corrupt, and where thieves break thro' and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Let our minds be filled with a solemn sense of a present God, the witness and judge of all our ways; and of the supreme tribunal at which we must all appear. *And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another and towards all men; to the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness, before God, even our father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.*

A M E N.



S E R M O N XIX.

The nature and obligations of truth in general.—The vices of perjury,—lying,—diffimulation,—hypocrisy,—detraction,—slander.

Precept ninth.

EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

THIS precept regards principally the peace, safety and happiness of our fellow men, in the preservation of their good name. To defame, slander, and falsely accuse one, are ways most effectual to destroy his character and influence, and to wound the heart of an innocent man. Since a person's peace and usefulness among men, depend upon the preservation of a fair character, falsely to accuse or slander him, is doing him an irreparable injury. It is also an injury to society, as it deprives a person of opportunities and advantages of usefulness to others. It is a

crime most offensive to God, who hath most solemnly said, "Thou shalt not bear false witness."

To *witness*, is to give a testimony or declaration of the truth of any thing. To bear or give false witness, is to misrepresent a thing wilfully & knowingly, and with an intention to deceive. The crime is the same, whether interest, favor, prejudice or hatred, are the motives. A person is obliged to speak the truth, even of his greatest enemy. No temptation can justify falsehood. The precept commands, "not to bear false witness *against* our neighbor"; and the spirit of the law equally condemns speaking falsely *for* him, in any case whatever. Let sacred truth be the rule and guide of all your words and actions.

By the judicial laws of Moses, a person could not be convicted of a crime, unless the charge was supported or established, by the mouth of two or three witnesses. The reputation and life of a person would be more unsafe, were they to depend upon a single witness, by whom truth would be more liable to perversion, thro' prejudice, misconception and the selfish passions, than by two or more. Witnesses must also agree in their testimony to the same thing.

To remove the formidable barrier, which the malevolent passions have raised, against an extensive philanthropy, and good will to men, the important precept before us is given. It shall be my duty, by the divine assistance,

1. To explain the primary intention of this law.
2. To shew the nature and guilt of the subordinate crimes prohibited, and

3. THE sacred obligations of *truth* in all our conversation and transactions with men.

THE primary intention of this precept is to prevent the violation of sacred truth, especially in civil courts; on whose decision the interests & lives of persons depend. To these tribunals, *bearing witness* particularly refers. It is witnessing on oath, to facts, concerning others. Those who are especially interested and cautioned, are the opposite parties. It is necessary, in the adjudications of causes in civil courts, and in arbitrations of differences between contending parties, that judges and jurors should be truly and impartially informed of the merits of all causes brought before them for decision, that so they may form true judgment. The most likely way to obtain this knowledge, is by the solemnity of an oath. In which persons are adjured as in the presence of God, the witness and judge of thoughts, words and actions, to declare the whole truth. This ordinance, of a solemn oath, is agreeable to the divine will, and the welfare of society renders it necessary. By this act they are brought as into the immediate presence of the God of truth, and avenger of perjury, that the mind may be guarded against uttering a falsehood, or speaking rashly. Such is the good end of bearing witness on oath. The precept, however, is not confined to *witnesses* only, but is equally a rule and law of conscience, to all concerned. And

1. To the parties, the accuser and accused, plaintiff and defendant. Neither the accuser in stating the case, nor the defendant in his vindication, should deviate from the truth, misrepresent or mix things true and false together, or deny the truth of a just charge.

2. THAT the advocates for the parties, do not misrepresent the case, or by sophistical arts hide the truth or blind the court by falsehood, or darken counsel by words without knowledge. It also requires that judges and jury decide impartially, from the best light which they can obtain in the case, and give true judgment, according to righteousness, without partiality, bribery or favor, as in the fear of God.

THE nature and obligations of solemn oaths, we have already considered, under the third precept of the decalogue. *This* condemns false oaths or perjury. Perjury is a more heinous crime than lying. Lying is commonly committed without thought of God or accountableness to him: but in an oath, God is called upon as the witness and judge of the truth. And the witness calls upon himself to speak to God, or as in his presence. Perjury is therefore a deliberate sin. In addition to the impious guilt of calling upon God to witness to falsehood, the crime is great towards men, inasmuch as an oath is the only sure way of coming at the truth & certainty of things, in many cases, in which the interests and life of individual persons, are concerned. Perjury destroys that certainty, and strikes at the foundation of every thing valuable in life. Peculiar wrath awaits this sin. Against it, the divine law points its sharpest arrows. By the laws which the Most High gave to the Jews, the perjured person was condemned to suffer the same punishment, which his perjury would have brought upon another. "If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him, that which is wrong; the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and behold, if the witness, be a false witness, and hath testified

falsely against his brother : then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done to his brother, so shalt thou put away evil from among you. And others shall hear and fear."* To such God hath said, he will come near to judgment, as one who takes unerring aim at his prey," and I will be a swift witness against false swearers, who fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts. " Perjury is a crime of peculiar aggravation, because it is levelled against both God and man. We come,

2. To the consideration of those subordinate crimes, which are violations of this law, as lying, detraction and slander. These are sins, which altho' they are less criminal in their nature than perjury, yet are they solemnly condemned by the divine law.

1. A *LIE* is uttering falsehood, with an intention to deceive. It is a wilful misrepresentation of truth. A declaration by words or actions of a thing, contrary to the mind or intention of him, who makes the declaration. In this false communication with men, the tongue and the heart, are at variance. To lie to our neighbor, is to do him an injury, proportioned to the magnitude of the object about which he is deceived, and his interest therein. It may eventually destroy his peace, his property or his life.

WHEN a person speaks to be believed, he virtually promises to speak the truth. His intention is, that his words shall be received as true; and the hearer has a right to expect the truth. Falsehood is then a breach of promise.

THIS precept also condemns the violation of a

* Deuteronomy XIX.

promise. Promises are sacred. To fail of the performance of a promise, is to be guilty of a species of lying. From this guilt the person is freed, who finds by further knowledge and information, that the promise was unlawful, which, however, he thought was lawful, at the time. We hence infer the necessity of due consideration in promises. Where a person is sincere in a lawful promise, and he does all in his power to fulfil it, but by the providence of God, or some unforeseen occurrences, he is unable to perform; in such case, he is clear of the guilt of falsehood.

ONE who conceals or denies the truth, to exculpate from blame or to escape punishment, is guilty of the sin of lying. To resort to falsehood, as a subterfuge from blame, is to increase the guilt of the offender.

“ For he who does one fault at first,
“ And lies to hide it, makes it two.”

ALTHOUGH human laws do not oblige an offender to accuse or condemn himself, yet the moral law obliges him not to deny his guilt when accused. Sins which are secret, & by which another is not injured, a person is not obliged to confess to men. He may be a true penitent before God, & the world know nothing of his offence. But the case is different with one who has injured another. His confession to God is his first duty, and his satisfaction to the person injured, is in the next place necessary.

It is a vice inherent in the depraved nature of man, to practise the acts of prevarication & falsehood, to shield himself from blame, for ill doing.

The tempter of men, who is called emphatically the *father of lies*, early instilled this principle, in the laps'd parents of the human race. With what violation of truth was not Adam chargeable, when to exculpate himself, he threw the blame of his transgression upon the woman; and the woman also, in casting her's upon the serpent? We see the early buddings of this sin, in the arts and stratagems of children, to skreen themselves from blame for evil conduct.

THIS divine law condemns that species of lies, which invents fictions and things marvellous, to excite admiration and impose upon the credulous. Persons of a lively imagination are expos'd to this temptation. It originates in vanity and pride. It is that foolish talking which the apostle condemns, and which tendeth not to edification. Altho' a person may have no design to injure another, by the relation of lying wonders, yet as they are propagated for truths, they are hurtful; because they mislead the credulous, and confound the difference between truth and falsehood. For every idle word men must give account to God, whose laws demand truth in all our conversation, and awfully condemn those who deal falsely, either in word or conduct.

3. Dissimulation and hypocrisy are violations of this divine precept. Dissimulation is commonly understood as an attempt to deceive others, with false appearances in the affairs of life; hypocrisy is practising the same art, in religious concerns. One expresses a regard for others, which the actor has not; the other, that regard for religion, which is destitute of sincerity. They wear the appearances of what they are not, and

are an odious species of lying. Hypocrisy, signifies going beyond the mark, or pretending to more than is real. These vices are commonly put on to serve a purpose, and are painful to the actors. The dissembler and the hypocrite labor to conceal themselves behind a mask. The effort being unnatural, discovery and shame must be the final issue. Nature will peep out at unguarded moments; and when restraints and temptations are removed, the mask will be thrown aside. Persons of this description would save themselves a world of labor, were they such in reality, as they wish to appear to be. To him who is sincere towards his God and his fellow-men, the appearance of his sincerity will be natural, and spontaneous; but without the reality, it is difficult to maintain the appearance of virtue. To put on the semblance of goodness, to gain esteem with men, shews that there is something in real goodness, which commands our approbation. And if the appearance is good, much more so is the reality. The vicious pay an involuntary reverence to persons of religious characters. The loveliness virtue commands their veneration. The best and surest way to appear to be virtuous, is to be really virtuous.

HYPOCRISY and dissimulation, wander in artful ways, and thro' much perplexity sometimes accomplish their purposes: but virtue and sincerity pursue their object in the straight road, and will finally prosper: for "truth is mighty and will prevail." Should the deceiver for a while succeed, in the practice of imposition upon men, yet he cannot deceive God, whose omniscient eye pervades the darkness and the thickest veil, and who requires truth and sincerity of heart, in all

our professions of him, and in all our conversation with men. He will gloriously reward the lovers of sincere truth and goodness, and severely punish all hypocritical dissemblers.

4. ALL malicious lies invented or propogated to the prejudice of others, are utterly condemned by this law. This is to bear false witness before the world, against our neighbor; and is a crime hateful to God and nijurious to men. Before I proceed to the particular consideration of the vices of slander and detraction, comprehended in this article, allow me to take notice of the evil nature and ruinous effects of falsehood in general.

I. A DISPOSITION to utter falsehood or lies, is a proof of a vicious heart. Persons given to this odious habit are destitute of any good principle of action. They have lost the moral sense of right and wrong, and the wide difference of truth and falsehood. They shew that they have no proper regard for their own interest or happiness, or of their fellow-men, and that they have wholly cast off a suitable fear of God. The shameful and hurtful nature of this vice, proves the great depravity of its source. From the vicious heart proceed evil thoughts, and every degree of falsehood. In the heart of Judas, lying dwelt, as in its proper habitation. He pretended to be grieved for what he called the waste of ointment; (the grateful tribute of a sincere penitent to her compassionate saviour) but his declaration was a falsehood to conceal his fraudulent intention. The same principle which inclines a person to utter falsehood, and to cheat and deceive by lies, will also induce him to cheat others of property, when

opportunities present. The liar is therefore dishonest, and is not to be intrusted with the goods of others. These vices usually meet in the same person. The precept forbidding theft, precedes that which forbids falsehood: For theft is commonly followed by the sin of lying.

