DISCOURSES ON THE PARABLES OF OUR Blessed LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

BY THE Revd. WILLIAM DODD, Lecturer of West-Ham, in Essex, and of St. Olave's Hart-Street, London.

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables: and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

St. Matt. xiii. 34, 35.

Familiare est Syris, & maxime Palæstinis ad omnem sermonem suum parabolas adjungere: ut quod simpelx præceptum teneri ab auditoribus non potest, per similitudinem exemplaque teneatur.

Hieronym. in Matth.

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Study the Holy Scripture, especially the New Testament: therein are contained the words of eternal life: it has God for its Author, Salvation for its End, and Truth, without any mixture of Error, for its Matter.  

Locke.
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DISCOURSE I.

On the PARABLE of the Sower.

Being the Substance of Two Sermons.

PART I.

Matthew xiii. 18.

Hear ye therefore the Parable of the Sower.

S there is nothing more worthy a rational creature than the adoration and worship of that glorious Being from whom we have received life and all things; so is there no sight wherein the soul of man should so much rejoice as in a great congregation of such ra-

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B rational
sional creatures, assembled to unite their solemn prayers and praises to the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of mankind. Oh how good is it for us to be here: how pleasing is it to breathe our souls earnest desires with united fervor to the throne of grace: how joyful to resound with one heart and voice the praises of the God of Glory: to tell of all his loving-kindness, and to declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men!—But blessed and honourable as this employment is, pleasing and refreshing as this prospect: what infinite concern must it give every sincere Christian, but more especially every sincere teacher, to see not only these duties in particular so carelessly perform'd, but the word of God in general have so little effect; to see numbers frequenting the temple of the great Jehovah, with as much seeming indifference and irreverence, as if it were not indeed the place where his honour dwelleth; and departing from thence as unedified and as fast bound in the chains of sin, as they entered into it.—When a preacher is truly desirous of the eternal welfare of those who hear him, and in love to their souls anxiously longeth after their salvation, it cannot fail to give him the most sensible
sensible uneasiness, when he perceives the small fruits arising from his words; and that after sermon upon sermon, line upon line, and precept upon precept;—still the deaf ear is turned, and the greater part refuse to hear, and cast his words behind them. It is apt to make us suspect that there is some great deficiency in ourselves, that we do not deliver the word with freedom and plainness enough; that we do not rebuke, exhort, instruct, as cometh the ministers and messengers of Christ: and in truth, did the success depend upon our weak endeavours and poor discourses, we should be rather surprized to find one soul won over to God by their means, than to see all men unaffected by them.—But the case is far different, if we take care to sow the good seed with diligence and sincerity, this is all we can do; the increase is not in our powers, we cannot carry it to the heart, and cause it to take root there: this is the work of God alone: *It is not of him that planteth, nor of him that watereth, but of God that giveth the increase.* Wherefore it is the more surprizing, that the ministry of God in general, but particularly where perform'd in sincerity, that the word read and preach'd hath so little effect: and that after we have delivered the truth, time after time, and year after
after year, most part not one tittle the better, most part are not one tittle the wiser for all they have heard!—an alarming consideration both to minister and people: advising the one to take heed, that it is indeed the word of God which he preaches, and not man's wisdom; advising the other to take heed, how they hear, according to our Saviour's caution, since a careless, unfruitful and unprofitable hearing of his word will greatly enhance the condemnation of those who hear.—It is judged in general a matter of no moment how we hear, and many suppose that God's word may be listened to, just as if it were the word of man, as some pleasing tale, to amuse and entertain us: that hearing of sermons is a matter of much indifference, and we may go from the church after having heard the gospel, just as inattentive and as blameless too, as we entered into it. But let us not mistake this matter: The gospel must be either a favour of life unto life, or of death unto death: if we hear and will not obey, the very words we hear, will hereafter condemn us: and the higher degrees of light and instruction we have had, so much higher punishment shall we hereafter share, if we neglect so great salvation. Every sermon that has brought Christ to our ears, but not carried him to our heart, how
how hard a saying for ever we may now think it, will assuredly rise up in condemnation against us.—Great reason is there therefore that we attend to our Saviour’s counsel, Take heed, how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that which he seemingly to have *. With which words our Lord, in St. Luke’s gospel, closeth all he had to say upon the Parable of the Sower—a parable of infinite use both to ministers and people: to us, because it tends to ease us of much concern upon the small success of our ministry, of our sincere tho’ imperfect endeavours to promote the kingdom of God: which ill success, if we could suppose it at any time owing to ourselves, I know not of any misery, that could equal that which must arise from the reflection of souls perishing thro’ our default: and to you it may be no less edifying,—“I say it may (to use the words of the excellent Bishop Beveridge †) not it will be: for

* Juvenal has an expression similar to this—

Nil habuit Codrus—& tamen illud


’Tis true poor Codrus nothing had to boast,
And yet poor Codrus all that nothing lost.

† In his sermon on this parable Vol. X. sermon 9,—which is so truly excellent a discourse, and wherein he hath handled this subject in so complete and masterly a manner,
for I fear that my preaching upon it will have no more effect, than what is intimated in the parable, that is very little, if any at all. But if you be not wanting to yourselves in hearkning to it, I am sure, you may receive great instruction and edification from it: for you cannot be insensible of your great unprofitableness under the means of grace, having heard many hundreds of sermons in your life, and yet are no way the better for it, if not much worse: and you cannot but wonder what should be the reason of it. In this parable you have the reason plainly set down before your eyes, you may see where the fault lieth, and of consequence, if you have any regard for your souls, amend it for the future. Which that you may do, I would desire you to apply what is said all along every one to himself and consider which part of the parable toucheth you, or cometh the nearest to your own case: for there is not a person in the congregation, who is not particularly concerned in something or other that is said in it as you will all find by that time we have gone quite through it."

that they who come after him, must expect to fall very short. However I cannot atone for my own deficiencies better, than by recommending my reader to an author, where he cannot fail finding satisfaction.
Our Lord delivered the parable from a ship* to a great multitude that stood on the shore: and when his disciples requested him to give them an explanation of it, he began that explanation, saying, 

**HEAR YE therefore the parable of the Sower**—to inform both them and us, that though all the multitude had heard this parable with their outward ears, yet was there another hearing, an hearing of the heart and understanding, which alone could be termed hearing. The multitude hearing heard not, neither did they understand: the disciples, desirous of learning from Christ, had ears to hear, that so they might understand with their heart, be converted and healed.—Would you, therefore, hear this parable, not as the multitude, but as the disciples heard it, and to the same blessed end, that Christ may convert and heal your souls, in humble desire request him to shew you the truth, to open your hearts, to give you the hearing ear and understanding mind: and may he of his infinite love grant you all so to hear, that you may know the mysteries of his kingdom, that you may all understand and be converted: that the seed sown may by his grace find all your hearts that

* “We see here a representation of the church which consists of the people united to their pastors. These being more exposed to violent tossings and storms, are as it were in a ship, while those continue at ease on the shore.”
On the PARABLE

bones and good soil which will bring forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty!—Hear ye, therefore, the parable of the sower.

Behold a sower went forth to sow, and when he sowed, some fell by the way-side, and the fowls came and devoured it up. Some fell upon stony places where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up *, because it had no deepness of earth; but when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. But other fell on good ground and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold. Who hath ears to hear let him hear †.

Such is the parable; in the explication of which there are no difficulties, as our Savi—

* Sprung up &c.] Thus Quin
tilian saith of the rath-
ripe wit, that it rarely comes to maturity, comparing it to those seeds, which being sown in the surface of the earth, spring up quickly, because the root does not go deep into it: illud ingeniiorum praeox genus non temere unquam per-
venit ad frugem: non multum praebat sed icto—nec penitus
immissis radicibus nititur, ut quæ summo solo sparsa sunt
semina celerius se effundunt. Institut. lib. i. c. 3. p. 16,
17. See Whitby on the place.

† F. Quesnel's reflections on this parable, Mark iv: well deserves the attention of all ministers of the word.

our
our himself hath unfolded it to us: but before we come to that, it is obvious and necessary to remark, that as the sower, so the seed is but one, one and the same in all the different soils. *He that soweth the good seed is the son of man*, who went forth in the days of his flesh to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and who now sows it by the ministry, which he hath ordained, and wherewith he hath promised ever to be present‡: when upon his ascension, *he gave some apostles and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers*, for the sowing of this seed, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ †.

And the seed is one and the same, namely the *word of God*, this is the seed of the kingdom, the spiritual seed, whereby we are begotten anew, for *of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth*, faith St. James, *that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures*: and it is compared to seed, first, because of its smallness, a little contemptible thing in appearance: as is the word of God in outward shew, small and of no reputation, the least of all seeds, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness:

‡ Matt. xxviii. 20. † Eph. iv. ii.
On the PARABLE

2dly, from the fructifying and increasing nature of seed, which gold and jewels and the most precious metals have not: and so the word of God hath a wonderfully quickening nature to regenerate men, and to form in their hearts the whole image of Christ: 3dly, as seed while kept locked up in a barn or chest produceth no fruit, so the word of God unless sown by preaching into the ears and hearts of men continues dead and unfruitful: and 4thly, as in sowing the seed the soil must be prepared, the fallow ground must be broken up, as the prophet expresseth it, and the blessing of heaven give the increase; so in the preaching the word, unless the heart be prepared for receiving it, ploughed up by sincere repentance and mortification, and the dew of God's grace accompany the seed sown, there can arise no fruits: which as we cannot obtain by our own means and strength, preachers and people should never fail jointly and earnestly to implore the great giver of all increase, for us, that utterance may be given unto us, that we may open our mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel — for you, that the Lord would open your hearts, that you may attend unto the things that are spoken, as Lydia did to Paul.

Thus
Thus you see the sower and the seed were one and the same in all the different soils: from whence it is plain the difference of increase could not arise from them; but as we shall see, it arose from the soil, from the place where the seed was sown: and though it is sad to think, that only one part in four of this good seed was fruitful: yet it is some comfort in return to see, that the word, whenever sown, will not fail of some good fruit, that it shall not all perish; and that the reason why any of it is lost, is neither in the sower, nor the seed, but in ourselves: and so of consequence we may easily through God's grace remove the impediments, if we will: this is a material reflection, and renders us without all excuse, if we bring not forth such fruit, as the gospel requires.

But the more fully to see this, let us consider our Lord's explication of this parable. The seed was sown at one and the same time, even as now the word is preached to all of you at once; but it fell upon different soils, such as it is to be feared, the word preached will always meet with: it fell upon path-ways, by the wayside, in the common road, where the fowls came and devoured it up: on rocky ground where it had no depth of earth, and speedily withered away: among thorns, where it was choked;
On the PARABLE

choked; and on good ground, where it brought forth fruit.

Concerning the 1st our Saviour speaks thus: When any one heareth the word of the kingdom and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away* that which was sown in his heart: this is he which receiveth seed by the way-side. In St. Mark and St. Luke we have the same explication: all agreeing to inform us, that they by the way-side are all such, as do indeed hear the word, but neither understand, regard, nor † consider it; who come with the multitude to the place where it is read and preached, who come, as the prophet expresses it, as the people of the Lord come, who fit before him as his people, and hear his words, but they will not do them: for their heart mean time goeth after their covetousness, Their thoughts are engaged upon other subjects: one is thinking of his farm, another of his merchandize: one of his yesterday's enjoyments, another of his intended gaieties: this of his profits,

* The birds of the air represent Satan, faith Theophylla, because his habitation is in the air, the prime of the power of the air.

† This is the force of the original Συμβεβλητος which signifies not only to understand, but to ponder, to consider, to lay to heart, and to observe in order to action — See Whiiby's useful note on the place.

that
that of his pleasures: and so according as their several treasures are, there are their hearts also: but their hearts are not with the Lord. No wonder, therefore, the word falleth upon them, as upon dry, hard beaten path-ways, where these thoughts do, as it were, tread it under foot: while the Devil is careful to promote this indisposition to the word and to forward such inattention; thus like a rapacious vulture, snatching up every seed, as soon as it falls, left it should take root and flourish.

So that the great defect here pointed out is, coming to hear the word without a sincere intention to do it, is hearing it without due attention to it, suffering vain and trifling thoughts and imaginations to ingroof our hearts, and so giving place to the tempter, to pluck away all the good seed sown, or intended to be sown in it!—And alas how many

† The power of the Devil, says Quesnel, over the hearts of the children of the world is greater than it is imagined, and is not sufficiently dreaded.—The number, diversity and incumbrance of the affairs of the world; the continual motion and hurry in which worldly men are; that chain of employments which to appearance are neither good nor bad, and of new designs which succeed one another: and that cycle of pleasures, amusements and vanities: these are the things wherein that art and policy consists which the Devil uses, in order to render the word, good thoughts and good desires fruitless, and to take away God's seed out of their hearts and minds.
such hearers are there—how many who frequent the church merely thro' form and fashion, to comply with custom, to save appearances, merely to maintain a shew of religion: who come with no holy and settled resolutions to believe and to practise what they hear, but rather to see and be seen, to hear with one ear, and let it out at the other, or perhaps so sadly injuring their own souls, to cavil with the preachers words, and to pick up objections against that truth, which they are determined not to believe, and much more determined not to practise. Hence there is always a general dissipation in the religious worship of such, an inattention to the sacred things of God, a listless drowsiness while the prayers are reading, eyes roving and expressive of scatter'd thoughts, a readiness to fall into conversation, even in the house and presence of God, upon the most trifling and frivolous occasions: and while the word is preaching, either weariness, scorn or utter inattention is all they will vouchsafe the preacher. An idle comedy or a merry tale sounds far more pleasing in their ears than the word of the most high God, than the good and glad tidings of salvation thro' a crucified redeemer! who can wonder that Satan, ready as he is to forward evil, and to destroy our souls,
souls, plucks every seed from such minds, and takes away the word out of their hearts, left they should bear and be saved!

And is it possible then, that any of you, my brethren, should be so regardless of your eternal good, so ready to work with your inveterate enemy, as thus to give him the power to take away the word out of your hearts, left you should bear and be saved? If any of you, upon a sincere examination of your own souls, find this description of the hearers by the way-side applicable to yourselves, I beseech you, in love and for the sake of Christ, lay it seriously to heart, and ask whether these things ought to be so—whether it is reasonable for us, (who are accountable beings, and who must one day answer for all your actions, thoughts and words, before the awful tribunal of God) to injure and affront the high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity, by coming to his house, with unholy and unbecoming purposes, by behaving there with inattention, and disregard, and by departing thence just as you came in all respects,—save that your sins are greatly enhanced by departing thence no better. God forbid, that this should be your case: God forbid that these words read and preached should be a means of your future condemnation! but, dearly beloved, consider that the word of God
God doth not operate like a magical charm upon mens minds, whether they will or not: we are reasonable creatures, and God dealeth with us as such. On which account it is our duty to regard and consider as well as to hear, to give our serious attention to God's word, to apply in humble prayer to Christ for understanding, and to search and see, after the example of the Bereans*, whether these things are so: and when once we bring this humble and teachable mind, this *bonæf* and good heart, to the hearing of the gospel, there is no fear of our departing from it unprofited, there is no fear, that Satan should ever be able to take it out of our hearts: for if we never give him any entrance ourselves, he will never find away. Our not attending, not keeping a strict guard over ourselves, not laying seriously to heart what we hear, but thinking of and observing other matters, is the ready entrance to the tempter; who knows, that if we hear and understand we shall be saved, but if we only hear and regard not, we are sure prey for him.—Behold therefore I have told you: and if now, you do not guard against him, I call heaven and earth to witness against you, that your own negligence

* Acts xvii. 11.
and inattention will be the sole causes of your ruin: nothing else stands in the way, if you will hear, consider attend, and pray Christ the almighty Saviour of mankind hath promised to receive and abundantly pardon you: he will heal your backslidings, he will love you freely: nay, behold, faith he, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him, and will sup with him and be with me*.

Such are the first sort of hearers: the second are those who are described by the stony ground: he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon receiveth it with joy, yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation and persecution ariseth because of the word, by and bye he is offended, and falleth away.—This second sort of hearers go further than the first: they are glad to hear the word, and they receive it with joy; they receive and embrace it with hasty zeal, are rejoiced to be told what Christ hath done for them, delighted to have the rich promises of an absolutely unconditional gospel applied to them‡; are

* Rev. iii. 18.
‡ This is well express in the introduction to that excellent and useful treatise of Dr. Worthington's on self-resignation—It pleaseth men, faith he, to hear of speculative doctrines,
pleased to hear the vices and faults of the age and their neighbours severely reprehended: and while the gospel brings no inconveniences, neither thwarts their profits, pleasures, or ease, who so loud in its profession, who so strenuous for the faith of Christ as they? But when tribulation and persecution for the sake of this word ariseth, when the doctrine of the cross begins not to be heard only, but to be felt by them; as they have no root, no deep grounded knowledge, no well-founded principles, no regular light, but hasty gleams only; the darkness of trouble soon overwhelms their minds, and they give up the cross to obtain worldly peace, shrink from present sufferings to rush into eternal ones, resign heavenly happiness to avoid a little earthly scandal and offence! — The reason

trines, and to be entertained with a luscious preaching of the gospel, made up all of promises, and these wholly: it gratifies them to hear what is done without them, rather than what is to be done within them, and the necessity of sincere and entire obedience to our Saviour's precepts; all would reign with Christ, but they will not suffer with him: they would hear only of Christ dying for sin, of his being crucified for them, but to hear of their dying to sin, and their own corrupt will, of their being crucified with him, and suffering their wills to be resigned to the will of the Father, as Christ's was, to hear of making an entire oblation of themselves to God, this is a bare saying; few will bear it, it is very unpleasing to flesh and blood &c. See the whole treatise, well deserving a serious perusal.
of this we are told is, because they have no root, no true understanding of the principles of the gospel, no right affections, no deep repentance, and lively faith: the ground is rocky and hard, and will not give the seed that deep admission, which it requires for growth, and which can be given by nothing, but unfeigned repentance and lively faith, built upon the promises of the gospel. Where these are not, the same Sun + which cherishes and ripens the good seed, the same trial and persecution which establishes the real believer, will parch up and cause the temporary professor to wither away. This is indeed a sad case, for it is better never to have known the way of righteousness, than after we have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us! yet how many such hearers hath Christ always had, who have for some time followed him, and been pleased with his words and works, but at length turned away because of some of his hard sayings, and walked no more with him*: who have desired to enter into life, but departed sorrowful, because

† By the sun rising understand temptations, says Theophylact, because temptations shew men, and manifest them, as the sun doth hidden things—Οι ξεπαθμοι διδυμοι των αιθρων ξαι θαυμάζων ως ο ήλιος τα κρυπτήματα.

* John vi. 60, 66.

they
they could not prevail with themselves to fell all and follow him: who have been almost persuaded to be christians, but afraid of being altogether so, left—left what? left they should lose the pleasures of sin; left they should enjoy the pleasures of holiness!

Times of persecution have always made great discoveries of this sort; and tho'—blessed be the God of heaven,—we are at present free from the danger of the stake, and have not yet resisted unto blood; yet we must not mistake, as if now there were no tribulation or persecution because of the word, whereby men are offended and fall away. For St. Paul positively and peremptorily declares, that All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution: and this persecution is to try us; sad will it be, if we are not found faithful, but are offended, and so fall away.—I heartily wish there may be none such in this congregation: but it is to be feared there are some things in the cross of Christ, which may shake the weakness of some ill-grounded faith, and which, when experienced, may work disgust and dislike, rather than increase hope, if we have no root.—And let us ask, what is it really that keeps so many professors from embracing the gospel in its power and spiritual extent: what is it that causes such an harvest of nominal,
nominal, and such a spare gleaning of real christians?—Are we not afraid, that the scoffs and reproaches of our acquaintance and others may fall upon us for our stiffness and preciseness, our over-much righteousness, (as they are fond to style a conscientious discharge of duty) when we will not run the same length of riot with them; but for conscience sake abstain from the fashionable vices and pleasures of the age? are we not afraid of a hard name, a title of reproach, which the men of this world seem pleased to fix upon those who would live godly in Christ Jesus, thus undesignedly doing the greatest honour to the cause they would mean to depreciate? are we afraid our interests should be hurt, our trades suffer, our customers dislike us, that therefore we dare not act and live as becometh the holy disciples of a holy master? or is it, because we fear our sensual appetites will be offended, as they, 'tis true, must be denied, must be mortified: and as we are unwilling to be at enmity with them, and therefore chuse rather to be at enmity with the God, who died to subdue and crucify them! however it is, that, when we have better knowledge, we do not practice agreeably thereto, swayed by worldly motives of whatever sort, mov'd by fear or trouble of whatever kind—then we are off-

C 3

sended
fended at Christ's gospel, then we fall away, and like the seed sown upon the rock, shall be parched up, and become base stubble, fit only to be burned!

Take heed, therefore, that you be rooted and grounded in Christ, and built up in faith: in order to which not only hear, but labour to understand, by searching the scriptures diligently, and by reading the book of your own hearts, with humble application for God's Spirit: See that your repentance be deep, unfeigned, sincere: that your faith be lively, strong and operative: that your love be active, zealous and uniform. And remembering that trials are only sent of God to prove us, learn to submit to his divine will, and to persevere in the midst of trials, for perseverance is the only virtue that is crowned: if we fall off, all our former good works will be forgotten; for when I shall say to the righteous, faith God, that he shall surely live: if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall surely die for it. But as the iniquity of the once righteous shall prove their destruction, so God in return hath promised, that the repentance of the wicked shall assuredly save their souls alive. Again when I say unto the
the wicked, thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.—

So that here again I call you all to record, that if any man amongst you, through persecution and tribulation, for Christ's sake and the gospel, hath been offended, it is yet his own fault, if he utterly fall away and perish; there is yet life and mercy for him, if he will turn from his sin and do the first works: and that, if any man who now seemeth to rejoice in the gospel of Christ, is yet offended through fear and upon the apprehension of persecution and trouble for Christ's sake, let him know his present joy is not sincere, the word hath no deep root in him; he hath no true understanding, no fundamental knowledge of the gospel, no inward and efficacious sealing of the Spirit on his conscience. And therefore should any of you find a dislike, disrelish, or a coldness to the gospel, because, by the malice of Satan and his instruments evil men, you are tried with the principal trial of this day, with cruel mockings, or opprobrious names, fly to God in this state of danger and hazard to your souls, as yet your faith is weak, and without any root—but seek and you shall find, pray for more increase,

† Rev. ii. 5:
and you shall have it, attend upon Christ in
his word and sacraments, humbly wait upon him in all his appointed means, and pa-
tiently submit to his good pleasure; and then fear not, but the rock will at length be beaten
down in your heart by the hammer of the word, and the good seed sown will so take root, as to spring up and increase, and to bring forth fruit abundantly.

Thus I have spoken of two out of the four sorts of hearers which our Saviour mentions
in this parable of the sower: a parable de-
serving the serious attention of every christian
as much as any in the gospel: because it so clearly opens to us the causes of the visible ill
success of the gospel amongst men, and shews that the fault is neither in the sower nor the
seed, but in ourselves: and I hope you will make it matter of diligent examination to
your hearts: for which reason I have been the larger upon it, and purposely postponed
the remaining part, that our contemplations
may be renewed upon it.—Be not like the
hearers by the way-side, either wholly dis-
regard, or make even these words delivered
solely for your good, a means of mockery,
and infinite prejudice to your souls. Consi-
der, that if you do so, yours alone is the loss, you harm only your own souls; and while de-
despising the word of God as preached by the ministers of Christ, remember, that you despise not them, but Christ and not Christ, but his Father also: for be that despiseth you, faith Christ, despiseth me, and be that despiseth me, despiseth not me, but him that sent me: and again, be therefore that despiseth, faith the apostle, despiseth not man but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. Endanger not, therefore, by this or any other means your souls eternal health, your everlasting salvation. For salvation, my brethren, is a great concern: and it is every man's great concern: if our souls perish everlastingly, what vanity of vanities will all our past cares and fears be found to us!—We know that there is but one road to salvation, one way to life: and we can be directed only in that way by one book, the word of God, where we are taught concerning him, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Faith cometh by hearing this word: the blessings of the gospel are procured only by faith, evangelical, lively, operative faith: such as was that of Abraham's, and by which we are justified freely through grace. So that our salvation plainly depends upon our hearing, as the main instrument, for if by faith we are saved, and faith cometh by hearing; if we do not hear so as to obtain this faith, it is evident,
dent, we cannot be saved. Hence then you see, how much more important, than perhaps you may have imagined, the faithful hearing of the gospel, as well as how great a blessing the sincere and uncorrupt preaching of it is; and how wise and necessary that caution of our Saviour's is to us all, Take heed, how you hear; since if you hear not properly, you can never obtain that faith which cometh by hearing; and since if you hear improperly you enhance your own condemnation, knowing your Lord's will, and doing it not: I will therefore close the present discourse with a few general directions, teaching you HOW to hear: and I pray God, the giver of all increase, that he would incline all your hearts so to hear as to understand, so to understand as to believe and be saved! For Oh! how sad a sight will it be, my beloved friends and brethren, for us, who have now all the means of grace in our power, to stand before the tribunal of our judge, condemning and condemned, and hearing then too late, how we ought to have heard: how it was our duty and would have been our happiness to have listened to the glad tidings of a pardoning God! blessed be his name, that we have lived to hear this! may we not now hear in vain!
of the SOWER.

In order to which, 1st, Come to the hearing of the word with honest and good hearts, with a sincere desire, and single intention to know and to do your duty. Let not curiosity, form or fashion bring you to church, but come with meekness to receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

2dly, As coming with sincere intentions, labour when you are come to give diligent heed to the things that are spoken; beware of levity, and inattention of behaviour, the sure consequence of which is grieving the good Spirit of God, and giving place to the power and suggestions of Satan: remember always that you are in the courts of the house of the God of glory, that you come to pray to, and to praise him, and to hear his word: and surely the word of God deserves your most serious regard: if the embassy of a mortal king would raise all your attentions, how much more should the embassy of the king of kings: Now then (says St. Paul) we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to GOD *.

3dly, Beware, that you injure not your own souls by entertaining any prejudice against your minister: consider our words, weigh their agreement with scripture, and

* 2 Cor. v. 20.
On the PARABLE

the doctrines of the church whereof you are members: and let not any cunning craftiness of men or devils persuade you to reject them, merely because this or that man delivers them, with whom you see some cause to be dissatisfied, and in whose conduct you may suppose some improprieties: remember how very hard it is to arrive at the true motives of action, and how difficult often to judge in the clearest matters of fact. Consider moreover that we of the Clergy are but men: and though in truth it is our duty to keep a conscience void of the least offence both towards God and towards men, as well as to labour by the exemplary holiness of our lives to be shining patterns to the flock; yet perfection is not the attainment of mortals, and we cannot expect to be free from error, while surrounded with a body of flesh. It is happy when our doing and teaching go hand in hand—and oh how much is this to be wished and prayed for in all the ministers of Christ! but if we miscarry, it is not our actions, but our doctrine that concerns you: and let us remember that in this happy nation of ours, the negligence of pastors (though an unspeakable evil and much to be deplored) will be no excuse for that people, who have the word of God itself in their own language, to read and to gather instruction from, in the way
of the Sower.

way of righteousness. For if the watchman blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned: if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.—And as you should avoid all prejudices against, so should you as much as possible all strong prejudices to the person of any pastor, so depending upon him, as to believe his word, upon his authority, and not as the word of God *; if you do so, as having no root, be assured you will be scorched up and wither away in time of persecution and trial: Take heed that you err not in this particular, opposing Paul to Apollos, and Apollos to Cephas, for we are all but the ministers

* See Archbishop Leighton's thirteenth sermon on the Parable of the Sower, the paragraph beginning—Where then is the difference? &c. "Above all, says he, towards the conclusion, pray before, after and in hearing, dart up desires to God, he is the Lord of the harvest, whose influence doth all; the difference of the soil makes indeed the difference of success, but the Lord hath the privilege of bettering the soil. He that framed the heart, changes it when and how he will. There is a curse on all grounds naturally, that fell on the earth for man's sake, but fell more on the ground of man's own heart within him, Thorns and briars shall thou bring forth. Now 'tis he that denounced that curse, that alone hath power to remove it, he is both the sovereign owner of the seed, and changer of the soil, turns a wilderness into Carmel, by his Spirit, and no ground, no heart can be good, till he change it.
of one Lord, the servants of one master, the messengers of one salvation, and Christ is not divided.

4thly, Coming thus with pure and sincere desires, hearing thus with diligent heed and attention, and entertaining no prejudices for or against the man, who is only the bare instrument of delivering that truth, which, through grace, is able to save your souls; remember always to make a particular application of the word preach'd to your own hearts: and let the question of Jesus to Martha* ever be present to your thoughts,—Believest thou this? Do not consider how it suits others, and hits their case, but lay your hand upon your breast, and ask, with the disciples, Lord, is it I?

And lastly having thus received the seed, be careful as you prepared the ground, by sincere prayer and desires, so to close and water it therewith: pray to God as well before as in and after the word, for his blessing both upon the preacher and yourselves, that he may speak with power, that you may hear with humility and faith, with obedience and understanding. And if thus your earnest prayers ascend to God for his blessing, you need not doubt of obtaining it:

the word will be found effectual, to the enlightening your understanding and the building you up in the faith of Christ.

*Take heed therefore how you hear*: and let it be always under such dispositions as these; and then by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall be fruitful indeed in every good word and work, and produce some an hundred, some sixty, some thirty-fold, &c.
On the Parable of the Sower.

Part II.


And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

HEN our blessed Lord was interrogated by a curious hearer, who was more solicitous to be inform'd of the salvation of others, than to secure that of his own soul, Lord, are there few that shall be saved? he did not think fit to satisfy the inquisitive disposition of this person, but rather
rather advised him to a serious use of this question for his soul's eternal welfare. He said unto him, strive to enter in at the strait gate, do not make enquiries, whether many or few shall be saved; but use thy utmost endeavours to secure this blessing to thyself: for there is need of thy utmost striving: seeing I declare it unto thee as an infallible truth, that many will SEEK to enter in, and shall not be able: as only seeking with feeble efforts, not striving with all their might, and labouring with all their power, as in a great and noble contest*, to attain that inestimable prize, everlasting life. - So we, whenever we hear the gospel of Christ, should be by all means careful to avoid any curious enquiries into the case and state of others; while we labour with the utmost diligence to apply the words of this salvation to ourselves, and take care to secure its benefits to our own souls. This would be one sure method to defeat the purposes of the tempter, to drive away those evil birds, the infernal spirits, that are ready to

* All this seems fully and beautifully expressed in the original word, which we translate strive, ἀγωνίζεσθαι, — from ἀγων, a contest, Cornel. a Lapide well explains it,—contente, agonizate, & quasi in agon & agonía contendite, extremas summasque vires velut agonizantes exercite. quasi pro vitâ, si vincitis, vel morte, si vincimini, luétaturi. See Leigh's Critica sacra, a work of the greatest use for all students in the Greek Testament.
On the Parable

Take away the word out of our hearts that it may not answer the end of the divine Sower by bringing forth fruit with patience.

This parable was not intended to exercise our curiosity, indulge our malevolence, or enhance our condemnation, but like the whole of Christ's gospel delivered to awaken our attention, arouse our negligence, shew us the great causes of our manifold unprofitableness under the means of grace, and of consequence the sure way of improvement by removing those obstacles. It is a very alarming parable: shewing us, what is wonderful to think, that, not thro' any defect in the Sower or the Seed, in Christ or his gospel, not through any absolute decree or fore-ordination of God, but thro' the corruption of the human heart, and the default of fallen nature, thro' our own voluntary perverseness and disregard to these things,—only one part in four of the hearers of the gospel, for the most part, are obedient to it! one cannot be surprised that Turks and Infidels, Heathens and Despisers of the word of God, those who either possess not that invaluable blessing, or those who reject and contemn it when in their power, that these should be unfruitful, disobedient, unholy. But that in a land where the gospel is publicly professed, where it is continually read and preached, where bibles are
are in every hand: that in a congregation, who assemble on purpose to praise and adore the Lord and giver of this word, to sit and hear it:—that in such a land, and such congregations, any should be found unfruitful, is astonishing indeed to reason and to faith, seeing this Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.—The present parable serves well to satisfy the anxious and inquiring mind in this awakening particular: which directing us to the natural sinfulness and corruption of the human heart, shews us that from thence, and thence only, proceed the great impediments to the gospel, and that it is neither from the Sower nor the seed, but from ourselves only that this unfruitfulness proceeds. An information at once full of terror and comfort: Comfort in that we are assured, there remains no obstacle to our salvation, no horrible decree excluding us from all eternity, are we but ourselves really and truly desirous to be saved: if we will but bring the willing mind, the grace of God and the love of Jesus will make the seed fruitful in our hearts. Full of terror, in that we are assured our mouths must be stoppt, and we must plead guilty before God, who shall have nothing to urge in our defence, on the day of trial, but with shame and confusion of face shall be order’d to depart from him, who have bid his word
depart from us, either by our inattention to it, fear of persecution and trial for it, or pre-
ference of the cares, and riches and pleasures of this world to it!—O how sad will it be, then to perceive the gospel of life and of love become unto us a favour of death and of misery! That we might avoid its terrors and be made partakers of its comforts, I proposed to consider the parable of the sower, that each of you applying it to your own hearts, and seeing therein, as in a glass, your own de-
fects, and the obstacles to your fruitfulness, might be stirr'd up to a serious sense of your danger, and an immediate removal of those obstacles, lest you also should be broken off.

With this view, we considered, 1st, The case of the seed falling by the way-side, and devoured by the fowls of the air, and found it, from our Saviour's explanation, applicable to the inattentive careless hearers of God's word, who come to church for form or fashion, or because other folks do: but with no de-
sign to present unto God the acceptable service of a devout heart, or to hear his word to the saving of their souls, and who depart from the church unedified as they entered, having heard with one ear, and let it out with the other. These, be sure, can never bring forth fruit, for if the seed never is admitted into the
the ground, but suffered to lie on the top of the beaten path, it will soon be devoured by the birds, or trodden under foot by the passengers. —— Ask now each one their own heart, is it I? am I such an hearer of the word? don't revolve in your mind, who and who in the congregation come to church and hear in this manner: but sincerely desirous to save your own souls, search and let conscience reply, whether you are or are not such a hearer? If you are, by all means labour to remove, thro' grace, these obstacles to your salvation; come with holy purposes and a single eye to God's house, and hear with prayer and fervent desire to gain instruction in righteousness. — But if you will not remove these impediments, and are resolved to remain in your present state, do not deceive yourselves, you are condemn'd already*: your continuance in a state of wrath is wholly owing to yourselves, when free redemption is offered to you; and you can have nothing to plead at the bar of justice, why sentence should not pass upon you.

The fearful and timorous, the half convinced and almost christians, who have no deep grounded conviction, faith, and know-

* John iii. 18.
ledge of the doctrine of the gospel, which is the doctrine of the cross, are represented to us 2dly by the seed which fell upon a rock, where having no root, it was parched up by the sun, and withered away. Afflictions and persecutions do not make us insincere, but find us so: they try us, as in a furnace; and if we cannot stand the fire, consume us. This is a sure sign that the word hath no deep root in us, that we have but little knowledge of, little love for the crucified Jesus, who is a suffering Saviour, who hath gone before us, bearing the cross, who hath assured us, that we must in this respect be like our master, and where apostles have declar'd, that thro' much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God.—Take heed therefore, that you be not offended, when troubles and trials fall upon you for Christ's sake; nay rather remember the wise man's advice, my son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation nay, rather remember the words, I should have said, of a much wiser than he, blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and shall cast out your name as evil, for the SON OF MAN'S Sake—Observe solely for the Son of man's sake, must this hatred to you arise, that this blessedness may follow;
low: and when thus reviled and hated for his sake, rejoice ye in that day, leap for joy, be exceeding glad: so far from falling away and being offended, we must even leap for joy, and a good reason there is, our Saviour assures us, for great is your reward in heaven! you see therefore how little reason there is to be offended in time of temptation, or to fall away when persecution ariseth for Christ's sake and the gospel; there is then no reason to fear, and if we do fear, and so fall away, it is because we have no root. Strive therefore to get more and more convictions of sin, more and deeper knowledge of the freeness of God's grace and the love of Christ, more and more understanding of the riches of his exceeding mercy: and then you will be able to stand in the evil day; you will be able to receive and embrace your Saviour's divine counsel, I say unto you, my friends,—O what a word of love is that from the mouth of the incarnate God—MY FRIENDS, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you, whom you shall fear; fear him, who when he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. I say unto you, fear him.†

This is a sure remedy for the second sort of unprofitable hearers.—But alas what reme-

* Luke xii. 5.
On the PARABLE

dy shall we find for the IllId? who, as it is to be feared, being the most numerous, so are also in the most dangerous state of all the rest? but God is powerful and grace is triumphant: and the same call, which brought Matthew from the receipt of custom, which render'd Zaccheus just and charitable, which filled impure Magdalene with chaste and holy love, can now work the same work for us, and call us from the cares, the riches, and the lusts and pleasures of this life; can root out these thorns from our hearts, can turn the stream of our cares, desires, and pleasures, to other and better objects, and make us as anxious for divine treasures as we are now for the poor perishing riches of this world! and may he in infinite love effect this mighty change wherever needful, for which purpose it may conduct under divine grace to consider the true estimation of these things, and the effect they have upon the word of God.

Some of the seed, we are told, fell among thorns: and the thorns, growing up together with it choked and suffocated it: so that it could bring forth no fruit to perfection: which our Saviour unfolds thus—That which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.
See then how worldly cares, riches and pleasures are estimated in the fight of the great God, and of consequence, what they are really in themselves! the God of truth compares them to suffocating thorns: and their effect upon the word sown in the heart, is like that of thorns and briars upon good seed sown among them. He would be judged a very unskilful farmer who should sow his seed upon his land, when that land had never been ploughed and prepared, but was moreover quite overgrown with thorns and thistles and briars. No man would wonder if he should be disappointed and reap no crop. And the case is exactly parallel with those who come to hear and receive the word of God with an heart over-run with the cares, riches and pleasures of this world: though the seed may be sown there, and like Herod with John, they may hear gladly and do many things; yet while these evil thorns grow up together with it, the sure consequence is, that they will draw all the nourishment from the corn, and in fine utterly suffocate and destroy it. For it is impossible to serve two masters: Christ hath no agreement with this world: the same land cannot produce a good crop of corn and be over-run with briars and thistles: so that if we suffer these three evils, or any one of them to reign in our hearts, the
the sure consequence is, that they will destroy the good seed, though we receive it never so cordially, and so choke it as to render it utterly unfruitful: and that this is their natural tendency we shall soon see, if we consider separately the nature of these three great enemies to holiness; nay, I should rather say, our own experience fully convinceth us, that when the cares, the riches, and the pleasures of this life, have hold of our hearts, the care of the soul, the riches of futurity, and the pleasures at God's right hand are little regarded, nay, rather are quite choked and suffocated.

And first, for the cares of this world. It is not to be supposed that our Saviour condemns here, that reasonable care and regard for ourselves and families, which is a main branch of true religion: but the cares he condemns are over-anxious, distrustful, repining, uneasy, restless cares and solicitudes, the very anguish and torture of the mind *. "Those distracting worldly cares, which fill our heads so full of contrivances, and so employ our time, that we are not at leisure seriously to think upon and carefully to pursue the concerns of our souls.” These are entangling, vexing, scratching, vile thorns, whose end is only to be burned: which will suffer no-

* See Whitby in loc.
thing to grow near them, they so over-run the foil, and draw all the nourishment to themselves: strong briars they are, amongst which it is impossible to walk, without being holden and entangled by them. " Though a man be never so well disposed, if his thoughts be distracted and perplexed about worldly things, it is impossible he should either be or do good. They who are careful and cumbered about many things, cannot sit at the feet of Jesus, and attend to the one thing needful. It is impossible a man's mind and heart can be wholly engaged by two things at once: and therefore our Saviour faith, we cannot serve God and mammon: it is utterly impossible to be a servant to the cares and love of this world, and a servant of God also. For a man whose thoughts are only engrossed by the getting, keeping and enjoying the things of this world, though he may pretend to religion and endeavour to practise it, yet will he have very sufficient proof, that his worldly cares will always be uppermost, will present themselves in prayer and in every good work, blunt the edge of his holy desires, and keep his eyes and heart from that heavenly kingdom which should always obtain our chief concern. For but one thing is needful—absolutely, simply, so: we were created not for this world, but to live with
with God in eternal glory; our case should therefore be chiefly engaged by that which is the chief, the only valuable end of our creation. In our endeavours after which how do these same worldly cares entangle and perplex us: they choke all our best resolutions, keep full possession of the heart, tie us down to this world; and like thorns prick and wound us: so that a heart enslaved by worldly cares and anxieties is distracted and restless, entangled in its walk, and wounded every step by the surrounding briars, and of consequence can never quietly and peaceably attend to the main care, the care of the soul: and so can never please, can never bring forth fruit unto God.

2. That worldly cares and anxieties are thus perplexing and suffocating, scarce any one will deny:—but riches, the grand pursuit of all mankind, the blessing of life, the gift of heaven, how can this, will the wealthy man ask, and the poor man wonder, how can this be applied to them!—Here again it is necessary to distinguish; for we must not suppose that God hereby condemns riches in themselves, which are his gift, and when rightly used, become great blessings*: but as we shall see it

* Cur Saviour, faith Theophylact, doth not say, that this world chokes the word, but the care of this world: nor
it is the trusting in them, the placing our hearts upon them, which causes them to choke the divine word; and when we do so, our portion of worldly goods, whether great or small, become thorns: for it is not riches, but the deceitfulness * of them, and the love of this world consequent upon that deceit, that ties down and enslaves the heart: an evil arising as frequently from moderate possessions as exorbitant wealth. Riches, therefore, or worldly possessions then choke the word when they gain our hearts: when we are not only over and above earnest, but transcend the bounds of right and honesty, in the pursuit of them; when we are self-satisfied in the possession of them: when they are used to wrong purposes, as instruments of pride, pleasure and ambition, and not applied as the gifts of God, and as instruments of benevolence and charity; and when they draw our affec-

nor riches, but the deceitfulness of riches. For riches, when dispersed, do not choke, but cause the word to increase. ὁ αὐλος γὰρ ὀταν ἀκορίστῃ, οὐ συμπτυγνείς, ἀλλὰ αὖξαν τον λόγον.

* ἡ ἀπατή τῆς πλουτοῦ, a very elegant phrase, as one observes, and admirably expressive of the various artifices by which people in the pursuit of riches excuse themselves from day to day in putting off religious cares, and of the confounding disappointment, which often mingles itself with their labours, and even with their success. Of this we shall see hereafter a strong testimony in the case of the rich fool.
tions towards them, and from the divine treasures where those affections should be. They do then indeed choke the word. And therefore our Saviour declares, that *it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man, who TRUSTETH in his riches, and makes the fine gold his confidence, to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Whenever we trust in them, we make them our God; and so commit the most heinous and abominable sin, that of *idolatry:* for couetousness is idolatry: and they are very deceitful, very apt to gain the heart, and to incline us to trust in them: wherefore we are warned by the great apostle, not to trust in uncertain and deceitful riches, but in the living God, who can never fail nor deceive us: seeing they, not only who are rich, but who desire to be so, who burn with that deadly and ever increasing thirst to add silver to gold, and gold to silver—fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition: for the love of money is the root of all evil: so that reason good there is, why our Saviour should compare to thorns, that which hath such a manifest tendency to suffocate the divine word in the heart, and to prevent the good feed from bringing forth fruit to perfection.
of the S O W E R. 47

It is remarkable, that our Saviour here places riches in the midst between cares and pleasures: for cares generally precede the gaining of riches, and when gain'd they draw men into pleasures and indulgencies: thus wounding the soul on both sides; and in the end, when these riches must be forsaken, these earthly, dearly beloved treasures, Oh how grievous it is to part, O what terrible torture to go and leave behind all a man holds dear; to go to a place where he neither has nor wishes to have any treasures, and to leave a place where is all his delight and happiness, where is all his heart! Who can wonder at the dire blasphemies and horrid execrations which have proceeded from some dying lips against the God of heaven, when his summons is sent to tear the trembling criminal from his darling mammon, to take him from all, not one favourite bag attending him, to hurry the wretch who hath made gold his only hope, his only God, to the impartial and almighty Judge, who esteems all the riches of the earth as dross! Riches then become thorns indeed.

3. Nor are the pleasures and lustings * after

* St Mark makes no mention of pleasures, but of αἰ πείρα κομψα επιθυμαί, the lustings after other things, which it seems most natural to suppose of the same import with
On the PARABLE

ter other things, of the world, less entangling and destructive than its cares and riches: how wretched a state is that of theirs, who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness: who wallowing in the filth of sensual lusts and appetites are preparing grievous thorns to wound their own souls,

with the ηδονή τῆς ζωῆς, the pleasures of this life, mentioned by St. Luke—I have therefore so understood them. Whitby speaks of them separately, and explains the lustings after other things, by the Lusts of the eye, or our desires of gay apparel, rich furniture, stately buildings, great attendance, and equipage: or such as by St. John are styled the pride of life, desire of popular applause, of high estimation in the world, or advancement to high posts, or to great places above others: or lastly, our excessive love unto our relatives, our parents, wives, children, or friends: for when these affections prove temptations to sin, as the excess of them still doth, they will be then obstractive of that influence the word of life should have upon us: St. John informs us, that all these are not of the Father, but of the world: That if we love or set our hearts upon them, the love of the Father is not in us: and therefore Christ requires us, to deny ourselves in all these things, to hate, that is, to love them less than him, that we may be his disciples. The desires after other things—if expressive of any thing different or more than ηδονή, may mean, irregular desires after any thing, which are not according to the will of God, which alone ought to be the one desire, as it is the only happiness of creatures. The χαράων, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, the better to be shewn the true estimate of what they style diversions, amusements, &c. cannot do better than read carefully Mr. Law's Christian Perfection, and his little Treatise of Stage Entertainments,
while the word of God is wholly choked by them.—Nor let us deceive ourselves or imagine that this is the case only with criminal pleasures, and the outward works of sin; it is equally so with pleasures of every sort and kind, with all those amusements and diversions which are falsely stiled innocent, when once they become immoderate and excessive, and so wholly engross the love and care of the heart as to exclude the one thing needful. This seems to be a matter not much attended to in the case of our diversions and amusements, which though perhaps they may not be absolutely sinful in themselves, yet are they highly so in their consequences; as they tend to estrange the heart from God, take off our affections from and cool our desires for things above; as they tend, manifestly tend, to choke the divine word of God in the heart; and will as assuredly keep it from bringing forth fruit, as the cares and riches of this world: for they must have far better hearts than any of the human species who can perform their devotions in the church or at the Lord’s table after a night spent at a ball, a gaming-table, or a play-house, or when their hearts are bent on such pleasures as these the day ensuing. These pleasures are thorns that choke the divine word: and let them who
use them, (if it can be possible for any serious and sincere seeker after the kingdom of God to use them) say, if distracted thoughts and roving fancies, cold affections and heartless devotions are not the services,—should I not rather say, the abominations they offer up to God?

These are the three deceitful things which render the word unfruitful, cares, riches, pleasures, the three deceitful, vanishing, perishing things, which have, as it were, no existence, which speedily will become to us, as if they had never been; and which, if they possess our hearts, so sure we may be, that the love of God is not there; for infallible truth declares, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.*

There is no doing this will of God, unless his word abide in us: there is no having his word, if the love of the world, its riches, cares and pleasures abide in us: "whatever inclination a man may have to piety and christian truths, the love of riches and worldly things, 

† 1 John ii. 16, 17.
if it be predominant ruins all.—To rely upon riches, is to lie down upon a bed of thorns.—To seek for peace amidst the cares of the world, is to seek it in the very bosom of inquietude itself.—The word cannot bear fruit in a heart possessed with the love of riches, and with a design of raising a fortune in the world.'—Therefore, dearly beloved, let me intreat you each one to consider, whether these causes of spiritual unfruitfulness any way affect you: whether through the cares, the riches, the pleasures of this life, the divine word of God is choked and rendered unfruitful in your hearts?—Oh consider how terrible the effect will be if you remain unfruitful: and remember that the impediment here again is in yourselves: if you remove these, the word of God will bring forth fruit abundantly: the proper means of promoting which spiritual increase will be best suggested and seen by the case of those, who in the last place are described by our Lord, as hearing with honest and good hearts, and bringing forth fruit with patience.

For the seed which fell upon the good ground, we are told, are they, who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, receive, understand, and keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience, some more, some less, according to
their several circumstances and conditions in life, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundredfold.*

The great and essential difference between these hearers and all the former is, that they bring forth fruit; for by this it is that true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites, by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness: and herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit †. The leaves of a profession will avail us nothing without the fruits of holiness: not the hearers of the word only, but the doers of it are justified before God: if we know these things, then and then only are we happy, if we do them ‡. The whole purpose of seed sown is, that it may produce fruit: the husbandman commits it not to the

* The fruitfulness of the seed that was sown on good ground (says Macknight) is not to be understood of the fields producing a hundred times as much as was sown in it; but it is to be understood of a single seed, producing a hundred grains, which it might easily do, where it met with a good foil, and was properly nourished. But there are many accidents by which the produce of a field so rich as to be capable of nourishing a hundred grains by one root, is reduced within ordinary bounds.—See the difference of increase in hearers largely expatiated upon in bishop Beveridge's sermon on the subject, vol. 10. page 281. This will be spoken of more fully in the discourse on the parable of the ten talents. See Gen. xxvi. 12.

† John xv. 8. ‡ John xiii. 17.
of the Sower.

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earth with any other view: the end of the gospel, be sure, is never answered, unless it produce holiness of heart and life. If you are unfruitful in good, and fruitful only in evil, you may profess Christianity and be called christians, but you dishonour the name, and are entitled to none of the privileges of that holy profession: for how shall we that are dead to sin, continue any longer therein*?—And as this is the main difference, so the defects of the former hearers, and the obstacles to their fruitfulness are well contrasted by the opposite virtues in the fruitful hearers—The first heard, but understood not, nor regarded: the 2d understood and regarded, but kept it not with patience, not enduring to the end: the 3d heard and regarded and kept the word, but suffered it to be choked, and so brought forth no fruit. On the contrary, these fruitful hearers are described, as both hearing, receiving, and understanding, and that with an honest and good heart, 2dly, as not only hearing and understanding, but keeping the word with patience, and 3dly, as not only keeping the word with patience, but bringing forth abundant fruit, nothing chokes the promising crop: “they hear with joy, they retain with fidelity, they practice with zeal.”

* Rom. vi. 2.

E 3

They
They hear with an honest and good heart: their intentions are right; their purposes honest: they do not, like the hearers by the way-side, come to church merely through form and profession; but they come with holy resolutions and a duly-prepared heart: their design is to worship the God of heaven, and to hear his word, so as to receive it and gain instruction in righteousness from it: what they hear they are resolved to practise to the utmost of their ability. And having this first grand preparative, this honest and good heart, this sincere and pious intention, this single eye, the certain introduction to a holy life, they do not go away ashamed: their whole body is made full of light*: for hearing thus the word of God, with humble faith and sincere desire to be enlightened by it, they are so enlightened; they understand it: God by his grace opens their understandings, that they may understand his scriptures: and gives them to see and know their interest in them. Convinced that to them is this word of salvation sent, they are taught to know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance amongst the saints: and what is the exceeding greatness of

* Matt. vi. 22.
his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power*. And having their eyes and understandings thus opened to discern spiritual things, the word is rooted in them, they keep it, with patience persevering in every trial: they give no place to the Devil, by letting evil thoughts reign in them; they give no place to worldly cares, riches, or pleasures, to deceive their souls and choke the word: they use the things of this world as not abusing them, as the good creatures of God, given by a bountiful creator, and sanctified to their use by the word and prayer: their fears and anxieties are never immoderate; their hearts never fixed on the good things of this life: and its pleasures, all its fleeting pleasures they despise, as partakers of superior happiness; its sinful pleasures they abhor as hell, and detest as the grave: while having their eyes and hearts upon the glory that shall be revealed, they cast all their care upon him who careth for his servants: and zealous in all good works, in love to God and love to man, they go on in the pleasant paths of righteousness, abounding in all the rich fruits of holiness,

* Eph. i. 18, 19.

