

Jolly 1206.

C IV 6



J. 5

*Alexander Jolly.*

SELECT DISCOURSES

*J. 1.*

ON THE PRINCIPAL POINTS OF

NATURAL AND REVEALED

RELIGION.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THEOLOGICAL LECTURES

ON THE TEN FIRST CHAPTERS OF ST. MATTHEW;

DELIVERED AT

WESTMINSTER ABBEY,

By JOHN HEYLYN, D. D.

LATE PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER, AND RECTOR OF  
ST. MARY LE STRAND.

---

A NEW EDITION.

---

VOL. I.

---

---

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. AND C. REVINGTON,  
N<sup>o</sup> 62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

M DCC XCIII.

---

---

## P R E F A C E.

**T**HE learned and ingenious Doctor HEYLYN, who bequeathed these volumes to the world, having prepared them himself for the press, was distinguished in his time, as an eminent divine, a celebrated preacher, and a Christian philosopher.

He never appeared in public, without impressing a lasting opinion of his piety and abilities. But his fame was much less extensive than it might have been; for humility was one of the strongest features of his character. He was not only averse to an active display of his excellencies, but too diffident of himself, to aspire to the stations from which his light might have shone more diffusively.

However, he was so warmly admired and esteemed, for many years, by all who knew and heard him, that his

## P R E F A C E.

character will still secure a favourable reception to any work of his.

He had all the advantages of education which form men for the world; strong natural parts; a fine imagination, improved by an early and intimate acquaintance with the best writers; and he had spent many years of his life in foreign parts, in conversation with the most pious and eminent men of their time.

The reader will trace these several advantages in his works; and the unprejudiced reader will not be offended, if his sermons should retain some tincture of the life and energy with which preachers in warmer climates, either naturally or artificially, address their hearers. He might insensibly adopt their manner, but it appeared natural in him, and as it resulted in great measure from his own thoughts, and his own heart, it became so peculiarly his, that, notwithstanding the success he always had in preaching,

no

## P R E F A C E.

no one has yet ventured to imitate him.

He had every talent requisite in an excellent preacher. Of his language the reader will judge; but his action, every look and gesture of his, was so adapted to the nature and variations of his subject, that he hardly ever failed to enforce and enliven his language by his manner; and by the united force of manner, language, and sentiment, a single period from him had sometimes the power, at once to convince, to awaken, to delight, and to inculcate.

The principal rule of his eloquence was, to carry his real thoughts into the pulpit, and to preach, as if he were SPEAKING to his congregation. Many of his expressions were singular, because many of his thoughts were so; but he was only singular, either in thought or expression, because the strength of his own mind supplied him with reflections, and words in which to express them,

## P R E F A C E.

without the aid of what had been written or said upon the subject by other men.

He was styled by some, the MYSTIC DOCTOR, and he was deeply read in the writings of the MYSTIC divines. It is no uncommon thing for men of the best understanding, to carry about them some marks of the company they keep. But though many things, in that mode of divinity, had naturally access to a mind and heart formed like his, he was ever averse to any thing that had the appearance of faction in the Christian religion, and professed himself of no party, being indeed as true a member of the church of Christ as any since the earliest ages. He would even confess in conversation, that some things in those writers argued a disordered mind, and, by way of apology for any thing that seemed extravagant in them, he would ingeniously apply to them a Spanish proverb, of which the import is, that light makes its way into a dark room through a CRACK.

It

## P R E F A C E.

It would be small praise to attribute to so pure a character the common virtues of a good sort of man. It would sound like attributing to a scholar a competent skill in the rudiments of learning. His character was such as presupposed the good qualities, by the bare profession of which men often pass reputably thro' the world.

He had formed his mind early for an indifference to the common pleasures and pursuits of human life; and this early habit, invigorated by a religious fortitude, frequently broke out in conversation, in so cool and radical a contempt of the objects upon which men are apt to be seriously bent, that a single incidental expression of his would sometimes convey all the force of a regular satire, even though it proceeded from a most benevolent mind.

Hence many things, both in his conversation and preaching, passed for wit, which were not intended so by him; for

## P R E F A C E.

he delivered only his natural sentiments, which being original, lively, and uninfluenced by prejudice or fashion, had sometimes the appearance of being ludicrous, and, in many cases, recommended a severe morality, even to those who hear and converse merely for entertainment.

He affected not the superiority of a philosopher, or a contempt of the persons and things which the order of the world had placed above him. He was too sincere to affect any thing, and too humble to despise other men with petulance. But as his observations sometimes fell insensibly upon ridiculous men or things, he was in his own heart too superior to the world to dissemble an instructive thought. To this part of his character we are indebted for many lively passages in his sermons, and he was no less delightful to his private friends, than instructive to his hearers, by this happy mixture of vivacity and good humour  
with



## P R E F A C E.

with affections intirely fet on things above.

According to the vulgar idea of good-breeding, it should seem hardly credible, that he excelled in that accomplishment. But he was a striking instance of the close connexion between a good and a well-bred character. Without the advantage of a graceful person; and probably without having ever studied the exterior of good-breeding, he was always engaging. He had so easy and natural a complacence to others, and such inattention to himself, in matters of an inferior nature, about which good-breeding is chiefly conversant, that, with all his abilities, he never appeared arrogant, and, with great bodily infirmities, he seemed rather intent upon the case and condition of his friends, than sensible of his own.

It is hoped, that no part of this character is exaggerated. Some persons now living knew him intimately; and if it be their opinion that he resembled this account

count

## P R E F A C E.

count of him, the public will admit, that such a character, so negligent of praise and popularity during life, merited at least so cheap a tribute as this, after his death. Among his surviving friends, some are too discerning to be imposed on by the extravagance of panegyric; and those, who were unacquainted with Doctor HEYLYN, will think this account of him corroborated, if we may take the liberty of naming the DUKE of ARGYLE, the EARL of GRANVILLE, and the late Bishop BUTLER of Durham, as persons whose esteem he had the honor to enjoy.

## CONTENTS

---

---

## CONTENTS TO VOL. I.

---

### DISCOURSE I.

Page

*NATURAL Religion the Foundation of  
Revealed. Job xxxvi. 2, 3. - I*

### DISCOURSE II.

*Of Original Sin. Rom. v. 18. - 16*

### DISCOURSE III.

*Of the Tree of Knowledge. Gen. ii. 17. 34*

### DISCOURSE IV.

*Of Conscience. Rom. ii. 14, 15. - - 48*

### DISCOURSE V.

*Of the Ceremonial Law. Mark ii. 27. 61*

DISCOURSE

C O N T E N T S.

D I S C O U R S E VI.

	Page
<i>The Connexion of Religion with Morality.</i>	
Micah vi. 8. - - - - -	73

D I S C O U R S E VII.

<i>Of the Blessedness of not being offended at</i>	
CHRIST. Matt. xi. 4, 5, 6. -	91

D I S C O U R S E VIII.

<i>Of the Nativity of our LORD.</i> Luke ii. 12.	105
--	-----

D I S C O U R S E IX.

<i>The Epiphany.</i> I Tim. iv. 10. -	119
---------------------------------------	-----

D I S C O U R S E X.

<i>The Obedience of JESUS to Joseph and Mary.</i>	
Luke ii. 12. - - - - -	136

D I S C O U R S E XI.

<i>The Humility of JESUS.</i> Matt. xi. 29.	149
---	-----

D I S C O U R S E XII.

<i>Of taking up the Cross.</i> Luke ix. 23.	163
---	-----

D I S C O U R S E XIII.

<i>The Passion.</i> Heb. ii. 10. - -	174
--------------------------------------	-----

D I S C O U R S E

# C O N T E N T S.

## D I S C O U R S E X I V.

	Page
<i>Of the Resurrection.</i> <i>Isaiah xi. 10.</i> -	189

## D I S C O U R S E X V.

<i>On Whitsunday.</i> <i>Acts ii. 2, 3.</i> =	201
---	-----

## D I S C O U R S E X V I.

<i>The Christian Benevolence.</i> <i>Rom. xii. 9.</i> -	221
---	-----

## D I S C O U R S E X V I I.

<i>The Christian Sacrifice.</i> <i>Rom. xii. 1.</i> -	233
---	-----

<i>The Rich Man and Lazarus.</i> <i>Luke xvi.</i>	
<i>19, 20.</i> -    -    -    -	247

<i>The Obligation of Rich Men to Almsgiving.</i>	
<i>1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.</i> -    -	266

<i>Preached in the Chapel at Lambeth, Dec. 3,</i>	
<i>1738. At the Consecration of the Right</i>	
<i>Reverend Father in GOD, JOSEPH, Lord</i>	
<i>Bishop of BRISTOL.</i> <i>2 Tim. ii. 15, 16.</i> -	283

# CONTENTS.

## DISCOURSE XXI.

	Page
<i>On Conversion.</i> Zech. i. 3. - -	300

## DISCOURSE XXII.

<i>The Prevalent Passion.</i> Heb. xii. 1. -	314
--	-----

## DISCOURSE XXIII.

<i>On Eternity.</i> Deut. xxxii. 29. - -	328
--	-----

## DISCOURSE XXIV.

<i>On Patience.</i> Luke xxi. 19. - -	340
---------------------------------------	-----

## DISCOURSE XXV.

<i>Awake to Righteousness.</i> I Cor. xv. 34. -	351
---	-----

## DISCOURSE XXVI.

<i>On the Eucharist.</i> I Cor. ii. 28. -	366
---	-----

## DISCOURSE XXVII.

<i>Judge not.</i> Matt. vii. 1, 2. - -	383
--	-----

## DISCOURSE XXVIII.

<i>On Sloth.</i> Rom. xii. 11. - -	396
------------------------------------	-----

DISCOURSE

# CONTENTS.

## DISCOURSE XXIX.

	Page
<i>The Sower,</i> Matt. xiii. 3. - -	405

## DISCOURSE XXX.

<i>The Loaves and Fishes.</i> Matt. xv. 36, 37.	419
---	-----

## DISCOURSE XXXI.

<i>Nor Riches nor Poverty.</i> Prov. xxx. 8, 9.	432
---	-----

## DISCOURSE XXXII.

<i>A second Sermon on the same Text.</i> -	445
--	-----

## DISCOURSE XXXIII.

<i>The Prodigal Son.</i> Luke xv. 11, 12. -	457
---	-----

## DISCOURSE XXXIV.

<i>Fast Sermon preached before the King.</i>	
2 Chron. xx. 5, 6. - -	470

DISCOURSE

# DISCOURSE I.

*Natural Religion the Foundation of Revealed.*

---

J O B xxxvi. 2, 3.

*Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee, that I have yet to speak on God's behalf: I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.*

**S**UCH is the connexion of religious truth, that any part of it received and practised will gradually lead to the rest: like a circle, wherever we enter it, persevering we shall pass the whole circumference. The ordinary christian, who with an honest heart receiving the truths commonly taught, makes the gospel his rule of life; must, by his humble acquiescence therein, reap great benefit: but if others more difficult, or curious, or misapprehending some revealed doctrines, cannot readily embrace them; it is their duty to go back to first principles, *to fetch their knowledge from afar*, and begin in what is called *Natural Religion*. If they really



begin, and seriously endeavour to conform their practice to such their reasoned notions of duty, they will soon get new views of truth; and a due perseverance will certainly dispose them to receive whatever revelations God has made of himself.

The term *Natural Religion*, is used by modern writers in two different senses. Sometimes they mean by it *all* obligations rising from the nature of things; at other times, *only such* obligations as are discoverable by the light of nature.

I shall begin to treat of it according to the first sense, as it imports all obligations arising from the nature of things. As such, it has been verbosely recommended by considerations of the *proportion, harmony, beauty, and order*, which it would establish. Such notions are right indeed, but too subtile and slim to curb the unruly appetites and passions of men. The famous author of *The Religion of Nature Delineated*<sup>1</sup>, has, I think, set it in a more advantageous light, by shewing it to consist in *a conformity to truth*, as he has evinced and demonstrated with a peculiar accuracy: and indeed he has so exhausted the subject, that it is superfluous to treat farther of it in that light. I would only subjoin that the same notion was long since inculcated in numberless passages of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Woolaston.

scripture,

scripture, wherein *truth* is proposed as the substance of duty; the divine precepts are called *the laws of truth*<sup>2</sup>; and the fulfilling them is stiled *walking in the ways of truth*; *doing the truth*; *obeying the truth*; and the like. On the other hand, the fall of Lucifer is ascribed to *his not abiding in the truth*: and he, as the principle of evil, is called *the father of lies*: and all transgressors are called *liars*, because in action they are *liars*, every sin being a *lye* in practice.

Thus is *truth* often proposed in scripture as the substance of duty; but the term more generally used there to express the whole duty of man, is *justice*, or *righteousness*, which is the same thing, and the same word in the originals, and in all translations (that I have seen) besides our own. The theorists in morality will find this term *justice* altogether as philosophical as that of *truth*: yet it gives a more familiar notion, and is consequently more intelligible, which is a material advantage in subjects of abstract speculation. It may therefore serve as a farther illustration of the religion of nature, if we consider it in this second light as *justice*, and at the same time compare it with the former, that of *truth*. For these two terms, *truth* and *justice*, are, in some respects, synonymous; as

<sup>2</sup> Nehem. ix. 13. Mal. ii. 6. Ps. cxix. 151. John xvi. 13. John iii. 21. 1 Pet. i. 22, &c. John xviii. 37. John viii. 44, &c. Apocal. xxi. 27.  $\omega\rho\iota\sigma\tau\eta\nu\ \psi\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omicron\varsigma$ .

when they are taken for a rule, or law: they differ only as they respect different faculties in man, *viz.* the understanding and the will. *Truth* is the rectitude of the understanding, by which we know things for what they are: this *truth*, impressed upon the will, becomes *justice*.

To treat each thing, *as being what it is*, is the same as to do each thing *justice*: for the office of justice is to render to each thing its due; and the measure of what is due, consists in the nature of the thing, or *what it is*.

If men were consistent with themselves and acted uniformly, *truth* and *justice* would be inseparable. But see here the defect and the reproach of our natures. *Truth* in the understanding, often rests there a barren notion and empty speculation, without ever passing into the will and affections, so as to produce *justice*: That is its proper office, which if it does not perform, it becomes totally vain and useless.

*Truth* therefore, to be effectual, must govern all our sentiments and affections, but principally *love*, which, rightly directed, is in scripture stiled *charity*. *Love* is the master-passion, to which the other passions or affections of the mind conform so punctually, that they may be considered only as *love* diversified, according to the different situation of the object. Thus *grief* laments the absence, and *fear* apprehends the loss, of what we love. *Desire* pursues it;  
*hope*

*hope* has it in view; *anger* rises against obstruction; and *joy* triumphs in possession.

“*Amor meus est pondus meum* (saith St. Austin), *edè feror quocunque feror.*” *My love is my weight, by that I gravitate; by that I am carried wheresoever I am carried.* The metaphor of a weight here applied to love is surprisngly proper: for, as in the natural world *gravitation* is the universal agent, which controls every particle of matter, with infinitely various effects, according to their various situation; infomuch, that the firm adhesion of parts in a diamond, and the intestine agitation of parts in a chymical effervescence, are both accountable from the same principle: so in the spiritual world *love* excites, and governs all the motions of the mind; and is alone the source of every other passion and affection. And therefore, *to love things amiable in the degree they are amiable*, is another summary of Natural Religion, which also coincides with those before-named, viz. *truth* and *justice*; for it is treating things according to their nature, and rendering them their proper due. *Truth* and *justice* may be speculative notions, but if our affections are regulated, if the heart be set right, then actual virtue must ensue.

This *must* be the end of all religion, whether natural or revealed: reason and scripture agree in this, and the philosopher must conclude as

the apostle does, that *the end of the commandment is charity*; or, as the same is expressed more at large by Christ himself, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself.* On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets, i. e. all the doctrines of revelation tend only to establish and enforce these two commandments, which, being the substance of our religion, I shall farther illustrate by the doctrine of gravitation before-mentioned.

By the laws of gravitation all bodies tend to their centre, and at the same time they attract, and are attracted by each other. The centre draws them all, so as comparatively to supersede their mutual attraction; yet, in reality, they have such attraction: and if the centre be with respect to each of them, as almost infinite to a unit; yet they keep still the proportion of units among themselves: and the nearer they approach to the centre, the nearer they approach to each other, and thereby increase their mutual influence.

Analogous to this universal law of the material world, religion enjoins *charity*, i. e. *to love God with all our hearts: and our neighbour as ourselves.* By this all pure spirits, I mean spirits in a state of perfection, tend to God as their centre with an unparalleled vehemence.

The

The force here is as infinite to one: and their respective action is as units among themselves, inasmuch as they are individuals of the same nature, and upon that account equally amiable. For *self-love* is innocent and reasonable in its proper degree; and then only becomes criminal, when it becomes *partial*; when it appropriates more than its due, and thereby detracts from that equal measure of love which we owe to others. At the rate men commonly love themselves, it is not possible to love others as themselves; but we ought to bring down self-love to such a moderation, and raise brotherly-love to such a pitch, that both may come to be adjusted in the same level.

Upon the whole, if this principle, *love*, was exerted according to the *nature* of its objects, it would maintain *order* in the spiritual world, as gravitation or attraction does in the material.

And thus we may consider Natural Religion, as comprehended in the general notions of *truth*, *justice*, and *charity*; in which several views of it, duty is the mere result of the *nature of things*; and religion, in this sense, is but another name for the *law of nature*, or that law, which the nature of things prescribes and requires.

It may, perhaps, farther illustrate this subject, to observe with what an inviolable fidelity

the *laws of nature* are maintained in the material world. All inanimate beings, from the sun, stars, and planets, down to the minutest spire of grass, continue immutably in the order prescribed by the great Creator. The same immutability might have been established in the spiritual world. Man might have been endowed with such clear and invincible impressions of *truth*, as would have determined his will and swayed his affections in such a manner, as to have rendered him incapable of error in judgment or practice. In such a state that divine *concurfus*, which maintains the laws of nature unvaried in the *material* world, would have taken place in the *spiritual*; and established *truth* and *justice* as it were mechanically, and by what is called a fatal necessity.

A superficial and arrogant thinker may possibly wonder, why this is not the case; but he will cease to wonder, when he considers that *species of excellence*, to which the divine Will has been pleased to appoint human nature. Had man been made passive, as brute matter is, he would have been a mere machine, that must go *true* indeed, but would be absolutely incapable of praise or blame, virtue or vice, reward or punishment; whereas it is evident that man was created in a state, wherein he might yield a voluntary homage, not a forced subjection. He is therefore endowed with *free will*, which is  
the

the image of God in man, and renders him as independent, as is compatible with the nature of a created being. Instead of those invincible impressions of truth, which would have captivated the will, God gave him *reason*, by which he might examine the objects presented to his choice. Man was placed in such a situation, and the supreme Good was so obscured; or appeared so remote, and consequently diminished, as made a possibility for temporal goods to come in competition with it. And hereby the freedom of the Will was preserved, which would have been annihilated in a perfect view of truth: But, as the case now stands, as some objects, although of the utmost importance, affect the mind but feebly, or may be wholly disregarded; while others, though exceedingly trivial, by their immediate presence and vigorous action upon the senses, raise considerable emotions in us; there becomes room for choice, after reason has deliberated, and given its verdict.

This is the province of religion in the second sense, and which I proposed for the second head of this discourse. Hitherto religion has been treated, as containing all possible duty in all possible beings: But in this second sense, which indeed is the more usual, we understand by it *the duty of man as discoverable by the light of reason*. In this, as every man must answer for himself, so every man must judge for himself.

Each



Each may declare his own discoveries, and point out to others the prospect he has taken; but that is all: For this religion of nature, like the supposed state of nature, knows no submission to authority.

It has been observed already, that the law of nature is punctually fulfilled in the *material* part of the creation, while it is notoriously transgressed in the *rational*. Why then do the higher faculties so often miscarry, while brute *matter* never deviates from the truth of things? To answer this, we should consider in the first place, why *matter* is so regular, the reason of which is the continual *concurfus* of the Deity. For the laws of nature in the material world are therefore unerringly accomplished, because the God of nature himself puts them in execution. Those who have studied nature most, and penetrated deepest into her hidden recesses, have discovered themselves, and demonstrated to others, “ That every particle of matter is actuated by the Deity residing in all his works: “ That the heavens and the earth, the stars and the planets, move and gravitate by virtue of this great principle within them: That all the dead parts of matter are invigorated by the presence of their Creator, and by him made capable of exerting their respective faculties.” Now God is equally present in all spiritual beings: But

But his presence there is not, as in the former case, always efficacious; because *matter* being merely passive, the divine energy takes place there without impediment: But *spirits* being endowed with freedom and self-activity, God, who treats all things according to the nature He has endowed them with, requires their *voluntary concurrence*: This is as necessary on their part, as mere passivity is in inanimate matter.

I observed before, that, according to *justice*, all creatures have a necessary dependence upon God: But by *free will*, it is in the power of man whether he will act suitable to such dependence or not. Although the presence of God maintains him in existence; although by this he moves; although by this the blood circulates, and the animal life performs all its functions; yet the mind of man can, in some sense, exclude God, can obstruct his benign influences, can quite neglect or forget Him, and *live* (as the *Psalmist* speaks) *without God in the world*.

No wonder then that such men live as they do; no wonder that minds broke loose from their dependence upon the supreme Wisdom, commit such follies and crimes as justly render them contemptible to each other. This account of things, and this alone, explains the mad scene of human affairs: For folly and vice  
must

must proceed from wilful ignorance of God as necessarily as night follows sun-set.

The first means to be used towards dissipating this darkness, is *prayer*, *i. e.* the mind's seeking God, and returning to an actual dependence upon him. The duty of prayer is a fundamental article of natural religion, as its accurate *delineator*<sup>1</sup> has demonstrated with his usual solidity: Concluding in express terms, "That never to pray to God is equivalent to this assertion: *There is no God, who governs the world, to be prayed to.*"

Give me leave therefore to observe here, that those who neglect the offices of devotion, are not to be reckoned among the disciples of natural religion. And it is great pity they should deceive themselves with so specious a name. The advantages of natural religion, which are confessedly very great, cannot belong to those who do not practise it, by setting aside a certain portion of their time daily, wherein to pay their solemn homage to the great creator. If this were done regularly with such attention of mind, such desire of heart, and such perseverance as bears any proportion to *the nature of things*; they would find their notion of God, which has hitherto been obscure, insipid, and un-affecting: They would, I say, find their notion

<sup>1</sup> Woolaston, p. 18.

of God improved and animated : It would grow the predominant thought, and gradually the predominant passion of the mind.

Devout meditation would produce this effect both on the part of man, and on the part of God.

On the part of man, because “ Perceptions  
“ are heightened by reflection and the practice  
“ of thinking. By reflecting we exercise our  
“ capacity of apprehending ; and such use and  
“ exercise of it will increase and extend that  
“ capacity.”

These dispositions there are in man for the knowledge of God. And on the other hand the infinite goodness of the Deity must incline him to manifest himself to those, who thus seek him in sincerity. For as reason dictates prayer, so reason dictates trust in God, I mean an humble assurance that our prayer shall find acceptance. *He who made the eye, shall not he see ? He who made the ear, shall not he hear ? He who made the heart of man, shall he reject its only just desires ?* He will not reject them, nor long hide his face from the pious distress of his creatures.

To pray, as I shewed before, is a doctrine of natural religion : and if it were faithfully practised, we are confident that it would lead men into the doctrines of revelation. We desire only that christianity may be put to this test : We need

not

not, we ought not to ask more of our hearers. The interest they have at stake well deserves that the experiment should be made; for our scriptures charge all infidelity upon the want of natural religion. *He that is of God* (says our Saviour) *heareth my words: Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*<sup>1</sup>. *Every one that hath heard of the Father, and learned, doth come unto me: But no man can come unto me unless the Father draw him*<sup>2</sup>. His Apostles too declare to the same purpose. *We are of God. He that knoweth God, heareth us. He that is not of God, heareth not us*<sup>3</sup>. So necessary is the practice of natural religion, to prepare the mind for evangelical truth. And that it should be so, is perfectly agreeable to the celebrated *law of the nature of things*. For *to follow the light we have*, is a requisite disposition for farther discoveries; which discoveries the divine *mercy*, as well as *justice*, denies to those who are not so qualified.

God, in his *justice*, refuses greater manifestations of himself to those, who abuse the means of knowledge already given. Nor is it less an act of *mercy* to withhold greater conviction from those, whom such conviction would render yet more guilty, and consequently more miserable.

To conclude, true religion, of whatever denomination, is to be practised. Only to talk

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 47.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 44, 45.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 6.

and dispute about it, is in some sort to profane it. It was not instituted to amuse us with barren speculations, but to bend our heart low in a reverential awe of the Deity: And transfer us from the initiating principles of natural religion, to the consummation of it in the gospel dispensation. We shall not then need to *fetch our knowledge from afar* in abstract unaffecting reasonings; but enlightened by divine grace, we shall perceive the presence of the Deity within us to assist our weakness, and accept our homage.

## DISCOURSE II.

## Of ORIGINAL SIN.

---

 ROM. v. 18.

*As by the offence of One, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: Even so by the righteousness of One, the free Gift came upon all men unto justification.*

**A**S the fall of man happened in a higher, and very different order of nature from the present, it is not possible for us to have a clear and adequate knowledge of it. But there are numberless degrees between a perfect knowledge and a total ignorance. We are told all that it concerns us to know; and that we should attend to as an important part of our own history. In forming our notion concerning it from the account given in scripture, we must make due allowance for the imperfection of human language, which cannot express spiritual things otherwise than by figures founded in that analogy, which subsists between the visible and the invisible

invisible world. And there is the greater reason to make such allowance for a book so ancient as that of *Genesis*, which was wrote when language had been little cultivated, and the generality of mankind were very gross and incapable of sublime speculations: So that the sacred historian was obliged to represent intellectual things by sensible images, which he uses, if I may so speak, as a kind of hieroglyphics. Such in particular is the *tree of knowledge*, which appears to have been a well-chosen symbol, and well understood by the *Jews*, because a *tree* or *plant*, is still frequently used by the *Jewish* writers to signify some principal point of knowledge *implanted* in the mind. Hence the famous *Arbor Cabbalistica*, on which their system of the Divine attributes, called *Sephiroth*, is distributed: Hence the Rabbies call their articles of faith *עצי* *plantationes* or *plantas*: And hence our Lord himself, after reprobating some false doctrines of the Pharisees, adds, *Every plant, which my Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*\*, i. e. Every doctrine, which is not of Divine institution, shall be eradicated—and, if it be not an instance too light to be joined with those before-mentioned, I would remind you, that the same symbol is made use of at the end of our public grammar.

\* Matt. xv. 13.



When therefore we read that the first man was placed in a fruitful garden, we must infer that his mind too had its *Paradise* suited to its capacities, and abounding with various objects of knowledge; which were as necessary to it (the mind), as corporeal food was to the body. For every kind of life must have its proper and homogenial nourishment. Life is, as a fire, always spending itself, and requiring fresh fuel, which it devours, digests, transubstantiates, and then perspires to make way for successive circulations. Thus the earthly body is recruited with the productions of its mother earth, while the mind feeds on thought, and requires a continual supply of suitable entertainment as verily as the body does. The parallel too holds with regard to the effects of diet. Good thoughts nourish and meliorate the mind, as evil thoughts corrupt and poison it. For meditation does the office of digestion, and transmutes its objects into the substance of the soul. In Paradise man found not only outwardly *every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food*: But also inwardly all branches of knowledge pleasing to speculation, and *good for food* to the soul. He had there, not only favourable and delightful, but also wholesome and substantial truths, on which he might *ruminare*, and by which he might nourish and improve.

Beside these there was within his reach one set of notions, which he was forbid to meddle with, called *the knowledge of good and evil*. Or perhaps we shall speak more properly, if we say he was forbid to take things in one certain point of view, which would discover the knowledge of good and evil. In some sort indeed he knew good from the moment of his creation, for all was good about him: But he knew it only, as one may be said to know health, who never felt disease: Or to know light, who never knew the want of it, who never was in darkness. Such a man's idea of light (if he has any) will scarce deserve the name of knowledge, for want of that distinction, which is found only in comparing it with its opposite. We, who have experienced darkness, have quite another notion of light than such a person would be capable of. It was this experimental knowledge which was forbidden, a knowledge of good by its contrary: So that in a proper sense evil only was prohibited.

For it may be further observed, that *good* and *evil* are relative terms, whose sense is to be determined by the circumstances to which they refer. Thus *David* says of himself, that *it was good for him that he had been afflicted*<sup>a</sup>. Doubtless affliction is in itself evil, yet he rightly calls it

<sup>a</sup> Ps. cxix. 71.

good, by reason of the greater evil it delivered him from. Now *Adam* in his state of innocence, could have no such notion. The absence of evil left no room for the relative good. As he knew not disease, so neither had he a notion of medicine; and after the same manner he, in all other respects, enjoyed a fortunate ignorance. He was therefore commanded to *keep this his first station*, and not depart from that true view of things which was set before him.

But it may be asked: Whence then came evil into the world? This has been deemed a question of great intricacy; but it may be solved by considering only whence *moral* good proceeds. Does it not arise from the right use, which a free agent makes of his liberty, when he chuses that which is proper for him, and rejects the contrary? Now evil comes from the same fountain that good comes from, even the free-will. Take away free-will, and there can be no moral good in man, as there is no moral good in a mill or other machine. As good therefore proceeds from the freedom of the will, so the possibility of evil evidently flows from the same cause, and it is needless to seek it elsewhere.