2. THE evil and guilt of lying appears from the necessity of the observance of truth, to the happiness and existence of mankind; and also from the dreadful consequences which would follow, should falsehood and lies become an universal practice. Without the observance of sacred truth; mankind could have no confidence in each other: words, those images of the thoughts, would be of no use. No contracts, promises or solemn covenants, would bind men. Universal distrust would take place, social union be dissolved, and peace banished from the earth. Such are the ruinous effects of falsehood, that all men detest a liar. For he is the enemy of mankind. Other vices are kept in countenance, by finding guilty companions, who practise and applaud them: but the most vicious detest the liar. The most abandoned clubs expect and demand truth from each other, after they have cast off every other virtue.

3. THE vice of lying is punished in a degree, in this life. The liar loses the confidence of all who know him. He is despised and shunned, and labors under the great inconvenience of not being believed when he speaks the truth. And as by lies he attempts to deceive others, the evil is retorted upon him, by a disbelief of truths, which he may utter. Thus lying is a vice, rewarded with universal hatred. A heathen poet could say,

“He who'll think one thing, and another tell,
 “My soul detests him, as the gates of hell.”

4. AGAINST those who practise this shameful sin, the wrath of almighty God, is also proclaimed. Liars are classed among the greatest offenders; and the severest doom awaits them. They are excluded the pure abodes of just men, and sent to associate with the father of lies. “All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” Into the new Jerusalem, “there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie,—For without are dogs (the contentious and unclean) and forcerers, and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

DETRACTION and slander fall under the condemnation of the sin of bearing false witness. They are a species of lying and full of hatred against our neighbor. Detraction is a vice, which depreciates another's merit. Which does not allow him the good properties which he possesses, and which aggravates his failings. It is the offspring of envy and hatred. Slander is the invention or propagation of false reports, to the injury of another's good name. These are vices condemned by the moral and evangelic law, and are directly opposed to that charity and benevolence, which mankind ought to exercise, one towards another. These vices are denominated in the sacred writings, by the odious names of backbiting, tale-bearing; and the propagaters of them, busy bodies. They are blinded to their own failings, but watchful to spy the failings of others. They discern a mote in their neighbor's eye, while they perceive not a beam in their own eye. They

put the most favorable construction upon their own faults, and aggravate and blaze abroad the faults of others. Persons of this character are envious and cruel in their dispositions. Destitute of merit themselves, it grieves them to see others possess it. Their torment increases in proportion to the increase of their neighbor's prosperity. The gall of hatred is spit from their invenomed tongues, to poison the character of others. They are like the spiteful asp, who torments himself by gnawing, with bloody jaws, upon the impenetrable file. It is surely a most uncomfortable and hateful temper. It is to act the part of him, who is emphatically the accuser and destroyer of men.

A good name is a most valuable possession. It is what every one wishes and labors to establish, by meretorious conduct. It is the virtuous poor man's only inheritance here, and the valuable legacy which he leaves to his children. It is a treasure, which the owner would not part with for any earthly reward, because upon it depends his peace of mind, his credit and usefulness on earth. To injure a persons character is an extensive and irreparable injury. It is an act of robbery; and the guilt is increased, by the consideration, that the robbery does not enrich the slanderer. He says one,

“ Who steals from me my purse, takes trash,
 “ 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to
 thousands;
 “ But he who ‘ robs’ me of my good name
 “ Robs me of that which not enriches him,
 “ And makes me poor indeed.”

To propagate unfavorable reports of others un-

necessarily, even on the supposition of their guilt, is a violation of this law. To "speak evil of no man," is an excellent rule of government of the tongue. We ought to conceal the faults of our neighbors, unless the good of others, or of society, makes it necessary that we should witness against them. And when that necessity happens, the benevolent person, will not speak with pleasure, but with pain of the faults of others. Sometimes the reformation of the offender, renders it necessary that his faults should be exposed to public view, that being reproved before all, he may be ashamed, and repent. But the amiable temper of religion will teach us to do this, with a spirit of meekness and love, to the offender. To raise false reports of another, and propagate them is a far greater sin than spreading abroad those, which are true concerning him. It is adding the sin of lying, to calumny. It is to do the greatest injury to an innocent person. To defame a person in his absence, is to act the part of the assassin, who stabs in the dark, and behind the back. Persons also are chargeable with the guilt of this sin, who willingly hear the character of others aspersed; and who do not vindicate the absent innocent person, and frown upon the slanderer. To slander one to his face, is also a great indignity, especially when done in the intoxication of anger. He who bestows praise upon one for well doing, confers a deserved reward: but he who detracts from another's merit, is guilty of falsehood and robbery. Dealers in scandal are commonly the most unworthy characters. He who knows the value of a fair reputation, will guard against this sin. He will find that those, who have no character to lose, are most liberal in their censures of others. If you see a person ve-

ry cautious to praise, but forward to censure others, you can scarcely refrain from concluding, that he possesses an envious and wicked heart.

As we value our own good name, let us also value the good name of others. For the reputation of your neighbor is as precious to him, as your's is to you. *“As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”*

A M E N.



S E R M O N XX.

On speaking the truth,—the vindication of the reputation of others,—forgiveness of injuries,—censorious judging,—kindness to the unfortunate,—the vindication of our own reputation,—the performance of promises.

EXODUS XX. 16.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

IN the preceeding discourse was shewn the criminal nature, and hurtful consequences of the sins prohibited, by this divine precept. What it condemns, is summarily comprized in the vices & crimes of perjury, lying, detraction and slander. I shall now point out the positive duties and virtues which it demands. These are all contained in the sacred obligations of *truth*, in all our conversation with mankind. As this law condemns all falsehood and dissimulation, it forcibly demands the universal practice of truth and sincerity.

I. MANKIND are sacredly obliged to speak the truth to, and of each other. The reason of this

appears, in that the interest and happiness of mankind, depend upon the confidence which they repose in each other's words and promises. The christian religion forcibly inculcates this duty of the moral law. "Wherefore laying aside all evil speaking, speak truth every man with his neighbor. Speak not evil one of another. Whatsoever things are true,—think on these things."

2. WE are bound to adhere to the truth, when called to speak of the character of our neighbor, and in our vindication of him. We are commanded not to hate our brother in our heart; but to love him as ourselves. This love is shewn, by giving him all suitable respect for his virtuous and useful deeds, and in vindicating his good name from reproach.

A GREAT incitement to calumniators, to propagate evil reports of others, is the patience and willingness with which persons listen to slanderous reports. This disposition, too natural, alas, to the depraved heart, arises from a wish to pull down others, to a level with themselves, and to have themselves held in greater esteem. But the person who fears and loves God, knows his own many failings, and will not take pleasure in the failings of others, nor in false and suspicious reports concerning them. The generous and pious person will frown upon the tale-bearer. "As the north wind driveth away rain, so doth an angry countenance a back-biting tongue." A good man, will be slow to believe unfavorable reports of his neighbor. He will rejoice to hear him well spoken of; he will grieve to hear any thing to his disadvantage. He will put the most favorable construction on his words and conduct. He will not

exaggerate his faults; "for charity is kind, and thinketh no evil, but rejoiceth in the truth." If we cannot speak in commendation of another, it is a good rule to be silent.

3. THIS law obliges us to bury in oblivion the sins of others, after they have repented of them, and made satisfaction. Their faults should be forgotten, as tho' they had never been. The divine mercy towards us, teaches us so to do, towards our fellow men. God is graciously pleased on our repentance, to pardon and blot out our sins. He will not suffer them to rise to shame or condemn us. They are said to be cast behind the back, and buried in the depths of the sea. And "except ye in like manner forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father in heaven forgive your trespasses." If our gracious Lord thus freely forgives us, the debt of ten thousand talents, shall we be unforgiving to our fellow offenders? The forgiveness of injuries from the heart, is that amiable temper which the gospel breathes, and that charity which hides a multitude of faults.

WE are obliged to shew our regard to truth, and to our offending neighbor, by suitable endeavors, in the spirit of meekness and love, to reclaim him. Thus to deal with an offender is the most likely way to bring him to consideration, and repentance; and thus to save him from the condemnation of his sin. In this way a person may be most serviceable to another, in the concerns of his best interests, and his temporal and eternal happiness. For "he who converteth one from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

4. THIS law obliges us to shun passing a severe

judgment upon others, or rashly condemning any. "Judge not that ye be not judged. Judge nothing before the time." No person can be lawfully judged or condemned, without clear evidence of guilt. When guilt is evident, and the glory of God and the good of others make it necessary, that we expose his sins, a sacred regard to truth obliges us on the one hand, not to enlarge upon his faults and crimes, and on the other, not to hide them. We are not to suffer sin upon a brother; but our motives in reproving or condemning him, should be pure, and the necessity evident. Remembering that we also are in the body, and that we are chargeable with faults and crimes, against God and men, for which we need forgiveness.

5. THIS precept obliges us to shew kindness to all men, and that we take no pleasure in the infirmities and failings of any. To make others the subject of ridicule and contempt, on account of any natural infirmity, either mental or bodily, which they may labor under, is cruel and impious. It is an injury to the person, because it is not in his power to remedy the defect; it is impious, as it is a reflection on the creator. "Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou, that thou has not received?" The profane youth of Bethel once ridiculed the holy prophet Elijah, on account of this baldness; and the Most High resented the indignity, and beasts of prey were commissioned to tear them in pieces.

6. TRUTH and justice also require that we vindicate our own reputation from detraction and slander. A fair character is a possession next in value to life itself. It is every person's duty to

obtain and possess this treasure. It is acquired by a uniform life of virtue; by the sacred observance of truth and sincerity; and perseverance in benevolent and useful deeds towards men, and piety towards God.

He will possess this treasure, more precious than rubies, who "speaks the truth in his heart: who does to others, as he would that others should do to him: who does justly, loves mercy, and humbly walks with God."