E 4 accept-
acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Yet never counting themselves to have apprehended, this one thing they do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before: they press towards the mark, for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Such are the fruitful hearers of the word: and as we have in them a pattern how we ought to bear and do: so have all those who have heard the gospel and not done it, who have heard and not brought forth fruit, lively instructions how to correct the evil, and abound in the works of holiness for the future. Let such take care that they use them: and it requires constant watchfulness and circumspection in us all not to let our "hearts become an highway, open to all the world, trampled by passengers, covered with the dust of vanity, fouled by the dirt of pleasures, hardened by habitual sin, and exposed to devils."—This let us never forget, that nothing can denominate us true believers but the fruits of the Spirit: if we have not those fruits, it is in vain that we pretend to believe: our faith is profession, our dependance, rottenness. And the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

* Phil. iii. 14.
If we have not these, we have not the Spirit *: and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, says St. Paul †: and if we are not the property of our Lord Jesus Christ ‡, in which consists all the happiness of christians, we know to what matter we must belong.

Have we, therefore, these fruits of the Spirit? are they manifested in our lives? Are we full of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance? And if we have them not, let us ask seriously from which of the abovementioned causes doth this want proceed? It is not the fault of Christ: he is ready to give to all that ask: he shutteth not up the bowels of his tender

* Gal. v. 22, 23.
† Rom. viii. 9.
‡ The answer to the first Question in the Heidelberg Catechism is very emphatical—Q. What is thy only comfort in life and in death? Ans. That both in body and soul whether I live or die, I am not my own, but the property of my most faithful Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—who most fully satisfying for all my sins, by his most precious blood hath delivered me wholly from the power of the devil: and so preserves me, that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a single hair can fall from my head; nay, moreover, all things shall work together for my good. Wherefore he also gives me by his Spirit the certain hope of everlasting life, and renders me fit and ready to dedicate my whole life to him. See Alting's useful explication of this Catechism.
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compassion against any fallen child of Adam, against any labouring and heavy-laden sinner: _whosoever come to him he will IN NO WISE cast out_. It is not the fault of his gospel; _that is the power of God_, the powerful instrument ordained of God and efficacious thro' his grace, _unto salvation, to every one_, not one excepted, to every individual soul, _that believeth_, that accepteth the terms, and is willing to be saved by God's own appointed way. It must therefore arise from ourselves, as we have seen it really doth in considering the present Parable.

**1st, Proceedeth it then,** let us ask, from inattention, want of due consideration, want of proper regard to the word of God read and preached?—Behold, this is an impediment we may easily remove: Resolve, by the grace of God, to come to the hearing of the word with that honest and good heart, that single eye and pure intention, which shall never be sent empty away. In order to which, labour as much as may be to obtain a lively conviction of sin; this is the soil in which the word delights to grow, a _broken_ and a _contrite_ heart*. There is no fear of fruit, where that is found: _He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth his precious seed_

feed with him, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.

When sorrow wounds the breast, as ploughs the glebe,
And hearts obdurate feel her soft'ning show'rs,
Her seed celestial then glad wisdom sows,
Her golden harvest triumphs in the soil.

To gain this conviction, serious self-examination and the word of God, but especially the divine and spiritual extent of the law are excellent means: constant and attentive hearing join’d with sincere prayer, will never fail, sooner or later, to open the sinner’s eyes: wherefore, as was before observed, come to the word with a single eye and a sincere intention: and above all avoid all levity and inattention in the courts of the awful majesty of heaven. Fail not continually to apply to God in earnest prayer for strength from above. When you come into the church, or take the bible in your hand; remember, that the one is the house, the other the word of God, and of consequence each demands the utmost reverence of behaviour and sedateness of thought. When in the presence of God, if vain and roving imaginations present themselves, give no place to them, but shake them
them off, and apply to God, in short and fervent ejaculations, for the grace of recollec-
tion and attention: and if any would draw
you into conversation, during the service, or
endeavour to destroy the good effect of
the word read and preached by objecting
against, ridiculing, or despising it, think of
that particular circumstance which the pa-
rable suggests of the infernal spirits, like
hungry birds, flying about you to take the
good seed out of your hearts, left you should
HEAR and be saved. Treasure it up in your
hearts and water it with prayer; then doubt
not but it will take root and flourish, and
be found effectual to the saving of your
souls. But do not think it enough merely
to have heard it in the house of God, and
then forget it, as soon as you are departed
thence: This is described as the sinful de-
fect of those, who when they have heard go
forth, no more regarding the good word,
but suffering the things and thoughts of the
world, its cares, riches, and pleasures to take
place and choke it. Too many by a neglect
of self-examination after the service, by idle
conversation and many other the like means,
lose all advantage, as neglecting all improve-
ment of the word: for the husbandman will
tell you, that it is not enough just to sow
the
the seed, unless the harrow follow after, and shut it up in the earth, that it may be preserved from the birds, take root and bring forth fruit to perfection.—But if you will not take these necessary pains, do not wonder that you remain still unfruitful: do not wonder that the word of God hath so little effect upon you: is so much despised, is so disgusting to you, nay and so soon plucked out of your hearts; seeing the devil, whose one single view is to your soul's destruction, is ever ready at hand to take it away, lest you should hear, believe, and escape out of his net, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler *. No body would pity the farmer, who should starve for want of crops, when he had never plough'd his grounds, sowed the seed, harrowed and taken all due care to remove the thorns and thistles and noxious weeds. He would be judged by all, as justly punished with poverty and woe, for his extreme negligence and indolence. Let us take heed that we be not thus self-condemned.

2. That you may not be offended and fall away in times of trouble and trial, I have already suggested the proper motives: We have another added here, that the honest hearers brought forth fruit with patience: re-

* Psal. cxxiv. 7.
ceiving persecutions and troubles as the marks of fatherly love they are amended and purified, not offended and utterly perverted by them. And one great reason of this is, that hearing with an honest and good heart, they understand the word: whereas they who fall away, receive the word in a rocky heart, a heart that will not give it any entrance, it has no depth of earth, so can take no root; for which reasons here again should your prayers ascend before God, that he would take away the stony from your hearts, and give you a heart of flesh*: you should labour to understand the word of God, your study and meditation should be in it: and while having your sole dependance on the teaching of God's good Spirit, you should be careful to treasure up all the precious promises, and to observe all the duties, and all the privileges of the children of God. This would keep your faith unshaken.

3. But in the last place, is your fruitfulness hindered by the cares, the riches, the pleasures of this world—do they choke the word and render it unfruitful—what must be done in such a case?—done, my brethren, any thing surely, so be, we may but be delivered from this state of danger, this gall of bitterness:

ness: any thing surely, rather than perish eternally: any thing surely, rather than lose our immortal souls, which worldly cares, riches and pleasures will profit nothing in the day of trial!—the husbandman, when he finds his land overgrown with briars and thorns, cuts them up, casts them forth, then breaks up the earth with his plough, and sows his seed, whence a plentiful crop ariseth. — So must we cut up, eradicate and cast forth those spiritual thorns, if we mean to obtain God's grace. Worldly cares and anxieties must be torn away from our hearts; we must cast all our care upon God: we must remember his universal and particular providence, that all things the most minute, are under the direction of infinite wisdom: and learn from a knowledge hereof to be careful for nothing *, uneasily, anxiously, distrustfully careful, but in all things by prayer and supplication make our requests known unto God: and whatever may be our condition in life, whatever the event of our labours, we must resign to his omnipotent wisdom and goodness, and be content in every state—and surely, it is no hard matter for sinful, frail dust and ashes to resign to an all-powerful, all-wise and all-good Father!—necessary it is, that we fulfil every du-

* Phil. iv. 6
ty of our station; a care to discharge our se-
veral offices faithfully is not only commend-
able before men, but acceptable to God: but
when we have done our utmost, and exerted
our honest and best endeavours, we must then
resign to the wise dispositions of providence, and
perfectly and cheerfully submit, without mur-
muring and discontent, to his good pleasure,
all whose ways are righteous, holy and true,
and who, by means that we cannot fathom,
causeth all things to work together for good to
them that fear him. Thus must we cut off
all unreasonable irreligious cares.

For Riches, we must take especial heed so
to use them, as not to abuse the bountiful
and gracious giver of them: whatever he hath
entrusted to our care, we must consider our-
selves as stewards thereof, as much accounta-
ble to God for all we have received, as stewards
are to their earthly Lords. Now it is always
required in stewards, that they be found faithful.
We must remember, that the evil doth not
consist in the possession of riches, but in the
earnest desire to have them, and in the
wrong application of them: wherefore we
must take heed of all indirectness in the
acquirement of them, we must take heed
that we do not trust in these uncertain
riches, that they have not our hearts, that
they do not pin us down to this earth, and keep our affections from heaven: the great matter is to fit easy to them, if we have them, and to be as willing to part with them when the master calleth, as though we had them not. Thus keeping them from ensnaring, engaging and possessing our hearts, we must see and apply them to their proper uses, making our abundance a happy supply to the wants of others, using them as instruments and tokens of brotherly love in and for Christ, that we may hear at that day, Inasmuch as ye have done it, unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto ME. Thus if we divest our hearts from the love, and our hands from the defilement of earthly treasures, we may make ourselves friends indeed of the mammon of unrighteousness, which otherwise used will grievously enhance our future condemnation. For even here they are not the great means of happiness, a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth: many having food and raiment, and being therewith content, are happier than those whose palaces are adorned with cedar and vermilion. In the day of death they avail us nothing, for naked come we into the world, and naked must we depart thence: in violent pains they are wholly useless; all
the wealth of Lydia's King * cannot keep off the anguish of the stone, or the burning of a fever: and in the day, the great and important day of trial, they are often found so far from profitable, that they, and they alone, are the means of condemnation:—If therefore we would bring forth fruit to God, thus must these thorns also be plucked out of our hearts.

And, 3dly, as to worldly pleasures they have such an immediate opposition to the joy of the Spirit, and the peace passing all understanding, that I need only say, are you kept from bringing forth fruit by these thorns?—You must pluck them up, you must tear them away, though dear and pleasing as a right eye: for they that live in pleasure are dead while they live †: they have no fruit in those things, whereof the enjoyer is always

* Nay that King himself proved the vanity of abundance. Solon wisely told him, upon his enquiry, whom the sage thought the happiest man, doubtless expecting that he would name him, that no man could be pronounced happy before death. In remembrance of which when Cæsarius experienced the vicissitudes of fortune, was taken prisoner by Cyrus and ordered to be burned, he cried out Solon, Solon, &c. Upon which Cyrus asking the reason, and being informed of Solon's saying, in consideration of it, and his own mortality, he spared the King of Lydia, and treated him with much respect.

* Tim. v. 6.
ashamed * in the end: there is no joy in the recollection; the soul finds no comfort in reflecting on a life spent in a round of sensual pleasures and carnal satisfactions: in the end it is all a bubble; vanity of vanities: the glass breaks, and the giddy meteors all perish. But it would be well if this were the whole: though they leave no sweetness, yet they leave much gall in the cup: bitter is the remembrance of a life spent in sinful gratifications and lusts, in the round of worldly vanity, in the pursuit of that shadow, call'd earthly pleasure, to the neglect and contempt of the God, who hath given us all things richly to enjoy: bitter is this remembrance to the departing soul, and bitter indeed will be the remembrance hereof to the suffering soul in the kingdom of misery for ever! Wherefore let us pluck up these thorns also: let us cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the whole armour of light: let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof †.

Thus I have gone thro' this excellent Parable: and I hope you have applied it to your-

* Rom. vi. 21, † Rom. xiii. 12—14.
selves, as I have gone along: and then it will prove a fountain of great happiness to your souls: if you hear and do, as you have been advised, there is no doubt, but you will be in the number of the fruitful hearers of the word: and we shall have mutual cause to rejoice, that the seed was not sown in vain. If you receive the cautions I have given, you will then be happy in this world, so using it as not abusing it; careful and diligent without anxiety and distraction: inflexible to sinful, and moderate in all pleasures and enjoyments: and as rich in good works, so by your worldly riches laying up a good foundation in the world to come. But if these cares, riches and pleasures still will overbalance, remember the word of God standeth sure: it is of yourselves and from yourselves that your future destruction cometh. But I hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation: you see your duty:—you see your danger:—the rest now remains with you:—I have done all I can in sincerity to convince, persuade, advise, awaken and admonish you: It is not in the power of your Ministers to do more: Would God, it were! for then not one of you should depart hence unpersuaded, unconvinced, unadmonished! But this is the gift
gift of God, this is his work: and this depends upon your working with him, upon your joint endeavours! and if really desirous to hear to the saving of your souls, the blessed Spirit will strengthen and assist your yet imperfect desires, and bring them to perfection.

—Yet a little while, and he that will come, shall come, and will not tarry! Oh who would not wish to be prepared for the great, the terrible day of his coming! nothing but fruits of holiness springing from a lively faith in your judge, will prepare you: if you have not these fruits, it is your own faults: he is ready to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him: if you are sensible of your danger, desirous of his grace, and wish to be saved, he will fulfil all your petitions, work with you in your earnest endeavours after salvation, and grant you all your heart's desire. But if you neglect his mercies, despise his merits, contemn his word and grieve his Spirit—how shall you be able to abide the dreadful day of his coming?—May he impress these things on the hearts of all: and grant that the Seed now sown, may have such a blessed and abundant increase, that we may none of us be found wanting in the great day of account, but bring forth some
some an hundred, some sixty, some thirty-fold: having our fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour! Amen.
Discourse II.

On the Parable of the Seed springing up of itself.

Mark iv. 26—29.

And he said, so is the kingdom of heaven, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not bow. — For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full Corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

The evangelist St. Mark alone records the present parable, which he subjoins to the parable of the sower wherein our Saviour unfolds to us the several hindrances to the
success of the word preached, as well as the increase which it will always find: for tho’ some fell by the way-side and was devoured by the fowls, though some fell on ftony places, where it had no depth of earth, and so speedily withered away, though some fell among thorns and was choked, yet other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that spring up and increased, αὐσακαίνοντα καὶ αὐσκαίνοντα — and brought forth some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred-fold.

It is of this fruitful seed whereof he speaks in the present parable, wherein we are shewn how it springs up and increases: in the parable of the sower we are only told in general, that the seed falling on good ground did yield fruit, springing up and increasing: in this parable we are shewn, how the seed sown passes through its different stages, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. And as in the parable of the sower both ministers and people are instructed in their duty, and informed of their defects, so here again an useful lesson is given to both: to ministers, advising them not to grow remiss or lukewarm in their duty, if they perceive not immediately such fruits arising from their labours, as they might hope or expect: since the word preached is like seed sown in the field,
field, which appears not immediately when sown, and grows up when appearing by imperceptible degrees, at length fully convincing the husbandman that he hath not sown in vain: in this hope the preacher should strenuously, humbly and diligently sow the seed of the divine word, and leave the rest to God, as assured that his labour will not be in vain in the Lord: who will certainly reward his faithful ministers, not according to their success (which is only with the giver of all increase) but according to their zealous and sincere endeavours: in this hope therefore, in the morning they should sow their seed and in the evening not with-hold their hand, because they know not which may prosper: some of it assuredly shall: for as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud; so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that thing which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it, faith the Lord*.—And " although the seed sown doth not appear presently, it may be not in our days, but seems rotten among the clods, yet may it appear afterwards by a plentiful increase when our own heads are laid among

* Isaiah Iv. 10, 11.
On the PARABLE

the clods: verifying that saying of our Saviour, *one soweth and another reapeth* †. So that it is wrong either for minister or people to form their judgment of any particular preacher either from his present visible success, or from his manifest want of it, (which I the rather mention, as in this judging age many are apt to conclude too prematurely on this subject:) success hath sometimes seemed to attend those who have proved very wicked instruments, while it hath seemed to have been denied to those who were indisputably the servants and messengers of God. Little success attended Christ himself in his personal ministry; though that was the seed of the great success of his apostles and ministers through all ages: little success attended Isaiah, Jeremiah, &c. who were sent to a people that would not hear, nor understand: while Christ tells us there will be some at the day of judgment, whom he will reject as workers of iniquity, though they have cast out devils in his name, and in his name done many marvellous works *.

And

† See Burkitt on the place. John iv. 37.

* Doddridge observes very well, that it cannot be the design of the present parable, to encourage private christians to imagine that religion will flourish in their souls without proper cultivation: or to lead ministers to expect that it will flourish in their people, while they neglect due ap-
And as thus to ministers, so also to the people this parable holds forth an useful lesson clearly informing them, that an empty profession of the gospel unadorned with the fruits of holiness, will be of no avail: for Christ herein teacheth us, that his heavenly Father hath instituted this spiritual husbandry, not to be content with the ploughing and sowing of his ministers only, but with a design to put in his sickle, and to reap the ripe fruit into his garner. Unless, therefore, the professors of the gospel practise good works, through the obedience of faith, do the will, as well as hear the word of God, they will be guilty of having suffered the most precious seed of God to be destroyed and corrupted in them. For the earth, which, sown with the good seed, and watered with the rain that cometh oft upon it, doth nevertheless bear thorns and briars, is application. Our Lord meant, therefore, to intimate, that his apostles and other ministers were not to estimate their usefulness, merely by their immediate and visible success; but might hope that by their preaching a seed would be left in the hearts of many which might afterwards produce happy fruit. On these principles I doubt not but our Lord's preaching greatly promoted the signal success of the apostles (to which he might in part refer, John iv. 38) and I hope the remark may sometimes be applicable to our labours, especially with respect to those, who having enjoyed a religious education, and being restrained from groffer irregularities, have not been so far as others from the kingdom of God.
relected, says St. Paul, and is nigh unto cursing whose end is to be burned *. 

Such are the general instructions which this parable holds forth to ministers and people: the main scope of which seems directed to teach us, "the imperceptible increase of the kingdom of grace in the heart, and the gradual but constant growth of the seed sown, to full maturity from the time it takes root." Many have supposed the parable referable to the case of the gospel and its gradual increase upon earth: as well as to the secret and invisible influences of the Spirit, whereby it was to spread, not by any human and violent means. The fathers, I think, for the most part refer it to the beginning, progress, and perfection of the gospel. The man who sowed the good seed, say they ‡, is our Lord Jesus Christ, who first sowed it throughout Judea: the seed is the word of life; the earth is the heart of

* Heb. vi. 8. ‡ Ἀνθρωπός εἰμι αὐτός ὁ Θεός, ὁ γενομένος ἐν ἡμῖν Ἀνθρωπός, a strong testimony of the real divinity of Christ—the man is that very God who was made man for us—Σποροῦει τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ κηρύμα; Βαλλών δὲ τοῦ γαθέων, τετερω, ἀνυλίθεν εἰς θορνοὺς &c. See Theophylact in loc. The author of the Scholia upon Mark, generally supposed to be St. Jerome, has these words, homo jamiam semem est filius hominis; semen verbum vitae terra, corda humana: dormitatio hominis, mare est salvatoris, &c. See the ref. St. Gregory. Lib. 22. of his morals, chap. xx. explains the parable in a moral sense.

man:
of the Seed springing up of itself.

man: the sleeping of the man is the death of our Saviour: who having slept on the cross, and ascended afterwards into heaven, seems to an unbelieving world to disregard as it were his seed sown, though it continues to grow up and increase, men know not how, both by night and by day, in prosperity and adversity: which it will ever do, till the last great day shall come, the whole harvest shall be ripe, and the Son of man shall put in his sickle, and receive the righteous into everlasting habitations. — Thus the excellent Quesnelle *, treading close in the steps of the primitive writers, speaks on this passage: "Christ himself cast the seed of the word, from which his church sprang up, and formed it himself, after a conspicuous manner, by the preaching and miracles of the apostles, and by the blood of the martyrs of the first ages. He seemed as it were to sleep in the following ages, while

* Zeger explains it in exactly the same manner — hác dominus parabola indicare voluit, quo pacto ecclesiæ status & inciperet & procederet. Homo siquidem Christus Dominus est, qui primum evangelii sui semen per se ac suos disemina-vit in agros mentium humanarum: deinde in passione ac morte sua quasi noctem quandam faciente obdormivit: post hae etiam tertio die à somno mortis resurrexit. Interim semen ipsum excrevit, germinavit, germinare haud cessat, idque die ac nocte, hoc est, perpetuæ, vel in prosperis pariter ac adversis, tametsi nonnumquam mortalibus extinctum & à Deo videatur à relietum.
it continued to grow up insensibly, during the night of adversity, and the day of prosperity. And as Jesus Christ himself cast the seed into the ground, so he will also himself reap the harvest at the general judgment. How fearful ought we to be lest we should let the time of harvest come before that of our ripeness, death before the conversion of our hearts, and judgment before the performance of good works!"

But though the Parable may have this reference, it seems more plainly and naturally directed to teach us, the gradual growth of grace in the heart, and the imperceptible manner of the divine Spirit's proceeding in the renewal of a soul: and in this sense some of the primitive writers * as also the above-named author understood it: "How adorable is thy conduct, oh my Saviour, says he, in the establishment of thy kingdom, and how admirable are the secret operations of thy grace, in those souls which thou formest for heaven! Grace has its different ages and gradual increase: its growth is imperceptible. When a Soul is once arrived at that measure of age and fulness, according to which Christ is to be formed in it, then God withdraws it from the world."—In this sense of the Parable therefore the Sower is not

* See St. Gregory as quoted above.
only Christ, but every minister of his, who by his ordination and authority sows the seed of the word, (in which sense Christ may indeed himself be said to sow all the seed, as it is by his authority only that his servants sow it.) This seed sown by the ministers of Christ, in the good and honest heart, brings forth fruit with patience: and this fruit daily increaseth, though we know not how the word and the Spirit worketh that increase: and then Christ, the chief husbandman, the Lord of the harvest, who sows the seed and is proprietor of the field, at the time of the harvest sends forth the angels, his reapers, and gathers this good seed, i.e. the sons of the kingdom represented by it into his celestial mansions.* This I take to be the true meaning of the Parable: in which we are shewn,

* Thus Dr. Whitby. I see no necessity, adds he, of enquiring here (in this sense of the Parable) how Christ may be said to sleep and to rise day and night: Christ being like to this husbandman only in sowing and reaping of his seed; nor can it be said of him, his seed grows up he knows not how: not yet would I depend much on that remark of the Fathers that here is a proof of man's free will and power, to do good of himself, the seed being only sown, and no farther care taken taken of it: for as seed sown in the earth is only fruitful by being watered from heaven and ripened by the sun, so a like influence of the word and spirit upon the heart of man seems requisite to bring the seed sown in it to perfection. See the true state of the case. p. 90, and note.
Ift, Whence the seed hath this increasing nature, namely not from men, but God.

IIIdly, How God carries it on gradually to full maturity: And,

IIIIdly, What is the consequence, when the fruit is brought forth or ripe.

I will just in brief explain the Parable in reference to these three particulars, and conclude with some general marks, whereby our spiritual growth may be discerned, more especially for the comfort and establishment of weak believers.

Ift, Then we are shewn whence the seed hath this increasing nature: not from men, but God. For the kingdom of heaven, says our Saviour, or the church in which God reigns graciously by his word and sacraments, or rather the kingdom of grace in the heart, may, in one respect, be likened unto a man, who cast seed into the ground: the man can confer nothing more to its growth, than what he hath done, by ploughing, dunging and duly preparing the soil, and afterward sowing the seed: and therefore he is said to sleep and rise night and day; to sleep by night and rise by
by day, occupied as usual about his common affairs, having delivered his seed to the ground, and placing his hope of the future harvest in God, who without any further endeavours of his blesseth the earth, causing his sun to shine and his rain to descend upon it, and bringing on the seed sown to maturity. Similar hereto is the case of a preacher of the word: he hath not the hearts of men in his hand to turn them which way he will, nor can he do any thing more, than as it were prepare and sow the seed in his hearers hearts, by teaching, admonishing, persuading, rebuking, exhorting them. After this he hath no more that he can do, but only to water the seed sown by his constant prayers and longing of heart after it, which, some suppose, is meant by the expression, sleeping and rising night and day, that is, having his thoughts continually intent upon it, his heart in the work. But that the seed shall take root, that those who hear shall be enlightened, regenerated, renewed, and bring forth fruit, this is no more in the power of the minister to effect, than it is in the power of the husbandman to cause his seed sown to grow: but in both cases alike the blessing proceeds alone from God. "The Spirit of God is carrying on the business,
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when the preacher sleeps * and can do no business, no way forward or promote the work, which God hath been pleased to begin thro' his means: or when he rises, to go about other business. The prophets do not live for ever: but the word, which they preached, is doing its work when they are in their graves: the dew by which the seed is brought up, tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men †."—To sow the seed is all that man can do; to preach the word, is all the spiritual seedsman can do, the blessing is from God. This is fully expressed by St. Paul, I have planted, Apollos has watered, but it is God who giveth the increase. So then neither is he that planteth, any thing, nor be that watereth, but God that giveth the increase ‡. But we should observe, that tho' the works of the ministry and the blessing of God are distinct, yet they are not separate, but joined together: The husbandman must prepare the soil, and sow the seed, or God will never give the increase: the minister must preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, or the holy Spirit will not make that word effectual to the salvation of souls. And we

* See Job xxxiii. 15, 16.
† See Henry on the place. Micah v. 7.
‡ 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

should
I should learn from that faith and hope, where-
with the husbandman sows the seed, nothing
doubting of a good crop from heaven, when
he hath done his part, though many pinching
frosts, and many nipping blasts may inter-
vene:—from thence we should learn, to
preach the word, in the like faith and hope,
to sow the divine seed nothing doubting, but
the grace of God will accompany our sincere
and zealous endeavours, and render it fruitful
to the happiness of those who hear, and the
comfort of those who preach. In this view,
and with this faith and hope, we should not
withhold our hand, but scatter the good seed
which increases only by being dispersed; re-
membring always, that though the outward
preaching in itself be nothing, weak and un-
availing, yet it is absolutely necessary as one
great mean, whereby the Holy Spirit works
efficaciously. Thus while Ananias lays his
hands upon Paul, and speaks to him of that
Jesus whom he had persecuted, there fell as
it were scales from his eyes and he was en-
lightened: while Paul preached, the grace
of God opened the heart of Lydia to attend
to the things which were spoken of him.
While Christ talked with his disciples in the way
to Emmaus, and opened the scriptures, their
hearts burnt within them. And so continually

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the inward grace hath accompanied the outward preaching of the word; to shew us the necessity of our own endeavours, which though in themselves unavailing, when sincere, will always be accompanied with the grace of God. Let us take care therefore never to separate those which God hath joined together, but to look for his Spirit, by the preaching of his word, to expect his grace in the use of the means, and to pray earnestly for that grace, when the weakness of the means so abundantly convinceth us that the power is of God *! for what alas could this foolishness of preaching †, (as St. Paul calls it) avail, how could it serve to the awakening of the dead, the carnal, the worldly heart, if the almighty Spirit of God did work with it, and make it effectual to the salvation of Souls! Oh then how much, how earnestly, should ministers and people pray, — the one that this Spirit would ever-graciously condescend to accompany their words: the other that this divine Spirit, would ever-graciously condescend to open their hearts to a fruitful reception of the word preached: that those may not

* See Mr. Ridley’s Sermons at Lady Mayer’s lecture: Sermon VII. p. 269.
† 1 Cor. i. 21.
labour, that these may not hear, in vain.—
And it may be worth while to consider, whether the present small success of the gospel preached may not be greatly owing to a sad deficiency in this very important duty,—Send forth therefore, blessed Jesus, send forth thy convincing Spirit: open the hearts of all who hear: and cause, by thine own almighty power, cause thy divine word to find a glorious increase amongst us!

Thus we are shewn whence the seed hath this increasing faculty: as

IIly, We shall see, how God carries it on gradually to full maturity. Christ tells us that the seed springs and grows up, μήκος ῥοϊς, is lengthened out successively by gradual increase, the husbandman knoweth not how: though he hath sown it, it surpasses all his skill to tell how the work of vegetation is begun, carried on and perfected. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself by a curious kind of mechanism, which the wisest cannot explain or comprehend, though not without the dew of heaven, and the light of the Sun; which are absolutely necessary to vegetation; and by means whereof the earth endued with a prolific, productive power, bringeth forth by gradual and imperceptible degrees,
degrees, first, the green blade, then the milky swelling ear, and after that the full ripe hardened corn in the ear. And such is the gradual growth of grace in the heart, thus believers spring and grow up, they know not how till they come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. For when first the word of God is cast into the heart, it frequently takes root therein, beyond human understanding, and excites new motions, dispelling former prejudices, and inducing other considerations; insomuch that men are carried forward in their search after heavenly things, even while they suppose no such matter; and are ignorant of themselves and their desires, whence they arise and whereto they tend. For the influences of the Spirit, Christ tell us, are like those of the air or wind: the air bloweth where it listeth, and thou heardest the sound thereof, but canst not tell, whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit *

And when the heart hath thus received the seed of the word of God, the work is not immediately perfected: but there is first a weaker knowledge and less enlightened understanding of God, and the things concern-
ing him; like the green blade, infirm and tender, which is accompanied with weak graces, weak resolutions, and weak performances: but the seed is continually growing, tho' by imperceptible degrees, and therefore a more solid piety, and a more confirmed knowledge, stronger graces and more lively works, like the swelling ear, in their course succeed: and shew us that the word hath taken root in our hearts: when at length patience having wrought experience, and experience hope, our faith is confirmed strong and triumphant, our holiness universal and settled, our love burning and perfect, when being fully ripe we shall soon receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. For grace will have its perfect work as well as nature, and though the beginning be but small, the latter end will greatly increase. God carries on his works insensibly and without noise, but insuperably and without fail. — Wherefore we have need continually to pray, Lord, increase our faith, that the seed sown may grow more and more perpetually in our hearts, and we at length be ripened and made fit for the kingdom of heaven.

Thus the work of grace is gradually and imperceptibly carried on in the heart; and
from hence we are fully taught, that as there are great degrees in sanctification, so weak faith may yet be true faith: and if not deprived of the influences of the divine light and Spirit, it will grow up and increase to perfection. As the seed sown first putteth forth the green blade, so the word received in the heart must first produce weak and infirm graces, not full and indisputable assurance; for as nature according to the maxim, *nil facit per saltum*, doth not work in a desultory manner, doth not bring forth perfect men at once, but proceeds gradually, from conception to maturity: so grace worketh in the same gradual, regular, uniform method: and our ideas of that which is not seen, are to be taken from that which is. But though weak and infirm graces are first produced, yet tho' we know not the way of the Spirit, they must continue in a gradual increase, of which increase we cannot, we ought not to be insensible, though we may be wholly strangers to the particular manner of it. *As thou knowest not the way of the Spirit the wind or air which bloweth where it listeth*, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the

* Compare *John* iii. 8. and consult this text in the original.
WORK of God who will do the whole †. This though great encouragement to weak believers, yet should advise them to take diligent heed that they continue not always weak, but that they grow in grace, daily increasing in the faith and in the knowledge and love of God: suffering the seed to spring and grow up in their hearts, by the secret and insensible influence of the divine Spirit, continually fought for in and by all the outward means.

Our Saviour faith, that the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, ἀυτομάτη *, as a self-moving machine; and yet not so, unless the husbandman prepare the soil and sow the seed, and unless the influences of heaven shine graciously upon it. So the heart of man hath the spring of motion within itself: he hath a natural power and will to work with God, or to reject his grace: yet neither can this heart of man bring forth any fruit, but is

† Eccl. xi. 5.   
* Mark iv. 28.

* The word ἀυτομάτη, says the elegant Mr. Harvey, is a fine expressive word. Signifying, says a Greek scholiast, τις μηχανής, αὐτή ὁμοίως εὐρέως—It seems to give us the true sense of that remarkable phrase in the Mosaic history of the creation—וֹרֵשׁ אֲלֹהֵינוּ לִיעַיָּוֵה Gen. ii. 3. which God created and made, appears tautological and is by no means an exact translation. It should rather be interpreted, which God created in order to make: to make by these prolific instruments and reproducing principle a continual succession of animals, vegetables and creatures.—See Theron and Aspasio. Vol. 3. p. 12. See also philosophical essays by Dr. Watts. Essay 9.

by
by nature barren foil, unless the seed of the
divine word be sown therein by the outward
preaching of the gospel, and unless God ac-
company the word spoken by his grace and so
give it increase. It is man's work to prepare
the foil, by ploughing, weeding, dunging,
and other means; and so it should be our en-
deavour to prepare the heart for the reception
of the incorruptible seed, by due repentance
and mortification, and by all means necel-
sary to give the word admittance and growth.

By this beautiful image we are shewn
very clearly the nature of man's will, of it-
selt like barren foil, as well as the necessity
of grace: at the same time that we are taught
that the grace of God by no means excludes
all the effects and endeavours of man, and that
all the effects and endeavours of man are un-
available without the grace of God *. Without
man's

* This may be confirmed by a passage from a treatise,
called A necessary erudition for a christian man, compiled by
archbishop Cranmer, and the rest of the committee of di-
vines: in the article of free-will. " The state and condi-
tion of free-will was otherwife in our first parents before
they had sinned, than it was either in them or their pos-
terity, after they had sinned: for our first parents Adam and
Eve until they wounded and overthrew themselves by sin,
had so in possession the power of free-will by the most li-
beral gift and grace of God their maker, that not only
they might eschew all manner of sin, but also know God
and love him, and fulfil all things appertaining to their
man’s work and heaven’s blessing neither the ground will produce fruits, nor the heart produce holiness: but where the word is preach’d, the seed sown, where hearts are ready and inclined to hear, and willing to use the due preparatives, for which preventing grace will never be denied them, and where ministers in ardent prayer commend their hearers to God, then from his own blessed promises, from his own ordination and appointment, their labour shall not be in vain: but in due time they

supreme felicity. For they were created in a state of righteousness, and after the image and similitude of God, having power of free-will to obey or disobey. So that by obedience they might live, and by disobedience they should worthily deserve to die. From this most happy state our first parents falling by disobedience, most grievously hurt themselves and their posterity; for besides many other evils that came by that transgression, the high power of man’s reason and freedom of will were wounded and corrupted; and all men thereby brought into such blindness and infirmity, that they cannot eschew sin, except they be illuminated, and made free by an especial grace, that is to say, by a supernatural help and working of the Holy Ghost. Although there remains a certain freedom of will in those things which do pertain to the desires and works of this present life, yet to perform spiritual and heavenly things, free-will of itself is insufficient. And therefore the power of man’s free-will being thus wounded and decayed, hath need of a physician to heal it, and a help to repair it, that it may receive light and strength, whereby it may see and have power to do those godly and spiritual things, which before the fall of Adam it was able, and might have done.”
that have sown in tears shall reap in joy, and present glad fruits before the God of their salvation:—and Oh that you might all be found amongst that good fruit, which when the harvest is come the great husbandman will reap into his celestial garner.—Which is the

IIIId and last thing whereof I proposed to speak.

*When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Christ is the chief reaper: I looked and beheld a white cloud, faith St. John, and upon the cloud, one sat like the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle: and another angel came out of the temple crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the throne, thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.*

Such will be the general judgment: of which we shall hear more in the parable of the tares: in the mean time Christ is preparing his servants, and daily reaping the harvest of those who are ripe in grace: for when the work of God is brought to its due perfection, then the divine husbandman sendeth forth his angels, his reapers, putteth in the sickle,

*Rev. xiv. 14, 15.*
and taketh away by death those who are ripe for his kingdom, because the time of their harvest also is come, when they shall reap the fruits of their labours, and rest with God in endless felicity. Happy they, who make speedy advances towards the kingdom of God, who grow up quickly to perfection, zealous in the ways of God and in the means of grace, who are early found ripe for heaven, young in this world, but old in that wisdom which is from above—happy they, for quickly, (if their stay on earth be not, by God's will, delayed sometime for the greater manifestation of his glory in the good of others) quickly shall they be removed from all the troubles of mortality to the full enjoyment of the glory they have longed for, of the God they have continually panted after!—" but how terrible will this voice be, the harvest is come †, to those who shall then be only in the blade, or in an imperfect ear! My God, vouchsafe to ripen thy fruit thyself, and render us worthy to be of that good grain which is to be offered up to thee as the fruit of eternity!

Such is the parable; wherein we are shewn whence the blessing of increase cometh; how by gradual and imperceptible means the word

† Mark iv. 29.
of grace growth up in the heart; and what is the happy consequence of ripeness in grace, even a speedy removal to the land of everlasting life. I will just in brief apply what hath been said to the case and comfort of weak believers.

When the *seed* is sown, it springs and grows up, we know not how. We cannot know it: so neither can we know in a sensible way, the manner of the Spirit's operation. He works by *insensible* degrees, and we may chance sadly to mistake the workings of nature or of the evil spirit for grace, if we pretend to a gros and palpable *feeling* of the Spirit within us. And alas! it is but too well known, and cannot be too much lamented, with how many absurdities enthusiasm has perplexed the church from this unsound principle †: against which we cannot be too well guarded.—But though the manner is unknown, and no man can tell how the seed *rotting* in the earth sends forth a green blade, no more than how the Spirit

† Many strange enthusiasts in former ages, and the *quakers* in our own, are strong proofs hereof. See *Lejly*’s *snake in the graves*, particularly at the end. The *Massalians* or *praying monks* comprized the duties of a christian in *praying and sleeping*: and taught that you might know the precise time when the evil spirit left any one by a visible exit, and see the *Holy Ghost* enter in the form of fire that hurt not and might have *sensible evidence* of his illapfes. See *Ridley*’s *sermons*, p. 165.
of God makes the word preached productive of repentance and faith,—yet when the green blade appears above the earth, we know certainly that the seed is fruitful—and so when repentance and faith are manifested in the life and conversation, we know as certainly that the word hath prospered. "After a field is sown with corn, how soon is the surface altered: how beautiful and pleasant doth it look when it is covered with verdant? So let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will shew itself as the wisdom from above doth, by a good conversation." And tho' the manner of the increase be utterly unknown, as being wholly beyond the reach of human understanding, yet the increase will fully and manifestly declare itself: by their fruits ye shall know them.

But there are so small appearances hereof in me, may some one reply, that I am afraid the word hath not taken root,—I find corruptions so strong, evil thoughts so prevalent, and graces so weak, that I fear the work of God is not begun in my heart, or at least I can perceive no traces thereof.

Remember, O believer, this very com-

* Henry in loc.
plaint, and these very fears of thine, are a proof, that the good seed is not dead in thy heart: for unless the word of God had awakened and enlightened thee, how couldst thou have had any knowledge at all of the dark state of thy soul? sinners yet in the death, in the night of sin, never are heard to complain of the prevalence of lusts, and the weakness of graces. They tell you, that they have very good hearts indeed, that they for their parts are not so wicked, as you profess yourself, —nay, that they are full good enough, and with the Pharisee, thank God, because they are not as other men are!—now, had you rather be as these men are, so totally insensible of sin, or groan as you do, under the sense and sad feeling of it? I doubt not of the weakest believer's choice.

But these fears you apprehend are criminal —inconsistent with love,—distrustful of God, and the like unreasonable fears, fears of God's veracity and power, surely are criminal: perfect love doth indeed cast out all such, as well as all servile, slavish fear: but not the loving, filial, acceptable fear of offending: this is a gracious fear, and the more we have of it the better: nay doth not the great apostle advise you to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, sure-
ly not with the fear of a slave dreading gibbets and gallies, but with the cautious holy
fear of a dutiful son, who, through love to
the best of fathers, fears to offend him, more
than he fears death and hell:—"Moreover
that you fear, to use the words of an able
writer*, is no argument of mistrusting God;
we have reason to fear for ourselves; nor will
this fear be wholly taken from us, till we are
removed out of this world: were there any
reason to think that security as to our future
condition was among the gifts of God's Spirit
to the true children of Christ, then indeed
our fears would be matter of disturbance to
us: but since the best must fear and tremble,
why should we disquiet ourselves: since not
only our present condition requires it, but it
is even part of our security to fear and to la-
bour with care and diligence, which is the
blessed fruit of holy fear. To fear your God
will not perform his promises to us, is a
wicked fear: but to fear that we may fall short
of those promises is a reasonable fear, our
present weaknesses considered: and it is a
spur to virtue: and those who would desire
this thorn in the flesh to be removed; may be
answered in the Lord's name, as he answered
St. Paul, my grace is sufficient for you. You

* Bp. Sherlock's Discourses, Vol. II. p. 82.
are weak but the Lord is strong, and his strength is perfected in weakness; so that if your fear be active and busy, and sets you to work, for the thing you are afraid to lose, there is no doubt but that, through Christ, you shall be enabled to do all things."

Thus an holy fear for our souls is no evidence, you see, of want of grace, but of the contrary: especially when it carries us out to endeavours after salvation. And let us enquire whether you, who complain of your weakness and deadness, and your want of that **full assurance**, which some tell you of; whether, though you are insensible of the Spirit's manner of **working**, yet cannot discern, upon serious examination, some evident marks of his **work** upon your soul, which may serve perhaps to give you the most comfortable and infallible assurance of all? Do you not now perceive in yourself some new and good desires and inclinations, such as you never experienced before: as a love and desire to hear the word: a satisfaction and pleasure in conversing with christians upon spiritual subjects: a distaste of your former companions in sin, a disrelish of your former and profane conversation? These good desires and inclinations are as it were the **green blade**, springing up from the seed of the word. Go
Go on and you will soon find the sense of the evil of sin, and of the corruption of nature still deeper and deeper upon your hearts continually: which will be attended with an earnest longing after a thorough change of heart and life: a sure and infallible proof, that the word hath not been sown in vain: which word now will become most sweet and desirable, and you will say with David, *I love thy commandments above gold, yea above much fine gold: thy word is sweeter than honey to my taste, yea sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.*

But thus the seed is not come to perfection: this love of the word must of necessity be accompanied with a love to Christ, and a hatred to all sin; where that is found, all self-confidence is cast away, and the soul as relying upon Christ, hopes for, seeks for, desires nothing out of him. Now it comes *burden’d and heavy laden,* and is glad to take up his *yoke,* and to walk in the way of his commandments.—And whoever readily yields universal obedience to Christ, takes him not only as a *Saviour,* but a *Sovereign,* and because he loves him keeps his commandments—there can be no doubt, but the word hath taken root in that heart, and when the fruit is fully ripe, the divine husbandman will put in the

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sickle, because the harvest is come.—These and the like are clear and indisputable evidences, that the seed hath not been sown in vain; and tho' corruptions, temptations, and trials, tho' oppositions, reproaches and above all the treachery of our own hearts may lead us frequently to doubt of the work of God, yet let us examine ourselves by such tests as these, by our good desires, our hatred of sin, our love to Christ, our obedience to his yoke—and wherever we find these, rest assured that the work is of God, nothing doubting, in humble confidence, but that he who hath so graciously begun it, will in his good time perfect it in us.

In order to which let us be careful to work with him, that he may also work with us; remembering, that all increase cometh from God alone, let us be much in prayer for the gift of his Spirit: but well informed, that this Spirit is not given without our own endeavours, let us be careful and diligent in all the means of grace and use them with a full and entire dependence upon God. To quicken us in our diligent, faithful use of which, let us be ever mindful of that day, when the great husbandman shall put in his sickle; that so we may grow in grace and advance in holiness, and be found ripe and fit for the celestial
And as we learn from the present parable, that the kingdom of grace is **gradual**, but **constant** in its increase, tho' we know not the manner of the Spirit's operation, let us be jealous over our own souls, that we do not either stand still in the ways of God, or much rather that we do not go backward: **plants**, tho' their increase be not perceptible, are always increasing: and true grace in the heart can admit of no stand: if it be not increasing, it is in a state of decay: and that it may increase we must omit no opportunities to obtain the warmth of the divine **light**, and the nourishment of the celestial **dew** of God's Spirit: without either of which in grace, as well as without their great emblems in nature, **light** and **water**, neither the seed of the word nor the natural seed can **spring** and **grow up**. We are bound to be greatly thankful, that we have so plentiful means of enjoying both: we have great cause to praise and magnify the riches of God's grace, for many nations have not the word at all, the precious seed is denied them: no wonder they are unfruitful: the sun shines not upon them, nor have they such fruitful showers, as we of this place and nation enjoy! oh happy we, if we know how to prize our own privileges and happiness! But wo unto
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unto them, whether professors or others, who oft receive this seed and enjoy this sun and rain, yet bring forth nothing but thorns and briars! It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement than for such! God grant we may not be found in the sad number of those who are unfruitful under the plentiful sowing of the divine word, under the blessed means of divine grace: lest haply we not only incur the punishments destined for such hereafter, but become the wretched means of withdrawing this word of grace, of causing the candlestick to be removed from our church and nation—which our aggravated sins, hardness and backslidings do but too dreadfully forbode! Alarmed by which may we one and all follow St. Paul's advice, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure—for we are not sufficient of ourselves to do any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.

* I am indebted for this and other remarks in the conclusion of this sermon to Keach, in his discourse on the present parable: an author in whom many excellent passages are found, but one by no means to be recommended without great reserve, on account of the many peculiar, not to say dangerous doctrines, which he inculcates.

Now
Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, thro' the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, thro' Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
DISCOURSE III.
On the PARABLE of the Tares.
Being the Substance of Two Sermons.

PART I.


Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man, which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householders came and said unto him, Sir, didn't thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, an enemy hath done this.

In the present parable, which St. Matthew only relates, we have an answer to three important questions, which have greatly perplexed mankind, and upon which many volumes
lumes have been written, as to be satisfied in them is of great consequence to the cause of religion and the establishment of our faith. I. Whence evil hath arisen in the world in general, and the church in particular. II. Why it is permitted, and III. what the final event or issue of it will be. In which questions we are greatly interested: for could we suppose, that God was the cause of evil, that he permitted it for its own sake, or could not prevent it, that he would neither avenge himself of it here or hereafter: there would be an end to all virtue and holiness: our obligations to piety would cease: and there could be but one rule of conduct, the gratifying ourselves and our appetites, as we thought good. But the case is far different: and our Saviour, as in various other parts of scripture, so in the present parable, fully and clearly informs us, that God is not the author of evil, that he doth not permit it for its own sake, and that there is a day coming, when he will judge the world in righteousness, when he will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. On which day the excellency of the righteous man's choice shall be gloriously displayed: for then, says our Saviour,
Saviour, on that day, when the wicked shall thus go into everlasting misery, then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

I propose to consider the parable in this view, as it gives a satisfactory answer to these questions! 1. Whence evil arose in the world in general and in the church in particular? 2. Why it is permitted by God, and 3. what the issue or event of it will be?—with a resolution of which important questions, I will not fail to connect such remarks, as may tend to inspire us with a hatred to evil and the father of it; the better to effect which I will conclude with a brief description of that glorious city the new Jerusalem, into which we can never enter, if we permit sin and evil to reign in our hearts; for all things that offend and they which do iniquity shall be gathered out from thence, and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lye; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This parable of the Tares, like that of the Sower, being fully explained by our Saviour himself, hath no difficulties in it: it differs from that as also from the parable of the seed

† Matt. xiii. 41.  * Rev. xxi. 27.
springing up of itself, in this respect, that in them the good seed is taken simply and by itself for the word of God: but in this according to our Lord's own exposition, the good seed are the children of the kingdom, who are regenerated by that word of God, as by incorruptible seed*: and as our Saviour, by the first parable, removed a stumbling block, which offends many, when they see so small fruits arising, from the word of God, and numbers of hearers neither the wiser nor better for it, and thus excites every hearer to take diligent heed how they hear: so by this parable he takes away an offence, which again disturbs the minds of many, when they

* Theophylact upon this parable speaks thus, Ev την προτεραν παραβολην &c. in the former parable (that of the sower) he said, that a fourth part of the seed fell upon good ground: but in the present he shews, that not even this seed, which fell upon good ground, is suffered to be incorrupt by the enemy, while we sleep, and are idle. The field is the world, or the soul of every individual: Christ is the sower. The good seed is good men or good thoughts: the tares are heresies or evil thoughts: the sower of these is the devil. But men sleep, when thro' supineness and negligence they give place to heretics or evil thoughts. The servants are the angels, who are grieved at heresies in the church, or iniquity in the mind: and are defirous to pluck up and cut off from this life heretics and the devisers of evil things. But God permits not heretics to be destroy'd by wars, lest the righteous should suffer and be destroy'd together with them, &c. See the author.
On the PARABLE

perceive in the church such a mixture of evil with good: of tares with the good corn: and hereby would stir up the teachers of the word, particularly, to be careful, lest, thro' their negligence and supineness, the treasure of life perish in the hearts of some who thus may be changed from good seed into vile and useless darnel. In that parable therefore, according to St. Chrysostom, he reproved the hypocrisy of the hearers of the word: in this he animadverts upon the councils and devices of heretics, shewing us whence they arise in the church, no less than evil in the world, and what the final issue of each will be.

It may be proper just to observe, that the word *tares* in our translation doth not seem to express the meaning of the original word ξιζανα — for tares* with us are not noxious weeds, but a serviceable kind of

* Indeed was I to follow Mr. Johnson in his dictionary, or was that to be allowed a standard of the English language, then tares might be admitted as a proper word: for tares, says he, (from Tereen, Dutch, to consume) is a weed that grows among corn. The original word ξιζανα, very able Græcians tell us, is not found except in the Evangelists and some of the Fathers, and they give different derivations. Suidas says, that ξιζανα is ἐν τῷ Στετω αὐρα—quasi ἡθαρια. And so he corresponds with Mr. Johnson. But the word is most probably of Eastern origin, from the Chaldée ιι εἰβανιτ— as Martinus observes in his Lexicon, whom consult.
pulfe, of great use for cattle: and very easily distinguished in their growth from wheat; whereas the original expresses somewhat, and the scope of the parable demands it, which is of no service at all, fit only to be burned and which cannot easily be distinguished, from the good corn, till both are grown up: and to these particulars answer either what are called the *deaf ears* in the wheat, which cannot be discerned till the time of harvest, and then are found to be utterly useless, or rather a weed called *darnel* the *infelix loliurn*, which grows up with wheat; and unless gathered out of it, before it be reaped, is very prejudicial to the corn. To avoid confusion however I have chosen rather to retain our word *tares* in this discourse, as grown familiar thro' long use: and any mistakes concerning its true import are thus obviated.—

I come now to speak of the first question namely, whence evil arose in the world in general, and in the church in particular? Concerning which we are informed in the first part of the parable.

*The kingdom of heaven,* says our Saviour, *is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.* But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth
forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So
the servants of the houholder came, and said
unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in
thy field, from whence then hath it tares? He
said unto them an ENEMY ΕΞΘΡΟΕΞ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ
hath done this. In the subsequent verses he
gives the following exposition, He that sowe-
eth the good seed is the son of man: the field is
the world: the good seed are the children of
the kingdom, but the tares are the children of
the wicked one. The ENEMY that sowed them
is the DEVIL.

In which words, we are clearly taught,
whence all that evil arose in the field of the
world, the existence of which is but too evi-
dent, and hath never been denied, as how
indeed could it—? in any age or time. The
only dispute or doubt hath been, whence this
evil, so confessedly predominant, both in men
and things, hath derived its fatal origin? And
while men have attempted to solve the
difficulty and untie the gordian knot by the
mere force of unenlightened reason, they have
run into absurdities and extravagancies, wild and
perplexing, instead of unravelling, have only
entangled the more, and lost themselves in a
labyrinth of error, while they either wanted
or were too wise to use the only clue that could
direct them aright, the word of God. Hence
the
the wild heresies of Simon Magnus, hence the profane and ridiculous solution which Manes gave of this matter, who supposed two self-existent powers or gods, one the author of all good, the other the author of all evil: hence the romantic notions of Origen concerning the pre-existence of souls in a former state; and hence may we say, the dangerous and blasphemous positions of some, who make God the author of all evil by supposing it eternally predestinated and decreed by him! The notions of the two former were evidently derived from the pagan schools: and where-

* See King's origin of evil, vol. 1. p. 102, &c.—As also his incomparable sermon concerning the divine præscience, at the end of his 2d vol. See also Ridley's 5th and 6th sermon at Lady Moyer's lecture.