From that possibility man called forth evil into existence, and thereby fell from *righteousness*, i. e. justice largely taken, as involving all duty. By justice the creature belongs to the Creator, and can have no right to dispose of  
itself.

itself. The only use man ought to make of his will, is to surrender it to God perpetually in a generous obedience. And the freedom of the will should serve only to remove servility, and give a kind of merit to his subjection; to make it an homage worthy God, as coming from a Being that might possibly refuse it; yet pays it freely, and returns the use of all its faculties to him, from whom it received them.

*Adam* acted otherwise, and thereby *pulled down destruction upon himself*<sup>1</sup>, as the wise man expresses it: He disobeyed his Creator, and he had the punishment he deserved. So far, I think, there is no ground for objection. But the consequence of his fall involving all his race, and *making infirmity permanent*<sup>2</sup> (as *Esdra*s speaks); this is a great offence to many, and furnishes matter of complaint to almost all. We are apt to say with him, *That it had been better not to have given the earth to Adam* (not to have trusted him with the fate of his posterity); *or else, when it was given him, to have restrained him from sinning*<sup>3</sup>. This sentiment, though a rash one, is very natural to our frailty and ignorance; as is also the exclamation which follows: *O Adam, what hast thou done! for though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee*<sup>4</sup>. Such complaints,

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Efd. iii. 22.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Efd. vii. 46, 48.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Efd. vii. 48.

and such expostulations have been common among serious men ; but it is common to complain without reason ; and if we saw the whole plan of providence with relation to mankind, I am fully persuaded, that we should find this complaint unreasonable, and even ungrateful to our Redeemer ; who has made abundant compensation for all damages arising from *Adam's* transgression, by atoning, not only for original sin, but also for the many actual offences of mankind, as is shewed at large in the context.

I would only observe in this place, that the reason why we are so prone to complain and lament ourselves, is, because we now feel the inconveniences of our present state, and are not sufficiently apprised of many of its advantages, nor of the greater disadvantages, which other *initiating states* may be liable to. It is very probable, that every intelligent being has a time of trial or probation. Some of the angels are fallen, for ought we know, irreparably. Our father *Adam* was placed in a lower station than they : His fall consequently was less, and by the mercy of our great Mediator, He and *Eve*, the companion of his fall, are now fully restored<sup>2</sup>. We find ourselves, not by our own fault, at the bottom. But a ray of *light* reaches down to us, and a *way* is opened for our ascent.

<sup>1</sup> Psal. viii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Wisd. x. 1.

That *light* and that *way*<sup>1</sup> is our dear Redeemer, who is ever present with us, and in us, to enlighten, guide, and assist us in our passage.

As to the corruption of our nature, that, strictly speaking, is not our sin, nor shall we, through the merits of Christ, be answerable for it. On the contrary, at the day of judgment it will be brought to our account on the favourable side, and all due allowance made for it. In the mean time it has its office admirably contrived by providence, in affording us continual occasions wherein to exercise virtue. It is a source of evil desires; and those evil desires are the enemies which we have to combat; consequently, to those who combat them, they are the subject of victory and triumph. To have such enemies is not our crime: Our crime lies only in basely submitting to them. The grace of God is ever ready to assist our endeavours, and, as the Apostle speaks, to *make us more than conquerors through Christ that loveth us*<sup>2</sup>. Take away these enemies, otherwise than by our conquering them, and you take away that which constitutes the proper excellency of human nature in the present state; which excellency consists in resisting evil inclinations, in overcoming ourselves, and approving our fidelity to the Creator amidst all the temptations which surround us.

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 12. and xiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 37.

Those therefore who complain of original sin, as if they were hardly dealt with, should consider well the answer which the angel gave to *Esdra*s, when he complained of *Adam* in those words before-mentioned: *O Adam, what hast thou done! for though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone; but we all, that come of thee.* To which the angel answered: *This is the condition of the Battle, which man that is born upon the earth shall fight: That if he be overcome, he shall suffer; but if he get the victory, he shall receive eternal glory*<sup>1</sup>.

Such is the condition of the battle; such are the terms prescribed; such is the trial, or state of probation, which we must pass through. But if some were to speak their thoughts, we should hear objections against all such trials. Why (would it be said) why did not God make us happy at once? Why would He suffer his creatures to run any hazard of being miserable? He might have made justice as natural and necessary, as respiration; and thereby spared us all the pains, which we now must be at, before we can be happy upon the terms which he has set us.

To this we might answer in the words of the Apostle: *Nay but, O Man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed*

<sup>1</sup> 2 Efd. vii. 57, 58.

*say unto him who formed it; Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter power over the clay*<sup>1</sup>, &c. Thus we might answer, and thereby satisfy a pious mind: Although these words were spoke only concerning God's electing a peculiar people, called to the distinguished privileges of the gospel dispensation; and were not intended to be applied, as they have since scandalously been, to the bulk of mankind, whose sentence at the last day will depend only on their own works and deservings; which I remark here, because this way of arguing, which resolves difficulties by vouching Divine Supremacy, has been so profanely abused to maintain impious misrepresentations of the Deity, as absurdly arbitrary and tyrannical, that men of sense have good cause to distrust it. To those therefore who move this question: "Why did not God make us happy at once, without our passing through any state of probation?" It will be more satisfactory if we can intelligibly unfold this knot, instead of cutting it by dint of sovereign power.

The objectors would be dispensed from all probationary states; they would take no trouble, and run no hazard: They would have nothing to do, but to enjoy; they would be immutably, eternally, infinitely *happy*. They want no more of God: They have no other cares, or desires.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 20, &c.

Let



Let it now be considered, whether such desires are reasonable. Are they not on the contrary most ungenerous and base, arguing a frame of mind quite unworthy of the favour to which it makes pretension? We are all *children* of the Almighty Father; and consequently under such obligations as that relation infers. Suppose then a son quite averse to giving himself any trouble about pleasing his father: One who thinks it a hardship to be bid do any thing, but what he himself inclines to do: Who grudges that any service should be required of him; yet wants an inheritance, wants that his father should do all he can for him. Such are they who make the objection: And God, who bids us *not to cast pearls before swine*, will not squander his blessings upon such unworthy, selfish spirits.

The word *merit* has been so misapplied, or misunderstood, that one is almost afraid to use it, even upon proper occasions. But we cannot be mistaken, in asserting, that God, in his justice, requires of every man *such merit*, as He himself has made him capable of. A man can stop a covetous desire from breaking out into theft or fraud, *i. e.* he can keep the eighth commandment: (And the same may be said of the rest.) Now, if from a dutiful regard to God, the man maintains his integrity, God will reward his obedience: For so far as he

is

is a creature fit to be made happy, he is a *proper object*: And he will be found in the event, that the Divine Wisdom has provided effectual means to render all objects of the Divine Bounty *proper objects* before their final beatification.

Even in this state of confusion we think it *wrong*, when a worthless man is possessed of great wealth or preferment. Though these are far from being any real good, yet, as men value them, they judge them misplaced in the hands of a fool. In the kingdom of heaven there will be no such preposterous distribution: But excellence shall be the measure of blifs, and *none shall be crowned, but those who have conquered*.

And this may serve for an answer to those who are inclined to charge God foolishly, for permitting the influence of the first man's transgression to infect all his race. This infection we commonly call *Original Sin*, which has been denied by some, and misrepresented by others with such gross aggravations, as render it offensive to common sense, and inconsistent with the revealed doctrines, particularly those of this epistle.

As for those who deny it, I shall not dispute with them; for who would debate with a blind man about darkness? And they must be blind

▪ Rev. ii.

indeed,

indeed, who perceive not evil in their natures. The truth here is to be felt, and needs no foreign proof. All that seems farther necessary for their conviction, who scruple to admit it, is to remove the just prejudices conceived against it from the spurious additions made by those, who have misrepresented it.

Whatever the cause may have been, it is certain in effect, that among the professors of christianity there has long been a strange proneness to credulity, and a preposterous humour of making things that are difficult in themselves still more difficult to be understood. Subjects, that were naturally obscure, have been rendered quite dark, and unintelligible. It would have been well, if men had stopped even here: and surely it was high time, when the premises were become absurd, not to advance consequences, and plunge farther in nonsense. Yet this has been done notoriously, and men from their own mistakes have made or admitted inferences, at which themselves stood amazed; and yet have not scrupled to avow them.

As I intend by this reflection no invective, but a friendly complaint; I shall instance in a person, whom I honour exceedingly, I mean Mr. Pascal, who, as far as I can judge, has contributed more to the defence of christianity, than any other man in the last ages. Yet in his Thoughts upon Original Sin, which are,  
generally

generally speaking, most excellent and satisfactory, he has the following paragraph, (page 28.) “ The transmission of original sin from  
 “ Adam to his descendents appears to us, not  
 “ only impossible, but also most unjust. For  
 “ what is more contrary to the rules of our  
 “ wretched justice, than to damn eternally an  
 “ infant incapable of will, for a sin, in which  
 “ he seems to be so little concerned, that it was  
 “ committed six thousand years before he came  
 “ into existence? Nothing certainly is more  
 “ rudely shocking than this doctrine: and yet  
 “ without this, (which is the most incompre-  
 “ hensible of all mysteries) we are incompre-  
 “ hensible to ourselves.” The conclusion is a  
 great truth; but the premises are clogged with  
 needless absurdities.

As first, he says, That the transmission of original sin seems an *impossibility*. Now the scripture account is, that Adam, after his fall and recovery to a capacity of working out his salvation, *begat a son in his own likeness, after his image*<sup>a</sup>, i. e. with the same evil dispositions, and with the same infused principle of grace to combat them, as Adam himself was then endowed with. I see here no impossibility, but on the contrary, a regular course of nature, according to which all animals produce their like.

<sup>a</sup> Gen. v. 3.

To this pretended impossibility, the author adds its apparent injustice. For *what* (says he) *is more contrary to the rules of our wretched justice, than to damn eternally an infant incapable of will?* Here he calls the notions, by which we judge of this doctrine, *the rules of our wretched justice.*—Our practice of justice is indeed very *wretched*: but our speculative rules of justice are right enough, for God himself appeals to them by the prophet Ezekiel <sup>2</sup>, upon the very point in question. Our notions of justice are not of our own production, but a transcript of the eternal law graven in our conscience; and according to these we ourselves shall be judged at the last day. We may therefore safely trust to their judgment concerning an *infant incapable of will*, and consequently of law: since St. Paul declares, that *sin is not imputed, where there is no law.* And again; that *where there is no law, there is no transgression* <sup>3</sup>. To which we may add, that where there is no transgression, there can be no punishment; seeing punishment is a relative term, which always supposes transgression, and cannot subsist without it.

This is a sure conclusion, although the scripture had been silent, as it is in a great measure, concerning what the Redeemer shall accomplish in the future state. But the same divine au-

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xviii. 19, 25, 29.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 13.

thority,

thority, which teaches the innate distemper of mankind; teaches also its remedy, and frequently declares it to be adequate to the disease: for the second Adam will repair all damages done by the first, and himself answer for all those, who have no unrepented crimes of their own to answer for. [See Rom. v. 12—21.]

I shall now speak of another account of original sin authorised in our own church; which though it was made with a good intention, to render us the more sensible of our obligations to the Redeemer; and is expressed in terms, which are literally true in a certain sense; yet may easily be mistaken, and thence render the doctrine absurd. As where it is said, [the IXth Article] that original sin is not only the *corruption*, but *the fault of the nature of every man*, and *deserves condemnation*. When we call it a *fault*, we must remember, as I observed before, to distinguish it from our own actual faults; and remark that the article calls it only *the fault of our nature*. *Fault* is used here, as we apply it to inanimate beings, and in the same sense, as when we say of a vessel, that it is *faulty*, i. e. defective, useless, deserving to be rejected and cast away: yet, as we did not concur to the breaking it, this is not, in strictness of speech, our proper fault, our personal crime: nor will the guilt of it be laid to our charge. However,  
for

for the present it has spoiled us, it makes us abominable: for a fault is a fault, and corruption is corruption, which ever way it came, or whatever *use* may be made of it. It has happened without our crime; and it may have an issue unspeakably to our advantage. But neither of these are here considered. Regard is had only to the present nature of man in his unregenerate state, which is notoriously unjust, and as such deserves condemnation, as *a dead tree cumbring the ground*, if there were no *reviving power*, if there were no *Redeemer*. But this is putting a case, which never was, nor could have been. For the Almighty, *who inhabiteth eternity*, and whose all-seeing eye reaches through the whole extent of it, foreknowing the lapse of the first Adam, had, *before the foundation of the world* \*, provided a second head of human nature, through whom to derive his blessings to the whole race, when the first channel was polluted and spoiled. And as by the first channel *death* came into the world, so *resurrection* proceeds from the second: for *as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive*. And those, *who have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation*.

The present life is our time of trial, during which our gracious Redeemer administers proper

\* 1 Pet. i. 20.

assistances to each man particularly, according to his capacity. For as *he has tasted death for every man, so he is the Saviour of all men, and the light of all men, having wrote the law in their hearts.*

As for us, who beside the general law of nature, have the additional lights of revelation; we have so much more to answer for. Let us not then waste our time in vain complaints, or absurd cavils at the divine dispensation. We see indeed but little of God's ways, yet what we see is sufficient for our conduct, and to silence all reasonable objections: since we are assured, that the merits of Christ are co-extended with the demerits of Adam, and that every man at the last day shall be judged only according to his own deeds and deservings. Then the mercy, as well as the justice of God, will be exerted in a manner that far transcends all notions we can now form of them: the clouds, which now cover the ways of providence, will be dissipated: wisdom will be justified of her children; and even those who shall be then reprobated, will be forced to acknowledge the equity of their condemnation.



## DISCOURSE III.

*Of the Tree of KNOWLEDGE.*


---

 GEN. ii. 17.

*Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

**I**N my last discourse I had occasion to mention this remarkable prohibition, and among other reasons for it, observed, “ That good and  
 “ evil are relative terms, whose sense is to be  
 “ determined by the circumstances to which  
 “ they refer. Thus David says of himself, that  
 “ *It was good for him, that he had been afflict-*  
 “ *ed.* Doubtless affliction is in itself evil, yet  
 “ he rightly calls it good, by reason of the  
 “ greater evil it delivered him from. Now  
 “ Adam, in his state of innocence, could have  
 “ no such notion. The absence of evil left no  
 “ room for the relative good. As he knew  
 “ not

“ not disease, so he had no notion of medicine :  
“ and after the same manner he, in all other  
“ respects, enjoyed a fortunate ignorance. He  
“ was therefore commanded to *keep this his first*  
“ *station*, and *abide in the truth*, i. e. not de-  
“ part from that true view of things which was  
“ set before him.”

Some may be curious to know more distinctly what that view was ; but though it should be delineated in the properest terms that human language can furnish, yet, I fear, the description would be little relished : the *many* would slight its great advantages, and perhaps treat them as a refined and subtle speculation, void of that solidity and importance which they imagine in their present prospects and pursuits. Even as the highest mountains appear as clouds or bluish mists to those who are at a great distance from them : so the distance at which men look back towards the state of primitive innocence, renders it hard to be perceived ; and often little to be valued when it is perceived. Yet, however, as any tolerable representation of it may serve farther to solve the difficulty in question, viz. why the knowledge of good and evil was prohibited ; I shall essay to trace out the gross lineaments or outlines of that primitive state, which is sometimes called *the state of innocence* ; sometimes *the state of original righteousness*. The first is a negative account of it :

the second is positive and explicit, therefore fittest to be insisted on.

The terms *original righteousness* [*justice*] import that Adam, in his first situation, was in a capacity of doing *justice* to every object that occurred to his notice: or (to speak in the modern philosophic language, which emulates the plainness of algebraic equations) the *original justice of Adam* consisted in this: that he knew things for what they were, and could treat them as being what they were: or, in other words, he knew the nature of things, and could behave towards them according to such their nature, *i. e.* give to each thing its due, *i. e.* do it justice.

You observe here that the original *justice* of Adam proceeded from his knowledge, I mean those right impressions which *truth* made on his understanding: and while those first impressions lasted, they necessitated him to value all things truly, *i. e.* each according to their intrinsic merit. All things then had their proper place in his esteem: and therefore the same rank which God holds in his universe, that same rank the notion of God held in the mind of man; consequently it was the ruling predominant thought, to which all his other thoughts were adjusted and kept in a due subordination; for every other *thought* was as dependent on that, as every other *thing* was dependent on the  
Creator.

Creator. God was then known as the first, and the final cause of all things; as their author, and their end. Now this *sense* of their relation to God ought to have been preserved as inviolably in the mind of man, as that relation really and incessantly exists in the nature of things: and the divine will, which made them what they were, each in their order; the same divine will was the rule by which they were to be estimated.

Thus evil was quite excluded; it was no where to be found in all the works of God: and accordingly we find it repeated at the close of each article of the Mosaic account of the creation, that *God saw that it was good*. The cedar, and the smallest spire of grass; the radiancy of the sun and the glimmering light of the glow-worm, were equal in this respect; for goodness, as was noted before, is a relative term, and all things were equally good for the several purposes to which God intended them.

And thus things must appear while seen in their true light, *i. e.* as the creatures of God, produced by him, and dependent upon him. But when frail Adam turned away from this sublime, yet only rational view of things; and, disregarding the Creator, considered himself as having a distinct interest of his own; then he would estimate the creatures by the service and use he imagined they might be to himself: and

then immediately more and less, better and worse, good and evil, would present themselves. For when God was set aside, then *self* succeeded in the place of God to supply the immense void made in the mind of man by that horrid omission. Here was now a new standard by which he formed his judgment of things. And as justice consists in the practice of truth, so injustice must be the consequence of rejecting it: for when man desisted from considering himself and all about him as the creatures of God; he must at the same time cease to be *thankful* for them, he must lose the *sense* of his obligations to the divine bounty: and hence would ensue a general revolution in all his sentiments.

In all his sentiments, gratitude must have been a predominant principle, as long as he continued in that first state, which is rightly named, the state of *original justice*. For justice is universal virtue, and gratitude is a more delicate kind of justice, acting by the pure motive of love, which love is the genuine source of happiness. Thus, while man gratefully considered the creatures as the gifts of God; besides their proper value, they became more valuable to him as *tokens* of God's love to him, which would more and more excite his love to God. And as the love of God gained the ascendant in his mind, that would more endear

to him the gifts of God, and double his enjoyment of them: this greater delight would still increase his love of God, and that love of God, reciprocally increasing his delight, would lead him forwards to the utmost bliss he was capable of.

Such was the natural course of things, if man had persisted in his original rectitude. But, frail as he was, he deviated from this straight ascending path; and too attentive to the gifts of God, he forgot the donor: being diverted from that sublime, yet only true view of things, which set God always before him, he lost sight of God, he turned his back on him, if I may so speak; and became ungrateful to his benefactor. *Ingratum si dixeris omnia dixeris.* Ingratitude implies all kinds of guilt. This was fully verified here. For when man no longer considered his own existence, and that of all within his power, as the gifts of God; he of course took all to himself. The Creator's right being set aside, he accounted all his own: possession was the ready title by which he usurped an uncontrollable dominion over them; and his heart was elated with a spurious joy in the new acquisition of his imaginary riches. Thus when he ceased to be *thankful* for them, he grew *proud* of them. Where gratitude stopped, there self-complacence with pride began: and so the preacher accounts for the origin of evil, *the*

*beginning of pride is when one departeth from God, and his heart [affection] is turned away from his Maker: for pride is the beginning of sin, and covetousness, and envy, and every species of injustice are its certain consequences* <sup>5</sup>.

This seems to me a satisfactory account of the prohibition we are treating of, and I find it confirmed by those of the Jewish commentators, who are most distinguished for piety, parts and learning. Philo Judæus upon this subject writes as follows <sup>6</sup>: “ By paradise we  
 “ are to understand the principal faculty of the  
 “ soul, which is filled with numberless opi-  
 “ nions, as a forest with plants. By the tree  
 “ of life, is meant piety or godliness, that  
 “ principal virtue which renders the soul im-  
 “ mortal. And by the tree of knowledge of  
 “ good and evil is meant <sup>7</sup> such a view of  
 “ things, as distinguishes their difference and  
 “ contrariety among themselves, without re-  
 “ gard to the end to which they ought to be

<sup>5</sup> Ecclus x. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Edit. ult. Vol. I. p. 37. De Mundi Opificio.

<sup>7</sup> *Such a view of things, &c.*] This period would not be intelligible in a literal translation, and therefore I was obliged to render it by a paraphrase, which, I think, fully expresses the sense of the original. The author himself explains *φρόνσις* by *ὄψις διανοίας, visus animi*, Vol. II. p. 10. And the effect of the *φρόνσις ἡ μέση*, which he here speaks of, is that *φρόνημα καρπὸς* which is mentioned in our IXth Article of Original Sin.

“referred. These two were placed as opposite  
“extremes in the soul; and God, presiding as  
“judge, observed to which of these man would  
“addict himself. And when he saw that man,  
“neglecting holiness and piety, turned aside to  
“cunning” [the Greek word imports what is  
contrary to simplicity, viz. a crafty regard to  
selfish ends] “he then rejected him, as was  
“fitting, and drove him out of paradise.”

Such is the account which Philo gives of the fall; and I conceive that Maimonides too intended the same notion. More Nevochim, part 1. chap. 2. where he interprets Job xiv. 20. as spoke concerning Adam. *When he turned his face, thou didst cast him out.* So he translates the original, and explains it, by shewing that the Hebrew word for *face* signifies the intention, and whatever the mind is principally attentive to; and infers, that when Adam changed his view of things, and applied his attention to that which he was forbid to attend to, [viz. a comparison of the creatures among themselves, exclusive of their relation to the Deity] then God drove him out of paradise.

The cause then of all this ruin is want of piety, want of that devout regard to the Creator which constitutes the whole duty of man. I say *the whole duty of man*; for as God alone is the first cause of all existence, so he alone ought to be the first cause, or motive of all  
moral



moral agency. The relation which we and our fellow-creatures stand in to him, ought to be the sole rule of our conduct; and *to act contrary to that relation* is practical atheism. 'Tis the original sin, and the cause of all sin that was, or is, or can be committed. *To act contrary to the relation which we bear to God*, is an abstract way of speaking, the importance of which, I fear, may not be duly apprehended. Let it therefore be considered what it is for men to act in contradiction to the very inferior relations which they bear to one another in civil society. If a *servant*, laying aside all thought of his master, deserts his service; and disposes of himself, and of all he can get of his master's into his hand, as if it were his own, his unquestionable property.—If a *son*, casting off the reverence and obedience due to his parents, and mindless of his obligations to them and dependence on them; follows his own devices in defiance of their authority.—If a *wife*, departing from her husband, places her affections upon another man, &c.—These shew what enormities follow from the creatures acting contrary to the relations which they bear respectively to one another: but when man acted in contradiction to that high relation which he bore to God, this was consummate guilt; this was a total apostasy from truth and goodness. The crime proved its own punishment: he had forsaken

faken

faken God, and was forsaken by him. Thus the sentence denounced, viz. *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, was punctually executed on the very day of transgression.

For death is not a loss of existence, (probably there is no such thing in nature,) death, I say, is not a loss of existence; but it is an alteration in the manner of existing, whereby the scene is changed: we lose our accustomed view of things, and can no longer have that intercourse which had been maintained during that kind of *life*, whereof such *death* is the extinction. For as it was noted before concerning good and evil, that they were relative terms; so it is with the words *life* and *death*, which are always to be understood with regard to that scene of action, to which the life spoke of is the introduction, and from which the death is the exit. *Our prime faculties are the understanding and the will: the use of these is LIFE, which accordingly consists in perception and activity with regard to the objects within its sphere.* Thus the angelical life is conversant with things celestial and divine; while the animal life is occupied in things terrestrial, to which its perception and activity is confined. For,

As there are different *senses* in the same life, appropriated to the different qualities of its objects; the eye, for instance, discerns colours,  
the

the ear sounds, &c. so there are different lives in the same person, appropriated to the different worlds to which they appertain. And as the loss of one sense does not extinguish the rest, but, on the contrary, it is found by experience, that the loss of one sense may render those which remain more lively and acute, the stock of animal spirits obstructed in one part, venting itself more copiously in others: so, when the spiritual life was quenched in Adam, the animal life was so far from being extinguished by that loss, that, on the contrary, it was greatly enlarged, and became enormous. For those higher affections, which were suited and originally belonged to the divine life, being destitute of their proper objects, sunk down into the animal principle, and applied themselves with their innate vigour to the low concerns of the animal life. *Life*, as it was said before, *consists in perception and activity*, and man in the fall having lost his *perception* of heavenly things, (which loss is the death denounced in the text :) his *active force* still subsisting, vented itself upon things temporal with an intenseness most disproportionate to such inferior objects. And hence ensued all the follies and miseries which have disgraced the human nature.

But when we essay to represent the disorders of the lapsed state, the same difficulties recur which were complained of in the beginning of  
this

this discourse : for as the great distance at which we stand from the state of innocence, makes us not relish, or even perceive its excellence : so, as we ourselves are actually in the state of the fallen Adam ; its nearness, or rather identity with our own, makes us not sensible of its deformity. Men, ignorant of their proper bliss, do not resent the loss of it : for their proper bliss consists in the knowledge and love of God, which the scriptures rightly call *eternal life* <sup>8</sup> : and the loss of this is the *death* we treat of. But men wholly occupied about their temporal concerns, acquiesce in that wretched state ; they are reconciled to their misery, and may say, as those mentioned by Isaiah, *We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement* <sup>9</sup>. For although they still have a perception of what is just, and right to be done ; they use it only to blame or complain of others ; and not taking it for the rule of their own conduct, they are quite unconcerned about their gross deviations from it.

Even they who are of a better mind, and being convinced of their errors, seriously endeavour to reform their lives ; even these, I say, do not at first, and all at once, discover the deep corruption of their nature : nor is it convenient that they should do so, because a full view of it might greatly discourage them, and

<sup>8</sup> John xvii. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah xxviii. 15.

would

would be useless in their present situation: it suffices that they practise what they know, and then farther knowledge will be the reward of their perseverance. It is not reasonable to have a second lesson, till the first is learned. The innate depravation therefore is commonly discovered by degrees in the measure they strive against it; and the moral light increases only as they follow its guidance. As in travelling, we are always shifting our horizon, and objects, which were scarcely visible at a distance, magnify when we approach them: so in the road of virtue, what before seemed a vain refinement, becomes an essential part of duty, when we attain a capacity to perform it.

As for those who give themselves up to other pursuits, and neglecting virtue do not regret their want of it: to such the doctrine of original sin infecting the human race, commonly appears a needless absurdity, which offends their pride, and is not consistent with the high opinion they have of their own excellence. Yet some there have been<sup>1</sup>, men of acute parts and a fine discernment, whose pride took a different turn, and, instead of concealing their natural depravity, rendered them inquisitive to search it out, and industrious to divulge it. These treating it as a matter of mere speculation, have, with gaiety and a kind of triumph

<sup>1</sup> Rochefaucault, Mandeville, &c.

over the rest of their species, so described the deep and universal corruption of mankind, and so exposed the defects, or, if one may so speak, the viciousness of human virtues, that they have scandalized many, and surpris'd all, but the few, who by their own experience in their religious progress, were already apprised of it: and yet even those severe dissectors of the heart of man, after having exhausted all their sagacity in discoveries, which, generally speaking, were true and well grounded; have professed, as they had great reason, that there remained still a *terra incognita*, which they could not penetrate.

The just reproach of these writers is, that they have represented man only by the dark side, and have omitted the mixture of goodness that is in him, I mean that innate instinct to justice and piety, whereby the Creator has in part restored his lapsed powers, and put him in a capacity to deny himself, to withstand the wrong propensities of his nature, and do good works in spite of bad inclinations.

The omission of this salutary truth is very blameable in these pretended philosophers, because in consequence of that omission, they have represented the acquisition of true virtue as an impracticable project: however they give proper evidence in the cause for which they here alledged, viz. to prove the great corruption of the human nature, which ensued upon the spiritual death of our grand progenitor.

## DISCOURSE IV.

## Of CONSCIENCE.

---

R O M. ii. 14, 15.

*When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law; these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.*

**I**T is here asserted, that some among the Gentiles (who had no knowledge of a revealed law) have, by the light of nature, discovered and performed the principal duties which the revealed law enjoined. The Apostle says, that *not having the law, they were a law to themselves*, and thereby shewed, that what was prescribed by the law, was also *wrote in their hearts*, as their conscience testified by the  
 sentence

sentence it passed within them of approbation or condemnation of their actions.

The text therefore imports, that conscience gives decisions agreeable to a divine law impressed upon the mind of man. This then is the first revelation made to us of the divine WILL, and all farther discoveries of it presuppose this, as a fundamental principle. Yet even this has been disputed, and difficulties have been raised, to obviate which is the purport of the following discourse.

The term *conscience* has been lamentably abused and perverted to cover motives that have no relation to it: and not only hypocrisy, but fanaticism, with many follies, and vices too, have taken sanctuary in the name of conscience. For when sinful men, industrious to deceive themselves or others, seek to justify the wrong they do; they give for their excuse *good* reasons instead of *true* ones: and therefore, as the plea of conscience, where it is real, is ever a sufficient justification, this plea has been often made, where conscience had no share; but would have prevented the wrong, if it had been attended to. And hence arises a farther mischief, viz. that other bad men, reluctant to the restraints of conscience, gladly take such opportunities to decry it, and harden themselves in neglecting it. They tell us gravely, that to follow conscience is a dangerous way, and subject to gross



delusions: and to confirm this, they have at hand many stories, some tragical, and some ridiculous; wherein great follies, and even vices are charged upon the score of conscience. If we examine the ground of this charge, we shall find it to be only the false excuse which the guilty make for themselves; which derogates nothing from conscience, and would certainly be rejected as frivolous, if there were no private reasons for admitting it. But men, as I said, standing in awe of conscience, and uneasy under its censures, readily embrace whatever may lessen its authority, and serve for a pretext to dispense with their subjection to it.