THERE is among mankind such a respect for a truly virtuous character, that altho' some worthless persons may envy, and others defame, yet the man who is uniformly good, will be esteemed and respected. While the vicious and profane hate his virtues, they reverence his principles of action. By the blessing of God, every man may attain to a fair reputation. It depends not on greatness of genius, or learning, or wealth or worldly distinctions; but on integrity and benevolence towards men, and piety towards God. The most virtuous characters are sometimes found, among the poor of this world, and oftener than among the rich. Poverty is more friendly to virtue than opulence. Many of the ancient saints, of whom the world was not worthy, were poor. They were destitute, afflicted, tormented. They took patiently the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had enduring substance. The only perfect pattern of goodness, that ever blessed the dwellings of men, and in whom the perfection of every virtue dwelt, was poor. He voluntarily chose the condition of virtuous poverty. "The son of man had not where to lay his head." Jesus is the rich and the poor man's pat-

tern, in every amiable and useful accomplishment. His followers, tho' poor in this world, is rich in faith, and the christian virtues, are heirs to a kingdom, glorious and unfading. They are blessed who imitate him; who have the same mind in them, which was also in him. Who walk as he walked in truth and sincerity, and in all the duties of righteous and piety. Persons of this character will be respected and loved, by wise and good men, and revered by the wicked, whatever their worldly condition may be.

“Honor and shame from no condition rise,
“Act well your part, there all the honor lies.”

THOUGH the virtuous poor may be hidden from the observation of the world, they are seen by that omniscient judge who approves and will reward them openly. It is the duty of a good man, by just and lawful means to defend and vindicate his reputation, from falsehood and slander. A sacred adherence to truth, is as necessary in the vindication of his own as of his neighbor's character. Saint Paul, when falsely accused of the Jews, defended himself before king Agrippa. “I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I may answer for myself, touching the things, whereof I am accused of the Jews.” And his vindication terminated in his honor, and the confusion of his accusers. And when his enemies at Corinth, labored to lessen him in the esteem of his brethren there, as a person of inferior accomplishments; he modestly commends himself; but laments that he is compelled to the disagreeable task. “I am become a fool in glorying, but ye have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended of you, for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest

apostles, tho' I be nothing. But by the grace of God I am what I am."

ALTHOUGH it be a small matter to a virtuous man, to be judged by a censorious world, yet does his duty to God, and justice to himself, render the vindication of himself necessary, because the honor of God and of religion, is connected with the unblameable lives of the professors of godliness, and because a fair character is necessary to their usefulness. And that others seeing their good works may glorify their father in heaven. By the establishment of a good name, by worthy deeds, the sphere of a man's usefulness is enlarged, and mankind benefited by his good works and good example.

THUS are persons obliged to guard against every thing which brings a just reproach on their character,—to be very tender of the reputation of others,—zealously defending the injured,—frowning upon the slanderer, and those who are pleased with malicious reports, and when injured themselves, to use all suitable means in their own vindication.

LET me add, that it is sinful for a person to bear false witness against himself. This persons may do, by accusing themselves of things of which they are not guilty, and by needlessly exposing their own secret faults and infirmities, which do not concern their fellow men.

7. THIS precept obliges men to perform all lawful promises. As men place dependence on the promises of each other, the nonperformance, is an injury to the party, and a violation of truth.

They should no more be broken, than oaths and written contracts. A conscientious person will perform his promise, tho' it be to his hurt. The virtuous and generous man will not however, exact the fulfilment of a promise, when it cannot be done without great detriment to the promiser, and especially when the good promised or an equivalent, is not attainable.

THERE are some things indifferent in their nature, in which a promise may be made, or purpose intended, and in which others cannot be injured, by withholding or varying the performance. There are also conditional promises between men, in which the performance of the condition, by the one party, binds the other to perform the promise. And on the other hand, the failure of the condition, liberates the promiser from the obligation of his promise.

It is the character of a good man, that tho' he promises to his hurt, he will perform his promise. Tho' temptations to violate a promise, made to one's detriment, are powerful to plead in excuse, for a failure in performance, no temptations, however, can justify a failure in things lawfully promised. For every failure is a violation of truth.

THERE are several instances, recorded in the sacred writings, of virtuous and pious persons, uttering falsehood, and practising the arts of dissimulation. These instances shew the imperfection of human virtue, amidst the darkness and temptations of the present state of guilt and depravity. They are recorded, not for our imitation but for our warning. The sacred volume begins, with an account of the falsehood of the original pa-

rents of the human race, immediately on their transgression; tempted thereto by the malicious arts of the father of lies, who was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth.

THE inspired writers of the sacred scriptures, have recorded the faults and crimes of the most eminent persons, and their own. This is a proof of great honesty and impartiality, in those writers, and that they were guided in what they wrote, by the divine spirit. They give glory to God, who pardons the sins of his people, and confess their own guilt, that the riches of grace in their forgiveness, may be magnified. From the charge of falsehood, the great and good character of the patriarch Abraham, is not wholly exempted. Thro' fear of death in Egypt, on account of his amiable Sarah, he denied her to be his wife, and called her his sister. The like fault we find in his son Isaac. The stratagem of Jacob and his mother Rebecca, to circumvent Esau and deceive the aged parent, is a complication of falsehood. God overruled their conduct therein, to accomplish his own divine purposes, towards their descendants. Although God had decreed the blessing to Jacob, yet this did not exculpate him, in the use of unlawful means to obtain it. The midwives of Egypt, to save the lives of the male children of Israel, made a false report to the king. God blessed and built up their families, not because they had spoken falsely, but for their kindness to his people. The penitent Rahab of Jericho, who had been an harlot, but who obtained the grace of forgiveness, is ranked by the apostle, among the worthies who died in faith. She was guilty of falsehood, in her attempt to conceal the spies, who fled to her house for protection. She

is commended for her faith and for receiving the spies; but not for her falsehood, in concealing them. Samson, another of the ancient worthies, was guilty of falsehood in answer to the inquiries of his enemies, into the cause of his great strength. The ambassadors of Gibeon, who sued for peace, were chargeable with great dissimulation. To preserve life, they were tempted to utter falsehood.

WE discover falsehood in Jonathan, the amiable friend of the son of Jesse, when his father Saul sought his life. Jonathan excused his absence by a falsehood. The like dissimulation and falsehood we also find in David, when he fled for his life to Ahimeleck the priest, and to Achish king of Gath.

THE instances of falsehood in good men, recorded in the bible, were principally in cases in which life was in danger, and the fear of death overcame for a time, a just sense of the sacred obligations of truth. Some of them afterwards suffered for their falsehood, and all repented of the sin.

SOME reflections will conclude this discourse.

1. LET us habitually cultivate in our hearts a principle of love and loyalty to God, as the most efficacious motive to the sacred observance of truth, and sincerity, in all our conversation with mankind. "Thou, O Lord, desirest truth in the inner parts. The eyes of the Lord are upon the truth." Impressed with a lively sense of the divine omniscience, we shall do no injustice knowingly to men. Let us not violate sacred

truth, though tempted by the most flattering prospects of wealth, honor or life. For he who apostatizes from truth and a good conscience, to save life, shall lose it. Let it be the rule & measure of all our words and actions. Let a consideration of the odious nature, and hurtful effects of falsehood, guard us from this sin, and excite to a watchfulness over the thoughts, that we offend not with our tongue.

2. THE impressions of kindness and charity towards our fellow men, will restrain the tongue from injury. When duty calls to speak of the ill deeds of others, or to hear them spoken of, let us consider what we should reasonably wish, were we in their condition; and practise upon that just and benevolent rule of religion, "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Let not prejudice, fear or partiality, tempt us, at any time, to deviate from the line of truth and rectitude. Let us ever discountenance the vice of slander, and stop our ears to the language of detraction; and avoid the company of those, who propagate idle tales, to the prejudice of their neighbor. If any have been guilty of this heinous offence, let them seriously reflect on the injury, which they have done to others. If by the suggestions of the father of lies, and the depravity of their own hearts, any have raised groundless reports against their neighbor, let them take all suitable methods to repair the injury. Let them follow the scandal, which they have propagated, through all its windings, and unsay and contradict it, and make reparation. Let the offender look forward to that solemn day, when for every idle & false word, he must give account to God.

As motives preventive of this vice, let me mention, 1. That slander is the way to widen the breach of friendship between men, and increase contention. "A tale bearer separateth chiefeft friends." A sincere regard for an offending brother will dispose us, in the spirit of meekness, to endeavour to reform him from his faults; but slander tends to create them. It excites the resentment and hatred of both the injured, and the offender.

GIVE praise where it is due; and be as ready to commend another, for his good deeds, as to censure him, for those which are evil. If the person is guilty of the sin, of which you accuse him, remember that you also are an offender: that you have sins lying upon your conscience, perhaps unrepented of, greater than those, for which you condemn him. Do you not need mercy and forgiveness from God, as well as your offending brother? And can you persuade yourself, that your offences are less than his, because they are yours? If the sin which you charge upon another, is false and groundless, your sin is the greater, because you condemn the innocent.

LET us guard against that foolish talking, which sports with the reputation and happiness of others. He who so does, is compared to a madman, who casts abroad fire-brands, arrows and death. Tho' it is mirth to the scoffer, it is the occasion of grief to the injured. To guard against the evils condemned by this law, we are to practise that sincerity, openness and integrity, which is opposed to guile, hypocrisy and falsehood. What a worthy commendation does Jesus give, of one of his disciples, "behold an Israelite in-

deed, in whom is no guile." Let us strive, first, to obtain this worthiness of character.

If you have deserved reproach, receive and improve it as an admonition to repent and reform; and go and sin no more. Thus you will make an enemy, the instrument of your spiritual advantage and salvation. If you are innocent, pity the offender, and let the reproach serve as a guard against all just occasions of offence.

If you suffer reproach for doing your duty to God and mankind, dare to be singular in your adherence to the cause of religion, and in the midst of mockery and persecution, meekly bear the shame. Let your example be the meek and patient Jesus, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not." His suffering followers, he will reward with eternal honors. "Cast not away your confidence in him, for ye have need of patience that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." If you meet with opposition from this quarter in the progress of your salvation, meet it with fortitude; humbly depending on the grace of Christ, who for us, suffered without the gate; And go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, is called the faithful and the true witness, because he declared to men the counsel of God, and made known all things necessary to our faith and practice, with plainness, faithfulness and truth. In him was no guile. He witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate, saying, "To this end was I born, and for this cause, came I into the world, that I should bear

witness to the truth." He died a martyr to the truth; and hath said, "every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." From his blessed kingdom of truth and holiness, "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie," will be forever excluded.

AWFUL will be the final doom of false-swearers, liars and the perjured. They will be condemned to the lake of fire and brimstone, kindled by the breath of incensed justice. But the everlasting blessedness and glories of heaven, will be given to him that speaketh the truth in his heart, who loves God with all the heart, and his neighbor as himself, and is true and faithful to men. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteoulness, and speaketh the truth in his heart."

FINALLY, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

A M E N.

S E R M O N XXI.

The nature and guilt of covetousness.