† Chemnitz, whom the favourers of these tenets would suppose on their side, produces a passage or two from Calvin and Beza, on that subject, pretty remarkable. "How far from this heresy (of the Cainites) Calvin is removed, the pious reader will discern from these words of his de occult. provid. Facit lapisum Adae fortuitum fuiffe, sed occulto Dei decreto ordinatum! I confess that the fall of Adam was not fortuitous, but ordained by the hidden decree of God! And Beza, in Aph. 1. Lib. 1. Sine Dei decreto nihil fit uspiam a quocum neque universaliter neque specialiter, ne iis quidem exceptis, quae mala sunt ac proinde detestanda. And again. Cap. 3. Ap. 4. Fantendum est lapisum Adae non contigisse fortuito, vel nuda & otiosa permissione aliquâ, quà ab ipsius voluntate & decreto separetur!—Thus these men in plain and express terms are not afraid to make God's decree the origin of all evil—so he, not the devil, according to them, sowed tares!
ther that of the latter may not be a monstrous birth from the Manichaean heresies, it would be no difficult matter to trace: as a key to which, we shall do well to consider, that Calvin, Beza and other first teachers of unconditional election and reprobation derived all their doctrines from St. Austin, who was many years, as he sadly deplores, lost in the gross errors of the Manichees; and who afterwards both in his disputes with them and the Pelagians dropt many unwarrantable expressions: which tho' he retracted and for which he repented; others less wise, and less ingenuous, have made the foundation of doctrines far more rigid, unreasonable and unscriptural: and of consequence false: for in this case the scripture and the scripture only can give us certain information.—And from thence we have what we desire: the present parable, delivered by the mouth of infinite wisdom, clearly satisfies us in this point; wherein we shall do well to inform ourselves, and in our enquiries after which we are justified by the sollicitude of the servants, who perceiving tares mixed with the good corn, in their masters field—came full of such anxiety, as well distinguisheth careful servants, and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it

* See Austin's confessions, b. 3, c. 6. &c.

tares?
tares? And as the master satisfied them concerning the author of this mischief: so our great master and teacher fully satisfies his sincerely anxious and carefully enquiring servants, concerning the author and source of all evil, in the exposition which we heard from him of this particular in the parable—

*the enemy that sowed them is the Devil:* the father of lies, the grand accuser, adversary and enemy of God and man: who from the beginning hath proudly opposed himself to God, and laboured to corrupt and destroy the good seed sown by him in his field of the world in general, and the church in particular.

God sowed good seed only in his field: he pronounced all that he created *VERYGOOD:* he formed man in his own image, endued with righteousness and true holiness: and as it was necessary to make him capable of rewards or punishments gave him a free will to choose or refuse, and set life or death before him, as the consequence of his election. Speedily the ENEMY, properly and emphatically so called, came and sowed tares: he poured his vile insinuations into the ear of too credulous Eve; and while, with subtle artifice, he introduced destructive pride, by means of serpentine infidelity, into the hearts of our first parents,
parents, it became no difficult task for him to recommend daring disobedience to their esteem and friendship. These rank tares, this vile and destructive darnel he sowed amongst the good seed: and made him who was created righteous, a sinner; true, a liar; innocent, guilty; holy, accursed; humble, proud; happy, miserable; made him, who was created the angelic and blessed inhabitant of paradise, and heir of immortality, a poor corrupted worm, subject to misery, mortality and wrath.

And as thus at first he sowed tares among the wheat, so have they continually grown up together; and at all times when God hath been pleased as it were to sow his field afresh, the enemy hath been ready at hand to sow tares also: when God gave the good seed of the law from mount Sinai, satan was ready with his tares: the murmuring people, the idolatrous calf, the schismatical Corah and his company, and the like were the evil instruments employed by him to corrupt the precious seed of God.

And when Christ came to sow the good seed of the gospel in the world, to teach men the most pure and holy doctrines, and to shew the only way to salvation, how busy was this enemy of the seed of the woman speedily to sow tares, speedily to raise up corrupters of this
most pure doctrine: and to intermix it with the most dangerous and damnable heresies; even as he hath continued to do to the present day, and will not cease, till the day of the great harvest? For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, says St. Paul, only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall the wicked be revealed; whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming*. And to this case of the Christian church, the parable seems most properly and peculiarly address'd: in which by himself and his apostles, whom he commanded to preach the word unto every creature, Christ, as in the field of the world, sowed the good seed of his most pure and holy gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation, and which received in faith makes men the children of the kingdom: for in this gospel the righteousness of God by faith is revealed; and we are all the children of God by faith:—This pure word and this precious gospel was soon corrupted, and that our Saviour assures us by the enmity of the devil: he came and sowed tares; which sprung up and appeared amongst the good corn even in the days of Christ and his apostles. The Lord himself had amongst his own disciples and familiar friends a Judas, a

* 2. Thess. ii. 7, 8.
devil, a traitor. Amongst the seven first deacons of the church, was a Nicolas, the author of that vile sect of the Nicolaitans, which in the revelation*, Christ tells us, he hates. A Simon Magus join'd himself to the apostles, whose heart was not right before God, who was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity †: and the author of infinite evil to the church. Soon after arose the heresies of Ebion, Cerinthus, and other rank and profest opposers of the divinity of Christ—as on the contrary some there were who denied his humanity. The Pharisees, who believed, and confounded the works of the law and of faith, caused various troubles, as did those who corrupted the doctrine of free grace, and made it a handle for sin—who said, let us continue in sin, that grace may abound, against each of which St. Paul strongly opposed himself in his excellent epistles to the Romans and Galatians. And there were not wanting many false brethren and hypocrites, who having a shew of godliness, without the power of it, were the unhappy occasions of much scandal and offence. Of such St. Peter speaks, but there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring

* Rev. ii. 15 † Acts viii. 23.
in damnable heresies, even DENYING the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction; and many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of†.—Of this fort were the deceived and impious followers of Arius, and others, who denying the true divinity of Christ, the Lord that bought them with his own most precious blood, brought such evils on the church as deluged it in blood: and continue to this day to work the downfall of many who follow their pernicious ways: for a denial of the divinity of Christ, is a denial of the whole merit of his satisfaction, so of the whole gospel salvation, and of necessity the most fatal heresy the church ever knew*.—How many tares have since been sown by the papal as well as Mahometan anti-christ, we all but too well know: and how many in this day are sown by arians, socinians, deists, and the professors of natural religion a mere phantom, a vile tare,—how

† 2 Pet. ii. 1.

* For the fulleste proof hereof, I refer my reader with great satisfaction to that incomparable treatise of Dr. Waterland’s, the importance of the scripture doctrine of the trinity—a book of such sound learning, knowledge and piety as merits every christian’s perusal, and it is only to be lamented that it is not, in this day especially, in the hands of every person, baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy-Ghost.
much evil, I say, are done by these, no man can tell: but to these we may with truth attribute the sad state of christianity, the lamentable and universally confessed* growth of infidelity, and of consequence immorality, in this church and nation.

These are some of the tares, for the time would fail me to speak of all, which from the beginning the enemy hath sowed among the wheat; and they have grown up together. Indeed we could have no reason to suppose, that if such and so many corruptions abounded in the church even in the first and purest days of it, future ages should abound with less: and therefore if you will give yourselves the trouble to look thro' the ecclesiastical history, you will find, that this hath always been the case; there hath always been this intermixture of tares with the good corn: these heresies, false doctrines, and false practices (be sure consequences of false doctrines) have thro' the enmity of satan always prevailed, and in the wisdom of God always been permitted,

* For a proof of this we may appeal to two sermons lately preached before the university of Oxford, by the Rev. Mr. Hall and the Rev. Mr. Griffith—in each of which the learned authors much and very justly complain of the said growth of infidelity. See particularly p. 24. of Mr. Griffith's discourse. p. 23. of Mr. Hall's.
for which hereafter we shall endeavour to assign some probable reasons.

But the knowledge of this, as well as of the original of these evils, which our Saviour clearly informs us have the devil for their father and author—(*the enemy that sowed them is the devil*) should satisfy us as to all doubts with regard to the church, and cause us never to fall in with the opinions and persuasions of any of those, who therefore would separate from it, because there are found corrupt *profeffors* in it, corrupt in *principles* and *practice*.

—This would have been as good a reason for separating from *Christ* and his apostles, and the primitive church in the very first ages, as from any other: for corruptors and corruptions have been in the church more or less from all ages: and if that church by her creeds, articles, canons, &c. disclaims all such principles and practices, the rottenness of those members is no argument for a separation.

This, we perceive, hath been the case more or less: and a church wholly incorrupt, wholly free from tares, we shall never see, till the day of the great harvest, when all things that offend, shall be gathered out of it. In the mean time our great care should be to see these errors *reform'd* to the utmost of our power, in whatever state of life we are plac'd:
if in a public state, our care and eye should be to public reformation; if only in a private, to the reformation of ourselves and those within our sphere; but in every state, we should take especial heed to ourselves, that we be found amongst the good seed and not amongst the tares: fruits are the things that God requires: and as there are tares as well as wheat in the church, let us be jealous over ourselves, that we become not by a bare profession, and a communion only with the external church, base tares and wretched darnel, fit only to be burned: let the offences which we see in others, whether in doctrine or practice, stir us up to more and more zeal in the cause of God and in the ways of truth: let us be careful to examine ourselves concerning the sincerity and purity both of faith and life: blessing God, when we perceive ourselves steadfast in the one and unblameable in the other: and as infinitely thankful for his grace to us, so let us pray in sincerity and love for all those to whom that grace is yet denied, and who yet wander in the darkness of sin and unbelief, that it would please him to give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth; as also that we ourselves may hold fast our faith and a good conscience, which should never be separated: for some having put away a good
a good conscience, says St. Paul, concerning faith have made shipwreck.

Thus then we learn whence evil arose from the beginning, namely from Satan, who is here called the ENEMY, because of that enmity put between him and the seed of the woman, the son of man in paradise, which will continue to the end. But because this enemy doth not always prejudice the church immediately by himself, but hath his tools and instruments, through whom he spreads idolatry, heresies, superstition, and all kinds of impiety through the world, therefore, say some, he is called emphatically in the parable ἔχομεν ἀνθρώπως, a man that is an enemy *. He is also called verse 38 the wicked one, πονηρός, the evil one, because he stood not in the truth, nor kept his first estate, but revolted and fell away from God, who is the only good, and the only fountain of all good: and having made this shameful revolt, his mind is turned from all good, and he is alone delighted with all evil, he walks about with

* There is indeed no great stress to be laid upon this, since, as Dr. Hammond well observes, the phrase ἔχομεν ἀνθρώπως, literally enemy man, is here an Hebraism, the like as we shall find Est. vii. 6. The man adversary, or adversary man, is this wicked Haman. And so it restrains not the word here to a man, but leaves it in the latitude, that ἔχομεν alone would be a man or devil.
purposes exactly contrary to those of Christ, (who went about doing good) seeking whom he may devour, doing evil only: and by himself and his instruments is the sole cause of all unrighteousness and iniquity amongst men. Surely then he is justly called the enemy, and well would it be, if we continually esteemed him as such, and of consequence abhorred all sin and evil, which alone is the grand support of his kingdom: for who shall harm us, if we be followers, not of that which is evil, but of that which is good.

Christ also would not only warn us of his enmity to man, and his love of evil, but of his craft and subtlety: therefore he calls him Διαβόλος, the devil, the accuser, calumniator, slanderer, the grand deceiver who always acts under a cloke, and by his enmity to the church aims at the head of it, at Christ himself, who is his bitter and professed enemy, as being his conqueror and condemner. It deserves just to be noted, that the Greek knows no other name for slanderers than this of Διαβόλος, devils, and this is the word used for them in the New-testament*: and if slanderers in God's esteem, are mere devils, how very careful should it make us all of that heinous sin of slandering and backbiting, which too many in-

* 1 Tim. iii. 11. Not slanderers, οἱ Διαβόλοι.
judge, to the infinite hazard of their souls; and which they will do well to consider as an offence truly devilish: since they themselves in that language, wherein God has given us his divine gospel, have no other appellation than that fearful one of — Devils!

Observe next, this grand impostor’s method of proceeding: you see, he sows his pernicious seed not in his own but in the field of another: for the world or the church is not the property of the devil, but of God, both by right of creation and redemption. — Then you perceive, he doth not sow his tares, but where the good seed hath been first sown: for his principal enmity, as well as devices are against those, to whom the gospel is preached: and whose hearts are prepared by the ministry of the word, to become the field of the Lord, that they may bring forth fruits worthy their profession. — The whole human nature is corrupt; and while it remains in its natural corruption, Satan is not much solicitous about it: as knowing it safe and secure to him: he has no occasion to tempt or molest open and professed sinners. But as soon as he perceives any likely to escape from his snare and to be delivered from his power, then he exerts all his efforts, to oppose
oppose the work of God, and to bring back those who are at all advanced from his kingdom,—the better to effect which, this subtle adversary diligently takes occasion, when he perceives those to sleep and to be negligent in their office, whom the Lord hath either placed as public guardians and protectors of his field; or commanded as private persons to watch for themselves. Thus while MEN SLEEP, the enemy comes and soweth tares: sends either deceivers and crafty hypocrites to beguile and insnare: or open contemners of the divine word, and inventors of evil, who both commit sin themselves, and draw others by their example unto the like shameful practices. And having done this he DEPARTS, retreats into his former darkness: his vile and treacherous schemes and designs are secret at first, and not easily discovered: it seems as if no harm were done: and men are drawn into evil insensibly by his devices which are not manifest, till the sad fruits of them are but too manifest in faith and life.

This should advise us of the use and excellency of our Saviour's counsel: what I say unto one, I say unto all, watch: this should stir up all christians, but especially all faithful ministers of the word, to whom more especially Christ hath committed the care of
his church, to shake off all spiritual sloth, and slumber, and to stand to their arms and watch; that they may counterwork all the arts and subtleties of satan, as not ignorant of his devices, and be careful that the church of Christ take no detriment from their negligence, and ill discharge of their most important office. Certain it is, that as soon as Adam began to sleep, as soon as he began to grow forgetful of the divine command, immediately the devil seiz'd the opportunity, brought death into the world and all our woe!—And this spiritual slumber comes upon men by various ways: sometimes when they connive at the vices of those intrusted to their care: parents at the vices of their children, sparing the rod, and spoiling the child: masters at the vices of their servants, husbands at the vices of their wives, wives of their husbands: magistrates at the vices of the public; the public at the vices of magistrates, encouraging and confirming them in evil, rather than seriously and duly remonstrating: neighbours at the vices of each other, sparing rebuke and friendly admonition, not exhorting each other with patience, meekness and love, which, tho' the kindest and most friendly of all offices, would now be deem'd rank offence and bold affront—and all this notwithstanding the great
great God hath commanded, *Thou shalt in any wise by all means rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him,* or rather, as the margin has it, *that thou bear not sin for him*.—Sometimes this spiritual slumber ariseth from the negligence of ministers to preach and expound the divine word, to instruct, exhort; rebuke: sometimes from the negligence of hearers to pray for a blessing upon what they hear: sometimes from the negligence of magistrates to execute justice and maintain truth. From these and various other the like causes ariseth this spiritual slumber: which Satan never fails to improve to the prejudice of souls; and to the increase of his kingdom by sowing tares and propagating iniquity, in faith and practice amongst men. And alas for our poor church! wherein but too visibly and too confessedly all these evils abound, all these causes of spiritual slumber are notorious! What can we expect other than that it should be wholly overgrown with tares, for however men may sleep to good, our restless adversary never sleeps to evil.

As therefore we are thus informed of his devices, as well as of his implacable enmity to the children of the kingdom, to the word of truth, let us take care, that we suffer not this

*Lev. xix. 17.*
spiritual slumber to creep upon us: but each one in our station diligently keep the watch, and guard against all those evils, which Satan will not fail to improve to our souls hurt. For ourselves, let us each one watch and be sober, putting on the whole armour of God, and in whatever state or condition of life we are, let us resolutely endeavour to destroy the works of sin, and to attack the kingdom of Satan: as certainly assured, that we can have no peace with this sworn enemy to our souls; that if we will not continue strongly resisting him in the Lord, he will take every opportunity to corrupt our faith and life: and by his means we shall daily grow worse and worse, till ripe for destruction, we are cast into that kingdom of his, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth—Therefore, my brethren, resolv'd to fight manfully against him, be strong, not in any opinion of your own strength, but in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And remember, that you have need of all care and circumspection, FOR we wrestle not against flesh and blood, in this spiritual combat, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take
take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Thus I have shewn you whence all evil arose in the world, and in the church: even from the devil, the grand enemy and accuser, whose hatred to man, as well as his devices, I have endeavour'd to lay open, as far as the present parable leads thereto:—It may now be asked, if all evil doth thus arise from that fallen spirit, called the devil and satan; how is it that the great God permits its continuance in the world?—Which naturally leads me to the second question, which this parable resolves, namely, the reason, why God permits evil.—And tho' indeed a laudable desire "to justify the ways of God to man" may lead us to assign probable reasons for the divine conduct; yet this like other such questions might very properly be resolved into the wonderful depths of God's wisdom and justice, which with our present dim sight we can by no means perfectly discern, which with the present short line of human reason we can by no means fathom: and that more especially when we are assured, that he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness. Tho' thus we might abundantly satisfy every true believer; yet we may, without pre-
presumption, venture to assign some probable reasons for God's proceedings in this respect, which will appear in the next discourse; and while considered, with due humility, and the most profound veneration of the wisdom and justice of all the great Jehovah's ways and works, they may thro' grace tend to establish our faith, and enable us with greater confidence to sing the song of Moses here, that we may sing it with full assent and perfect triumph hereafter, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways; thou king of saints. Revel. xv. 3.
On the PARABLE of the Tares.

PART II.

Matt. xiii. 28—30.

The servants said unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?—But he said, nay: lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.—Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the Tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.

Observed in the former sermon that the present Parable supplies us with an answer to three questions, which have much perplex'd the enquiry, and often shake the faith of christians, namely,

Ist, Whence
On the P A R A B L E, &c. 131

Ist, Whence evil arose, as well in the world in general, as in the church in particular.

IIdly, Why it is permitted of God: And,

IIIdly, What the issue or consequence of it will be.

Concerning the first, our Saviour fully informs us, when he declares, that he himself, by whom the worlds were made, sowed good seed only in his field, but that his arch-enemy, the grand accuser and adversary of men, sowed tares amongst the good seed: and of consequence is the author of all evil, the sole origin, and cause of it, as God alone is the author of all good.

Here a question naturally ariseth from the dim apprehensions of men, and their very contracted view of the great designs of God, why it is, that, when he sowed good seed only in his field, he should suffer the tares sown by his enemy to continue and grow up with it—why he would not comply with the proposition made by his servants, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? In his answer to whom we are supplied with a general reason, why the good and wise God of heaven and earth permits the tares to remain among the
the wheat, permits the continuance of evil in
that creation, which he pronounced very good,
in that church where he sowed nothing but
the pure and wholesome seed of the divine
word.

But be said, nay: I will by no means allow
you to go and gather up the tares: lest while
ye gather up the tares, thro' inadvertency and
mistake, thro' haste, or thro' necessity, ye
root up the wheat also with them. For by ei-
ther of these three means the wheat might
suffer; 1st, thro' the inadvertence or mistake of
the servants, who might very possibly in a field
intermixed with tares and wheat, lay hold
of a stalk of good corn instead of a tare.
2dly, Thro' haste, in their zeal to pluck up the
tares they might very easily root up some
wheat instead thereof: and 3dly, This evil
would arise sometimes from necessity: the roots
of the tares and of the wheat being so inter-
mingled, that it would be naturally impossi-
ble to pluck up the one without rooting up
the other also: and the original seems to
lead to this as the principal reason, μὴ εὐρίγοβτε,
left ye tear up by the root the wheat, while
gathering up the tares; between which there
is so natural and necessary an intermingling
of roots, that one cannot well be disturbed,
without disturbing the other also. So that
you
you perceive, the good husbandman out of regard solely to the good corn, suffers the tares to continue till the day of harvest.

Now let us apply this to the case of evil in the world, and we shall see the same good reasons for God's suffering it, as for the husbandman's suffering the tares among the wheat. Suppose God was to give his servants in this world, a power to destroy evil, and to root up the workers of iniquity, either heretics or common sinners, there would be the same danger to the good, from the above causes, as to the wheat from the gathering up of the tares. For 1st, inadvertence and mistake, from which men are never free, would much endanger the good seed, the children of the kingdom. Men, being the instruments in God's hand of his vindictive justice, as being men only, subject to error and liable to mistake, however sincere and however upright in intention, might and would frequently err in their opinions of others; and either in the case of heresy or immorality, suppose those guilty who were not so in God's account, and those innocent, who were most detestable in his sight, who alone can see the heart, and who alone can be a proper judge of actions, as trying and knowing the intention; which lieth deeper, than any human Eye can penetrate,
On the PARABLE

trate, and is that wherein the essential difference of actions consists.

And in the various communions of Christians it frequently happens, that some very sincere and strenuous for the one, suppose those of another base tares, fit only to be burned, who are really children of the kingdom. The Jews esteemed that way, in which St. Paul worshipped the God of their Fathers, heresy, and therefore were for killing him: but see how great was their mistake—what they called heresy was, in the fight of God, a right and acceptable service. And on the other hand, as men may mistake the children of the kingdom, for the children of the wicked one, so may they err on the other side: Satan often transforms himself into an angel of light; and some over-zealous hypocrites are so like real christians both in profession and practice, and all things external, that it is well nigh impossible for any but the trier of the hearts and reins to see their vileness, or discern their shameless hypocrisy: nay, and the most subtle heretics, the better to gloss over their evil cause, have frequently assumed a more than ordinary strictness and sobriety of life, whereby they have been better enabled to spread their tares, and by their cunning craftiness to lay in wait and deceive.
deceive. Who but the discerner of hearts could have drawn the veil from off the zealous Pharisees and shewn the *whited sepulchres*, full of dead mens bones and all uncleanneness?

—not that it follows from hence, that there is an absolute impossibility to distinguish either *grofs sinners* or *open heretics*: our Saviour hath given us an infallible rule, whereby to know both the one and the other, *by their FRUITS ye shall know them*, — by the evil practices of the one, by the evil docttrines of other. But from what hath been said, it plainly appears, that there are many cases, wherein men must and will err, on both sides mistaking tares for wheat, and wheat for tares; — either blinded by their natural prejudices, however otherwise sincere and upright: or by the cunning craftiness and hypocrisy of deceivers, who are sometimes so transformed into angels of light, that nothing less than the discerner of hearts can pierce through the veil, and discover the malignant heart within.

In this respect men therefore would be very improper instruments to gather up the tares: and as mistake, so 2dly, too much haste and zeal to root up the evil, might endanger the good.

Men still are men: and often when well per-
persuaded of their own sincerity, they mistake bigotry for zeal, and call persecution doing God service. The disciples themselves shew something of this Spirit: when the Samaritans refused to give their master entrance in violent zeal for his honour, as they doubtless thought, too hastily, said they, Lord, wilt thou that we call down fire from heaven to consume them as Elias did? They supposed all these Samaritans base tares, fit only to be burned, and in hasty zeal would have gathered them up to consume them: but their Lord rebuked them saying, ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.—And hereafter it will be seen, that there are many amongst these whom ye would thus hastily destroy, who will receive the word gladly, and become children of the kingdom. And possibly, by the way, our Saviour might suggest this particular in the present parable not only to warn his disciples then, but his followers in all ages, against this hasty, fiery, persecuting spirit, which, whatever may be the motive for acting, how great soever our apparent zeal for God, and the honour of his cause, is by all means contrary to the Spirit of Christ, who will in mercy save the tares, for the sake of the good
good corn, who came not to root up and to burn, not to destroy, but to save men's lives. Who can doubt of the sincerity of Paul's zeal, when breathing out threatenings and slaughter, he went to Damascus to imprison all that called on the name of Jesus! I VERILY thought, said he, with myself, that I OUGHT to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. But by means of this over-hasty zeal, he caused many of the saints to be put to death, and found reason to lament himself afterwards as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, as the chief of sinners.

In this respect therefore men are again, by no means qualified to be employed in any work of this nature, but should learn from God's long-suffering and forbearance, the like forbearance and love, remembering that Christ will not have his kingdom promoted by fire and sword, since he reigns not over the bodies, but in the hearts and consciences of men, which no outward force can reach; and will by no means put the power into any of his creatures hands, to root up the tares, lest they root up the wheat also: the sad consequences of attempting which we see but too manifestly in a neighbour church, whose

* 1 Tim. i. 13—15. many
many bloody persecutions against heretics, as they are charitably pleased to style all, who differ from their communion, have rooted up much wheat, many children of the kingdom, and made the field of God a mere Aceldama, a field of blood!—They are a full example of all before advanced, namely, that men are very improper instruments, however sincere we may suppose them, to gather up the Tares; since unavoidable mistakes through prejudice or hypocrisy, or too hasty undiscerning zeal without due knowledge, will of necessity endanger the good corn:—and I doubt not, but we should all with one consent, supposing it possible for the deity, to put it to our choice, disclaim the use of human instruments for the purpose of rooting up the tares from amongst the good corn.

But 3dly, supposing it to be possible that men could discern, who were and were not tares, and that God should endue them with even a miraculous discerning of spirits, as well as a clear knowledge, unbiassed by false prejudice or zeal; or in other words, suppose he should use his holy angels, as the immediate instruments of his vengeance upon the wicked; yet in the present state of things, and the present disposition of human affairs, as it would be impossible to gather up the tares,
tares, without infinite prejudice and danger to the wheat, on account of that necessary intermingling and interweaving of the roots of one with the other—So on account of the mutual conjunction of interests and alliances of men one with the other, it would be impossible to discriminate or to separate the good from the bad, by any vindictive punishment, or to afflict the one without greatly afflicting the other also. In the present intermixture of men and things, good and bad, the good have frequently such a dependance upon the bad, that the ruin of the one would be the ruin of the other also. A good child frequently has its whole dependance upon a worldly wicked father: a good father frequently has his highest earthly happiness in an unworthy child, to see whom cut off in the blossom of his sins, would overwhelm his soul in sorrow. A good wife with many otherwise helpless babes frequently depends for subsistence upon a worthless husband: a good servant upon a bad master, and the like. "The same titles in law: the same advantages in trade: the same hazards of person are shared between good and bad: the same vessel on sea, the same family on land, the same shop in the city contains both: so that it is not possible to any human consideration, for storms or fire
fire or pestilence, suppose God himself the righteous minister of them, or for any other common calamity to fever between them *.

So that as there is, and must necessarily be this mutual dependance, it would be impossible unless a new heaven and a new earth and new inhabitants were to be formed, which is foreign to the present inquiry † for any separation, in the present state of things to be made, absolutely speaking, without prejudice to the wheat, as well as the tares: to the children of the kingdom as well as to the children of the wicked one. So that we must wait for the great day of harvest, when all things that offend shall be gathered out of the kingdom, the tares be confined to everlasting burning, the wheat to the celestial garner of their God.

* These are the words of the excellent Dr. Stanhope in this parable in the 2d vol. of his useful commentary on the epistles and gospels: whose whole reasoning on this subject I could have been glad to have produced rather than my own—as far superior: — to which I must acknowledge myself highly indebted: —and with pleasure refer the reader thither, desirous of fuller information on this subject.

† See for an answer to the question, why God permits evil, archbishop King's treatise concerning the origin of evil, chap. 5. sect. 5. and following. He justly supposes all evil secondarily, to arise from depraved eleotions, and then proves that a removal of free-will from man is inconsistent and impossible.

Thus
of the TARES.

Thus then we have a satisfactory reply to the second question, why God suffers the continuance of that evil, which came through envy of the devil: this we see arises solely from his good-will to the children of the kingdom, whom in the present state of things it is impossible to separate from the wicked, without greatly endangering them, impossible to gather up the tares without rooting up the wheat also: which impossibility we have considered as well in reference to the instruments of rooting up, as to the natural situation of things, and that mutual dependance and connection of the good with the bad, that mutual intermingling and interweaving of the roots one with the other: so that the tares cannot be pulled up without disturbing the wheat, at its very foundation, without rooting it up also.

I will just before I conclude this head, suggest to your consideration two reasons more, why God permits evils and heresies, one in reference to the good, the other in reference to the wicked: which, tho' not immediately implied in the parable, will be thought, I hope, not altogether foreign to the subject. The first is mentioned by St. Paul, there must be also heresies among you, faith he, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.
On the PARABLE you*: there must δει oportet—not from any natural necessity, as if they were good in themselves, but it is expedient for them to be, they must arise from the present corrupt, fallen, disordered state of men and things:—that God produceth good from them, is a proof not of their usefulness, but of his over-ruling wisdom and power and goodness.—Herefies therefore, as appears from these words of St. Paul, tend to the manifestation of those who are found in the faith and doctrine, and so are approved in the sight of God. And thus he is pleased to make them serviceable to the good seed, the children of the kingdom giving them by means hereof an opportunity "to exercise their patience, their wisdom, their charity: thus raising in the minds of men a love of the truth: making it better understood, causing it to be preached in a more clear, zealous and exemplary manner: exciting the vigilance of the pastors, to discover the wolves concealed among the flock, the tares amongst the good corn, and to make those sheep manifest, which grow in charity by feeding secretly on the truth: cleansing and purifying the vessels of mercy by the vessels of wrath to confound the devil, and to fulfil the scriptures †." Thus heresies, by the wisdom of

* 1 Cor. xi. 19. † Quesnelle on Cor.
God, are permitted for the advantage of the children of the kingdom: and he, who knows how to make this evil subservient to the encrease of his kingdom hath suffered an Ebion and Cerinthus to oppugn the divinity of his Son, that it might appear the more manifest by the gospel of St. John, written on account of their heresy: — hath suffered judaizing converts to oppose the freedom of justifying grace, that the pen of a Paul might for ever silence all adversaries, and magnify the riches of the mercy of God: and in all times hath suffered heretics and unbelievers to oppose the faith, that these who are approved, might be made manifest. And as in the case of heresy in the church, so hath God suffered evil in the world to the same end: an absolute removal of it, would be a removal from the good, of many occasions and opportunities for exerting several graces and virtues. Patience, forbearance, meekness, charity and the like would have no existence, nor could there be those afflictions and trials, and various means of good, which are now ministered to the children of the kingdom by means of evil, to prove, purify, purge and perfect them. "Many other graces there are, as one observes *, that there would

† Erskine's sermons, Vol. II.
be no use for, if all our enemies and corruptions were destroyed at once. Triumphant graces, such as love and joy in their perfection would make a perfect heaven: but there are militant graces that must be exercised also, while we are on earth, and which there will be no use for in heaven: for example, if all wants were supplied fully, there would be no need of poverty of Spirit; if all sins were wholly destroyed, there would be no more need of godly sorrow; if death were already swallowed up of victory, there would be no need of the desire of death, nor of longing for heaven: if vision were already come, there would be no need of faith, as 'tis a militant grace, fighting its way many times through doubts and fears, and want of sight and sense: if fruition were come, there would be no need of hope: if all trouble were at an end, there would be no need of patience.' Nay, indeed were all evil removed from men and things, the present state could not then be what it now is, a state of probation; take away sin and evil, and this world is a paradise, and men are ἀγγελοὶ, equal to the angels of God: for this it is which constitutes the happiness of that holy city; out of which the fearful and unbelieving and abominable are cast, and where neither sin nor sor-
row, crying, pain or death shall in any wise enter.

Thus we see one good reason more, why God suffers evil, which is plainly for the advantage of the righteous: but 2dly, that he hath wise and good ends even in behalf of the tares, of the wicked, in suffering them not immediately to be destroyed, will appear very manifest, when we recollect that his patience and forbearance leadeth to repentance, and that sinners having had space and time allowed them, have frequently magnified the riches of his mercy, and become of the children of the wicked one, children of the kingdom: for though tares can never, by any work of man, become good seed: yet, by the almighty grace of God, for which we all, miserable sinners, are bound continually to adore him—yet by his grace, children of the wicked one may become children of the kingdom; sinners may become saints: enemies may be made the sons and friends of God, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Had Paul been plucked up, when a blasphemher, a persecutor and injurious, or Matthew while engaged in unlawful gain: had Peter been plucked up while cursing and swearing, and denying his master: or Magdalen while burning in the flames of impure lust: had Austin...
been rooted up when abandoned to all the impurities of sin, or lost in the gross errors and heresies of the Manichees—of how much glory had the grace of almighty God been deprived in the conversion of these to the faith; of how much good had the church been deprived, which hath followed from their conversion and labours?

And indeed there is nothing which more abundantly manifests the unspeakable goodness of God, than this tender forbearance, this gracious long-suffering of his towards sinners: for which we are bound perpetually to praise him on our own behalfs: and for a continuance of which we should never cease to pray both for ourselves and others: since our many and daily provocations so justly deserve his wrath, and would certainly draw it down, were his compassions only like those of men, were he only merciful as we are merciful: for did any one provoke us so grossly, so frequently, so repeatedly as we provoke and offend our heavenly Father: should we be so ready to pardon? would not our resentment be kindled? would not our friendship and regard wholly be extinguished? too well, from sad experience we are assured, that it would: but his mercies fail not: yea they as much exceed all the mercies of the most
most merciful, as he is superior to the lowest of his creatures: the reflection on which should fill us with the highest love to so amiable a being, who is not willing that any should perish: and therefore permits the tares to continue among the wheat, hoping they may, through grace, be changed and converted unto good: for he desireth, that all should come to repentance and live; for he is a God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: BUT WILL BY NO MEANS CLEAR THE GUILTY, the impenitent, hardened unbeliever, who rejects all his offers of grace and love, and chooses death rather than life in the error of his ways: seeing he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, vindicate all his ways, and shew that they were just and right by rendering to every man according to his works; to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour and glory and immortality, will be rendered eternal life: but unto them that are contentious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil: which naturally leads me to the resolution of the
IIIId and last question suggested in this parable, namely, what the issue or event of evil, however it may pass off here unpunished, will be in that state where all things shall be set right: and let us remember, that a knowledge of this future state and this great appointed day, is of itself entirely sufficient to satisfy all our doubts, supposing we could see no reasons at present capable of justifying the ways of God: if all that hath gone before and all that can be offered on this subject, should be deemed utterly insufficient to a resolution of the great question in hand, let humility learn to wait with lowly expectation, seeing the great hour is approaching, when the judge of all the earth will demonstrate that all his ways are equal; that holiness cannot fail of his favour and eternal love: that iniquity shall by no means escape unpunished. An awful consideration: which as it cannot but awaken in the sinner's mind dreadful apprehensions, so must it console and support the children of the kingdom however grieved, oppressed, or suffering here below: when they know that their redemption draweth nigh, how can they fail to lift up their heads? and, in truth, a full persuasion of the great truths delivered in this last part of the parable, are suf-
sufficient to comfort every mourner in Sion, as well as to abash and terrify every bold despiser of the great judge of heaven and earth.

Are God's ways unequal? are not his judgments just? doth vice flourish and abound? and is humble virtue depressed and persecuted? do tares grow up with the wheat? are evils suffered in the world, and heresies permitted in the church? behold and see the great day is coming, when he will terribly avenge himself, and all shall join in that triumphant song of Moses and the Lamb, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou king of Saints.

And thus his dealings are now represented in the sacred scriptures to us, that every mouth may be stopped, that none may dare to implead the God of justice, but that all may plead themselves guilty, and so find mercy before him.

For, let both grow together, faith the houholder, unwilling to suffer his servants to gather up the tares, lest they should root up the wheat also,—let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, gather up together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. Which our great prophet and teacher thus unfolds to us; The harvest is the end of the world, and

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the reapers are the angels: as therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world: the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father; even as the prophet Daniel foretold, and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever *.

He that hath ears to hear let him hear. Thus shall iniquity meet its due reward, thus shall evil for ever be done away: thus shall the righteous be crowned with everlasting glory: and thus shall the kingdom of Christ be free from all things that offend, for ever and ever.—The better to understand, as far as in this dark state we are able, the blessedness of that glorious kingdom, and its inestimable privileges;—and so on the contrary, the miseries of an eternal confinement in a furnace of sulphureous flame, kindled by the breath of an angry God, where are heard only constant weepings, dire wailings, and

* Dan. xii. 2, 3.
sad gnashings of the teeth, through bitter recollection of past follies, and the intolerable severity of present sufferings: the better, I say, to conceive a just dread hereof and an ardent longing, which surely must be attended with a zealous seeking, after that heavenly city: I will conclude the present discourse with a brief description of that glorious city, the New Jerusalem, and such of its divine privileges and properties, as are mentioned in the last chapters of the Revelation: where though many things are by no means to be understood in the letter, yet I shall not dare to attempt an explication of them, since the words in which they are at present delivered, give us far more lofty and sublime ideas, than any of uninspired writers can do: and such as can be exceeded by nothing, but real vision, and the transporting prospect of that divine city, when the triumphant Redeemer shall deliver us from this mortal prison, and welcome us into that unspeakably glorious abode: and oh that he would now give us all ears to hear, hearts to desire and pant after this city of the living God, and grace to purify ourselves as he is pure, that we may see him in bliss and enjoy him eternally in glory.

I. St. John, after a prospect of the general resurrection and judgment, when whatsoever
was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire, informs us, that he saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea: no more any thing frail, fleeting, changeable, tempestuous. And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The magnificence and beauty of this glorious city, are described in the most exalted terms: It is said to have the glory of God; and her light, faith St. John, was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as the crystal: it had a wall great and high: and had twelve gates, and at the gates, twelve mighty angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel: on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates: and the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; probably to represent to us, that whosoever inhabit that glorious city, have built only on that faith which the apostles once delivered to the saints: upon which the church is truly built, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the
the head corner stone *. — And he that talked with me, faith the Apocalypt, had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with a reed twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall of it an hundred and forty four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, the angel. Thus you have the extent of the city, and its exquisite proportion described in the most magnificent terms: four-square with a wall around it, on each side three gates, and at each gate a mighty angel: its length and breadth and height being equal, and each astonishingly great, at least several thousand miles! what are all the most mighty cities of the world compared to this great city the new Jerusalem! Jerusalem, in Palestine, was, as we are told, thirty three furlongs in its whole circumference. Alexandria thirty in length, ten in breadth; Nineveh is reported to have been four hundred furlongs round, and the great city of Babylon four hundred and eighty! but what in-

* Alluding, says Henry on the place, to the twelve apostles, verse 14, whose gospel doctrines are the foundations upon which the church is built. See the Shepherd of St. Hermas, 9 similitude, B. 3.
inconsiderable villages are all these, and all the cities of the world to the new Jerusalem, one of whose sides measured twelve thousand furlongs! — From hence we understand the immense greatness and magnificence of the city, with its beautiful order and exact proportion: to give us the comfortable assurance, that how small soever the number of real christians may appear in any age or time, the number of the inhabitants of that blessed city will not be small: but thousand thousands will enjoy its glory, and ten thousand times ten thousand will minister to the great Lord of it; who moreover gives us to know by this description, that every thing relating to the happiness of that state, is prepared with the greatest order and exactness.

2. But to see further how very excellent things are spoken of this city of God, let us consider the matter whereof it is built, and we shall then behold in its beauty and riches the poverty of all earthly grandeur. The building of the wall of it is of jasper: and the city is pure gold, like unto pure glass. And the foundations of the walls of the city are garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation is jasper: the second sapphire: the third chalcedony: the fourth an emerald, the fifth sardonyx: the sixth, sardius: the seventh, chrysolite: the eighth, beryl: the ninth, a topaz: the tenth, a crysoprasus: the eleventh, a jacinth: the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. All the most beautiful, excellent and precious things in nature are applied to elevate our ideas to the most exalted pitch, concerning the beauties and grandeur of this most magnificent city: the whole of whose structure is represented to us under what images are the most valuable and exquisite, namely precious stones, pearls and gold.

3. But the internal glories of the city far transcend its outward ones: there shall be no temple there, we are told: the worshippers shall
shall indeed worship there in spirit and in truth: when the end is attained, the means are no longer useful: for the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it: there shine forth all their inexpressible glories, and there stream forth all the boundless blessings of their inexhaustible love: hence it is, that the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof: and the nations of them that are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring all their glory and honour to it. All the glory and majesty of earthly courts shall be, as it were, united there: and far, very far exceeded: and in this respect particularly, namely, that the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day, that is, shall never be shut, since there will be only one perpetual, bright, and glorious day in that celestial abode, for there shall be no night there. And there shall be no night there, faith he again, and they need no candle neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

4. And as the city shall thus be blessed with the essential and immediate presence of the almighty, whose glory shall perpetually enlighten it, and whose glad beams of love shall crown it with eternal blessedness and joy,
with day eternal, with eternal life and peace; so shall the delighted inhabitants of this blessed city enjoy unspeakable privileges, suitable to the magnificence of the city and the grandeur of the mighty Lord of it. I heard a great voice out of heaven, says St. John, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them: and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. This is consummated happiness: this privilege includes all the rest: and behold the blessed consequences, God, even their God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death: the source of all tears, the cause of all sorrow: and as no more death, so no more sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. So that those who are found worthy to enter into this glorious city, shall be crowned with immortality; for the cause of death shall utterly be done away: and all the sad consequences of sin shall cease: for crowned with immortality they shall enjoy consummate bliss, strangers to sorrow and pain, to anguish of mind or anguish of body they
they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, but share uninterrupted peace, and everlasting joy: be that overcometh, faith Christ, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son.—Such will be the unspeakable blessedness of those who overcome through the blood of the Lamb: and oh! how worthy is it of all our patience, all our sufferings and all our labours? whatever of high or lovely, of great, glorious or excellent there is, in all the monarchies of the world, is altogether not a dust of the balance, is altogether less than nothing, compared to the superlatively excellent glory which shall cloath those children of God, those children of the kingdom, who shall shine as the sun in the firmament, having overcome here below, having kept the commandments of their God, and so having right to enter in, through the gates into the city!—They shall be delivered from all inward cause of evil: they shall be invested with the highest glories, they shall shine as the sun, cloathed with the transcendently splendid righteousness of their divine Redeemer: and all outward molestation shall also be for ever removed thence: all things that offend, and they that do iniquity shall be gathered out and separated from that perfectly right-
righteous and holy city. The fearful † and unbelieving, those who had neither courage nor faith to confess Christ and so to overcome, and the abominable, and murderers and whoremongers and all forcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. Yea, there shall in no wise enter into this city any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life ‡.

† There is then a fearfulness, says Quesnelle, which alone is capable of damning us: as well as these other crimes. It is not only that which causeth us to deny the faith, but that likewise which causeth us to be wanting to important and essential duties through the fear of hurting our fortune, our ease, &c. And of creating ourselves enemies. No man has a greater or more heroic soul, than he who has a great faith, and who fears nothing but God, and to displease him. This is the true generosity. And the true cowardice is, not to have the courage to overcome ourselves, nor to renounce the love of the creatures through the hope of enjoying the creator.

‡ The abovementioned excellent author observes again upon this v. 27. Let us remember, that we entered into this holy city only by divesting ourselves of the old man, and cloathing ourselves with Jesus Christ, and that we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb in order to become his members. Let us be faithful to the promises made at baptism. Let us endeavour earnestly to purify ourselves completely by repentance, and to destroy every thing which renders us unworthy of God. O Lamb of God, who blottest out the sins of the whole world, blot out every thing
God grant, that we may all be found written in that book! for surely the apprehension of being cast, for ever cast out of so glorious, so blessed a city,—the sight of which, and the hearing of the celestial melody re-founding perpetually from its golden dwellings, will highly aggravate the tortures of the damned, howling in the dark sulphurous lake, where light and hope can never come—Surely, I say, the apprehension, the dread hereof, as well as the desire to become citizens of so divine a city, will cause us to gather out from ourselves and our own hearts, all things that offend, that so we may overcome through Christ, have him for our God, and be called—O gracious privilege much to be desired.—be called HIS SONS for ever and ever.

And to render us wholly without excuse, if we will not separate from all iniquity, and do his works now, while it is called to day, as well as to encourage us in our sincere desires and endeavours after the fruition of this new Jerusalem—behold, how he exhorteth us, how with infinite love he inviteth us to thing which displeaseth thee in me. Write thy law for ever in my heart, that I may be written in the book of eternal life: as well as in that of the divine adoption which thou hast begun in me by thy grace.
be partakers of this unspeakable felicity. And he faith unto me, it is done: I am Alpha and Omega: the beginning and the end, I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely! Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life; and may enter in thro' the gates into the city. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come: and let him that heareth say, come: and let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely! He that testifieth these things, faith, surely I come quickly. Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
DISCOURSE IV.

On the PARABLE,

Of the PEARL of great PRICE.

Matt. xiii. 45—46.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

ERE we to judge of the gifts of Christ, and the blessings of his kingdom, from the general conduct of men in the world, we should be so far from esteeming them a Pearl of great price, that we should suppose them the least valuable of all goodly pearls, and the merchandise of them by no means worthy to be compared with the merchandise of silver and fine gold.
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gold. But if we take our estimate from whence we are not likely to be deceived, and are willing to believe the infallible word of truth, we shall on the contrary find the things of this world so little worthy to be compared with the kingdom of heaven, that all its most goodly pearls are but as dung and dross to that one pearl of great price, the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which is more precious than rubies, and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared with it.—To shew us which, our Saviour, in the present short parable, compares it to a pearl of great price, for which a wise merchant conscious of its worth, and resolved to purchase it, readily parts with all he hath, and gladly gives up every other goodly pearl, which he had hitherto been seeking, that he might get into his possession this one supereminently precious jewel. Whereby we are taught, that the kingdom of heaven, at present in grace, hereafter in glory, will be found of those who sincerely seek for it, so truly excellent, precious and desirable, that they will readily forego every earthly good, sell all, deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow* their master,

* Matt. xvi. 24.

M 2
On the PARABLE

so be they may but secure unto themselves salvation, and enter into the joy of their Lord.†

In this parable, which must have been peculiarly acceptable, and sensibly felt by the disciples of our Lord, who really had forsoaken all and followed him,—Christ

Ist. Compares the kingdom of heaven to a pearl of great price, wherein the excellency of this kingdom is set forth.

II. He compares the seekers of this kingdom to a merchant-man ‡, seeking goodly pearls, wherein we are taught

† St. Jerom upon the parable says, bonæ margaritæ sunt lex & prophætæ. Unum autem est pretiosissimum margaritarum, scientia salvatoris & sacramentum passionis ejus & resurrectionis arcanum. Quod cum invenerit homo negotiator similis Pauli apostoli, omnia legis, prophetarumque, mysteria & observationes præfænas in quibus inculpate vixerat quasi purgamenta contemnuit & quifquillas, ut Christum lucifaciat.

‡ Just before this he delivered another to the same purport concerning treasure hid in a field: "The parable of a treasure which a man found hidden in a field, says Macknight, was designed to teach us that some meet with the gospel as it were by accident, and without seeking it, agreeably to what the prophet Isaiah says chap. lxv. 1. That God is found of them that seek him not. On the other hand the parable of the merchant seeking goodly pearls, informs us, that mens receiving the gospel is oftentimes the effect of a diligent search after truth." Grotius makes exactly the same observation; and adds, that as the Messiah was found by many who sought him not, so many at the time of his coming were seeking for and earnestly expecting him among the Jews.—Messiah avidis animis espectabant. See the author. the
of the PEARL of great PRICE. the diligence and application necessary to find salvation. And

IIIIdly, He informs us of the qualifications and dispositions of mind which are necessary to render us partakers of this salvation, under the image of the merchant's selling all that he had and buying this pearl.

I propose to speak of these three things—Of the excellency of Christ and his grace—Of the duty of seeking him—And of the necessity of selling all to buy or obtain him: which done, I will conclude with some general remarks.

Ist. Then I am to speak of the excellency of Christ, his grace and glory as made known by and offered to us in the gospel. This is represented to us under the image of a Pearl of great price: which it is probable our Saviour the rather used, as the merchandise of pearls was very common amongst the Jews, and they were esteemed the most valuable part of merchandise§. Naturalists tell us, that pearls are formed in a wonderful manner, in those shell-fish wherein they are found: (whence the shell is called the mother of pearl). At a certain season § of the year, say


§ This account of the matter and spiritual application we have in many of the fathers—Theophylact, from Chrysostom:
say they, these shell-fish open themselves and take in a certain moist dew, after which they are as it were impregnated, until they produce the pearl: so that they have, as it seems, their birth from heaven. And in this particular, some writers on the present parable, have supposed a parallel between Christ in his marvellous birth from heaven and the pearl. And this parallel they carry much farther: since the great price of pearls—the hidden and medicinal virtues in them—their orient brightness and beauty, have all been applied to the riches of Christ's grace, his hidden virtues, and healing influence on the soul—the greatness of his glory, and the transcendent beauty and excellency of his person.—Be this, as it may, the sacred scriptures frequently use this image for that wisdom, which is from above, and so for him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom: a passage or two from Job, and from the Proverbs, (to the latter of which it is more than probable our Saviour in this parable refers) may suffice. And by the way we may

\[\text{Job}^{7:17}\text{ observes, } \Theta\alpha\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\alpha \circ \omega\rho\omega\nu \beta\sigma\tau\nu \text{— The sea is an emblem of the present life. Christ is the one precious pearl. Then he gives an account nearly similar to that in the text—see the author—Cheminzt gives the same account and carries on the comparison, as observed above, which is very much enlarged by Keach, who hath applied the pearl } \& \text{c. in every minute particular to Christ.} \]
observe, that it is no wonder pearls were so well known to Job and the Hebrews, since the finest pearls are found in the Persian gulph, and upon a coast near the borders of Arabia, from whence Idumæa and Palestine are not far distant. In the first, Job xxviii. 12, we read, but where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, it is not in me: and the sea saith, it is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weigh'd for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold! no mention shall be made of coral or pearls, for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.—Similar to which is what we read Proverbs. iii. 13. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: for the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her: length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour: her ways
ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of Life to them that lay hold of her, and happy is every one that retaineth her. And again Chap. viii Ver. 11 Wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things, that may be desired are not to be compared to it. Riches and honour are with her, yea durable riches and righteousness. Thro' this whole eighth chapter you have the most sublime and elevated description of Christ, the true wisdom, his excellency and eternity, which I could wish you seriously to read and carefully to remember.

Such is that divine wisdom, which is in Christ, and is his gift to men; the excellencies of whereof are thus set forth in the most strong and beautiful terms: and which we shall best and most distinctly discern if we consider briefly the divine author of this wisdom,—its transcendent superioritity over all the things of this life—the present peace and happiness it bestows—and above all the future happiness in an everlasting life of glory.

The excellencies of the divine author and giver of this wisdom, our most blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, are very manifest from the greatness of his person, and the greatness of his work. For he is not only a man, but the most high God—God and man in one person,
person, being the unchangeable JEHOVIAH from all eternity, God blessed for ever, the great and only potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent: who being in the form of God, very God of very God, of one substance with the Father, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!—* And the work, for which this great and glorious person so humbled himself, was no less great and glorious: it was for the redemption of a world, which none but he could redeem, who at first created it, who at first made it and all things: and which he redeem'd by a method so stupendous, as no less display'd the greatness of the work and the greatness of his person, than the greatness, the unspeakable greatness of his love to fallen man!

Needs then must that wisdom be excellent, and that grace desireable which so adorable a person himself procur'd and brought down

* See Bp. Bull's Defenso fidei Nicæae—which most useful and incomparable work for the benefit of the English reader is translated by Holland, 2 vol. 8vo.

|| John i. 3.
On the PARABLE

from heaven, and for which his boundless love wrought such a work, and paid so immense a price! and compare it with all the things of this life, then you will soon discern its evident superiority, then you will find, that its price is indeed above rubies, and that all the things that may be desired are not to be compared with it. Riches, pleasures, honours, the three great idols of mankind, the Baals to which so many thousands bow the knee, are poor when plac'd in competition with this heavenly wisdom. Riches make themselves wings and fly away—how foolish then to set our hearts upon that which is not*? Pleasures cloy and grow insipid: our very appetites forsake us, and four disappointment corrodes the anxious heart: Honours the very bubbles of popular breath, to day are given, and to morrow as capriciously denied: and when possessed they can neither remove anxiety of heart or pain of body, nor cure the tymanpy of pride or jaundice of envy; which like pale fiends, still tread hard on the steps of ambition; and plume themselves in the splendor of earthly honours.—But let the grace of God and the wisdom from above possess the happy heart, and these corrosives all are healed, these burn-

* Prov. xxiii. 5.
ings all are cooled: peace, peace unspeakable serenes the soul, and happiness founded on a rock, despises the roaring of the waves below, and stands unshaken amidst every earthly trial. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, says, Solomon, and all her paths are peace. No longer a slave to the ever increasing and never satisfied desire of wealth, she learns her happy followers to be content in every state, and with cheerfull resignation submit to the good will of their heavenly Father: no longer anxious in the pursuit after worldly pleasures, she leads her followers to a new scene of happiness, and teaches them to find consummate felicity, in the love and contemplation of him, at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore: no longer ambitious of the honours which mortality bestows, she holds forth to all her children a crown of glory, which engageth all their hearts, and causeth them to run with patience and with joy the race that is set before them.—These are some of the gifts which that divine wisdom gives to those into whose heart she hath entered, whereto she hath said peace, from which she hath remov'd the guilt, the fear, the punishment of sin, by leading them to that divine peace-maker, thro' faith in whom we have peace with God!—Happy they who live beneath the influence of
of this heavenly wisdom:—pardon'd, reconcil'd, adopted: content like good and obedient children with all their wise Father's disposals; blessed, abundantly blessed in the sweet contemplation of his infinitely gracious love, and ever aspiring in ardent desire and with holy ambition to enter into his glorious courts, and to reign with him for ever and ever!