Thus imposture on one hand, and wilful self-deceiving credulity on the other, have concurred with atheism<sup>2</sup>, to depreciate conscience. The imposture indeed has commonly been so gross, as to require a great degree of credulity; and could never have passed upon any, but such as thought it their interest to believe it. For what has an aukward, spiritless, or perverse shyness; what have spleen, melancholy, a dis-tempered imagination, cowardice, or other com-

<sup>2</sup> Whoever denies conscience will be proved to deny God by an inevitable consequence, according to the reasoning of Mr. Woolaston, p. 18 and 121; especially if we receive that of Menander, which I think true in a qualified sense: *Βροτοῖς ἅπασιν Συνείδησις Θεός*. *Cunctis mortalibus Conscientia est Deus.*

plexional infirmities of mind, to do with conscience? Yet all these have been imputed to it: as also enthusiasm and superstition, *i. e.* madness and folly; with persecution and rebellion, two of the greatest crimes; these too have been ascribed to conscience, and its sacred authority vouched for actions that proceed from most opposite principles. That bad men say what is false to excuse themselves is no wonder: but if we had a right notion of conscience, we should know these to be such improbable falsehoods, that it is just matter of wonder that any should give credit to them.

As for those who do give credit to them, and thence raise arguments to justify their own neglect of conscience, they do not act sincerely; for they think themselves in no danger of bigotry, or fanaticism, or a merciless persecuting spirit, although they should, in the strictest manner, perform all that their conscience requires of them. They have so good an opinion of themselves, that they are under no apprehension of the brain-sick follies they object. They fear not these for themselves. Their only fear at bottom is the pain of following conscience: they fear it not as a deluder, but as a rigid exacter of truth and justice: and thence they treat it as an enthusiastic principle.

And yet, as mean an opinion as men profess to have of conscience, when they are pressed to follow its guidance; upon other occasions they

speak of it with respect, and in some phrases the name is held in veneration. As when a man says; that *he thinks so in his conscience*, he means by *conscience*, that *serious unprejudiced posture of mind, which is an immediate disposition for perceiving truth*. And to say of a man that *he has no conscience*, is the worst of characters: and the person to whom it is applied will resent it as highly injurious. So that all men would be thought to have conscience: but if we should ask many what use they make of it? they would be at a loss for an answer.—What answer would they give?—

But to return whence we digressed. It was said, that men sometimes put a value upon conscience: they look upon the want of it in others as an unpardonable defect: and when they desire most to establish the truth of what they assert, they vouch for it the testimony of their conscience. There are other occasions in which they shew not only a high opinion of it, but even put the utmost confidence in its authority. For when they feel themselves notably injured, they will often appeal to the *conscience* of an adversary. The reasons with which he defends himself go for nothing—there is, they say, no end of reasoning: and they have recourse directly to his *conscience*, the conscience of an adversary; they require *that alone* to give judgment between them, with a perfect assurance,

that if their adversary will but hearken to his own conscience, *that* will condemn him, *that* will do them justice.

Whence comes it to pass, that men can divine so precisely what will be the opinion of conscience in another person? Whence, I say, comes it to pass, that they appeal with such assurance to the sentence which conscience will pass in the breast of an enemy, upon the subject in debate, even against his interest? If conscience were in his power, as reasoning is; would not he make that too speak in his favour? Here men plainly look upon conscience as an infallible judge, as a sovereign arbitrator; they require only that it may be fairly consulted; and where wrong is done them, they are secure of being righted by the sentence it will pass in the breast of him that injures them.

Such homage do men pay to conscience in general, although they themselves in their particular conduct have little regard to it. They know what advantage to make of the conscience of other men, although they pretend sometimes not to know what use to make of their own.

But there are times in which men are obliged to submit to the force even of their own consciences; as in cases of great distress; especially when some afflicting circumstances bear such relation to a former crime, that providence seems to execute the law of retaliation, and

marks the fault in the punishment. So when the brethren of *Joseph*, although twenty years after they had sold him a prisoner into *Egypt*, were themselves seized and imprisoned in *Egypt*, presently their conscience reproached them with their cruel usage of their brother: *And they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us—behold his blood is required*<sup>1</sup>. So naturally do afflictions, suited to the crime, make the voice of conscience heard.

Danger too has the same effect, especially when life is concerned. For as death will put us under the full dominion of conscience, and subject us to all the rigours of its discipline: (conscience being that worm which never dies, that fire which is not quenched) as death, I say, will establish conscience in all its powers: so the approach of death begins to set it at liberty: many self-deceptions and false reasonings, which beclouded it, are dissipated, as the passions decay, and life draws to an end; leaving the man defenceless and appalled, a prey to fear and remorse.

There are besides these, other occasions wherein this divine principle is felt and submitted to, even by those who have long hard-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xlii. 21.

ened themselves against its remonstrances. A prudent reproof, for instance, seasonably urged by proper authority, will sometimes pierce to the quick, and cause such pangs, as for a while interrupt the lethargy of sin. So when *St. Paul* preached to *Felix* the governor; it is said, that *as he reasoned of justice, and temperance, and judgment to come; Felix trembled.* The judge trembled at the words of his prisoner.

Many other instances might be brought from profane as well as sacred story; but they are needless, and I appeal to your own experience: and I do so the rather, because the subject now treated of is better known by our inward feeling and experience, than any definition of divines or metaphysicians. Conscience is something so subtle and spiritual, that the grossness of human language serves ill to define it. Words are not capable of such precision, as will exclude all cavils: and one of the ways men have of escaping from conscience, is to dispute about it. While men, reluctant to its censures, are canvassing its nature in abstract speculations, they easily elude its force: for although the voice of conscience is distinct enough, when the mind is attentive and prompt to obey: Yet the heart being indisposed it is presently drowned in the noise of controversy.

Conscience, in her instructions, barely signifies her will, too delicate to insist, much less to

debate and contend : and as her dictates are, so is her nature, too subtle to be grasped by a rude disputant, whereof the casuists have given strange proof.

No definition of light can give an idea of it to a blind man, or improve the sight of him who sees. What light is, cannot be taught, but must be felt. And so it is with conscience. But as persons, whose eyes are weak and sore, avoid the light ; so many avoid the light of conscience ; they shrink from it, because they are hurt by it, and then perhaps, as in their own defence, they call its validity in question.

*Truth, reason, justice,* are still names in vogue ; while the term *conscience*, with many favours of delusion : but the terms *truth, reason, justice*, have been used in such loose, unpractical senses, that men are come to treat them as mere speculations. While the term conscience tends directly to practice ; it calls the man *inwards* ; and points out to every individual his peculiar duty, more distinctly, and with more sensible obligations, than those other *names*, which vulgar use has extended to general unaffecting notions.

But after all (it may be asked) is it not true in fact, that men have run into strange follies while they believed themselves under the guidance of conscience ? And is there not such a thing

thing as an erroneous conscience<sup>1</sup>, which we ought heedfully to guard against? To both which questions we answer severally:

First, that it is not possible to prescribe any rule, that may not be abused. We can propose no doctrine, but what may be perverted: and when men are disposed to deceive themselves, there is no advice upon earth that can hinder them. Those who are at all acquainted with the heart of man, know the strange power he has to persuade himself of what he has a mind to believe. To deceive others may require some art and caution: but to deceive ourselves, when we are inclined to it, is as easy as to sleep, when we are inclined to it. For when men give into self-delusion, the understanding is the dupe of the will: reason becomes the tool of inclination, and being degraded from its office of *judge*, fervilely plays the advocate of those passions, which it ought to controul.

As to the term *erroneous conscience*, that may be considered as a figurative expression of the same kind, as when we say a *false diamond*; by which we mean what is actually no *diamond*, but a counterfeit. So what is called an *erro-*

<sup>1</sup> Conscience is used in different senses (as what word is not) according to some of which it is rightly said to be *defiled, erroneous, &c.* But I have taken it in the sense which it bears in the text, where the *Law of God, written in the hearts of men*, is declared the only ground of its testimony: and such testimony is not fallible.



*neous conscience*, is not really the conscience which St. *Paul* speaks of in the text, but a delusion; and such a delusion as can never hurt any, who have not concurred to their own deception. And, as I said before, when a man is desirous to deceive himself, he will effect it, notwithstanding any method we can prescribe.

Having thus endeavoured to revive the authority of conscience by removing some of the mistakes, which have often contributed to diminish it: give me leave to exhort you to hearken to, and obey its dictates. Conscience is *the law of God written in our hearts*: and God has not wrote his laws in vain. If they do not govern us they will condemn us; they will make us one day condemn ourselves with inexpressible confusion. For though we may for the present stifle the voice of conscience, it will not long be in our power: It will assume its rights with an absolute sway: and those who do not receive it as their guide and their lawgiver, shall feel it as a judge and an avenger.

For it is an emanation of the Deity, and has its origin in that supreme universal *Reason*, which St. *John* in the beginning of his gospel calls *The Word*, the Divine *Logos*: and after declaring Him the creator of all things, adds immediately, that *He is the light of men*<sup>1</sup>. And lest we should not heed sufficiently a truth

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 4.

of so exceeding great importance, he presently repeats it, *He was the true Light, which lighteth every man, that cometh into the world*<sup>1</sup>. And this is said of the *Logos* before his incarnation: this therefore is spoke of his divine universal essence, whereby, as the *Sun of Righteousness*, He diffuses light through all spirits in such measure as they are capable of it. In mankind it is at first a glimmering feeble light, discovering only the frontiers of virtue, and the entrance of religion. This is a wise and merciful dispensation: for hereby God accommodates Himself to each person's capacity, giving them as much as they want, even all they can use in their present dispositions; and withholding a useless abundance of light, which, if rejected, would render the soul more guilty, and its return to Him more difficult. Hence it is, that what we term *conscience*, in men, is so very various. The wise man calls it the *candle of the Lord*<sup>2</sup>: and in different men it enlightens after a different manner, according to their different capacities. In some it shines with an unclouded brightness; while in others it faintly distinguishes good from evil: and in the obstinate sinner it seems totally obscured. Yet in the worst of men there still remains all the light he is capable of, *i. e.* as much as he can use: and if he will seriously try the experiment, if he will recollect his thoughts,

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 9.<sup>2</sup> Prov. xx. 27.

and

and in earnest consult his heart upon the subject of moral duty : this spark of divinity, still residing within him, will assuredly shew him the next immediate steps which are to be taken : and if he perseveres in them, the light will increase abundantly. With his new views he will acquire new powers and abilities. For the *light* of conscience, when we actually use it, does not stop in speculations ; but is an *active principle* to enable us to *do* what it directs.

But I stop here, and refer you to the greatest of all instructors, Conscience ; which is a ray of the Deity, shining in our hearts to shew us the way to Heaven. Happy those who follow its guidance : they will advance from less to greater degrees of light, till at length they arrive at the beatific fountain. But they who neglect it, will not neglect it with impunity : For this (saith our Lord) *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil : for every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 19, 20.

## DISCOURSE V.

*Of the Ceremonial LAW.*

MARK ii. 27.

*The Sabbath was made for Man.*

**A**S man consists of two parts, animal and rational ; so, corresponding to these, religion has two parts, *viz.* Ceremonial, and moral ; both necessary, though of a very different nature and importance. For ceremonies are to morality only as means to an end, and all their value is to be estimated in promoting it. Yet many men in all ages have been apt to overvalue them : while others, especially in these latter times, have as rashly depreciated them ; and, because they are not our principal duty, treat them as no duty at all.

These are dangerous extremes, as will appear by treating of religious ceremonies in general, so as to explain their nature and use, which I shall endeavour to do by applying to the whole ceremonial law, what our Lord has determined concerning

concerning one capital article of it, *viz.* the observation of the sabbath. *The sabbath was made for man.* So we may say of all the *ceremonial law*, that it was made for man, for his use and assistance towards attaining *the end for which he himself was made*, even the duties of the *moral law*. For these man was made. To fulfil the moral law is the end of our creation: and they live in vain, who do not make this their principal study, their main pursuit, as it is the only necessary business of life.

To direct and assist us in this, the ceremonial law was instituted. It was *made for man*, a help to his frailty: it was contrived on purpose to facilitate the practice of essential duties. And when men totally neglect the essential duties of religion, it is natural to disregard its accessory rites, which then become insipid, useless, and burdensome.

Upon which account in those countries, where fashion and vogue still compel men to frequent the public worship, it has been found expedient to adorn and illustrate the religious offices with great magnificence; and bribe the attention of the audience by elaborate entertainments of show and music. I will not venture to blame, what may perhaps be well intended, and what possibly may have a good effect upon some, who coming to church upon a less worthy motive, are however in the way  
of

of duty, in the way of being affected with the great truths of religion. However, to speak in general, religious ceremonies, where they are too numerous, or too pompous, must be less edifying. Instead of recollecting the mind, they distract and dissipate it. Like too thick a medium, they obstruct the sight : and may be compared to painting upon glass, which is intended to adorn it, but in event obscures it, and keeps out the light. This will appear from a representation of the ground and nature of religious ceremonies, which I take to be as follows.

There are many things, which, though indifferent in themselves, yet bear so near a relation to moral duties, that it is proper they should be brought under some certain regulation ; which, when it is established, becomes itself a rule, and obliges us to conform to it, not for its own sake, but for the sake of those real duties to which it relates.

Take for an instance the first and greatest of all laws, that of worshipping the Creator, which is a duty always seasonable : but as men are apt to put things off, for which they have no great relish : and what may be done at any time, is often done at no time, because no certain time was fixt for it : therefore it was found proper, even at the beginning of the world (as there is good reason to believe) to set apart every seventh day for the offices of religion, and to forbid on that day all  
other

other buſineſs, that men might be quite at leiſure to pay their homage to the Creator.

So again, in the act of paying this homage, men have by nature ſuch an unaffecting ſenſe of God, that at firſt they find it difficult to keep it in their minds. The thought of God is ſoon thruſt out by numberleſs vanities, in which their poor heart takes a more feeling intereſt. To help themſelves therefore againſt this ſhameful frailty, they invented, or were taught, religious ceremonies, which might be of ſervice to engage, or prolong their attention by the mediation of ſenſible objects. Here would follow a ſeries of actions, which, as they were ſignificative of their holy intentions, ſo they were meant to continue ſuch intentions alive, and in act, for a conſiderable ſpace of time, and thereby gradually render them habitual.

Thus a mind, endeavouring to be grateful to the univerſal benefactor, was not content with mere ſpeculations concerning God's goodneſs; for it found ſuch ſpeculations ſoon flag and vaniſh; and therefore (as exerciſe is the greateſt improver) ways were contrived to exerciſe, and expreſs men's gratitude by religious oblations and ſacrifices; wherein they returned to the Almighty a part of his gifts, a part for the whole, as an acknowledgment that they received *all* from *Him*; that *all* were due to *Him*, and ought to be employed in his ſervice. Some, while

while they assisted at the sacrifice, would consider that themselves are not *their own*: that the work belongs to the maker, and ought to have no other will or desire. While the mind was occupied in such pious thoughts, and the passions suspended in devotion, conscience would have a favourable audience, and its just remonstrances would be heard, and attended to. Men in these dispositions would feel with regret and compunction the injustice and the turpitude of their evil inclinations; they would earnestly desire deliverance; they would in imagination substitute those evil inclinations in the place of the victim, and invoke the Almighty to destroy and annihilate them. Some, more advanced, would, after the same mental manner, even substitute *themselves* in the place of the victim, with hope and faith of a renovation, when the animal or sensual part of their nature was sacrificed and extinguished.

And thus the senses and the imagination, which are the two great inlets of evil into the mind, would be brought to oppose it with better success, than perhaps could be effected by naked theory, in that gross noviciate of religion which we now speak of. For then the animal part in man predominates; and in religious ceremonies the animal part has its proper employment; the senses minister to the imagination; and although that is a low faculty, yet the exercise of it is



then more easy, more lasting, and more affecting than that of reason. In abstract reasonings upon divine subjects the mind is as it were upon the stretch, and consequently cannot without difficulty persist long in its attention; and while it does persist, the truths in view appear so subtile and remote, that they very feebly work upon our affections. But if the same truths can be represented in the imagination, which is the aim of religious ceremonies, they have then quite a different effect upon us: they get life, and colouring, and force: the mind can contemplate them at leisure, and commonly takes a delight in being affected with them.

Nor are we here to think that the mind proceeds upon arbitrary and groundless fictions. There is an analogy betwixt the visible and invisible world, which the Scriptures<sup>1</sup> declare to be the foundation of the *Mosaic* rites, and from which other religious ceremonies receive their fitness and utility. The terms *unclean*, *defiled*, *polluted*, are applicable to minds as well as bodies, and that with a propriety which is easier felt than explained. The correspondent terms of *cleansing*, *baptizing*, *purifying* with *water*, or with *fire*, as the cause may require, or the subject can bear; these too have a just and obvious signification in morals as well as

<sup>1</sup> Heb. viii, &c.

naturals;

naturals ; for the systems of both worlds run parallel, so that the realities in the superior have their respective shadows in the inferior, and are fitly represented by them.

To conclude ; religious ceremonies are outward expressions of inward sentiments, inculcating, entertaining, strengthening, and prolonging such sentiments, and thereby tending to make them habitual.

The *Jewish* ceremonies, as also the christian, both relate to our redemption by Jesus Christ ; but as to prefigure things future, and to commemorate the same when passed, require different expressions : so it was necessary that the *Mosaic* institution should be succeeded by the rites and discipline of the christian church ; which, together with the rules or method of life that every reasonable man will prescribe to himself, constitute that part of the law which is called ceremonial, and which is by no means confined to the *Mosaic* institution, but belongs, as I said, to all ages of the world. For it had been practised by the patriarchs before the *Jewish* law was given ; and since that was abrogated, still subsists, as constituting the rights and discipline of the present visible church, together with those rules and methods of life, which every private man ought to prescribe to himself, so as may best suit his own condition and circumstances.

Such is the ceremonial law, subordinate to the moral as means to an end; for if that end be not attained, it will prove a frivolous amusement at best, and may lead to dangerous superstitions, whereof there are numberless instances, which have deformed the face of religion, and given great offence, when ecclesiastical rites have been brought into competition with, or even been preferred to moral duties: whereas all their merit consists in promoting the moral duties. They are, as was said before, only means to an end: they are helps for the human infirmity, to raise and assist the mind in the practice of true religion and virtue. Like military exercises, they prepare for real combats, they put the man in the best postures for defending himself, and offending the enemy: they render him more active, dextrous, and vigorous. But after all, a thorough coward will be little the better for them, and a genuine courage will do wonders without them.

I have treated hitherto only of ceremonies in general. What I have farther to add shall be confined to two remarkable ones: this *day* and this *place*. This day is called the Lord's day, and this place is called the Lord's house; both names of great significancy. For although all places, and all times are His, who created, and who possesses them, *filling Heaven and earth and inhabiting eternity*; yet he has been pleased,  
in

in condescension to the low and narrow capacity of mankind, that certain *days*, and certain *places*, should more immediately bear his name, and be appropriated to his service.

As to the first of these, the Lord's Day, the religious observation of it is enjoined, as well by the civil, as the ecclesiastical authority; yet we see to our grief, how great a part of the nation neglect and prophane it, absenting themselves from this holy place, and thereby frustrating our endeavours to admonish and reclaim them. We must content ourselves with lamenting what we cannot redress, and confine our care to the instruction of those who still favour us with their attention.

To these we represent that, although all days are, strictly speaking, God's days; and persons of an advanced piety do actually pass them as such, making religion overspread their whole time, and serving *God in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their life*: yet the Christian church has, for the reasons before mentioned under the general head of the Ceremonial Law, wisely imitated the Mosaic institution, and distinguished the first day of every week, by the glorious appellation of the Lord's Day, a day on which he only is to be served, and in which all servile labours are prohibited, that they may not interrupt our devotion, and

that our minds may be totally vacant to the offices of religion.

For this end we assemble in this place, which also on the same account is called *God's house*, being consecrated, *i. e.* solemnly appropriated to his service. All places are in themselves indifferent, but take their dignity and excellence from the uses to which they are applied. Those to which this edifice is dedicated are the noblest and most sublime that can employ the mind of man; for this is a house of prayer, and a school of wisdom. The fabric<sup>1</sup> too is worthy of the sacred offices for which it was erected by the piety of our forefathers, and the seasonable care and bounty of the public has repaired and beautified it with elegance and magnificence. Nor have the head and the principal members of this royal foundation been wanting, on their part, to compleat the work in such a manner as it became them.

The use and end of all is, that we give a *religious* attendance upon the holy ordinances which are here celebrated for public worship and instruction. In the first we unite, or ought to unite, with heart and voice, in prayers and praises to our common Creator; and in the second we are taught, at least we are reminded of our duty towards him. These two are of

<sup>1</sup> Westminster Abbey, where this was preached, A. D. 1747.

divine institution, as needful helps for the infirmity and ignorance of men: and our Lord has vouchsafed to promise his peculiar presence and benediction upon such congregations as are met together in his name, and his Apostle blames those who absent themselves, as the *manner of some*<sup>2</sup> *was even* in his days; and in ours their number is greatly multiplied upon different motives and pretences. Some are openly prophane, and averse to all religious exercises, as well private as public. Others (from whom we hope better things) say, that they can be as well employed at home, as at the church; that they may use the same forms of prayer in private, and that they can read a better discourse than what they shall hear from the pulpit. This may be true, yet the inference they would draw from it is erroneous; for they must remember, that they are members of a religious community, which their way of reasoning would dissolve. “That Christ himself  
“has instituted this community, called the  
“visible church; and has promised his more  
“peculiar presence with those who devoutly  
“frequent it.” That it is not an author read, or a sermon heard, that can effectually make any solid change in our minds; but that the spirit of Christ is necessary to sanctify our hearts, and that those can have no reason to hope for

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 25.

that spirit, who seek it not in the way which he himself has appointed.

You know the history of Naaman, to whom Elisha prescribed the waters of Jordan for the cure of his leprosy: but Naaman blinded by delusive reasonings, and disdainning a prescription which he judged vulgar and trivial, said: *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean<sup>3</sup>?* So he turned and went away with indignation; till being better advised by his more considerate servants, he reflected, that no waters whatever could heal his leprosy by their own intrinsic virtue, and that a cure was to be expected only from the benediction of heaven, in the punctual use of the means which itself had appointed. Repenting therefore of his hasty and presumptuous reasonings, he went to Jordan; and, washing there as directed, by his humble obedience obtained not only a bodily cure, but his mind too was so purified by that baptism, that he renounced the idolatry in which he was educated, and became a faithful proselyte to the true religion.

The application which we ought to make of this story is so obvious, that I think it needless farther to insist on it, and therefore I conclude with the usual prayer, that God would vouch-

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings v. 12.

safe to give a blessing to what has been now delivered in his name, for the sake and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

---

DISCOURSE VI.

*The Connexion of Religion with Morality.*

---

MICAH vi. 8.

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

**WHAT** is good? i. e. what will make us happy? is the most interesting question that can be proposed. It deserves the most solemn consideration, and reason and religion should both be attended to for the solution of it. But without consulting these, men prepossessed in behalf of some imaginary goods lay  
out



out all their passions upon them. And it is only in the disappointment of those passions that they become in a condition seriously to enquire, what is that *real good* which will ensure to them the happiness they pant after. Here the men of speculation all agree, that virtue is the *summum bonum*, the chief good of man. But then there are different opinions concerning this virtue: what kind, or degrees of it are necessary. Some, considering only our mutual obligations as we stand related to each other, make the whole duty of man to consist in what they call, *moral* virtue. Others of more just and extensive views, looking backward to their original, and forward into the eternity that awaits them, conceive a new scheme of duties towards that SUPREME BEING, of whom they received their existence, to whom they owe all their present enjoyments, and from whom they expect their portion in the future everlasting state. From these views arise the obligations of *religion*, as those of *morality* spring from a regard to the good of society.

The perverseness of mankind has separated these, as if they were two things that could exist apart. Some suppose that a man may be morally good without religion. Others, more palpably absurd, think they may be religious without morality. They tear asunder the *two tables*, but at the same time break both; for

for in this case to separate is to destroy.—For no man can discharge his duty towards his neighbour, who neglects the worship of God; and no man can be a true worshipper of God, who neglects his duty towards his neighbour. In the text, which is an abridgment of all that God requires of us, these two duties are united. *To do justly, and love mercy*; that is morality. *To walk humbly with thy God*; that is religion. It is plain that both are necessary, because God *requires* them; it is my purpose now to shew that they are also inseparable, and that

There can be no true religion without morality :

Nor can there be found morality without religion.

It may seem needless to prove the first of these, *viz.* That no man can be sincerely religious who is not morally virtuous, *i. e.* that he cannot be a faithful servant of God, who does not obey the commands of God. It may be said, this is so evident a truth, that no man can be so weak as to doubt of it. It should seem so indeed; yet there are men so infatuated as to value themselves upon their religion, though they are notoriously deficient in point of common honesty. Such persons are sometimes exact to a superstitious scrupulosity in certain ceremonies and formalities of will-worship: they frequent religious ordinances, even sacraments, and are

com-

commonly remarkable for a violent zeal for the sect or party they belong to, although their lives are a great disgrace to it. The Pharisees in our Saviour's time were of this character, and the gospel records many woes which he denounced against them. All such pretensions to religion, without the vouchers of morality, are *vain* and *scandalous*. *Vain*, because they want the substance of religion, *i. e.* such solid uniform piety as should produce obedience: *scandalous*, because they dishonour religion, and vilify christianity in the esteem of the world.

Even without reasoning men feel this truth, that moral virtue is a necessary effect of piety, and consequently that there can be no true religion without morality: but what I added in the second place, *viz.* That there can be no sound morality without religion, this is not so evident. The contrary opinion is maintained by many, who flattering themselves with some appearances of natural probity, love to *talk* of morality, and, as they persuade themselves, to practise it; but they account the knowledge of religious truths an useless speculation, because, say they, it is of no importance to the welfare of society. For they suppose that the good of society is the *only* measure of virtue; but this supposition is false and groundless. If mankind had made itself, or was made only for itself; if we had no obligations but to one another, nor  
a de-

a dependence upon any other being; then the social duties might be the whole duty of man. *But God made us, and not we ourselves; we are his,* and therefore our principal business is to serve and to please him.

We may best learn the measures and extent of virtue from our Lord's conversation with the Jewish doctor, who asked, *Which is the great commandment in the law?* Jesus said unto him: *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* God is so transcendently amiable for the excellency of his nature, and has such claims to our utmost affection by innumerable and inestimable benefits daily conferred upon us, that there is no obligation which bears any proportion to that of loving him. But he has vouchsafed of his infinite goodness to transfer as it were some part of his right upon our fellow-creatures; requiring us for his sake to love them as ourselves; which, if we look only to their merits, we might sometimes with justice think ourselves not obliged to: but *the love of God constraineth us,* religion enforces morality, making our duty towards our neighbour a part of our service to God. And to this purpose it is observable that our Saviour, who was incomparably the greatest benefactor to

78 *The Connexion of Religion with Morality.*

mankind, and, as his gospel speaks, *went about doing good*, never assigns that, *the doing good*, as the primary cause of his actions ; but asserts that *he was about his father's business, and doing the will of him that sent him*. To benefit men was but a secondary view, subordinate to his main design, which was purely the glory of God ; and he considered the redemption of the world only as the means to accomplish it. This will appear undeniably to those who consult his gospel ; but mere moralists are little influenced by arguments brought from thence. They love to propose to themselves some heathen pattern of virtue ; a Cato, or Aristides, or Socrates ; as if christianity could furnish no examples, as if the Son of God, who took our nature on purpose to set us an example, was not worthy their imitation.

Let us therefore reason with them upon their own principles ; and as Socrates is universally acknowledged the most glorious instance of virtue in the pagan world, let us examine whether his piety was not as remarkable as his morality. We have his sentiments recorded by two of the greatest authors of antiquity, who frequently declare it to have been his settled opinion, that morality was not to be obtained but by the practice of religion. I shall mention only a few passages of many that might be produced. In Plato's first dialogue concerning human nature,  
Socrates

Socrates is introduced treating of that necessary fundamental of all morality, *know thyself*; and he says, “ That we can know ourselves only by  
“ contemplating the divine nature, of which  
“ our soul is an image—and he makes the  
“ knowledge of God as necessary to the know-  
“ ledge of ourselves, as that is to good mora-  
“ lity.” He says farther, “ But if you act un-  
“ justly, and instead of regarding God as the  
“ true light, you regard that which is without  
“ God and full of darkness, you cannot but do  
“ works of darkness, *i. e.* works full of ini-  
“ quity, because you do not know yourself.” This is a literal translation of his words, though they sound so like phrases of scripture. You cannot know yourself, while you are ignorant of God; as a servant cannot know himself for what he is, *viz.* a *servant*, if he does not know that he has a master. Man is a dependent being, and cannot possibly form any right judgment of himself, but in such measure as he considers his relation to God, and the obligations that result from it.

Again; Socrates not only teaches the duty of prayer, but shews the necessity of *divine assistance* for the right performance of it, the same which in christian style we call *the Spirit's helping our infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought*; and he shews convincingly, that “ God only can prepare our hearts

80 *The Connexion of Religion with Morality.*

“ to pray worthily, by dispelling the darkneſs  
“ of the ſoul, and purifying it, ſo that it may  
“ diſtinguiſh rightly between good and evil.”  
To this his pupil replies, “ May that God then  
“ diſſipate and deſtroy my darkneſs, and work  
“ his whole will in me ! I reſign, I abandon  
“ myſelf to his conduct, I am ready to obey all  
“ his commands, provided I may become a  
“ better man.”