Precept tenth.

EXODUS XX, 17.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

THIS is the last precept of the moral law. The four preceding, respect the life, the chastity, the property and the reputation of our fellow men. There is a striking gradation in the arrangement of the duties and virtues of this second table of the law. The greater crimes are first prohibited, and the obligation of the higher duties implied. And the prohibition of these crimes, and the obligations of the opposite duties and virtues, are wisely laid on the foundation of filial obedience; which is the first law of duty towards mankind. For the virtue of filial piety, prepares the subject for the faithful performance of all social and relative duties. This tenth and last precept is added as an appendix to the whole, and is a key to open and explain the spirituality, the latitude and extent of the other precepts of this universal law. "Thou shalt not covet, any thing that is thy neighbor's." This precept relates immediately to the heart, and shews that this, and all the rest, are spiritual as well as external. It strikes at the root of all evil in conduct towards our fellow men; for all evil originates in a selfish and covetous principle, cherished in the heart. We are hence taught the

spirituality, and perfection of the moral law. That it respects the state of the mind ; the government of the passions and affections, and all the faculties and exercises of the heart, as well as the external conversation. Our text confirms the declaration of the Apostle, " The law is spiritual." And also of the psalmist, " Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

To look back to the precepts of this second table, we find, the fifth teaches us, very comprehensively, the duties which we owe to superiors and inferiors ; the remaining precepts, our obligations to our equals ; the sixth, in the preservation of his person and life ; the seventh, his innocency and chastity ; the eighth, his property ; the ninth, his reputation. And since all evil conduct towards men, proceeds from a depraved nature, this last precept gives a rule of government to the heart, forbidding every lustful or coveting emotion towards the goods, possessions and enjoyments of others, and demanding universal good will to men, and contentment with our own condition. Thus every degree of injurious conduct towards others, is destroyed at its source ; the fountain is healed, that good and beneficent actions may uninterruptedly flow to men.

THIS precept is added to shew us, that God's law must be impressed upon the heart, would we acceptably keep his commandments. And that it must be divinely written there, by the powerful operation of renewing grace, by which it is able to convert the soul, reforming not only external immoralities, but changing the heart from a state of rebellion against God, and hatred of others to the love of God and our neighbour. This is hap-

pily the case with him, on whose heart God's holy law operates in its spirituality and purity.

IN the first table of the law, the ever blessed God is proposed to us, as the first object of our thoughts, our love and obedience. And from the nature of the law, and the perfections of God, the father of our spirits, we must infer that no duty can be acceptable with him, unless done from principle, or an habitual regard to him. And that his glory must be the chief end of the obedience of his creatures. The duties of the second table, originate in the same divine authority, and teach us, that they are to be performed by us, for his sake, or from a sincere regard to the divine authority. Thus truth and sincerity of heart are demanded, in all the duties of piety towards God, and of righteousness towards men. To him who keeps this last precept in sincerity, all the other duties of this table will be easy. "Thou shalt not covet."

I shall, 1. Explain the nature and extent of this prohibition,

2. Recommend the virtue and duty of contentment.

AND lastly, the exercise of the benevolent and friendly affections towards our fellow men.

COVETOUSNESS is a sordid, selfish passion. It is an excess of love and complacency in earthly objects, and a criminal desire to possess the things of others. Whoever seriously considers the evils attending this passion, must be convinced of the necessity of a law to restrain it. An inspired apostle condemns it, as "the root of all evil."

FOR the miseries which mankind bring upon themselves and on others, by the crimes of injustice, and unmercifulness; the invasion of social and civil rights, intemperance, lasciviousness, contentions, robbery and war; and the banishment of the benevolent affections from the human heart, may all be traced to the sin of *coveting*, or eagerly thirsting after the goods and enjoyments of this life. Tho' the text condemns coveting any thing that is our neighbor's, it does not condemn lawfully desiring, or endeavors to obtain, some things which are the property of others. Mankind are placed in a condition of mutual dependance, for many things necessary to life and happiness. This dependance is the spring of all industry and exertion, in every occupation. We lawfully strive to obtain by purchase, the goods which others possess, and which we need. What is condemned, is the desire to possess those goods of others, which we cannot lawfully possess; and which others cannot part with, without injury to themselves. The crime forbidden, appears in striking colors, in a selfish Ahab, coveting the vineyard of Naboth. * The latter refused to part with so valuable a patrimony, the inheritance of his ancestors. But the avaricious monarch, instigated by the criminal passion of covetousness, devised means to accomplish the death of an innocent man, and by force seized the possession of his neighbour. For this crime, a prophet was divinely commissioned, to pronounce upon him, an untimely death, and the wrath of God.

A *selfish* principle is the source of covetous desires. A covetous man views himself, as the only object in the universe, whose wishes are to be

* 1 Kings 21.

gratified. His soul is contracted and draws all things to itself. It is a stranger to benevolence, and the tenderness of sympathy. To correct and eradicate so mean a principle, let the subject strive to consider himself, but as a poor helpless individual, in the great family of mankind. Let him place himself, as in the presence of his creator, and ask himself, in what light he appears in the view of the universal preserver and judge of his creatures; and whether he has a right to claim greater favors, than myriads of his fellow men? A slight discovery of his helpless and dependent condition, and his unworthiness of the least of the divine mercies, would restrain those selfish and unreasonable desires, which grasp after the goods of others. But this view of himself, the covetous mortal has not. He imagines the world made for his use, and strives to rise on the ruin of others. He cares not who sinks into poverty and wretchedness, provided he may swim in wealth; nor by what means he gets possession of the goods of others. Covetousness is a criminal passion,

1. BECAUSE its tendency is destructive to the interests and happiness of others. It disposes a person to deprive another of his goods, without a just equivalent, and thus reduce him to penury and wretchedness. And when power is united with avarice, all within the reach of that power, will feel the effects of this selfish principle, for it produces injustice, oppression & violence. Men have a legal right, by the laws of God and of society, to their own goods and enjoyments, but to covet, or anxiously desire them, is to be unjust & unmerciful to men.

2. It is a temper and practice, directly opposed to the will of God. For it is his pleasure that mankind should possess and enjoy the bounties of his providence, and the fruits of their lawful industry : but covetousness opposes this benevolent intention of the creator. It takes from another, what he claims by the best title, even the law of the universal proprietor.

3. It is a sin hurtful to him who indulges it. It deprives him of contentment and peace of mind ; fills the heart with restless desires ; and sets the invention at work to deprive others of their possessions unlawfully, and thus makes work for such uneasy reflections, as effectually destroy all enjoyment. The thoughts are agitated, like the restless sea, and the soul laid open, to invite many fatal temptations. An increase of wealth increases anxiety and cares. Our necessary wants are few, and easily satisfied ; our fancied wants are many, and are never supplied.

“ Man wants but little here below,
“ Nor wants that little long.”

WHY should we augment our burdens, by wishing for more, while travelling the journey of this transitory life ? We brought nothing into the world, and we can carry nothing out of it. The desire and pursuit of riches are lawful and laudable, only when our governing motive is to do good ; or by them, to enlarge the sphere of usefulness. It is a low and criminal passion which prompts men to acquire wealth, for the sake of wealth ; and without the intention to employ it, to good and useful purposes. The frowns of heaven are upon the acquisitions of the covetous,

who pursue after wealth, for its own sake. "As the scorching sun withers the grass, and it perisheth, so also shall the covetous man fade away in his ways." Vain is the defence of riches against the accidents of life, and the power of death. They avail not in the day of wrath. "Their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them, in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels." The covetous person, is tormented with the malevolent passion of envy. He is envious at the prosperity of his neighbor.

LET the experience of the wisest and wealthiest of the sons of men, satisfy us, of the vanity and vexation, which attends the pursuit of riches, as the object of the soul's felicity. Solomon sought happiness in riches, and earthly goods, and enjoyments. But the pursuit was vain. He returned sorrowful and disappointed. Each creature said, happiness is not in me. Let us hear his own account of the matter. "I said, I will prove thee, with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also is vanity. I gave myself to wine and merriment. I made great works; I built houses and planted vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, I got me servants and maidens, — I had great possessions of great and small cattle, and heaped up silver and gold, I got men-fingers and women-fingers, and the delights of the sons of men, musical instruments, and that of all sorts; and whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked upon all, and all was vanity and vexation of spirit; and there is no profit under the sun. I hated all my labor, because I should leave it to the man that should be after me, & who know-

eth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool." These concluding reflections are the result of the large experience, of one, who was under the best possible advantage to make the experiment; and who deliberately went to work, to find all that felicity, which this world can give. He inscribes vanity and vexation on all things beneath the sun, pursued as an object, to satisfy the immortal desires of the soul. And what can he do who cometh after the king? But the object which he so eagerly pursued, he found, where it is only to be found, in the love and fear of God. "Let us, says he, hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

PERSONS are directed to make suitable provision for this life, by diligence and care in some lawful calling; sensible of dependence on God; and to "use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away."

THE love of this world is criminal, where it hinders the exercise of the duties of religion; or makes the heart cold and indifferent towards them. When the highest satisfactions arise from the possessions and pleasures of life, the gratification of the senses and appetites, and the applause of men. When these are valued and sought after, more than the loving kindness of God, and a conformity to him; when more pleasure is found in them, than in the consolations of religion, in the worship of God, his word and ordinances; where persons experience little or no delight, in devout meditation on the perfections, works and providences of God; or in drawing nigh to him, in devout prayer and praise; then is the heart at-

tached criminally to this world, and opposed to God, and to its own true happiness. Then does the heart go after its own covetousness. And he that thus loveth the world supremely, the love of the father is not in him.

ALL the good which the world contains, is comprized by saint John, in three things, *pleasure, wealth and honor*, by the name of the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. The heart that is ardent in the pursuit of these, as its chief happiness, is enmity with God.

THE man of this world, when invited to surrender back his heart, which has wandered from God, as the dissipated prodigal from his father's house, forms many excuses. "One goeth to his farm, and another to his merchandize." One to his worldly business, and another to his sensual pleasures, and the soul perishes with its perishable riches.

LET the conclusion of this discourse impress our minds with this truth, that *the expectation of permanent happiness, in the things of this life, is vain*. The immortal mind must look above and beyond this world, for this invaluable pearl. For that which is short in duration, and uncertain in its stay, as is the case with all things here, cannot give rest or peace, to the desires of the immortal mind. In the favor of God alone, shall we find that blessedness, of which no accidents, nor life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, can deprive us.