And herein more especially the excellency of this precious pearl is discovered: the kingdom of grace is not only excellent on account of the divine author of it, God and man in one person: it is not only excellent on account of its transcendant superiority over all the things of this world, which are but mere unsatisfying vapours: it is not only excellent on account of the present peace and happiness which it bestows: but it is excellent, supernaturally excellent on account of that future unending life of inconceivable glory, secured for all those, who enter into the kingdom of grace here, who are redeemed by Christ and favoured with the earnest of love. This enhances far beyond all estimation the value of this pearl of great price: but of this future glory, I spoke at large in the last discourse: we may add, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them.
them that love him. These are sure and certain to such, as are already by grace adopted into the family of God, who have sought and found, fold all and bought the pearl, and so are become children of the kingdom. And were not eternity secured, the possession of all the fine gold, pearls and rubies beneath the sun, would be of no more consequence to us, than the possession of so much dust and so many pebbles, when we come to die.—As therefore this alone is the one thing certain in this uncertain life, that we must die, and after death be judged; let us be careful to secure to ourselves this pearl of great price, the kingdom of heaven, the excellencies of which if we would but duly weigh, and rightly consider, we should think no fatigue too great, no diligence and application too unwearied that we might find and obtain it: which naturally leads me to the

IId thing proposed, namely, The duty of seeking the kingdom of heaven, or gospel salvation, represented to us in this parable by the merchant's seeking goodly pearls.

Oh how will these merchants of the earth, condemn the spiritual merchants: how will their conduct sadly convict, at that day, the conduct of but too many professors of Christ's gospel! Let us be wise in time and prevent that judgment by judging ourselves now, and escape
escape that condemnation by learning wisdom from them.—See how industriously they pass from clime to clime*: explore new regions and subject themselves to all the inclemencies of varying seasons: see how they trust themselves and their substance, in a frail bottom of boards, to the mercy of contending elements—winds and waves! and all this to what end—to get a livelihood, to raise a fortune, to amass much wealth, and then set down quiet and easy at the noon of life! and yet all these perils, thus undergone, and for this end, they are by no means certain, that they shall attain the end desired: a thousand and ten thousand evils stand in the

* Horace in his first epistle B. i. v. 45, describes the anxious merchant beautifully.

Impiger extremos curris mercator ad Indos,
Per mare pauperiem fugiens, per faxa, per ignes:
Ne cures ea quae stultæ miraris & optas,
Discere & audire & meliori credere non vis?

To distant climes, that burn with other suns,
Thro' seas and rocks the undaunted merchant runs
In search of wealth—yet heedless to attend
To the calm lectures of some wiser friend:
Who bids him scorn what now he most desires,
And with an idiot's ignorance admires.

Francis.

Even the darkest Heathens could see the poverty, the vanity, the folly of a wild love of the world, and its transitory gifts! What can excuse us in this broad day light if we love the world and the things of the world, and so have not the love of the Father in us!
way: here are storms ready to devour them: there are rocks ready to split the foundering vessel; here are enemies lying in wait to destroy: one leak may in a moment plunge their vessel, themselves and all their hopes, in the bottomless deep:—And should they secure the *goodly* pearls, the merchandise they have fought with so much peril and labour, yet ere the day of enjoyment comes, when they think to reap the fair reward of all*, in the midst of all their hopes, death gives the fatal sting, and the soul rushes unprepared to meet its God.—Or should not this be the case, should they enjoy the utmost of their wishes, and live to hoar age in the full fruition of all they have acquired, yet death, that necessary evil, will come at last; and after death a day of trial will succeed, when all they have procur'd, and all they have enjoy'd here below, will stand them in no stead, nor arrest one moment the irrevocable sentence.

And shall not all their labour, all their perils, in search of an uncertain, earthly, transitory good, sorely condemn us, if we will not learn, from them, to seek with industrious

† Thus *Milton* in his fine poem of *Lycidas*.

But the fair Guerdon, when we hope to find
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind fury with the abhorred sheers,
And slits the thin spun life.
care and zeal after that pearl of great price, which, like the merchant's treasure, can never fail us, which is ever certain to them that seek it, which will well repay our toils, and never disappoint our hopes. We trade for the best of merchandise, all the riches of the world are not to be compared with it: our gain is sure, no loss can ever harm us: nothing can deprive us of it: and we have no perils or dangers to undergo in any respect equal to the merchant of this world; and our gain is eternal, whatever we may suffer to procure it here, eternity is long enough to reward us. Who would not be merchants upon such conditions as these?—assured that they should attain the riches they carefully sought for, yea and much more than they could expect; that nothing should deprive them of these riches, and that they should serve to their future and most consummate happiness?—Yet even upon these terms men can scarcely be persuaded to venture upon the search after heavenly things: they can scarcely be persuaded to believe and hope in a God of truth, tho' they live by faith and hope, faith in ships, in seas and men—hope in perishing, fallible goods: they can scarcely be persuaded to venture, tho' they are infallibly assured that if they will seek, they shall find: tho' they are infal-

libly
libly assured, that what they shall find is well worth their seeking,—even a pearl of great price, which will not only enrich them here but eternally: tho' fully assured hereof, even by the mouth of God himself, we still find them more ready to commit themselves to a plank and an ocean than to trust in the promises of the living God: more ready to hope for happiness from transitory possessions, than from the possession of the future glory!

And indeed were there as much danger in seeking the one as the other, as many perils by sea and by land for the merchant in spiritual as for the merchant in temporal things: it would be less surprising that the things which are seen should overbalance the things which are not seen: and, God knows, such very treacherous hearts have we, and so very little love for his unspeakable goodness, that if such and so great difficulties and perils attended the search after the things of heaven, as after the things of earth, I fear there would be then, much fewer seekers than there are even now.—But blessed be his name the search is not so difficult, nay it is so very easy, that this again greatly enhances the wonder, why so few seek, and will mightily enhance our condemnation, if we do not seek. The depth faith, it is not in me, and the sea faith,
it is not in me. We have no need to say, who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down: or who shall descend into the deep, that it to bring up Christ again from the dead: But the word is nigh us, even in our mouth and in our heart: that is the word which we preach:

In this word the precious pearl is to be sought: and that by sincere faith: for if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, continues St. Paul, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, thou shalt gain the pearl of great price. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*. This is to be sought in the word in general, and in all the exercises of it in particular, as hearing, reading, meditating: he is to be sought in all the means of grace, by a solemn renewal of our baptismal covenant, and by a solemn and serious participation of the Lord's supper, where if a man doth not seek him, I know not how he can hope to find him at all, I know not how he can properly be called a christian, who refuses obedience to his Lord's last dying positive command, the memorial of his love, the seal of

* See Rom. x. 10. St. Chrysostom's incomparable commentary on this epistle, which we can never study too much—and on this verse in particular.
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his everlasting covenant, the representation of his all-sufficient sacrifice, and the source of new and spiritual life.—And as in the sacraments the grand means of grace, so by fervent prayer must we diligently seek for him, who hath assured us, that so seeking we shall find, seek and ye shall find: ask and ye shall have: knock, and it shall be opened unto you *. I love them that love me, faith he, and they that seek me early shall find me †. 'Tis good to seek him early; early in the day of youth, early in life: "a flower when offered in the bud, is no vain sacrifice" early in the desires of the heart, before all other things: and early upon every affliction and trouble which he throws upon us; 'tis good to fly to and acknowledge God in the very beginning of them: and if we were to add, early in the morning every day, we should but add a necessary duty: the bride in the Canticles advises, let us get up early to the vineyards: and David declares, as for me I will sing of thy power, and will praise thy mercy betimes in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the time of my trouble. Thus must we seek for the kingdom of God: by a due attendance upon all the means, and particularly by searching the word with faith

* Matt. vii. 7.
† Prov. viii. 17.
and prayer, and that with all diligence, perseverance, and full purpose to sell all when we find this pearl of great price, as convinced of its transcendent excellency and our own great need of it.

And when we consider what it is that we have to sell, we shall gladly suffer the loss of all those things, and count them but dung that we may win Christ, which is the

IIIId and last particular, whereto the parable refers us; the merchant having at length found one pearl of great price, sold all that he had and bought it.

As a key to which, St. Paul's words and conduct may be quoted from the third chapter to the Philippians. If any other man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, faith he, I have more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the flock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee: concerning zeal persecuted the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless.—But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things: and do count them but dung, that I may
may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. — So that you see St. Paul sold all his legal righteousness, all those things wherein he before trusted: he sold all self-merit, all dependance upon any works of his own, all his former privileges, and gladly parted with them that he might purchase, buy, gain χρηματον, or win Christ. So must we sell all self-righteousness, disclaim all self-merit, and give to Christ alone the honour of our salvation. And as we must sell all self-righteousness, all those goodly pearls which we fought and admired before for the purchase of this precious pearl.—So must we sell all our former evil doings, all sin, with its filthy works and abominable lusts; we must follow that great command of Christ, deny ourselves, our sinful, fallen, miserable selves, take up our cross daily, daily mortify the old man with all his affections and lusts, and follow Christ, follow his blessed example, conform ourselves to his divine pattern and precepts. Nor is this all, we must not only sell all self-confidence, and depend on Christ alone for salvation, we must not only sell all sin and lust; but we must sell all that we have, our own lives, and all things most dear and near to us,
us, that is, we must distribute liberally to the relief of our brethren, according to our ability, and stand in readiness to part with all we are and all we have, whenever Christ calls either by death or persecution; willing to give up friends, wealth, and life, rather than lose him, who hath told us, that unless we forsake at all times in disposition, and in reality when he commands—father and mother and wife and lands, yea and our own life also, for his sake and the gospel, we cannot be his disciples. And who hath promised, that there is no man that leaves house, or parents, or brethren, or wife or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time [through peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost] and in the world to come life everlasting.

Thus must we sell all to obtain, to buy or gain the kingdom of heaven: to win Christ, as St. Paul expresseth it: and this very selling of all is the whole purchase money we have to give. For we can buy no otherwise than by selling thus: we can gain Christ no otherwise than by parting with all things contrary to his cross and love. We have no good works, nothing to offer, nothing to present unto him, since every good and every perfect gift flows from his free grace and bounty to us, nay, is the consequence of our obtaining this pre-
precious pearl: before we possess which, we have nothing but the tattered rags of our own righteousness at best, and many, very many evil works to sell and give in exchange for the righteousness which is of God by faith. Hence when the prophet exhorts to come and buy, he adds such conditions as well suit such poor bankrupt sinners: Ho, every one that thirsteth, faith he, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and price. Agreeable to which, Christ promises in the Revelation, I will give unto him that is athirst, of the water of life FREELY: and again, let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will let him take of the water of life FREELY.

Thus must we sell all to buy this pearl of great price: immediately and without reserve we must sell all our sins, all our self-righteousness, self-love and self-confidence; and all that we have we must so sell, as to be ready to part with them upon every call of the great master—father, mother, wife, children, lands, yea and our own life also. Upon these terms he will freely give us the riches of his unspeakable grace, adopt us into the family of God, and crown us with a right to the eternal kingdom. And who would not gladly make such an exchange, who would not gladly sell all that
they have, all that sin, the world and Satan can bestow to obtain so precious a pearl, whose transcendant excellencies words cannot express, heart cannot conceive.

Thus then I have shewn you the excellencies of the kingdom of heaven, of Christ, the purchaser and giver of it, of that present peace which is the beginning and earnest of it, and of that future glory which is the blissful consummation of it.—And as the knowledge hereof surely cannot fail to inspire us all with a desire to obtain this kingdom, I have next shewn you where and how it is to be sought, and urged some lively motives to the seeking of it from the practice of earthly merchants, whose diligence, assiduity and application, are excellent lessons to arouse and instruct the spiritual merchants, the seekers after this pearl of great price—And then when seeking and finding it, we might not be disappointed through ignorance of its price, I have shewn in the last place what must be given in exchange for it, and what you must necessarily sell, that you may be able to purchase this rich inestimable jewel. I will conclude with some general observations.

There have been in the golden days of Christianity, those who have counted with St. Paul all things but dung, for the excellency of
of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. There have been who have really sold all, and laid it at the apostles' feet: there have been who have not counted their own lives dear, but gladly resigned them amidst flames and racks and tortures to win the riches of a Redeemer's love.—But now, alas! though the pearl is no way diminished in price, though Christ is equally lovely, equally excellent, the fairest amongst ten thousand, to day, yesterday, and for ever the same: though gospel privileges are by no means abridged, but pardon, peace and joy continue still the proffered blessings to believing hearts; though heaven still invites with joys unspeakable, and pleasures for evermore: yet alas, tho' these remain the same, though the pearl is no way diminished in worth, how much is its price fallen! how low is it in the general estimation, of how little value—If we may guess from mens endeavours to buy it, if we may guess from the low exchange they are willing to make for it? for where is that self-denial, that self-abasement—where is that holy love and ardent zeal, where is that spirit of sacrifice and resignation, which so eminently distinguished the first, and which are so necessary characteristics of all true christians, of all sincere seekers after the kingdom of heaven! instead of
of an objection of all self-merit and righteousness, instead of counting all things but dung for Christ, men dare to set up their own poor, paltry doings, and imagine somewhat in their tattered, filthy deeds, more excellent and efficacious to procure life eternal, than in the everlasting righteousness of the immaculate lamb of God!—Hence many professedly in words, nay, and from the press itself, delirious to perpetuate their sin and their reproach, and more alas, in deeds openly oppose the wisdom from above; declare themselves wiser than God, disbelieve a revelation confirmed by innumerable prophecies and miracles and doctrines, such as never man taught: and disclaiming justly the name of christians would be called deists, moralists, free-thinkers, or any other name whatever, rather than the disciples of a crucified, self-denying master! these men having no value for, no true knowledge of the worth of the pearl, will never sell any thing to gain it: yet let them be told, how rich forever they may esteem themselves in the sight of the great God who is to judge them, they are but poor, bankrupt sinners, wretched and miserable, and blind and naked. And the best method they can pursue, is to take the counsel of that Jesus whom they persecute and whom they despise, and who yet ad-
advise them well, to buy of him gold tried in the
dum, that they may be rich, and white raiment that
they may be clothed, and that the shame of their
nakedness do not appear: and to anoint their eyes
fail’d up in the darkness of sin with eye-salve
that they may see.

Did the christians in days of old fell all that
they had, and thus provide for themselves bags
that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens
that faileth not, where no thief approacheth,
neither moth corrupteth?—Must they not
then have seen some transcendent excellencies
in this same precious pearl,—superior, far su-
perior to all that we can now discern? since
so far from selling the hearts of christians are
bent on getting: so far from parting with all,
you are with difficulty to be persuaded to
part with a little pittance for the relief of
their suffering brethren: since so far from
selling, and laying up treasures in heaven, the
one single view of the far greater part of man-
kind seems to be how they may lay up trea-
sures on earth, add field to field, and call the
lands after their own names. Nay, and may we
not too truly say with Mantuan, cælum est ven-
ale deusque!—Oh how doth this same worldly
spirit, how ill doth it become those who pro-
fect themselves heirs of heaven, members of
Christ, and children of the most high God!

Did
Did the first christians gladly, nay rejoicingly give up their lives as well as their possessions and righteousness for the sake of Christ, courting martyrdom, and in love with the flames, that united them forever to their God? How will they rise up against the men of this generation and condemn it! How will they rise up against those, who so far from giving up their lives for Christ, give them up wholly to the service of sin and Satan: who live in the delicate pampering and voluptuousness, cherishing of the body, as if it were the better part, and the poor soul only form'd to live in a prison and be its slave! who live in an unthinking round of pleasures, and so are dead while they live, and are more ready to attend a ball, an assembly or play, even after a sacrament! shame to think of it!—than to pay to the God of glory the holy honours due unto his name: who live not only in luxury and pleasure, but in the practice of filthy lusts, and make their bodies, which were design'd to be temples of the holy ghost, members of harlots, instruments of lasciviousness, drunkenness, blasphemy, and other vile abominations—Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, that such, many such there are, solemnly dedicated to the holy trinity in baptism,—mark'd with the cross of a crucified Saviour
of the PEARL of great Price. 189

Saviour—wash'd in the laver of regeneration! oh think, in the name and for the sake of Christ, if you dread future judgment, if you have any apprehension of approaching eternity, into which perhaps next moment you may launch—think I beseech you how highly aggravated offences must be in those, who have thus been baptised into Christ, who have been solemnly dedicated to his name and service! consider, that on this account you are not your own, but the Lord Jesus Christ's, who hath bought you with a price, who died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, which died for them and rose again. And therefore since you are his property, who thus died for, thus bought you: grieve him not, offend him not, ruin not your own souls, aggravate not your future condemnation; but now while it is called to day, seek him, serve and honour him—glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.

Aw'd and awaken'd by the danger of neglecting so great salvation: conscious of our necessity of an atoning sacrifice: struck with the bright excellencies of Christ and his grace, let us, my brethren, seek for this wisdom, as for goodly pearls, and dig for it, as for hid treasures: then shall we understand the fear of
the Lord, and find the knowledge of God! for behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding. Let us but seek in sincerity, seek in the word, in the sacraments, in prayer, early, diligently, and with hearts athirst for God: and we shall soon find to the comfort and refreshment of our souls. We shall soon find that the gospel bringeth indeed glad tidings, and that he, who hath the son hath life, hath pardon, hath peace, hath all things necessary for him here, and the glorious earnest and blest assurance of eternal life hereafter. For what rest is to the weary, what bread is to the hungry, what clothing is to the naked, what sight to the blind, what liberty to the captive, what peace of mind to the troubled in heart and conscience, what pardon to a condemn'd criminal, what ease and perfect care to a man in intolerable pain and anguish: and in a word, what it is to be perfectly delivered from whatsoever is evil, either in this world or in that which is to come: such, and all these things, yea and much more is the blessed Lord Jesus to all that seek and find him: whatsoever is truly, really and spiritually good, all this he hath to bestow: so that with justice it may be said of him, all the things, that thou canst desire are not to be compared with him: he is the tree
of the PEARL of great Price. 191

tree of life to them that lay hold of him, and
happy is every one that retaineth him. Length
of days, even eternity, is in his right hand:
and in his left hand riches, incorruptible riches,
and unchangeable honour.

And when you know that he has a cure
for every wound, balm for every sore, and
consolation for every grief, that he wipes
away all tears from all eyes, enriches, blesses,
immortalizes; need I—should I trespass so
much upon your judgment, as to persuade,
as to exhort you to sell all, that you may buy
this pearl, to sell all that you may win Christ,
and be found in him, not having your own
righteousness, but that which is in the faith
of Christ, the righteousness which is of God
by faith?—Nothing we have or can have
deserves to be put in competition with him:
our own righteousness, will we be but impa-
tial, is as a filthy rag: our sins are great,
many and aggravated: how then can we stand
before the pure and holy God, who discerns
imperfection and impurity even in the highest
angels? Had we the sanctity and patience of
a Job, the zeal of a Paul, or the charity of a
Cornelius, it would be necessary for us to abhor
ourselves, as they did, to repeat in dust and
ashes before God, and to disclaim all self deserv-
ing, and self-esteem at the foot of an atoning
Saviour's
Saviour's cross. And surely 'tis no hard bargain to part with that which will certainly condemn us, that we may receive in exchange as a free gift a precious righteousness, which will never fail us.

And as to our earthly possessions, can we be unwilling to part with any of them to refresh the bowels of our suffering brethren? to feed the hungry, cloath the naked, relieve the sick and afflicted, and that more especially in this season of scarcity and distress, when the poor calleth so pathetically, when hunger pleadeth so pressingly, when misery in every form so loudly demandeth a relief and supply? O to how good use may we now through Christ employ that abundance, and those treasures he hath blessed us with! but if we employ them not thus, let us remember, that hoard we them up never so carefully, seek we them never so unweariedly, the day will come when though they forsake not us, we must forsake them: and be carried to an awful tribunal, where none of all our wealth will stand us in any stead, except that which we have laid up in heaven, by liberally bestowing it on the suffering members of Christ upon earth.

And when we look back upon the former days, and revolve in our minds the actions of our forefathers, with what joy and thanksgiving
giving should we now receive and embrace the Gospel, when by the happiness of our times we can obtain the precious pearl at so cheap a rate, and be made partakers of Christ, with so little loss, so little peril. Heretofore the profession of the Gospel and Martyrdom were connected together: a man could no sooner profess Christianity than he might expect the loss not of riches but of life, and of all things:—and how cheerfully, how gladly did many thousands thus fell all, well satisfied with the glorious bargain, and fully convinced that the exchange was infinitely favourable on their sides;—that Christ and his grace were worthy all the severest tortures they could endure! Let us contemplate the noble army of Martyrs; and while their high estimation of this pearl strikes us with conscious shame, at our base lukewarmness and vile indifference to us, let us learn at least to copy after their zeal far as we may, and give all we are now able—at least, all our sins, and all our fancied righteousness for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

At the same time remembering, that if we neglect so great salvation, such happy offers, and such inestimable privileges, there may come a day when we shall wish we had better known the things that concern our peace.
The sword of war hangs horrid over our heads: inveterate enemies burning with furious zeal are raging against us: and we have but one way to hope for a deliverance from their threatening fury: even by making the Lord our strength and our confidence, and seeking him now for our safeguard and protection, while he may be found. But if we refuse now to seek him, if we harden our hearts, close our eyes, and stop our ears, if we refuse to sell all, that we may obtain his grace and love:—then in just wrath he may let loose the scourge upon us, bid the destroying sword go thro' the land, sweep us with the besom of destruction, try us with far greater trials, and purify us in the furnace of affliction. If such days should come,—and all around us looks black and gloomy—if such days should come, how then shall we be able to sell ALL, wealth, life, houses, families, for the sake of this pearl, who now will not sell our darling sins and fancied righteousness, who now will not part with a small portion of our goods for Christ's sake to the children of affliction? — Consider this, dearly beloved in the Lord, lay it to heart, and the Lord give you a just understanding of it! and while we know that the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance,
let us not despise the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, but let us take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Rather exhort one another to day while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, &c.
DISCOURSE V.

On the PARABLE

Of the Unmerciful SERVANT.

Matt. xviii. 35.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

As the great and distinguishing blessing of the Christian Religion, is "the free and full remission of all our debts and trespasses,"—so the great and peculiar doctrine of it, is the free and full forgiveness of all injuries on our parts. Herein the christian morality is far exalted above all the most refined schemes of heathen moralists: Revenge, before the coming of Christ, so far from being esteemed criminal, was applauded and encouraged as the mark of a great and generous spirit. Nay, and by them
Of the Unmerciful Servant.

them of old time, who had clearer knowledge and better means of instruction, it was professedly taught, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy* : Nor could the contrary duty be enforced by any but him, who came at once to give the precept, and to set the example, who came—who unbounded was his love—to die, even for rebellious enemies, to bless them that cursed him, to do good to them that hated him, and to pray for those which despitefully used and persecuted him. And that the nature and necessity of this important duty, upon which our acceptance with God through Christ depends, might be fully and clearly understood—Our Saviour in answer to a question of his disciple St. Peter, delivered a beautiful and expressive Parable, the scope or chief design of which he sums up and closes in the words of my text, *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*

Flesh and blood still recoils at the doctrine of a free and full pardon of all injuries done to us, and is ever inventing some alleviating circumstances to encourage that hateful spirit of resentment, which repeated affronts are apt to raise in the heart. What, says the evil

*Matt. v. 43.*

O 3 nature
nature within us, shall I still pardon the man, still forgive when he hath added injury to injury; and though reconciled upon former offences, still aggravates the past, by adding fresh ones to them—Surely it may suffice to have forgiven him again and again—But if the offender still persists to offend, I can be under no obligation to smother my resentment, or to renew my forgiveness? Such was Peter's reasoning—Lord, said he, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?—till seven times? * Peter had no apprehension, but that there must be some limited time: He had no apprehension, that we are bound to a continual forgiveness upon our brother's submission and desire of forgiveness. But our Lord not only satisfied him as to the time, but as to the measure, and the absolute necessity of such forgiveness. Jesus faith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven †, that is, always, and at all times, without any determinate number, so often as he who hath offended, returns, ac-

* The determination of the Rabbis, as Whitby observes, in this case, runs thus, that three offences are to be forgiven, but not the fourth: And this they gathered from Amos i. 3. St. Peter puts the three and four together, as perhaps others of their Doctors did, and asks, whether he must forgive till seven times?

† See Gen iv. 24.
knowledging his offence; so often as he in-
treats you to have patience, so often are you
bound freely and fully to forgive his trespases:
As the following Parable will abundantly prove
to you.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven, the gospel
kingdom, or the kingdom of God establiished
on earth, likened unto a certain king, which
would take account of his servants. God is the
great King and Sovereign of all creatures, and
all are accountable to him as servants to a
master—He will reckon with all. Happy are
they who live sensible of this important truth.

—When he had begun to reckon, one serv-
vant was brought unto him which owed him
an immense debt—even ten thousand talents *,
a debt much greater than he was able to pay.
And such being the case, his lord com-
manded him (agreeable to the custom of those
times and places †) to be sold for a slave, and

* A Talent, says the Margin of our Bibles, is 750
ounces of silver; which after the rate of five shillings the
ounce, is 187 l. 10 s. If these were talents of gold, as
Dean Prideaux observes, this would amount to seventy
two millions sterling: if of silver, it would have been
four millions, five hundred thousand pounds. Our Lord
seems to have used it as a general expression on purpose
to intimate the number and weight of our offences against
God, and our utter incapacity of making him any satis-
faction. So Doddridge observes.

† See Nehem. v. 8. and 2 Kings iv. 1. Isa. i. 1.
his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.—The servant convinced of the justice of the sentence, and having nothing to trust to, but the mercy and clemency of his lord, fell down and with humble reverence and earnest importunity besought him, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all. The generous lord of this servant moved with compassion towards him, accepted his humiliation, and to make his happiness complete, not only loosed him from the sentence inflicted and the punishment ensuing, but freely forgave him—forgave him all the debt. An obligation one would have conceived, which must have melted his heart into gratitude towards his lord, and the tenderest sympathy to any of his brethren in the like distresses.—But see how contrary was the issue. This same servant went out from the presence of this compassionate lord, and as it were to try him, he found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him an hundred pence, a poor inconsiderable debt, in comparison of that which he himself owed his lord—yet behold the base inhumanity, uncharitableness, and hard-hearted covetousness of this servant—He laid his hands on his fellow-servant, and with violence seized him by the throat,
Of the Unmerciful Servant.

so as almost to strangle him*, and without any preface, said, *Pay me, that thou owest—

His fellow servant fell down at his feet, even as he had just before done at the feet of his lord, and besought him, in the very same words, which he himself had just before used, saying, *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.* Such a similarity of circumstances, one would have imagined, must have affected his heart, brought to remembrance his own late distress, and melted his soul into the like generous compassion, which had flowed so sweetly from his lord towards him—But his conduct was the very reverse: he would have no patience—he would shew no pity: he went, and applying to the proper magistrate, cast his unhappy fellow-servant into prison, till he should pay the debt.

But when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly afflicted and much grieved in brotherly charity both for the one and the other, upon which they came and told their lord the whole transaction. Then his lord summoning the servant to appear, fill'd with just indignation and abhorrence, said to him, *Oh thou wicked servant,* how perverse is thy behaviour, how ungrate-

* Such is the emphatical force of the original, παρ' αυτων εσπευσθη.
ful and base thy proceeding—I forgave thee all that debt, all that mighty debt which thou owedst me, because thou desiredst me; I was moved to clemency and compassion by thy intreaties and distress, and shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee—shouldst not thou much rather have forgiven him, who was thy fellow-servant and owed thee so small a sum, when I thy King and Lord had forgiven thee so immense a debt? And his lord was wroth and deliver'd him to the tormentors*, till he should pay all that was due unto him—which as he could never do, being utterly insolvent, so could he never expect to leave that place of torment."—So likewise, adds our Lord, even thus shall my heavenly Father do also to you,—thus deliver you to the tormentors, till you pay that immense debt which you owe to him, and which you can never pay, and so

* Imprisonment, as Dr. Doddridge observes, on the place, is a much greater punishment in the eastern parts of the world, than here: state-criminals especially when condemned to it, are not only forced to submit to a very mean and scanty allowance, but are frequently loaded with clogs or yokes of heavy wood, in which they cannot either lie or sit at ease: and by frequent scourgings and sometimes by racking are quickly brought to an untimely end. See Sam-meto's China, p. 225.
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must be confined eternally—so shall he do to you, if you from your hearts forgive not, if you do not cordially, sincerely and without any limitation forgive—every one, for no man is exempt from this duty—his brother, their trespasses—for we pray, forgive us our trespasses,—in the same weight and measure—as we forgive them that trespass against us; and it is remarkable, that this is the only petition in our Lord's prayer, which He at all explains or expatiates upon: but to shew us the importance of this, at the conclusion of his prayer he adds—For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.''

Such is the present parable, and from it we are taught

Ift. The obligation to and reason of this duty of forgiveness.

IIId. The nature and extent of it. And

IIId. The necessity of it, which is seen in the immediate penalty inflicted upon the neglect of it. So likewise shall my Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts, forgive not, every one, his brother their trespasses.—
Ist. Then, we are hereby shewn the obligation we are under to this duty of forgiveness. This is seen in the first part of the parable, and is expressed in the words of the King to the wicked servant, shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?—“As I forgave thee the ten thousand talents because thou didst me, so oughtest thou to have forgiven thy fellow-servant the hundred pence, when he desired thee, bound by the ties both of humanity and gratitude, of brotherly love and regard to thy master.”—And here we see our great obligation to discharge this duty. God is the great and supreme Ruler in the kingdom of heaven both as begun on earth in grace, and finished above in glory: we are all his servants, all subject, all accountable to Him: from Him we have received all that we have received; life, with all its blessings, and all its gifts, both of body and mind, is derived from the inexhaustible fountain of his divine bounty, and all that we possess, whatever qualifications or endowments He hath bestowed, to him they must be returned, and for His honour and glory they must be used, seeing, as we are told, He will take an account of his servants. That this means not
that last and general account, when our doom shall be finally and irrevocably sealed, the whole parable abundantly proves: God takes an account of his servants, or begins to reckon with them here upon earth, when his Spirit, by the ministry of the word, reproves the sinners conscience of sin, when in and by that word the careless and unthinking servants of God are summoned to give an account to Him, and stirred up to think of that great and final account, which it is dangerous to leave unsettled. Thus David was summoned by the prophet Nathan, when the Spirit of God set home to his heart the awakening declaration, Thou art the man. Thus the Ninevites were summoned by Jonah, when the awful threatening of God was denounced—Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And thus every sinner is constantly summoned, when by the word of God read or preached they are called to give an account, to repent, believe and obey the gospel.

When men neglect to hear this call, then the great Lord of his servants compels them to be brought to him, compels them to stand before him, and to acknowledge their debt, either by inflicting heavy chastisements, or by trying them in the furnace of affliction—out of which many thousands have come purified,
On the PARABLE

... who entered full of filth and defilement; and who could say, Before I was troubled I went wrong—blessed be the Lord for his afflicting hand—all glory to the God of wisdom for chastening and correcting my soul! For being brought by these afflictions to give an account to their King, then it is, that they see and confess the immense debt, the ten thousand talents, which are due to him.

We are all thus in debt to God—and so great is the debt, so innumerable the sins and offences which we have committed, so heavy their guilt, so oppressive their load, that like this servant we have nothing to pay, no means to escape and deliver ourselves; reduced to the utmost distress we can find no method from ourselves to help ourselves, but if God proceeds with us according to strict and impartial justice, we must be sold, and all that we have, that payment may be made.—We must be delivered up as wretched slaves and bankrupts into the hands of Satan our infernal master, and tormentor, and remain in that horrid slavery forever, as we shall ever be unable to

* Shakespeare speaks finely of adversity,

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

See Beauties of Shakespeare, vol. I. p. 11.
pay the debt.—In such a state of imminent danger as this, soon as our eyes are opened to it, no wonder the terrors of it drive us to our almighty Creditor, with prayers and tears entreating him to have mercy upon us, to have patience with us, while we promise him to do our utmost to pay the debt. Humble supplication and sincere repentance will never fail to move our Lord’s compassion: soon as the prodigal returns and confesses, *Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*—so soon the Father embraces him, and reinstates him in his former grace and favour. So was it with the king in the parable: moved with compassion to his suppliant and weeping servant, convinc’d of his utter inability to pay, and desirous to shew the greatness of his clemency, he freely forgives him all the debt, freely releases him from all the punishment.

And such is God’s dealings with us,—soon as our eyes are opened to see the immense debt we owe, soon as our eyes opened to see the eternal slavery destin’d for insolvent sinners, soon as we see a just God taking a strict account, soon as we are convinced of the greatness of our debt and our utter inability to pay,—then shall we fall down, worship, and implore his compassion, for the sake of him, who hath paid all our debt; and soon as we confess, and apply
ply in sincere faith and repentance, so soon will the God of mercy deliver us from the debt, freely forgive us all that we owe, and discharge us at once from the guilt, the power, and the wages of sin. And here we see our great obligation to forgive every one, his brother, their debts and trespasses: for as we are all such great debtors to God, and all have nothing to pay, and as God upon our sincere application, is faithful and just, ready and willing to forgive us the whole,—when experiencing that forgiveness, we can never be backward, we must never refuse to forgive our brother their little debts and trespasses to us, which are but as an hundred pence to ten thousand talents, compared with our many, great and aggravated offences to the sovereign majesty of heaven and earth.

So that if any one asks, why must I forgive my enemy these injuries that he hath done me; these many, these great, these repeated injuries—The answer is plain; because you yourself want forgiveness at the hands of God, and must by no means expect that He should forgive you the ten thousand talents you owe him, except you forgive your brother the one hundred pence he oweth to you; for should not you have compassion on your fellow-servant even as your Lord had pity on you? —This
---This obligation to the duty is so clear and plain to all mankind, that none, who make any pretence to common understanding can deny its truth and reasonableness---but, as in most respects is the case with men, so is it in this: when convinc'd of a duty, we are for bringing it down to our own standard, and for practising it under certain limitations, which we prescribe to ourselves: and this perhaps hath been the case with no duty more than that of forgiveness, in which men have been frequently found to deceive themselves, by supposing with St. Peter, either seven times often enough to forgive—or by mental reservations, forgiving, but not forgetting; with many other the like mistakes, which will best be removed by shewing in the IId place, the true nature and extent of the duty.

And this we are shewn abundantly in the present parable---Things sometimes are best seen by their contraries: the wicked servant will shew us what is not the true nature of forgiveness, and how we ought not to proceed; from the consequences, we shall learn how we ought. When freely forgiven of his lord, and under the strongest obligations to gratitude and love, as well as, one would have thought, the liveliest impressions of his
past danger, and now happy state, he went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, whom he treated with the greatest rudeness, barbarity, and inhumanity, denied the petition which he made even in those very words which himself had even now used to his lord, refused to be intreated of him, and with the highest rigour and unmercifulness cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

Wherein you see painted, in a lively manner, the inhuman barbarity of man to man, to whom God is long-suffering and merciful, and who cannot or will not learn compassion from that God, who is so willing to exercise it towards them. Had this servant acted as became him, upon the sight of this fellow-servant who owed him an hundred pence, and upon his request to spare and have patience with him, he should, as his lord observed to him, have had compassion on his fellow-servant even as his lord had compassion on him—just in the same manner: he should as freely and fully have forgiven him the whole, when he desired it—He should ingenuously and nobly have confessed—‘Just now I have experienced the great clemency and unbounded compassion of my lord and your lord—immense was my debt to him, im-
impossible was it for me ever to have discharged it—Had he been severe and rigorous to exact his due, I with my wife and children and all that I had must have been sold, and wretched slaves must we have been all the days of our life—but upon my falling down and imploring his patience and mercy, behold the overflowing of his generous love—freely, freely hath he forgiven me all!—and you, my fellow-servant, shall partake of my happiness, and share in my master's favour—freely as he forgave me, so freely do I forgive thee—He hath blotted out all my debt, and lo! for his sake and love, with gladness do I blot out thine!" Such should have been his confession, such his manner of proceeding: and such must be ours, if we would be like the Father of mercies, if we would have our trespasses forgiven even as we forgive our brother his trespasses.

So that you see, the true nature of forgiveness, and its true extent is to be taken wholly from the nature and extent of God's forgiveness to us—just as he hath forgiven us, that is, freely; and just as often and as many trespasses as he hath forgiven us, upon our sincere application, that is, innumerable; just so freely, just so frequently, just so with all our hearts must we forgive our returning brother his
his trespasses. And this our Saviour fully expresses in the close of the parable, *if ye from YOUR HEARTS forgive not;* a dissembled, pharisaical, outward forgiveness and reconciliation will avail us nothing—our forgiveness must be from the heart, cordial and sincere; just such a forgiveness as we desire and hope to share from God; and we all desire a full and unreserved pardon: for if God, according to the absurd notions of some, should forgive, but not forget; that is, pretend to forgive, while the memory of our offences remained fresh against us; if he should so forgive, as to do us neither good nor harm, (as some are wont to express their forgiveness) then in how sad a state should we be? since all we can hope, or all we can receive proceeds wholly from God's entire blotting out from the book of remembrance the very trace of our offences, blotting them out like the morning dew; and in his giving us consequent upon forgiveness, a right and blessed title to enter into the joy of our Lord.

So that forgiveness must not be in name, but in fact, not in word but in heart, not in ceasing to avenge, but in readiness to serve; and in a willing acceptance of our offending brother to his former grace and favour with us, upon his return to us, and acknowledgement
ment of his fault. But a want of this return will be no excuse for our not forgiving: we are taught in this same chapter, ver. 15. how we are to act with our brother, when trespassing against us: we are first, to tell him his fault between ourselves alone: if that will not do, then before two or three witnesses, such as are most likely to influence him: and if this fails to gain him, we are then to tell it to the church: which if he refuses to hear, he is to be unto us, as an heathen man and a publican: tho' at the same time we are bound to pray for him, to forgive him in heart, for the sake of our own souls; and to be always in a disposition to give him the outward marks of forgiveness, in case of his penitential return and request to be pardoned and reconciled. As to forgiveness in general, the true nature and extent of it, must and can be only taken from the nature and extent of God's free and full forgiveness of ourselves; and if we do not so forgive let us remember, that with our own lips we terribly and fearfully condemn ourselves, since we pray, forgive us our trespasses, as, we forgive them that trespass against us; and who that repeats this prayer, who that desires salvation, will dare to live in malice and at enmity with any, since so great, so imminent is the dan-
ger—Forgive us, as we forgive them that trespass against us!—and this leads me in the IIId and last place to consider the absolute necessity of forgiveness, which is founded upon these words, if we forgive not every one his brother their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses: and is fully exemplified in this beautiful parable.

A complaint being lodged by the fellow-servants, who were very sorry to see what was done, the lord summoned again this ungrateful servant to appear, and reproaching him with the inhumanity and baseness of his conduct, moved with just indignation, he delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him; which plainly implies, that he was delivered forever, since he had nothing to pay, and could never in a doleful prison procure any thing to pay so immense a debt. And such will the case be with all those, who despise the mercy and forbearance of God, and trespass against him by injuring their brother; while they may fancy themselves high in the favour of God. Plain it is from hence, as well as from many other parts of the Gospel, that forgiveness of injuries is a necessary condition of life eternal. If we forgive not, neither shall we be forgiven; which by no means derogates from the
the freedom of grace and the merits of Christ; who hath by his one sufficient sacrifice satisfied for all our sins, and established a new covenant for us upon better promises; but if we fulfil not our part of the covenant (which by his grace enabling us, we shall, if sincere, never fail to do) neither must we expect that God will fulfil his part to us: and he hath plainly informed us that if we do not forgive with all our hearts, as he hath forgiven us, we must be delivered to the tormentors, till we pay all that mighty debt which we owe him.

So that the necessity of forgiveness is hence abundantly seen, that without it we can never enter into the kingdom of God: and into whatsoever heart Christ hath entered by faith, this sure fruit will arise; for if we have not the Spirit of Christ we are none of his; and if we are not like him here, we shall never be so, compleatly hereafter—and forgiveness of injuries, love to enemies, and endeavours to do them good breathed thro' his whole life and conversation; yea and in this spirit also he gave up the ghost, when praying for his crucifiers he said, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do! If therefore you desire to escape eternal torments, and to reign with God in heaven, you must forgive your bro-

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other
ther his trespasses, even as you expect and desire your trespasses to be forgiven of God!

From hence we are clearly taught, (and from hence should be strictly guarded to watch and to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling) that sins once forgiven, may by our forfeiture of that pardon, by our misdemeanours, be again charged on us. For after this lord had forgiven his servant the whole debt—freely, fully and without reserve*; he afterwards revokes his pardon, which stood wholly upon his own clemency: and being angry with the servant for his unmerciful behaviour towards his fellow-servant, delivers him to the tormentors; upon which our Saviour adds; so likewise shall my heavenly Father do, &c. God’s pardons in this life are not absolute: but according to the petition in the Lord’s prayer, answerable to our dealing with others, and so conditional†; and are no longer likely to be con-

* No man can say that this servant was not in a truly pardon’d state—and that of consequence a person in a truly pardon’d state cannot fall—The loop-hole which the favourers of final perseverance creep out at, is, a pretence, that those who fall away were never really in a state of grace. This, man indubitably was: yet he fell away. The conclusion is undeniable therefore.

† Doddridge, in his paraphrase, observes, the lord declared, that on condition of his future good behaviour, he frankly
continued to us, than we perform the condition*.—Truth it is, God's grace is sufficient for us; and that grace we shall never want, if we ask for it; but if, according to a horrible doctrine of some, once in grace, always in grace, once justified, always justified; if presuming upon this, we neglect to do our part, and go out from God, leave the path of his commandments, become unmerciful, and cease to fulfil the terms of the gospel covenant, truth it is, we shall fall from grace, and our last end will be much worse than our first—a lesson of severe admonition to those, who presume upon that grace wherein they think they stand; but of no discouragement to the humble and sincere believer, who stands by faith, and is continually striving by a life of obedience and love to make his calling and election sure.

It is moreover practically inferred by some from hence, that the Lord forgiving his servant, because he had not where-with to pay, and being angry with him because he would not have compassion on his fellow-servant, but went and cast him into prison, not having patience with him till he

frankly forgave him—and in his note he adds, This is a circumstance exceeding natural, and by the revocation of the pardon afterwards, it seems strongly implied.

* See Dr. Hammond on the place.
should pay the debt—that this seemeth to bear very hard on those unmerciful and unchristian creditors, who cast poor men into prison for their debt: augmenting thus their debt by the goaler's fees, and rendring them less able to pay than they were before: and so making their brother's state more miserable, and their debt from him as desperate as ever. For sure he that bids us lend, hoping for nothing again, will not allow us to imprison, where nothing can be hoped for: and it is to be feared that men so unmerciful may find but little mercy at that day: for if it be a crime that will then be objected to our condemnation, that we did not visit Christians when in prison, what will it be to cast them into prison—and so incapacitate them from ever being able to pay us what they owe *?

Thus then, as the time would allow, I have just pointed out to your serious reflection the great obligation, we who are such mighty debtors to God lie under to forgive one another our lesser debts and inconsiderable offences: 2dly, the nature and extent of this duty—unbounded as God's love to us, unlimited as his free pardon of our great,

* See Whitby in loc.
many, and aggravated crimes; and 3dly, the necessity of it—which is abundantly seen in our Lord's declaration at the conclusion of this parable; wherein he shews indeed at once all that hath gone before—So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you—thus deliver you to everlasting torments, as he hath full right, seeing you are not only his servants, but his insolvent debtors, having nothing to pay—so shall he do, if ye forgive not from your hearts, without any limitation, without any reserve, freely, fully, sincerely; if ye forgive not every one, no man is exempt; high or low, rich or poor; all who will enter the kingdom of heaven, and escape the hands of the infernal tormentors—every one must forgive from their hearts his brother their trespasses—their trespasses, none excepted, however frequently repeated, till seventy times seven, however aggravated; for we must have compassion on our fellow-servants, when requesting us, as our Lord had compassion on us, when we desired him*.

Hard as this duty may seem to flesh and blood, yet we must perform it: and tho' from that spirit of malice and revenge, which abounds so much amongst Christians, full of

contention and strife, and almost upon every occasion having recourse to law, and falling out by the way, as if they were not brethren, tho' from hence, I say, one would conclude this duty but little known, yet we have it written as bright, as with a sun-beam, in the gospel of truth, that without it, to whatever we pretend, or whatever name we bear, we are not Christians, and can never be forgiven of God. And if not forgiven, as we are all unable to pay, we must be sold, and confin'd till we pay the uttermost farthing.

But the duty, tho' hard to flesh and blood, is far different to the renewed spirit: the true Christian rejoices in every opportunity to manifest his forbearing and forgiving spirit, and knows not any joy superior to that of heaping coals of love on his enemies head, by doing him all the good actions in his power, according to St. Paul's excellent advice, If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals, melting coals of love, upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Nothing will avail more for the attainment of this divine temper, than a frequent and constant meditation upon the example of Christ; who with such unspeakable meekness endured, even for the sake of sinners, such a continued
tinued buffeting of his enemies, such a con-
stant return of injuries for benefits, of ingrati-
tude and reproach for miracles and blessings.
But as even the example of Christ will lose all
its influence, unless you are convinced of
your high obligation to forgive others by a
thorough sense of your own want of forgive-
ness from God,—by all means labour to at-
tain the most just and perfect knowledge pos-
fible hereof. Consider yourselves as servants,
as servants accountable to their divine King
and Lord, who will one day reckon and that
very strictly with us all: prepare yourselves
for that reckoning, search, try and examine;
and when you find, how immense your debt
is, how great and numberless your sins and
transgressions, and how impossible it is for
you ever to pay, ever to satisfy divine justice:
then delay not to fly and lay hold of the
horns of the altar, delay not with strong cry-
ing and tears, to present your supplications
before the throne of grace: plead the one
sufficient sacrifice, of the Son of God; and be
assured, that when we confess our sins God is
faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to
cleanse us from all unrighteousness. "A sincere
humiliation of heart, a fervent prayer, an ap-
plication full of hope to the patience of God:
a real desire and firm resolution of satisfying
God,
God, to the utmost of our power, are the only dispositions, that can qualify us to receive the infallible remedy. And it is no presumption in a man who has nothing, to promise the payment of all, provided he depend not on himself, but on the patience of God and the merits of Jesus Christ. The value of these is infinite, and from these the repentance of a Christian receives all its worth. A man cannot have too great hopes, when he is resolved, not to spare himself, and his heart is entirely devoted to God *:

But when, upon sincere application to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the load is removed, the debt discharged, and you freely forgiven, then take care, that you persevere in the right way; remember, that by faith you stand; that the promises of God, and your forgiveness are conditional: if you fail to discharge your part, you fully acquit God from his promises, and subject yourselves to the punishment due to impenitent offenders. Let him therefore who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall; especially let him, as here taught, by our great law-

* See Quesnel in loc.
giver and judge, beware of an uncharitable, unforgiving temper. Be sure, this can never consist with the Christian life: if you are a true member of Christ, pardoned for his sake, and living by his Spirit, you must love, as he hath loved, you must forgive as he hath forgiven. A certain and infallible test, whereby you may try and examine yourselves: and if you are found wanting in this balance, pray with earnest sincerity for a better spirit, even a spirit of love, from him who hath weight, and who can supply all our lightness. Forget not the high obligation you lie under to forgive: remember your debt to God, remember your daily prayer: and indulge not a diabolic and distracting spirit, which ruins all present tranquillity and will eternally condemn you.—Think of the sweet, the inexpressible satisfaction of a soul melted with divine love, and ready always to forgive and embrace the returning brother; and when offences seem too repeated, too aggravated to be borne, too vast to be passed over;—when your patience seems almost worn out, then cast your eyes on Stephen stoned, and hear him, crying, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! But if this will not do, if this be not sufficient, I have another
example in reserve; which must be effectual, to persuade you all,—if this will not do, then raise your eyes to Jesus, dying even for your sins, even for his enemies, behold him hanging on the bloody tree, and listen to his last and loving voice, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!

Father, for the sake of that prayer—for the sake of that Son of thy love, oh send forth thy spirit of love into all our hearts; and enable us by thy grace, so to forgive every one his brother their trespasses, as we hope to be forgiven of thee our great and numberless sins and offences! Convince us all, O Lord, we beseech thee, of the greatness of our debt, to thee, and our utter incapacity to pay, that with fervent prayer and earnest application we may fly to the throne of grace, and be dissimist with the comfortable enjoyment of thy pardoning favour. Oh make us so duly sensible of, so perfectly grateful for thy inestimable love to us miserable sinners, that we may overflow with love one towards another, that we may love, even as we have been loved, and continue overmore from our hearts to forgive every one his brother their trespasses, even as Thou,
Thou, Oh Father of mercies, hast freely forgiven us all our trespasses, which we beseech thee to grant, for the alone merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.
DISCOURSE VI.
Being the Substance of Two Sermons.
On the PARABLE
Of the Labourers in the VINEYARD,
PART I.

St. Matt. xx. 16.
So the last shall be first: and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

I TH this sentence Christ closes a parable, which he delivered concerning the kingdom of heaven, and it is remarkable, that he introduces the parable with this sentence also: as you will see in the last verse of the foregoing chapter—where he says, But many that are first shall be last, and the last first: upon which he adds the parable—For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a householder that went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard—And when he had agreed with
with the labourers for a penny (a Roman penny about 7d. of our money) a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, (which was our nine in the morning, six being called with the Romans and Jews the first hour; so, nine the third, twelve the sixth; three in the afternoon the ninth; and six the twelfth or last hour) about the third hour therefore he went out, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and he said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right and reasonable, I will give you. And they consented and went their way into the vineyard. And again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour, or five in the afternoon he went out and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us; he said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.—So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward, call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. And when the first came, they
supposed, that they should have received more, and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didnst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?—So the last shall be first and the first last: for many be called but few chosen.

* Dr. Waterland, in a sermon on this subject, gives a particular explication of the word chosen, which I will subjoin and leave to the reader's judgment—"The meaning of the word chosen, is much the same with eminent or extraordinary; in such a sense as St. Paul is called a chosen vessel, and Christians a chosen generation. So we read of chosen men of Israel, choice cedars, choice city, choice gold, choicest vines, and the like: meaning excellent or eminent in their respective kinds. There are but few such chosen or eminent saints in comparison of the whole number called. Yet they and they only shall be reckoned of the first rank in God's kingdom, whether they came in soon or late." And this the learned doctor thinks the main scope of the parable, which is to shew, that those called even at the last hour, may by their greater zeal and activity in the vineyard, become chosen, eminent servants of God, and fo be
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This sentence evidently directs us to the main scope and design of the parable: and we may observe, that it is usual with Christ, either at the beginning or end of almost all his parables to affix some leading sentence, which may direct our view to the principal point of doctrine intended to be inculcated in that parable. The present sentence therefore is to admonish those, who seem to be first in the church either on account of their singular gifts or good works, to take heed and humble themselves, lest, if they should grow vain on account of their gifts, or trust in their works, God should humble them, and they who were first should be rejected and esteemed amongst the last.—How natural and common it is for such spiritual pride to creep into the breasts of even the chosen servants of God, many examples in the sacred scriptures sufficiently prove, but none more remarkably than that of the apostle St. Peter.—And indeed it seems to have been on his account, that our Saviour delivered this parable, as you

be entitled to the reward. But to do his argument justice the reader should consult the sermon, p. 413. vol. I. of his Practical Discourses. It seems, in my judgment at least, to enervate the sense and design of the parable, and is borrowed, I should conceive, from the Jewish parable of the like nature, delivered with no good view to the present. I will give a further account of it hereafter.