From theſe and many other paſſages it appears, that this pious philoſopher was fully apprized of the connexion there is between religion and morality, that they are one and the ſame in their origin, and will ever thrive or decay together. The ſame principle, doubtleſs a divine one, which ſo eminently reformed the morals of this egregious man, did as remarkably reform his notions of religion, and inſpired him with the ſentiments of chriſtianity near four hundred years before the birth of Chriſt, and that too in a place and age infamous for the groſſeſt ſuperſtitious and idolatries.

As a farther proof of that inſeparable relation which religion bears to morality, St. Paul in the beginning of his epiſtle to the Romans, treating of the progreſs of vice in the heathen world, imputes, not only their idolatries, but alſo their groſs immoralities to the neglect of true religion. *For, ſays he, as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, which by the*  
way

way is an admirable expression of true religion, which implies an habitual sense of God, or as it is here called *a retaining God in our knowledge*; but forasmuch as they fail in this, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to uncleanness, and vile affections, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. And hence he derives all the abominable vices which overspread the heathen world, as a judicial consequence of their impiety.

The same observation had been before made in the book of Wisdom<sup>1</sup>, where, in a very elegant description of the rise and progress of idolatry, it is particularly remarked that the loss of religion was immediately followed by the loss of morality. *The devising of idols* (says that author) *was the beginning of*<sup>2</sup> *fornication; and the invention of them, the corruption of life; and again, after men had ascribed to stocks and stones the incommunicable name, they kept neither lives nor marriages any longer undefiled.* To this he adds a copious description of the vices of the heathen world, and all to prove that the corruptions in religion always end in corruption of manners.

And indeed how can it be otherwise? for he that sins against God, whom will he not offend? Will a twine thread bind him, whom fetters

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xiv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Spiritual* is here added by our translators without reason, and is not consistent with ver. 23, 24.



cannot hold? Can ought besides avail, where infinite goodness, wisdom, and power lose their influence? *Justice* is the first law of morality; and will it not be weakness and absurdity to expect that he will be *just* to his fellow-creatures, who is unjust to his Maker? There can be no debt comparable to that which we owe to God; and he who neglects to make suitable returns of gratitude and obedience for such immense obligations, must renounce all pretensions to justice. I mean not but that he may pay his debts, or answer some other obligations with exactness; but I say that he does not this from a principle of justice. Some persons are said to be very punctual in paying their losses at play, while they are deaf to the solicitations of honest creditors: and would it not be highly ridiculous if these men should boast of their justice? Justice is an uniform principle, rendering to every claim its due; and as it will not neglect the least, so it is proportionably careful to satisfy the greatest.

*Generosity* is another virtue which some mere moralists value themselves upon. This is their chief boast; they talk with great satisfaction of the joy and the glory of *doing good*. I am almost unwilling to speak against any appearance of a virtue, whose reality is so amiable; but they ought to be informed that they must be *just*, before they can be *generous*; they must learn of religion, *from whom* they receive, and *to whom* they

they are accountable for the use of those goods, which they make a *merit* of bestowing. Religion too must teach them that only motive which can sanctify their benevolence, even the pleasing God, and not their own humour and vanity. They must give only for *his* sake, from whom they receive; and not usurp a *property* in that, which is but a *trust*. Suppose the steward of one of these generous benefactors should of his own head bestow very considerable sums of his master's money, in his own name, and without once mentioning to others, or reflecting with himself to whom they belong: would you commend his liberality, or blame his presumption? Such, and so absurd is a generosity, which has not religion for its foundation.

Another excellency, which some advocates of mere morality arrogate to themselves, is the *right use of reason*; but surely they have little title to it, who see not the reasonableness of religion. For what is religion? Is it not to love God with all our hearts, to devote ourselves to his service; and to live only *for* him, *by* whom we live? and is not this a *reasonable service*? Those who judge otherwise, do yet think the pursuits of pleasure or profit *reasonable*, whilst they account all improvement in virtue a needless care: they judge it prudent to make provision for a short uncertain remnant of life; though they see no reason in preparing for  
G 2 eternity:

#### 84. *The Connexion of Religion with Morality.*

eternity: they approve the studying nature and the visible world, as a rational entertainment; but the knowledge of that God, who made the world, is to them an insipid speculation.

Yet these are the men who boast of their reason.—To neglect and forget that Almighty BEING, from whose bounty they have received all that they *have*, and *are*, and to whose justice they are accountable; is to act against all principles of reason, all sense of gratitude, all motives even of interest and self-preservation, and consequently a great folly; but to call themselves *reasonable* in so doing, is a surprising absurdity. I would intreat and conjure all such persons seriously to examine the nature of our religion; which if they would do with such attention, as is requisite in so weighty a matter, they will be obliged to confess with<sup>3</sup> one of the greatest masters of reason in the last age,  
“ That there are but two sorts of persons, who  
“ deserve to be stiled reasonable; either those  
“ who *serve* God with all their hearts, because  
“ they *know* him; or those, who *seek* God  
“ with all their hearts, because as yet they  
“ *know* him not.”

The few plausible objections which they make to religion would soon vanish, if they gave themselves the leisure duly to apprehend its nature, which I shall now briefly represent

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Pascal.

in explaining those last words of the text, *To walk humbly with thy God*; or, as it is literally and much better rendered in the margin; *To humble thyself to walk with thy God.*

*To walk with God* is a phrase used frequently in holy writ, to signify an habitual sense of God, a continual regard to him; such a regard, and such a sense, as children have of their parents, while they are in company with them. The child does not every moment reflect distinctly that he is in his father's sight, but he has such a general consciousness of his presence, as influences his whole behaviour. Such *walking with God* is that pious habit of mind, which the scripture calls *faith*. The same expression does also import *charity*, or the love of God, without which it is not possible to persevere in a sense of his presence. We all find by experience, that when we love any thing with a considerable degree of affection, our mind is ever present with it, and conversant about it: I mean we are always thinking of it, admiring it, and concerning ourselves in its interests: it is ever uppermost in our minds, it habitually possesses us; 'tis like the consciousness of our own existence, and we may as easily forget ourselves, as lose the remembrance of it. In this sense, holy men are said *to walk with God*; for loving him with all their heart, they in some sort always think of him. God is ever the

predominant notion in their minds, the uninterrupted desire of their souls, the ruling object, and final aim of all their actions, upon which account it is the common character of the saints of the Old Testament that they *walked with God*: in the text is added *humbly*, but, as I said, the literal translation of the Hebrew is, *to humble thyself to walk with thy God*.

Which words contain an important sense, instructing us in the necessary disposition towards walking with God, which is here said to be *humbling ourselves*, or humility. *The beginning of pride*, saith the son of Sirach, *is when one departeth from God; and his heart is turned away from his Maker. For pride is the beginning of sin* <sup>4</sup>, making us forget God, and substituting *self* in his stead. By pride we are always thinking of ourselves; we delight in, we admire, we love, we seek to please ourselves; so that pride leaves no room for God in our hearts. Self usurps the altar there: it becomes our idol, to which we pay that homage, and give that preference which is only due to God. And hence it clearly appears, why God requires that we should *humble ourselves* to walk with him. Humility dethrones the idol which profaned his temple, and leaves him his proper place in our esteem and affection. *It casts down all imaginations* (as St. Paul speaks) *and every high thought*

<sup>4</sup> Eccl. x. 12.

*that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*<sup>s</sup>. God cannot be known to the soul, but as her sovereign good; and whatsoever besides him she chooses as such, is here said to *exalt itself against the knowledge of God*, because it really excludes the knowledge of him; for not to know him as infinitely desirable, is to be ignorant of him, according to that of St. John, *He that loveth not, knoweth not God*; for God is our supreme good; and the soul cannot be said to know him, who does not apprehend him as such; nor can she apprehend him as such, as her supreme good, while any created good has the preference in her esteem, and therefore this expression of St. Paul may be applied very properly to shew how humility prepares the heart for the knowledge of God. *It casts down all imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* And then God graciously vouchsafes to manifest himself to our souls, causing there an inward and lively sense of his presence. Happy those who know this by their own experience; but those who have not yet attained to it, have the encouragement of many gracious promises, such as that by Isaiah: *Thus saith the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also*

<sup>s</sup> 2 Cor. x. 5.

*that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones* <sup>6</sup>. And Christ himself assures us, that in consequence of our dutiful submission to his will, *He will manifest himself unto us; that his Father will love us; that he and his Father will come unto us, and make their abode with us* <sup>7</sup>. In a literal sense indeed local motion is not applicable to God, and we cannot say that he *comes* to, or *goes* from any thing; because he incessantly pervades all his works: and in this sense God is present in the worst of men, even in the proudest: but they are in God's presence, as blind men in the light.—God is present in humble souls after a quite different manner: he partly reveals himself to them, and fills them with his knowledge and love, which are accompanied with that tranquillity of spirit, that inward peace of God, which passes all understanding. This happy state is the reward of persevering virtue, and God requires of us, that we should humble ourselves so as to become capable of it.

I know not any objection that can be made to this, but what arises from mens inward sensations. In their natural state they feel themselves (if I may so speak) at such a distance from God, so estranged from him, that they cannot conceive, and therefore are very back-

<sup>6</sup> Isa. lvii. 15;

<sup>7</sup> John xiv. 21, 23.

ward to believe, that such knowledge of God is attainable. Upon serious reflection with themselves they find, as it were, a vast gap, an immense gulf, which intercepts all communication betwixt man and God; and so far they judge right. This is the natural state of man. *Our sins have separated between us and our God*<sup>3</sup>, but herein is founded the necessity of a Mediator, and from hence the whole system of christianity takes its rise. *No man* (saith St. John) *hath seen God at any time*; how then can he know him, or walk with him? the Apostle answers, *the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*<sup>9</sup>. The divine and human nature, however distant, are united in the person of Christ. He possesses at once both extremes, and opens the communication between earth and heaven. *For God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*<sup>1</sup>. All the knowledge of God which we can attain, is the work of Christ in our hearts. He is, as he speaks, *the way; and no one cometh to the Father but by him*<sup>2</sup>. In a word, there is no way of communicating with God but by him our Mediator. He is *Emanuel, God with us*; a God who possesses the hearts of his servants, who unites himself with their spirits, replenishing them with humility and joy, affi-

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lix. 2.

<sup>9</sup> John i. 18.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 6.



ance and love, and making them perceive and know that he is their only *good*.

This is true religion, and the certain consequence of this will be found morality; for hereby we become the temples of the living God, which his presence will sanctify: his Spirit will become our guide and governor. It will purify our desires, regulate our passions, and rectify all the springs of action in their source.

## DISCOURSE VII.

*Of the Blessedness of not being offended at CHRIST.*

---

MATT. xi. 4, 5, 6.

*Jesus said unto them: Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

SUCH was our Lord's answer to the important question *whether he was the Messiah*; and among the many apologies for christianity this of its author justly has the pre-eminence, as carrying the greatest authority, and giving the fullest satisfaction; for in vain would others employ their parts or learning in the defence of it, if he himself had not laid the foundation for them to build upon. It is also reasonable to expect from him the *wisest* answer, as well as the strongest proofs: were men guided  
only

only by reason, there would need nothing but reason to convince them; but this is not the case. Passions and prejudice sway their judgment, both which our Lord had regard to, in the admirable account he here gives of himself; which begins with an appeal to their senses for the truth of his miracles: *Go, and shew again those things which ye do hear and see.* He then enumerates them; senses and limbs, health and life itself restored in a way altogether supernatural, were actions that bespoke a *Messiah*. *Goodness* and *power* are the two most obvious attributes of the Deity; and he who exerted them so eminently, produced indisputable credentials of a divine mission.

It may be farther observed, that this answer of our Lord is expressed in the words of <sup>3</sup> *Isaiah* prophesying of the *Messiah*: so that he reminded them at the same time of that other great argument of his being the Christ, his fulfilling the prophecies. He shewed them, not only that he wrought miracles, but that he wrought those very miracles which the prophets had foretold the *Messias* should perform. This he intimates with a peculiar force, by giving an account of himself in the terms of the prediction, and converting prophecy into history. *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead*

<sup>3</sup> *Isa.* xxix. 18. and xxxv. 5, 6.

*are raised up.* These arguments for christianity have been often, and amply insisted on; that which follows has been less attended to, yet is it of great weight, which I shall endeavour to represent in the following discourse.

To the evidence of miracles and prophecy our Lord adds, *The poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is he whomsoever shall not be offended in me.*

*The poor have the gospel preached to them:* by the *poor* we may understand those who are literally such in their outward circumstances; or else in a spiritual sense, those who are *poor in spirit.*

When we understand this literally, the meaning is, that there was no worldly, no political design; no human views; no partiality to the rich, or prejudice to the poor, in the gospel dispensation; that those regards to secular interest, which are inseparable from the character of a false prophet, had no place here. Where selfish interests are the motive, the rich and powerful will chiefly be applied to, and they will be little minded, who have little to bestow; but where the good of souls is the only thing in view, as souls are all of equal value in the sight of God, they will be all equally applied to, and the poor will have the gospel preached to them.

So we understand this passage if applied to outward poverty; but our Lord, who considered men principally with regard to their inward state and dispositions of mind, commonly speaks of them only in that view, as they appear in the sight of God, *i. e.* such as they really are; and by the *poor* he intends those whom he calls elsewhere *the poor in spirit*. So that his meaning is, the gospel, *i. e.* glad tidings, are declared to all who are thus qualified, even *poor in spirit*; which words contain the proper characteristic of christianity, and are the best description of our religion, as well as the most satisfactory proof of it; which will appear if they are distinctly considered.

First, of being *poor in spirit*. Poverty is a state in which a man hath nothing of his own, and if we add that he is in debt, and has nothing to pay, this is a superlative degree of poverty. And such is the state of man with regard to his Maker. He not only has nothing of his own, being the *steward* and not the proprietor of what he possesses; but also he is much indebted to the divine justice by the abuse of his talents; yet few are duly aware of this, the generality of the world are not sensible of their absolute dependence upon God; of their incessant obligations to him; and that return which reason, justice, and gratitude demand. They see indeed distinctly enough the folly, and wickedness

wickedness of the world about them; these they are affected with, these they would have reformed; while themselves err in the same or greater degrees without regret, even without any consciousness of their errors.

But he who is *poor in spirit*, is truly sensible of his want of wisdom, as well as virtue. He knows well the weakness of his head, and the corruption of his heart; he knows too, as he has found by sad experience, his inability to amend either, without the divine aid. He finds himself subjected to his appetites, a slave to his passions, and so entirely under the dominion of evil habits, that without a divine deliverer, who should assist and rescue him in this calamitous situation, he stands exposed to utter misery.

Such is the man who is *poor in spirit*. He alone, who is duly conscious of this his spiritual poverty, thoroughly comprehends that noted maxim of wisdom *Know thyself*, a maxim the most generally assented to in theory, and rejected in practice of all the truths of morality. He that *knows himself*, will find little ground for self-complaisance; he will become truly humble, and being sensible of his wants, will fly with earnestness to what only can relieve them.

It is, in this sense principally, our Lord here uses the word *poor*. *The poor have the gospel preached to them*; for the doctrine of Christ is not glad tidings to any but the poor in spirit. *Gospel* is an old Saxon word, signifying glad  
tidings;

*tidings*; and the doctrine of Christ is not glad tidings to any but the poor in spirit, because they only know their want of a Saviour. The man who is not sensible of his bondage, will not care to hear of a Redeemer; he knows not any need he has for one. He who thinks himself in health will despise a prescribing physician, will take it ill to be confined in an infirmary, and treated as an invalid. He who thinks himself rich, will be affronted at the offer of an alms; for which reason our Lord adds, *and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

It is remarkable that the first beatitude in the Gospel is annexed to poverty in spirit. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*<sup>1</sup>. The same benediction is here repeated, though not directly, yet the connexion plainly shews it. *The poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me*; implying that all others, but the poor in spirit, will be offended at Christ and his doctrine.

A strange kind of benediction this! he does not say; blessed is he that loves me, or obeys me, or even believes in me; but blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me. To offend, to choke and stumble men was so remarkable a part of the *Messias's* character, that this, as well as his miracles, was foretold by *Isaias* and other prophets. *He shall be for a stone of stumbling, and*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v.

*a rock of offence to the house of Israel*<sup>a</sup>. The event but too well justified the prediction ; for though he went about doing good, and distributing blessings wherever he came ; though he spake, as never man spake, and lived as never man lived : with such simplicity, and such innocence, as to a discerning mind were a greater miracle than any he wrought upon others ; yet he offended the world ; and still, alas, offends it.

That he should have given so much offence, is a fresh offence to weak minds. It may be apprehended, that so extraordinary a person must needs have displayed such superior merit, as could not but captivate the hearts of men. If he was the divine person our religion bespeaks him, how came it to pass, that such conspicuous excellence did not extort the approbation of mankind, and overbear the stubbornness of the most incredulous ? at least how is it possible that it should disgust and offend the world to such a degree, that there should be this distinguishing blessing pronounced upon those who are not scandalized at it ? In answer to this we shall enquire why the excellence of *Jesus Christ*, although in the strictest sense divine, did not only fail of general approbation, but even gave offence.

<sup>a</sup> Isa. viii. 14.



As to the first, why he failed of approbation, we may observe that excellence is of different kinds according to the different qualities in which it is exerted. One kind, for instance, we may call *sensible*, and in certain respects *corporeal*; wherein are included nobility, wealth, extent of power, great exploits, and whatsoever is esteemed in heroes or conquerors. Another kind of excellence may be termed *intellectual*, which we admire in learned and speculative men. A third kind of excellence may be called *spiritual*. It consists in the practice of truth, conformity to order, or whatever other name we give to the performance of what is most conducive to the perfection of our nature. Now each particular kind of excellence has its proper sphere, in which it is esteemed, and beyond which its beauties are unknown. *Learning* is one kind of excellence, and outward *grandeur* is another; that which charms the man of letters, may seem trifling to the admirer of pomp and magnificence; the scholar too in his turn often despises and ridicules many things, which the other sets his heart upon. It may happen indeed that the same person may excel in both characters, and accordingly have a relish of both, but that is accidental; they are distinct in themselves, and generally speaking the excellencies of *science* are undiscernible to men of another character, as the pleasures of grandeur and magnificence

nificence may be unaffecting to those who are engaged in the pursuits of knowledge.

The excellency of christian virtue, that *wisdom which cometh from above*, whereof the doctrine of Christ is the rule, and the life of Christ is the example and standard; this kind of excellency is absolutely distinct from the two former; so that these three characters constitute three species, three several orders of men; and no one is a proper judge of what is *great* in any one of these orders, unless he in some degree partake of it. He must be a man of some genius, who can taste the beauties of a sublime poet or orator. He must have a mind somewhat great and heroic, whose breast warms at the recital of the toils and dangers of some illustrious conqueror. And without some tincture of true piety, no man can discern the proper excellence of a *Saint*, and above all of the *King of Saints* our adorable Redeemer; concerning whom his Apostle *Paul* saith, that *He is to Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*: by the *Jews* he means such as those above-named, who relish only secular grandeur: by the *Greeks* those who admire wit and science; which were the respective characters of those two nations. To both these our Lord *had no form or comeliness*, that they should admire or *desire Him*; no beauty discernible to their gross apprehensions. On the contrary, his poverty and sufferings

ferings were a *stumbling-block* to the one, and the plain simplicity of his doctrine seemed *foolishness* to the other. But these sufferings and this simplicity are so far from diminishing the proper excellence of his character, that on the contrary they heighten and illustrate it with glories peculiar, and such as no other circumstances were capable of. Riches, power, and fame may sooth mean and superficial minds with a sense of *pleasure*; but want, and hardship, persecution, conflict, and sufferings in every form, such as are recorded in the history of *Jesus*; these furnish the proper scenes for the display of genuine excellence.

Nor are the speculations of science (such as the *Greeks* boasted of) less foreign to the perfection of our nature; they may serve to entertain leisure, gratify curiosity, and feed vanity; but they do not rectify the heart. The *Greeks* with all their wisdom (as St. *Paul* observes) *knew not God*, i. e. they knew not the principal point of true wisdom, without which life is a continual series of error and vanity. And therefore our Lord, although in his divine capacity he was the source of *power* and of *knowledge*; yet when he appeared in the world as its *Saviour*, rejected those frivolous embellishments which vain men had been intent upon, to the neglect of piety and virtue: I say he rejected these, to shine only in his proper and superior sphere, Himself  
the

the *Sun of Righteousness*; as his prophet stiles Him. His *riches* were divine graces to rescue and reform depraved mankind: his *conquests* were over sin, death, and hell: his *arts* such as made men *wise to salvation*.

But these are glories which worldly-minded men have no proper notions of; these are things above their capacities, till their minds are enlightened, and their hearts enlarged by divine wisdom. Our Lord was well aware of this, when he repeated so often in the conclusion of his sermons those memorable words, *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*, as knowing that there was a certain pious disposition of mind, a certain relish of divine things, a spiritual discernment required for the right apprehension of his sublime doctrines. There are many other passages in the gospel, and in the writings both of prophets and apostles to the same purpose. I shall mention only one from St. Paul, *Our gospel is hid to those that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*<sup>1</sup>.

That the minds of men are thus blinded, is certain from experience: how this comes to pass may in some degree be accounted for, if

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 3, &c.



we look back, and trace the common progress of the mind through the earlier stages of life.

\*It is evident, that in the beginning of life we have no ideas but from the material world, because we receive no information but by our senses ; and we fix our notions on *good* and *evil* upon objects, according to the present pleasure or pain they give us. By this means the world gets the first possession of our hearts, before we are in a capacity to defend ourselves from its delusions. Knowing only sensible objects, we lay out all our passions upon them ; and our sensual appetites, those noted foes of virtue, are strengthened exceedingly by exercise, and gain the force of habits, before right reason can come to our succour.

Those erroneous prejudices are unhappily confirmed in us by the fallacy of vulgar opinion, and the vain conversation of the world. The manner in which men speak of *beauty*, and *greatness*, and *riches* ; of *glory*, of *infamy*, and *affronts* ; does irritate the respective passions much beyond what those objects would naturally effect ; so that here we have a second source of error, which strangely multiplies delusion. And thus are we fortified against truth both within and without, by nature, custom, and example ; so that christianity finds us prepossessed, and under another power, before we are in a capacity to give her proposals an audience. And then they  
appear

appear so different from, so inconsistent with, so destructive of our former opinions, that notwithstanding the concurrence of divine aid, it is with great difficulty, by many little steps, and gradual conquests, that religion can recover its prerogative, and subject the whole man to its dictates.

See the man in his state of nature, wholly intent upon the things of this life, and prosecuting his projects of avarice, sensuality, or ambition with all his might. To *this* the bias of depraved nature draws him; to *this* worldly objects, present to his senses, and thereby powerfully exciting the passions, daily solicit him; to *this* rooted inveterate habits enslave him; in *this* the almost universal example of mankind confirm him; when *Jesus Christ* coming in his gospel-revelations contradicts all his notions, and forbids all his pursuits; commands that he renounce those things which he had hitherto doted on; and embrace, at least be contented with many things, for which he has the strongest aversion. He tells him that there are other *good* things to be desired, other *evils* to be feared, in comparison of which all the good or evil things of this life are very trivial. In a word, that there is *another state*, which should make us indifferent about what passes in this. That therefore the man has hitherto lived in error and delusion; but that

now he must unravel his past life in austere repentance, must condemn himself of guilt and folly, and begin a new course through the narrow paths of self-denial.

Now the man who will not be persuaded to make so total and difficult a change of his sentiments and habits, must in his own defence reject the authority that would engage him to it: he must for his present quiet delude himself into a disbelief of these harsh truths; for he is under a necessity to condemn himself, or to condemn the gospel; to be offended at his past life, or to be offended at Christ.

Few are so ingenuous as to take shame to themselves; few are so just as to pronounce sentence against themselves; fewer still have that noble fortitude, which is necessary to conquer their inclinations, and do violence to themselves in regulating their conduct according to the doctrines of the gospel; and therefore they reject it, and endeavour to justify themselves by condemning that law which condemns them. And hence we may perceive that notwithstanding the concurrent evidence of prophecies and miracles attesting his divine character to the reason and even the senses of mankind, our blessed Saviour had great cause, from his intimate knowledge of our depraved nature, to add this seemingly strange benediction, *Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

D I S-

## DISCOURSE VIII.

*Of the Nativity of our LORD.*

---

LUKE ii. 12.

*This shall be a Sign unto you ; ye shall find a Babe wrapped in Swaddling-Clothes, lying in a Manger.*

**T** WAS on the sacred night wherein the Saviour of the world was born, that the shepherds of *Bethlehem*, simple industrious men, then intent upon their painful calling, and watching their flocks in the open field, at midnight, in the depth of winter ; were surprised with a sudden blaze of light and glory, out of which an angel proclaimed to them, as persons best disposed for divine revelations, the joyful news of our Lord's nativity. *Behold,* (said he) *I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.* Thus at length were so many oracles accomplished, so many prophecies fulfilled,



filled, so many types verified. The *desire of nations*, the *hope and glory of Israel* was come: Christ, the Lord, was born *a Saviour*. *And this shall be a sign unto you* (so the angel proceeded) *this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger*. A preposterous *sign* this (may some think) of the great *Messias*; of the only Son of God, and lord of men. *Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger?* The *manger* for a cradle was a sign of great poverty, a sign indeed distinguishing enough, for few of Adam's sons were born in such mean circumstances; but was it a proper sign for the Lord of Glory? He is now become a babe, a helpless babe; no splendor, no innate majesty, no effulgent rays appear about him; and he is distinguished from other infants only by a singular degree of meanness and poverty. Yet such was the *sign* which the angels gave to the shepherds; such was the *token* they were to know him by. I do not wonder indeed that it was a *sign* (as Simeon said) *which should be spoken against*<sup>1</sup>, should be objected to, should shock and offend many, as a very improper and unworthy sign of the Son of God incarnate. And yet, upon due consideration, it will appear, that this sign was most natural, most proper to the occasion, most expressive of the thing sig-

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 34.

nified;

nified; and consequently most worthy of God's choice, and our approbation.

For this is not the sign of the *Messias*, as he is the divine *Word* or idea by which all things were at first created; nor, as he shall hereafter appear, *the judge of the universe*. But this sign refers to his character of Saviour. *Unto you* (said the angel) *is born a Saviour*; and this shall be a sign unto you, that such a Saviour is born; ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. This sign then, I say, was the fittest that could be chosen to signify that character, which necessarily implied two things: first, *that he should expiate sin*; and secondly, *that he should reform the sinner*. For the justice of God and the iniquity of men being the obstacles to our salvation, there was a double task incumbent on him as Saviour, viz. first, to reconcile God to men by satisfying the divine justice; and secondly, to reconcile men to God, by curing them of those evil affections whereby *they were alienated from him*. He discharged the first, when by his meritorious suffering, he satisfied the justice of God; and he discharged the second, by doing all that was possible towards reforming the evil inclinations of men. And hence will appear the great congruity of the sign to the thing signified; because the circumstances of poverty, humility, and sufferings, in which the shepherds found our Lord, were a proper token

token that he was a Saviour, as they answered those two ends which the Saviour was to accomplish, *viz.* satisfaction for past sins, and all proper means to prevent future transgressions. The distinct consideration of these will be the subject of the following discourse, and suggest to your meditation many things seasonable and pertinent to the present festivals.

First, then I say that the state in which the shepherds found our Lord was a proper sign of his being the Saviour; for herein he began his great work of expiation.

Crime and punishment are connected by a natural necessity and the indissoluble laws of justice. Of this men were intimately conscious, inasmuch that the sense they had of debt to the divine justice gave occasion to those expiatory sacrifices, which were used before the coming of our Lord, not only by the Jews, but also by all the nations of the earth; wherein it was intended to appease the offended Deity by substituting some other creature to suffer instead of the sinner. None of these indeed could effectually satisfy the injured majesty of God for the violation of his laws; and even those appointed by himself in the Mosaic dispensation were only typical, precluding to the one great expiatory oblation made by the Saviour of the world. But what I would say is much better expressed by St. Paul: *The law having a shadow*  
*of*

of future good things, and not the substance of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offer year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect—wherefore, when he, i. e. Jesus Christ, cometh into the world, he saith: Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me. Pray observe these last words, they are very remarkable. When he cometh into the world, i. e. in his incarnation, at the sacred time, which we now commemorate. When he cometh into the world, he saith: Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, i. e. of bulls and goats; but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings, and sacrifice for sin thou hast no pleasure; then said I: Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) Lo I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second<sup>1</sup>.

Thus the true sacrifice, so long and often prefigured by the types and shadows of the Old Testament, began to be offered. The holy babe, as soon as he came into the world, lying in the manger, as on an altar, made there for the first time a solemn oblation of himself for the sins of mankind. God would no longer receive the vain offerings of slaughtered cattle: no victim from among the flock or herd would be accepted; but a body he had prepared, the body of the infant Jesus. This was *the Lamb*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 1. &c.

*of God, a victim worthy of God, worthy to expiate the sins of the world.*

The fathers often speak of this early sacrifice at his nativity. *A partu virgineo effectus hostia,* says Tertullian; *a Saviour sacrificed as soon as born,* a victim from the womb; and St. Chrysostom warns us not to imagine that the oblation of the Lamb of God was the last, or only the last action of his life. His suffering began from his birth, and in the stable of Bethlehem he offered the first-fruits of that sacrifice, which he completed upon Mount Calvary.