THE happiness of worldly men, is rather in appearance than real; and a poor kind of happiness at best. The crown of royalty is often a

crown of thorns, to him who wears it; and the monarch who wields a sceptre, is less happy than the peasant who guides the plow. All earthly things are changing, and tending to death. They will soon be to us, as tho' they had never been. The good man, who hopes to see a kingdom which can never be moved, would not wish to live here always. To be the sport of unforeseen accidents; of expectations and disappointments; of pains and pleasures; of prostrate hopes and fading joys; is not that state of permanent rest and happiness, which our ever active spirits pant after. They rest only in that peace, which arises from a sweet sense of pardon and reconciliation with God; "that peace, which passeth all understanding, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart."

THE shifting scenes and sorrows of life, are wisely and mercifully ordered, by our creator, to convince us that this is not our home; and thus detach our minds from all sublunary things, and elevate our noblest ambition, and fix our hopes beyond the skies.

BLESSED is the man, who overcomes, through the grace of the favour, the sordid love of riches, and of this transitory life; and who minds religion now. To him, the favour addresses these comforting words, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

LET the solemn caution which is given us in this precept, be continually impressed on all our minds, lest at any time our "hearts be overcharged with the cares of this life," the flattering prof-

pects of pleasure, or the amusing charms of the world, and drown the good impressions of the holy law of God, and the gospel of his son, on our minds.

SHALL we pant after the perishable goods of this life, and turn our back upon heavenly riches? Shall we fondly hug the phantoms of happiness, which die in our embrace, and foolishly call them our portion? Shall we build substantial dwellings on the moving sands, and stormy seas? Let us rather, with humble & persevering ardor, breathe after that never ending happiness, which flows from the love of God, reconciled thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE shortness of our time to prepare for heaven, ought to excite our most earnest solicitude, that we may obtain that eternal world. That you may obtain, let me, sirs, invite you to him, who has purchased heaven for you, and who with unutterable compassion addresses you, saying, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest. He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." If salvation is lost, through a criminal love of this world, the sinner's choice will be without excuse, and his condemnation without remedy.

STANDING at the gate of death, and entering on the shores of eternity's vast, unbounded ocean, how trifling, will all the goods of this life then appear, to you, sirs, to me, and to all the sons of men? For that awful and glorious period, may we all now be preparing and prepared, and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. *Provide for yourselves treasure in heaven, that*

*fadeth not ; where no covetous desires arise ; where
no oppressor comes ; and where neither moth nor
rust corruptieth.*

A M E N.



S E R M O N XXII.

The virtue and duty of Contentment.

EXODUS xx, 17.

Thou shalt not Covet.

THE virtue of contentment, is opposite to the vice of covetousness. Let us now attend to the nature and duties of this amiable virtue.

CONTENTMENT has its seat in the mind. It is a satisfaction with our condition, as ordered by God's providence. It is a virtue which respects principally our circumstances in life. It is a freedom from distressing care and anxiety, to alter our condition; and contains a cheerful resignation, and grateful acquiescence, in the distributions of divine providence. It is a virtue which depends not on external appendages. Whether we are poor or rich, in ease or pain, in company or solitude, in elevated stations, or the humble walks of life. It is not in the power of earthly scenes, to give or take it away. For true contentment arises from a higher source than this world's enjoyments. It springs from a firm trust in God, and a humble grateful sense of dependence, and unworthiness of the divine mercies. Several considerations may be suggested to establish in our souls the divine virtue of contentment, & to excite us to a daily cultivation of its pleasant and profitable duties. As

1. GOD is the munificent giver of all that we

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possess or enjoy. From him we receive the benefit of existence, and all those circumstances which make it desirable and happy. His rich gifts are to be received with gratitude. In his air we breathe, his soil gives us bread, his sun warms, the fleeces of his flocks clothe us, and from his forests we are provided with convenient dwellings. He continues to us the bounties of his providence, and us in the enjoyment of them. "In God we live and move and have our being." Whether God gives us little or much of this world's good, contentment and gratitude is demanded of us. "Be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The providence of God is engaged to supply our real wants. "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

2. We are unworthy of the mercies of God, and cannot claim any good thing which he bestows. Our mercies flow from his loveran pleasure. As we are sinners we have made ourselves unworthy of them. The supreme Jehovah needed not creatures, to increate his own eternal happiness. To communicate happiness to them, he was pleased to bring them into existence. We have ungratefully rebelled against him, and rendered ourselves the objects of his righteous judgments. But instead of judgments, mercies are showered down upon us. Every favor man enjoys, is more than he deserves. A sense of unworthiness, and of the divine goodness, will excite gratitude, contentment and peace in every ingenuous mind. In this frame was the patriarch Jacob, who, on the recollection of the past mercies of God, and a lively sense of the present,

exclaims, "O Lord, I am not worthy of all the mercies and all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant."

3. MULTITUDES of our fellow men, as good or better than ourselves, are not so well provided for: While we are in health; others are sick; while we are sick and accomodated; others are sick and destitute: while we have food & cloathing; others suffer with hunger and nakedness: while we are blessed with reason, kindred and friends; others are deprived of their understanding, or have lost their dearest friends by death: while we enjoy the advantages and comforts of social and civil life; others are pining in slavery and bondage: while we enjoy the blessed light of the gospel, and means of salvation; others are wandering in the darkness of paganism, without God, and having no hope in the world. When we suffer, we are to consider that others have also suffered as great or greater trials: and also that God can sustain and comfort us, in the greatest. We are to remember that the hand of God, who does all things well, is in every affliction; and that it might have been much worse with us, than it is. Better persons, the objects of heaven's peculiar care and kindness, have endured greater trials. Many ancient saints, of whom the world was not worthy, were destitute, afflicted, tormented; yet did contentedly bear the spoiling of their goods. Call to recollection the condition of Jesus, who was emphatically a man of sorrows, and yet perfectly resigned, and ever contented. Unparalleled sufferings he endured for you; but yours are all merited. As no murmuring or discontentment was found in him, in his great trials, let none be indulged by you. In his superior sorrows forget

your own; for yours are infinitely less than your deserts.

4. **CONTENTMENT** is necessary to our happiness. It is indeed but another name for happiness. It is attended with peace of mind. Satisfied with the dispensations of providence, the mind enjoys peace. Serenity reigns within. The soul that is pleased with the ways of God, all whose ways are right, and dismisses all anxious concerns for the perishable goods of life, possesses happiness, which others vainly seek, in the increase of wealth.

“Content is wealth, the riches of the mind:
 “And happy he who can that treasure find.
 “But the bare miser starves amid his store,
 “Broods on his gold, and griping still at more,
 “Sits sadly pining, and believes he’s poor.”

5. **CONTENTMENT** is necessary to usefulness. As the contented person is prepared to obey God acceptably, he is prepared to serve his generation usefully. The contented man seeks and pursues lawful and laudable means, to advance his own best interests and happiness; and he will also pursue the same, to promote the good of his neighbor. The discontented person is a trouble to himself, and to others: but the contented are pleased with themselves, and with others. He who would have friends, must shew himself friendly. And the example and labors of such, are most likely to be good and useful to mankind.

6. **GREAT** profit and advantage arises from the practice of this virtue. The contented mind enjoys a feast which never cloyes. It finds arguments for gratitude and praise to God, in all possible cir-

cumstances, and especially at every fresh instance of divine bounty. The christian lives in character, who habitually cultivates this virtue. He will sweetly experience the truth of the declaration of the apostle, that "godliness with contentment, is great gain."

7. THE consideration of the shortness of the time that we have to live, should be a motive to cultivate the virtue of contentment, with our worldly condition. Why should we be very anxious about what we shall leave so soon? While we are in this world, the good providence of God will take care of us. The part which we are to act on the theatre of life is assigned us, and we shall find support in the way of our duty. And he who confides in God will never be confounded.

THO' our condition in the world may be mean and poor, and our hopes cut off by unseen casualties, let us ever bear in mind, that this is not our rest, and that the scene will soon be changed. God's good providence may give us to see better days. Let hope and trust in God, bear up our spirits, and animate our resolutions in duty. Let us remember, that at death, and in the future world, it will not be of any consequence to us, what our worldly condition has been; whether we were once rich or poor, honorable or dishonorable, the companions of princes or peasants; for death levels all distinctions. The only inquiry, which will then greatly concern us, will be, whether we have done well, as the children, servants and friends of our God and Saviour. Poverty and afflictions are among the instrumental means of grace, and are oftentimes sanctified, to the spiritual and eternal happiness of those who are

subjected to them. This consideration should excite the earnest desires of the afflicted and poor of this world, after those durable riches, which the favour gives to the humble and poor in spirit. "The light afflictions of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed." An increase of wealth is attended with temptations; and particularly the dangerous one of withdrawing the heart from God, and the interests of eternity. Mankind are inclined to trust in riches, as their defence and confidence; therefore we find repeated solemn cautions, in the book of God, against the ardent pursuit and love of them. "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them." They sometimes part the soul from Christ; as we see in the instance of the young ruler, whom Jesus kindly invited to follow him, with the assurance, that he should have a treasure in heaven. But he went away sorrowful, because he was rich. Alarming to those, whose hearts are absorbed in the love of this world, is the remark which the divine favour makes, on that occasion. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." For to use a familiar proverb, "it is easier for a camel to go thro' the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

GREAT gain is secured to those in whom are united godliness with contentment. The gain secured by the union of these divine virtues, are spiritual and eternal riches. And this is gain suited to the taste, and worthy of the pursuit, of the immortal mind. And of this gain, neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, can deprive the happy subject. For the favor of God is an eternal inheritance, and the happiness of heaven, never fading treasures.

A GOOD or ill improvement of wealth, depends upon the disposition of the possessor. An increase of riches, alters not the disposition of the contented man, except, as it gives him opportunity to gratify his benevolent feelings, by enlarging the sphere of his usefulness. For riches are desirable only as a means of doing good. Should they increase or abate, his mind is fitted to his condition, and accommodates itself to the alteration of his circumstances. His heart is not proudly elevated with prosperity, nor meanly depressed in adversity. He makes not gold his confidence; but the loving kindness of the Lord is his most desirable portion. But on the other hand the evils of discontentment are many. They may be traced up to the sources of pride, selfishness and unbelief.

I. PRIDE is a fruitful source of discontentment. From this evil principle, originate rebellious murmurings against adverse providences, and envious emotions of soul at the prosperity of others, and covetous desires to possess others goods. Instead of rejoicing, it grieves at their happiness. Actuated by this malignant principle, the proud spirit strives to rise and aggrandize itself, at the expence of the interests and happiness, of his neighbor. This haughty spirit of proud discontent, is to be subdued by the cultivation of a meek and humble temper, and a disposition to comport with the station, and condition assigned, by a wise providence.