Q 3 will
will see by referring to the foregoing chapter—There we read of a young man who came to Christ, full of his own merits, and self-satisfied with his external obedience to the commandments of God: and when our Lord in answer to his enquiry what he should do to have eternal life, gave him a particular call (thereby to prove his sincerity and truth) to go and sell all that he had and give to the poor, and come and follow him: he, on account of his great possessions, offended at that saying, left Christ, and went away sorrowful. Upon this, our Lord said to his disciples, that it was easier for a camel to go thro' a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven—so apt are these earthly riches to take up and possess the heart, to hinder the soul from hearing and obeying the call of Christ.—A little of the old leaven soon displayed itself in the heart of Peter. This young man, thinks he within himself, is justly rejected from the kingdom, because he would not obey the call of Christ. But we have forsaken all and followed him. We are therefore better and more worthy than he, we deserve to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And Christ replies accordingly; "You are indeed in the kingdom of heaven, and blest with unspeakable privileges: but it behoves you dili-
diligently to take heed, that you walk worthy your high vocation and calling, lest you be cast out thence for your pride, and elation of mind. *For many that are first may and shall become the last*, as many that *are now last shall become the first*. Many that have done and suffered much for the kingdom of God, may so lose his grace and favour, as not to receive the prize, if they trust too much on their own works, if they glory too much in their own obedience, if self-confidence and self-merit lead them from the proper dependence on the almighty grace and favour.

This is the foundation and main scope of the parable, in which we must acquiesce, if we cannot be able to accommodate every member and part of it: for in the parables we must not sometimes be over exact as to particular circumstances, but attend principally to the main point designed to be inculcated; which, as was observed, may almost always be gathered from some leading passage, and the context.

There are many particulars, wherein that sentence is verified, *the first shall be last and the last first*, as well with regard to the Jews and Gentiles, (who are, as expounders agree, primarily intended in this parable) as also with regard to individuals; and there are many useful
useful branches of doctrine and instruction to be gathered from the several circumstances of it. Some of which I shall endeavour by God's grace to recommend to your consideration and practice. But before I come to the points of doctrine, it may be proper just to make a general remark on those who were the occasion of this parable—the young man and Peter. In one or other of whom, we have a picture of almost all mankind. For human reason either cannot or will not reconcile these two things with each other: the one, that salvation is wholly of grace, not of works: the other, that this notwithstanding, we must labour by good works to make our calling and election sure: so that he who refuses to work, must inevitably be rejected. Yet, when we have done all, all that was commanded us, we have no merit, free grace alone remains and triumphs, and by that alone, we unprofitable servants must be saved. Men cannot reconcile these two things: and hence in all times, from the very beginning corruptions have followed in our most holy faith; some daring to cry out, because it was preach'd unto them, that men were freely justified by faith, thro' the grace of God, therefore let us do evil, that good may come, let us continue in sin that grace may abound. This was
was the cry even in St. Paul's days; this was the consequence of his evangelical preaching: it has been the same in all ages of the church, and even in our day there are not wanting some, who ignorant of the grace of God and the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, still retain the old error, and stumble at the same stumbling block.—The patrons of works, on the contrary, persuade themselves thus: It is the will of God, that we should do good works, we have his commands, his promises, and his threatenings: and we do obey them: therefore the reward is due to us, of debt and merit." And it is no wonder that this opinion should prevail with men of the world, nay and with sincere men too, when even Peter himself who had heard John the baptist, had convers'd above three years with Christ, and made a notable confession of him, was shaken with it: for he reasoned in some such manner as this,—This young man will not forfake all and follow Christ, and therefore, he is excluded from the kingdom of heaven. We have left all; therefore we merit the kingdom of heaven. Christ answers to these suggestions of his:—"Take care lest thou of the first mayest become the last:" and lest he should not understand the saying or soon forget it, he adds a parable according to his custom,
custom, when he treated of any point of doctrine particularly useful, necessary and difficult, the better to impress it on the minds of all who should hear—in which he teaches us, 1. That the housholder calls and hires of his own free grace and will. It is of his own choice and favour, that he calls any into his vineyard. 2. That they who refuse the call, and do not enter into the vineyard, but stand all the day idle, receive nothing when the evening cometh. 3. That they who labour according to the housholder's rule and direction, receive the reward. 4. That they receive it not for the merit of the work done, but they, who pretend merits and deservings, are rejected: so that Christ teaches us the same with what St. Paul teaches, Gal. ii. 5. That we who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law, moral or ceremonial, shall no flesh be justified, and—not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us—So that from this parable, and these examples we are taught to maintain and defend both these important articles of faith, as well free justification by the grace of God, as the abolute necessity of good works.—And
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And if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must with thankful hearts adore the free grace of God in Christ, and humbly depend upon his infinite merits for salvation; yet not so depend as fondly to reject obedience and love, without which we shall never be saved:—but so work as if we were to be saved by good works only, and when we have done our utmost, so abandon, as it were, all remembrance of them, as if they had no part in the business of salvation.

This premised we may now come to the parable—wherein we are taught, that there are many first, first in calling, first in dignity, first in gifts, first in graces, who shall be last, who shall thro' self-confidence, or an opinion of their own merits, be last in honour, last in place, last in bliss,—a solemn caution to all not to be high-minded but fear—for many are called, to many the outward call of the gospel is given, but few are chosen*, few hear and obey it, like the young man, they think the conditions too hard, and so go away sorrowful; for none can be chosen, who do not hear, and obey the call, who choose rather to stand idle in the market-place, than

* See Munster's useful observations on the first verse of this chapter.
On the PARABLE

to go and work in the vineyard. To exemplify these important truths, and to persuade us to obey, and enter into his vineyard, Christ delivered the present parable. Which we may properly enough divide into two main parts.

Ist, The hiring of the labourers into the vineyard.

IId, The giving them their wages, when the evening was come.

Ist, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain man that was an householder—The kingdom of heaven, is the gospel kingdom—God’s dispensations and manner of proceeding in the kingdom of grace, set up here on earth is like to the proceeding of a certain householder. We must take care not to understand the kingdom of heaven, in this place as of the future and glorious state of the church triumphant, but of the church militant here on earth—which is frequently called in the New Testament the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom is likened unto a certain householder—God in Christ is the great householder, the great master of his family the universe, who went out early in the morning, in the beginning of things
things and the establishment of his church to hire labourers into his vineyard: the church is frequently compared to a vineyard, as you may see in the very next chapter to this, and in many express passages in the prophets.

1. It is obvious to remark here, that no one is by his own means a labourer in this vineyard: that no one of his own accord, comes to the housholder, and desires to be employ'd by him. But that he is himself obliged to go out, and seek for them: and while he seeks for them he finds them standing idle, wholly unemploy'd in any good thing; and not only standing idle, but also in the market-place—antiently the market-place was not only the place of sale and contracts, in which were many frauds and cheats, and much sin committed; but the place also of judgment and trial, where malefactors were tried, condemned and punished.—Christ therefore by this circumstance would suggest to us what we are by nature, idle, without good, full of sins, and full of judgment. Nor do we seek God, that he may amend, and receive us into favour: but he desirous of our salvation, himself seeks us, and is found afterwards of those who sought him not. Therefore He faith by the prophet—I am found of
them that fought me not—and St. John speaking
of this adorable love in our blessed Father
says, *Herein is love: not that we loved God,
and so fought him—but that he loved us—and
so fought us—and how did he seek us? even
by sending his only beloved Son to be a propitia-
tion for our sins—to purchase the vineyard for
us to work in, to call us into it—and to give
us that reward, which is the merit only of
his propitiation and of his faithful services!
*herein indeed is love!*

2. And this divine householder went forth
with this benign purpose, not only early in the
morning, but also on the 3d, the 6th, the 9th,
and the 11th hour—that is with respect to the
whole universe, from the very beginning of
the world even to these last ages;—from the
time of Adam the 1st hour, of Abraham the 3d,
of Moses the 6th, of the prophets the 9th, of
Christ the 11th or last times as the days of the
gospel are called: for he hath always had a
vineyard to employ labourers in, always had a
church upon earth, wherein his faithful ser-
vants might do his work and perform his will.
These different times of going out are by some
referr'd to the Jews and Gentiles, of which
I will speak hereafter. With respect to indi-
viduals this kind master goes out to hire them
into his vineyard, from the 1st hour, from
child-
childhood and the first dawning of reason even to the end of our life*—some being happily called into his church and faith at the first hour, and some, that none might despair, tho' none should presume even at the eleventh! for who that rejects the call at the 3d, or 6th or 9th hour can tell, that he shall have it at the 11th? Nay from the parable we have great reason to suppose, that those who were called at the 11th hour had never been call'd before—*Why stand ye all the day idle, said the master—they reply, because no man hath hired us. But how unspeakably dangerous had it been to have refused, when called and hired into the vineyard!—Let us alarm'd hereby beware, lest we reject the call of God, and withstand the kind offers of grace, for now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation: let us take heed lest we be found all the day idle in the market-place, passing all our time in this world, without any work in God's vineyard; for if we do nothing there, how busy soever we may be in the market of this world, it will avail us nothing—-we shall hear at the conclusion that dread-

* St. Gregory upon the gospel gives both these expositions—and in nearly the same words—wherefore I omit to quote him, and refer the learned reader to the author himself.
ful sentence, *bind him hand and foot*---and cast the unprofitable, the idle, useless servant *into outer darkness*.

3. The householder, we are told, who thus went out to hire labourers into his vineyard, agreed with those, whom he sent in first, for a *penny* a day. This circumstance in the parable has been variously interpreted: some say that by the *penny*, the *reward* is to be understood even *eternal life*: which God hath promised as a reward to all his faithful sons and servants. But it cannot be this for two reasons: first, because the parable treats not of the things which are to be hereafter, but of God's dealings in the gospel kingdom here below: and 2dly, because that reward cannot be given to those that murmur at the good man of the house: In heaven there will be no murmuring, no discontent: all with one voice will declare, "just and righteous, holy and true are all thy ways, O king of saints!"—others, and that with greater show of probability, explain the *penny*, of Christ; for he is the true *price*, the true purchase money of our redemption and deliverance: he is the *shekel* of Israel, the ransom money paid for every soul, that makes the whole city of Jerusalem holy.*

* See Exodus xxx. 12—16.
We may say in general that the price agreed upon, are the blessings and privileges of the Gospel, which are offered equally to all,—free pardon, adoption and grace; and which are given here below, as freely to those who have wrought but one hour, as to those who have borne the heat and burden of the day: all are alike justified in Christ Jesus, with whom there is no difference: and in whose sight the persecuting Paul, when coming into the vineyard, is as fully entitled to the reward (for it is wholly of grace) as the amiable Timothy, who had known and loved the sacred scriptures even from a youth. This is the case as to justification here: but it will be very different as to eternal life hereafter: where, we are assured, the degrees of bliss and glory will answer the degrees of holiness in the saints: which supplies us with another reason, why this penny cannot be the eternal recompence of reward.

4. When the housholder had called and agreed with them, we don't find these labourers standing any longer idle, nor betaking themselves elsewhere, but obediently hastening to the vineyard: otherwise they would never have received the penny.—And thus we are taught, what we are bound to do, when God graciously calls and gives us the blessed...
offers of salvation: whither should we go, but to that vineyard, the church of Christ below, where He himself is found, that generous vine, in which we must be ingrafted if we would bring forth fruit, and in whom if we are not found at the last day, we shall be cast out as a withered branch fit only to be burned? But he who is ingrafted in this vine hath all things in him: he receives life and spirit from him, as the branch from the vine, that he may grow up in him, and bring forth fruit unto everlasting life.—Nor must we, if we tender our own salvation, delay our departure into the vineyard, and put off from day to day our approaches thither. Let no one say, there are twelve hours of the day; it will be sufficient, if I enter at the eleventh: this is the voice only of profaneness, ingratitude and folly: and hardness of heart may follow such a resolution, if the call be now neglected; as David faith, To day if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts; and God may in the end complain of such, as he did heretofore by his prophet, I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts! Oh, 'tis sad for a God of love to complain thus of his own people: Oh 'tis sad, that the people of a God of love, his own creatures, should reject
reject his gracious calls, and refuse to accept as a free gift the inestimable blessings purchased by a bleeding Redeemer!—If gratitude to your God, if love to yourselves, if the hopes of immortality can at all influence your breasts, surely, my beloved, you will rejoice to hear and accept the call of God: will use your utmost efforts to obey it, hasten to the vineyard, and work the works of him that calleth you, while it is day, as knowing that the night cometh wherein no man can work.

5. For, from this parable, we learn, what the labourer is to do there, who, obedient to the call of the householder, enters into his vineyard. He is not to destroy or confound anything: he is not to pass away his time idly, in foolish discourse or useless trifling: he is not to hinder or disturb others in their work: but to attend to his own business.—By all which we are taught with regard to ourselves, that when we have received remission of sins thro' faith in Christ, and are admitted to his church, and a participation of his sacraments, of his free grace and favour to miserable sinners, we must take care not to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, not to use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love to serve one another, as free, and not having our liberty as a cloak of
maliciousness, but as the servants of God. As servants in his vineyard, we must do the duties of that vineyard: we must dig about and dung the vines, prune and purge them that they may bring forth more fruit; or in other words we must mortify our old man, crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, and walk in the Spirit, according to the Gospel. This we must do if we would not be cast out of the vineyard, as idle and unprofitable servants: nay we must do it, tho' we may be compelled, if I may so say, to bear the heat and burden of the day, though it be very hard and grievous to the flesh; tho' our passions are strong, violent, and difficult to be subdued; yet subdued and kept under they must be: we must, with St. Paul, keep under, and bring our body into subjection, lest, after all our faith and hopes and privileges, we ourselves should be cast-aways. Wo to them that are idle in the vineyard, where there is such continual need of labour, and where there is such constant means of improvement! and where all our works and all our labours will be acceptable: for they that do good works acceptable to God in Christ, must be in the vineyard, adopted into the family of their heavenly Father: that is, ingrafted in Christ by faith, reconciled to God, and
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and regenerated by the Spirit. For a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit: and whatever is not of faith is sin, faith the apostle. And upon this our church in one of her articles* declares, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, before men are in the vineyard, are not acceptable to God: and that for the most substantial reason, forasmuch as they spring not of that FAITH in Jesus Christ, which alone makes our works acceptable."—

And as we learn hence, where our works are to be done, so also we learn what kind of works we must do: not that which seems good in our own eyes: St. Paul rejects the will-worship of the Colossians, and Christ himself declares, from the prophet, In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. The householder hires the labourers into his vineyard with an intention, that they should obey and execute his orders: and produce fruits for the edification of the church. They must not return to the market-place: they must cease to do evil, and learn to do good: the blessed commandments of their Lord and Saviour must be the rule of their actions, and these they must diligently labour to fulfil in faith and love.

* Art. the 13th.
On the PARABLE

As thus we are taught, the place of good works, even the Church, and the sort of them, obedience to Christ's holy commands: so let us learn also from hence, to obey and follow the voice of God, whenever he shall call us to this vineyard and to these works. Let us fear to put him off, and to reject the hour, lest another hour should not come, lest another call should not be given. Let us not presume to reason with him whose ways inscrutable are always just and right, why he calls some more early and some later into his vineyard. Let us not ask with Peter, But Lord, what shall be do? but heedful to the divine call, obey it with all our hearts; thankful, abundantly thankful, that it hath been at all vouchsafed to us: and labouring to improve it to the utmost of our power: not being slothful in business, in works of faith and labours of love, but doing and suffering with so much diligence, with so much zeal, patience and meekness, that we may properly say, we have borne the heat and burden of the day! Then abundantly happy shall we be, when the evening comes, and when our conscience bears a blessed testimony, that we have been faithful to our great Master's work; which, happy are they, and happy shall they be, who perform with all their heart: but cursed is
is he, faith the prophet, that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.

And when we have thus done all, thus been laborious, faithful, and industrious in our day of service, to our great Householder our divine Lord and Master; let us lay all our sins and all our imperfections with all our best works at his feet, and sincerely acknowledge ourselves unprofitable servants. —Let no man presume to say, "I have laboured much, I have laboured more than others, I will now give over—I have done more, and so shall receive more than others"—Let no man thus deceive himself: but remember, that our service is not done, till the day is done: and that when the even cometh, and our Lord shall reckon with us, the whole reward is of grace, not of debt: that if he should be extreme to mark what is done amiss none of our best services could stand the trial of his eyes, which are as a flame of fire, and in whose sight even the highest angels are not pure: and that, as he hath an undoubted right to do what he will with his own, he may give unto the last even as unto the first. For he is the great Sovereign and disposer of all, and it is our highest happiness to adore his divine wisdom, and to acknowledge in all things the depth of the riches both of the
justice and mercy of God: for they who repined hereat in the parable, manifested only their evil eye*, evil because he was good: and were dissatisfied with his awards merely because they were generous and beneficent to their fellow-creatures: and this naturally leads me to the IIId part of the parable, the distribution of the reward when the evening was come—omitting which to the next opportunity, let us mean while endeavour to improve by the present.

Christ, the great Householder, solicitous for his people's welfare, is continually seeking labourers, is constantly sending to call and hire souls into his divine vineyard. Oh what unspeakable grace is this! that the great Lord of the world should condescend to call, to invite, to hire poor dust and ashes, to hire us his creatures, us miserable sinners, to come and receive from him the inestimable blessings purchased even at the price of his own life! Who would chuse rather to stand all the day idle in the market-place, than to embrace his blessed offer, than to hasten to his place of labour, than to work the works of him that

* The only thing we have to do, is still to humble ourselves whatever our condition be; because nothing but humility can either keep the first in grace from becoming the last—or draw down that mercy on the last, which will make them first. Quesnelle,
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calleth, as remembering that it is but a day, a span-long day, wherein we can work, the
day of life, which when once closed upon
impenitent eyes,—farewell the calls of grace,
farewell the hopes of glory!

Dearly beloved, let me intreat you all, now
to accept this offer: this offer of salvation
and life, which he is at present pleas'd to
make you: oh reject not the council of God
against your own souls: but resolve to close
with Christ, to leave your sins, to hasten to
his vineyard, to come in living Faith to him,
and to labour in all his pleasing works of
love and holiness! for his commandments are
not grievous: his service is perfect freedom:
all his paths are peace.—You see how much
his loving heart is inclined to you: you see
how desirous he is to gain you to himself:
you see how much he longeth for your souls
welfare: so much that rather, than you should
die, this Lord of love consented himself to
die for you! thus he went out early to seek
and to hire you: and by his Spirit, by con-
science, by the word read and preached, how
often, how solicitously hath he press't you to
come to him? and strange, that you should
still distrust his love, still doubt his mercy,
still refuse to hearken; still remain his ene-
mies and continue in league and friendship
with
with that sin and Satan, which nail'd your Redeemer to the tree! oh the sad hardness of the human heart! to doubt the fidelity of a God, who sealed his covenant with his own blood: to refuse that heart to him, for which he, who is the creator of all hearts, gave himself a sacrifice on the cross! and which now, he only asks, he only wishes you to give him,—that he may enter into it, and bless it with all his blessings! that he may fill it with peace, with joy and love, deliver it from the fear of death and of hell; and give it, in the foretaste of his favour, heaven begun here, and heaven consummated hereafter! oh that you would all therefore be wise and accept this gracious offer: that I could prevail with you to come and give up your hearts to Jesus, that he might fill and bless them! but if not with all, would God I could prevail with even one soul to cleave to our divine master: would God, that one, if it be but one would say, “I can stand here idle no longer: blessed Jesus thou hast overcome: I yield, Lord, I yield: I give up myself, my soul, and body unto thee! oh take me; Lord, take me to thy service, to thy grace and favour! the time past too, too much sufficeth to have wrought the works of sin and Satan! I repent, Lord, I repent: the remembrance
of my sins is grievous to me: the burden is intolerable! and I come prepared and desirous henceforth and forever to do thy will, oh my God!

May God of his infinite mercy grant this to be the language, this to be the voice, not of one but of many, not of many but of all; not of all in this, but of all in every congregation assembled to honour him this day; of all who shall hear or read his divine word; for the sake and all-sufficient merits of Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. To whom, to the Father and the holy Spirit, three persons but one God, be all adoration, thanksgiving and praise now and forever. Amen!
DISCOURSE VI.
On the PARABLE
Of the Labourers in the Vineyard

PART II.

St. Matthew XX. 6.

So the last shall be first: and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

The whole Gospel is throughout one continued display of the rich mercy, the free grace and abundant love of God to penitent sinners: It is in the strict sense of the word glad tidings to a guilty world: glad tidings of pardon, peace, and purchased heaven by the infinite merits of a dying Redeemer! Who in every word he spoke, in every action he wrought,
wrought, while upon earth, manifested the most affecting compassion to the souls of sinful men, and pour'd the most prevailing comforts into the wounds of every troubled conscience.

The present parable, (of which the words in the text are the application, and of which you heard at large in the former sermon) was delivered with the same benign purpose: to shew us the infinite riches of God's free grace and bounty to sinners, and how good and gracious he is in the distribution of those rewards, which no man can merit or claim, and which, as being wholly free, we have nothing to do, but to humble ourselves before him, and to receive with thankfulness a gift, proceeding solely from his sovereign goodness.

—To the acceptance of these gospel blessings and the obtaining all the privileges offered in Christ, nothing conduceth so much, nay we may add, nothing is so absolutely necessary, as entire humility and perfect acquiescence in the divine good-pleasure: pride and self-complacency, an opinion of our own merits, or a confidence in our own works cuts us off from all the riches of God's bounty, and stops the channels of his grace from us.—Wherefore the whole scheme of the Gospel is so wonderfully and so mercifully
conducted, as to hide all pride from man; to debase him utterly in the sight of God; and to teach him, that he alone who is poor in spirit, he alone who humbles himself, he alone who denies himself, takes up his cross and follows Christ, can be either a disciple of that Lord, who humbled himself even to the death of the cross; or an inheritor of that kingdom, which was purchased by the deepest humility, that of the Son of the most high God, humbled into the form of a servant upon earth.—To this, I observed, in my former sermon, our Saviour directs the view of his disciples and servants in all ages, by the present Parable, and by these words, which lead to this the main scope and design of it—So the last shall be first, and the first last: which were directed, as I then remarked to you, to humble the growing pride of St. Peter and the rest of the apostles, who began to over-value themselves on the privileges they enjoy'd, arising from Christ's free choice of them, and so to prefer themselves to others: a dangerous evil and pernicious enemy to the kingdom of Christ in the heart which, as was observ'd, is founded wholly in humility; and must of consequence be utterly subverted, when any preference of ourselves to others, any self-confidence, self-seeking, and self-esteem,
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esteem—so much the more dangerous because spiritual,—usurp the place of perfect self-annihilation.

To destroy all these, and to shew the sovereign freedom of God in the disposal of those Gifts, which flow absolutely from his mercy and grace, Christ delivered the Parable of the householder: which, as I observed to you, might very properly be divided into two parts:

Ist, the hiring of the labourers into the vineyard. And,

IId, The accounting with them, or the giving them their wages.

In considering the first we saw God's mercy and free grace in calling men into his vineyard, calling them not once only, but going out frequently, and repeating his earnest invitations to men to come to work in his vineyard. A grace which as we could no way merit, so can we never sufficiently admire and extol. And this grace is still more manifested by the reward, which he is pleased to propose: for man is God's creature, what have we that we did not receive—and therefore all we have is immediately due to him, and
and can claim no reward, did we employ it faithfully from childhood even to death: much more then is the bounty and mercy of our God extoll'd, who offers to give the penny, the great and glorious blessings and privileges of the Gospel, not to those only, who work all the day, but to those who work only one hour: to all who will repent and believe and come to Jesus that they may have life.

But this is no encouragement to the impe- nitent and obstinate sinner, tho' more wel- come than life to the repenting soul; for none, you observe, who obeyed not the call, and went not into the vineyard, had any share in the reward: tho' some work'd more than others, yet all work'd: all were employ'd in the vineyard; and it pleas'd the goodness of the master, for the encouragement of all, that none might despair of his goodness to make the last equal to the first—as we shall see in the II'd part of the Parable, where we have an account of the labourers receiving their hire.—

When the evening was come, we are told, that the Lord of the vineyard said to his steward, call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last to the first.—By the evening here I apprehend, as before noted, we
we must understand either the end of the world, or the end of man's life; but take it only as a general expression, accommodated to introduce the main scope of the Parable; which appears in the dispensation of the reward, a dispensation that occasioned some murmuring against the good man of the house. For so gracious and bountiful was he, that when they came who were hired only at the eleventh, the last hour of the day, he gave them a penny, the price of the whole day's labour. Seeing him thus beneficent and generous, they, that were hired first, when they came, supposed that they should have received more: and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, without any just grounds for so doing, moved only by envy, they murmured against this good man of the house, saying these last have wrought but one hour, and yet thou hast made them equal to us, who have borne the heat and burden of the day.—This indeed would have been matter of just complaint, if the beneficence of their Lord had injured them, and caused them to receive less than their due: but while his generosity only served to make happy their unfortunate fellow-labourers, whom no man had hired before—surely they should have adored and admired his
his kindness, and rejoiced together in the reflections on his justice and mercy.

This he suggested to them—he kindly answered one of them and said, friend, I do thee no wrong: Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? was not this thine own bargain with me, and have not I exactly fulfilled my contract? take therefore thy penny, take that which is thy due, and go thy way contented and well pleased: I will give unto this last even as unto thee: and surely I may do so without offence to thee: for is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? is thine eye evil, and art thou full of envy, because I am good and generous to thy fellow-labourers—why dost thou grudge them the enjoyment of what thou thyself enjoyest, and by which thou art in no respect injured? so the last shall be first, the last called, shall and may be first in estimation and reward, while the first, by their murmuring, envy and opinion of their own works shall and may be last: for many are called, many are hired into the vineyard, but by means of their own evil dispositions, their pride, envy and high-mindedness, few of those many are chosen—only those few, who humbly receive the divine bounty and thankfully adore the free grace which bestows it. As therefore by Faith
Faith we stand, not by any unconditional decree, it behoves us not to be high-minded but fear*.

Herein we have a picture not only of the Jews murmuring against God for his mercies to the Gentiles—but also of Christians, who have long laboured in the vineyard, against the justice of the reception of notorious and great sinners into the like privileges and blessings of the Gospel kingdom with themselves: an evil too common with mankind, to which the best are liable, and against which they can never too strongly fortify their souls; as remembering that Christ died for sinners; and that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than

* It deserves notice, that St. Paul absolutely declares the Jews to have been broken off, because of unbelief, and the Gentiles to stand by Faith: that he warns these to continue in that Faith, and in the goodness of God, on pain of being broken off: and comforts those with the assurance of being grafted in again, if they abide not still in unbelief. Rom. xi. 20—23. What words can more plainly and clearly assert, that Salvation is free to all, who believe—and that damnation is the sad consequence—not of any reprobating decree of God—but of the obstinate insidelity of man. What words can more clearly and fully obviate the doctrine of the impossibility of falling from grace? If the Gentiles continue not, Paul affirms, in the goodness of God, they shall be broken off: if the Jews repent and believe, they shall be grafted in. So then the word of comfort is, believe and continue in belief, and thou shalt be saved. See Ezekiel xxxiii.
over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.

I will just in brief explain to you the Parable, as adapted to the Jews and Gentiles; and proceed to obviate any objections which may arise against the justice of God for this manner of proceeding with sinners, and conclude with such remarks and encouragements to come to Christ's as the present Parable abundantly suggests.

Those who refer this Parable to the Jews and Gentiles, particularly that able commentator Whitby*, suppose, that by the householders first going out early in the morning is meant, Christ's first going out to call the Jews, —by his 2d, the sending of the apostles to preach in their cities and villages; by the 3d and 4th at the sixth and ninth hour, Christ's preaching, by his apostles, assisted by the Holy Ghost, first to the Jews in Judæa, and then in the dispersion—and by his call at the eleventh hour, the preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, who had not been hired before; —by the equal reward, which those hired at the eleventh hour received is meant,

* See his annotations as also those of our very learned Dr. Hammond on this Parable.——See also Cocceius.
the equal privileges and advantages to which the Gentiles were admitted, as well as the Jews: by the murmuring of those first called, who had borne the heat and burden of the day, is meant the murmuring of the Jews against the Gentiles, which you observe thro' the acts of the apostles and the epistles is a constant ground of complaint and disturbance—dissatisfied as they were, that the Gentiles should be admitted to the privileges of the Gospel, without the works of the law, the heat and burden of which they had long borne.

And by the householders reply is suggested to us, God's uncontrollable right and sovereign authority to bestow the blessings of his Son upon the Gentiles as well as the Jews: and to them the last sentence may be well applied, so the first shall be last and the last first: that is, so the Gentiles believing in and thankfully receiving Christ shall become his church and people, whilst the Jews murmuring and falling off from Christ, because of this his kindness to the Gentiles, shall be excluded and cast out from his kingdom, till the last: for tho' many of them be called by the preaching of the gospel, but few of them thro' their own perverseness and obstinacy,—not any decree of God unconditionally reproving them,—will be chosen, or prevailed upon to become the
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the elect or sons of God by Faith.—And the manner in which this same sentence is used in the scriptures confirms this interpretation; for it is manifestly applied to the Jews and Gentiles—one passage shall suffice, Luke xiii. 28, 29. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out: and they shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south: and shall fit down in the kingdom of God: and behold there are last which shall be first, and first which shall be last.

Thus the Parable is applied to the case of the Jews and Gentiles; and perhaps there is no interpretation of it wherewith all the circumstances so perfectly agree: more especially that of the murmuring, which we see fully explained by the future conduct of the Jews; to whom the calling of the Gentiles was the greatest offence, as well as mystery: “yea even the believing Jews murmured at their admission to the like privileges with them, without circumcision and the observance of the law of Moses, and made great schisms in all the churches of the Gentiles on that account, and the unbelieving Jews were enemies to the gospel for their sakes”—and as this preaching
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The Gospel to all the world, and no longer confining his church to a particular people, was, amongst the rest, one great purpose and consequence of Christ's death and sacrifice for all, therefore we find him all thro' the New Testament, taking every opportunity to inculcate this great point, and to bring to light that hidden mystery, that the Gentiles should be saved; of which St. Peter, who by particular revelation preached to the Gentiles, speaks fully Acts xv. 7. in words, that excellently illustrate the Parable consider'd in this view: men and brethren, ye know, how, that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe: and God which knoweth the hearts bare them witness: giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us: and put no difference between us and them (giving to every man a penny) purifying their hearts by Faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—we shall be saved, even as they: and they shall be saved even as us, after the same manner, ἀλλ' οὖν τροπον, namely by the Grace of the Lord Jesus. Thus the Parable has an obvious reference to God's dealing with the Jews.
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Jews and Gentiles: but it is no less just, when referred to his dealings with mankind in general: as we are abundantly shewn by it the freedom of his Grace, which is rich to all, to the greatest sinners, as well as the highest saints, no less to common and unclean Gentiles, than to holy and separated Jews. He admits all alike to the privileges of the Gospel, who obey his call, and enter into the vineyard: adulterous Magdalen, and persecuting Paul, as well as the strict pharisee Simon, and the beloved St. John: to one he gives the Holy Ghost as well as to the other, for he is no respecter of persons, and he is a debtor to none—all his creatures are alike dear to him, all his children equally beloved. He puts no difference between them, when they hear his word and believe, purifying their hearts by Faith.

How comfortable a reflection! What glad tidings indeed to the soul oppress’d with the conscience and condemnation of sin!—Well might the prophet, when about to prophesy of Christ’s kingdom begin, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, faith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord’s hand
hand double for all her sins.* What comfort like this, what tidings like these? that a God hath bled, that a God hath died, that a God hath risen and lives for evermore, to give full pardon and eternal peace to all the sinful sons of men, who will come in faith and implore the blessing! Oh wonderful grace! oh unspeakable love! Not a sin so great, not an iniquity so heinous, be they red as scarlet, be they numerous as the stars of the firmament, but shall freely be pardoned, but shall wholly be done away by faith in the all-sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction of the dying Jesus! Let but the prodigal come to himself, arise, return, and confess his fault before his father — the father will anticipate his warmest desires, run to meet, embrace, welcome, clothe, and rejoice over him.

* Isaiah xl. ii. The commentators have been much troubled with the word double in this text, and have given different and very contradictory interpretations. The original word is הָלַךְ which signifies to double, by folding back, so to revert, and hide from sight. It is used for the doubling or folding back of the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tabernacle. Exod. xxvi. 9. And in the present passage, it means a folding back, hiding, and taking away all the sins of Jerusalem, by Christ; for she hath received of the Lord's hands reversion, folding back, utter hiding for all her sins. They are doubled back, and covered from sight forever.—It should be observed, that in the parallel places commonly brought to explain this passage, the original for double is not the same as here. It is here
Here is abundant consolation to penitent sinners, rich encouragement to arife, repent and be doing, but not the leaft foundation for continuance in sin, not the leaft encouragement to those who are resolved to reject all the good offers of God, and foolishly presume upon a future repentance, which they may never have, upon an Almighty mercy, which they have continually despised. The father took not home the prodigal while midst harlots or feeding swine; 'tis upon the returning prodigal only, that his paternal bowels yearn.

The elder brother, in that parable, exactly corresponds with the labourers who were first hired in this: he would not enter in, when he heard the music and rejoicing, he expostulates with his father, as these labourers do with their lord: and the father condescends there to reason with him, and justify his conduct, even as the lord doth here with his labourers: and in both the one and the other we have a lively representation of that natural envy and grudging even against the good gifts of God to others, from which the most righteous are not wholly free, and to which frequently, if they do not diligently keep the watch, even their very righteousness leads them. To see labourers rewarded who have work'd
work'd but one hour, even as they who have borne the heat and burden of the day:—To see a brother, who hath spent all his substance in riotous living, welcom'd home with greater festivity, than ever that son shared who had served his father many years and never transgressed his commandments;—to see a sinner, who hath led the greatest part of his life in all the luxuries and pride of sin, who hath continually done what seemed good in his own eyes, denied none of his sensual appetites their indulgence and taken his fill of every criminal enjoyment—to see such at length received into equal grace and favour with ourselves, who have from our youth up labour'd to serve God with all our might, liv'd in mortification of every sensual appetite, denied ourselves all the gratifications of sense and been laborious in works of faith and love—to see such admitted to equal privileges, pardoned, justified, adopted—to see them partakers of the divine communion and blest with all the Gifts of the holy Spirit—their hearts purified by Faith—how apt is frail man to feel envious grudging, a kind of murmuring and repining against the good man of the house, whose bounty to our fellow-creatures we should rather adore and rejoice to
to see them though late made partakers
of the like precious promises with ourselves?

To admit, or in any degree encourage this
temper, is highly criminal, and may be so
prejudicial to our souls, as to cost them the
loss of God's favour forever. It is ours there-
fore, in such cases, to rejoice with a brother
that was lost, but is found; to adore with
thankfulness that goodness, which is alike
unmerited by, alike unbounded to all, and
which desireth all to be saved; to be glad,
that we have been able to work at all in his
vineyard, that so we may in humility receive
that recompence, which is wholly free, by no
means the due and debt of our labours, all of
which are of right belonging to God: and in
whose service, alas! we are all such slothful
servants, that we can never wish to depend
even upon our very best performances, but
having done all, must acknowledge that we
are but unprofitable servants—and when called
to receive our hire at last, have only to urge—
Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant,
for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

"What is man that thou art mindful of
him, and the son of man that thou visitest
him? What hath man deserv'd, that thou
shouldest give him thy grace? Lord, what
cause have I to complain, if thou forfake me?
or if thou doft not that which I desire, what can I justly say against it? Surely, this I may truly think, and say, Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing that is good of myself: but in all things I am defective, and do ever tend to nothing: and unless thou help and inwardly instruct me, I become altogether cold and indifferent *.

But it may be said, tho' the mercy and goodness of God is very manifest from his dealings with those called at the eleventh hour, yet his justice doth not appear so evidently in the case of those called at the first hour?—To which it may be replied, that it is infinitely happy for us miserable sinners, to see his mercy, as it were, triumph over his justice—Mercy, his darling and peculiar attribute, which is beheld so beautifully glorious in Christ, and which should rejoice the hearts of us all, when we consider our own wretched unworthiness, and in how sad a case we should be, were God to deal with us according to our sins, and according to his justice—and therefore after the most emphatical and devout part of the prayers which we offer to God, we pray, "O Lord, deal not with us after our sins, nor reward us after our iniquities"—since very sad indeed would be the reward of these our best services.

* See Thomas a Kempis, B. 3. c. 40.
But moreover in answer to this, it may again be said, and I think very justly, that as the eleventh hour denotes the Gospel-days, these last times, so the former part denotes God's dealings with the Jews, with whom he had made a positive agreement, if we may so say, to give them the penny, to raise up Christ, of their seed and nation—whereas he had made no such promise to the rest of the world—and therefore in the parable you read, he agreed with the first labourers for a penny a day, with the rest he made no agreement, whatever is right and reasonable, said he, that will I give you*—reserving the power to do more than justice, yet giving them the assurance of no more. But further, the householder himself obviates all objections of this sort, and shews the exact justice of the dealings of God, even with his own subjects.

For 1st, they can complain of no injustice done them, who receive their full wages, who are paid to the full of what they agree for: Friend, I do thee no wrong, said he: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?—And so in regard to all the servants of God—if he give them the precious privileges of the Gospel, if he admit them into grace and favour here,

* See Grotius, his Annotation on ver. 4.
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and the blessed hope of immortality hereafter—what can they desire more? Only let them take care not to repine against the good man of the house, only let them be humble and thankful for God's good gifts both to themselves and others—and then they shall receive exceedingly abundant above all that they ask or think.

But 2dly, every man has a right to do what he will with his own—and supposing him just in fulfilling his contracts, he is not the less just, for being generous to others, and doing more than they could demand or expect. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?—Yes, surely, it is, and a fountain of perpetual praise it ought to be to us all, to think that God is so liberal, so bountiful to us, of his abundant grace, refusing none the utmost, yea infinitely more than they can demand, and giving to others, equally with the choicest of his servants, what they had no reason to expect, and therefore should receive with greater humility and love; as it is reasonable to suppose they will: for said Christ, upon another occasion, to whom much is forgiven, they will love much: Magdalen had more forgiven than Simon—therefore she loved more: he murmured, like these labourers, against the Lord, but that Lord supplied both him and
and us with an excellent reason for his proceedings, namely, that greater grace from God generally begets greater love in the penitent—and it is the work of love alone, which is acceptable in his vineyard: the warmth and sincerity of which, it is possible, may make one hour’s service equal to that of the whole day *. Let us moreover remember, that our services

* Dr. Waterland observes, It is an advantage most certainly to have been first called: it is an advantage likewise to have been long lifted into God’s service, and to have been as it were all the day working: but still these advantages, great as they are, may be more than compensated by a super-abundant zeal, fervor and earnestness in those who came later. By their greater alacrity and redoubled speed, they may outrun those who have got the start of them; they may advance far in a little time, by taking large strides and quick paces: and so may get beyond those who had set out long before them, but had been slack and loitering in comparison: and thus the last may be first, and the first last.—It is true if the first had been exceeding active and diligent, and had made the utmost advantage possible of their early setting out; it would not then have been possible for those who came later to outstrip them, or ever to come up to them: but here lies the case: there are but few such persons in comparison, few who have so much zeal, perseverance, and assiduity in a long course: many are called, but few chosen: many are called into God’s service, and many also go on with it faintly however and languidly: but there are few of that eminent, that heavenly, that chosen and godlike stamp, as to begin, continue, and persevere to the end, with due fervour and constancy: and because many grow weary and faint upon the progress, and do not make all the use they might of the advantages they have had by their early call; therefore it
services bear not any the least proportion to the reward offered us: were an householder now to hire poor men into his vineyard or farm, and to offer them a thousand pounds a day upon consideration they faithfully discharged their duty, would any man suppose that their labour and service was equivalent to, and me-
it is, that the last comers will many times be preferred to the first; and so the last will be first in God's favour and esteem, and the first last: tho' both shall be rewarded not in proportion to the time spent in the service, but to their respective zeal and earnestness in it."—And hereupon the learned Doctor builds his interpretation of *chojen*, as given at the beginning of this discourse: which seems, as then observed, to enervate the force of the parable, and to be too agreeable to the *Jewish fancy* following, recorded by Dr. Lightfoot, in his Harm. vol. I. p. 249: For the apostate Jews, the better to gloss over their wicked cause, and the better to subvert, if possible, the Christian, have invented not only *miracles*, but *parables*, in many respects similar to our Saviour's, in order to discredit, and to weaken the evidence and power of his Gospel. "The *Jeruf. Talmud in Beracoth*, faith Dr. Lightfoot, hath a parable somewhat like to this, but wildly applied to a far different purpose. A king hired many workmen, and there was one of them hired for his work, for more than what was enough. What did the king? He took him and walked with him up and down. At the time of the evening the workmen came to receive their wages; and he also gave him his full wages with them. The workmen repined, and said, We have laboured all the day, and this man laboured but two hours: and thou haft given him full wages with us. The king said to them, This man hath *laboured more in two hours*, than you have done all day. So *R. Bon.* laboured more in the law in twenty-nine years, than another in a hundred, &c."
ritorious of the gift? and should he receive others to work half or a quarter of the day, and give them the same reward, would not his bounty and generosity strike the hearts of all with gratitude and love, and could any repine at the proceedings of so generous a mat-
fter?—Let us refer the case to God's deal-
ings with us: and then we shall see that the gift of Christ, the privileges of the Gospel, and the promises of heaven, bear no proportion at all to the most imperfect, wretched services of sinful men! The gift is perfectly free, and to see others share in the liberal bounty so much above all our deserts, should dilate our hearts with joy, and fill them with thankful-
ness to the adorably gracious Giver!

But 3dly, to obviate all objections to his justice, our Lord opens the reasons of this murmuring and grudging: it proceeds from an evil eye: envy is at the bottom, a cursed passion, which is late eradicated even from the breasts of saints—Is thine eye evil because I am good? What a cause of envy is here: even the unspeakable goodness of God!—And this is for the most part the foundation of that accursed passion—Mens eyes are evil toward their fellow-labourers, because God's eye is upon them for good: his gifts, blessings and graces in and to them are for the most part the
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the object of the evil man's envy—Oh how vile a sin is that, which thus basely strikes at the most beautiful and blessed of our God's attributes, even at his goodness, his free unmerited goodness to sinners!—Well may they, tho' first in calling, gifts and dignities, expect to be last, who harbour and encourage such a malevolent disposition against this good man of the house, this glorious Householder, who from his large beneficence * giveth us all things

* It deserves continually to be remarked by us, in honour of this beneficence, this universal love and exceeding great kindness of our God and Father, that none of these labourers, (who from the first became last, who, tho' called by him, were not chosen) became last thro' any foreordination or absolute decree of his, or were reprobated, not chosen, by any dreadful sentence excluding them from salvation, even from eternity! They became last, thro' their own malevolence, they were not chosen, thro' their abuse of the grace given them! Other cause we hear not of: let us be careful how we presume to assign any other; how we wrong the unspeakable love and goodness of God by supposing him the author of man's downfall and damnation! He is love: and he desireth all men to be saved! If you obey his call, believe on his Son Jesus Christ, and live in obedience to his commands—never trouble yourself about your predestination: you are certainly safe: but if you will not hear the call, nor obey it, if you pretend to accept it for bye ends and worldly views, if you are idle in the vineyard, or raise confusions, heresies and schisms in it, and other works of the flesh: if you trust in yourself that you are righteous and despise others, are proud, murmuring, boasting—I talk not of faith and predestination: you are certainly no believer, and so certainly shall never see God.
things richly to enjoy here, and hath given us his dear Son to merit eternal blessedness for us hereafter!

 Warned therefore by these considerations, let us, as the only method to extinguish this hateful passion in our breasts, adore the infinite love and goodness of our God manifested in his gracious dispensations towards a world of sinners: and while we are anxious to be made partakers of the blessings of his everlasting Gospel of comfort and grace, let us rejoice to see others admitted to the same divine privileges with ourselves, and more especially let us rejoice over those recovered to the vineyard of our Lord, who have stood all the day idle, \textit{idle to him}, tho' sadly busied in the works of sin: let us rejoice more over those that were lost, than they that were safe in the fold, that our joy may be like that of the angels above, who triumph most in the recovery of repenting sinners!

 Confident, that none who \textit{stand idle}, can ever receive the blessed recompence of reward, let us be careful to employ ourselves diligently God. For without that \textit{faith}, which worketh by love, no man can see him. Be zealous therefore for evangelical repentance, \textit{faith}, and \textit{obedience}, and leave consulting God's decrees, till you have better means and opportunities of so doing in his celestial kingdom.
in the vineyard, to work the works of God while it is called to-day, left if we delay and be idle, any of us should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. And to encourage us in the work;—blessed be his adorable name,—the gracious master whom we serve hath proposed to us a glorious reward as far above all we can deserve, as his omnipotence is far from our weakness! we may with safety and satisfaction cheer ourselves all the days of our life, and amidst all our labours, with the comfortable prospect of this divine reward: our Lord himself hath set us the example, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross! we may place the crown of righteousness in view, that so we may resist manfully, fight the good fight of faith, stagger not thro' unbelief, endure, as seeing him that is invisible, and support ourselves under every trial, and in every temptation, with the recollection that the time is but short, and that our light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

But above all things let us take care, not to suppose this reward due to us of right, or that the merit of our good services have justly deserved it at the hands of God: humbled evermore under the deepest sense of our own un-
unworthiness, let us confess that grace, free grace alone hath given us the earnest, and can give us the possession of glory! Let us acknowledge, that it is lawful for God to do what he will with his own, who is an absolute sovereign, and therefore may deal with us his creatures, even as he sees fit: let us acknowledge that he is no man's debtor *, but that all men are debtors to him; they owe him all they have, and all they can do—and remembering this, let us with sincerity deplore our own unprofitableness in his sight; and glory in nothing before him, save in his inexpressible, inestimable love, who hath given his Son to die for our sins: upon whose allsufficient merits we may rely, and upon the prevalence of whose intercession, we may plead a right to the glories of heaven: since he hath fully satisfied almighty justice, and is able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them: to persuade them to which, he hath declared to our eternal comfort, that he came not into the world to condemn the world, but that whatsoever believeth on him, should not perish but have everlasting life.

* This is given in some Bibles as the scope of the parable: 'tis one great point of doctrine in it. See Henry on Matt. xx, i, and ii. i.
And to conclude: influenced by that love of God to man, which shines so brightly throughout all the Gospel, let us one and all labour to be made partakers thereof, and to love him, because he first loved us! Let us neither abuse his mercy, nor his justice: his mercy, by delaying to accept the gracious calls offered to us, and by putting off our repentance from day to day: who knows but this call and this day may be his last? and then what will all our resolutions of repentance avail us?—Truth, some were called at the eleventh hour: and this is comfortable news to old and advanced sinners: to them it speaks thus: "Even yet the mercy of God waits for thee: thou’st thou art grown old in sin, it is not yet too late, repent, turn, and be saved: thy God longeth for thee: he desireth thy salvation: haste to his vineyard, accept this his last call, thy day is declining, the night cometh on apace; death is hastening towards thee with mighty strides: eternity lies open before thee—an eternity of bliss, or an eternity of woe—awake, and be wise, for who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" But tho’ this call is offered at the eleventh hour, that none might despair: yet it is absurd presumption to sin on, in expectation of such a call, or in purpose of future amendment: since none can assure them—
themselves of longer life; and since the more and the longer we continue in sin, far harder is it, to break the yoke, to get free from satan's chain, and to undertake the laborious work of true repentance. To day therefore harden not your hearts: to day may be the very last time, the Spirit of God will strive with thee: and should be leave thee, O sinner, then thou can'st never repent: to day may be the last time, thou may'st have an offer of grace: and if thou refusest it, thou art lost for ever. Death's messenger may arrest thee instantly: a fever may lay hold of thee, a fall may demolish thee; in a moment thou may'st plunge into eternity—and who would venture such a momentous matter on an issue so dangerous, so uncertain?

Oh how happy are you, my beloved brethren, who have accepted the Gospel call, and are labouring by the grace of God, to do the works of him that sent you: be steadfast, continue immoveable, always and daily more and more abounding in the works of the Lord, as knowing, with the utmost certainty, that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.—But as the others his mercy, so take heed that you offend not against the justice of your God, by repining at any of his dispensations or dealings with you, or by endeavouring to
to enter too much into the inscrutable secrets of his deep and hidden decrees, his wonderful dealings with the sons of men. Be content to discharge your own parts faithfully: leave the issue to your blessed master; wait humbly his good pleasure; and attempt not to reason with him, or to murmur at him, because his ways at present appear not to you right and equal. The day is coming when all will be set clear; then the poor will see why God thought fit to place them in that state, rather than a more exalted one: and why it was best for their souls eternal good: then the afflicted will see, why God thought fit, continually to chastise and correct them, and why it was better for them to suffer with Christ, than to enjoy uninterrupted prosperity: then the early labourers, the youthful servants of God who have borne the heat and burden of the day, will adore his wise dealings with them: while those called at the eleventh hour, will acknowledge the exceeding greatness and bounty of his free redeeming love!—Then all together will see and know how inexpensively greater is the reward in bliss, than they could have hoped, than they could have expected: how far beyond all they looked for: then they will learn to despise all the little sufferings of this life: and esteem the greatest evils
evils light in comparison of the revealed glory! then will they learn to despise all their own poor merits and righteousness; and wonder, whence it was, that they could have done so little for a God, so gracious, for a Saviour so bountiful! whose fatherly kindness, and un-speakable love, ages, eternal ages will not suf-fice to glorify and extol: whose free mercy and rich grace in Christ Jesus, it will be the business and delight of all their souls to cele-brate from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.
DISCOURSE VII.

On the PARABLE

Of the importunate WIDOW.


And he spake a Parable unto them, to this End, that Men ought always to pray and not to faint.

HERE is no one duty in Christianity the practice of which our Saviour presseth upon us more frequently than the duty of prayer."*

And there is no one duty to which he hath added so many and so great promises, the better to incite us to a diligent performance of it. Call upon me in the day of trouble, faith God, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye

* These words are from the beginning of Bp. Brownrig's sermon on this subject—whom consult. v. i. p. 594.
shall ask the Father in my name, that will be give you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. This is the confidence, that we have in him, faith St. John, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us: whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him.

To shew us the holy qualifications and dispositions of mind necessary to render our prayers acceptable, he makes use of different similitudes: 1st, That of a child, craving food from its earthly parent, to shew us the necessity of a simple dependance, and full confidence in our heavenly father. 2d, To shew us the necessity of forgiveness in prayer, he makes use of the lively similitude of a gracious master and an unmerciful servant: 3d, To shew us the necessity of humility, he makes use of the example of a self-righteous-pharisee and an humbled publican: and 4thly, to shew us the necessity of perseverance and importunity in prayer, he informs us in the present Parable of the victor, which a poor afflicted widow gain'd by their means over an unjust judge, who neither feared God, nor regarded man.

The human mind is but too apt to despond, especially when afflictions press hard, and prayers
prayers seem unaccompanied with any blessing from above. Mens faith tried thro' a length of time begins to fail; and when infidelity can once persuade the heart, that God neither hears nor regards the prayers offered up to him, it is but a very easy step into the total neglect of them: when thro' a long season, they appear to have been wholly unavailing, and not serv'd at all to the removal of those evils which we groan under; we are ready to cry out, God hath forgotten to be gracious: and so cease from the watch, leave the helm, and let the vessel drive at the mercy of winds and waves.

To obviate which surmises, and to strengthen the faith of his disciples under such trials, Christ, as the evangelist assures us, deliver'd the present Parable: wherein he teacheth us, that tho' God should sometimes seem averse to our petitions, and we so far from a deliverance should, even while we continue to pray, fall deeper and deeper into distress, so that our prayers appear fruitless, and our groanings unheard: yet ought we, Δι, yet is it absolutely necessary for us to persevere with invincible constancy of Faith in prayer. For if the importunate, persevering prayer of a poor Widow at length prevailed upon an unjust judge to do her justice; what may not the righteous, the children
children of God by Faith expect, from a just and holy God and Father, the avenger of his chosen people?