The condition the shepherds found him in, was an evident sign that he had begun the great work; it was a state of uncommon hardship and distress. His virgin mother, big with her sacred burden, had been obliged to travel up to Bethlehem; for the emperor then reigning had issued a decree, *that all the world should be taxed;* and that all might be registred, each in his proper place, they were ordered to resort to those towns which belonged to their respective tribes and families. Joseph, obedient to the command of public authority, *went up to Bethlehem the city of David, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed, with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*

The crowd of those of the lineage of David, who met here upon the same occasion, was so great, that, although *the days were accomplished*  
for

*Of the Nativity of our LORD.* III

for the delivery of the blessed virgin, she could not get *room in the inn*; but was forced in her distress to retire to a stable, where she brought forth the Saviour of the world, *rejected of men, and an outcast of the people.*

Here the shepherds found him; and instructed as they were by the angel, recognized their Saviour by his sufferings, with which he was then expiating their sins, our sins, and the sins of all the world. Laid in the sordid manger, he did penance for mankind: he there shed his tears, as he afterwards shed his blood upon the cross, to be a propitiation for our offences. By these his meritorious sufferings, he has satisfied his father's justice. He has rendered God propitious to us. This second Adam has repaired all the evils induced by the first. His humility, poverty and patience, have atoned for the pride, avarice, and sensuality of men. In a word, our sins are expiated, our pardon sealed, and the circumstances of our Lord's nativity are a *sign*, an evident token that this is done for us. All that is required of us, and less could not be required, is, that we amend for the future, and renounce those evil inclinations *which have separated between us and our God.*

And for this also has our Lord done all that was possible, as the circumstances of his nativity plainly declare; which was the second argument proposed to prove that they were a proper

*sign* of the birth of a Saviour, because they were a sign that he was duly qualified to be the *reformer* of mankind, which is the other necessary branch of the Saviour's character: and therefore I must again remind you not to consider this babe, cradled in a manger, as the *brightness of his Father's glory, and express image of his person; as the lord of heaven and earth, or judge of quick and dead*<sup>2</sup>: he is indeed all these; but none of these are his present character; nor does there appear any the least sign of them in the condition he assumed. *He is born a Saviour*, as such he is to be the *reformer* of mankind; and the sign the angel gave of this was most fitly adapted to the office he was to discharge. He was born to save us from that which ruins us, which makes us wretched; from pride, sensuality, and covetousness, the three grand enemies of mankind, and sources of all our misery.

Now the state into which our Lord descended, and wherein he appeared at his nativity, was of all others the most proper to save men from this triple evil. Could there be humility more profound, poverty more destitute, or a more rigorous austerity, than that which he exhibited in the stable of Bethlehem! So early was *he about his Father's business*, preparing the world by his example, for the sublime doctrines which he was afterwards to preach.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. i. 3.

St. Matthew introduces his relation of the birth of Christ with an account of his genealogy, which is adorned with whatever appears great and illustrious in the eyes of the world. We find among his ancestors, the brightest instances of grandeur, dominion, riches, and science. Yet all these ceased from his family before his appearance in it. The splendor of his pedigree was useful to prepare the attention of mankind to his person and doctrine; but he himself would receive no advantage from it. All his lustre was employed only for our benefit, to render him discernible and conspicuous to us; but not the least ray of it was reflected back upon himself. For though he might count nineteen kings among his progenitors, and was himself a king by descent, wanting not the power, had he had the will to assert his claim; yet he made his entrance among mankind in the most astonishing circumstances of meanness and poverty.

Let ordinary men, whose fortunes are not their choice, and who are confined to the low station in which providence has fixed them; let such, I say, extol an *honest poverty*, or declaim against grandeur and high stations, as dangerous to virtue, with the most cogent arguments; yet shall they not persuade the great and opulent, who will impute such invectives to envy, and the poor satisfaction some find in



maligning what they despair to attain. But when we see the Son of God, the lord of the universe choosing the lowest place among men, born in the meanest circumstances of want and obscurity; and at the same time we hear of the concerts of angels, who did him homage; and that the heavens put forth a new star, to inform the remotest nations of his birth, and carry the glad tidings round the world, in the daily revolutions of the globe; there can after this be no farther objection. It is evident that his choice is voluntary; and if we have any deference for his judgment we must renounce all ambitious projects, all our fond desires of secular greatness. In this thought the man of low degree will be contented, will be pleased with a state, that has the recommendation of his Saviour's choice; and the man of high degree will grow *poor in spirit*, with a heart disengaged from all fondness for the riches and dignities he is possessed of; and far from pride or insolence upon that account, he will rather be modestly discountenanced, and ashamed to find himself in so much better circumstances than his Saviour.

Such at least would be the effects of a lively faith in this mystery: I say, such at least would be the effects of it, because it has often produced much greater. It made the primitive

christians, and many christians since the primitive times, sell all they had to give to the poor, and resemble their Saviour at any rate, even in his outward circumstances; happy, as they thought, if they could make any advancement in *poverty of spirit* at the expence of all their worldly goods.

What shall we say then of those, who now-a-days call themselves Christians, yet dread *poverty* more than *sin*, and prefer *riches* even to virtue; when the God they pretend to worship chose the extremest poverty, the greatest hardships, the most inglorious obscurity? He who made all nations, and is king of the kings of the earth, chose the lowliness of poor Mary: and he who created all things, chose the stable of Bethlehem, because even the carpenter's home afforded more conveniencies, than his exemplary virtue would admit of. And this he did to cure our effeminate luxury, affected delicacy, and fond attachment to wealth and high stations; to reconcile us to every state, which his providence should dispense; and to recommend to us the lowest as the best, in as much as it is the more advantageous for the exercise of virtue.

The depravation of mankind consists in their inordinate love of this world, its honours, riches, or pleasures. This is their disease, which Jesus Christ came to cure. He came to convince men of the emptiness and vanity of these tran-

fient goods, and engage them in the pursuit of more solid and substantial joys: now how could our divine master better teach us that important lesson, than by a perfect neglect of those things, which the world is so fillily fond of? What could he do, that would be better adapted, more agreeable to the great design of his coming, which was to destroy in us the false love of the creatures; than to divest himself of all use of them, but what was absolutely necessary? Thus does his example anticipate his precepts, and every part of his history is a comment and illustration of his doctrine. He might have prefaced and enforced all his instructions, as he does those of meekness and humility: *Learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly of heart.* He that commands us to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, and devoutly submit to the severest dispensations of providence; was himself born in a stable, and first laid to rest, perhaps on a little straw, in a manger.

The consequence which we ought to draw from his example is very obvious. But that consequence so contradicts the depraved sentiments of mankind, that many, rather than admit it, will reject the principle on which it is founded. They will doubt if this simple babe be the Son of God, possessed of infinite power and dignity; for they judge by a carnal reason, I mean, they estimate the greatest things by all  
the

the disadvantages of outward appearances. To such the *swaddling-clothes and the manger* are no *sign* of a *Messias*. They would expect such *signs*, as suit their vain glory; such magnificence, as they would choose for themselves, if they were to act the part: pomp, and noise precluding, palaces prepared, and monarchs waiting his advent.—Mistaken men! Had it been intended to suit in any degree the place of his reception to his quality, all palaces were alike unfit, infinitely unsuitable, disgraceful as the hovel he was born in. But he foresaw an excellency there, which palaces were not capable of, as it was a proper scene for all the virtues. 'Twas the temple of humility, of patience, of heroic fortitude; of faith, resignation, and the most disinterested charity. All the virtues, as St. Ambrose speaks, were there incarnate in his person, and those circumstances opened the largest field to exert them in.

How ill do we judge of states, and what a condition should we be in, if we could obtain our foolish desires? It would be such as left no room for true virtue, such as allowed no opportunities of improvement. To be at ease, and and in plenty; to be served, honoured, and applauded may be pleasure; but it is not virtue, nor a likely means to attain it. Want and hardship, and suffering; such circumstances in a word, as those of our Lord's birth, are the pro-

per school to learn it in. But few men love virtue enough to sacrifice their ease for acquiring it; and therefore the greater part see no glories in a condition, which is so much their abhorrence.

The angels, who best understand the nature of true virtue, admired and applauded the exalted degree in which our Lord practised it in the circumstances of his nativity; and they gave those very circumstances, as *tokens* to assure the shepherds that their Saviour was born: *Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.*

What I have said upon this occasion has been so practical, that it needs no other application but what you must make yourselves. And I pray God you may do it effectually by the amendment of your lives, that so you may secure an interest in these glad tidings, that *to you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

## DISCOURSE IX.

*The* EPIPHANY.

I TIM. iv. 10.

*We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.*

**W**E this day celebrate the manifestation of Christ to the *Gentiles*. The promises of his advent made to the patriarchs, and continued by a succession of prophets in the Jewish church, were at length accomplished in his nativity; and the eastern magi, as proxies of the heathen world, were called to do homage at his cradle.

Without farther entering into the particulars of the history, which you have heard in the service for the day, let us now consider only the principal point proposed to our attention, from which the festival has its name, *viz.* that the knowledge of the *Messias*, which had hitherto been confined to the people of Israel, was hence-

forth to be diffused among all nations; and that, to indicate this, these wise men, as the *first-fruits* of the *Gentiles*, were led miraculously from a remote country to recognize their newborn Saviour.

The pious christian thankfully commemorates this early vocation of the wise men, as the earnest and prelude of the succeeding publication of the gospel through the world; whereby he himself has been happily called to participate of its unspeakable advantages: but others, who yet know not Christ but by hearsay, find in it ample matter for objection. They ask, why the knowledge of Christ was ever confined to one nation? and why, since it is diffused, it is not equally diffused through all nations? Is not this cruelty on the one hand, and fond partiality on the other? Cruelty to those who never hear of Christ; and fond partiality to those, who, according to the christian system, are by an *especial* grace or favour called to the knowledge of him? This difficulty, which is in itself plausible, has been excessively aggravated by gross misrepresentations of the revealed doctrines; according to which misrepresentations, a sentence of everlasting punishment is passed upon all who have not in this life the benefit of outward revelation; and even of those to whom the gospel is preached, only a few are *elected* to  
future

future bliss by an arbitrary and *irresistible* grace of the Almighty.

The subject therefore requires that we first distinguish the spurious additions, wherewith the truth has been clogged, from the truth itself, in order to their confutation. And then lay before you what revelation plainly teaches upon this head, with such reflections, as will, we hope, remove those prejudices, which upon this account may have been unwarily conceived against it.

When we say that *God is the Saviour of all men*, we mean that God has put all men in a capacity of salvation: thus much at least the words import; that God has put all men in a capacity of salvation, so that no man shall be condemned at the last day but for his own proper guilt, and personal misbehaviour.

The most rigid of those who have confined salvation within the pale of the christian church, readily acknowledge that God will at the last day *judge* those who have not in this life heard of Christ; for they go farther, and maintain that he will then condemn them. Since then it is admitted that God is their judge; I infer, that God is therefore their Saviour; for if he were not, *i. e.* if he had not put them in a capacity of salvation, there could be no possible ground of judging them.



The very notion of judgment implies a law before promulged, and a question of fact decided, *viz.* whether the person accused, all circumstances being considered, deserves to be acquitted, or condemned. An arbitrary discharge might be granted, or arbitrary pains might be inflicted without regard to the merit or the demerit of the person impeached. But this is not *judging*. To judge any one implies, as was said, the previous obligation of a known law. An unknown law is no law, and *where there is no law* (says St. Paul) *there is no transgression*<sup>1</sup>; and consequently nothing to judge of: and therefore God has wrote his law in the conscience of all men, to the end that they may thereby be qualified for the future judgment, or (to borrow the words of the same Apostle) that they may thereby *become subject to the judgment of God*. The words in our translation are; *That all the world may become guilty before God*<sup>2</sup>; which seems a strange reason for giving a law: but the Greek *ὑπόδικος* signifies *subject to the judgment* of God, as may be seen in the lexicon and even in the margin of our version, where the translators have put those very words, *subject to the judgment of God*. The Apostle had before laid it down as a fundamental truth, that the law he speaks of had been sufficiently promulgated; for he asserts that “ what men

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iv. 15.<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 19.

“ are

“ are concerned to know of the Deity, is by  
 “ him manifested within them, and from with-  
 “ out inculcated by all the creatures ; that his  
 “ law is wrote in their hearts <sup>3</sup> ;” and he proves  
 that all men know it by a very palpable argu-  
 ment, *viz.* because without such knowledge  
 they could not, as they do, censure others for  
 the breach of it.

This law indeed has very various degrees ac-  
 cording to mens different capacities and situa-  
 tions in the world, which will more seasonably  
 be considered in the sequel, and need not be  
 attended to here ; since every man will be judged  
 by his own law, that law I mean which God  
 has interwoven into his nature on purpose to  
 make him capable of being judged at the last  
 day, when *God shall render to every man* (not  
 according to his faith, which belongs to a pe-  
 culiar dispensation, but *according to his works*)  
 as St. Paul the great doctor of faith assures us ;  
 adding, “ that God will give eternal life to  
 “ those, who seek it by a patient perseverance  
 “ in well-doing ; but anger and anguish to every  
 “ man who does evil, whether he be Jew or  
 “ Gentile <sup>4</sup>.” And, as if he foresaw, and  
 would prevent, the monstrous opinions which  
 some have conceived, as that all the heathen  
 were to be damned ; and farther, as some mi-  
 nute sectarians dream, that all christians but

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 19, 20. ii. 1, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. ii. 6, &c.

those of their own party were to be damned; (opinions most injurious to religion, and shocking to common sense :) to prevent these, I say, he repeats again, “ that God will give glory  
 “ and honour and peace to every man that doth  
 “ good, to the Jew first, and after to the Gen-  
 “ tile; for there is no respect of persons with  
 “ God.”

After these declarations of St. Paul, I shall remind you of the account which Jesus Christ, who is the appointed *Judge*, as well as the Saviour of all men, himself gives of his own procedure at the *last judgment*, as is related, Matt. xxv. 31, &c. where he declares, that after dividing those who then appear at his tribunal into two classes, according to their different characters, and placing the good on his right-hand, and the bad on his left; he will appoint the former to eternal life for the sake of their past acts of humanity and compassion; and pronounce a sentence of condemnation upon those on his left-hand, for their past acts of inhumanity and hardheartedness. The passage is so well known, that I give here only the substance of it. But what points directly to our present purpose is, that this last scene of divine judgment relates *solely* to the heathen. By heathen we are here to understand all those who have not actually been called to the real knowledge of Christ; and I say that to these only this last scene

scene of divine judgment relates; for in the same chapter our Lord had before represented, how those, who had been called to genuine christianity, were to be treated, by his two parables *of the virgins*, and *the servants intrusted with talents*. His words are: *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins, &c.* *Kingdom of heaven* is his usual phrase for the christian church as distinguished from the rest of mankind; and the name of *virgins* given the persons here spoke of, suggests that they were souls of an uncommon candour and piety. Yet part of these, having been remiss in their duty, were shut out from the *marriage-feast*; which is a negative punishment, and implies that they were deprived of some high degree of bliss, to which they were called, and would have been admitted, if they had not forfeited it by their negligence.

The next parable represents a lower order of christians, who are compared to servants, servants intrusted with talents, each a different number, according to their various abilities. Those who had rightly employed their talents, were rewarded proportionably to the improvement they had made; but the wicked and slothful servant, who had made no improvement, was sentenced to *outer darkness*; which certainly intimates some grievous punishment, yet  
lighter

lighter than that, which was to be decreed against the cruel and hardhearted.

Thus far our Lord related the future fate of those, who are *especially* called to the knowledge of the gospel, and constitute the christian church. And it was necessary that their case should be determined before the last and general judgment, because the principal of them *who had followed Jesus in the regeneration*<sup>1</sup> shall then come in his retinue, his assessors, to judge the rest of the world, as we are assured in many very express declarations of scripture<sup>2</sup>: and accordingly Christ in the first place relates the two parables of *the virgins*, and of *the servants* to whom talents were committed; and after these, beginning a new account, he adds, *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy*<sup>3</sup> *angels with him, then shall he sit upon*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 28.                   <sup>2</sup> Jude, ver. 14. 1 Cor. vi. 2, &c. Dan. vii. 10, 22. Zechar. xiv. 5. Wisd. iii. 8. Luke xxii. 30. Revel. ii. 26. iii. 21, &c. &c.

<sup>3</sup> These are called *the angels of the Son of Man*, Matt. xvi. 27. By *his angels* we are to understand *his saints*, as above, who shall then be *ἰσάγγελοι*, *equal unto the angels*, Luke xx. 36.

Besides different judgments, the scriptures also mention different *resurrections*, as 1 Cor. xv. 23. *In Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order. Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming* [qui in adventu ejus crediderant, Vulgate] *then cometh the end, &c.* And 1 Thess. iv. 16. *The dead in Christ shall rise first.* And again, Rev. xx. 5, 6.—*This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.*

*the*

*the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations. The original for nations, has "Εθνη the heathen ('tis the very term from which the English word heathen is derived) before him shall be gathered all the heathen, who shall then be appointed to salvation, or perdition, according to their moral behaviour in this life; and those who have recommended themselves to his favour by deeds of good-nature and beneficence, shall upon that account be set on his right-hand, and hear those gracious words, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

There are in holy writ so many other proofs demonstrating *our Saviour* to be *the Saviour of all men*, that really one cannot but wonder how the contrary opinion, offensive as it is to piety and our innate notions of justice, could ever spread, and grow popular; which surely it could not have done without that cruel infatuation of self-love, whereby men are not content to fancy their own state better than it is, but will also think the state of others to be worse than it is, that their imaginary superiority may be more conspicuous. This delusion has acted powerfully *both* ways; for it has not only occasioned their rash condemnation of the heathen, but has also given birth to that other spurious addition to the revealed doctrines, *viz.* that,  
of

of those to whom the gospel is preached, only some are *elect*ed to future bliss by an arbitrary and *irresistible* grace of the Almighty.

That there is a *divine vocation and election* to christianity, with *especial* graces to those who practise it, is the undoubted doctrine of the gospel; and upon this account it is that God is said in the text *to be especially the Saviour of those who believe*. What we here accuse as surreptitious is the presumptuous conceit of those, who in the latter ages have taught concerning this especial choice and favour of God toward christians, that their *election*, not only to the knowledge of the gospel, but also to future bliss, is absolute, and unconditional; and that the evangelical *grace* is necessitating, and cannot be withstood.

All true christians are frequently stiled in scripture *the elect*; but that term does no where imply, that they are destined to eternal happiness by an absolute decree; it implies only that they are persons capable of the christian doctrines, and as such chosen by God to the practice of them. Those who faithfully correspond to the heavenly choice, who renouncing the world, and denying themselves, live up to the sublime precepts of christianity, will finally be elected to those sublime degrees of glory which are prepared for such in eternity. But it is notorious that this latter kind of election is conditional,

ditional,

ditional, and that all will fall short of it, who do not fulfil the terms.

Election therefore is of two kinds, to the means, and to the end; all, who are chosen to the first, are conditionally chosen to the second. But many, alas, do not use the means so as to attain that end, and of elect become reprobate. Even Judas was *elect*ed in the first sense: for Christ himself says that he had <sup>4</sup> *elect*ed him. Our version there uses the synonymous *chosen*; but the original has the term in question, the same which has since passed for an indelible character of sanctity, and an indefeasible right to the kingdom of heaven; which clearly shews that the word *elect*, as used in scripture, is not there intended in the narrow and invidious sense, which has prevailed in the schools, and which has been so much abused by fanatic teachers to the great scandal of christendom.

Another error falsely imputed to the christian system, relates to the *grace*, *i. e.* favour of God; which has been misrepresented in both extremes; so scanty and defective to some, that they want the necessary means of performing what God requires of them; yet so redundant and lavish to others, that it is not in their power to resist it; they being impelled by a happy violence, which no infidelity on their part can defeat.

<sup>4</sup> John vi. 70.



The former part of this calumny has been already obviated in the scripture account of the day of judgment, and it were easy to shew, that the latter concerning irresistible grace contradicts the whole tenor of revelation; but as the time will not permit a larger discussion of this subject, I shall mention only one passage, wherein it is formally disproved, and in such terms, as I think must appear conclusive to every one that understands the state of the question. *The just shall live by faith; but if he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*<sup>5</sup>. Here is a plain supposition that *a just man*, a man so just that *he lives by faith*, may draw back, and incur divine displeasure. Our version has inserted here *any man; if any man draw back*; but *any man* is printed in italics, to shew that those words are not in the original. Indeed they are not; nor ought such an interpolation to be admitted, as all who consult the Greek will be fully satisfied.

Such are the spurious additions to christianity, wherewith unwary men have lamentably disguised and deformed it; for while by very false arguments they extolled, as they thought, the religion they professed; they have in reality sapped the foundation of all religion, which is *the moral character of the Deity*.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. x. 38.

Nor on the other hand do they less offend against *the natural prerogative*, I mean, the absolute sovereignty of God, who deny him the free exercise of his bounty, as they seem too much inclined to do, who are backward to believe that great disparity among mankind with regard to the future state, which revelation always supposes, and often declares in many assertions at least equivalent to this in the text, “*That God is especially the Saviour of them which believe.*” His mercy is over all his works, but that mercy abounds to some much more than to others, according to the inscrutable *counsel of his own will*<sup>6</sup>. Nor is there a shadow of injustice in such unequal distribution of his favours. The term favours, implies freedom in bestowing them; else they were not favours, but debts.

The almighty Maker is master of all his productions. Both *matter* and *form* are his: all is gift, all is bounty; nor may the lizard complain of his size, because there are crocodiles; nor is the worm injured by the creation of an eagle.

The divine will is the cause, and the reason of all things: at their entrance into existence they *are*, because he wills; and they *are, what they are*, only because he wills them such. There is *then* no other reason; and if in the

<sup>6</sup> Eph. i. 11.

revolutions they may pass through, free agents introduce new reasons into their own nature, those reasons take place, and have their due effect under his conduct, in whom justice and goodness, wisdom and power incessantly concur. But those reasons in many respects are to us inscrutable; for what can we comprehend of that ἀμόρφος ὕλης, *informis materia, matter without form, out of which the almighty hand created the world*, as we read in the eleventh chapter of the book of Wisdom. Do we know the secrets of chaos, or what may have preceded it?

Infinitely various are the works of God, wherein the riches of his wisdom and power display themselves with such redundancy and profusion, as becomes the magnificence of their author. Although we should take off our thoughts from the great universe, to confine them to the diminutive globule which we inhabit; although we should here too pass over the countless diversity of plants and animals, wherewith it is replenished, and attend only to the endless variety of figure, temper, capacity, improvement, and outward circumstances, which appears in the human species; how vast and amazing is the speculation! It is more than probable that such a variety will not cease with this world. A flat and nauseous *sameness* cannot succeed to a scene so wondrously diversified. And although we are almost totally ignorant of  
what

what shall come to pass in the following stage, or stages of our existence; yet, as we know in general that the condition of every individual man or woman will then be the result of their moral characters; we may in that alone discern a ground sufficient to keep up the distinction in as boundless a variety, as that which we now experience.

Among the promiscuous splendors of that *numberless* host, gathered *from all nations, and kindreds, and people* <sup>7</sup>; who shall then *inherit the kingdom* purchased for them by the universal redemption of Christ; the *especial salvation* of those, who during this life *have believed in him*, shall then shine forth with supereminent degrees of glory. It shall then be known what a wondrous change has been wrought in those, *who have followed Jesus in the regeneration* <sup>8</sup>. And *they who derided them here, shall then be amazed at the strangeness of their salvation so far beyond all that they looked for* <sup>9</sup>. Of these shall be constituted *the church of the first-born, whom the great Father of lights hath of his own will begotten with the WORD of truth, that* <sup>1</sup> they

<sup>7</sup> Rev. vii. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. xix. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Wisd. v. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἀπαρχὴν τῶν αὐτῶν κτισμάτων, ut simus Primitiæ ex reliquo hominum acervo Deo selectæ, ac præcipua Pars totius Creaturæ ejus. Corn. a Lap. in locum. One French translation renders the text thus: *Afin que nous tenions en quelque sorte le premier rang parmi ce qu'il a créé.*

*should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures* <sup>2</sup>. The mysterious œconomy of providence in selecting these chosen spirits for the peculiar advantages of revelation will then be fully manifested; and the divine *wisdom*, who is said *now to go about seeking such as be worthy of her, shall then be justified of her children* <sup>3</sup>.

Such are the *believers*, of whom it is said in the text that God is *especially*, or in a peculiar manner, *their Saviour*. Nor may we apply their distinguished privileges to the common herd of christian professors, but only to such *believers*, as the Apostle had in view, when he wrote this epistle. Now they were *christians* indeed, who had not believed the gospel with a cheap historical opinion, as handed down by tradition, and obtruded upon the credulity of childhood; but against the prejudices of education, against the vogue and fashion of the world about them, and against the seductions of pride, and of interest, and of sensuality (so just was their sense of virtue, so keen was their search after it.) They had recognized their Saviour through the disguise of his humiliations, and embraced the cross in its genuine infamy.

There is not leisure now to compare our times with those of these primitive christians, and distinguish the several advantages, or disadvantages of each season; which perhaps, if

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 23. James i. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Wisd. vi. 16.

they

they could be duly balanced, would be found nearly equal upon the whole. But this we may be assured of, that although the obstacles to faith are different in different periods, yet faith is still the same in its efficacy; and if it have not in us somewhat of that vigour and energy to produce obedience, which it had in the first *believers*; we shall not only be excluded from that *especial salvation*, which belongs to *those who believe*; but our speculative barren knowledge of the revealed doctrines will be an aggravation of our guilt at the last day.

## DISCOURSE X.

*The Obedience of JESUS to Joseph and Mary.*

---

LUKE ii. 12.

*He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*

**W**HEN we consider the grandeur of Jesus Christ at, and before his nativity; what expectation of him had been raised in mankind by a succession of prophets from the creation; what messages had been sent by angels to reveal the miraculous birth of his harbinger, John the Baptist, and appoint or direct many circumstances relating to himself:—when we remember the hymns of the heavenly host glorifying God, and congratulating mankind upon his nativity; the appearance of a new created star to carry the glad tidings round the world in the daily revolutions of the globe; the homage paid at his cradle by the eastern princes, and his glorious reception in the temple by Simeon, and Anna, who had passed their lives in expectation

tation

tation of him, and at his appearance publicly praised God, *because their eyes had seen his salvation*:—when, I say, we consider these things, it seems very surprising that his history should here, as it were on a sudden, stop short; and (except the small fall of his wisdom in the disputation with the Jewish doctors) near thirty years of so important a life should elapse with scarce any other account of it than what I have now read: *He went down with them, i. e. Joseph and Mary, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*

For St. Luke only adds in the next chapter, that this subjection lasted as I said about thirty years; 'tis at the 23d verse of the third chapter of his gospel, which our translation renders, *Jesus began to be about thirty years of age*; but there is nothing of *age* in the original, and the word they translate *began*, signifies also, *was subject*, as may be seen in the lexicon. All that the evangelist intended was, to have it observed that Jesus, before he entered on his ministerial office to teach others, had himself lived thirty years in subjection<sup>1</sup>.

The dispute I mentioned in the temple, when he was but twelve years old, serves to evince

<sup>1</sup> I had this amendment of our translation, and not only of ours, but of all the translations I have yet seen, from page 27, &c. of the *Critical Examination of the holy Gospels, &c.* published in 1738, by the author of the *Vindication of the History of the Septuagint.*



sufficiently, that he wanted not capacity for what the world accounts its highest stations; and the evangelist remarks that in his childhood. *He waxed strong in spirit, and was filled with wisdom, and that the grace of God was upon him; and again, that he increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man.* And yet, during the long interval of thirty years (and he lived but three years more) there is nothing farther added in any of the gospels but his obedience. *He was subject unto them.*

It is my present purpose to shew that this his conduct is most reasonable, excellent, and exemplary.

In order to this it is to be remembered that by *disobedience* the first man fell; and thereby entailed upon his posterity *the spirit of disobedience*, I mean that wretched affectation of independence, which is the source of all our guilt, and all our misery. To be *independent* is the sole prerogative of God, incomptabile to a created nature: yet this is what we aspire after; we would be unconfined in our desires, uncontrolled in our actions.

To recover us from this depraved state, when Jesus Christ appeared in the world, he made *obedience*, as it were, the only business of the far greater part of his life: *That as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the*  
I
*obedience*

*obedience of one man many were made righteous* <sup>2</sup>: that he might counteract the rebellion of Adam with all its fatal consequences, and by his example instruct and engage us in this universal and indispensable duty.

To set this example in its proper light, it seems requisite that we here state the true notion of religious obedience, the *essence* of which is to have *God for its object*, I mean, to perform its services for God's sake, and in obedience to his commands; without this there may be a *civil, or politic, or servile submission*; but not a *christian obedience*; which is a *sacrifice of our liberty to God*, and oblation so precious, as ought to be reserved intire for his altar.

In this sense Jesus obeyed only his heavenly Father, and in this sense he says in the gospel, *Call no man your father upon earth; for one is your father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ* <sup>3</sup>; signifying that all obedience must ultimately terminate in God.

How then (may it be said) was he subject to Joseph and Mary? To which the answer is, that as in the natural world God works by second causes, to which he in the beginning communicated such powers, as would effectually accomplish his will; so also in the government of the moral world, God does not appear and

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiii. 9, 10.

act immediately, in person, to issue out his commands and prohibitions, but has appointed a subordination among men, wherein, by a deputation of his power to some over others, he as effectually reveals his will to us, as if it were pronounced audibly from his throne in heaven: and as religion obliges us to see, and acknowledge the *band* of God in all events, though produced by the mediation of natural agents; so it requires that we hear the *voice* of God in all lawful commands of our superiors; for they are the commands of God: he speaks by their mouths, and what St. Paul says of civil magistrates, is equally, and upon the same grounds, true of all whom God has set over us, parents, masters, and all other superiors. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God, the powers that be, are ordained of God; whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; for he is the minister of God to thee for good* <sup>4</sup>. And St. Peter gives the same advice. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake—unto your governors, as them that are sent by him* <sup>5</sup>. And accordingly when the children of Israel in the wilderness had murmured against Moses and Aaron, they said to them, *The Lord beareth your murmurings, which you murmur against him; and what are we? Your murmur-*

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xiii.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 13.