THE proud person is forever discontented, and exposed to many mortifications. He is impelled to live beyond his circumstances, and to draw admiration by the vain parade of life. Let pride and vain glory be mortified, by that humbleness

of mind, which is amiable in the view of the world, and “in the sight of God, of great price. God exalteth the humble, and abaseth the proud.”

2. Selfishness is another source of discontentment. It is a principle which engrosses every thing to itself, and like the circling whirlpool, draws all things to its own centre. It grasps after the goods of others; is not satisfied with competency; but labours to possess what it cannot enjoy. Like the grave it is never satisfied. How did discontent rankle in the selfish breast of Haman? Tho' elevated to all the honors of a royal court, he was most unhappy, because Mordecai refused him a servile bow. To what extremes of injustice and cruelty, did his selfish discontent transport him, when, to gratify it, he sought to destroy a whole nation? But the justice of heaven sometimes interposes, to punish the flagitious crimes of individuals, in this life; that others may hear and fear. The crafty are caught by their own devices, and the ruin which they meditated for others, comes upon their own head.

3. **DISBELIEF** of God's governing providence, is a source of discontentment. Unbelief is blind to that liberal hand of the munificent parent of the Universe, that pours in rich profusion, his bounties upon his creatures; who causes the sun to rise, and the rain to descend, on the evil and on the good, and on the just and the unjust. To guard against a sinful distrust of that ever active providence, which protects and provides for us, our Lord called the attention of his disciples to the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air. Assuring them, that the Almighty hand which clothes the one, in all their gay and blooming colors;

and that feeds the other, will much more take care of men, and especially of good men, who are of more value than lilies and sparrows.

4. DISCONTENTMENT with our condition, disqualifies us for duty. It is opposed to that patient and resigned temper, which is necessary to render our offerings and services acceptable to God, and our lives a blessing to mankind. "The meek he will guide in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way."

5. It discovers a disposition to take up with a portion in the goods of this life. It is estimating too highly the things of this world, the fashion of which is swiftly passing away. The discontented person places his chief desires, and enjoyments in the goods of this world, as tho' his happiness consisted in the abundance of temporal possessions. But reason would dictate to us, that since this life is of short duration, and the time of our death uncertain; and since the soul will exist forever, the comforts and possessions of this world, should be valued and sought after, as subservient to our future and immortal existence. The folly of placing a dependence on temporal goods and enjoyments, will be strikingly seen in the solemn hour of death. What will they then profit a man? It is illustrated by our Lord, in the parable of the rich man, "who said to his soul, soul thou hast much goods laid up in store for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry: but God said, thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God."

THE like folly and madness appears in him, at whose inhospitable gate, afflicted Lazarus lay. In this world he had his good things, tho' short in duration, and in the other, his evil things, of endless continuance. Tho' he fared delicately here, for this world was all the heaven and happiness he wished to know, yet in hell he lift up his eyes in torment, and saw between him, and the seat of the blessed, & impassable gulf. A deplorable choice of the man of pleasure and of this world, an eternity of misery, for a few years of pleasure!

THE folly of fixing on the goods of this world for happiness also appears, in that we shall have no use for them after death. They will then forever flee away. That which we want but for a short time, we should seek to obtain with a degree of indifference, compared with that good which we shall want forever.

6. DISCONTENTMENT discovers an unwillingness to be disposed of, as God shall see best; and a contempt also of present mercies. To be uneasy with our condition, as it is ordered by God's providence, is to murmur at the divine government: but is it not safer to submit to the disposals of infinite wisdom, than to follow the dictates of our own imperfect and limited understanding? If left to our own choice, no doubt our choice would end in ruin. Let us leave the care and disposal of ourselves in this, and in all worlds with God; for God is infinitely wise and good; and let it be our great concern, to conform ourselves to all the notices of his will, in all conditions of life. The discontented also ungratefully misimprove present mercies. They overlook them, and wish for others. The discontented

have ground to fear that they shall be punished by the removal of mercies already abused, and the cutting off of those, which would have been given them. God demands a grateful acknowledgment of mercies enjoyed, or hoped for. "For these things I will be inquired of, to do it for them."

It is difficult to convince the discontented of the inexcusableness and guilt of this sin. They persuade themselves that they have just cause. So the peevish prophet Jonah thought that he did well to be angry, & was hard to be convinced, even when his maker condescended to expostulate with him on his unreasonable discontentment. Persons of this spirit are ready to alledge in their justification, that they cannot cure a fretful temper. But this cannot be admitted in excuse, because this temper is their sin. They do not labor to subdue it. The remedy against either a fretful, hasty or discontented temper, is the cultivation of a deep sense of unworthiness, and accountableness to God.

SOME persons alledge, that they ought to resent with spirit, injuries brought upon them by men. But no man is qualified to resent an injury from men, unless his mind is solemnly impressed with the belief, that the hand of God is in it, permitting it for his best good. While we lawfully resist evil from men, we are meekly to submit to the divine correction therein. Tho' they mean it for evil, God intends it for good. We come,

LASTLY, to recommend and urge those friendly and benevolent affections towards men, which will powerfully incline us to promote their interests

and happiness in all respects. The principle that combines in one, all the precepts of duty to mankind, is *love*. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, for love is the fulfilling of the law." If this great principle of the law and gospel, reigns in our hearts, we shall be happily secured from all the evils, comprehended in the sin of coveting the goods of others. In all cases, let that comprehensive precept given by our Lord, as the daily directory of every christian, be inscribed on the heart, "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." And sincerely practising upon this rule we shall keep his commandments of duty to mankind. Let some practical reflections apply and conclude this discourse.

I. We infer the criminal nature and effects of covetousness; or an extreme solicitude for the goods of this world, to the neglect of the soul's immortal interests. Short and uncertain is this transitory life! How soon shall we leave all that the world esteems great and desirable, and about which our thoughts, our hopes and fears, are agitated, enraptured or alarmed. Let our souls rise superior to the world, and make the heavenly inheritance their principal object. And suffer not the affections to be placed on earthly, to the neglect of heavenly riches. The goods of this world will soon be to the owners, as though they had never been. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." By such a contented and useful employment of your earthly riches and advantages, to the glory of God and the happiness of your fellow men, your good works will go before you into heaven, and give a welcome to your admit-

tance there. But on the other hand, what dreadful prospects will the worldly spirit have, on his admission to the world of spirits: that world for which he has made no preparation, and where neither perishable riches, nor sensual pleasure, will be found? With a soul absorbed in earthly objects, he will find no objects there suited to his taste. Though he may have been wise for this world, he will be condemned as most unwise for eternity, and doomed to dwell with the unholy and unclean.

2. To guard against the ruinous love of this world, let us, first, learn the divine art of living above it. Raise your heaven born soul to riches and joys, worthy the dignity of its immortal nature, and open your heart to receive the great salvation.

OUR souls are in the pursuit of happiness. That happiness which the immortal spirit pants after, can be found only in the friendship and love of God, through Jesus Christ. Interested in this salvation, the soul will hunger no more, neither thirst any more, after happiness in earthly joys.

LASTLY, let us cultivate a mind satisfied with all the allotments of divine providence. Resignation to the will of God is the perfection of duty and happiness. Let us learn with the blessed Apostle, in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content. Our life is hastening to a close. Our salvation is the one thing needful, let it be pursued with all the ardor of our souls. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.

WE have now, my brethren, come to the con-

clusion of our remarks on the nature, extent, spirituality and perfection of the divinely moral law; that summary of universal duty. And on the review of the whole, is there, sirs, one of us, who can lay his hand upon his heart, and say, all these commandments I have perfectly kept? Does not the law conclude us all under sin and condemnation? Is there a single precept which we have not broken, if not in the letter, yet in the spirit of it? "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

AND now unto him who has magnified the law, and brought in everlasting righteousness; and for whose sake the father of mercies heareth and accepteth sinners, be salvation, dominion, and glory, world without end.

A M E N.

S E R M O N XXIII.

The purity and perfection of the law.

ROMANS VII, XII.

The law is holy.

THIS comprehensive sentence expresses the purity and perfection of that divine law which God gave to mankind, as the standard of truth and summary of duty. The apostle adds, and the commandment is holy, and just and good: By the *law* seem intended all the precepts of the decalogue; and by the *commandment*, that one in particular, which forbids the sin of coveting, or worldly and lustful emotions of the heart. The prohibition of these, in the tenth commandment, convinced Paul that he was a transgressor of the law. The other precepts he explained, while depending on his own righteousness for salvation, as referring principally or altogether to external duties: but when he examined himself by that precept which regulates the heart, he found himself deficient. *For I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet.* The whole law is proclaimed holy, and that precept in particular, which condemns the secret sin of coveting.

WHEN it is asserted that the moral law was given to man at his creation, that it was written upon his heart, and the like; it is to be understood with some limitation. Adam in his *solitary* condition at creation, had no occasion for the observance of the precepts of the second table of the law. He had for instance, no earthly pa-

rents to honor; there was no person living whom he could kill; or with whom he could commit adultery; or from whom he could steal; or against whom he would bear false witness; or whose goods he could covet. But on the heart of man at creation, the *spirit* or *principle* of the whole law was inscribed; consisting in love and benevolence; to be put into exercise as soon as objects and occasions should present. The particular precepts of the law consider man in a social condition, and shew him his duty in all important cases.

WHAT is now proposed, is—*To consider the character which is given of the moral law, it is holy.* By its being denominated holy, we are to understand, that it is a *pure, spiritual and perfect* law. It is *pure*, as it condemns all sin,—*spiritual*, as it reaches the heart, demanding truth and sincerity there,—*perfect*, as it comprehends the rules of universal duty, and is a transcript of the imitable, moral attributes of Deity.

OUR Lord has taught us in the gospel,* that the precepts of the moral law are very extensive; that they demand the perfect homage and obedience of the heart, as well as of the external behaviour. Taking his infallible exposition for our guide, let us proceed to look more attentively into the demands of this perfect law.