Therefore St. Luke tells us, that the present Parable was spoken by our Saviour προς το to this end, that he might thus by a lively example shew that men ought always (πάντοτε) to pray: and that we may rightly understand the true meaning and import of the word always, he adds, and not to faint, μη εκκακήσας: the word is remarkable: and signifies not to faint under pressures, and persecutions, not to yield to evils, and despond under them: to be so wholly wearied out with them, as to give place to them, and to cease from prayer, as unavailing to procure relief. St. Paul frequently uses the word in this sense. Ephes. iii. 13. I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you. Again, we faint not under our afflictions, tho' our outward man perish. And he exhorts the Christian sufferers, Heb. xii. 3. Not to be wearied, and faint in their minds.

So Christ, delivered this Parable, to this end or purpose: this is the main scope and design of it: that men ought, always, constantly, and perseveringly, to continue in the use of prayer; and not to be so wearied and faint, in their minds, (thro' the troubles and afflictions lying hard upon them, and for a deliverance from which,
which, they pray,) as to lay aside, neglect, and wholly omit this most necessary duty; which is of perpetual obligation: Seeing the delay of assistance from above, so far from giving cause to faintness in or a total disuse of prayer, ought rather to quicken our importunity and make us more earnest and urgent with God for relief.—To shew us the reasonableness whereof, as well as the prevalency of earnest and importunate prayer, and the absolute necessity there is for men thus to continue in prayer, and not to omit the use of it, our Saviour adds the Parable, wherein the great truth to be inculcated is evidently shewn by the contrary.

There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, nor regarded man: and there was in that city, a widow, and she came unto him, saying, avenge me of mine adversary; and he would not for a while: but the woman continuing to press and importune him, he said afterwards within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man, and so am influenced by neither of these motives to avenge this widow: yet because she giveth me trouble, by her clamour, and importunity, I will avenge her: left by her continual coming, σις τελος ερχομενη her praying always, she weary me. "The original word here ὑπνικς, signifies
nifies properly to beat on the face, and particularly under the eyes, so as to make the parts black and blue, *—In the present passage it has a metaphorical sense, and signifies to give great pain, such as arises from severe beating. The meaning therefore is, that the uneasy feelings which this widow raised in the judge's breast, by the moving representations, which she gave him of her distress, affected him to such a degree, that he could not bear it, and therefore to be rid of these feelings he resolved to do her justice. And the passage understood in this sense has a peculiar advantage, as it throws a beautiful light on our Lord's argument in ver. 6, 7. and lays a proper foundation for the conclusion, which it contains. *

For hear, said the Lord, what the unjust judge saith: namely, that because this widow troubleth him, by her earnest and importunate petitions, he will avenge her; lest she cease not to beseech him, and to touch and affect even his hard heart by the moving and frequent representations of her distress; *—and shall not GOD avenge his own elect, which cry day and night, unto him, though he do indeed bear long with them? though he seem

* See Macknight's harmony on the place.
to refrain himself from them for a while, to hold his peace and afflict them very sore? 1 Mac. iv. 11. For the prayer of the humble, or afflicted, faith the wise son of Sirach, pierceth the clouds, and till it come nigh he will not be comforted, and will not depart, till the most High shall behold to judge righteously and execute judgment. For the Lord will not be slack, neither will the Lord be patient towards them, οὔτε μὴ μακροθυμήσει επὶ αὐτοῖς, till he hath smitten asunder the loins of the unmerciful and repayed vengeance to the heathen, till he hath judged the cause of his people and made them rejoice in his mercy*.

I tell you, faith our Lord, that he will avenge them, and that, speedily, εὐ ταξις; even as St. Peter declares, "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day: the Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness: but beareth long

* The following verses from the 2d book of Maccabees, vi. 13-16, may serve to illustrate the expression of bearing long, &c. in the text. "For it is a token of his great goodness when wicked doers are not suffered any long time, but forthwith punished. For not as with other nations whom the Lord patiently forbeareth to punish, αὐχείοις μακροθυμῶν, till they be come to the fulness of their sins, so dealeth he with us, left that being come to the height of sin, afterwards he should take vengeance of us. And therefore he never withdraweth his mercy from us; and tho' he punish with adversity, yet doth he never forsake his people."
On the PARABLE

with us, ἀποκριόμενοι εἰς ἡμᾶς—not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But tho' thus long-suffering, he will at length avenge his people, faith our Lord: and, as his apostle declares, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, as suddenly and unexpectedly, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, &c. Nevertheless, adds our Saviour, closing the parable, tho' God will thus surely, suddenly, and speedily avenge his own elect, yet this notwithstanding, when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith upon earth? As much as to say, the certainty and expectation of this sudden, speedy coming of the Son of man, ought by all means to keep men steadfast in the faith, and diligent on the watch: yet such is the corruption of human nature, and such shall be the prevalence of infidelity, that, when the Son of man shall come either, first, to take vengeance on the Jewish nation, or secondly, to judge the whole world, he shall scarce find any faith left amongst men upon earth, the love of many waxing cold thro' the abounding iniquity, and the times being so totally and universally degenerate. See 2 Pet. chap. iii.

Such is the parable: wherein we are shewn, lift, what is meant by the duty of praying al-
ways,
ways, and 2dly, the absolute necessity of that duty: to the performance of which we have, 2dly, some very lively motives and strong encouragements given us.

Before I speak of either of these, it may be necessary just in brief to shew you the connection of the parable. We render the first words, *And he spake a parable*: it is in the original ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ—*But moreover he spake*: and the particle δὲ, *But*, plainly shews that this parable has a relation to what went before in the former chapter: where our Saviour is speaking of his future coming to destroy Jerusalem, and so, under that figure, of his future coming to judge the world. Wherefore, as some have observed, the parable in its first application may be referred to the Christians, who were under grievous persecutions and troubles from the Jews, before the destruction of their place and nation, an event which, as being strongly confirmative of the truth of Christ, was therefore much longed for by all believers: and secondarily, it may be referred to all, who in every age and time wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus in glory, and continue in faith and prayer amidst every opposition and every trial.

It is the duty of all such, 1st, to pray always, and not to faint, that is, to continue...
constant, regular and persevering in prayer. Observe, the point in hand is not concerning the true nature of prayer, or the several sorts of it, but merely of its external performance: which is not left to our own choice to be used occasionally or merely as we shall see fit, much less to be wholly omitted, but is to be continual and regular: we must pray always, not to-day and omit it to morrow; not in the morning and omit it at night; not on the sabbath and omit it all the rest of the week: but every day, day and night, always. The word which we render always, expresses no more than this in John xviii. 20. Jesus answered; I spake openly in the world; and in the temple, whither the Jews ALWAYS resort: that is, where they constantly and regularly come to perform divine worship. And so the morning and evening sacrifices, because of their constant and regular use, are called, by a still stronger expression, a continual burnt-offering*. Hence it is said of the aged Anna, that she departed not from the temple, οἵτινες ουκ ἔφευρον, but served God with fastings and prayers day and night: that is, she did not separate herself from the service of the temple, at the stated and regular hours of morning and evening prayer: for that she continued not always in the

* Exod. xxix. 42.
temple, is manifest from hence, that, we read, she came into the temple, to attend upon this continual duty, at that instant when the parents of Jesus were presenting him to the Lord. See Luke ii. 37, 38. And so in the present parable, the woman is represented as coming continually, εἰς τὸ τελός *, that is, constantly and frequently: and the original word answers to always, in the first verse: the elect also are said to cry day and night unto God, which plainly shews, what is meant by praying always, even praying, constantly, regularly, and perseveringly.

It is not to be supposed that the woman was continually kneeling before the judge: or the elect all night and all day on their knees before God: tho' she came continually to him, made her constant and repeated visits, and tho' the elect cease not to cry both by night and by day, every night and every day, making their requests known unto God. But we should remark, that as the woman must have had her mind intent upon the matter in hand, and have been apt to fall into petitions upon every sight of the judge: so also true prayer is in the heart, it is the desire of the heart

* Hellenistica locutio, inquit Grotius, ex Hebraeo יְבָלוּל quod significat perpetuo, ut Psal. ix. 19. xiii. 1, &c. in quibus locis etiam LXX habent τελός, perpetuos.
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turned to God, which desire must and will, in every true Christian, vent itself on every occasion and every remembrance of the object desired.—In this sense Cornelius, the devout centurion, is said to have prayed to God always: which must necessarily mean, to have been regular at the stated hours of prayer, and constant in the use of it, as well as to have had his heart's desire continually turned to God, and an aptitude to fall into holy ejaculations. In this sense it is, that our Saviour commands, Watch ye therefore, and pray always: and that St. Paul exhorts the Thessalonicans to pray without ceasing; and again, advises the Philippians in words which well explain the former, to be careful, anxiously, uneasily, careful for nothing: but in all things by prayer and supplication to make their requests known unto God. Hence he exhorts the Romans to continue instant in prayer, and the Ephesians, to pray always with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and to watch thereunto with all perseverance.

From all which, the meaning of praying always, and the main scope of the parable is very obvious; namely, that it is intended to inculcate frequency, constancy and perseverance in the duty of prayer: and not according to the strict sense of the words, continual praying,
Of the importunate Widow.

ing *, which is impossible to human nature and incompatible with the necessary discharge of the duties of our station. To pray always, is to pray at all the regular and appointed times of prayer, day and night, whether in the closet, the family, or the temple:—it is to pray all the days of our life, even to the end:—it is to pray in and for every thing; a Christian should neither begin nor end any undertaking without prayer:—it is to pray constantly, never omitting or growing weary of the duty, as unavailing and ineffectual:—and it is to have the heart always turned in desire to God, in an aptitude or fitness to pray, in an holy frame—praying always, in the spirit: for we should never forget, that prayer is an inward as well as an outward work: the fruit of the heart as well as of the lips: and so may properly enough be stilled the breath of the Christian life: in this sense it may be offered continually to God, as the heart of a truly regenerate Christian is always turned to him.

* Euthymius remarks, Semper, πάντα, hic non in summo rigore accipendum est, sed commodè, ut significet orationis perseverantiam, non continuatatem. Impossibile est enim homini ita omni tempore orare, ut nunquam orationem aliquà alià actione interrupat. Fieri autem potest & omnibus curandum est, ut congruis temporibus pro eadem re orare perseveremus, donec obtineamus.
"A man, says Quesnello *, may justly be said to pray always, when he has God always present to his mind, and always desires him, whether he do it standing or kneeling; in rest or labour, grief or joy." To which purpose Ephraim Syrus gives this excellent rule: "Whether you work or are going to lie down, whether you stand still or are going a journey: whether you eat or drink, whether you are going to sleep or are waking; take heed, you do not forget to pray: whether you are at church, at home, or in the field, whether you are at a feast or otherwise engaged, still pray and converse with God †."

* He observes, to pray always and speak but little, is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel: this duty requires little of the tongue, much of the heart.
† See Dr. Horneck's excellent Treatise entitled, The happy Aesthetic, or The Best Exercise—particularly, Exercise the first: by which you will be enabled to practise this duty; as he has subjoined short ejaculations suited to almost every occasion. Permit me also to refer you to the excellent Mr. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio, V. 2. p. 297, &c. where he speaks of ejaculatory prayer, and gives some remarkable instances of its success—particularly in Nehemiah. See Nebem. xi. 4. and David, see 2 Sam. xv. 31. xvii. 23. This is the prayer, says the pious and incomparable author, which all the devils in hell cannot withstand:—this is the prayer which brings down somewhat of heaven into the heart: in which I would myself desire to abound: and would earnestly recommend to all my acquaintance and all my readers.
In this sense, by holy ejaculations breath’d from a devout heart, we must also pray continually unto God—but not to the neglect of a constant and persevering application of soul to God, in all the offices of public and private devotion, the duty more immediately taught in this parable: we must by no means omit the performance of this duty; but be careful and regular in the discharge of it: more especially in times of trial and affliction, when our adversaries, sin or satan, evil men or evil things oppress and injure us: then must we become more and more earnest and importunate with our heavenly Father, instead of sinking beneath the burden, and fainting beneath the heavy load of our afflictions: for men ought always to pray and not to faint: and if thus we cry to God incessantly, continuing instant in prayer; tho’ he seem to delay, yet will he at length avenge his own elect, who cry unto him day and night. In full confidence upon which, let us never fail to implore his divine and gracious hand to protect us, since no other hand can protect us; since if we do not so call, earnestly and importunately, he will never avenge us; and since if we will but ask and implore, if we will but thus earnestly and importunately cry to him, we shall ever find him, far more ready to give,
give, and grant our petitions, than we are ready to ask and humble ourselves before him: and this we shall see beautifully represented, when in the IId place, we speak of the necessity of thus offering up our prayers to him, as shewn by the present parable.

The parable, St. Luke tells us, was delivered to this very end, for this purpose, and with this design, namely, to shew us the necessity of perseverance and continuance in prayer; he spake a parable to this end, προς το Δευ, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, nor be wearied in their minds, tho' afflictions press hard, and God even seem to hide his face and not to see or regard. And this necessity is clearly shewn to us, by the case of the widow: she desired to be avenged of, or rather to have justice done her* against her oppressing adversary: she desired her wrongs to be redressed, and the injuries, wherewith she was persecuted, removed and righted. In order to which she applies to the chief magistrate of her city, the judge appointed to avenge the fatherless and widow, and to see that they who are in need and necessity have right. But he was an unjust judge. He feared not God, and so was influenced by no motives of

* Μεταδίδωσι.
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Of the importunate Widow, piety, nor did he regard man, and so was influenced by no motives of benevolence and humanity to do justice and to relieve the oppressed. The poor widow therefore had little to hope from him: and her application to him succeeded just as one would have expected: he took no notice at all of her for a time, and refused wholly to be intreated of her.—Had it been any wonder now, if she had wholly dropt her purpose, and sat down sorrowful and distrest under the sad sense of the utter unavailingness of her petitions?—But instead of this, you see her rather whetted by refusals, and so far from omitting her petitions, continuing them with fervor, importunity, and perseverance. Her distresses press hard upon her: her unjust adversary afflicted and troubled her: but so far from fainting and sinking beneath the burden, so far from desponding and ceasing to cry aloud for justice, she was stung up and stimulated, as it were, by these, to greater earnestness and clamour: her wants increased her cry: and her continual cry at length prevailed even with this unjust, hard-hearted judge.

Here you see the absolute necessity of importunate and persevering prayer, as taught us by our Saviour: had this woman, when repulsed by the judge once and again, omitted after—
afterwards to come and importune him; had the fat down disconsolate and hopeless, and not wearied his threshold with her continual coming, and his ear with her continual cry; she had never gained the justice on her adversary which she sought, but had been left to the oppression and injuries of her oppressor. —So we, when we desire to be avenged of our adversary, when we groan beneath the weight of any inward or outward evil, when afflictions, persecutions or sin, vex and trouble us with all their storms, must learn, never to faint nor be weary in our minds, tho' God seemeth to delay, tho' our prayers are unsuccessful, and the evil unremoved. God wills that we continue in prayer: unless we persevere and cry unto him importunately and without ceasing, he will not avenge us. He hath made it absolutely necessary for us to do so, at once to try our patience, and to perfect our resignation to his divine will*. If we continue our prayers to him, if the sense of our

* God will have us pray always, faith St. Chrysostom, that by the frequency of our addresses we may be rendered familiar to him; that we may be humbled while we pray, and often call to remembrance our offences against him. —The same fine writer remarks, that prayer is as necessary to the spiritual life, as meat, drink and cloathing to the animal. He is very large on the subject in his book De Orando Deo, and in his 19 Hom. on Matt. 6.
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sorrows, and the weight of our afflictions render us impatient and repining, and stop the progress of our prayers to heaven, if we omit to tread his courts and to pour our supplications into his ears; he will neither hear nor regard, and we shall be left to the oppression and miseries which we deplore; under which we sink desponding; from which there is no deliverance save by the almighty power of God; and which power there is no engaging in our defence otherwise than by fervent, constant, persevering prayer, and full dependance upon him in all trials and afflictions. So that hence the indispensible necessity of the duty is abundantly manifest *

Where men are found diligent in the practice of it, as certainly as God is true, so certainly will he in his good time, (which he knows far better than we) take our cause into his hand, and plead it in judgment and justice with those that rise up against us: so certainly will he avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him: which naturally leads me to the 111d and last thing proposed, namely, the motives and encouragements we have to perform this duty, to pray always, which are oo-

* See Priceus his remarks on the 1st and 5th verse of the present chapter.
piously suggested to us in the reddition, that our Saviour gives us of the parable.

For, hear, said the Lord, what the unjust judge saith: namely, that because this widow troubleth him, he will avenge her, left by her continual coming she weary him—and shall not God, the just and supreme judge of all the earth—avenge his own elect,—his own faithful people, his elect by faith, his own beloved children—which cry day and night unto him, fervently, constantly, perseveringly? tho' he bear long with them?—He puts it by way of interrogation, to shew the absurdity of the contrary supposition: and this had been enough to assure us of the certainty of finding justice from God. But that we might have strong consolation, our Saviour answers his own question with a strong affirmative; I tell you, I, the incarnate Truth, the word of God, declare unto you, that he will avenge them speedily: his vengeance shall soon, too soon for the wicked, and suddenly fall upon them. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, to take vengeance on the wicked, and to reward the

* Concerning this vengeance, see Deut. xxxii. 35, 41—43. Of the scarcity of the faithful at that time, see Isai. lix. 16—19, where we read also of the vengeance. Of the speed of that vengeance, see Isai. lx. 22.

† So much seems to be implied in the original ἐν ταχύτερον. Consult Cocceius on the place.
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righteous, shall he find faith on the earth? He will scarce find any faith, as to this great event more especially, remaining amongst men: some fainting and growing weary in mind, thro' despair of his coming: and others waxing more and more bold and presumptuous, thro' disbelief and utter denial of it: saying, Where is the promise of his coming: for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world*?

Let not such presume too far: for behold he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry: one day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day: he is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but long-suffering, not willing that any, even the greatest sinner, should perish, but that all should come to repentance. However, when he hath borne long, if they will not repent, he will come speedily, he will come suddenly: The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: and as the lightning, that lightneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

And as to the righteous, let them not faint, nor grow weary, and cease to pray; since

they have first, Christ's sure word and promise, that he will avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him: tho' he do indeed bear long with them, that the trial of their faith may be found precious, and unto their praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ*: For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy now will I arise, faith God, I will set him in safety from him that would ensnare him. Nay, St. Paul affirms, that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble his elect: and to you who are troubled, it is also a righteous thing with him to recompense rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day †.

But besides these and other strong asserveations, they have also the most forcible arguments and motives to convince them, that he will avenge their cause, and of consequence to encourage them in the performance of their

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* 1 Peter i. 7. † 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9, 10.
duty, in a constant and importunate cry to him.—For consider first the person of the judge, and then secondly, of the widow: and you will discern what lively encouragements even this single parable supplies us with, to pray always, and how inexcusable we must be, if we faint and despair of the goodness or justice of our Father and our God.

1. For this judge was, in the first place, an unjust judge, and yet he was prevailed upon by the importunity of the widow. The Judge with whom we have to do, is not only a just judge, but a righteous father. How much rather then shall the importunity of his own elect, his children by faith, prevail with him?

2. As this was an unjust, so was he also an hard-hearted judge, he had no mercy, no bowels of compassion for a poor widow in distress: and he relieved her only to get rid of her clamour: he was such a one as Cambyses* the Great put to death in his days, and flaying him, caused the judgment-seat to be covered with his skin: after which, he made the son judge in his father's stead, who was thus continually reminded to do justice, by the consideration of his father's punishment: but this judge in the parable dreaded no such punishment; he neither feared God, nor regarded man.—Our just Judge doth regard man: he

is the helper of the helpless: he is full of compassion and mercy: his eyes are upon his servants, more especially such as are in affliction, the widows and the fatherless: he taketh their cause in hand; he will not withhold his peace at their tears. It was a regard, an eminent regard for man, that caused this very Judge to send his only-begotten Son into the world to offer himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world: to redeem his people from wrath, from death and from hell: and if he sent his Son to die for them, much more will he hear their cry and will help them: for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life, especially when we cry day and night unto him for that salvation!—Who then can doubt of the justice, who can despair of the goodness of this Judge; and who can be afraid to bring a righteous cause before him?

But as the judge in the parable was an unjust and a hard-hearted judge, so was he dly, an inferior magistrate, a subordinate officer; there lay an appeal from him to the higher courts, and the highest courts are always supposed to regard justice most.—God is the supreme Judge: the Judge of judges: and the Judge of all the earth will certainly do
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This is an undoubted conclusion, laid down by St. Paul: *We are sure, that the judgment of God is according to truth.* He can be influenced by no sinister motives, by neither prejudice, partiality, nor bribes: the Judge of all the earth will most certainly do right. May we not then with the utmost joy and confidence commit our righteous cause to this supreme, this just, and most compassionate judge?

Thus then we see three advantages we have over the widow, in the person of our Judge: she had an unjust, an unmerciful, and an inferior judge to deal with, and yet her importunity prevailed even over such a one as him! We have a most righteous, most merciful, and an almighty Judge, the Judge of all judges, and shall we doubt, that he will fail to avenge his own elect?—I tell you, that he will avenge them speedily.

But let us, 2dly, see the advantages we have over the widow in the character of the elect of God. 1. She was a widow, left alone and desolate: and poor widows seldom find many friends: she was an utter stranger to the judge: despised and unregarded by him: she had no friend to speak for her, or plead her cause, no advocate mighty and able to intercede. But the elect are no strangers to God,

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they are his own beloved children; they are not left alone or desolate: they may say with their Master, 'Tho' all the world forsake me, yet am I not alone: the holy Spirit dwelleth in me: Christ abideth in my heart by faith: the one maketh intercession for me in heaven, the other in my heart by groanings that cannot be uttered.' The elect are not despised or disregarded by God: they are his peculiar people: near and dear to him: they that touch them, touch the apple of his eye*. The elect come not to the Judge without a friend to introduce and plead their cause: they have an all-powerful advocate: a mediator mighty to plead, and able to save, even the Man Christ Jesus.

2. The widow had no promises to urge, or to quicken her confidence and application, no sweet invitations to come and be received into favour: the elect have many and exceeding great promises to urge before God, and to give them confidence in their approaches to him: many pathetic and earnest invitations to come and have life: the golden scepter is held out to them: they are commanded, desired, importuned to approach, to touch the scepter, to ask and they shall receive ex-

* Zech. ii. 8.
ceedingly abundant above all that they ask or think.

Moreover, 3dly, the prayers of the widow were a trouble to the judge: they wearied him out: and he only avenged her, because he was willing to be rid of her clamour and importunity. He was not like Philip, the great king of Macedon, to whom a poor woman applying for justice: the king put her off and told her, that "he had not leisure to do her justice." Upon which, the woman boldly replied, "Then you are not a king: for 'tis the business of kings to do justice to their subjects." Moved by the force of which reply, the king generously commended the woman; took her cause in hand, and did her the justice which she required. But this judge was moved by no such generous motives; his were perfectly selfish; he did her justice solely because she was troublesome.—But our Judge, our God and Father, is a great and a generous King: who will assuredly do justice and judgment to all his oppressed subjects: the sooner and the more importunately they cry to him in their distress, the more welcome are they and the more sure is their deliverance. The prayers of his elect are precious and delightful in the ears of God, which are ever open to them. The more
importunate, the more fervent, the more frequent our petitions are, the more pleasing they are to God; "God loves to see his doors, faith St. Aulfin, throng'd with importunate suitors:" this holy violence is acceptable to him *. When the elect cry, with earnestness, and that day and night, with perseverance †, such

* Et hæc vis Deo gratâ est, says Tertullian.
† As these trumpets of prayer must be loud, says Bp. Brownrigg, so must they be lasting. These cries are day and night, instant and constant prayers. Strength and length of devotion are the two wings of prayers. Paul calls it persevering in prayer. We must not have Bethulian devotions. Judith vii. If God will not deliver us in five days, we will give over our prayers. Fasting and prayer, that's the devotion of the day: and watchings and prayer, that's the devotion of the night. There was a society of monks in Constantinople, called Monachi insomnes, some of which company were praying at all seasons of the night. Well, that excess of devotion is now laid aside. Alas! who breaks his sleep to pray and mourn for the afflictions of the church? The ship is in a tempest and ready to sink, and Jonah is got into a warm cabin, and is fast asleep. Christ commends this watching unto prayer, under the parable of him, that at midnight went to borrow bread of his neighbour, and by importunity prevailed with him. An unseasonable hour for the man to rise: but God likes such importunities: these nocturni mendicatores, as Aulfin calls them, these nightly beggars, are welcome to God: like importunate suitors they will observe no decorum of time and place, but will haunt him, whom they sue to, wherever they can find him. Non tantum offerunt Deo preces, sed ingerunt & impingunt: they enforce their prayers upon him, and extort a grant from him. Like those men, that brought the paralytic to Christ, if the doors be shut, they will until the house, and break up the roof but they will bring
strong crying and supplications pierce the clouds, and make their way to heaven: they conquer God himself, and he delights in such importunity.

Did then a poor desolate widow, a stranger and despised, without friend, without advocate or intercessor—without any promises to urge, without any hopes to encourage—nay, contrary to all hope, when her prayers were hateful, and her cry wearisome—did she solely by the strength of her persevering importunity gain justice from an unjust, an unmerciful judge?—And shall we fear that God will fail, in his good time, to avenge his own elect, his own peculiar people, his own beloved faithful children, all who believe in, rely on, and obey him,—who have the most powerful all-prevailing advocate to plead their cause, and to intercede for them:—who have the

bring him to Christ, that he might be cured.”—Little-Gidding in Huntingdonshire, has been rendered more famous by the exemplary life of Mr. Farrar, than Constantineople by the Monachi insomnes: this most extraordinary Christian was at the head of a large family, some of whom were continually employed in prayers, &c. during the whole night. His life and devotions were peculiarly divine. Some brief account of him may be found in the Life of Mr. Herbert: tho’ it were to be wished, a MS Life of him, by Bp. Turner, put into my hands by a learned physician, was made public, to recommend so amiable and great example of piety. See Walton’s Life of Herbert, p. 67, &c.

* See vol. 2. p. 231.
most encouraging promises, and the strongest assurances of acceptance—and whose prayers will be welcome, whose importunity will be well-pleasing in the sight of their just, their compassionate, almighty Judge, their righteous and most merciful Father?

Hold up, therefore, thou suffering child of God, hold up ye that are oppressed and afflicted: and who are well nigh wearied out with the burden of your sorrows—your God, your Father, your just, and most merciful Judge will come and will not keep silence: he will avenge his own elect. Let patience only have its perfect work: resign to your Father's will, and in his good time he will visit and relieve you. For when men cry unto him in their trouble, he saveth them out of their distress.—Never, never therefore let us despair, be faint or weary in our minds, and cease to offer up the incense of our prayers continually on the golden altar. For shall an unjust judge avenge a poor friendless widow,—and shall not GOD avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him? Only let us so cry, so continue importunate and instant in prayer: nothing discouraged, tho' he bear long with us, tho' he seemeth long to withdraw his helping hand, thus trying our faith, and putting our resignation to the utmost test.

Prayer
Prayer is the golden key of heaven: but it will never unlock the door without faith: we must therefore endeavour all we can to strengthen and confirm our faith, that so our prayers may wing their way to heaven with greater force, and our deliverance draw nigh the sooner.—Truth it is, in times of affliction and trouble, more especially when they have lain long and hard upon us, it requires much faith and strong prayer to establish our patience and to keep us in perfect resignation to the will of God. The recollection of the justice and mercy of God, and the relation we stand in to him, thro' Christ Jesus, must of necessity confirm our faith and quicken our prayers. And when we reflect how successful this poor widow was even with an unjust judge, it cannot fail to animate our hopes, and to assure us of no less success, with a just

* Where faith faileth, prayer perisheth, faith St. Austin: for who prayeth, that doth not believe, according to the Apostle, *How shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed?* Faith poureth out prayer, and prayer being poured out obtaineth firmness of faith.—*In Verb. Dom. Rom. x.* so faith *Theophalecta*—παρελθεις προσευχε σάλῳ καὶ

agentis in πρέπεις—Faith is the foundation and basis of all prayer. For unless a man believes, that he shall receive to his profit, that for which he asks, his prayer is in vain. This same father gives us, from the more ancient writers, an allegorical interpretation of the parable, which as it seems rather too forced, I have omitted. The reader will find it by referring to his Exposition of the chapter, p. 474.

and
and a holy Judge who hath promised to avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him.

Our great study then should be to secure the divine adoption, to become his own elect, the children of God by faith, which all those are who "truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." And when you can in this important respect happily assure your hearts before him, then fail not to cry day and night unto God, after the example of this widow: "to whom the church of God is here compared: and here she fulfils St. Paul's description of a good widow, She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." Faith, constancy, and importunity are the very soul of prayer. Heartless, feeble, and languid desires seldom make their way to heaven. Jacob, we read, wrestled with the

* The elect in general signify all Christians chosen out of the world, thro' faith in Christ, to be the church and people of God: when it relates particularly to the Jews, it signifies those of them, who believed in Christ, and upon that account are styled the election of grace and absolutely the election. Rom. xi. 5, 7, &c. See this fully proved by Dr. Whitby, in his note on 1 Pet. ii. 9.

† This is Bp. Brownrigg's remark, to whom I referred at the beginning of this discourse: and whose sermon on the present subject well deserves a serious perusal.
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God-man *, all night, and would not let him go, till he gave him a blessing: and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. A strong figure and lively example, as the best ancient and modern writers are agreed, of the necessity and prevalence of earnest and importunate prayer. He prevailed and gained the blessing: his name was changed from Jacob to Israel, a prince prevailing with God, in token of the divine adoption and favour: and in honour of the God, with whom he had thus prevailed, he called the name of the

* It is, I think, agreed by the fathers and the most learned Christian writers, that the person with whom Jacob wrestled was no other than the second person in the divine Trinity. He is called, ver. 24. (Gen. xxxii.) a man, there wrestled a man with him—and he is called God, El, the particular name of the second person—As a prince hast thou power with God, ver. 28. I have seen God, ver. 30. So that he was, from these passages, plainly Man and God. But a passage in the prophet Hosea, chap. xii. 3, &c. abundantly proves that this person was God, as also the justice of the reference of his wrestling to prayer. By his strength he (Jacob) had power with God: yea he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he went and made supplication unto him: so he wrestled with this divine person, sent to him, the great messenger of the covenant: it will be of service to us in the reading of the Old Testament to remember, that angel is only a word of office, and signifies no more than a messenger, one sent, and so may be and is applied to the divine Persons, in many passages, grossly misunderstood of spiritual beings, commonly called angels. See by all means Justin Martyr’s dialogue with Trypho the Jew. Sect. 58, & seq.
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place Peni-El: for I have seen God, said he, face to face, and my life is preserved.—God himself commandeth the watchmen, in Isaiah, * never to hold their peace, day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence: and give him no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth.—And to encourage us still more to importunity in prayer, our Lord gives us to know, that importunity will sometimes prevail, so great is its power, even when friendship will not: though he will not rise and give him, faith he, because he is his friend: yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, adds our Lord, ask, and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For if a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall the heavenly Father give the holy Spirit, that best of all good gifts, to them that ask him?

Let these examples, these promises, these assurances persuade us to greater importunity, confidence and earnestness in our application to the

* Isaiah liii. 6, 7.
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throne of grace, to our heavenly Father: encouraged by these evangelical motives, let us not fail to pray to him continually, as well in all the offices of public and private devotion—as by the holy meditations of the heart, by strong and ardent desires darted up incessantly to the God who heareth prayer. Omit no proper times, nor places of performing this necessary duty, and see that your heart go with your lips: otherwise the words of the mouth be-lying the thoughts of the heart are a deep and solemn abomination before God. And as the day of trial will never end, till the day of death approaches; so the necessity of constant, importunate, persevering prayer and supplication will never cease; till that happy hour, that much to be desired moment shall arrive, when all our wants supplied, and all our grievances removed, we shall have no further need of supplication: the saints will no longer have cause to cry, How long, O God, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?—But the great day of the wrath of the Lamb being come, however despair'd of by these, however mock'd at, and disbelieved by those, and

* Revel. vi. 10, 11. comp. chap. xi. 18. The destruction of the wicked and the rewarding of the righteous are frequently joined.
the Lord having finished his glorious work in righteousness—his servants shall join in one eternal song of thanks and praise to the God who hath avenged them, who hath delivered them from sorrow, from sin, and from death, and hath wiped away all tears from their eyes, the former things being all passed away!

Influenced by which, let us not fail to pray always, lest we faint, and be weary in our minds: And as this parable was delivered at first with a view to a whole nation, let me conclude with a general reference of the duty to us, not only as individuals, but as members of the same church and subjects of the same king: which the present season renders the more applicable, since we are now called to humble ourselves before the Lord, and to turn unto him with weeping, fasting, and praying, for the blessing of God upon our country's arms—The parable, as observed in the beginning, was delivered by our Saviour with a design to support the elect under the expectation of his coming to destroy the Jewish place and nation. And in truth the Christians then had need of all possible support, when evil men and seducers waxed worse and worse: when persecutions and distresses on all hands prevailed and increased, and when, because of the abounding iniquity, the Faith
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Of many waxed cold.—Evil days seem to threaten us: the sword of war is drawn, and the powers of Europe appear in dreadful combination, to use it with all their might, and to drench it deep in blood. War is the fearful scourge of sin, the punishment of guilty nations, and where iniquity daily more and more aboundeth, there is but little reason to hope for victory in battle, or for an utter Deliverance from the threatening evils of war: since God is the Judge of all the earth, and if left out of the account his indignation will too surely be kindled against those who forget or despise his mighty arm: and put their trust in the vain and feeble arm of flesh. For thus saith the Lord, cursed is the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.—But, blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. Blessed are the people, who have the Lord for their God; blessed is the nation, whose strength is in the Lord of hosts: for it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in princes: since without a trust in him, all other helps are vain: unless he go forth
forth with our hofts, vain, very vain is all the help of man—we shall see nothing but disappointed councils, and only mourn over fruitless expeditions and shameful defeats.—That therefore we may each one in our station discharge our duty, as true subjects, and as living members of the church, let us not fail by true repentance and faith unfeigned to unite ourselves to the family and favour of God, that so we may be entitled to the privileges of his elect, and pray always with holy confidence, night and day, without ceasing, constantly, fervently, importunately, that it would please our heavenly Father to bless the endeavours of our royal monarch, for his peoples good, to give wisdom to his counsellors, and a dependance, a well-grounded dependance upon the great king of Heaven, to him, to all—but more especially to those, who preside and rule in this day of peril! And if we continue fervent, and earnest in prayer to God, and suffer him not to rest, if we cry day and night unto him for this our land, our king and country, we may have good hope, that he, whose mercies fail not, will hear, regard and bless our petitions. At least we shall have the insfelt satisfaction of having done our duty: and in the general wreck find an unspeakable comfort, in being reckoned amongst the elect of God,
Of the importunate Widow.

God, the sons of God by Faith in Christ Jesus!—

Give us therefore, O eternal Father of mercies, and God of all power, King of kings, and Lord of lords, the only ruler of princes, give us true faith, and lively hope to look up to and rely solely on thee; Enable us to pray continually unto thee, and accept our most fervent prayers, for the welfare of these realms, and of thy chosen servant George, our king and governor! preserve him from all open attacks, and secret machinations of his enemies! defeat their councils, assuage their malice: and bless the councils and arms of this people and nation, who turn unto thee, with weeping, fasting and praying! give wisdom to our governors, and a sense of thy power and mercy to all in authority over us: and if it be thy good pleasure, to speak the word, to disperse the cloud now hanging over these realms, and to restore unto us peace and a continuance of thy favour—grant us all the grace to improve it to our souls eternal good, and to become more abundantly thankful, and more grateful than heretofore, for thy manifold and particular kindnefles vouchsafed to us of this nation!—May thy Faith and love grow and abound more and more amongst us: and may we at least, however
in thy wisdom thou art pleased to deal with us here, be found in that Day, when the \textit{Son of man shall come} to judge the earth, a small remnant, faithful and beloved, that so we may inherit thy favour, and enter into the joy of our Lord. Grant this, O Father, for the sake of \textit{Jesus Christ}, our only Lord and Saviour, \&c. Amen.
DISCOURSE VIII.
Being the Substance of two Sermons.

On the PARABLE
Of the PHARISEE and PUBLICAN:

PART I.

St. Luke xviii. 9.
And he spake this Parable unto certain which trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and despised others.

HE former parable was delivered to teach us the necessity of perseverance in prayer: here we are taught another qualification, no less necessary, without which our prayers are an abomination, and all our services disgusting to God. 'Tis humility alone, which can make our persons acceptable, and the prayer of the humble, faith the wise man, pierceth the clouds: and till it come nigh he will not be comforted:

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and will not depart, till the most High shall be
bold to judge righteously and execute judg-
ment.

The great and peculiar doctrine of the Gos-
pel is humility: a virtue so little known to the
heathen world, the polite Greeks and Romans,
that they had not so much as a word for it
in either of their copious languages, before
Christ. The scheme of redemption and the
grand means of salvation are wonderfully so
disposed as to hide all pride from man, and
to extol the free grace, mercy and power of
God alone; to shew us, that God is all in all,
and we are nothing; to teach us, that every
one who humbleth himself shall be exalted, and
that every one who exalteth himself shall be a-
based.

Pride and self-confidence cast the fallen
spirits from heaven; cast Adam and his pos-
terity from paradise: pride and self-confidence
causèd the pharisaical Jews to reject and to
crucify Christ; and pride and self-confidence,
wherever they reign, will cause Christ to be
rejected and crucified afresh to the end of the
world. Our Saviour has not failed fully to
warn all his followers against this opposition
to his cross; to lay the foundation of his doc-
trine in humility,—his first blessing is for the
poor in spirit—to display the real malignity
lurk-
lurking in the hearts of those, who pretend self-righteousness: to shew the hatefulfulness of such pretences in the sight of God; and his great complacency and delight in the opposite virtue. *Ye are they,* said he to the Pharisees, *which justify yourselves before men:* but *God knoweth your hearts,* how full of all uncleanness and iniquity they are: men may reverence you on account of your fair outside: *but that which is highly esteemed amongst men,* who cannot see the heart, is *abomination in the sight of God,* who can. —To shew us which in the fullest light, he delivered a parable, expressly calculated for such, as St. Luke informs us, *who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous:* and as a necessary consequence of self-justification, *despised others.*

Two men went up into the temple, with one and the same design, *to pray:* the one a *Pharisee,* the other a *Publican:* very different in the esteem and opinion of men, the one being of that sect which was accounted the most holy and religious, and held in the highest veneration: the other, of a set of men, detested by all the Jews, as the greatest of sinners, and so joined constantly in their reckoning, with harlots, gentiles, and notorious offenders. The Pharisee, standing by himself, afar from the Publican, whom he would
would not approach lest his holiness should be defiled, prayed thus, made this prayer, if it may be so called, as we find neither confession, nor petition in it, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as ετος η τελωνης — as this same Publican! I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. — So having commended himself to God, he wrapt himself up in his own righteousness, and giving the poor Publican a scornful look, walked away perhaps to transgress some of the weightier matters of the law, judgment, justice and truth, and to devour some poor widows houses.

But the publican, who came up with him, not daring to approach the altar, to enter far into the courts of the house of the Lord, standing afar off, conscious of his own unworthiness, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!

I tell you, said our Saviour, that however you might judge from outside appearances, and whatever preference you would give to this seemingly-righteous Pharisee, I, who know and see the heart, declare unto you, that this Publican descended from the temple

* The original here expresses a kind of pointing, as it were with the finger: as ere!
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to his own house, justified, accepted in the
fight of God, and blest with the mercy which
he implored, and not the other, for this is the
exact import * of the phrase, which we ren-
der rather than the other: and which is there-
fore not to be so well approved, because it
hath led many to suppose, that the Pharisee
was justified as well as the Publican, but that
the Publican was more completely justified, more
acceptable in the sight of God, than the Pha-
risee, who it is very manifest to the least ob-
servation, could not be at all acceptable in
the sight of him, who has declared, that he
abaseth all who exalt themselves: and accord-
ingly declares here, that the Publican went

* The original, κατεβαν αυτος δεδικαιωμενος, εις εσων, is a
peculiar idiom of the Greek language, and will not ad-
mitt a literal construction into English. The following
passage will serve to shew, that its true import is as above
given. John xiii. 10. our Saviour says, He that is washed,
needeth not to wash, save his feet, ἐν χρυσῷ εξώ, ἐν τῷ ποδί
μασθαι, where the phrase is exactly the same, and as you
observe, excludes all washing but that of the feet. Any
Greek Concordance will supply you with more proofs.
The learned Gratius has fallen into the error of supposing
the Pharisee justified in some degree, by understanding the
passage, as we translate it: and our excellent Dr. Water-
land treading in his steps, observes in a sermon on the sub-
ject, "Our Lord does not say absolutely, that either of the
two was justified: but he speaks comparatively, that one
was so, rather than the other."—See Dr. Waterland's Ser-
mons, vol. I. p. 393. The reader will observe that there
is nothing for rather in the original, and therefore it is
printed in italics in our Bibles.

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down to his house justified, and not the Pharisee; who being righteous in his own sight, and so asking nothing of God, of necessity could obtain nothing, and so not be justified before him: for every one that exalteth himself, shall, what? be justified? no; shall be abased: and be that humbleth himself shall be exalted, blest with God's pardon, acceptation and favour.

This justification, this pardon of all our sins, this favour of God, and hope of everlasting life, is what we all equally stand in need of, after which we cannot too carefully enquire, and of which we cannot too zealously labour to make ourselves happy partakers. For if we fall short of this, by any wrong apprehensions, or wrong pursuits, the gain of all beside will be less than nothing in the future account: for what shall it profit a man, says infinite wisdom, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? The present parable will serve excellently to shew us the true nature of justification, what we must avoid, and what we must perform in order to attain it: for which purpose I will consider distinctly the character of the Pharisee and of the Publican, shew you the rocks upon which the former split, and the happy means that

* Mark viii. 36, 37.
brought the other safe to the haven of divine mercy! And God give us all the wisdom to humble and despise ourselves in our own eyes - with this Publican, that with him we may be exalted, that together with him God also may be merciful to us miserable sinners.

All men want his mercy: as well the strict Pharisees, as the despised Publicans: all are sinners: conceived and born in sin: and there is but one way of justification for all, thro' a better righteousness, than fallen man can ever offer unto God. To attain this, all alike must ascend to the temple, the house of God's worship;—and that with the same design as this Pharisee and Publican are said to have ascended, to pray; which word, in this as in many other places of Scripture signifies, to perform all the offices which pertain to the service of God—to hear his word, to implore his mercy, to bless his name, to partake of his sacraments—there he hath promised ever to be present in the midst, and to grant the petitions sent up with united fervor to the throne of grace. Souls desirous of pardon, like that of the Publican's, when ascending, with this purpose, to the house of God, will never fail to behave themselves decently, reverently, devoutly, as knowing the awful presence.
fence before whom they bow, as conscious of the solemn work wherein they are engaged, as earnestly desirous to obtain the favour and mercy, which they so much want: and like him, such will descend justified to their houses, refreshed with the comforts of the Lord, humbled in heart before him, and strengthened with new resolutions, to quicken their pace, and to walk with greater zeal and circumspection in the way of holiness.

Such are the first steps, which we must take in order to arrive at perfect justification: of which that we may not fail, Christ hath given us the two examples, which I propose to consider, the first teaching us what we are to avoid, the second, what we are to perform, that we also may return justified from the house of God.

It is almost impossible to understand the nature of the Pharisee's offence, and the grounds of his self-righteousness and contempt of others, without a general knowledge of the opinions and fatal errors of the Pharisees, and far the greater part of the Jewish nation at that time;—opinions and errors which are therefore to be more abhorred, and against which we are therefore more carefully to guard, as they were the chief cause of the treatment, which our Saviour and his doctrine met
met with from them at that Day, and as wherever they are found, they necessarily produce the same effect. I will therefore, before I consider the character of the present Pharisee, give you a general account of the principal errors of the whole body.

The first * capital error then of the Jewish synagogue, and as it were the foundation from whence flow’d all the rest, was, “their ascribing too great power and liberty to the will of man, or at least their utterly denying the necessity of divine grace, to operate upon that will, and to enable it to do works acceptable to God.” They were of opinion, that their own natural, unassisted powers, the law being added only as a kind of remembrancer, were sufficiently to obtain for them righteousness and salvation. In opposition to this capital error of theirs it is, that St. Paul hath so copiously set forth the necessity and efficacy of divine grace, and the inability of the human will and written law to work out any righteousness acceptable unto God.—It may not be necessary perhaps to observe, that this also is the first and capital error of the Deists, and professed opposers of the gospel of Christ in this Day, nay, and of many

* See Bp. Bull’s Harmonia, part the 2d. c. 15, 16, 17—where the reader will find these errors of the Pharisees fully laid open, and enlarged upon with great learning and judgment. See also Dr. Lightfoot’s Works. Vol. II. p. 656, 7, 8.

others
others, who profess a faith in Christ, yet deny the influences of the holy Spirit,—of all those, who like the Pharisee, trust in themselves, and their own imperfect performances, that they are righteous.—One would imagine, that this Doctrine, so destructive of Christianity, should not much be recommended to the Christian world, by such profess enemies and opposers of the truth of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Pharisees thus ignorant of the Grace of God, and the depravity of the human will, were 2dly ignorant of the true extent and spirituality of the divine law: hence they rested in a kind of civil righteousness: in an obedience, that was merely negative, external, and partial: 1st negative, since they thought it enough if they abstained from gross Crimes, and scandalous offences: not committing any thing for which they might immediately be brought to justice: * 2. external, for they regarded

* Hence one of their rabbies, "whoever shall abstain from the violation of a precept, a reward shall be given him, as if he had observed the precept." Misnah Lib. Kiddushin. Hence Clemens Alexandrinus explains the pharisaical and Christian righteousness in this manner. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, who seek for justification only by abstaining from evil; so that you moreover add, beyond their perfection, the love of your neighbour and works of beneficence—you will never be kings with Christ. Lib. 6. Strom.
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Examined only the outward work, and esteemed as nothing the sins of the heart, the evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnesses, blasphemies which our Saviour declares, in direct opposition to this opinion of the Pharisees, are the things that defile a man. And to this merely negative and external obedience even of the greatest commands, such as were bound upon them under the penalty of death, they added also, 3dly, a partial and reserved obedience to the rest, to the secondary commands; which they esteemed all, that were not bound upon them, by the immediate denunciation of death: supposing themselves not obliged to pay universal obedience to all these commands alike; but on the contrary, at liberty to choose out such, as they thought fit to observe, and so wholly neglecting the

p. 825. Potter, Edit. Even a heathen poet could shew the mere vanity of such an outward righteousness, where- in—shame to think—even so many Christians confide.

Nec furtum feci, nec fugi, si mihi dicat
Servus: habes pretium, loris non ureris, aio;
Non hominem occidi: non pasceas in cruce corvos.

Horatius, Epift. 16. L. 1. v. 41.

Suppose a slave should say: I never steal,
I never ran away: "Nor do you feel
The flagrant laft:" No human blood I shed:
"Nor on the cross the rav'ning crows have fed."


rest.
rest. Hence one of their rabbies expresses himself thus: "Whoever will sincerely observe even any one of the 613 commands, (for so many of this sort they have been scrupulously nice to reckon up) behold, for the performance of this one, he shall merit everlasting life!"—Against this fatal opinion of theirs it is, that our Saviour opposeth himself, when he declares, whosoever therefore shall break one of these LEAST commandments, and shall TEACH men so, (as the Pharisees professedly did) be shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees—this merely negative, wholly external, and this partial righteousness—ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. And doubtless to these same opinions it is, that St. James refers, when he says, whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point†, as the Jewish masters directly allow their proselytes to offend—He is guilty of all. But christians are under the perfect law of liberty; which requires not a partial, but an

* Quisquis vel unum aliquod ex 613 præceptis sincere observaverit, ecce is illud praeflando, vitam meretitum aeternam. In Mishnah, Lib. Maccoth. sect. ult.

† St. James, c. ii. v. 10. ἄνεντες εἰς ἐν, offended in uno. See Beza’s note and the context.—

univer-
universal obedience: not an external, but an internal from the heart, not a negative, but a positive obedience: it will not be sufficient to abhor and abstain from that which is evil, they must love and cleave to that which is good. —And you may observe that our Saviour all thro' his sermon on the mount, opposes these principles of the Jewish rabbies: and establishes for his church in all ages, an universal, internal and positive obedience.

Such was the second error of the Pharisees: an error which rooted them in their false notions of self-righteousness: and which proceeded, as you observe, from an ignorance of the true nature, extent and spirituality of the divine law: which had they duly considered, they could never have boasted in their own righteousness, but must have seen their manifold defects, and deeply deplor'd their weakness and sinfulness. From hence also it is, that so many in the present day talk of their own morality and works as sufficient to justification: they do not consider the nature of the divine law, and what it requires of them —even an obedience, so universal, that it denounceth a curse on the transgressors of the least precept: even an obedience, so spiritual and internal, that it condemns the very secret thoughts of the heart, the murders, adulteries, thefts,
thefts, &c. of the intention: even an obedience so positive, that it requires the performance of every work of love to God and love to man, a love of God with all the heart and all the soul, a love of our neighbour even as of ourselves!—And who amongst men, that will impartially consider himself in this glass,—and not like the Pharisee foolishly and absurdly compare himself with others; for the conduct of others at the last day will be no justification of ours;—who, I say, that surveys his natural depravity, as discovered by this bright glass of the pure and holy law of God, will ever dare to trust in himself and to despise others, will ever presume on the thought of self-justification—will ever dare to say other than with the Publican, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner?

But the Pharisees, as if conscious, that they wanted some positive righteousness, some good works to eke out their poor tattered covering, fell, by the invention hereof, into a third error: for they devised to themselves a fictitious kind of righteousness: which they founded upon the observance of some certain idle ceremonies, received by tradition from the elders. They laid a mighty stress upon these, even more, than upon the plain and positive precepts of the word of God: so that,
that, our blessed Saviour complains, *they had by their traditions made the word of God of none effect: teaching men to give gifts to the treasury, and so absolving them from the most positive and the first of relative duties, from honouring their parents; tithing, mint, anise, and cummin, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law, judgement, justice, and faith: these ought ye to have done, faith he, and not to leave the other undone: Ye blind guides which strain your liquor for a little gnat, and swallow down your enormous throats a mighty camel. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within ye are full of extortion and excess: without ye are fair and goodly, like whited sepulchres, within ye are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness, full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Ye devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.* And St. Mark informs us, concerning these vain traditions, and this self-will'd religion of the Pharisees: that they, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands up to the elbow †, (for that part of the ceremony was very scrupu-

* Mat. xxiii. see the whole chapter.
† Μηχρ τα αγκωνος, so Theophylact well explains πυγμα in the original: see the author.
louly observed) eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not; and many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and of tables. See St. Mark, chap. vii.

No wonder when thus persuaded of the free liberty of the human will, and when ascribing all their works thereto as having no notion of the necessity of divine Grace: when thus setting up a tatter'd obedience, merely negative, outward and partial, and to patch it up, thus devising a multitude of idle useless ceremonies, unprofitable to man, and utterly abominable in the sight of God:—no wonder, they fell into the 4th and last error observable in them, namely, "a full confidence in themselves, and in this poor righteousness of theirs, and so, a total ignorance of their want of pardon in the sight of God, of their want of a Mediator and a Saviour." They were whole and so needed no physician: they trusted in themselves, and so despised others, even Christ, and his atoning blood! They did indeed expect a Messiah, a Christ, but not a Jesus; a temporal prince to be anointed over them; not an everlasting Saviour, to save them from their sins: and therefore, as you all very well know,
know, Christ and his cross became a stumbling-block and stone of offence to them: they had no idea, that he was the end of the law for righteousness to all them that believe: and that, by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses *.—Blind hereto and proud of themselves, they rejected the grace of God against their own souls, and crucified the Lord of life!

And this is the sad, tho' certain consequence of the before-mentioned errors, which we see but too manifestly every day, in those who are so unhappy as to be ignorant of themselves, their fallen state and depraved will: so unhappy as to be ignorant of the grace of God and its divine influence over the souls of men; so unhappy as to be ignorant of the true nature, extent, and spirituality of the divine law; and therefore ignorant of that perfect righteousness, which God requires, which man, by his own natural abilities can never work out, and which can be only had, by faith in Christ Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth: the law is only a schoolmaster, to teach us our own natural weakness and fin-

* Acts xiii. 39.
fulness, and to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified by him: to shew us, from its spirituality, holiness, justice, and goodness, how sinful, how exceeding sinful, how fold under sin* we are: to drive us at length to the cry, O wretched man, that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death—that so, we may at length thank God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord † for the desired deliverance!