*ings are not against us, but against the Lord*<sup>6</sup>. And when the same people would no longer obey Samuel, God said unto him; *They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*<sup>7</sup>. And to conclude these testimonies, our Lord himself has commanded that even the Scribes and Pharisees of his day should be obeyed; *because, as he expresses it, they sat in Moses's seat*<sup>8</sup>, i. e. because they were still invested with that authority, which God first gave Moses; and their directions were therefore to be complied with as the voice of providence, by whose permission they were raised to that station.

These instances shew sufficiently our obligations to obey God in the commands he gives by the mediation of public governors, whether civil or ecclesiastical; but the duty of private obedience in domestic life, I mean the habitual submission to parents, masters, or others who have the more immediate inspection over us, as the occasions of it occur more frequently, so it is more difficult, and I fear much oftener transgressed: and therefore Jesus Christ, who was to be the universal pattern to all ages, all conditions, and all ranks of life; though he occasionally submitted both to Cæsar and the Synagogue, yet laid the main stress of his example

<sup>6</sup> Exod. xvi. 8.  
xxiii. 2.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. viii. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Matt.

in his thirty years domestic obedience to Joseph and Mary.

In *them* he heard his *Father's* voice. In serving them he was about his *Father's* business. He, who was to teach the will of God to all mankind, learned, or seemed to learn that will from moment to moment in their directions. He staid, or went, or came; he did, or suffered purely, as they commanded him; so his every minute was spent in the actual exercise of virtue: for he never did his own will, but the *will of him who sent him*, as declared by those, whom he had set over him.

Angels were sometimes sent to Joseph and Mary to direct their conduct of the Messiah, as in their retreat into Egypt, and their return to Nazareth; but he needed no other angel than themselves: their mouths were to him as the oracles of the sanctuary, and he humbly did the will of God upon earth, though revealed, I had almost said, *obscured* by such inferior ministers, with the same alacrity and fervour, as the angels do it in heaven, where it shines forth in unclouded majesty, and stands enforced with visible ensigns of omnipotence.

Such humble deference to the substitutes of God is a necessary ingredient to christian obedience, for that looks up to God, and considers only his orders, without cavil or exception to the meanness of the person by whom they are given.

given. And indeed there is a divine wisdom in the oeconomy of providence, which has appointed such a subordination among men, as best fits them to suggest their Maker's will to each other. For if God should always utter his commands immediately from his own person, the awful splendor of his presence would not only exclude the virtue of faith, but it would extinguish *all* virtue; for it would ravish, it would extort our obedience, and overbear the stubbornness of the most obdurate. God requires of us a liberal, generous, ingenuous submission. To obtain this he has delegated his authority to men over men; and commands us in obedience to him to obey one another. And to engage us to this, Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life and Glory, *when he was found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient to man.* He who did not disdain the virgin's womb, did not disdain the virgin's commands; did not disdain the orders of Joseph.

How can we enough admire such condescension? What words can express it? What instances can be found in nature, that may be compared unto it? When the sun stood still, obedient to the voice of Joshua; it was indeed a great and extraordinary spectacle, such as would strike the most gross and sensual: but in the eyes of faith, in the sight of God and good angels,

angels, it was infinitely more noble and excellent to see, in *the sacred family* of Nazareth, that Jesus, *to whom every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth shall bow*, obsequious to the call of Joseph, subject to the commands of Mary. So low his love had sunk him, so low his desire of our salvation, and zeal for his Father's glory had reduced him. Here God was truly honoured, and mankind instructed, in such a manner as should, one would think, reclaim; but if not, will certainly, at the last day, confound all *the children of disobedience*.

Nor let vain men censure this submission as mean and unworthy of the Messiah. Obedience is the noblest sacrifice that man can offer, or God accept. It is the sacrifice of ourselves, of our hearts, of our wills, of our whole powers and faculties; 'tis our proper homage to the Creator: and Jesus, who was to repair his rights violated by the rebellion of man, by these circumstances of his submission paid that homage in such a manner, as gave it its utmost merit and highest lustre.

To teach others obedience, as he afterwards did, was a work of no great difficulty. To work miracles was but the natural issue of his power; and I think it no wonder, that when he commanded, the winds and the seas obeyed him. But to see him in subjection, thirty years  
in

in subjection to Joseph and Mary: this was more extraordinary: this was a greater miracle than any he wrought upon others.

I observed before that the evangelist records, that from his infancy he *was filled with wisdom*: and could that wisdom be no better employed than in the service of a carpenter? No, for his was true *wisdom*; which taught him, and should teach us, that the state in which providence places us is the best and most desirable; that without obedience there is no virtue; and that to go out of our vocation upon pretences of doing God greater service, is not zeal, but presumption.

He wanted not capacity, even in his childhood, to have determined the controversies of the learned world, or decided the quarrels of the ambitious. He might then have filled Judea with the fame of his eloquence and his miracles. But every thing was indifferent to him, but *obedience*; and that gave an infinite merit to all his actions. For he was as truly *great before God*, when by Joseph's direction, *he put his hand to the nail, and his right-hand to the workman's hammer*<sup>9</sup>, as when he afterward communicated health with a touch, cast out devils, or called forth Lazarus from the grave.

Let this suffice for the exemplary obedience of our Lord, which is so instructive and per-

<sup>9</sup> Judges v. 26.



suasive, that it might well supersede the use of of any other argument. It may not however be improper to add to the example of Christ those precepts of his apostles; wherein they have made particular applications of this duty to particular ranks of men.

As first to children, whom St. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, thus exhorts. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord*<sup>1</sup>, or in other words, *Obey the Lord in your parents*; for *their* commands have the sanction of *his* authority, and your obedience to them is accepted as to his own person. The apostle adds, *for this is right*, i. e. your bounden duty. *Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long in the earth.* He then subjoins the duty of parents, which is the best guardian of the children's duty: *Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

The next he applies to are servants, at the 5th verse. *Servants, be obedient unto them that are your masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart*, i. e. with a pure intention, with one, only, simple design, viz. that of serving God; for so he explains it, *in singleness of heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers:*

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 1, &c.

*but*

*but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men. And again, Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not as men-pleasers with eye-service, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men: knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ*<sup>2</sup>. Then follows the duty of masters, whom he commands to give unto their servants that which is just and equal, as knowing that themselves have a master in heaven.

Nor must I here omit another rank, to whom the apostle addresses himself with this consideration, that they should pay their obedience, as to God, in the relative duties which they owe. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject unto their own husbands in every thing.* And then he adds the obligations of the other party, *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*<sup>3</sup>.

You may observe in this, and indeed in most passages relating to our present subject, that St.

<sup>2</sup> Coloss. iii. 22.<sup>3</sup> Eph. v. 22.

Paul joins both duties together, that of those who govern, with that of those who obey; and wo be to them who separate them; I mean who require duty, without paying it; who domineer, and play the tyrants in power, forgetting that they themselves have a master in heaven, to whom they are accountable, and who will severely punish their usurpations. If we were to obey them only for their own sakes, for aught I see, we might lawfully reject their authority, when they have long abused it. But I have told you through this whole discourse, that it is not to men, but God, that our obedience is ultimately due; and we must for *his* sake submit to those, whom he sets over us, although they may require things very unreasonable and contrary to our inclination: in short, in all cases whatever, wherein their commands are not absolutely contrary to the commands of God: in which circumstance their pretended authority cannot bind us, because that receives all its force from their being God's ministers, which they cease to be, when they enjoin what he himself has forbidden. Yet even here, we should oppose them with great meekness, and modesty, and humble remonstrances; signifying that we withdraw our subjection purely from a sense of superior obligations.

In all other cases we must remember and practise the advice of St. Peter, *to be subject not only*

*to*

*to the good and gentle, but also to the froward; for this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully—for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps.*

---

D I S C O U R S E XI.

*The Humility of J E S U S.*

---

M A T T. xi. 29.

*Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*

**I**F ever any circumstances could exempt men from temptations to pride, and dispense with their learning this lesson, they were those of the apostles. Their condition in either state, that of nature or of grace, disposed them to humility the most that was possible. They were poor, illiterate, simple, pains-taking men; and had the least temptations to pride by the privilege of their meanness: they were on the other hand chosen disciples, long taught by the doctrine

and consummate example of our Lord, and ordained by him to the apostleship with an uncommon effusion of gifts and graces, which must strongly incline them to humility. Thus had they all possible advantages for learning this lesson. They were the lowest of men in one character, and had the least to be proud of: they were the highest in the other, and had the greatest engagements to be humble. Yet still they were *men*, and by the common depravation very backward at learning humility, and frequently failed in the practice of it.

Nor should we wonder at them, since by nature all men are born *the children of pride*: the least are very liable to it; the greatest most exposed. No temper of constitution, nor state of worldly circumstances can confer humility. It must be *learnt*, as our Lord here commands; for naturally we are as destitute of it, as of any art or science. It must be an acquisition of labour, a product of long discipline in the school of Christ, who has taken all methods possible to instruct us in it: for he has taught it in the clearest precepts, and enforced it with the strongest reasons: yet, lest they should not be sufficient, he made his whole life here one continual lecture upon this virtue, and to this he refers in the text: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*

To

To teach by example is usually difficult to the master ; but always more commodious for the disciple than any other method of instruction. For what precepts teach in an abstracted notional manner, in several disjointed parts, with variety of exceptions in particular cases ; that, as in a picture, example at one view sets before our senses, clothed with all the circumstances of time, place, and person ; which make vigorous and lasting impressions on our minds.

The example here proposed is of all others most instructive, it is the example of God become man, on purpose to shew men how they ought to behave themselves : this he has done abundantly in all the virtues ; but in the text he singles out his humility, and in a particular manner proposes it to our imitation.

Let us contemplate therefore the exemplary humility of our Lord in its principal instances, whereof the first is found as early as possible, even in his incarnation.

The incarnation indeed is a mystery peculiarly incomprehensible, and fitter to be adored with silent wonder, than nicely examined or reasoned about. Yet St. Paul declares, that even here Christ sets us an example, and that we are obliged to entertain the same sentiments by which he acted when he became incarnate. The words of St. Paul are, *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being*

*in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation,* so our translation: but the original signifies *He emptied himself.* He laid aside all the glories of the Godhead, put off, as it were, and renounced all privileges and advantages of the divine nature. The infinity of Godhead was relinquished for a human body in which he confined himself. The Eternal WORD, the Eternal Wisdom of God was changed for the state of an infant, without speech, without reason. His supreme sovereignty was laid down that he might *take the form of a servant,* and all his glory forsaken for the misery of our vile condition. Thus *emptying himself,* as his apostle speaks, putting off his majesty, deserting all his prerogatives; shrunk from the immense extent of infinity to the narrow point of creature; sinking down to our low pitch, and becoming upon the level with the sons of Adam, he gave us an example of humility.

Such an example indeed, as cannot strictly be imitated by us: such degrees of that virtue are not required of us, nor are we capable of them. We are not obliged, we cannot like him empty ourselves of any intrinsic worth, renounce any just claims, or lessen ourselves below our real value. All we are commanded is not to overrate ourselves, not to swell with vain conceits, not to think of ourselves above what we ought

to think, *but to think soberly and the truth.* For humility requires nothing but the strictest truth. It appoints us that rank and character which is justly our due. It is indeed a descent with respect to the disorders of pride, but it therefore only degrades us, because we are out of our proper place.

By humility our Lord emptied himself of most intrinsic excellence, but requires of us only that we empty ourselves of vain conceits, and arrogant imposture: and that quitting all false pretensions, we appear to the world and ourselves what we really are.

He descended from above all height, his proper place, to that low rank which sin has made ours, that he might reduce us thither, that he might lure us down from the giddy heights of pride, and settle us upon the sure ground of humility, where only we can find rest and security, where only we can lay a foundation of true happiness.

He *emptied* himself of most substantial bliss, superlative excellence, the infinite prerogatives of the Godhead. He exerted all his omnipotence to work this miracle of condescension: and if we are not wrought upon by his example to cast pride out of our hearts, to rid ourselves of its vain delusions, and recognize our true condition; when he shall appear at the last day, as our judge, with majesty reassumed, he will  
eternally



eternally confound all those he could not humble, allotting them their portion in utter darkness, with him who is *the father of lies, and king over all the children of pride.*

The incarnation was the first great step of his humility whereby he became man. In his nativity he took the lowest place among men. The consecrated race from which he sprung was indeed ennobled with the most illustrious instances of wisdom, grandeur, and magnificence that are recorded in story. Patriarchs, prophets, kings and conquerors fill his genealogy; but before his appearance in the sacred family, he had reduced it to such circumstances of meanness and poverty as were most proper to give the largest scope to his boundless humility, and set his example of that virtue in the strongest light. Who can think of that stable, that hovel in Bethlehem, where the King of glory made his entrance among mankind, where he was first laid to rest, among the cattle, perhaps upon a little straw, in a manger; attended only by a poor maiden, and an ordinary tradesman: where only a few simple shepherds came to congratulate his arrival; while the great ones of the earth, Greece and her wise men, Rome and her Cæsars, Jerufalem and her princes had no notice of it from the angel that brought the glad tidings. Who I say can consider this stable at Bethlehem, the place of his nativity, which may be called  
the

the temple of humility ; and not feel his vanity at least suspended for a time, and his ambitious projects interrupted with some humble thoughts of his unworthiness? If we would seriously and frequently represent in our imagination this or the like scenes wherein our Lord's humility is displayed, it would certainly have a powerful influence upon our lives. His whole life was one continued instance ; his circumcision as a sinner, though he was perfectly free from all impurity ; his flight into Egypt, as unable to protect himself, though he could have summoned myriads of angels to his defence ; and afterwards his baptism in Jordan, as a public penitent, though he knew no sin, are actions in which humility was a principal ingredient. We have farther proofs of it in his continual avoiding all public honours. The far greatest part of his life was spent in the strictest privacy : and excepting his dispute with the Jewish doctors, we have no other account of him from his infancy till he was near thirty years old, but that he was humble, and obedient to his parents. *He was subject unto them,* saith St. Luke, and in that subjection spent the far greater part of his life, while unknown and unregarded he lay concealed in the house of a carpenter. How would a worldly spirit blame this conduct ? How many occasions were neglected, which the wisdom of the flesh, always forward to shew itself,

itself,

itself, would have judged improveable to the glory of God? But Jesus better understood his own religion, his chief business was to teach humility the foundation of all virtue, and for that such his silence was most eloquent.

When at last, for the glory of God, and the good of mankind, he produced himself in the world; you find him carefully avoiding all occasions of public esteem. In vain did his friends press him to a farther publication of himself. *Shew thyself to the world*, say they; but you see through his whole behaviour an affected neglect and aversion to being openly known and admired. And when, for the discharge of his commission, to rouse the attention of mankind, and confirm their faith in him by disclosing some rays of his divinity through the cloud of his humiliations, he wrought such miracles as would necessarily gain applause, we often find him industriously endeavouring to conceal them.

When he was to cure a man deaf and dumb, he took him aside from the multitude, and after restoring him to hearing and speech, he charged him, *that he should tell no man*, nor make use of the voice that was given him to publish the praises of the donor. The same charge is given to the leper whose cure we read, *Matt. viii. See thou tell no man* (saith Christ) *but give God the glory.*

Again,

Again, when he restored the daughter of Jairus to life, he shut out the multitude, and straightly charged those that were present, *that no man should know it.*

When the evil spirits published his praises by the mouths of the possessed, he exerted the same power to silence them, by which he cast them out. And when the voice of God, the voice of his Father declared the same truth upon the banks of Jordan, at the baptism of John, he soon retired from the crowd and their acclamations, and hid himself in the desert for forty days, where he encountered the foulest temptations of the devil, and among others rejected the empire of the world and the glory of all its kingdoms.

When in the presence of three of his disciples some rays of his glory appeared in his transfiguration upon Mount Tabor, he used all his authority over them, to oblige them to conceal it; and during the whole time of the discharge of his ministerial office in instructing mankind, and curing the diseases both of body and soul, he never assumed to himself any share of the glory of the doctrines he taught, or miracles he performed; but ascribed it whole and entire to his Father, and therefore was careful to inform his disciples, *that he did nothing of himself. The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but*

*but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*

And thus all parts of his life are adorned with lowliness and self-abasement; but lest what I have already mentioned should not be sufficient to cure our pride, he was pleased the night before his crucifixion to add one farther instance, which, in the language of the fathers, we may call the sacrament of his humility: I mean the washing his disciples feet, of which we read the account in the 13th chapter of St. John; it is a very remarkable passage, and the evangelist prefaces it with an exact observation of every thing that might serve to set off the profound humility of Christ in that action. He tells us expressly *that the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray him*; whence appears the infinite love, meekness, and astonishing condescension of the Son of God, who chose to wash the feet of that miscreant, then hatching treason against him. St. John adds, *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things into his hands: that he came forth from God, and that he was returning to God*: yet thus abounding as he was in glory and power, conscious of all his prerogatives, he chose to humble himself before his own disciples, and perform for them the lowest, the most servile office in life, even to wash their feet. Thus did he indeed *take upon him the form of a servant*, not in profession only, as is current in  
the

the language of civility, but in the literal, degrading sense of the word. How just, how highly reasonable is the inference he made upon this occasion. *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Master and Lord have washed your feet: ye ought also to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you: The servant is not greater than his lord. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

His passion, which immediately followed this washing the feet of his disciples, is one continued scene of humiliations, which were all as voluntary, as much his choice, as that very action; for had he not *chose* to suffer, legions of angels had flown to his rescue: that word, which stilled the tempests, which ejected devils, would immediately have scattered his enemies, and dashed all their projects against him. But he chose to humble himself to that extreme degree, that he might teach proud man humility; that he might recommend that neglected virtue by his own example, in the most difficult instances of it, which the power of men or the malice of devils could contrive.

We read indeed one passage in his life, wherein he was attended with public honours and applause. I mean at his last entrance into Jerusalem, when he was accompanied by multitudes  
crying

crying *Hosannas*, spreading their garments, and strewing branches in the way before him; but never was any spectacle more distinguished from the pomps of the world; nor is there any action in his life, wherein his humility was more conspicuous than in this his triumph. All the circumstances of his mean equipage and humble procession exactly verified *what was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion: Behold thy King cometh unto thee meek, sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass*<sup>1</sup>. He was so far from being elated with the acclamations of the officious multitude, that at his approach to Jerusalem, he wept over it, regardless of the honours that were done him, and affected only with compassion for the folly and misery of obstinate sinners: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem (he cried) if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

We may farther observe, that in the midst of all these shouts and applauses of the people he well knew, and had it then in his thoughts, that this public entry into Jerusalem was in order to his crucifixion, and that these applauses of the people would farther provoke the envy and malice of the Pharisees against him. He knew at the same time the fickleness and inconstancy of the crowds, who were now so loud in his praises;

<sup>1</sup> Zech. ix. 9. Matt. xxi. 5.

and

and that the same mouths, which now sang *Hosannas*, would within five days demand his blood, and cry with the same vehemence, *Crucify him, Crucify him.*

Human grandeur would not be so dangerous to virtue, as it often proves, if those who enjoy it were thus apprised, and reflected on the fickleness and uncertainty of popular applause: but such considerations offend our pride, and therefore worldly men reject them, and therefore Christ recommends them by his own example, as seasonable preservatives against vain-glory.

Such is the pattern which Christ gives us, and in the text exhorts us to imitate. But it may still be asked why of all the virtues that adorn him, his humility is singled out, and recommended so particularly. Augustine put the question, *What, Lord, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, laid up in thee, reduced to this, that humility is the principal thing to be learned of thee?* Yes, this is the principal thing; if we learn this, we learn all. For humility is the capacity for all the virtues; and no true virtue can possibly be attained without it: for virtue is the gift of God, the effect of divine grace working in our hearts. *Now God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble,* and that because the humble only are duly qualified to receive his grace: they are the only persons that will not abuse it. Every proud



man arrogates to himself the merit of his talents, and actions. Such an one is not fit to be trusted, he corrupts all that comes into his hands, he converts it to his own glory, and strengthens himself in his pride.

Such have too much to answer for in the abuse of their natural endowments. God reserves the gifts of his Spirit, the blessings of his right-hand, for humble souls; these he delights to adorn with wisdom and goodness, because they will be just and faithful in the use of his gifts, not arrogating any glory to themselves, but acknowledging God's bounty, and making suitable returns of praise and thanksgiving.

When I say that God gives grace only to the humble, I do not mean preventing grace, which is common to all; but the graces of proficiency in virtue, which doubtless are refused till the former is co-operated with by some advancement in humility.

## DISCOURSE XII.

*Of Taking up the CROSS.*

LUKE ix. 23.

*He said to them all; If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

SACRIFICE was always esteemed a principal part of religion. The Jewish altars smoked with slaughtered animals; but these, being only typical and significative of the death of Christ, were fulfilled and abolished by it. Yet the obligation to sacrifice, still remains; for St. Peter says of Christians, that *they are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices*<sup>1</sup>; not, as under the law, *the blood of bullocks and goats*; but *their own flesh and blood*, i. e. their appetites, their passions, in a word *themselves* both souls and bodies, to do and suffer the will of God at the expence of all that is near and dear to them. Our Lord *took away the first* of these,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5.

the Jewish offerings, which prefigured his death; *that he might establish the second<sup>2</sup>*, the christian sacrifice, which imitates it with a much nobler resemblance.

This is the daily sacrifice, to which our Lord's doctrine and example indispenfably engages us; for *He said to them all; If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. If any man will come after me: i. e. If he would go to heaven, for thither Christ leads. Let him deny himself; this supposes self inclined to evil, or else there would be no need for denying it. It supposes that distempered state of mind, which all men feel, and all good men lament and strive against. The only remedy is this here prescribed: We must deny ourselves, and take up our cross.*

When crosses happen, nature shrinks from them as evils; the judgment disapproves, and the will rejects them; but we must deny both our judgment and our will to accept them; for this is the *spiritual sacrifice* which God requires of us: we must renounce ourselves, and so confide in his wisdom and goodness, as to approve as good, and chuse as eligible, what his choice has prescribed as best for us. Thus *denying ourselves* both in understanding and will, and renouncing our own opinions and inclinations, *we take up our cross, we follow Christ, and imi-*

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ix. 10.

tate the oblation he made of himself to his heavenly Father.

We must, as I said, daily deny ourselves; *i. e.* oppose our natural desires, because they are wrong; they are like a depraved appetite, which longs only for what will nourish our disease. But as to *deny* all our desires, while we have it in our power to gratify them, will be a work of insuperable difficulty; therefore the merciful providence of God, to help our infirmities, furnishes us with daily occasions of denying ourselves, in the many cross accidents that happen to us.

Every event that contradicts our will, is a *cross* sent by God for that end; when we willingly accept it, we then *take up that cross*, thereby *we deny ourselves*, *i. e.* we renounce our own will in a voluntary endurance of the burden laid on us.

As to the term *cross*, it literally signifies that instrument on which our Lord died, and from which he figuratively called all the sufferings of Christians their crosses, meaning thereby to remind them of *his* sufferings, and to engage them to bear their own with that conformity to his example, which constitutes the character of a Christian. I say, he calls our sufferings by the name of his own, to remind us of the pattern which he set us in the consummation of his sacrifice. And whereas that must necessarily have

been the *last* act of his life, that he might not therefore, while he taught here on earth, lose the advantage of so edifying an allusion, he thought fit to anticipate his history, and predict the grievous circumstances of his passion. This he does, as in many other places, so particularly in the verse preceding the text; and then, that his followers might not (as too many have done) think themselves exempted from sufferings by his suffering for them; after foretelling his own cross, he adds, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

Whoever would dispose himself to practise this doctrine, must first have a true notion of *this world*; for men are very apt to mistake the world for quite another place than what it really is; and hence come the frequent complaints we hear of it. Men conceive of the world as a scene of pleasure, or a theatre for vanity and ambition; they think that the business of life here, is only to pass their time agreeably, and please themselves. For such an end indeed this world is very ill contrived. But to judge of it aright, we must consider it as a place of discipline, as a school of wisdom; wherein the perverseness of our will is to be broke and subdued by long and laborious exercises of mortification.

We may upon this account well compare the world to an hospital; wherein strict diet and  
painful

painful operations of various kinds are necessary. Now if we suppose a patient here ignorant of his condition; not knowing the nature of the place, nor the reason of such treatment, he must needs think himself and his fellow-sufferers very unaccountably dealt with. But if he were made thoroughly sensible of his situation; if he were shewed the fitness of such remedies for his case, and fully assured of the skill and goodness of the physician who administered them; then his complaints would turn to thankfulness, and all his care would be to submit to the methods prescribed for his recovery.

Religion, not only revealed, but natural universal religion sufficiently instructs us upon this head. If we look into ourselves, we must perceive that our souls are in a disordered distempered state. If we look to the great Author of our being, we must acknowledge him the governor of the world; and consequently that all accidents befalling us are the dispensations of his providence. He that made us, and gave us life, and health, and all other enjoyments; he only has power over his own gifts; and though he employ creatures, as second causes, as instruments to accomplish his will, yet we must know and remember that they act only by his permission.

This consideration will be of great force to persuade our acceptance of the daily crosses that attend us. It was this supported Job under his

heavy load of calamities ; for he ascribed all to the first Cause, and patiently acquiesced in the divine appointment. *The Lord gave (he said) and the Lord hath taken away.* Such also was the language of good Eli, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* After the same manner did the pious David express his resignation, when the rebel Shimei reviled and insulted him. *Let him (said that exemplary king) let him curse, because God hath said unto him, curse David.* And to sum up all, such was the sentiment of Christ himself at the approach of his passion : *The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?* The thought that it was his Father's doing supported him in all his agonies, and made him submit, consent to, and acquiesce in all the horrors of his crucifixion.

Thus must we learn to see all occurrences in the light of faith, as proceeding from God, without whose care and inspection even *a hair does not fall from our head, nor a sparrow to the ground,* as our Saviour testifies. All crosses therefore come from God, who inflicts them with a force most exactly proportioned to the wants or capacities of his patients ; and I insist so much upon this important truth, because the due consideration of it will engage us, not only the more willingly to accept the cross ; but it will also much contribute to alleviate the weight of it. For when we consider our suffering as

coming

coming merely from our fellow-creatures, the part they have acted in bringing it on, is often more grating than the suffering itself. The apparent baseness and unreasonableness of an adversary, the treachery of a friend, the ingratitude, the calumny, or the insolence of an inferior much obliged, add weight to the burden that is brought upon us by means so provoking: but if we behold the cross, as christian patience requires we should, as coming from God; we should be less affected with those aggravating circumstances, and feel no more than our proper burden; and even under that, our grief must be respectful, while we see the hand that lays it on. For can we believe any thing to be God's doing, and doubt its being well done? *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Can Infinite Wisdom err? Can the Eternal Truth falsify his promises that *all things shall work together for good to those that love God, and put their trust in him?*

I say for *good*, our chief, our eternal good, which is our improvement in virtue; for in our present state, without the cross, there is no place for the exercise of virtue, since sufferings are the opportunities which God affords us of approving our obedience. Are not fortitude and temperance, meekness, humility, diligence, are not these laborious virtues all? and are not desires restrained, appetites mortified, passions subdued,  
pains



pains of body and reluctances of mind the subjects in which they are exercised? So that in this life crosses are essential to virtue; and we cannot form any notion of virtue but as exerted in bearing them.

How ill do we judge of the state of human life? and what a condition should we be in, if we could obtain our foolish desires? It would be such as excluded all virtue, and admitted no occasions of improvement.

To be at ease, and meet no opposition; to suffer nothing from the weakness, the perverseness, the rapacious insatiableness of men (if such a state were here possible) might be *pleasure*; but it is not *virtue*, nor a likely way to attain it; difficulties and reproach, and contradiction; distress and conflict; in a word, sufferings of every sort, by which we may deny and renounce selfishness, these are the subjects in which virtue is learned and practised. But few men so well understand their true interests, as to make a just estimate of these opportunities; the greater part murmur at crosses, they strive against them as injuries, and by their impatience multiply crimes, where they might largely have increased their virtues. *Wherefore* (saith Solomon) *is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?* Sufferings are the price with which we should purchase wisdom, the

<sup>3</sup> Prov. xvii. 16.

only means of attaining her. This price is now put into our hand by an over-ruling necessity. God forces us into his school, whether we will learn there or no; we must have have crosses, whatever use we make of them. Yet such is the folly of men, they often pay the *price of wisdom* without making the purchase of it. *They have no heart to it* (saith Solomon) they have not the *sense* to discern that every event is the *will* of God, and that the *will* of God ought to be submitted to; they have not the courage to sacrifice their own will, although it comes in competition with the declared will of their Maker: reasonable as this is, they *have not the heart* to do it. So they suffer in vain, and pass their life in unprofitable calamities; for crosses are inevitable, neither grandeur, nor wisdom, nor innocence can escape from them; and they are burdens to all, but they are benefits only to those who *take them up*, and break their self-will by a voluntary acceptance of them.

Is there in nature a more self-evident truth than this, that the creature ought to submit and conform his will to the will of the Creator? Now such submission cannot take place, when the dispensations of providence concur with human wishes; but in *crosses* it is put to the trial: and they who upon such occasions refuse to give God the preference—the best we can hope for them is, that they may live to repent it.

What

What pity is it that we should lose such advantages, and instead of laying up treasure in heaven by a patient endurance, increase our punishment by a wilful resistance to the means which God has appointed for our sanctification. For by these we must begin our union with Christ; *we must suffer with him, that we may be glorified with him.* Hereunto (saith St. Peter) *we are called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.* Contemplating his cross, we must patiently endure our own, we must present ourselves as a *free-will offering* to the justice of God, arguing as the good thief upon the cross: *We indeed suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.*

But may it not be thought that I debase the cross of Christ by applying it to the slight evils we are obnoxious to? Are the little contradictions we meet with, to be named with his sufferings? Our troubles indeed are not to be named with his, with regard to the unparalleled greatness of his; but they may, and ought to be considered with his, as the rule, pattern, and the source of grace for our endurance of them. His sufferings were like himself, supreme, and above all comparison; whereas our light afflictions are suited to our weakness: and whatever our cross is, we must *take it up to follow*

*follow him, i. e.* to follow his example, for he admits of no other terms of discipleship.