I. THE supreme lawgiver is a spirit, and the author of our spirits, and demands the homage and obedience of our spirits. The law demands the perfection of the obedience. It gives up none of its just claims, in condescension to human weakness. In all the solemn exercises of

Matthew 5. and elsewhere.

religion & devotion, or those duties towards God which it demands, he, whose thoughts, in the multitude and endless variety of them, and all his words and actions, are not in all respects perfectly right, and conformed to the divine will, is guilty in the view of the law. A single evil thought or desire destroys that perfect righteousness which the law requires, and the person falls under its condemning sentence. No one has kept the perfect law of love and obedience to God, who has ever indulged a single sinful thought. On the supposition that a person could be found, who is meerly negatively righteous, or who had never positively transgressed in thought or behaviour; yet would he fall under the condemnation of the law, because the law requires positive duties; not only an abstinence from all transgression, but the practice of every virtue. And the duties required, are to be performed with our utmost ability. With the best judgment, will and affections. It requires that we love God with all the heart, might and mind, constantly, and forever. If then there is a single moment, in which our souls are not filled with the habit and exercise of the highest love to God, of which we are capable, we transgress, by a deficiency of that righteousness which the law requires. If we could have loved God with a more pure and ardent affection at any time, the case is the same. If we do not render to him, all that obedience and reverence, which are due to him, and that in the highest degree, and best manner, we come short of what is required. If our hearts are not divested of all impatience and murmurings, under afflictive providences: if they are not perfectly resigned to the will of God, without the most dis-

tant wish that he should deal otherwise with us: if our wills, with respect to our past, present or future condition and circumstances, are not intirely and cheerfully resigned to the sovran and holy will of God, we are destitute of that perfection of obedience which the law demands from creatures, towards the infinitely perfect creator, and fall under its condemnation.

IN a word, if at any time a vain or idle thought has come into our minds; or if our thoughts are not exercised constantly and intirely about those holy, good and useful objects and duties which its sacred precepts demand, we come short of the righteousness of the law, and are condemned. What man then can say, that he has kept the first great commandment of the law, and thus perfectly loved and obeyed God?

2. THE same perfection of duty also, the moral law requires of us towards our fellow men. It is not satisfied if we are only negatively righteous towards men; or that we do no harm and injure none. It demands positive and perfect duties. It not only requires that you should never allow room in your heart, for a single evil thought or wish, to the prejudice of your fellow men; that you feel no emotion of envy at another's prosperity; that you never think ill, much less speak evil of him; that you feel no disposition to revenge any injury he has done you; or that you neither think, or speak or do any thing injurious to his person, his property or reputation. Not only these negative virtues are demanded; but positive duties are to be performed, and that perfectly. The law demands that you love your neighbor as yourself. That you love him sincere-

ly, constantly, without interruption or abatement. That you love him with your utmost ability and do him good with all your power. That you comfort him in affliction, in distress relieve him, and in error wish & strive to reclaim him. That you weep with the sorrowful and rejoice with the prosperous. It also requires that the standard of your love to him should be fixed and immutable: and that the love which you have to yourself, should be the rule and measure of your love to him. That the same kind of love which you have for yourself, for your own person, interest and happiness, you should feel and exercise for the person, the interests and happiness of others. It requires a still harder lesson of you, that is, that you should exercise this perfect love to your *personal enemies*; and that no injuries which they have done you, should abate your love to them. God's perfect law further requires that this love and these duties, proceed from a principle of habitual love to God. And that in all your thoughts and conduct towards men, you never entertain any selfish or sinister end or motive; but perpetually seek their happiness, in the glory of God. Again,

3. WE may discover something of the purity and perfection of the law, as it holds forth the duties and virtues which are requisite to our own self government, over our thoughts, affections, appetites and passions. By our Lord's explanation of the sixth, seventh and ninth commandments, in the gospel, and by his remarks on the obligations of the whole of our duty to men, we see that our undissembled love should embrace enemies well as friends; and by the express letter of the last precept of the law, we find, that is required,

that the heart should be not only intirely free from, and emptied of all sinful anger, all lustful impure desires, and all envious, malevolent and covetous passions; but that the opposite virtues of benevolence, kindness, chastity of thought and behaviour, and thoughts and desires raised above this world, should live and reign in the heart, as a living and perpetual spring and principle of action, in all duty to God and to mankind. And that these virtues should be practised by us, in the highest & most perfect degree, of which we are capable.

Thus we are taught that the heart of man is the subject to which God's perfect law is addressed; and that he whose heart is not in perfect subjection to all and every precept thereof, and that also in the most perfect manner, is destitute of the righteousness of the law, and is convicted of the law as a transgressor, and falls under its condemnation. How broad and extensive is this perfect law of God! It requires perpetual love and sinless obedience to God, without the least interruption, and that in the most pure and perfect manner of which the rational nature of man is capable. And a single sinful thought or wish, or the omission of one known duty subjects the offender to a forfeiture of the righteousness of the law, and to all its dreadful penalties.

This condemnation it proclaims against him, who fails in one single duty of righteousness, love and mercy to men. And on him also, who fails in a single instance of self government; the virtues of whose mind are not pure and spotless, and wholly conformed the perfect law of God. The law demands the perfection of obedience in the whole of man's threefold duty to God, to

mankind and ourselves. And the reason of this is, that the law is founded on the immutable principles of right reason. It is the revealed will of God, whose will is the fountain of unchangeable rectitude. To man in his present lapsed & guilty condition, the law may seem awfully severe: but to man in innocency, it appeared most good, just and holy.

SAINT JAMES expresses the perfect rectitude & purity of the law, when he says,† “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” The observance of the law in some of its requirements, will not excuse neglect in others. The wilful omission or transgression of a single precept, is an act of disobedience to God. Our obligation to keep the whole law perfectly arises from the authority of the supreme lawgiver. “He that said, do not commit adultery, said also do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery; yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.” Whatever is commanded or forbidden in the law, is by the divine authority. To transgress a particular precept of the will of God, is an offence to the divine authority. The will of God in the prescription of laws to his creatures, is reason & motive sufficient to demand obedience; whether his creatures are able or unable to comprehend the reasonableness of them, or whether they comport with their inclination, or not. And disobedience to one single precept is disobedience to the whole authority of God. On the supposition that a person should perfectly keep the whole law, except in one single instance; would his obedience be acceptable? Could he claim life by his righ-

† James 2, 10.

teousness? Would he do the will of God? The perfection of obedience which the law demands, and the tenor of the covenant of works, assure the certainty of his guilt, and the justice of his condemnation: for he is an offender against the will of God, the righteous lawgiver, & becomes guilty of the whole law; that is, guilty of disobedience to God all whose laws to men, may be summed up in the *will of God*. A single sin, is a violation of that whole system of duty which the law demands, and the sinner is guilty, and falls under the condemnation of the law, who breaks one of the least of God's commandments. Righteousness is not only forfeited, but guilt is imputed. As the breaking a single link of a chain breaks the chain; and as wounding one member, wounds the body; so the violation of a single precept, is a violation of the whole law. And for one offence, the transgressor incurs the penalty which it pronounces against those, who keep it not perfectly. His *one* offence deprives him of the righteousness of the law, as effectually, as if he had not kept a single precept, or had broken the whole: for it accepts of no righteousness, except a perfect one. And it pronounces the dreadful sentence of death and the curse, not on him only who is guiltless of the sins prohibited; but on him who *continueth* not to practise perfectly, all the duties required.

THIS, sirs, is that perfect law of love and spotless obedience, which God gave to man, & made man capable of obeying. And this law is still in force against us. Here let us for a moment pause. And allow me to ask, has not this holy law concluded us all under sin and condemnation? Will any say that they are perfect touching

the law? Are we not all convinced of the law as transgressors; and who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" But on the supposition that this moment your heart is changed, and you have no more disposition to sin than Adam had in innocency, & can keep the law perfectly in thought, word and deed for the time to come; will your future righteousness justify you? Will you claim salvation by the covenant of works? It is evident that you cannot; because that covenant was given to man to keep by virtue of the powers of his own free will, without the aid of *special* grace; but if you keep the law by virtue of grace imparted, your righteousness is of grace, and consequently your salvation too, will be of grace. And because also, in this case, you are condemned for past transgressions, for the law of works promises life only to perfect obedience. Are any so vain as to dream that they are perfect and clean from sin? Those who are under this delusion are greatly ignorant of themselves and of the law. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Are any depending for acceptance with God, on their negative virtues; saying, with the pharisee at the temple; "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers?" But if by restraining grace, you have not been guilty of scandalous sins, are you not chargeable with sins of omission, sins of heart, of impenitence and unbelief?

WHEN we reflect on the spotless purity, spirituality and perfection of the law, and the deep depravity and guilt of our nature, and that every imagination of the thoughts are naturally evil, and contrary to that perfection of purity, love and obedience, which the law demands, we may

exclaim with the psalmist, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities: O Lord, who shall stand!" Our souls would sink in sorrow and despair; "but, O most merciful Lord, with thee there is forgiveness, through the blessed mediator, that thou mayest be feared."

WITH humble penitence and lively faith, let us look to *Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

A M E N.

S E R M O N XXIV.

The law satisfied by Jesus Christ, and sinners justified by the imputation of his righteousness.

ROMANS x, 4.

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

ALL those who embrace the righteousness of Jesus Christ, are convinced of sin by the law. A discovery of the nature and demands of God's perfect law, gives the soul a conviction of sin, and the certainty and justice of his condemnation. And thus the law leads and compels the sinner to the Saviour.

CHRIST is the end of the law, as the law was fulfilled in all its requirements by him. By his active obedience, he fulfilled all that the law required of man; and by his sufferings satisfied for offences. He is the end of the law for righteousness, as he finished a righteousness perfect in all its parts, and satisfactory to the justice, purity and perfection of the law, in all respects. And this righteousness, or the blessed benefits of the righteousness of Christ, are imputed to them that believe.

BOTH the ceremonial and moral law received their end and accomplishment in him. He was the innocent and holy sufferer, the lamb of God, to whom the various and costly sacrifices of the Jewish church pointed; who bore our sins, and endured the curse of the law. And in him alone was fulfilled the holy moral law, demanding supreme and perpetual love and obedience to God, and perfect benevolence to men, and every inward grace and virtue. In him was no sin. And such an high priest and mediator became us, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* What is proposed is,

R E

I. To explain the import of the phrase, *Christ is the end of the law*, and

II. THAT believers are justified from the condemnation of the law, by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

THE term law, is frequently used in the sacred writings, and in various senses; either for the whole revelation of the will of God to mankind, *a* for the ten precepts of the decalogue, *b* for the writings of Moses, *c* for the second table of the law, *d* for the principles of natural reason, *e* or for the moral and ceremonial law given at Sinai. *f* In the words chosen for the theme of this discourse, the apostle uses the word in this last sense. Let us then see how *Christ is the end of the ceremonial and the moral law*. Christ is the end of the ceremonial law, as that law received its fulfilment in him. The ceremonial law was given to the ancient church at Sinai, and consisted of various typical rites & sacrifices, referring to Jesus Christ, & the dispensation of grace to be introduced into the world by him. The sacred services of the Jewish tabernacle and temple, were designed to maintain the knowledge of the true God, and to keep alive the expectation of the Saviour, who had been promised at the apostacy. When Christ came and finished the work of redemption, the special care and protection, which God had shewn to the people of Israel, ceased. Sacrifices were the most expensive and burdensome part of the ceremonial law: but they were no longer necessary after the promised Saviour had offered up himself, a sacrifice for the sins of men.