Thus then I have shewn you, what were the four capital errors of the Jewish masters, but especially the Pharisees, when our Saviour was on earth: a knowledge of which will greatly tend to open many passages of sacred writ to you: they were, 1st, a persuasion of the absolute freedom of the human will, and a denial of the necessity of divine grace. 2. Confidence in a righteousness merely negative—external—and partial: 3. In ceremonies, devised by their elders, frivolous and weak, useless to men and odious to God: and 4. An utter ignorance of their want of a Saviour, and of pardon of sins, and so a total rejection of him and full trust in their own righteousness, endeavouring to establish which, St. Paul declares, they were ignorant of and submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God, which

is by faith of Christ Jesus *. And these errors, alas! have rather increased than diminished with that unhappy people, whose hearts are yet hardened, and over whose eyes a veil is drawn, so that they cannot understand the law: errors, which we cannot but observe with great concern, not peculiar now to Jews only, but polluting too many, who live in a christian land, nay, and are born and baptized in the christian faith!

I should now proceed to apply them to the Pharisee, in the present parable, and to shew the immediate opposition they have to the justification, which poor sinners expect from God: referring this to the next opportunity, let us, mean time, as not willing to deceive ourselves, seriously examine and search into our hearts, and try ourselves by the spiritual, holy, pure and good law of God. An ignorance of the true nature of this law and of what it requires, is one great cause of the prevalence of deists and moralists amongst us—baptized-deists—baptized-infidels! No man that understood the spirituality and extent of the law of God, would ever presume to talk of self-justification. This was the fatal error of the Pharisees. Error and self-
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deceit in this particular will be of as dreadful consequence, now as then: and voluntary ignorance is self-deceit, which can admit of no excuse with us: seeing we have the word of God before us, we have the law continually repeated to us: we confess our breach of it constantly: and therefore at the end of each commandment pray God, to "have mercy upon us, and desire him by his grace henceforward to incline our hearts to keep his law"—If these are merely the words of our lips, while our affections and thoughts are otherwise engaged—we shall do well to remember, that it is dangerous to trifle with the most high God, the judge of quick and dead.—And as thus we have the commandments of God continually repeated to us, so have we the perfection, spirituality and extent of them set before us in the Gospel, especially in our Saviour's sermon on the mount. From whence we learn, to use the words of an excellent writer*, that "the empire of the law, as prohibitory of evil, extends both to the outward and inward man: it takes cognizance of the actions; it judges every word; all the operations and all the

* The Rev. Mr. Harvey, in his Theron and Aspasio, vol. I. p. 320, and 326.
dispositions of the soul come under its sacred jurisdiction.—It is indeed a discerner not only of the working thoughts, but also of the dawning intentions: and arrains them both at his awful bar. *It pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit.* Not the inmost recesses of the breast are too deep for its penetration: nor all the artifices of the deceitful heart, too subtle for its detection. Other laws forbid the unclean act: *this condemns the wanton eye and irregular desire.* Other laws punish the injurious deed: *this passés sentence on the unguarded fallies of passion and the most secret emotions of resentment.* So eminently true is that remark of the Psalmist, *Thy commandments are exceeding broad.*

Now who can say that his obedience, that his righteousness hath been commensurate to this extensive platform of duty, to these prohibitions of the law, concerning evil?—and if we have not come up to its prohibitions, what shall we say when we consider the law in its nobler capacity, as commanding and enjoining what is good and excellent?—In this respect it "is a transcript of the unspotted purity and absolute rectitude of

* Psal. cxix. 96.
the divine nature: it requires an unreserved obedience to all God's commands, and a most unfeigned submission to all his dispensations: without regretting the former as a grievous yoke, or repining at the latter as rigorous treatment.—It calls not only for external duty, but also for the most upright imaginations and devout affections.—It insists upon the exercise of every virtue, and that in the highest degree: love without the least lukewarmness; and faith without any diffidence: a sanctity of desire, that knows no stain, and humility of mind, that is free from all elatement. In a word, it requires us to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

Now let the man who can say that his actions come up to this exalted standard, that his graces are thus refined: his obedience thus universal, spiritual and exact in heart and life, and such moreover as will stand the scrutiny of a God of immaculate purity, majesty and glory:—let this man justify himself before this God: let him trust in himself, and let him confide in his own righteousness: but let no man else presume to do so, since such an obedience only can answer the demands of the law.—But if all men, even the highest
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highest and most exalted saints and servants of God, are weak and imperfect in this view, and have acknowledged themselves overwhelmed with confusion in the presence of the great God of heaven: if these demands of the law can be answered by none of the fallen children of fallen Adam: and if the law denounceth a curse upon all, who stand upon justification by it, and perform not all these things, saying, cursed is every one that continueth not in all the works of the law to do them—if all in this view, this true state of the case, are insolvent before the great Lord of the universe: have no lamb in their fold without blemish, nothing in their life, nothing in their heart, but what is defective and defiled: if this be the condition not of open sinners, not of Publicans only, but of the most irreproachable person upon earth: if there is none perfect in any character or in any work, no not one: none that obey the divine law uniformly, invariably, completely: if this be the case, as it is most indisputably with us all: and as our hearts and consciences abundantly assure us—Then, men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?—whither shall we fly to escape the wrath to come? what city of refuge shall we find to deliver us from this
this avenger of blood? Men and brethren, what shall we do?—Behold the gates of mercy are open, fly for thy life from burning Sodom to the little Zoar of salvation! Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world! Christ hath delivered us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us! He, who knew no sin, became an offering for sin, a sacrifice for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him! Neither is there salvation in any other!—Let us fall down and humbly confess our sinfulness before him, count all our righteousness, with Paul, as dung and dross, and with joyful hearts accept the offer of free justification by faith in Christ Jesus, glad to be found in him not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness, which is of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. Let us acknowledge our absolute need of his divine grace, of his good Spirit, to work in us both to will and to do, to rectify our depraved will, and to enable us as well to desire, as to receive this perfect righteousness. And let us labour to testify by our future lives of humility and love, how deeply sensible we are of that unspeakable grace, which is merciful to sinners, and which exalteth all those to the favour of God, who humble themselves before
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before him: while with heart and voice we continually declare, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise, for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth's sake!——&c.
DISCOURSE VIII.

On the PARABLE

Of the PHARISEE and PUBLICAN.

PART II.

St. Luke xviii. 9.

And he spake this Parable unto certain which trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and despised others.

HIS parable was not delivered unto such as were really righteous, and so trusted in themselves: but to those who trusted in themselves, as being righteous: who supposed themselves such, and therefore proudly rested in this fancied righteousness of their own, buoy'd up by an over-weaning opinion of which they despised others: and so were guilty of two offences, (self-justification and contempt of their brother
brother—most immediately opposite to the great and peculiar doctrines of the cross, humility and love: offences, which, as I observed in the former sermon, arose principally from an ignorance of the true nature, extent and spirituality of the divine law; with which if they had been truly acquainted, they could never have supposed, Ist, their own strength, unassisted by divine grace capable of fulfilling it: could never have rested, 2dly, in a merely negative, external and partial obedience: or 3dly, in useless ceremonies of human devising, receiv'd by tradition from their elders: much less could they have 4thly supposed, this poor obedience meritorious in the sight of God, and so have rejected salvation and a Saviour.

For these, as I then shew'd you, were the great and fundamental errors of the pharisees, which led them to crucify the Lord of life: and against which that blessed Lord in his gospel, frequently and strongly opposeth himself: insomuch that I know not of any men or things, any principles or practices upon which he hath denounced so severe woes as upon these self-justifying, proud, judging, hypocritical pharisees, and the evil leaven of their doctrine: for he calls them serpents, generation of vipers; and adds, how can ye escape the
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damnation of hell? * A sufficient warning to all the servants of this Lord to be more especially on their guard against these opinions, so much detested, and so strongly opposed by their great prophet and teacher.—The present parable was deliver'd with a view to these, and to such as should embrace the same dangerous notions in all ages of the world. It is, if I may so say, the practice of them, set before our view: a true picture of these opinions represented to the life: in the Pharisee we behold them fully exemplified: while the publican stands forth as a lively contrast: his deep self-abasement aggrandizing the hatefulness of the pharisee's self-confidence: the pharisee's self confidence beautifying the excellency of the publican's abasement.—But let us consider the character and conduct of each, that we may learn what to avoid in the one, and what to imitate in the other; and so may descend justified to our houses, partakers of the divine pardon and favour, and blest with that loving-kindness of the Lord, which is better than life!

I. Both the pharisee and the publican we are told, went up to the temple with the same design, to pray; which always supposeth want;

* Matt. xxiii. 33.
for to pray, properly, is to ask for something, to make our requests known unto God *. But we hear not a word of this from the Pharisee: he was full and enriched with goods and had need of nothing: ignorant, mean time, that he was miserable and poor and blind and naked. God, I thank thee, said he,—for what?—Not that I am by thy grace rescued from a state of sin and death; not that by thy good Spirit, I am enabled to confess my sinfulness and acknowledge thy mercy in having shewn me my lost and ruin’d estate—but God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are,” that I am not like the rest of mankind—(vain and proud Pharisee that word shews thee too plainly a fallen Son of fallen Adam!) that I am of a superior stamp and order, and by the happiness of my constitution, and the good influence of the planets (not by any power of grace) a stranger to those vile offences which so many fall into—extortioners, unjust, adulterers. It was indeed a great happiness, had it been true, to have been kept from such transgressions, but, you are to remember, that he means only the bare outward act, not at all regarding the vileness of his inward affections, the dead men’s bones, and all uncleanness, lurking in the heart

* Phil. iv. 6.
of this *whited sepulchre.* And therefore, you observe, that while he thanks God for not being faulty in these respects, he shews his partial obedience to the law, by sinning in a still higher degree, thro' his self-pride and contempt of his brother, adding, *or even as this publican!* what business had he with his brother, when offering up his prayers unto God; or what right had he to judge him, with whose heart he could by no means be acquainted, whose outward behaviour could justify no such suspicions*, and of whom he ought rather to have thought well, from seeing him approach the house of God, and thus being at least in the way to life.—Nay, and granting the publican to have been really as bad as the generality of his profession and as the pharisee suspected him; what alleviation of any faults of his, or what addition of virtues could that have been? He should rather have prayed for him, if, as he supposed him, a miserable sinner: and have therefore commended him the more strongly to God: he

* Had he seen the Publican light and contemptuous in his behaviour,—he would have had good reason for his condemning him in that respect. But had he been a priest ministering in the service of God, he would have been bound in absolute duty to have reproved him for his indecent and unbecoming carriage in the house of God. But there was nothing of this kind in the Publican: his whole behaviour was expressive of the deepest self-abasement and lowliness.
should have pitied him on account of the unavoidable evils to which his profession exposed him, and have used the appearance of good in him, as an argument in his favour *. But here in the pharisee was but too like the generality of mankind: if there be nine grains of merit in a man and one of evil, they'll sift out and magnify the evil one and pass over the nine good ones unobserved. Virtues are seldom aggrandized: faults are daily. However if men are absurd enough to do so with a view to their own justification, they should let reason rule, and remember, that we are neither better nor worse, be other men what they will: we are not to be judged or acquitted in consideration of other mens faults, which will no way lessen

* For true christian love, as St. Peter informs us, covereth the multitude of sins: 1 Pet. iv. 8. I cannot help advising my reader here—of the mistaken sense of this passage, which has been unhappily misunderstood by many from our translation, as if charity or alms giving would be availing to the covering or hiding a multitude of our own personal offences. A most pestilent opinion and big with innumerable mischiefs. The original is η ἀγάπη καλοφιαὶ αμαρτων—Love will cover a multitude of sins—St. Peter took the expression from Proverbs x. 12. where we read, Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins. As St. Paul in his excellent chapter, 1 Cor. xiii. on the characters of true love, informs us, that it covereth all things—ver. 7. all things—there unfortunately translated, beareth all things. It is much to be wished the word ἀγάπῃ had always been translated love, and not charity, which is so equivocal, and has introduced so many mistakes.
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ours: nay God hath absolutely commanded us not to follow the multitude to do evil. The word of God, the divine and holy law is that alone, by which we must be judged: and whoever examines himself in this bright glass, will see his own deformities so very strongly, that he will never find time to contemn his brother: he will have business enough to look at home. Such contempt ariseth only from a neglect of this, and from a comparison of frail men one with the other. Measure thyself, O pharisee, by the exact standard of righteousness, proposed in the law, and thou wilt see how very a dwarf thou art, how short thou comest of the height demanded.—But the proud man looks at his neighbours defects thro’ the magnifying end of the perspective: and artfully reverses the glass, when he looks at his own.

The pharisee having thus made his proud boasting before God of the excellency of his nature, and his freedom from gross sins, his negative, outward and partial obedience; now raiseth the trumpet to a still higher pitch, that he may found forth the praises of his good works, his conformity to the tradition of the elders—Ifast, faith he, twice in the week:—

† Exod. xxiii. 2.
and who required this, O pharisee, at thine hand, while thou dost not fast at all unto God: while you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness, you do not fast at all unto me, even unto me, faith the Lord. He goes on, I give tithes of all that I possess. Truth, even of mint, anise and cummin, while thou neglectest the weightier matters of the law, justice, judgment, and faith: these oughtest thou to have done and not to leave the other undone.

Now should one have supposed this the sum of the Pharisee's prayer—of him, who made his boast of the law, that he was an instructor of the foolish, a guide of the blind, a teacher of babes, the light of those in darkness?— Might not one have expected him to have added something to this effect—" But, Lord, I am conscious how very small a part this is of what thy law requires: and how unable I am of myself to perform all thy holy will: pardon therefore the imperfection of these my best services, accept my praises for having blest me with whatever good there is in my life: enable me by thy grace to serve thee more fervently for the future, and forgive my sins, for thy mercy's sake in him, who is the true sacrifice and thro' whose blood alone we dare approach thy sacred altar."

A a 2

But
But we hear not a word of this: having paid his formal compliment to God, with much greater complaisance to himself, he left the temple, in possession only of that justification which he sought, not at all solicitous, whether he were justified before God, as thinking it sufficient for his purpose to be so before men. But God knew his heart, and this was an odious abomination before him.—Thus you see in this Pharisee those four great errors, which diffused themselves thro' the whole body, and rendered them so detestable. He was persuaded, with our modern deists, of the excellency and dignity of his nature, and therefore wanted no grace: so he prays not for it, but rather thanks God, that he had no need of it, not being like the rest of mankind: when alas—all are alike the sons of Adam, born in sin and conceived in iniquity, when all alike are by nature the children of wrath, inclined to evil and averse to good; when there is none that, by himself, can do good, no not one*: and therefore all alike have the same need of divine grace to incline their will to what is good, and to enable them to perform acceptable service unto God. And therefore you see under the baneful influence of this capital error, he falls into self-

* Rom. iii. 12.
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certainty from paying an obedience to the law, which was merely partial, external and negative: he boasted, that he was no adulterer, unjust, extortioner: while he was at the same time manifestly guilty of vices no less odious in the sight of God, self-justification and contempt of his neighbour, over whom he insults with an insolent kind of triumph: boasting of what he could by no means be assured, and in which he was greatly deceived, that he was not as this Publican!
—How dare he presume to judge of an heart, which he could not see?—if he could have seen it, he would soon have discovered the pride and baseness of his own—How dare he presume to judge of a heart, ignorant as he was even of what the written law required, ignorant of its spiritual extent and dominion, of its condemning the sins of the heart, as well as of the act, of its requiring universal obedience to all its precepts, as well those prohibiting evil, as those enjoining good?—However, to commend himself the more, he adds his good works, but not such as the law immediately required, and such as were in themselves excellent and acceptable, justice, judgment and faith, but some merely external ceremonies, tithing and fasting, which, tho' good when rightly performed, yet the most wicked
wicked may perform for an outward shew, and which are no tests of the sincerity and renovation of the heart by grace. "For works of this kind are not so much parts of true godliness as helps and furtherances towards it. We fast and pray, and read and hear, to the intent we may be fitted for practice: but if our passions be not subdued, fasting is formality; if our lives be not amended, hearing is vain: if our good deeds be not answerable to our devotions, prayer is but lip-labour.—And we cannot but know what a cloak to injustice a precise conversation hath often been made by dissembling wretches, whose godliness is gain: saints on God's days, but devils all the rest of the week: whose zeal consists not so much in amending themselves, as in censuring and flandering, condemning and despising every body else*. Such a one was this Pharisee: and no wonder when thus ignorant of himself, and of the divine law, thus proud of a merely outward obedience, he was ignorant of his want of a Redeemer, of his want of pardon for his sins, and so fell into those capital errors, self confidence and contempt of others, the immediate opposites to the love of God and of man.—No wonder therefore he

* See Dr. Stanhope's Epistles and Gospels, vol. 3d. p. 277.
was not justified: for whosoever exalteth himself, shall be abased, faith that God, who beholdeth the proud afar off, but bath respect unto the lowly.

2. And this we shall see, when in the 2d place we consider the Publican, and his humble carriage, as a fine contrast to the haughty pride of the self-righteous Pharisee.

All his words and actions speak the most profound self-abasement, the deepest humility: having been convinc'd of sin by the Spirit and law of God, he comes to the temple, as an humble suppliant: for where else should he fly? But when entering into the courts of the Lord's house, he stands afar of: the sense of his unworthiness forbids him from approaching far into the house of God: he dare not draw near the blessed altar, where those sacrifices are slain, in which he sees at once his hope and his confusion; happy would he be to be a door-keeper only in the house of his God. Conscientious how grievously he hath offended the awful Majesty of heaven, how he hath broke his laws, transgressed his precepts, and done despite to his grace and glory, under the most feeling shame and confusion of face, he would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, in token of his wounded heart and broken spirit,
in token of his deep grief and real contrition for having offended so just, so good, so holy a God: while his tongue, in concert with his feet, his eyes, his hand, his heart,—each of which you see was employed to express his shame and sorrow,—while his tongue speaks the language of them all, God, be merciful to ME, a sinner! As much as to say, "Oh my God, I confess, that I am a great and grievous sinner in thy sight: and therefore justly liable to thy wrath and condemnation. I cannot with Adam or with Eve transfer my guilt to another. I cannot say, this or that beguiled me. I have nothing to offer in plea, nothing to urge in excuse for myself: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and done amiss: and now I implore thy saving mercy to pity and to pardon me: I can pretend no merits. I can plead no deservings: I cry only for mercy: mercy, good Lord, mercy on me, a miserable sinner*: according to thy

* There are four lines at the end of our old translation of the Psalms, in the hymn called the Lamentation of a Sinner, which abound with as much natural pathos, and affecting energy, as can be found in the most elaborate compositions—

Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask
This is the total sum:
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit,
Lord, let thy mercy come.
mercy remember thou me, O Lord: for thy name's sake, O Lord, have mercy on my sin for it is great."—Such was the prayer of the Publican, which possibly he might have taken from the verse of the Psalms just produced: *For thy name's sake, oh Lord, have mercy on my sin.* The word rendered, *be merciful,* ἀντιποι, signifies, *be propitious to,* and is used in reference to the propitiatory or mercy-seat, which was the known and acknowledged type of him, who is the *propitiation for our sins* *; and whom, St. Paul says, God hath set forth to be a propitiation thro' faith in his blood for the remission of sins †: in each of which passages the word *propitiation* ἀντιποι, refers to the propitiatory or mercy-seat in the holy of holies, on which the high-priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice.

Thus you see the main branches of the Publican's prayer, are a confession of his own sinfulness, and an earnest cry to God for mercy, for his sake who was shadowed forth by all the sacrifices, slain and burnt, in the temple: and which were lively emblems to all who saw them, of what they must suffer eternally, whose sins were not remitted on earth thro' the *blood,* which they typified: *for without* blood there neither then was,

* 1 John ii. 2. † Rom. iii. 25. now
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now is, or ever can be any remission*.—And our Saviour adds, that this man, the publican, who thus humbled himself to the dust before God, descended to his house justified, partaker of the mercy for which he cried; and not the other; for having justified himself, he wanted no justification from God. Whereupon our Saviour adds an universal maxim for all men, times, and places, and which he frequently repeated in the gospel as of great moment: for every one that exalteth himself like this Pharisee shall be abased, and be that humbleth himself like this publican shall be exalted. Such humility shall always produce such favour from God: such pride and self-confidence shall always render men thus abominable in his eyes.

It may be necessary to observe, that true humility as shewn in the character of this publican, is not an outward virtue, manifested by gestures or cloathing, or any thing merely external: such affectations of humility may well subsist without any of the reality of it: a man may fit in sack-cloth and ashes, or like the papisfs, walk many miles barefoot, to the shrine of some notable saint, and yet carry a very proud heart in his bosom. True humility is an inward grace seated in the heart,

* Heb. ix. 22.
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which draws men off from all confidence in themselves, their own works, merits and righteousness, and all wherein men may glory: while it causeth them to fall down, humble and poor in spirit, at the foot of the divine majesty, to rely solely, and to put their full trust in the alone mercy and goodness of God thro' Christ Jesus. This virtue proceeds from the true knowledge of ourselves, our misery and fallen state. And a man then truly humbles himself, when he acknowledges in sincerity, that he hath nothing, and can do nothing of or by himself, but that whatever he hath, or whatever he doth, proceeds from the free grace of God: and that all his best gifts and offerings are sadly defective and miserably imperfect*. "This is a virtue which carries its

* St. Chrysostom, in his Homily upon this parable, observes, that it proposeth to us two chariots and charioteers: in the one righteousness and pride are yoked together; in the other, sin and humility: and the chariot of sin out-driveth that of righteousness, not out of the proper virtue, but thro' the conjunction of humility: not out of the frailty of justice but thro' the tumour and heap of pride. For as humility by its eminency doth overcome the weight of sin, and leaping up attaineth unto God, so pride by its weight doth easily press down righteousness. Therefore if having done many things well, thou thinkest that thou canst presume, thou lovest all thy prayer: but if thou carriest a thousand burdens of guilt in thy conscience, and humblest thyself as the basest of all men, thou shalt obtain much confidence of God. There are three kinds of humility,
its own commendation: pleasing to God, beneficial to our brethren, and improving to ourselves. For it defrauds none, hurts none, but renders to all their due. To God by magnifying his grace, and unfeignedly lamenting our own vileness and impotence. To men, by allowing nay by rejoicing in their just praises and deserts: it detracts not, judges not, flanders not, despises not: but contains itself within its own sphere: triumphs not in the faults of others, but shews every man his own. It opens our ear to discipline, makes us fit to be treated with, easy to be persuaded, susceptible of advice, patient of and willing to bear reproof: and by laying our mouths in the dust, by disavowing all merit, and taking sanctuary only in mercy, makes its foundation deep and strong, the sure foundation of a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

† Just the reverse hereof, is that pride, which refers all to itself, depends on and expects favour from God, as the meritorious reward of its good actions and services, and which is injurious to ourselves, to men, and to God.—It is hateful in his sight and will always be abased by militly, the one arising from afflictions, the other from pride itself and the insatiability of riches—for what is more abasing than to be subject to such base things—the third from a broken heart which God will not despise.”

* See Dr. Stanhope, as before.
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him: while such humility, persevering in the path of obedience, shall ever find a glad acceptance with him here, and be blest with a glorious exaltation to his kingdom of bliss hereafter.

Thus we learn that pride and self-confidence will forever cut us off from the presence of God, and that humility and self-abasement only can render us fit objects of his divine and never failing mercy.—I will conclude the subject with a short application of what hath been said, 1st, to those, who go not so far as this Pharisee did, in his own account, in the way towards heaven. 2dly to such, as keep even pace with him, but go no further. and 3dly, to those, who are in the happy situation of this lowly publican.

1st. How far then did the Pharisee go? He pay'd, you observe, a regard to the outward duties of religion: he went up to the temple to pray, and to perform all the acts of devotion. He was not guilty of gross and outward sins, such as extortion, adultery, injustice—He endeavour'd to keep his body under, and so fasted twice in the week: he shew'd a regard to the ministers of God, and to the poor, by tithing all his possessions for the support and benefit of each: and most probably was no less exact in all the other external ceremonies.

Now
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Now can you say, that you go so far as this Pharisee? that you are not as other men, in reference to the commission of these gross and actual offences: that you do not follow the multitude to do evil, but chose rather the narrow way, however singular it may seem, and however you may suffer in this world's goods, profit, good name and the like?—Can you say that you are free from gross presumptuous sins—that you are active in duties, that you fast twice a week: and give alms of all that you possess *, that you come up to the temple constantly to pray, to hear the divine word, and receive the blessed communion?—Alas how many, called by the name of Christ, doth this Pharisee in these respects leave far behind! Alas with how many, called by the name of Christ, will this same Pharisee rise up in judgment: with how many who pay no sort of re-

* How many are there who make it a merit to cheat their minister of their tithes—and boast of it as a notable act, when they have robbed him of his due offerings?—Such little consider the sacred right of tithes, and the blessing arising from a ready, cheerful, and exact payment of them—Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me, faith the Lord: but ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?—In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Nevertheless, bring ye all the tithes into the store-house that there may be meat in mine house and prove me now herewith, faith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Malachi iii. 8, &c.
gard to the house or worship of God, who perhaps never come there at all: or if they do, yet it is with such base purposes, and such unworthy designs, and so far are their hearts and thoughts from the great work wherein they should be engaged: such is their behaviour, so light and inattentive, so ready are they to fall into idle discourse, and even to censure their neighbours in the very house of God: that they can never expect to return blest with the divine favour, but rather loaded with his indignation more than when they enter'd, as having justly call'd it down on their own heads, by the affronting manner, in which they have trod his holy courts. They are so much more guilty than the Pharisee in this particular, as he shewed at least an outward reverence to the service of the great God!—He could boast of a freedom from gross sins:—But how many, called by the name of Christ, and bound to his service by a solemn dedication in baptism, cannot follow the Pharisee thus far—how many are there, who totally neglectful of their vow, their Saviour and their souls, work all uncleanness with greediness, wallowing in filthy lusts and passions, giving themselves up to the most accursed sins, adultery, fornication, drunkenness, to blasphemy and common swearing, scarce uttering a word without an oath, to extortion, fraud, injustice, covetousness, to malice, envy, hatred and all
all the filthy works of the flesh:—So far from having prayers to boast of, they can only boast of innumerable oaths and blasphemies: so far from being able to boast of fasting twice a week, many there are who can boast of never going to bed sober twice a week: so far from boasting of chastity, many there are who can boast only of their filthy debaucheries, and tell of their gallant uncleanness, and diabolic midnight revelries: so far from boasting of their justice many can tell of their extortion and their vile arts to get gain. Shall such be called by the venerable name of christians,—shall such be entitled to the blessed privileges of our most holy faith?—Sooner shall earth and heaven pass away, unless they repent, and turn and do works meet for repentance. All the Pharisees will rise up in judgment with and condemn such. And it will be more tolerable for Pharisees, however abhorred of God, than for such, who thus trample under foot the blood of Christ, and by their unholy lives bring an evil report on the good and pleasant land of Canaan.—But moreover, there are many, who free from these very gross offences, yet go not so far as the Pharisees did: are neither half so exact in the externals of religion, or the works of the gospel-law, as they were: and so of consequence are also condemned by them. How many professors have we, who cannot say they fast at all, so far
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far from fasting twice every week: who are glad to withhold their offerings, are slack in works of charity, not willing to part with any of that beloved mammon, which they so greedily seek after!—How many who never come to the Lord’s supper at all: who do but half keep the sabbath: thinking it enough if they come to the church in the morning, and spend the rest of the day in eating and drinking, and smoking, and visiting—who scarcely ever read the divine word: who are seldom in public or private prayer: and never have any in their families at all!—These men do not come up to the standard of the Pharisees of old, who at least were regular and exact in the externals of religion however they fail’d in the internals; and however pride, as a moth, eat up and consumed all their best services: and if christians, so call’d, do not even come up to the external part of a Pharisee’s religion, how can they expect any justification from God, since coming up to them only will avail nothing?

For, 2dly, supposing your duties to come up to those of the Scribes and Pharisees, and to go no farther, yet remember that infallible truth hath declared, yea and bound it with a double asseveration, that this will stand you in no stead: for verily, verily I say unto you,
faith Christ, unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Tho' you be as regular at the hour of prayer as they were, tho' like them you be free from gross and outward sins, no adulterer, drunkard, unjust, extortioner—nay and tho' like them you perform some good works, frequent the sacrament, fast, and give some alms;—yet, tho' you come up to the Pharisees in these things, as hard a truth as it may seem, most certain it is, unless you exceed this righteousness, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Truth it is these are good, excellent and necessary duties, they must not be omitted, nor can be spoke of with too much reverence, except when they are set up in opposition to the Saviour, and as means of man's self-justification: we may justly say of them, as our master said, these ought ye to have done, but not to have left the other undone. These ought ye to have done, but here is the great and essential difference, between the Pharisee's and the true Christian's doing them—but in a spirit of humility and total self-abasement.—If while you do these services, your heart is puffed up within you, if you rest in them as meritorious acts, and for your regular and constant performance of them, trust in yourselves as righteous before
before God, and so of necessary consequence despise others; then be fully assured that all these works, and all this self-righteousness will profit you nothing in his sight, before whom whoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and with whom humility and love alone make all our imperfect services acceptable. Pride and self-confidence is the canker worm, that will eat out all the substance of your gifts and graces; and tho' you come up to the strictness of a Phariſee, in all the outward duties required of you; tho' you are no gross presumptuous sinner, nay and guard all you can against inward secret sins; tho' you come constantly to the church, nay and to the sacrament also, tho' you fast often and give alms of all that you possess; yet if this be done with a proud, self-justifying, hypocritical spirit, all these works will avail you nothing in the sight of God; to whom pride and self-justification is the most immediate opposition. It is a sort of high-treafon against the divine king of heaven, the glorified and exalted Son, by whom alone we can be justified: and works of any kind, when thus set up as a kind of Saviours in opposition to the only name under heaven, whereby we can be saved, are the greatest offence to God: for they like the Phariſees of old crucify Christ afresh; and therefore you
you find, thro' the Gospel no persons or tenets so strongly decried and condemned. For they thus become the greatest impediments to salvation, they as it were shut the door of heaven, for they shut out all hopes of repentance and humiliation, which alone thro' Christ can introduce us into the courts of the Lord's house: and hence our Saviour peremptorily declared to such, Verily, I say unto you, that the harlots and publicans, as in a more likely state to repent and humble themselves, go into the kingdom of God before you, proud, self-righteous pharisees.

Above all things therefore, beware of this proud, self-justifying spirit, which ariseth principally from mens comparing themselves with other men, like themselves, and not with the perfect pattern of obedience prescribed by the holy law of God: we may indeed ever have a good opinion of ourselves if we compare ourselves with other poor sinners, like ourselves; for there is scarce any man so bad, but he may find another as bad or worse than himself: “If we will compare ourselves with other persons, we may look into the exemplary lives and deaths of saints and martyrs, recorded in scripture or church-history: observing what labours, what watchings, what fastings, what fatigues, what torments
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ments they waded thro' for the kingdom of heaven: humble all the while, and lowly in their own eyes, looking upon themselves as no better than unprofitable servants of the Lord whom they served *."— If we will compare ourselves, let it be with such as these; and then we shall be taught the more fully, and the more forcibly incited, to humble ourselves with this Publican, and to follow his example, as assured, that thus we shall go right, thus we shall be exalted in the fight of God; for our Lord himself hath declared, that he went down to his house justified.

3d. The first step towards this real humility is 1, a knowledge of our own great depravity, of our fallen state, and utter misery: to which when we join, 2, a serious knowledge of the length and breadth and heighth and depth of the divine law, and of that spiritual, universal and perfect obedience, which it requires of us, we cannot but be sensible

* See Dr. Waterland's Sermons, vol. I. p. 410. It should greatly humble us poor unprofitable servants—to observe the blessed, zealous, laborious Paul style himself ἐλαχίστου τῶν ἁγίων—less than the least of all saints. Eph. iii. 8. What then, O Lord, are we! ἐλαχίστου ἐλαχίστου !

B b 3
of our incapacity to do what is acceptable to God without his grace, and so, 3, of the absolute necessity of his good Spirit to enable us both to will and to do: we cannot but be sensible, 4, of the absolute impossibility of acceptance with him, thro' any thing we can do or offer: since after we have done all, that we are commanded to do, that God in his law hath ordered, Christ hath taught us, to confess, that we are but unprofitable servants:—so shall we not dare to lift up our eyes before him, but smite upon our breasts and say, Lord, be merciful to us miserable sinners!

Happy are those of you, my brethren, who truly humbled in soul, can pour forth this prayer unto God! But it is not the mere repeating of it, that will avail us: too many, alas!—are heard every day, wantonly praying God to have mercy upon them, as a kind of usual, rambling expression without meaning: the too common use of which, it is to be feared will keep many from the mercy which they thus triflingly implore.—But it is the pouring forth this prayer unto God from a deeply-convinced heart, a heart sensible of its sin and vileness, a heart sensible of its iniquity and worthlessness: it is the pouring it forth
forth with sincere desire and importunity, truly sensible of the want of that mercy which it desires, and truly anxious for that pardon, for which it is thus importunate. And wherever a man is thus really convinced of sin, he will never fail, when thus humbly and sincerely applying, to find that mercy for which he implores, and to obtain that pardon, which is only to be had from him, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation for the remission of sins thro' faith in his blood!—And when thus convinced, pardoned and absolved thro' faith unfeigned and true repentance, such a man will never fail to watch against sin, as against a scorpion: to avoid all its attacks and fly from all its occasions: he will never fail to use all the means, that may strengthen him in faith, and hope and love: to be diligent in prayer, in hearing, in communicating: he will never fail from a grateful sense of the exceeding love of God in Christ, to love all mankind with a cordial, disinterested love, and to rejoice in every opportunity to do them good, while he carefully and conscientiously discharges all the duties of his station: thus fulfilling the law, which love alone fulfils: for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour.
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hour as thyself. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.—When thus your righteousness, thro' God's grace, exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; then will you go down to your houses justified here, and then will you enter the house eternal and the joy of your Lord, completely justified hereafter.

The great point therefore you find, and the main foundation of the rest, is to gain this complete conviction of sin: this hatred of and sincere sorrow for it: this knowledge of our misery, and of our want of mercy thro' a bleeding Redeemer! May the almighty Spirit of God vouchsafe it unto every heart, yet unacquainted therewith, that so we may all come to the true mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of the great sacrifice, not daring to lift up our eyes, but smiting on our breast and each one saying, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner! Self-examination, joined with ardent prayers to God to enlighten your minds, will never fail to attain the desired effect: examine yourselves by the ten commandments as they stand in the bare letter: if you have transgressed any of these, remember you are guilty of all: and that the dreadful curse of almighty God hangs over your head; Cursed
is he, that continueth not in all the works of the law to do them: and delay not on any account to fly to the altar of mercy.—But if you find yourself acquitted here,—tho' but few, very few indeed live so acquitted—then consider the law, in its spiritual extent, as explained by our Saviour in his sermon on the mount: and dare not to deceive or trifle with your own souls—When upon a due inspection you find yourself guilty before God, smite upon your breast and implore him to have mercy on you a sinner—Remember, that if now you will not thus judge yourself, such a trial will one day come—and miserable they who are then forever condemned! "Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord." And to this end, carefully consider the exceeding breadth of the divine law, as hinted in the former sermon: consult such writers, as have carefully noted down all the sins, that are breaches of each of the commandments; and as you read, pray God "to have mercy upon you, for your former neglects, and to incline your hearts to keep his law for the future:" more especially when you repeat those words in the solemn service of the church, be careful to impress your minds with a due sense of their seriousness and importance.
portance. And the better to convince you of the dire guilt of sin and the horrid stain of human nature, as well as to fill you with a just abhorrence of it, look to the wild havoc, which it hath made from the beginning of the world until now: see Abel by means thereof bleeding beneath his brother's hand: see the whole world perishing in a fearful deluge: see Sodom and Gomorrah sinking beneath horrid storms of brimstone and and fire: see Pharaoh and his mighty hosts drowned in the Red-Sea: see the favourite and chosen people of God led into a seventy years captivity: see wars from age to age depopulating regions: earthquakes, famines, pestilences scourging guilty nations and sweeping them with the besom of destruction: see in private life, lust, malice, pride, covetousness, envy, ill-will, disobedience, unbelief, and all the horrid brood of sin, bringing in innumerable evils, and destroying all faith, concord and amity!—But above all, to see sin in its full length and utmost deformity look to mount Calvary, and there behold the Son of God himself stretched out upon a cross, in bitter anguish, and pouring out his blood as a ransom for the sin of the world!—As a consequence of which see at last that very
Jerusalem, which was once the city of God, and the joy of the whole earth, perishing in flames, in bloodshed, in famine, pestilence, and death; not one stone left upon another—a dreadful and expressive emblem of that world of woe, of death and horror, of those never-dying flames, and never-ending agonies, reserved for those, who repent not of their sins, and where every sin of man will meet its due and dreadful punishment!

Alarmed by the sense of which, let us, my brethren, as we tender our salvation, fly from sin and fly to Christ, fly from that which will forever ruin both body and soul, fly to him who hath shed his blood to redeem both, who is almighty to save, whose compassions fail not, and who will gladly welcome the humble, prostrate Publican.—Let us dread nothing, fear nothing, guard against nothing so much, so carefully as against sin, the only enemy that can harm us, the only serpent that can sting us: and let us unite the humility of the Publican to the zeal and strictness of the Pharisee: let us be as careful and diligent as the one, yea and far more so, to serve God in all the appointed duties, and let us be as far from
from trusting in any thing we do, as the other: remembering that God is all, and we are nothing, we are the clay and he is the potter, we are sinful worms, dust and ashes, and he is almighty, and eternal: that all we have; we have received from him, life, and breath and all things: that all we can do must proceed from his free grace and goodness: that all we can have must flow from his free mercy, who gave his Son to ransom us, when we and all we have were lost and forfeit to him: remembering that we are but of a day here, pilgrims, passengers and strangers, let us resolve to secure our future and better interest: and therefore with the deepest humility cast ourselves at his feet, with the utmost self-abasement, acknowledging ourselves unworthy the least of his mercies: yet let us with the utmost confidence implore those mercies for the bleeding Jesus' sake, and with the warmest love and gratitude testify throughout all our lives, the deep sense we have of his redeeming grace and love, and the unbounded gratitude of our hearts, for that he hath been pleased to make us partakers of that unspeakable grace and inestimable mercy.—In which, may
may we all so share here, as to unite with all the saints in that new song to the honour of our redeeming God, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation. Amen.
DISCOURSE IX.
On the PARABLE
Of the LOST SHEEP.

St. Luke xv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

And he spake this Parable unto them, saying,
What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over
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over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance.

The great end for which Christ came into the world was to save his people from their sins: to accomplish this end, when in the world, he conversed with publicans and sinners: he used all means to call them to repentance; he even eat and drank with them: and thus shewed that he would have mercy rather than sacrifice. The pharisees and elders of the Jews were self-righteous: unconvinc'd of the evil, the burden and wages of sin; they knew no want of a mediator, they dreamt not of repentance and faith.—The conduct of Jesus therefore towards protest and notorious sinners, was not only unaccountable, but absolutely abominable in their eyes: and they ground their principal objections against him hereupon, as a transgressor of the law, a friend of publicans and sinners.—To obviate which, and to remove their calumnies, he opened to their serious reflection a most important truth in these words, I say unto you, that joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

These
These words are a key to the general scope and meaning of the three parables delivered in this chapter: each of which is particularly levelled against the pharisaical objections to our Saviour's conduct; and each of which contains the most comfortable truths to the souls of repenting sinners: for to such are they spoken, and it should be remembered, that sinners can cause no joy in heaven, otherwise than by sincere repentance. Till they repent, they are as lost: and so of consequence cause grief: when they repent, they are as found, and so of consequence cause joy: even as in the common affairs of life, our particular concern is always raised by the loss of any of our property, and our joy raised, when it is recovered, and that in proportion to the value of the thing we have lost, and the doubt and danger of its recovery.

Our blessed Saviour, according to his custom, the better to inculcate this prime and most important doctrine of "free forgiveness and pardon to penitent sinners," delivers three parables, taken each from common life: the images in which as being natural and familiar could not but then, and cannot but at all times strike and convince the
the mind.—Indeed, justification or free pardon and reconciliation for repenting sinners, as it is the distinguished blessing of the christian religion, so is it the prime article of the christian faith: that wherein we are all principally and equally concerned: as to know how we may be justified before God is or ought to be the main concern of every reasonable being: and it is an article of such importance that for the most part the whole christian system stands or falls with the right or wrong interpretation of it. We shall find it nowhere in scripture treated with greater simplicity, perspicuity and power of consolation than in the present chapter, and the more diligently every portion of it is considered, the more it must delight and comfort. These and the like sentences in the sacred Scriptures are very excellent and refreshing to the soul. As I live, faith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he should return from his ways and live.—Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will refresh you—The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.—This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.—These and the like are passages very full of comfort;
but this whole matter is painted in a far more beautiful manner in the present chapter: where we are shewn, how we daily wander from God, some thro' simplicity, some thro' ignorance, some thro' perverseness, and their own depraved inclinations: whence we fall into a thousand dangers of wolves, of famine, of utter loss and destruction. And then we are shewn in how kind and solicitous a manner the good Shepherd seeks us, and useth every method to bring us to repentance: with what paternal love his bowels yearn to us, and with what affection he receives us, when we return and repent.—These gracious Truths our blessed Master beautifully represents to our view, that they may make the deeper impression on our Hearts, under the similitudes of a shepherd, seeking his stray'd sheep, of a woman, seeking the penny she had lost, and a father receiving the son, who had spent all his substance in riotous living. So that any objects of this kind should continually remind us of our heavenly Father's exceeding great love toward us, and on every occasion offered to us, from the sight of such objects we should contemplate our own case, and return praise to the Lord of mercy. And because it is difficult for poor unworthy sinners to give full assent to this article, and to embrace such bound-
boundless love, therefore our Saviour proposes three parables, that thus we might be perfectly advised of his gracious disposition towards sinners, as well from his word, as from the nature of things and common life: and might have as it were a glass continually before us, in which to contemplate his unspeakable mercy.

The main scope and design of the three parables, as observed before, is the same; and to be gathered from the 7th and 10th verses—as the occasion of their delivery is found in the 1st and 2d verses of the chapter: yet is there something peculiar to each one: for we observe that infirmity and simplicity is the cause of the error of the first: ignorance, of the loss of the second; and downright perverseness and an evil inclination, the cause of the miscarriage of the third.—I propose to dwell at present upon the first: which our Saviour immediately directed to the scribes and pharisees, who murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. He would convince them of the unreasonableness of their complaint against him, from their own conduct, and the common usage of mankind. Which man of you, said he;—make the case your own,—which man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the...
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wildernefs, safe in their fold and paslure, (for the Jews called all untill'd or paslure ground ἐρμος wilderness or desert:) and go after that which is lost, until he find it? This one lost sheep engageth all his care and concern, and for this plain reason, because it is lost, and the other ninety and nine, equally beloved, are safe in their paslure: should any other of the number fall into the same danger, and wander out of the way, it would claim the like care, and obtain the same sollicitude from the watchful, faithful shepheard: whose anxiety for the lost sheep necessarily occasions joy for it when found*. For when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing †, not harshly and cruelly treating it, but bearing it gently in his arms, and restoring the wanderer to its flock and fold. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, who had been partakers of his concern, and kindly sympathized with him for his loss, and faith unto them, Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost.—It is greatly more than probable, that in this particular of the parable, our Saviour alludes

* Anxiety and desire cause search and endeavours to obtain—search raises hope, and hope gratified causeth joy.
† Theophrastus observes here: So Christ bore all our griefs, and carried our sorrows.
Of the Lost Sheep.

To some well-known custom amongst the Jewish shepherds, who, 'tis possible, made it a point of duty and good neighbourhood mutually to congratulate each other on the recovery of any lost sheep; and 'tis by some conjectured that the words, "Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost," might be a kind of choral song used upon some such festivities.

Our Saviour, however, by this parable convincing them of the reasonableness of joy on the recovery of a desired good, proceeds to apply it: I say unto you, that in like manner, joy shall be in heaven over one profest notorious sinner * (such as these publicans and sinners, for receiving whom you so greatly murmur against me,) over one such sinner, that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no such repentance, as having, by the grace of God, been preserved from such flagrant offences, and kept within the field and fold from their youth up.—"When one of those poor sinners, who hath erred and strayed from my ways, and is lost in the paths of sin and evil, when he is found of me, and I am found of him, when I, who am the

* ἀμαρτωλός; many contend, that this word is to be understood very frequently in the sense above given, of profest, notorious sinners.

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good shepherd, recover him by my grace, and restore him by my almighty power to the unity of the fold, the holy inhabitants of heaven will rejoice with me in his recovery, and men upon earth should imitate this gladness, and rejoice with me and with them, when I have found my sheep that was lost; which, solely because it was lost and is found, must on that account occasion more joy, than the rest of the flock, equally beloved, but safe in the pasture; who not having by their wanderings caused any scarchings of heart, cannot by their recovery cause any rejoicings.

Such is the present parable: and thus understood we have no need to inquire with the fathers and others, what is meant by the wilderness, the ninety and nine sheep left there, and the like, which are plainly expounded, as above, and seem to have no reference to heaven and the angels, left in that blest abode, by Christ, as many of the ancients suppose *. But, there is one interpretation more, which

* See Theophylact on the place. Gregory, in his 34th Homily on Luke, observes: The one sheep lost is man, who was lost, when by sinning he left the pastures of life: and then the number of angels and men, made to live in God's presence, were diminished, signified by an imperfect number of 99 left in the wilderness. From this wilderness, which is heaven, God cometh down by the incarnation to seek lost man; that the number might again be perfected. And finding him, he layeth him on his shoulders, by bear-
is espoused by some, and clashes with that just given: for as our Saviour speaks of the just who need no repentance, some have conceived, that hereby he means the Pharisees, who were self-righteous, and in their own opinion needed no repentance: but the circumstances of the parable seem to require the exposition given above*; nay, and in this sense of theirs, the expression of

ing the burden of sin, and returneth home, that is, to heaven, after the work of our redemption finished. Then he calleth the angels, which are said to be friends, because they always do his will: and neighbours, because they always enjoy the presence of his brightness.

* Calvin upon the place observes, very judiciously, that the scope of this parable is to shew, that we ought not thro' neglect, to suffer them to perish, whom God would have to be saved, because the Pharisees were offended at Christ for conversing with publicans and sinners. It is the part of a good teacher no less to recover those that are lost, than to preserve those that are under his hand. The word repentance here is to be understood especially of that repentance whereby a man, being altogether adverse to God, and dead in sin, doth rise up again, by being turned unto godliness: for as repentance is usually taken, we all need it daily. And yet if we are already in the right way, we need not such a repentance, whereby this way is entered into, because we are in it already.—But why have the angels more joy for one convert than for 99, &c.—Not because they do not delight in a continual perseverance in righteousness, for nothing is more joyful unto them: but because he was a corrupt member and ready to be cut off even now, wherefore to see him suddenly and beyond all hope healed, thro' God's unspeakable mercy, this affected with extraordinary joy.

There can be no doubt, I think, but that Calvin's distinction concerning repentance in this place is right: and

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—more than ninety and nine just persons—appears superfluous: since just persons of this order, self-righteous, can cause no joy in heaven at all; and therefore it is no wonder that repenting sinners cause more joy than they. But the particular circumstance of wonder and delight in all these parables seems to be, "the superior joy, which repenting sinners raise in heaven, even over that which persons comparatively righteous and regular afford." But of this I shall have occasion to speak more fully in the parable of the prodigal, and the case of the elder brother.

In this parable three particulars more especially occur to our observation. Ist. The care and solicitude of our good Shepherd in seeking his lost sheep, represented by the man, who left his flock in the wilderness to go after the sheep that was lost. IId. The sad state of sinners, lost to God, represented by the lost sheep; and IIIdly. The joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, represented if any are still offended at the notion of just persons needing no repentance, it may moreover be added, that our Saviour possibly speaks of such, as having truly repented and believed, were made just—and so of necessity, being righteous in that respect, wanted not repentance again to make them so—we have no need always to be beginners, tho' we have need every day to lament and deplore the slowness of our progress since we began.
by the man's calling together his friends and his neighbours to rejoice with him. The two last particulars are also represented to us in the following parable, that of the prodigal, where I shall have occasion to consider at large 1st. the melancholy condition of lost sinners, and 2dly the joy occasioned by their recovery; and therefore in the present discourse I will confine myself to a consideration of our blessed redeemer, under that amiable character of the good shepherd.

And where shall we find that character so beautiful exemplified as by our shepherd himself in the words of his beloved apostle, who lay in his bosom and imbibed the very soul of love? in the tenth chapter of whose gospel, 1st. The exceeding great love of this shepherd is magnified, in that he lay'd down his life for the sheep. 2dly. His great power in that he protects and preserves them, and 3dly. His great care and solicitude, in that he provides for them proper support and due nourishment here and hereafter. We will consider him briefly in each of these capacities. But first as he is represented to us under the character of a shepherd in general.—

*I am the good shepherd*, said Jesus, in opposition to the blind leaders of the blind, the scribes and Pharisees who were no better than hirelings, nay
mere thieves and robbers *. I am the good Shepherd; the αρχιτιμων the chief shepherd of your souls, that great shepherd of the sheep, who was from the beginning, from all eternity, and whom God brought again from the dead, thro' the blood of the everlasting covenant. For as we were created by virtue of the WORD, so were we also chosen in him, called, and gather'd into the fold of his church. Hence 

D avid faith, know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. And because he is the true shepherd, he chose to derive his pedigree from ancestors of the like occupation: from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; whose sons told Pharaoh, thy servants are shepherds both we and also our fathers. And in this respect the patriarchs in general were figures of the true shepherd. David the king was also a shepherd: God took him from the sheep-folds, and from following the ewe great with young, that he might feed Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance. And who not only in this respect, but in his intercession for his people, is a lively and expressive figure of the great shepherd who stood in the gap, and suffered himself to be smote for his flock.

But these sheep, what have they done? let thine

* John x. 8
Of the Lost Sheep.

Of the Lofi Sheep, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.—So that we may say Christ was born a shepherd, from four of his ancestors.—But he calls himself—the good shepherd ὁ τοιμάζων ναλός—and there seems a singular emphasis in the repetition of the article O—that same good shepherd—thus pointing as it were with his finger, (as one observes) to the xxxiv chap. of Ezekiel, where the prophet very strongly characterises the pharisees and scribes, the evil shepherds of that day; and sets forth the care and excellency of this same good shepherd, whom Christ now declares himself:—Son of man, prophecy against the shepherds of Israel, prophecy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves—should not the shepherds feed the flocks? doubtless they should, but see what evil shepherds these were! O that none such might ever be found in any other day! ye eat the fat and you cloath you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost: but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them! Alas, alas.
alas for the shepherds, in all times, who have these complaints laid against them, how will they be able to stand, when that good shepherd shall appear, by whom the Lord promised to deliver his flock?—Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey, and I will judge between cattle and cattle! And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them even my servant David * (the true beloved, the true shepherd:) he shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd. To which remarkable prophecy our Saviour as it were points with the finger, declaring himself, by the remarkably emphatical articles, ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλὸς, that same good shepherd there promised; as well as in the prophecy of Isaiah, where this same shepherd is declar'd to be the LORD GOD. Behold the LORD GOD will come with strong hand and his arm shall rule for him; behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a SHEPHERD: he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young †.

Such

* The reader will observe that this cannot be spoken of David the king, who was dead long before Ezekiel prophesied, and therefore that David must have been a type or figure of this, the true. David in the original signifies beloved.

† Isaiah xl. 10, 11. See by all means the next verses, which
Such is Christ our good shepherd: and the excellent right he hath to that title is abundantly confirm'd, by what he adds, in the same 11 verse, wherein is declared, if, his exceeding great love to his sheep.