Let us then upon all occasions lift up our hearts to the crucified Jesus, whose death, when contemplated in faith, will sanctify all our troubles; not only those which are great and rare, but also the more trivial and ordinary: for as it is the glory of divine providence to superintend the meanest objects, and appoint the minutest events that happen to us; so it is the prerogative of the cross of Christ to sanctify all those events, even the smallest troubles of his creatures, who come under its influence by a due regard to him in the bearing them: and what he said of his sacramental cup, may be well applied to the cup of suffering. *Do this, as often as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.*

To conclude: all who own the obligations of our religion, must own the necessity of self-denials; but as we have not the judgment to discern which are properest for us, God therefore takes us in hand, and by the merciful œconomy of his providence sends us daily crosses, such as we want, and such as we can bear. By these we are to practise the self-denial he has enjoined; by bearing these patiently we advance in virtue, we follow Christ, and shall at length arrive, where he is ascended before us: *For if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him.*

## DISCOURSE XIII.

*The* PASSION.

---

 H E B. ii. 10.

*It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

**P***erfection* is the most reasonable object of our desire ; *sufferings* are the most natural object of our aversion : and yet we are intimately conscious that perfection cannot be attained but through sufferings. For in moral qualities, and such only we have now in view, that which costs nothing, we esteem worth nothing : where there is no self-denial, there is no ground for praise, and the *merit* of a good action is to be estimated by the counterpoise of obstacles which it overcomes. Now the perfection of a creature implies the *highest merit*, and consequently the highest fortitude in *suffering*. Hence the essence of virtue is founded. What we call  
heroic

heroic virtue rises only in proportion to the difficulties it surmounts ; and where those difficulties cease, the hero too ceases to be the object of our admiration. Other beings possibly may conceive *actual* merit consistent with *pure* bliss : but men cannot, and the lustre of virtue is not visible to human eyes, but as surrounded with the shade of distress.

*It became* therefore the Almighty Father, *to make the captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings.* As there was never virtue like unto the virtue of Jesus : *so there was never any sorrow like unto his sorrow*<sup>1</sup>. His whole life might be called his *passion*, though we confine that term to the conclusion of it, which in this solemn week we daily commemorate.

It will be a seasonable entertainment for your devotion to recapitulate the principal circumstances in a plain narration.

The first that presents itself, passed in the garden of Gethsemane, where he accepted, deliberately, with a clear knowledge and full consent accepted, all the miseries that were to ensue. The distinct view of them was indeed almost insupportable, and threw him into an agony, wherein his *sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.* In all other instances of human sufferings that are excessive, previous ignorance, and present tu-

<sup>1</sup> Lam. i. 12.

mult in the article of distress, hide much of the difficulty: and necessity and despair carry men through per force, where mere fortitude could never have made its way. But the virtue of Jesus admitted not such alleviations: neither ignorance concealed, nor tumult diminished, nor necessity supported any part of his burden. He willed, he chose the whole; but with such reluctance and revolt of nature, such mental conflict and agony, that he *sweat blood*, which issuing in large drops trickled down to the earth, on which he lay prostrate.

Some have accounted this strange symptom to be natural; and I cannot but think their opinion probable: for the passion of fear makes the blood retire hastily inwards, to fortify the heart; and thereupon ensues paleness, and trembling, and great weakness of the limbs so suddenly drained of the vital flood. And on the contrary, in the efforts of courage the blood runs to the extreme parts with great impetuosity, whence the limbs become more vigorous, the face of a sanguine red, and the eyes sparkling. Now in the conflict of passions which distracted the heart of Jesus, he suffered both these effects in the highest degrees that are possible. One while through an excess of *fear* the blood ran back to his heart with the utmost precipitation: when presently a contrary exertion of *courage* repelled its course, and surmounting

mounting *fear*, drove the blood outwards with a rapid violence. Again *fear* took place: and again *courage* overbore it. *Fear* prevailed by the clearest apprehensions of his approaching sufferings, presenting to his mind horrors that we can have no notion of: then his ardent love of mankind, and unsatiated desire of his Father's glory control these horrors, and urge him to his arduous enterprise with irresistible vehemence. He long stood the shock of these contending passions with a perpetual flux and reflux of his blood, which at last boiling with such continual agitation forced the capillary-vessels, and issuing through the pores moistened his garments and trickled down to the ground. This seems a rational account of his bloody sweat, which perhaps was purely natural and without any other miracle than his surviving it. We read in history many instances wherein single passions have been fatal; and men have died suddenly under extreme degrees of fear, or grief, or even of joy. Joy excepted, all the other passions raged here with the utmost fury and contention: but the *heart of Jesus* stood this tempest, till the strange ferment of his blood, which could not make a rupture *there*, rebounding with equal violence, stretched the extreme arteries, and occasioned this marvellous sweat of blood.



At length this conflict came to an end, reluctant nature was subdued, resignation triumphed, and Jesus was ready to complete his sacrifice. Judas now appeared with an armed multitude: and coming forward, at some distance from them, with his traiterous kiss marked our Lord for their prey. Jesus meekly rebuked his treachery: and then advancing toward the band that came to apprehend him, asked them whom they sought. They were abashed at his presence: the mild majesty he appeared in suspended their rage, and they timorously replied, *Jesus of Nazareth.* *Jesus said unto them, I am he.* *As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he; they went backward and fell to the ground*<sup>2</sup>. This was done to shew that Jesus made a voluntary oblation of himself: and therefore staying till they were recovered from their amazement, he again asked them *whom seek ye?* And they said, as before, *Jesus of Nazareth.* *Jesus answered: I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye see me, let these go their way.* Though he surrendered *himself* so freely, yet he still exerted his authority in defence of his followers, and his enemies durst not refuse him obedience; for there can be no other reason given why they let his disciples escape, inclosed as they were in the garden; especially Peter, who at that instant signally provoked them, for when Mal-

<sup>2</sup> John xviii. 6.

chus, a servant of the high-priest, was advancing to seize our Lord, the fervent Peter asked if he should smite with the sword! and according to his usual impetuosity, not staying for an answer, he smote Malchus, and cut off his right ear. *Then said Jesus to Peter, Put up thy sword. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? &c.*—then he touched the servant's ear and healed him. And turning to the chief-priests and captains of the temple whom he saw among the rabble, he mildly reprov'd them for that needless tumult. *Be ye come out* (said he) *as against a thief with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me; but the scripture must be fulfilled. This is your hour and the power of darkness. The power indeed of darkness,* which could blind the minds of men, even under the present conviction of a miracle: Jesus consented to endure its utmost efforts, and therefore yielded himself to the mad multitude, who bound him, and hurried him along with tumult and uproar, first to the house of Annas, and thence to that of Caiaphas, where his enemies, although it was then midnight, were assembled in expectation of him.

Caiaphas began with examining our Lord upon two heads, of his *disciples* and of his *doctrine*. Jesus said nothing to the first, that of his *disciples*. He could say little good of them,

for they had all deserted him. So he answered only concerning his *doctrine*, which was the principal point by which all others would be determined. Of this he said, with great modesty and ingenuity, that he was not the proper person to be enquired of, seeing he had always taught publicly; and therefore he desired that those, who had heard him, might be examined. His words were these, *I spake openly to the world, I ever taught in the synagogue and the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them who heard me—behold they know what I said. And when he had said this, one of the officers which stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand. But Jesus shewed no repentment, but replied with a mild expostulation and a charitable reproof, directing him to inform the court, if he had spoke amiss; and not usurp their authority. If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?* His persecutors thus disappointed of their insidious design, to find occasion against our Lord out of his own mouth, have at last recourse to witnesses: but those they produced were confused and various, contradicting not only the truth, but one another, so that their evidence was of no use: and therefore the high-priest had again recourse to the former artifice of intangling him in his own words. But Je-  
sus

Jesus held his peace, and though much solicited, would give no answer, but such as justified his silence: till the malicious Caiaphas attacked him with the solemnity of religion, saying, *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God.* Then his reverence for his Father's name again opened his mouth, to bear testimony to the truth. He answered, *that he was the Christ;* and added, *nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right-hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* These last words were an answer, not to their question, but to their thoughts. *Nevertheless, i. e. notwithstanding your present infidelity, you shall one day be convinced, when you see me coming to judge the world.* At this the high-priest, colouring the malice of his heart with a hypocritical zeal, *rent his clothes, saying: he hath spoken blasphemy, what think ye? They replied, he is guilty of death.* But as the civil power was in the hands of the Romans, their sentence was of no force till ratified by Pilate: and as it was not yet day-light, they must wait the proper time to address him; and in the mean while, lest Jesus should have any rest, they gave him up to be harrassed and worried by their servants and soldiers, *who mocked him, and spit on him, and smote him: and when they had blindfolded him they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy who it is that smote thee?*

*thee? and many other things blasphemously spake they against him: till at length, the day appearing, the priests and elders again assembled, and leading Jesus their prisoner, went in a body to solicit the consent of Pilate. Pilate demanded what crimes were laid to his charge? They seemed to take this ill, as expecting that their accusation should be sufficient, and that the secular arm should execute their sentence without farther enquiry. They said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him unto thee. But Pilate would not decree in a cause which he had not heard; and so they were obliged to produce some particulars of their charge. They began to accuse him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar: saying that he himself is Christ, a king. Knowing that Pilate was obliged to be jealous of the rights of Cæsar, and that a crime against the state was most likely to make an impression on him; they therefore now accuse Jesus of sedition and rebellion, crimes whereof the Roman governor was bound to take especial cognizance. These imputations were false and groundless; for Christ always taught obedience to the civil powers. He had raised money by a miracle to pay tribute for himself and Peter, and fled from the officious multitude who by force would have made him their king. But his accusers only considered what would best serve to pre-*  
judice

judice the governor against him. He immediately calling for Jesus, examined him what kind of royalty he assumed, or at least was charged with assuming; to which our Lord returned such an answer, as sufficiently cleared him in the opinion of Pilate from an accusation which had so little ground as his affecting royalty in any such sense as might give umbrage to Cæsar. *So Pilate went out again, and said to the chief-priests and to the people; I find no fault in this man: and they were the more fierce (as it is common to supply the want of reason with passion) and said, he stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, from Galilee to this place.*

At the mention of Galilee, Pilate gladly laid hold of this occasion to shift off so troublesome an affair, and sent Jesus away to Herod, as belonging to his jurisdiction.

Herod had been long desirous to see Jesus, and was glad of this opportunity, because he hoped to see some miracle wrought by him. But as this Herod had lately apostatised from the doctrine of John the Baptist, and at the instigation of Herodias had murdered him; Jesus would not prostitute miraculous power to satisfy his vain curiosity; and though *Herod questioned him in many words, yet he answered nothing.* This was interpreted weakness or idiotism, and to signify as much, Herod with his courtiers, after many insults, dressed him

up in mock ensigns of kingship, and in that ridiculous habit sent him back to Pilate, an object of public scorn.

Pilate was in a fresh perplexity to find the judgment of Jesus again remitted to his tribunal: his conscience pressed him to absolve him, while the Jews with incessant cries solicited his condemnation. In this difficulty the coward judge bethought himself of an expedient, proper enough for his design, but infinitely disgraceful to our Lord: it was that, whereby the notorious Barabbas was brought in competition with Jesus, and preferred to him by the voice of the multitude. Pilate surprised at this unnatural choice, and grieved to see his expedient fail him; meanly betakes himself to a new contrivance, and commits a lesser injustice to prevent a greater. Since he could not withstand their fury, he endeavours to compound with it, and mollify it, by reducing Jesus to such a condition as might move their pity; for St. John remarks immediately after the preference of Barabbas, *that Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him.* Fastened then to the infamous pillar, not by the feeble cords they tied him with, but the inviolable bands of immense charity, he stood the proxy of a guilty world: he stood in our stead, the substitute for our offences; and heavenly justice smote by every hand that wounded him.

When

When this was over, the unrelenting executioners gave him no respite, but add to the cruelties of scourging a strange and new invented torture. For as the soldiers of Herod, to deride the royalty of Jesus, had dressed him up in a gorgeous robe, as a mock ensign of majesty: so these to improve upon their insults, add a reed for a scepter, and a platted wreath of thorns for a crown or imperial diadem.

While they were acting these impious buffooneries Pilate entered, and seeing Jesus in this condition, thought that now at least the rage of his enemies would be satiated, and that the most envenomed heart would relent at the appearance of so sad a spectacle. *Therefore (saith St. John) Pilate went forth again to the Jews, and said, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and Pilate said to them, BEHOLD THE MAN!* He said no more, concluding that the deplorable condition to which Jesus was reduced would plead sufficiently on his behalf, and extort compassion from the most obdurate. It was indeed a moving sight: his body torn with scourges, his head pierced with thorns, and the blood flowing from so many wounds down his face and hair, rendered him at once an object of pity and horror.

But



But nothing could move the priests. They thirsted for all his blood, and stirred up the rabble to join with them in louder cries to solicit his crucifixion: Pilate filled with indignation, said, *Take ye him and crucify him; for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered, we have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.*

Pilate was startled at this; for as he was prepossessed with the fabulous history of the heathen gods, and had just before been alarmed by the strange warning from his wife upon her divining dream; he began to apprehend, that Christ, who had indubitably wrought many miracles, might possibly be the offspring of some of the divinities he worshipped. And therefore (as the evangelist remarks<sup>3</sup>) *when he heard that saying, that Jesus made himself the Son of God, he was the more afraid with a religious dread; and presently called for Jesus to enquire of him concerning his birth and parentage. Whence art thou?* said he; *but Jesus gave him no answer. Then said Pilate, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee? and power to release thee?* Here Jesus meekly rebuked his vanity and insolence in presuming his fate was in his hands. *Thou couldest* (said he) *have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.* It was

<sup>3</sup> John xix. 8.

not the judgment of men, but the eternal decrees of his *Father*, that our Lord had in view: and he considered Pilate and all other agents in his passion, only as the ministers, and executioners of those decrees: but when Pilate fondly treated him as if his life was dependent on *his* will: Jesus took the ascendant that was proper to his dignity, and checked his vain presumption. *Thou couldst have no power at all against me, unless it were given thee from above.* Pilate felt the force of this reproof, and continued his endeavours to release him, but all in vain; for being intimidated with threatenings of Cæsar's resentment, he at last, after a public declaration of his own innocence, as well as that of Jesus, consented to his crucifixion.

Thus Jesus was delivered to the will of his enemies, who brought him forth from the judgment-hall, sadly fatigued indeed, and almost spent with the various torments he had endured; yet not dejected, or dismayed. He still wore the crown of thorns; and now they load him with the cross, on which he was to be suspended. He carried it, or dragged it along through the streets of Jerufalem; but when he came out of the city, his strength failing him, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to assist him in bearing it.

At length he climbs Mount Calvary, a place infamous and noisome with slaughter, that had  
its

its name from the wretched remains of executed criminals.

The appointed soldiers dig the hole, in which the cross was to be erected.

The nails and the hammer are ready.

The cross is placed on the ground :

And Jesus lies down upon that bed of sorrows.

They nail him to it.

They erect it.

His nerves crack.

His blood distils.

He hangs upon his wounds, a spectacle to heaven and earth !

It is not unusual for those who speak in public, to profess that their subject surpasses their utmost efforts : and when they have exhausted their abilities in saying all they possibly can, to break off in interjections, and abrupt exclamations of wonder and astonishment. Whatever may have given occasion to these passionate figures of speech, it is sure that they can never find their place so properly as here.

You heard in the text, that *it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through sufferings.* But what tongue of man or angel can suffice to tell the *depth*, and the *height* ; the *profundity* of his *sufferings*, and the

the *sublimity of perfection* to which they raised him.

We must here adore in silence what we cannot comprehend.

---

DISCOURSE XIV.

*Of the* RESURRECTION.

---

ISAIAH xi. 10.

—*His rest shall be glorious.*

The whole verse runs thus :

*In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious.*

**F**OR *Rest* the Vulgate has *Sepulchre*, the place of rest. *Sepulchrum ejus erit gloriosum.*

The whole chapter is a lofty and figurative description of the blessings which were to attend the coming of the Messias; and the verse now read  
read

read mentions particularly the conversion of the heathen, and their concourse to his church erected as an *ensign* or standard for them to resort to; and this their conversion is principally imputed to the death and resurrection of our Lord: *for his sepulchre shall be glorious.*

The sepulchre, the grave is an unusual stage for the display of glory; with the rest of mortals it has a very different appearance. The best that Job could say of it, when in the anguish of his soul he most desired it, was: *There the wicked cease from troubling: there the weary are at rest.*— And some others, distressed like him, may think death eligible, and long for the *grave* as a refuge from misery. But generally speaking the grave is an object of horror, too loathsome to be described—there lie the ruins of man sinking into corruption and putrefaction: and though a preposterous vanity may strive to hide this disgrace with the magnificence of pompous edifices: yet will such sepulchres ever be (what our Lord used them for) emblems of hypocrisy and imposture; which *indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead mens bones and all uncleanness.*

So offensive, ignominious, and loathsome is the grave in the ordinary course of nature: and it was the peculiar privilege of our Lord that *his sepulchre should be glorious*; for it was the theatre of his resurrection.

To

To methodize our discourse upon this subject, it may be proper to consider the glory of our Lord's resurrection in two views; first, as it illustrates *him*, and secondly, as it influences *us*; for it is of the essence of *glory* to be diffusive, and stream forth from its subject upon all objects within its sphere; which occasions these distinct considerations of the glory of this his resurrection, in its *source*, and in its *influence*.

We shall discover somewhat of the personal glory of Christ in the circumstances of his resurrection, related by the evangelists. And

Its influence will appear in its consequence, I mean the effect it has upon mankind, which I shall endeavour to detail with some seasonable application.

But first, of the history of Christ's resurrection. And here it is material to observe that not only the prophets, but that he himself had often foretold it; a circumstance which was particularly remarked by the angel who first brought the glad tidings to the two Marys at their early visit to his sepulchre. We read<sup>1</sup>, that after a great earthquake (which probably happened at the very instant of our Lord's revival, as the preceding one had at the instant of his death) an angel descended from heaven, and having rolled back the stone from the entrance, sat upon it. *His countenance was like light-*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii.

*ning, and his raiment white as snow, and for fear of him the guards did shake and became as dead men.* While the soldiers were in such astonishment at the splendor of his appearance, he turned and said to the women: *Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus who was crucified: he is not here, for he is risen, as he said, i. e. according to his own prediction, which is a circumstance, as I shall shew, of great moment for establishing our faith in this mystery, and preventing or answering the cavils of infidelity.*

And first, he had frequently told it to his *disciples*, as appears from many passages of the gospel, wherein he commonly foretels both his death and his resurrection together, perhaps to mitigate a little the scandal of the cross by the glories that were to ensue; and at the same time to prepare their faith *by* the one *for* the other. At first his sufferings could not but appear highly improbable to his disciples; for they could not conceive how a person like him, vested with omnipotence, should suffer by Jew or Gentile; much less that he should die under their hands. Yet they saw this verified within five days after his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when the whole city met him with Hosannahs to the Son of David. And this in reason should have confirmed their faith in the remaining part of the prophecy which concerned his resurrection: for so our Lord intended it should, as he declared  
upon

upon a like occasion, *I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He*<sup>2</sup>.

But had the disciples only been acquainted with these predictions, sceptical men might have had some pretences against their testimony; at least we should have lost many substantial proofs of the resurrection, which the vigilant malice of the Jews has furnished. And therefore our Lord took proper occasions to inform *them* of it: and when they pressed him for an authentic signal of his divine commission he referred them to his resurrection, as the final and indisputable test of his divinity. Thus, when upon his driving the traders out of the temple, they demanded some proof or warrant for the authority which he there exercised: their words are, *What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou dost these things*<sup>3</sup>? He refers them to his resurrection three days after his death, as what would confirm and ratify all his pretensions. Upon this occasion he called his *body this Temple* with great propriety of speech upon account of the divinity residing in it; and because it was a standing tradition among the Jews that the *Sanctum Sanctorum* represented the *Messias*: but lest these reasons should escape us, the evangelist is careful to declare his meaning: *He spake* (saith St. John) *of the temple of his body*. And the

<sup>2</sup> John xiii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> John ii. 18, &c.



Jews in general understood sufficiently that he appealed to such a resurrection for the final confirmation of his divine mission, as appears particularly from their address to Pilate for a guard to watch his sepulchre, wherein they mention his foretelling his resurrection as a thing that was notorious. *Sir (said they) we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead*<sup>4</sup>. Pilate consented to their request, and <sup>5</sup> granted them what military force they had desired. *Ye have (said he) a watch, go your way, and make it as sure as you can.* He left the guards to their disposal; for if he had given them their directions himself, they might still have had some room to pretend that right measures were not taken for securing the sepulchre; and therefore by the especial appointment of providence, to remove all the subterfuges of infidelity, they had the ordering of the guard themselves. Pilate committed it all to their care, saying: *Ye have a guard, or, I grant ye a guard: go, and make it as sure as you can.*

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxvii. 63, &c.

<sup>5</sup> That the soldiers belonged to Pilate appears, *Matt.* xxviii. 14.

Thus

Thus authorised by the governor, and animated by the passion which transported them, they neglect nothing. The tomb is closed with a great stone, that stone is sealed, and the whole sepulchre invested, and, as it were, besieged by soldiers. No precaution was omitted. There was no want of care to reproach themselves with, that there might be no want of evidence wherewith to reproach the truth.

A needless provision this against a few poor fishermen, who were naturally timorous and mean-spirited; who had abandoned their master at the first appearance of danger; who were since sunk into consternation and despair at his death, and whose hopes were all buried in the tomb with him: who were so far from an inclination, as well as capacity, for so hazardous an enterprise, that they were strangely backward even to believe the miracle itself, when it was accomplished. For the Jewish priests already knew our Lord's resurrection, and were taking measures to prevent the report of it, while his own disciples scrupled to give credit to it: and Thomas in particular was so obstinate in his unbelief, that he would not be persuaded of his master's revival, till he had the testimony of all his senses.

It was reasonable to expect that our Lord's persecutors should have first heard of his resurrection from his disciples: but as they had

contrived matters, they received the news of it from their own watch flying in dismay from the angelic vision. Thus God, who in the order of his providence converts the evil purposes of men to his glory, made the Jewish malice contribute to establish the certainty of our Lord's resurrection by such proofs, as could not have happened but by their opposition.

And it was needful that his glory should at length break forth with a lustre sufficient to dissipate any reasonable doubt and surmise. For all his foregoing transactions from the manger to the tomb, although infinitely *excellent*, were little *glorious*; because their merit was so veiled by his humility, that it was scarce discernible. Now *glory is merit displayed*, it is the manifestation of excellence: and the resurrection is therefore by way of eminence the glorious mystery, because it was the manifestation of the excellency of Christ, it was a demonstration of his divinity, which here *emerged*, as it were, from the abyss of humiliations into which it was sunk. Here he shewed, that what he had done and suffered was truly meritorious, because it was voluntary. We know that he had willingly laid down his life, when we see him by his own power take it up again; and we learn to value his death as a free-will offering for our redemption, when we contemplate his resurrection. Expiring on the cross he seemed to go the way  
of

of all flesh, and fall like the rest of Adam's sons by a common and unavoidable fate: but we can no longer doubt that he fought death as a *conqueror*, when we see him return in *triumph* from the grave.

St. Paul in the beginning of his epistle to the Romans, speaks of this as a fundamental of christianity, *viz.* That the resurrection of Christ certifies us of his divinity: for he says of him, that *He was declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection*<sup>6</sup>. This declares, and demonstrates his divine nature: for there can be no room to doubt of it, while we believe, that he raised himself from the dead. Now what a splendor and glory does this cast upon all the parts of his precedent life; which, if we consider him only as, what he often styles himself, *the Son of Man*, is indeed exceeding pious and virtuous to a degree never before attained: but when his resurrection shews him to be *the Son of God*, it is all amazing, That *the Son of God* should be born in a stable: That *the Son of God* should live in poverty, and die in pain:—What instructions! what examples! what encouragements! but above all, how glorious is that Son of God amidst such miracles of goodness, such prodigies of divine love and condescension, for which the angels can never sufficiently admire him; for which the universe shall eternally adore him!

<sup>6</sup> Rom. i. 4.

So glorious, and infinitely more than words can express, is the resurrection of our Lord with regard to himself, as it asserts his divinity, and puts the seal to all his revelations. But glory, as I said, is of a diffusive nature, issuing forth in bright influences upon all objects within its sphere; and therefore we are next to consider our Lord's resurrection with regard to ourselves, and shew the certain consequence of it, which is our own resurrection.

The world had now lasted four thousand years at the time of Christ's death, and all generations hitherto had sunk into the grave, not knowing what would become of them. We must except here the patriarchs and saints of the Jewish church, who by an anticipated revelation of a Redeemer had their hopes full of immortality. But the bulk of mankind were in the dark concerning a future state. Good men might wish, and wise men expect a life to come: but these wishes and these expectations were perplexed with much doubt and misgiving. Death was as a gulf whereof they saw only the entrance, and could discern nothing beyond. But the glories of our Lord's resurrection have enlightened the grave, and so dissipated the shades of death, as to shew that to be only a passage or thoroughfare, which before seemed a gulf and an abyss. For life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel of Christ,

who declared, not only that there was a resurrection, but that he himself was *the Resurrection*, i. e. the power whereby men shall be raised from the dead. *I am* (said he) *the Resurrection and the Life*<sup>7</sup>. As the sun is light in himself, and the great source of day to all the worlds around him: so Christ is resurrection to himself, and the great cause and author of resurrection to all mankind, who after they have undergone the common sentence of death passed upon them in Adam the first head of our race, are by this second representative of the human species restored to immortality: and, to use the words of his apostle, *since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as by Adam all died, so by Christ shall all be made alive*<sup>8</sup>.

And indeed it is a very natural prerogative of Christ, as judge of the world, that he should by his own power summon all men to his tribunal. But hear the account which he gives of himself upon this article. *As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them: even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*<sup>9</sup>. And again at ver. 26, &c. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life*

<sup>7</sup> John xi. 25.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 21.

<sup>9</sup> John v. 21, &c.

*in himself: and hath given him authority also to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

Resurrection and a future judgment are the fundamental principles of morality, and they are in the gospel not only taught, but demonstrated. The divinity raised Christ's human body out of the grave, to convince us that he will also raise us at the last day. This is a miracle in kind, involving the thing in question, most pertinent, cogent, and irrefragable: so that we cannot but conclude with St. Paul, *That God has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*<sup>10</sup>.

Seeing then that you have this assurance, Do you hope, or do you fear a resurrection? Do you, I say, hope, or do you fear a resurrection? for you must expect it. If upon just grounds you hope for it, happy are ye. But if you fear it, be warned in time to remove those fears by such an amendment of life, as may give you comfort and joy in the prospect of futurity. It

<sup>10</sup> Acts xvii. 31.

is my duty here to persuade you to this, and to advise and direct you in the performance of it: but I can only persuade and advise, you yourselves must *work out your own salvation*.

Which that we all may do effectually, may God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

## DISCOURSE XV.

On WHITSUNDAY.

ACTS ii. 2, 3.

*Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.*

**I**T has been the pious wisdom of the church to set apart certain days for the solemn commemoration of its principal mysteries, and for the honour of those blessed saints and martyrs who were most instrumental in its establishment.  
The



The occasion of the present festival is the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, whereby they were qualified for the conversion of mankind, and the christian church was completely settled and established: so that the church does now keep its own festival, celebrate, as it were, its own nativity: and all the saints days in the calendar shine but with borrowed rays from this day's glory; for all those virtues and excellencies which have made their names so precious in the christian world, were as at this time poured forth upon them. To this it is we owe the sanctity of their lives, the purity of their doctrines, the power of their miracles, and all the glorious acts of their martyrdom.

All the other mysteries of the gospel prepare the way for this, which is the end of the incarnation, the fruit of the death of Christ, and the full accomplishment of all his designs. He had indeed already formed the body of his church while he was here on earth, conversing with and instructing his disciples, but by this last act, the descent of the Holy Ghost<sup>1</sup>, he infused a soul into that his mystical body, he endowed it with a vigorous principle of life and action, a heart that would always correspond and sympathize with him its head.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13

And this indeed seems peculiar to this festival season, that whereas the subjects of other holy-days are actually past and concluded, so as to require only our devout remembrance and acknowledgment; the occasion of this still subsists, and ever will subsist in the church. The same Holy Spirit, which then descended upon the apostles, does still descend upon all the living members of Christ, according to his gracious promise in the last words of St. Matthew's gospel, almost the last words which he spoke upon earth. *Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

This promise is fulfilled in the mission of the Holy Ghost. Christ is now present in his church by his Spirit, which as it formerly descended upon the apostles, so it ever shall descend upon all his true disciples *unto the end of the world.* The sacred fountain still stands open, and nothing is retrenched from the bounteous efflux of divine grace, but only the outward prodigies which attended it at the beginning of its course. Now indeed it flows on, as some peaceful river, through opened channels, with a silent stream; and marking its way only by the riches it spreads in the parts it passes through: but the season we celebrate was the time of its *eruption*, if I may so speak, when it rapidly issued forth from the divine source to replenish the apostles, who were the conduits prepared

prepared

prepared to receive and convey it forward to the latest generations. At that time, as was usual upon such extraordinary occasions, it manifested itself even outwardly, by sensible representations, expressive of its energy and the effects it produces in the spirits of men. These sensible representations appeared in the two active elements *air* and *fire*, which kindle and keep up the life of nature.