SACRIFICES of atonement were common among pagan nations; and the custom is a confirmation of the divinity of original revelation. They must have borrowed it from this source; because the principles of natural reason could not have discovered a connection between the death of an animal, and the pardon of sin.

a Psalm 1. 2. and 119. 72. *b* Romans 2. 12 and 25. Galatians 2. 11. *c* John 1. 17 and 45. *d* Galatians 5. 14. Romans 13. 8. *e* Romans 2. 14. *f* Galatians 3. 24.

And it also shews that the doctrine of human depravity, and the necessity of atonement for sin, was the universal sense of mankind. The sacrifices of the law pointed out the certainty and the necessity of the death of Christ. It was certain, because God had promised; and it was necessary because the justice of the law demanded an adequate satisfaction. On the certainty of the death of Christ, the ancient patriarchs and saints were saved. Death and the curse came by the first Adam's eating of the fruit of the interdicted tree; and life and immortality are given to believers, since Christ the second Adam bore death and the curse, on the tree of the cross. This manner of death is called in the law of Moses, an accursed death, probably referring to the death which Christ should endure, that he might remove from man, the curse due to sin.

THE epistle to the Hebrews is a commentary on the ritual of the ceremonial law, and shews how the sacrifices and services of that dispensation, received their full accomplishment in Christ. It was a figure of good things to come. The self righteous Jews rested their hopes of acceptance with God, and of eternal happiness, in their observance of that external law. Instead of attending to those sacrifices and services, as the way to lead them to Christ, they trusted in them, as the end of their duty. To the sensual & self righteous, they were as a veil that hid Christ from them, so that "they could not look stedfastly to the end;" but righteous men saw Christ thro' the veil of ceremonies, and to them both the preceptive and ceremonial laws, served as a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ. They contained the *alphabet* of the gospel, and taught the doctrine of grace thro' a mediator. When Christ expired upon the cross, having made atonement for sin, the veil of the temple was rent asunder, to signify, that the ceremonial law & the levitical priesthood, were no more. The order of Aaron was at an end, the sceptre then departed from Judah; for Shiloh had come, and to him the people out of all nations, were soon to be gathered. As the ceremonial law of the ancient church received its end, design and accomplishment in Christ; let us now enquire how

Christ is the *end of the moral law*. Christ is the end of the moral law in two respects, first, as he perfectly kept it, and secondly as by his obedience and suffering, a righteousness is finished, by which sinners, whom the law condemns, may be saved. He always did those things which pleased God, and so to do was the fulfilment of the law, for the moral law is the revealed will or pleasure of God. He loved God with all his heart, and mankind as himself, constantly and perfectly. Each particular precept of the moral law, was perfectly obeyed by him. He delighted to do the will of God. His whole life was filled up with obedience to God, and love to mankind. He fulfilled all righteousness in his obedience to the positive and moral laws of Jehovah. He gave the most illustrious evidence of obedience to God, and love to men, in his life and in his death. He shewed in the view of the intelligent universe, that the law which man was made to obey, was holy, just and good, by the obedience which he rendered to it. He magnified the law and made it honorable. And by obeying and suffering the penalty of the law, he has brought in everlasting righteousness; a righteousness by which, on the constitution of grace, the penitent believer in Jesus, is delivered from condemnation, and admitted to eternal life.

II. BELIEVERS are justified from the condemnation of the law by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

I. MANKIND by the guilt of sin forfeited life and fell under the condemnation of the covenant of works. The mercy of God has provided for them the milder dispensation of grace, by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The tenor of the first covenant was, *obey and thou shalt live*. The tenor of the covenant of grace is *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*. The unsearchable wisdom of the Deity devised this plan of grace, by which the law maintains its authority; for its precepts are obeyed, and its justice satisfied, by a divine surety, and life is given to the guilty. And God can now be just, and the justifier of the ungodly, and grace reigns, thro' *righteousness* unto eternal life, towards them that believe. It is consistent with this wonderful grace, that

the endless and blessed benefits of the righteousness of Christ, should be placed to the account of believers in him; and that as to them, the condemning sentence of the law should be repealed. Those who are interested in the righteousness of Jesus Christ are said to be justified. Let us inquire into the nature of justification, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers. Justification is a term borrowed from the usage of civil courts, in which the person accused is acquitted on the law's being satisfied, either by himself or his surety. Justification is opposed to condemnation. Such is the merciful tenor of the covenant of grace, that a surety is accepted on the sinner's behalf, and the guilty are declared righteous on account of the righteousness of the divine saviour. To them there is no condemnation. The justified person was once under the condemnation of the law; but on his believing in Jesus Christ, his sins are pardoned, and he is accepted as a righteous person, on account of the righteousness of Christ, imputed. He is acquitted from the guilt of past sins, and from the deserved punishment. The law is satisfied, and the penitent believer is justified. Justification does not imply that a person is inherently or perfectly freed from all sin, or the possibility of sinning; but it is an act of grace, by which he is declared just with respect to the law which he has broken. Past sins are remitted, and for the merciful remission of all sins to which they are liable, by the force of temptations and depraved nature, for the time to come, believers have an advocate with the father, who ever liveth to make intercession for them, on their repentance and supplication.

2. JUSTIFICATION is a sovran and gracious act of God in which he does not dispense with his law, nor acquit the sinner without the law receiving honorable satisfaction. It was sovran grace which provided the remedy. In this was manifested the love of God, that he gave his son to redeem us. As the general plan of the redemption of sinners, was an act of sovran grace, so also is the application of that redemption to individuals. He bath mercy on whom he will have mercy. And God justly leaves those who reject salvation, to the fatal consequences of

their own choice. He will glorify his justice on the vessels of wrath, who by the love and practice of sin, have fitted themselves for destruction. Sufficient means of knowledge and conviction are given to the impenitent to leave them inexcusable, self-condemned, and proper objects of the awful curses of the broken law.

3. THE divine spirit is the heavenly agent by whose powerful operation attending the instrumental means of grace, the sinner is brought to a state of justification. This he does by convincing of the nature and guilt of sin, of the necessity of a righteousness answerable to the law's demands, and of the judgment which will be passed upon all who fall under its condemning sentence. By grace ye are saved, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

4. THE justified will not come into condemnation. Their stability is secured by their union to their spiritual head, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. They are members of his body, and branches in him the living vine. And because he lives, they shall live also. Every sincere believer in Jesus, may with saint Paul, bid the heroic challenge, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. And who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"

5. THE believer is justified by a righteousness imputed. Unable to satisfy the demands of the law, it became necessary to man's salvation, that a surety should satisfy for him. And help was laid on one mighty to save. The reason why man cannot satisfy the demands of the law, is that by his guilty apostacy, he has lost both the ability and the inclination to keep it. By nature the servant of sin and enemy of holiness, and when renewed by grace, his best obedience is weak and imperfect. And there is not a just man upon earth, who sinneth not. The holy angels could not satisfy the law for man. Their best and most perfect obedience, the law which they are under, demands from them constantly and forever. They

have no surplufage of merit to place to man's account. But the ability of the Lord Jesus Christ to accomplish a righteousness, by which the sinner can be justified, is manifest, inasmuch as he is a divine person, possessing the perfections of Deity, uncreated and independent. He was the son of God united to a perfect and innocent man, the second Adam. His merit is infinite. By his obedience and sufferings in the human nature, he finished a righteousness satisfactory to the justice of the law, and sufficient also for the purchase of eternal life for his disciples. The righteousness which Christ finished on earth was designed for the use and advantage of mankind. This, says the prophet, is the name by which he shall be called, *the Lord our righteousness*. The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. In the same sense in which our sins were imputed to Christ, his righteousness is imputed to us. As he felt the dreadful effects of sins which he had not committed, so believers enjoy the blessed benefits of a righteousness, which they themselves have not accomplished. The effects, or the punishment of sin were borne by Christ; and the rewards of his obedience are given to believers. As our sins deserved death, and death was inflicted on our surety, so his obedience merits life, and life is given to all who are pardoned and justified by his redemption.

6. The subjects of justification are believers in Christ. Evangelical faith comprises knowledge and love; a knowledge of the divine character, and of the law as holy just and good. A knowledge of personal guilt and unworthiness, and of Jesus Christ, as a holy and almighty Saviour. These important doctrines the mind receives as divinely true, and embraces them with cordial approbation; and with humble gratitude reposes its immortal interests in the hands of the blessed mediator, and pleads his all perfect righteousness, as the only ground of hope and acceptance with God. To conclude,

1. WE learn from the nature of the law, and from the design of the gospel, that man has not a righteousness of his own in which he can with safety appear; and that we fall under the dreadful condemnation of that law

which gives us the knowledge of the guilt and desert of sin. Since, first, such is our unhappy condition, let us never cease to admire and adore, that wonderful wisdom and grace of God in our redemption, which makes it consistent with the rectitude and goodness of the divine government, to receive a satisfaction to justice rendered by our divine surety, and not exact it at our hands. Had it been demanded of us, alas, we must have been cast into the prison of eternal despair, there to have remained thro' unceasing ages, since we could never have paid the uttermost farthing, of the immense debt which we owe to the divine justice.

2. We learn that salvation is not applied to men absolutely and unconditionally. It is by faith in Jesus Christ, we become intitled to the blessed benefits of a righteousness which satisfies the law's demands, and purchases for us an eternity of happiness. We hence,

3. INFER the duty of an immediate submission to the divine plan of grace revealed in the gospel. There the great and endless blessings of the finished righteousness of Christ are freely offered, and given to every penitent believer. There is salvation in no other name. Let us, first come to God thro' him, for whose sake the father of mercies heareth and accepteth sinners; pardons our numberless offences, saves us from the curses of the broken law and from the wrath to come, and will raise us to endless glory and felicity.

MAY we, my brethren, ardently aspire after that blessedness which is given to those, unto whom a merciful God imputeth righteousness, the righteousness of the divine Saviour; for blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered, and unto whom God imputeth righteousness. May we persevere in faith and love and holy obedience, and thro' grace obtain admittance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom be all the glory of our salvation.

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THE greater part of this volume was printed at a distance from the author's residence, and he had not opportunity to inspect the press. Several typographical errors are observable, which the candid reader is requested to correct: the principal of which are the following:—

- Page 33. 11 line from the bottom, for dear, read *dear*.
 42. 11 l. from the bottom, for disciple, read *master*.
 58. 14 l. from the top, erase, *has*.
 91. middle of the page, for deserve, read *desire*.
 123. 4 l. from the bottom, for errors, read *horrors*.
 125. last l. for deity, read *deity*.
 162. 7 l. from the bottom, read to be *instructed*.

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