For when the apostles were assembled *on the day of Pentecost*, i. e. the day whereon the law was given to the Jews; *suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind: and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.* For *cloven tongues like as of fire*, according to our version; I think the sense of the original is *separated or distinct flames*. *Lambent flames*; for *tongue of fire* is a Hebraism for a *flame*, as may be seen in *Isaiah* <sup>2</sup>. So that here was a double prodigy, *a sound was heard from heaven, as of an impetuous wind filling the house; and several distinct flames were seen, one of which resided over each of the apostles.* Now these are two proper emblems or symbolical representations: and in order to judge of their significancy we are to observe, that there is such an analogy and intimate connexion between the material and the spiritual worlds,

<sup>2</sup> *Isa. v. 24.*

that

that not only the names of things visible serve to denote things invisible, and are the only names we have for them, which plainly argues a notorious analogy upon which such use of the names is grounded: but also some extraordinary transactions in the higher order pass on and impress themselves upon the lower, so as to affect outward nature in a similar manner, such I mean as some how answers to what is then accomplished in the supernatural state. Thus, for instance, a few weeks before this descent of the Holy Ghost, while our Lord was hanging on the cross, the sun was eclipsed; and when he expired, outward nature was convulsed with an earthquake. And she sympathised again, yet to a different purpose, in a second earthquake at his resurrection. And now, when his Spirit with the plenitude of divine power was descending upon his apostles, a sound from heaven was heard as of an impetuous *wind*, and distinct *flames* were seen over the heads of the apostles.

It will be proper here, as far as our scanty knowledge will permit, to trace out the analogy wherein these two symbols are grounded.

Concerning the first, it has been observed<sup>3</sup> that among those parts of the material world which are invisible, and whose existence we discover only by their effects, there is scarce any

<sup>3</sup> Barrow, Vol. II. p. 446.

thing more subtile, more active, and of greater efficacy than *wind*, i. e. air in motion, or *spirit*, which is the same thing according to the primary sense of the word. Hence in the common use of most languages the name of wind or spirit serves to express those things, which being not discernible to us by reason of the subtilty or fineness of their substance, are yet conceived to be moved with great agility, and endued with great force. So naturalists, when they speak of that which is most abstruse, most agile, and most operative in any liquor or other body, call it *spirit*. And for the same reason our souls are called spirits, for the subtilty of their nature, and those vital powers wherewith they actuate our bodies.

In regard to our capacity and manner of conceiving things, the holy scriptures have used this term *spirit* to express even the adorable and incomprehensible Deity, signifying his most simple nature and most powerful energy: his most simple *nature*, I say, which cannot possibly be the object of any of our senses; and his most powerful *energy*, which pervades and actuates all things.

This name Spirit, as it is common to the whole Godhead, so it is peculiarly applied to the third person of the ever-blessed Trinity, stiled by way of eminence *The Holy Spirit*, and  
the

the operations of God towards men are in an especial manner ascribed to him.

Now in all languages commonly known, the operations of a superior mind upon an inferior to raise and invigorate it, is expressed by the metaphor of *inspiration*, i. e. breathing into: and the general consent of mankind in the use of this metaphor demonstrates its fitness and propriety. And therefore when the infinite mind vouchsafed to communicate itself with such plenitude and force to the minds of his chosen servants assembled on the day of Pentecost, this sound from heaven of a mighty rushing wind, or torrent of mysterious *air*, was a proper symbol to indicate its *descent*: as the other miraculous appearance by the element of *fire* was proper to represent the *effects* which it produces.

To *enlighten*, to *purify*, and to *warm*, are the properties of fire. Now if we transfer these to the spiritual world, the light of the soul is *truth*, the purity of the soul is *holiness*, the warmth or heat of the soul is an active, vigorous *ardour* to surmount obstacles, and zealously prosecute the end proposed. The Holy Ghost produces these three effects, and accordingly the scriptures describe him as a spirit of *truth*, of *holiness*, and of *power*. As a *spirit of truth* he enlightens the minds of the faithful, and *leads them into all truth* fit for them to know: as a *spirit of holiness*, by an intimate union with their hearts,

hearts, he reforms them and makes them holy: as a *spirit of power* he gives them vigour to resist temptation, strength to bear their crosses, and full ability to work out their salvation. We shall take these three properties of the Holy Ghost, for three heads to be treated separately.

First he is a *spirit of truth*, and so our Lord stiled him when he foretold his descent upon the apostles, *I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth*<sup>4</sup>. Men may teach us diverse truths, but to teach all truth is the distinguishing prerogative of the Spirit of God. There are truths, and those too of the utmost importance, which *flesh and blood* have not, *cannot reveal*: truths which *the world cannot receive*, which even the apostles themselves could not *bear*, much less relish, approve, and practise before they had received the Holy Ghost. *Ye cannot bear them now*, said Christ in the passage last quoted, they shock corrupt nature, and our passions recoil at the mention of them. For, besides the mysteries of our holy religion, *the deep things of God*, which cannot be duly apprehended but by minds enlightened by the Spirit of God: besides these, I say, there are many moral truths, whereof we cannot be fully and effectually persuaded but by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost:

<sup>4</sup> John xvi. 12, 13.

such are those in the beginning of our Lord's sermon on the mount, "That the poor in spirit, the meek, those that mourn and are persecuted, are blessed above other men. That it is better to pull out our eyes and cut off our hands than use either in the commission of sin. That our enemies are amiable, and that the most provoking injury ought not only to be forgiven, but requited with benevolence." These, and others that might be named, are certain and saving truths: but no mortal man can convince us of them, I mean with a full, lasting, operative conviction, such as shall determine our practical judgment, and become the habitual rule of our conduct. All demonstrations of reason and arts of persuasion are vain to this end: and it is in vain that we ourselves endeavour to reason ourselves into these truths. The Holy Ghost only can work this effectual conviction in our minds, and we must seek this conviction from him by prayer and opening our minds to his operations, or we shall perish in our errors. The same power only that made our minds, can reform them. That Holy Spirit of God, which at the first creation brooded over the rude chaos, and produced this orderly world out of darkness and confusion, must also preside in our minds to make the new creation of virtue, to bring forth light out of our darkness, truth out of our errors. St. Paul alludes



to this, where he says, *God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*<sup>s</sup>.

Such are the advantages we now celebrate, such are the privileges to which we are admitted, if we do not *love darkness more than light because our deeds are evil*, and we resolve to continue in them. God's school now stands open to all, his Spirit condescends to be our master, our teacher, and will infallibly lead us into all saving truth, if we devoutly resign ourselves to his direction.

We cannot have a plainer proof of this than in the history of the day. Consider the apostles, see how wondrous a change was wrought in them by the illumination of this Holy Spirit. Observe what they were *before*, what *after* his descent; and learn from thence what inestimable advantages we are intitled to by christianity.

Three long years had the apostles been in the school of Christ, and had tired even his patience with their gross stupidity and incapacity to apprehend his spiritual doctrine. Though they had made some progress in the ways of truth by leaving their little all to follow him: though they daily heard his precepts, and saw his practice, that living comment upon his doctrine: yet nothing could rectify their false notions, no-

<sup>s</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 6.

thing could wean their vain desires of secular grandeur and magnificence. When our Lord informed them of the necessity of sufferings, the benefits of poverty, the blessedness of persecution, it was all a riddle to them. *They understood none of these things; these sayings were hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken*<sup>6</sup>. Even after the resurrection of Christ the cloud was still upon their minds, and they were yet hankering after an immediate possession of worldly grandeur and dominion. *Lord, say they, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*<sup>7</sup> Christ no longer opposed their carnal prejudices, but referred them to the Holy Ghost for full information and conviction.

According to the promise of Christ, the Holy Ghost came. Immediately all darkness, error, and mistake fled before him. They understood, they believed, they taught, they practised, they were ready to lay down their lives for those truths, which before they could not receive, they could not bear, nor endure. The cross of Christ was no longer an offence to them, but their boast and their glory; and they rejoiced, that they themselves were *counted worthy to partake of it, and to suffer shame for his name*<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xviii. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Acts i. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Acts v. 41.

Such and so effectual were the fruits of the Spirit enlightening the minds of the apostles as a Spirit of *Truth*. We are in the next place to consider him as a Spirit of *holiness*. He is not only by way of eminence the *holy* Spirit, but also the hallowing, *i. e.* *sanctifying* Spirit, from whence all holiness in the creatures is derived. It would be endless to mention the places of scripture where this property is ascribed to him; I am more concerned how I may explain to you the precise meaning of the word *holiness*, which is to be considered in two respects, first, as it is proper to God alone, and secondly, as it is the duty of a creature. According to the first sense we say in the Communion Service, *Thou only art holy: as Thou only art the Lord*. This holiness peculiar to the Deity, consists in the singularity of his nature, even that surpassing transcendent excellence, which leaves all creatures at an infinite distance beneath his majesty.

It is a common error in mens notion of God, that they conceive of him as *one Being among many*: greater indeed and higher, and better than all the rest, but yet *as one among others*, one that may be named with them, and however superior, yet not absolutely distinct from the rest. This is a wrong conception, for God is not only *unus*, but *unicus*. He is One alone, the First without any second or like. But this is a subject which no speculations can  
do

do justice to, and which should naturally sink the mind into the profoundest devotion. Suffice it then to say, that this sublime exaltation and infinite distance of the Creator from the creatures, constitutes his *holiness*. The Hebrew word signifies *separation*, and when applied to God, imports that inconceivable elevation whereby he is distinguished, and stands alone in his universe. Thus we read; *There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides Thee*<sup>9</sup>. There is none beside him: he is a whole genus by himself, and this surpassing, singular excellence, which excludes all possible comparison, constitutes *his holiness*, and the exercise of it tends solely to the promoting his own glory. *He is glorious in (rather by) holiness*, says the Psalmist; and the angels incessantly celebrate him by this title, *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts: heaven and earth are full of thy glory*. The holiness of God is founded, as was said, in the *supremacy of his nature*; and it is perpetually exercised in maintaining that supremacy, in treating himself worthily, exerting all his attributes, and directing all his acts, to one certain point, which is his glory, the exaltation of his nature, the effulgency of his excellence. The reason why God does all things for his own glory is, because That is the end most worthy of God, his supreme excellence requires it of

<sup>9</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 2.

him as a due to himself by the eternal laws of righteousness: truth and justice make this necessary in the Deity. The glory of God therefore being the end most worthy of God, and all his acts centering therein, all his acts are holy, *i. e.* pure from all alloy of inferior motives, from every thing that does not inflexibly promote that end.

Such is the holiness of God. The creatures too are holy, when they prosecute the same end that God does, the end for which he created them, *i. e.* *the glory of God*. We call things or persons holy when they are separated from common use and dedicated to the service of God, devoted to his glory; to apply them to any other end is to *profane* them. All the laws of God are boundaries set to fence in the way that leads to God's glory, and we never transgress those laws, but we at the same time deviate from it. And therefore St. Paul defines sin to be *a falling short of the glory of God*. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*<sup>1</sup>. Holiness on the contrary aims all our actions aright, making the glory of God our scope and design. In a word, every action directed to that end is an holy action, and leads us on towards the participation of the divine glory, which we had regard to in performing it; and when it is said that the Holy Ghost sanctifies Christians, the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 23.

meaning

meaning is, that he infuses this generous motive, extinguishing the narrow principles of covetousness, pride, and sensuality, and exalting our nature to the noble disinterested purpose of glorifying our Maker.

Those corrupt motives of covetousness, sensuality, and pride cleave intimately to our souls in the present depraved state, rendering all actions that proceed from them, *unholy*: and the Spirit of God does then sanctify us when it disengages us from those corrupt motives. To *wash, cleanse, baptize, and sanctify*, are commonly synonymous in scripture; hence the phrase of being *baptized with the Holy Ghost*, which is elsewhere called *being baptized with fire*, to signify the universal and intimate purification of the inmost springs of action thereby. With this view the prophet Malachi<sup>2</sup> compares the Spirit to a *refiner of gold or silver* destroying the dross, and separating all heterogeneous particles from those metals by force of fire, till they are reduced to a perfect purity. Thus the Spirit sanctifies the soul by abolishing all sordid inclinations, by purging away the multiplicity of carnal desires, and reducing all the powers of the mind to one simple constant pursuit, *viz.* that of God's glory. This renders the soul holy, *i. e.* pure, all of a kind, concentrated in

<sup>a</sup> Mal. iii. 3.

the end of its creation, even the glory of its Maker.

To shew how the apostles were thus sanctified, were to relate their history, which is but one continued narrative of their holiness. They were purified from all corrupt principles of action, I mean not absolutely and in that supreme degree which is peculiar to heaven, but yet in an eminent and extraordinary manner. The love of *riches* moved them not: for they had all the treasures of the faithful laid at their feet, without any other concern than for the right distribution of them in charity. The love of *ease and pleasure* moved them not: for their life was spent in incessant labours: they traversed the face of the earth, doing good, and suffering evil in all the parts they visited. *The love of glory and applause* moved them not, for they gladly suffered reproach in their Master's cause: and when divine honours were offered to two of them at Lystra, they rent their clothes, and expressed a greater concern for the misplaced reverence of the multitude, than for all the ill usage they had ever met with. And lastly, the *love of life itself* moved them not, when the glory of God required them to resign it. They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to die in so great and good a cause. They went cheerfully to death, although the wit and malice of their persecutors had so circumstanced it with a  
horrid

horrid variety of tortures, that only the *manner* of dying was the punishment, and death itself the deliverance.

Such was the holiness of the apostles; it was the purity of their hearts, the unity of their desires all meeting in one point, the glory of their Maker.

This *one thing* only they desired: this *one thing* only they pursued: they pursued it thro' poverty, infamy, and distress; through numberless toils and torments. Death in vain came athwart their passage, they leaped the gulf, and were received into glory, that glory for which they had been so zealous.

If we would arrive where they are ascended, we must follow their steps; we must *be holy, as they were holy, i. e.* we must absolutely prefer the glory of God to all other considerations; for heaven stands open to none but saints; and *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

That we may not be disheartened in so arduous a work, I propose the greatest encouragements when I add in the third place, that this *Spirit of Holiness* is also a *Spirit of Power*, inspiring zeal, magnanimity, and fortitude sufficient to surmount all difficulties that occur in the arduous paths of duty. And of this also the apostles were very remarkable instances.

Our Lord having had a long experience of their natural weakness and pusillanimity, when  
he



he appeared to them after his resurrection, commanded them to live retired, and *wait for the promise of the Father. But (said he) ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and then ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*<sup>3</sup>. And his prediction was gloriously accomplished as soon as the Holy Ghost came. The zeal which inflamed their hearts found a ready channel into their tongues; their tongues were as tongues of fire, communicating their sacred ardour to the hearts of all that heard them.

That conceit of the ancients, who represented their famous orator as brandishing flames of lightning with a thunderbolt, was never so nearly verified as in the apostles: they flashed conviction into the minds of their hearers, and bore down all opposition of reluctant passion or prejudice with a force and energy most irresistible. They made those very Jews who had lately condemned our Lord, and with bloody cries solicited Pilate for his crucifixion, now condemn themselves with bitter remorse and compunction. It is said, *they were pricked in the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, What shall we do*<sup>4</sup>? Three thousand were thus converted at one sermon, which, considering the natural weakness of the preachers,

<sup>3</sup> Acts i. 4, 8.<sup>4</sup> Acts ii. 37.

with

with the rooted prejudices and noted obstinacy of the audience, we may account one of the greatest miracles of our religion.

The apostles *bear witness of Christ*, not before his friends, or even persons indifferent, but those that murdered him. Those apostles, who had deserted him shamefully at his being first seized, so far were they from *bearing witness for him* at his trial: Peter in particular, who trembling before a servant-maid had three times renounced him with oaths; *now standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice and said: Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words*<sup>5</sup>. You see he makes no timorous apology, he uses none of the little arts to gain benevolence; but conscious of the divine authority wherewith he stood invested, he charges his hearers with all the enormity of their crime. *Ye have killed* (said he) *the Lord of Life*: he tells them, that the person, whom *they had with wicked hands crucified and slain*, was the *Messias*: And he proves him to be so, *by bearing testimony of his resurrection: Him God hath raised up from the dead, whereof we are witnesses*. And he backs his own evidence with irrefragable arguments from scripture, which he at the same time explained with such force and perspicuity as extorted assent from the most obdurate. Is this the illiterate fisherman? Is this the carnal disciple who pre-

<sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 14, &c.

fumed to rebuke his Lord, when he first mentioned the cross to him? Is this the fugitive, apostate, abjuring Peter? But *with God all things are possible*: Peter had now received the Holy Ghost, *the Spirit of Power*, whose property it is to strengthen us with might in the inward man, to create a new heart, and renew a right spirit within us.

And thus I have endeavoured to represent this Holy Spirit in his operations of truth, holiness, and power.

It remains only that I add a word or two concerning the disposition by which we must prepare our hearts to receive him: and This, as our Lord teaches us, is earnest and persevering prayer. We have his direction, *Luke xi. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.—If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* The terms, you see, are very easy, are highly reasonable: if we do not perform them, we shall be without excuse. But if by humble, fervent, incessant prayer we seek from our heavenly Father the gift of his Spirit, we shall infallibly receive it, we shall be enlightened, purified, and confirmed in all goodness, we shall advance from strength to strength, till we become meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

DIS-

## DISCOURSE XVI.

*The Christian* BENEVOLENCE.

ROM. xii. 9.

*Let love be without dissimulation: abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.*

**I**F the generality of mankind were to act without *dissimulation*, they would be insupportable. If men were to shew openly the envy or contempt, the malice or aversion which they have in their hearts, they could not possibly bear with another: therefore they mutually play the hypocrite: and it is well for the public peace that they do so.

This hypocrisy is found so necessary to the present welfare of society, that it is cultivated with great care, and reduced into a science by the name of *politeness*. It is become so considerable a part of education, that it bears from the rest, by way of eminence, the name of *good-breeding*: and the skill to act one's part well in the *comedy of manners*, is valued as a high

high accomplishment. Indeed the gesture and the language even of the best actors is often ridiculous to an impartial spectator ; because their parts abound in a preposterous humility, and a frivolous officiousness. But there is nothing so absurd which fashion will not reconcile us to : and upon the whole, it is well (as was said) in this corrupt state of mankind that such fashions are established : for *good manners* serve at present instead of *good morals*, and in a great degree supply the want of charity.

But if men would in earnest apply themselves to the practice of Christianity, there would be no occasion for that habitual falsehood in their behaviour and conversation ; since a genuine modesty and benevolence would then succeed to the artificial professions of both ; and men would become in reality, what they now affect to appear. They would *then love without dissimulation*, their hearts would then be warmed with a sincere benevolence to mankind : which happy disposition every true Christian aspires after, and will attain to in the same measure that he advances in religion, the end and consummation of which is *charity*.

That which principally retards his progress, is a most unjust *self-love*, whereby every man prefers himself to all other beings whatever. This is so absurd and monstrous a folly, that all civilised people industriously conceal it : and  
upon

upon many occasions make a *shew* of neglecting themselves, and preferring others, by an habitual use of certain forms and phrases prescribed by the rules of *politeness*: but politeness is superficial, and goes no farther than appearances; whereas the rules of Christianity strike at the root of this evil, requiring a real benevolence to mankind, and that our inward sentiments correspond with our expressions of kindness. Accordingly the first and fundamental precept of the gospel is to *deny ourselves*: for by *self-love* we have engrossed to ourselves all that benevolence, which should be diffused throughout the world; we have appropriated all that stock of good-will, which is due to, and ought to be spread among the rest of mankind: but *self* must be *denied*, renounced, and mortified; that we may make room for the contrary principle, which is *charity*, to take root in our hearts. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*, saith our Master: in conformity to him every true Christian opposes and strives against his selfish inclinations; and while the men of the world are careful only to save appearances, and mask the deformities of selfishness with a superficial civility, he is actually *denying* himself; condemning, resisting his own unreasonable desires; renouncing, despising, and even hating himself for being capable of such unworthy sentiments. The divine grace corresponds with  
his

his honest endeavours ; and, as he perseveres in denying selfishness, he gradually gets the better of it : he gradually grows so convinced of his own weakness and meanness, that he loses all inclination to despise others ; he comes at last to see their infirmities with the same indulgence that he does his own ; and as the *excesses* of self-love are the immediate cause of all the *defects* of charity ; so, self-love being thus reduced, and charity exalted, each to their proper term ; they both come to be adjusted in the same level, and we *love our neighbour as ourselves*, sincerely and *without dissimulation*.

In our progress towards this high state of perfection there are two things principally to be guarded against.

First the friendship. And

Secondly, the enmity of the world.

As to the *first* of these : our essays towards a general benevolence may, if we are not upon our guard, betray us into a vicious complaisance. Associating with bad men, we may see their faults with too much indulgence ; and be ourselves seduced by their evil example. Therefore, to caution us on this side, the apostle adds, *Abhor that which is evil*, and, which is a necessary consequence, *Avoid as much as you possibly can, all those who wilfully practise it*.

This advice is of great importance to all who desire to become truly religious : and accordingly

ingly in the beginning of the Proverbs of Solomon we find this, among the first lessons, in which the heavenly wisdom instructs her disciples, *My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, "Come with us,"—Walk not thou in the way with them: refrain thy foot from their path*<sup>1</sup>. And again, *Enter not into the path of the wicked; and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away*<sup>2</sup>. He repeats the advice even to tautology, only to make it more observed: and indeed with great reason; for many a hopeful conversion miscarries purely by the neglect of it.

It must be understood here, that when I speak of avoiding bad men, this relates not to the necessary business of our calling, the ties of blood, or other circumstances in which we are engaged by providence. But it is meant only that we must not contract *friendship* with them, or chuse them for the *companions* of our leisure or diversion; because either of these is inconsistent with the practice of Christianity.

That we ought not to engage or continue in *friendship* with bad men, is demonstrable from the bare definition of friendship; for friendship consists in a *conformity of sentiments and inclinations*; which is the foundation of it: in a *reciprocal confidence and communication of the most*

<sup>1</sup> Prov. i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. iv. 14.



*secret thoughts*; which is the exercise of it: and *in mutual services and endeavours to promote each other's designs*, which is its proper effect and consummation. To have named these shews sufficiently, that friendship cannot be maintained between a real Christian and a man of vicious principles.

The foundation of friendship, as we observed, is a conformity of sentiments and inclinations: and this cannot last when only *one* of the parties becomes truly religious, for then he, the religious one, must have changed both his judgment and practice; and, forsaking his former courses, he must at the same time desert his companion, who still persists in them. The religious man has some real sense of God, and of our obligations to seek, and to love him with *all* our heart, and mind, and strength: therefore he renounces the inordinate pursuits of riches, and honours, and pleasures; he daily endeavours to wean his affections from them; he desires at least not to desire them: and advancing in virtue, he comes at length to disrelish and despise them: but the other is still in darkness; he has no such *sense* of God, as can raise him above these transitory things: and therefore he cleaves to them with his whole heart, and values them as the only good he is capable of. Now as similitude of sentiments and manners are the sole bond of union: so

contrariety

contrariety in both is a source of division and averſion. The Preacher obſerves it as one of nature's laws. *All fleſh conſorteth according to kind: and a man will cleave to his like; but what fellowſhip hath the wolf with the lamb? ſo the ſinner with the godly*<sup>3</sup>.

As theſe characters are oppoſite, ſo their ſentiments are irreconcilable; for, to uſe our apoſtle's argument upon this ſubject, *What fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? And what communion hath light with darkneſs? And what concord hath Chriſt with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath ſaid, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye ſhall be my ſons, and my daughters; ſaith the Lord Almighty*<sup>4</sup>.

This is a moſt gracious promiſe, with which a Chriſtian ſhould nourish his hope and faith in God's protection and *friendſhip*, for ſo the ſcriptures authoriſe me to ſpeak: but to inherit this promiſe we muſt renounce all worldly friendſhips, that we may cleave to him with our whole heart.

<sup>3</sup> Ecclus xiii. 16, 17.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14, &c.

And farther, we must avoid all needless conversation with worldly-minded men ; I say *needless* conversation, by which I mean such as our calling and station in life does not necessarily oblige us to.

This advice concerns not those who are far advanced in piety, for to such the society of bad men will naturally be so tedious and irksome, that it will rather be a cross than a temptation. But all young persons, and indeed persons of all ages who are but novices in religion, must scrupulously avoid bad company as the bane of innocence.

It is very worthy our observation, that in the first sermon of St. Peter after his receiving the Holy Ghost, whereby he converted three thousand persons, who being touched with a lively compunction, earnestly addressed themselves to him and the other apostles for directions *what they shall do*; what method of life they should now enter into : he, after prescribing the general rules of repentance, with faith and hope in the promises of the gift of the Holy Ghost ; adds, as one necessary qualification for receiving it, that they should *save themselves from the untoward generation* <sup>5</sup>. We have little reason to think the present generation less *untoward*, less depraved, or less an enemy to true religion than That was, which St. Peter required those

... .. <sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 40.

primitive Christians to retire from. The danger is still the same, and those who do not *save themselves from it* by withdrawing from the corrupt age we live in, are not worthy of the name of Christians; they are not yet living members of the church of Christ, which consists, as we are taught in the last verse of that chapter, of such only, *who thus save themselves* <sup>6</sup>. The words in our translation are, *The Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved*, but the original signifies only those *who were saved*, meaning those persons who put in practice the advice of St. Peter mentioned a few verses before. *Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

Christ came into the world, that he might call us out of it; I mean from its evil customs and manners: for St. Paul declares that *he gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God our Father* <sup>7</sup>.

Having thus far sufficiently enlarged upon the apostolic advice to *abhor that which is evil*, I shall speak briefly of the last clause in the text, *Cleave to that which is good*, and of the many senses wherein such general precepts are applicable: I shall treat it as an exhortation to adhere to our duty, notwithstanding the *opposition* we shall meet from those we converse with.

<sup>6</sup> Acts ii. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. i. 4.

As I interpreted the former precept, as a warning against the *friendship* of the world, that we should not be seduced by it: so this may be understood, as a caution against the *enmity* and opposition of the world, that we should not be diverted by it from our religious engagements. *Cleave to that which is good.*

If what is *good* were proportionably pleasant, we should not need persuasion to *cleave to it*. But such is now the disorder of our constitution, that the things that are best for us, are commonly not delectable, as the wholesomest physic is rarely palatable. Now at the same time that we have our own disgust, and the reluctance of our evil inclinations to struggle with, it will often happen, that the awe we stand in of the censure and ridicule of the world, will second our own bad desires, and we shall find no small difficulty in *cleaving to that which is good*, while temptation acts with this double force, as well from without as from within, to draw us from it.

It is therefore very material that the new convert should publicly declare himself for such. He should openly profess his faith in Christ, and his firm resolution to adhere to his doctrine. *Whosoever will confess, i. e. own me before men (saith our Lord) him will I also own before my Father who is in heaven*<sup>s</sup>. *And whosoever shall*

<sup>s</sup> Matt. x. 32.

*be ashamed of me, and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*<sup>9</sup>.

There is not a more monstrous absurdity than to be ashamed of virtue and piety: yet alas! monstrous as it is, it is very frequent. Bad men make so great a majority, and bear such a sway in the world, that they strike an awe and a dread upon feeble minds; for, as the Preacher observes, *There is that destroyeth his own soul through bashfulness*<sup>1</sup>. Without experience we could not have imagined such weakness possible: yet we see it common. *There is that destroyeth his own soul by bashfulness*.

Need we bring arguments to prove that men ought not to destroy their souls through bashfulness? Does not folly here stand self-convicted, self-condemned? And can any thing be more reasonable than that exhortation of the same preacher, *Be not ashamed, when it concerneth thy soul. For there is a shame which bringeth sin: and there is a shame which is glory and grace*<sup>2</sup>. Here are two kinds of shame, which have most opposite consequences. *There is a shame which bringeth sin: and there is a shame which is glory and grace*. There is an ingenuous shame, which is, if I may so speak, a more delicate

<sup>9</sup> Mark viii. 38.

<sup>1</sup> Eccclus xx. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Eccclus iv. 20, &c.

kind of sense in the soul, whereby she takes alarm at the approach of evil : and, if through any neglect she suffers herself to be sullied by it, she in some sort expiates the offence by a wholesome anguish. To have this kind of shame is *the glory and grace*, the defence and ornament of the mind : it is a beauteous guard of innocence, and we ought to have maintained it with a scrupulous exactness, and prompt attention to its dictates. But when by often giving way to vice the mind becomes inured to it, and evil habits have blunted the innate sensibility of remorse, then *shame*, which was before an outwork for the defence of virtue, falls into the hands of the enemy, and is turned against it. Then it becomes that *shame which bringeth sin*, and is in reality the most ignominious species of cowardice that disgraces the human nature.

The true courage, which men pretend to value so much, and for want of which, they have substituted so many kinds of false bravery in its stead : the true courage, I say, consists in *daring* for the cause of truth ; in defending what is right against the usurpation of custom, and clamours of the crowd ; and firmly practising it in the face of scorn and obloquy.

He who would *cleave to what is good*, i. e. adhere to his duty, will have frequent occasions for this species of courage, and that especially

at

at the beginning of a religious life, for, as things now stand, to be contented to pass for a fool is one necessary step towards becoming reasonable.

---

DISCOURSE XVII.

*The Christian* SACRIFICE.

---

R O M. xii. 1.

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

**W**HEN we see persons, whom we are fond of, neglecting some considerable advantage, or running into some great danger through ignorance or indiscretion; the interest which we take in their welfare, makes us not content merely with advising them, but to our counsel we add intreaties, and, as if the case were our own, we *beseech* them to follow the advice