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.—But he that is an hireling and not the shepherd whose own the sheep are, not, feedeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd: and know my sheep and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Of what he thus foretold to the Jews, we have only to look to the history of his passion, for the full completion. Where we see—not the sheep offered up as a sacrifice for the shepherd:—but the great and chief and good shepherd offering himself up as a sacrifice for his sheep! The infernal wolf had not only drawn them astray, but was ready to devour and destroy them eternally: when the good shepherd

which cannot according to any interpretation be applied to any other, than this same shepherd, Christ our Lord: and no man, one would think, that reads those verses could ever controvert the divinity of the person there spoken of.
On the PARABLE

came and plucked them from his jaws; and as the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs and a piece of an ear †, so Christ deliver'd his sheep from the mouth of the roaring lion, tho' at the expence of his own life. His own heel was bruised, but the head of his enemy was crushed, and all his power subdued*. For as David, while he fed his father's flock, killed the lion and the bear, and deliver'd the Lamb they had seized from their mouths*: so Christ the true David deliver'd his flock from the paw of the infernal Lion, and trampled under foot, that bitter enemy; he vanquished all the powers of the infernal lake: spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them. But he himself was first smitten—I will smite the shepherd, said the prophet, and the sheep of the flock shall be scatter'd abroad: which immediately before his passion our Saviour applied to himself: when he was despised and rejected of men—tho' he came to die for them,—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: when we hid as it were our faces from him; when he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did

† Amos. iii. 12.
‖ See Gen. iii. 15.
* 1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35, 36.
elevem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded—good and gracious shepherd!—for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed! all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way—and the Lord hath laid on him—on the shepherd for the sheep the iniquity of us all! he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; and, tho' the sovereign shepherd, the chief Lord of all, he condescended to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter: and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

Want you any further proof of the love of this good shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep? hear what that shepherd himself declareth: greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends! This is the utmost stretch of human love; how much then is the love of Christ our good shepherd magnified, in that he laid down his life for those who like sheep had gone astray, and turned every one to his own way. God commendeth his love, his exceeding great love to us, faith St. Paul, in that while we were—not righteous nor good, for whom peradventure some one would even

† See the whole liii. chap. of Isaiah.
dare to die—but in that while we were yet SINNERS, Christ died for us! the just for the unjust—the good shepherd, for the lost, perverse and wandering sheep! what shepherd ever so loved his sheep, as to lay down his life for them! but he loved us, and hath washed us from our sins his own blood! surely then he is justly called the good shepherd!

IId. But he hath not only prov'd himself the good shepherd and no hireling by laying down his life, as a ransom for his flock, but he daily proves himself such, 2dly, by the power which he exerts in their protection and preservation. Possibly this powerful protection, and strong support which Christ affords to all his sheep, who are found of him, and enter into covenant with him, may be implied by that particular in the parable of the man's taking the lost sheep on his shoulders, which are the parts emblematical of strength and support*: in this sense however many of the writers on this parable understand that particular. Be that as it may, in the following words, his preservation of his sheep is plainly declared.—My sheep, faith he, hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish: neither shall any pluck them

† See Isaiah ix. 6.
out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand: I and my Father are one.

From hence we may derive the most solid comfort to our souls: my sheep hear my voice, faith Christ, and follow me: and he assures us, that to those who do thus hear his voice in his word and follow him, that is, obey that word, and live according to the precepts and example which he hath given,—to those he will give eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of his hand—any enemy or evil one, referring principally to the grand enemy of souls. This is to the foundation of all true comfort, that our great Shepherd will protect and preserve us from the assaults and dangers of the enemy, and by his almighty power keep us both outwardly in the body, and inwardly in the soul, seeing we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, and are as weak and defenceless against the infernal wolf and all his powers, as a poor bleating flock against a wolf or lion raging with keen hunger. If

Origen and Isidore Pelusiot, well observe, says Dr. Whitby, that no man can snatch them away by force and tyranny; then they must perish without and against their own
we hear his voice and come to him, he hath assured us, that he will never cast us out; he that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out: nor can any pluck us out of his hands, when once beneath his sovereign protection: because his Father which giveth us to him, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck us out of his Father's hands: to strengthen us in which dependance upon him, he declares that be and his Father are one*: one in essence, one in power, one in will: so that the strength of own wills: but this may be done by deceit and allurements: thro' the negligence of men who have the freedom of their wills: for such men, who by the allurements of the world the flesh and the devil thus cause to obey Christ's laws, are not snatch'd out of Christ's hands, but chuse to go from him—Hence then no proof of final perseverance can be fairly collected, and indeed were this doctrine true, all the apostolical exhortations to take heed, beware, watch, &c. would be totally superfluous. But that it is not true, is plain, because St. Paul expressly faith, that some having put away a good conscience, concerning faith: have made shipwreck, 1 Tim. i. 19. Now it would make the apostle's words absurd, to say that these persons were not really and truly believers—they had faith and a good conscience, and yet did not persevere finally! be not high-minded, but fear.

* St. Austin well observes, that this is a strong text to prove the divinity of Christ, mark both—are and one and you will be safe as well from Scylla as Charybdis. One delivers you from Arius, who denies the eternal divinity of Christ: are delivers you from Sabellius who denies a distinction of persons in the godhead. See for a proof of this same point, Isaiah ix. 6. Jerem. xxiii. 6. Micah v: 2.
of his Father is his strength also; and therefore that strength is ours: because, if we come to him, we shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of his almighty hand: nay, and moreover to convince us, that the Father is one in will as well as in power with him—he declares, this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day:—him that seeth the Son, while upon earth, tho' now the blessedness from his own mouth is to them that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Hence then every believer may gather the strongest consolation, and rest happily assured, that this good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep, will also preserve and defend to happy eternity* all those, who hear his voice, who attend to his divine word, who

† The happy privileges of the sheep of Christ are here strongly declared—but we should observe that these privileges are for none but those who first hear his voice. 2. know him by faith. 3. follow him in loving obedience. Such from thence may rest fully assured, that as 1st, the father hath given them, so 2dly, Christ hath received them, 3dly, knows them, 4thly, gives them eternal life, 5thly, not suffering them to perish, 6thly, nor permitting any to pluck them out of his hand—and he is able to keep them—for he and his Father are one! who then shall separate us from his love? Art thou, O reader, intituled to these inestimable privileges?
rejoice in the found, and gladly follow him in the way which he leadeth, and readily pursue him in these steps which he hath marked out.—For such only are the sheep of Christ, such only know him and are known of him:—for he faith, I know my sheep and am known of mine: and again, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.—For he that is of God, heareth God's words, as he faith in another place, ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God: this St. John in his first epistle gives as one sure mark of the sheep, the true disciples of Christ: we, faith he, the apostles and preachers of the gospel, are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error—hereby know we which are and which are not the sheep of Christ. His sheep hear his voice, speaking to them by his prophets and apostles: they hear it and know that it is the voice of the good shepherd, who hath laid down his life for the sheep: they know it, from the inward testimony of their heart, and its sweet agreement to their spiritual wants and cries: it strikes an unison as it were, with all the wishes and desires of their hearts: and thus knowing it, they obey it, they follow him, and thus both know and are known.
known of the good shepherd: by their hearing, receiving and loving his word, and by their ready obedience to all its commands. Those who hear not, nor obey this word, are not of his sheep; for they believe not, and without faith it is impossible to please him, and without hearing it is impossible to have that faith, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. So that none are, none can be the sheep of Christ, but those who hear his word, receive it in their hearts, by the Spirit of Christ as his voice, (for none can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the holy Ghost—) so follow him, speaking to them in this word, and as the only shepherd of their souls depend upon him for their continual preservation and defence: which, as we have seen above, these who thus follow him, shall ever share; for he hath promised that none shall pluck them out of his hand: nay they shall obtain particular regard, for he hath declar'd, that the sheep who thus know him, are also known of him: *not barely known, the word denotes diligent care and protection, and love as well as knowledge: for in the sacred scripture knowledge is frequently used for the affections consequent upon a true knowledge. Where-

† See 2 Tim. ii. 19.
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fore here Christ informs us, that his knowledge of his Sheep is such as the mutual knowledge between him and his Father. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine: as the Father knoweth me and I * know the Father.* Now the mutual knowledge between him and his Father is doubtless attended with the highest love, and most eminent regard and therefore he adds, to shew, the nature of his knowledge of his sheep, how it is that he knows them—and I lay down my life for the sheep. † Such is Christ’s knowledge of, such his love

* So this passage should be read and understood, ξαθεὶς γνωσθη συν ο πατρι καιν γνωσθω τον πατηρα.

† Quefnelle observes, on the verse, the knowledge which the father has with respect to his son as the head of his elect and the shepherd of his sheep, comprehends within it all his designs concerning the head and the members, and all his eternal purposes relating to the redemption of the sheep, by the death of the pastor, and to their sanctification and eternal salvation by him and in him. The knowledge which the son has with respect to the father is a knowledge of adherence to his designs, and of obedience even unto death for the sake of his sheep. And as he never was one moment without this knowledge of love and obedience and sacrifice: so he never was one moment without giving his life for the sheep, which is here signified to us by these words, I give and I know &c. good pastors adore the knowledge of love and election in the father: and of adherence and obedience in the son: they devote themselves to him to be subservient to the father’s designs concerning the elect: they dedicate themselves to their service, sacrifice themselves continually for them, and with reverence and adoration conform
love and tender concern for his sheep, thus are they known of and loved by him, and thus known and loved, while they endeavour to know and love him in return, to hear his voice and to follow him, they may be assured, that he will give unto them eternal life, that they shall never perish, nor shall any ever be able to pluck them out of his almighty hand.

But in order to secure this divine protection of the good shepherd, his sheep should never forget, that in order to be known, loved and regarded by him, they also must know, love and regard him; know him as their shepherd and redeemer, given by the Father to lay down his life for the sheep; from whom they are bound to acknowledge the reception of whatever good they have in this life, and of whatever good they expect in the other, and from whom alone they are to look up for protection and preservation, for all things necessary to life and salvation. For he is that good shepherd who hath redeemed his flock, not with corruptible things, with silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood. They will do well moreover to consider how it is that Christ knows his sheep. He doth not conform themselves to all the dispositions of Christ toward them, saying, with St. Paul, we endure all things for the elect's sake.
know them from any thing external, from colour, size or the like—not from any worldly greatness, place or power—but from internal things, as the searcher of the heart and reins. We should therefore be diligent and careful in the due framing our hearts and lives, lest we offend the all-seeing eyes of the good shepherd: Who, that he may the more certainly know his sheep, marks them in baptism with the red mark of his bloody cross, which while preserved upon the forehead, no power of the enemy can hurt the soul; but as the angel passed over the houses of the Israelites, when he saw the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the door posts, so no destruction of the adversary can ever reach these sheep marked with the blood of Christ, nay this sign shall endure thro' death itself, and cause the great shepherd to ransom and redeem such sheep even from the power of death and the grave! * But wo to those sheep, who have wiped this red mark from off their foreheads—and thus are not known of Christ as his sheep! wo be to those, who are thus no longer under his protection and care, but subject to the

* Hosea xiii. 14: fury
fury and rage of the infernal wolf and all his powers *

Thus then they who know the good Shepherd, may with the fullest comfort depend upon his power and love to protect and defend them—Hear him, O Christians, ye who follow him, and know his voice—hear him praying for you to that Father with whom he declares himself one, and never dare to entertain a doubt of the faithfulness of that Shepherd, who hath laid down his life for you: holy Father, keep thro' thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; sanctify them thro' thy truth; thy word is truth: neither pray I for these alone, but for those also, who shall believe on me thro' their word: that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us, and that

* Dr. Young speaks finely on this subject——in his Night-Thoughts.

To man the bleeding cross hath promis'd all; The bleeding cross hath sworn eternal grace. And is there who the blessed cross wipes off, As a foul blot from his dishonour'd brow?— If angels tremble, 'tis at such a fight: More struck with grief or wonder, who can tell!—

2
the world may know that thou hast sent me: and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Read this whole xviith chapter of St. John's Gospel, and you will there see the love of the good Shepherd displayed in the most amiable colours: tho' not only this chapter, but indeed the conclusion of St. John's Gospel from Chap. xiii. appears always to me a part of scripture uncommonly sweet and comfortable and never enough to be prized and treasured up in every believing heart.

Having thus seen the love of our good Shepherd in laying down his life for the sheep, and his power pledged for their preservation and defence—let us in the 3d and last place consider his great care in the provision of proper pasturage for them here and hereafter.

When the good Shepherd putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them—anciently the shepherds used to lead their flocks and go before them, and that frequently with some rustic instrument of music, the sound of which, if not the Shepherd's voice only, the sheep were accustomed to follow*—and therefore our Saviour adds, that the Shepherd going before

* Thus Virgil in his 2d Eclogue, ver. 23.

Canto quae solitus, si quando armenta vocabat
Amphion—
On the Lost Sheep.

his sheep, the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep: all that ever came before me, are thieves and robbers, all the pretended messiahs and antichrists, all the false prophets and deceivers, who run without being sent, and acted without any commission from God—but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and out and find pasture, in the divine word of God, from that bread of life, whereof whoever eateth, shall hun-

* Christ here, ver. 7. declares himself the door; and in the 1st verse tells us, that he who entereth not into the sheepfold by the door is a thief and a robber: upon which Quefnelle observes—strange and terrible alternative! there is no possible evasion: Christ himself assures us, that he is this door: whoever entereth not therefore by Jesus Christ into the pastoral office, is no other than a thief and a robber in the sheep-fold. And he enters not by Jesus Christ who enters with a prospect of any other interest besides that of Christ and his church. Ambition, avarice, love of ease, a desire to be distinguished from the crowd, to enjoy the conveniences of life, or to promote the interest of ones family, and even the sole design of providing against want, these are all ways by which thieves and robbers enter: and whoever enters by any of these ways, or by simony, solicitation, craft, violence, &c. deserves no better name! Alas, for the shepherds! Oh that we were all wise to consider!—This same writer in his reflections on the present xth chapter of St. John, gives several marks of a good shepherd: some of which I will in brief note down here, and the reader may refer them to the following page. See his Exposition of the Gospel of St. John, in the place; and also Zeger's note.
ger no more, and from that water of life, whereof whoever drinketh shall thirst no more. He shall go in and out, our Saviour faith, a phrase which some suppose expressive of the full prosperity and perfect happiness, the free access to God, by the means of grace, which the redeemed shall enjoy. So it is said of David, that all Israel and Judah loved him, because he went out and came in before them: and so Christ is the Lord, who maketh his people blessed, when they come in and when they go out.—But this seems not to reach the full meaning of our Saviour: St. Austin

* 1 Sam. xviii. 16.
† On ver. 2 he observes, the 1st mark of a good shepherd is a lawful entrance into the ministry by the internal call of Christ—upon considerations which respect only his glory and the good of his church. On ver. 3. the 2d mark is an external call, which is then lawful, when it is conveyed by a lawful mission, and by the apostolic authority of bishops, with a concurrence of the necessary talents and qualifications. The 3d mark, a due use of the word for the instruction of the sheep, that it may be truly said, the sheep bear his voice. 4th. A good pastor should know his sheep perfectly, be thoroughly acquainted with their wants and necessities both inward and outward—to be intent, vigilant, and ready to assist every one. 5th, He must use his utmost to bring them out of the family of Adam, and to admit them into that of Christ by baptism: to bring them out of themselves, their sins, evil habits, inclinations, diversions of the world, pomps of the devil: and
On the Lost Sheep.

understands it by the entrance, an admission into the church by baptism, the sacrament of
and to lead them into the wholesome pastures of God's word, and into the ways of a christian life. On ver. 4. 6th, A pastor must not only shew his sheep the way, but must go before them: he must be the first to practise what he teaches; he must lead such a life, as they may follow without any fear of going astray, and he must animate his instructions by his actions. On ver. 9. 7th, A pastor ought to conduct souls to Jesus Christ, and by him, as the door of salvation. On ver. 10. 8th, The sole end which a pastor ought to propose to himself after the example of the prince of pastors, is to use his utmost endeavours to procure his sheep eternal life by the means of the life of grace. On ver. 11. 9th, The good pastor ought to sacrifice himself for his sheep, either by labouring in his ministry, or by exposing his life for the benefit and advantage of his flock. On ver. 12. 10th, A good pastor must carefully distinguish betwixt a mercenary spirit and the pastoral love. The hireling counts the sheep his own no longer than they are profitable to him; the shepherd looks upon them as his, as long as he himself can be serviceable to them, &c. On ver. 14. 15. 11th, A good pastor ought not only to know his sheep, but likewise to employ his thoughts continually upon them and to bear them always in his heart: for a good pastor is a father, and his sheep are his children. On ver. 16. 12th, A good pastor never thinks he has gained souls enow to God; he is continually desirous to bring in more, and labours incessantly to fill up the number of the elect and to compleat and perfect the body of Christ. On ver. 17. 13th, Nothing renders a pastor more amiable in the sight of God, nothing draws down upon him more graces and blessings and more speedily advances the work of his sanctification, than a contempt of all earthly things, of the conveniences of life and of life itself, that he may approve himself a faithful minister of Christ. On ver. 18. 14th, The sacrifice of a good
of initiation, and by the going out, a departure by death to the kingdom of perfect peace. There is no door or entrance to salvation other than by this good Shepherd, and by faith in him, who gave his life for the sheep: if we would be saved we must enter in, by this door, by true baptismal regeneration: and so entering, we shall find that pasturage to feed and support us here which shall preserve us to life everlasting, and be our immortal food hereafter, when we go out: for there is no going out, no departure from this life to life eternal, unless we first enter thro' the door of faith into the life of grace: which if we do, we shall go out, depart into the life of glory hereafter: that is, have the life of grace, which is begun here more abundantly hereafter: for he faith, I am come that they might have life, life now, by their entrance into my church and fold, by me the door of the sheep; and
good pastor must be altogether voluntary. He is not indeed master of his own life and death, as the sovereign Master was: but he must be willing to lay down his life, tho' he could preserve it. 15th, A pastor ought to have the will of God continually before his eyes, and to join obedience to charity. His first sacrifice is that of the will."—Such are some of the marks given by this excellent writer, of a good pastor: and I doubt not, but this sketch will be sufficient to engage my brethren of the clergy (if haply any such shall condescend to read my poor performances) to a diligent perusal of the whole piece, to which I refer them with pleasure.

that
that they might have it more abundantly, a more abundant life of glory, when they depart and go out from the present life of grace.—And for this life of grace here, they shall find sufficient pasture and support in all the blessed means of grace; for the life of glory hereafter, the Lamb himself in the midst of the throne shall feed them.—In full dependance upon this, David most beautifully sings in the xxiiiid Psalm, *The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore shall I want nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort,* &c. And the prophet Isaiah, *He shall feed his flock like a Shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*—What can more pathetically express the affection and concern of our good Shepherd for his lambs,—he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom! near his heart, dear to him indeed, and safely reposed in such a divine resting place, what can harm, what can molest or trouble them? He adds, that nothing shall: *They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite on them, for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall be guide them*—He promises moreover by his prophet Ezekiel, to feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains.
mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God: I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away: and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick, but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment.

Such is the care of our good Shepherd for his flock, and thus doth he feed them here and will feed them eternally. It would be easy *, if my compass could allow it, to display the love and power of our good Shepherd in many other particulars: his subordinate shepherds † however, all the ministers and pastors

* It would be very profitable to consider from the xth chapter of St. John, the fold or church of Christ and its unity—the case of thieves and robbers, of false teachers, heretics, and deceivers—of hirelings, ungracious pastors, the door, the porter, the characteristics of the true sheep, &c.—which would afford many useful and pleasant speculations. The reader may see some of these points treated on by Dr. Stanhope—Epist. and Gospels, vol. 3. p. 27, and 149.

† Magistrates also as being subordinate shepherds of the great Shepherd, ποιμένας μεταρ—may learn from this xth chapter of St. John, 1. to enter into office and power by a lawful call, lawful means, not by usurpation and bribery, or any unjust means. 2. To seek for the inward grace of the holy Spirit to guide them in a due use of their government.
pastors of his flock may learn from his example, 1st, to spare no pains, to spend and be spent for their flocks, to dedicate all their time, powers and labours to their welfare, yea and if need be even to lay down their lives for them. 2d, To use all their endeavours to preserve and protect them from the artifices and cruelty of the infernal wolf, of all false doctors and doctrines; and, 3d, so to feed them with wholesome food and the pure milk of the word, that they may grow in grace and the fear of the Lord, and may be made fit to present unto Christ, as living sacrifices—But how doth this example of the chief Shepherd reprove all those ungracious pastors, who lord it over God’s heritage, who feed themselves and not the flock, and fall under the severe censures threatened to such by the prophet Ezekiel? May God incline the hearts of Christians to pray for such; and lead us all much rather to pity and weep over them, than triumphantly censure and aggrandize their miseries!

ment to the glory of God and the good of the people.
3. To know their people, to know all their interests, concerns, &c. that they may the better satisfy their wants, defend and protect them. 4. To supply them with wholesome food, proper laws for the defence of their lives and properties. 5. To go before them, to set them a good example in all things, and shew themselves a pattern of obedience to those laws, which they themselves enact.
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However, from a view of our gracious redeemer in this amiable and condescending character, we cannot but be filled with the highest love and most perfect confidence in him. This concerns us all. It is our duty and will be our happiness—to contemplate him in this pleasing point of view: and—to acknowledge him as our good shepherd, who hath laid down his life for us, and taken away ours and the sins of the whole world by a willing sacrifice of himself on the tree:—to bless him for having condescended to represent himself to us in that affecting character, for our comfort, of a Shepherd—whose weary work and anxious labour like that of all others is never done and over: whose constant care and fatigue endures thro' all the night as well as the day, knows not any respect of holy-days, but is ever incessant and ever watchful: the flock continually demanding the eye and solicitude of its Shepherd. Above all it is our duty and will be our happiness, so to know him, as to hear his voice and to follow him: for this is the only sure testimony, that we are his sheep: when we delight in his commandments in the inner man, and, having the hope of eternal life thro' his death, purify ourselves as he is pure, and daily labour after an advancement in holiness. Thus may we
we be sure, that we are of his flock, his sheep, his elect, even by a living faith in Chrift—and a dutiful obedience to his word: and thus may we rejoice indeed, since he hath promised, and his word is signed and sealed by his immaculate blood—that he will give us eternal life, and that no one shall pluck us out of his hand—continue therefore in his love, persevere in the paths of holiness, regularly, soberly, uniformly, and as the truth and power of God is pledged for your defence, be fully persuaded, that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Chrift Jesus our Lord*

But behold and adore his love—He hath not only laid down his life for his sheep, and so redeemed all those by his blood, who hear his voice, believe in, and so follow him; he hath not only promised to protect and preserve them from every evil and every danger, and to bring them safe to everlasting life—but he hath also promised to support and feed us during our pilgrimage here: and if the great Jehovah be our Shepherd what then can we lack? But he is our shepherd, and if we are truly his sheep, if we know him, as we

* Rom. viii. 38, 39.
are known of him, love him, because he first loved us, and depend upon him, as sheep on their shepherd, as children on their parent, for good pasture and living springs of water, he will richly supply us with all spiritual food, nor will he suffer his chosen to want temporal support sufficient, but give them in every respect day by day their daily bread. For if there be any promise clear and evident in the sacred Scriptures it is this: Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [all things necessary to life and well-being here, food and raiment] shall be added unto you*. Oh when shall we learn to believe God, and trust his infinite truth?—Lord, increase our faith!

And to draw to a conclusion: were we all lost, all by nature gone out of the way, from which we confess daily, that we have erred and strayed like lost sheep: and did this good Shepherd not only come down from heaven to seek and to save that which was lost, but lay down his life for us, when he found us in the very jaws of the infernal wolf, whence he could by no means redeem us, without the loss of his own most precious

* Matt. vi. 33.
life: and doth he, when having thus delivered us, preserve us from all dangers and protect us from all evil, doth he feed us with the bread of life, with the divine pasturage of grace here, and will he feed us with the riches of his love in glory hereafter?—Then let the serious reflection on these things incline our souls to a diligent heed in our spiritual walking, that we wander no more out of the way in the desert, amongst thorns and briars, wolves and evil beasts, to the great hazard of our eternal lives; that we no more leave the flock and fold, nor by any means, by life or doctrine, break the unity of the church of Christ, but continue regular and exact in the path of life, and labour uniformly to obey all Christ's commandments, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. A faithful obedience, a single eye, a diligent heed to Christ's word, and the precepts of his apostolical church, with an humble resignation to his will are the only sure means to preserve us in the right path of doctrine or practice, and are the grateful tributes we should render, when we are found, to our good Shepherd, for seeking and saving us, when we were lost.

And for that he laid down his life for us, and greater love than this hath no man—let us
remember that great commandment, whose obligation ariseth from hence, that we ought to love as he hath loved us,—to love our brethren, as Christ hath loved us, so to love, as to do them all the good we are able, yea, and if need be, even to lay down our lives also for them! It was well indeed with Christianity, when the worst thing its enemies could say of its professors were—See how these Christians love one another—Brethren, let us all labour, in the love of Christ, to give his enemies once again the same cause of calumny!

When moreover we reflect, that no other ransom could redeem our souls but the blood of the incarnate God, let us learn duly to value that precious blood shed for our sins: and to abhor that sin, in every shape, which drew forth that precious blood, and from which that precious blood alone can wash us—He hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood†!

And lastly, hath he not only fought and found, not only suffered, bled and died for us, but promised to protect, feed and support us here, when we enter into his fold and church and to bless us eternally in heaven,—

† Rev. i. 5.
let us be careful in lively faith to entrust ourselves and all we have to his fatherly protection: and above all, not to despise this sacred pasturage, but to feed continually on the food of life, that is, upon himself the true bread of life, as conveyed to us by all the means of grace used in faith, more especially the word, the blessed communion, and prayer: thus let us feed upon him here, and then we may have good hope to eat of the true bread, the hidden manna, hereafter.

And to conclude all,—to the good Shepherd who fought and saved us, when we were lost, and had wandered out of the way, let us render simple obedience, and unfeignedly resign our wills up to his divine leading.—To the Shepherd who bled, and died for us, when under the sentence of death, let us render with all our hearts infinite love and infinite praise, consecrating all ourselves, our souls and bodies, all we are and all we have, to his divine honour and glory—for he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again*.

And from the Shepherd who defends us by

* 2 Cor. v. 15.
his power and supports us by his grace, let us receive with child-like simplicity the wholesome food: nor dare to contend or dispute with him, as if we knew better than he, what nourishment would suit our souls; what condition would most forward our eternal welfare.—And as he is our Shepherd let us consider what may justly be expected of us in the relation of sheep—certainly, a delight in and attention to the voice of our Shepherd—a diligent following of his example, a treading in the steps, wherein he hath gone before us—for the sheep follow their Shepherd, when he goeth before them—Fruitfulness in all good works: meekness and humility, patience and harmlessness, simplicity, contentedness, and a love of Christian society—each of which virtues * we may be taught from the sheep of the flock, and each of which we should return to our good Shepherd, for his love, his care, and protection.

And then with full confidence and holy hope we may cheerfully depend upon and joyfully expect from the chief, the triumphant Shepherd, when he shall come in all his glory, when he shall make the great and

* See particularly Dr. Stanhope, vol. 3, p. 27.
final separation, to be placed on his right hand, as his redeemed sheep, his own peculiar flock: and to be admitted to those realms, where we shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun nor heat smite us: for he that hath mercy on us shall lead us, even by the springs of water shall he guide us, and we shall drink of his pleasures as out of a river.

Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro' the blood of the everlasting covenant; make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord: that so when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye may all receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away thro' Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
DISCOURSE X.

On the PARABLE
Of the PRODIGAL SON.

Being the Substance of Three Sermons.

PART I.

St. Luke xv. 11, 12, 13,

And he said, A certain man had two Sons:—And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me: and be divided unto them his living—And not many days after, the younger Son gather’d all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

HIS whole xvth chapter of St. Luke is full of the greatest consolation, and abounds with the most joyful tidings to the souls of sinners: it shines like a bright and distinguish’d gem
gem in the midst of the gospel crown: and in three most beautiful and expressive parables sets before our view that most comfortable doctrine of remission, of free pardon of all our offences upon our sincere repentance and return to our heavenly Father. Each parable, that of the lost sheep, of the lost penny and the lost or prodigal Son, is design'd to inculcate the same great truth, express'd in our Saviour's own application of them, "that there is joy in heaven and in the presence of the holy angels over one sinner that repenteth." And the occasion of our Saviour's delivering these three parables, (as was observed in the former discourse) throws great light upon them: particularly on this of the prodigal Son, which I propose now to consider. Then drew near unto him, says St. Luke, all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them! a matter of great offence to those self-righteous, self-justified scribes and Pharisees. To convince them however of the evil and absurdity of such murmuring, our Saviour spoke these following parables, and to shew them that they ought rather to rejoice herein: since the recovery of sinners was the work upon which he was sent; since he came not to call the righteous but sinners
to repentance, and since there was more joy in heaven over one sinner so repenting, than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance: just as there is more joy upon earth on the recovery of a thing that was lost, than on account of that which we have safe in our possession, and are in no fears about: not that the thing lost is dearer in itself, but only by accident, because it was lost, and therefore had raised our anxiety, and is found, and therefore occasions our joy. This our divine teacher beautifully exemplifies first in the parable of the lost sheep, upon which all the shepherds care is employ'd, while the rest of his flock continues safe in the fold; and when he has found it, he rejoices more for this one sheep, than for the whole flock, and for this plain reason, because they were safe, and this which had been lost, was found. The same is expressed in the parable of a woman, who had lost one of her ten pieces of silver, which having found, she rejoices more for that piece, than for the other nine, which had caused less solicitude, and so, in that respect, caus'd less joy.—And in a more full and beautiful manner he shews not only this particular but the great readiness of God to pardon and to receive returning sinners, under the similitude of a Father, who had two Sons: the younger of whom
whom not content to live in his Father's house, safe under his protection and happy under his eye, desired his Father to give him the portion of goods which fell to his share: and having obtained his desire, as if the presence and neighbourhood of so kind and indulgent a Father was irksome and grievous to him, as being doubtless no inconsiderable restraint to his evil practices — he gather'd all together, and took his journey into a far distant country, where he had an opportunity to give a loose to his wicked inclinations, and where he wasted all his substance, with riotous living. After he had spent all, the evil day came: a mighty famine arose in that land: and he began, —poor thoughtless prodigal, now to feel the pinchings of want, and the necessities of hunger. He went therefore in this distress and join'd himself to a citizen of that country: willing to try all things, rather than return to an indulgent parent and humble himself before him. This citizen, having a just contempt of his past prodigality — for such spendthrifts are always despicable in distress — employ'd him in the meanest and most contemptible offices: he sent him into his fields to feed swine: a change indeed from a life of voluptuousness and gaiety, a life of pleasure and excess! — But so great was hunger, so mighty his distress,
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tress, that he would even have been content in this miserable state, could he have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat: but no man gave to him, no man shew'd any the least compassion towards him, so that the very swine were in a better condition than this miserable prodigal!

It was the feeling hereof, which brought him to himself: he had been all this time in a kind of reverie: a state of madness and utter forgetfulness: but now coming to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my Father, have bread enough and to spare: and I perish with hunger! undeserving as I am, I will make trial of his favour and mercy: I will arise and go to my Father, for such he still is, and I tho' wretched and lost am yet his Son; and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called and treated as thy Son: I cannot expect that happiness, my behaviour has justly deprived me of all right to it—Make me, only make me as one of thy hired servants. And having thus resolved, he arose and made haste to come to his Father!—And here behold—what a scene of tenderness and affection breaks upon our view:—while he was yet afar off, his Father saw him: his bowels yearn'd to-
wards him, he had compassion on his lost and ruined child: paternal love would not suffer him to forbear: he ran with all the speed of that paternal love, to meet him, fell on his neck and kissed him.—The Son encourag'd by this kind reception, nevertheless falls down at his Father's feet, and begins to make confession of his faults, to plead his own unworthiness, to request his Father's pardon:—Father, said he, I have sinned both against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son—but he was suffered to proceed no further: the love of his parent prevents the rest, and he commands his servants to bring the best robe, and put on him, to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and to kill the fatted calf, that they might eat and be merry. For this my Son, said he, was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found. And they began to be merry,—as there was great cause, more especially with the Son, thus restor'd to his Father's house and favour.

During this transaction the elder brother was in the field, properly employ'd in his Father's business: but as he return'd from thence, drew near to the house, and heard sounds of mirth, music and dancing, he call'd one of the servants and enquired, what these things
things meant: and being told, that his brother was returned home, and that his father had killed the fatted calf, because he had received him safe and sound, he was much displeased, very angry, and therefore would not go in. Upon which his father came out and intreated him. But he told him, lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time, thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son—ο υιος σας θητος! who hath devoured thy substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf!—The father, with the most amiable and condescending tenderness replied, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. But it was very meet and right that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found.—

Thus stands this most beautiful and expressive parable, which may vie with all profane writings for the excellency of its painting; and which equals every other parable of our Saviour for the sweetness of doctrine and abundance of consolation, which it brings to every sinful soul of man.—There are three expostitions commonly given of this parable:
Of the Prodigal Son.

The parable: each of which may, I suppose, have some place in its original design: for it deserves to be remark'd and remember'd, that the parables and doctrines of our blessed Saviour are by no means ever to be confined absolutely to one single point of view: since frequently they have relation to different objects, and hereby abundantly evidence the riches and depth of the manifold wisdom of God.—In this parable, for instance, under consideration, the great and principal doctrine proposed to be particularly inculcated, (as appears from the context, and the occasion of this discourse) is, "that sinners upon repentance are gladly received into favour:" or, "that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."—But still, as was just now observed, there are two other expostutions of this parable, each of which may, and the latter of which doubtless must have place in it.—I will just in brief propose them to you: and afterwards confine myself to the parable, in that particular, which appears, to me at least, its principal, but which certainly is to us its most affecting sense: "the great readiness of our heavenly Father to receive us worthless prodigals, when we return and confess our own unworthiness before him."

Happy will it be for us, and may his good

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Spirit bless our contemplations on this parable to that end, if the sense of this his exceeding great love to and care for us, may incline our hearts to leave the filthy, wretched service of Satan and Sin, and to return with all our speed to the house and bosom of our affectionate, merciful Father, with whom is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore!

If then, many, not to say the greatest part of the ancient writers expound this parable of Adam*: to whom the Image of God was given, with many other excellent gifts, which he might have used happily, had he been content to stay and use them in his Father's house. But like this younger brother, who foolishly desired his portion of goods to himself, that he might be his own master, under no confinement or restriction, so Adam was unwilling to remain under obedience and confinement to the divine precept; he was desirous to have a free use of the things in paradise, and by the devil's instigation affected a wretched independency, which caused him to break the divine command, and to eat of the forbidden tree to obtain the knowledge of

* See their expositions and particularly St. Chrysostom's remarks on them in his Homily on this parable.
good and evil. Thus he lost for himself and his posterity the substance put into his possession at first: but God, his Father, upon his and his posterity's return, hath provided such grace and compassion for them, that they may be reinstated in their former place and favour. Which grace not being granted to the higher order of intellectual beings, the fallen spirits, is the cause of their murmuring against God and man, figured out by the anger of the elder brother in this parable: for it is conjectured by many, that the grace proposed for man thro' Christ, (before the worlds were made) in case of his fall, was the principal occasion of the rebellion of the apostate angels.

Others, IIdly, and with a greater shew of probability, expound this parable of the two people, the Jews and Gentiles, who have both one Father, even God. And while they both continued in their Father's house, the true church, they wanted nothing: there was plenty of food for the soul, there was substance enough for them both. But after the younger brother, (the Gentiles) possessed of his share of knowledge, went into a strange country, left God, and spent his substance, the evidence and knowledge of God, fell into spiritual fornication, into idolatry, and wasted
all he had in riotous living, all his knowledge of God in the loose and absurd ceremonies of idolatry: then behold, a mighty famine arose in that land! a famine not of bread, nor of thirst of water, but of hearing the word of God, as Amos faith*: in this hunger and dreadful dearth he joined himself to the service of the devil, and worked all uncleanness with greediness. But finding nothing to satisfy his spiritual hunger, this prodigal (these Gentiles,) long estranged to his father, upon coming to the knowledge of himself by this spiritual famine and his own severe want, returned home in humble confession, was readmitted into favour, and blest with the privileges of the Gospel. But the elder brother, the Jewish people, who were daily employ'd in the field of the legal ceremonies, and long bore the heavy yoke of the law, seeing the Gentiles received so easily to the grace of God, to the remission of sins, and the hope of everlasting life, murmured at it: and as we gather from the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles, were often unwilling (even the judaizing Christians) that the Gentiles should be received to the grace of the Gospel, unless they took upon them the yoke of the law: as you may read at large in the xvth Chapter of the Acts: and as I have

* Amos viii. 11.

had
had occasion before to remark in my Discourse on the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.—But God out of his great compassion, pleading the cause gently with the elder brother, to whom he offers all things, upon supposition of his continuance in obedience, delivered the nations from this burden: for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to the Apostles, acting by his authority, to lay upon the Gentiles no greater burdens, than some things absolutely necessary for the then state of the church, not desiring to put a yoke upon their neck, which neither we, faith St. Peter, nor our fathers were able to bear.—Thus the parable has a very clear and good exposition: which yet will be much confirm'd if you consider the state of the Gentiles as described by St. Paul, in his first Chapter to the Romans: where you will find that they were at first possessed of a sufficient stock of knowledge, their portion of goods was given them, that which might be known of God, was manifest to them: for he himself revealed it, God himself shewed it unto them: but when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: they fell into the most shameless and foolish idolatry, worshiping birds, and beasts, and creeping things:

upon
upon which God gave them up to a reprobate mind, and they were put to feed swine by the hard master whom they served, dishonouring their own bodies with the filthiest and most abominable uncleannesses.—And the words of the father, as applied to God and his dealings with the Jews are also, in this view of the parable, exactly consonant: Son, all that I have, is thine: all the blessings and privileges of the Gospel are thine, upon condition you remain in my house obedient, come in, and eat of the fatted calf, that is slain, and rejoice with us on the recovery of your lost brother—for love is the fulfilling of the law. And thus the murmuring of the elder brother is explained to us without any the least difficulty: and as the offence of receiving the Gentiles to pardon and peace, thro' faith in Christ, was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews; there can be no doubt, I imagine, but that our Saviour intended to obviate and remove it by this incomparable parable.

However from the context and the occasion of delivering it, it is plain that the IIId interpretation is the first in design and importance: the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Jesus; upon this the Pharisees murmured: and upon their murmuring, he delivered this and two more parables to shew, that if they would be like God and the holy angels, so far
far from murmuring, they should rejoice at seeing sinners willing to embrace his doctrine: "because there is joy in the presence of God and his angels over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance ."

The parable considered in this view, naturally divides itself into three parts: there are three capital figures, wherein the prodigal represents himself to our view. Ift. We see him in all his short-liv’d happiness, in his sinful state. IIId. In a state of repentance; and IIIdly, in a state of forgiveness and justification. So that the life of sin, the nature of true repentance, and the fruits and effects of such repentance, are the three great points of doctrine, which in this parable offer themselves to our serious meditation.

And Ift. Herein we are presented with the life of a sinner, in the most strong and lively colours: as well as with the steps or several gradations leading on from sin to sin. All indeed, tho’ sinners, do not run the same

* Clement Alexandrinus, in the 2d book of his Stromata observes, that there is one sort of repentance for those who have lived in the ignorance of Gentilism—and another, which God of his goodness grants to those, who being believers, are guilty of some offence.”—Repentance, Gerhard observes, often signifies the whole work of conversion—sometimes only contrition and godly sorrow. All men at all times stand in need of the latter—True believers need not the former. Refer this to note, p. 391, foregoing.
length of riot and wickedness: but the case is put the strongest possible in this parable, that there might be comfort and hope for the greatest sinners upon true conversion to God, which is the main and essential thing in the christian religion, and necessary to all.—A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods, that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living—devoured it with harlots, ver. 30. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him! 

Wretched prodigal, how poor, how short—

* He did not abstain from these husks, we may suppose, out of principle, but only because they were swines food, and such as he could not fill his belly with; tho' so severe was his hunger, he would fain have done it, had it been possible. His master gave him money for his wages—but the famine was so great, he could get no food—The passage would be more clear, if the last clause were rendered, as the ellipsis requires, and no man gave him meat, or gave him to eat—or perhaps it would be clearer still if it were, he would fain, &c.—For no man gave unto him to eat.

liv'd
liv’d was thy bliss! How speedily is the evil day come—how great and deep thy distress! Look, O sinner, and behold thyself, in him; and learn what fearful famine will ensue, if thou continuest, like him, to waste all thy substance in riot and excess.—Observe the source and several steps of his fatal fall. Pride and affectation of independency is the root of all sin, the beginning of all evil. It was the first error of our first parents: they wanted to be as Gods: nay it cast Lucifer, that morning-star, himself from heaven: to this that Lucifer first tempted our Saviour. And this was the first offence of the prodigal: he wanted to be independent. He could not bear—and what sinner can?—the restraints of his Father’s house and law: so he departs from that house, from the presence and fear of God: and the sure consequence of this is a blind and headlong plunge into all disobedience and intemperance: for when pride induceth man to follow his own carnal reason, he must obey the dictates of that fleshly wisdom, and thus waste the talents and substance given him of God in riotous living. And when these are wasted, and the knowledge of God defaced in the heart, the master which sinners serve, puts them to the vilest employments, sets them to feed swine, to serve the filthiest lusts: the service of which
On the PARABLE

is the greatest drudgery, and brings the severest want and famine on the soul, a want, a pinching want of peace and solid comfort; and till this want is severely felt indeed, which outward calamities for the most part impress, no sinner, however wretched, thinks of returning to God. All means else are to be tried, while they little think, that after they have fought for rest and peace in every earthly thing, the soul will still remain hungry and in famine, miserable and in distress as before, and till they come to themselves, and recollect the blessings of their Father's house, till they resolve to return unto God, no peace is to be had upon earth, and none we know in a future world. For in this world we must and shall have tribulation; in Christ alone is it possible for man to find peace.

But if when men find this spiritual want, if when they find their souls uneasy and dissatisfied, they will not try the right means but fly from God rather than to him—they must expect the wages which the service of Satan supplies. Such a conduct it is, that occasions the strange melancholy and uneasiness, which possess many even in the midst of every earthly blessing: they feel the spiritual want, yet will not come to themselves: could they once do that, recollecting the blessings of their heavenly Father's house, and so return in true con-
contrition, then would they find him as represented in this parable, ready to forgive and forward to pardon.

We may all learn this important lesson from the parable: we may all see ourselves in it: we may each one say, in serious self-examination, Lord, is it I? and to each one of us it may be replied, Thou sayest. Thou art one of these prodigal sons: thou art he, that hast left thy Father's house, and wasted thy substance in riotous living. To thee was given in baptism the gift of the Holy Spirit, new life, salvation, the answer of a good conscience, and in fine, a right to the kingdom of heaven—These at baptism were put into thy power and possession: and while in the house of thy Father, in his Church, whereinto we are all thus by baptism admitted, it is the will of that Father that thou shouldest be led by the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the flesh, fight manfully against sin, the world and the devil—and not, like a traiterous deserter, fight against him in the service of these—and yet, alas, this, thou must confess, this thou hast done—For his service hath been grievous to thee, and therefore his presence unpleasing. Wherefore with the prodigal, thou has desired to leave thy Father's house, to become thine own master, and to seek for happiness in a far country. Not wanting to be led by the Spirit: not wanting
wanting to hear and live according to the word of God, nay hardening thine heart against it, thou hast separated thyself afar from the house, the presence, and the protection of thy Father. And thus thou hast wasted all thy goods, thus thou hast quenched and grieved the Spirit which thou hast received, thus thou hast made shipwreck of thy faith; the fervor of thy prayers is extinguished, and thou art brought to fore distress and in danger of perishing eternally:—Up therefore, up and return, think of thy misery, and flee to thy God.

Thus if every sinner would behold himself in this prodigal, see himself in the evil of his heart departing from God; abusing his good gifts, yea and wasting them in a course of iniquity, he would soon find that his soul was in that state of need to which the prodigal was reduced, and soon think of returning to his offended Father.—But the misfortune is, as the prodigal did not feel his want till the famine came, so too frequently sinners feel not their spiritual want, but go on in a course of sin, thoughtless and regardless of the consequences; till God is pleased to lay his hand upon them, and by some outward evil to shew them their inward misery. While in the full enjoyment of their lusts, pleasures and profits,
profits, men regard not, they think not of God—nay, when in the full career of their vices, they are like the deaf adder, stopping their ears to all the calls of God inward and outward. But he, far more compassionate to us, than we, poor unthinking mortals, to ourselves, not desirous of our death, not forgetful of his love to us;—the better to arouse us to a due sense and feeling of our state, sends some famine, some outward affliction, of what kind soever, to remind us of our misery, and to cause us to repent and return. When he finds that mercy and forbearance will not do; then he lays his hand upon us; and happy would it be for every Son of man, if they would always consider the calamities which fall upon them, as instruments design'd by their merciful Father to awaken their eyes, to shew them the extreme poverty of their souls, and the danger they are in of perishing eternally with hunger insatiable.

Yet alas how long is it before men can be brought to this knowledge! deplorably miserable was the state to which this poor prodigal was reduced: and yet how long was it before he thought of returning to his gracious Father. Pride, fear and shame conspired to keep him back. He tried therefore all
other means, and rather consented to feed swine, the most base and servile occupation, nay and rather chose to be fed with swines food, the vile husks, than to humble himself and return: nothing but the very last extremity could force him to it—nothing but the danger of perishing with hunger. And so the sinner is frequently reduced, before he can be persuaded to humble his stout heart before God. Indeed every sinner in his most flourishing state may be considered in as wretched a situation, as the prodigal: for he is a servant and slave of sin and the devil, the hardest and worst of task-masters, he is employ'd, in their service to feed and nourish lusts and passions; sorrow and uneasiness, want and distress are his wages: he wallows like a swine in the filth of vile affections, and yet from thence can find nothing to satisfy the hunger of his rapacious soul. Look at the sinner indulging sensual pleasures; and ask him when the famine is fallen on his land, and he is brought low by sickness or suffering, ask him, what fruits he hath in these things—and he will tell you, that he finds nothing to satisfy his wants, nothing but gnawing anguish and keen remorse, sad bitterness of soul and heart in the recollection of those things whereof he is ashamed, and the end whereof is
is death—The lover of the world, its riches, pride and ambition finds in the end, that he hath been gathering water in a sieve all his life long; all his life long labouring to fill that, which runs out faster than he can put it in, and in the end horribly deceives his hopes and disappoints his sanguine expectations. And so every sinner, when they come to themselves, and are enabled, by a right mind, to weigh the fruits of their offences in the balance of true felicity, will find them not only incapable of giving ease, but incapable of removing heavy anguish from their hearts.—More especially the young, gay, thoughtless, prodigals of our times may see and behold themselves in this strong picture: in this younger Son they may see, what their separating themselves, from their Fathers house, from the fear and favour of God, will at length bring them to: they may see the fruits of their riotous and intemperate living, sure want, certain hunger, a hunger, worse than of bread, a hunger of soul, which unless it be satisfied here by the true bread of life, will remain upon them dreadfully violent and gnawing thro' all eternity! and what fruit can they have, do they expect from their vices—? Even shame, disease, poverty and contempt! while in the mad career they may fancy
fancy themselves happy; but when they shall recover their senses, then conviction will sting them with severe reproaches! would God they were wise to consider in this their day: would God they would turn from their evil, that so iniquity might not prove their ruin! would God, they were so wise as to improve every misfortune, every calamity to their souls good: and to make every sickness, and sorrow an occasion of heedful examination, that so they might perceive at once their spiritual hunger, recover their right mind, and turn to God in true repentance!

I say, recover their right mind: for from this parable we learn, that all sinners are esteemed in the sight of God, while they continue in a life of sin, not only as dead, and as blind, but also as mad, and having entirely lost their senses: and therefore it is said of the prodigal, that when he came to himself, he then bethought himself of his Fathers house: Then he determined to go in confession of his sins, to acknowledge his own unworthiness, and to beg acceptance from his Father.—And as the day will assuredly come wherein however iniquity, the love of the world, its lusts, pleasures and vanities may now deprive you of all sense and wisdom towards God, as the day will come, when all must be brought to themselves,
selves, to a true knowledge and feeling of their state—O endeavour, my beloved, to embrace that day and come to yourselves, before it be too late and your eyes be opened only to a sense of your misery and condemnation, to a sight of those eternal torments, that black dungeon and those horrid chains reserved for the mad and impenitent offenders against their God!—And as all men are but too guilty in this respect, that they have by their sins offended God, troden under foot the blood of Christ and neglected the grace of the Spirit given in baptism; and since to all alike the favour and grace of repentance is offered: let us not despise so great salvation, but with the prodigal come to ourselves, and resolve to return.

In order to which let us be careful to improve every outward or inward affliction to this blessed purpose, and consider it as sent of our heavenly Father to bring us to our senses: let us carefully enter into our own hearts, get a clear knowledge of their exceeding sinfulness and of our own fallen sinful wretched state—let us in earnest prayer importantly request the Father of mercies to enlighten our eyes, and to shew us ourselves: let us be diligent in hearing the word, and take every convenient occasion to come under the most awakening preaching of it: let us
continually meditate on the foulness, emptiness, vanity and short duration of a life of sin—the length of eternity—the joys of heaven, the horrors of hell—Jesus dying on the cross to save us from the one, Jesus dying on the cross to purchase for us the other—and, by Gods grace, using these and the like means, we shall come to ourselves—and be enabled in sincerity thus to confess our unworthiness and disobedience, our shameful rebellion against the best and most tender of fathers, the kindest and most loving of masters and of friends—Happy they who with real contrition can say—"O what hast thou done, my soul, what hast thou done, who hast so shamefully and maliciously offended, so good and gracious a Father! how hast thou wasted those goods, those precious gifts and graces, which he gave to thee; how hast thou employ'd them in the service of sin—how often has he call'd and invited thee to return—while thou hast resisted his holy Spirit, and given up thyself to the service of the worst of masters, who hath degraded thee beneath the brute creation, the vilest animals, in making thee a slave to filthy lusts and inordinate affections.—Father, thus have I sinned grievously before thee, and yet as thou art my Father, reconcil'd to me by the blood of thy dear Son—even yet I dare humble myself before
before thee, even yet I dare cast myself upon the riches of thy mercy!—I have nothing to plead, nothing whereon to depend, but thy mercy in Christ Jesus, the lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the whole world—I am unworthy to be called thy Son, I am unworthy the least of thy favours: make me but as one of thy hired servants: O cast me not wholly out of thine house, do with me here in punishment and correction whatever shall seem good to thee---But, O Father of mercies, cast me not out, cast me not out for ever from thy presence and the house of thy peace."

Thus if we confess our sins and our unworthiness before God, and thus if we come to him, doing as we confess, we shall find him gracious and merciful, yea abundant in mercy, ready to receive us and running to embrace the returning prodigal, which naturally leads to the IIId thing proposed, which shall be the subject of our next discourse.—But let us well remember, that unless we do return, we cannot share his favour, we can have no fatherly love and tenderness shewn to us—May we therefore one and all, feeling and confessing our wants, and groaning beneath the sense of our sinful unworthiness, come to a due sense of ourselves, take up the resolution of the prodigal, and fall down at the feet of our heavenly Father, saying, Father.
I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son. And may that Father accept us, out of his free and unbounded love, clothe us with the best robe, and cause us to sit down with him for ever at the feast of everlasting joy. Amen.
DISCOURSE X.
On the PARABLE
Of the PRODIGAL SON.

PART II.

St. Luke xv. 18, 19, 20,
I will arise and go to my Father, and will say
unto him, Father, I have sinned against heav-en and before thee, and am no more worthy
to be called thy Son: make me as one of thy
hired servants: And he arose and came to bis 
Father.

Observed to you in a former sermon on this beautiful parable, that there were three expositions com-
monly given of it: the first, referring it to the case of Adam fallen, offend-
ing, and received again into grace and favour:
the second, to the gentiles, whom they suppose figur'd out by this younger brother as by the elder they understand the Jews: and the third, agreeable to the context, conceiving the grand scope of the parable referable to the case of prodigal and repenting sinners.—Having given you some general hints touching the two former expostitions, I proposed to dwell more largely upon the 3d, and in order thereto it was remark'd, that the parable consider'd in this view naturally divides itself into three parts, 1st, the life of a sinner, 2dly, his repentance, and 3dly, his reception to pardon and peace: each beautifully display'd in the case of this younger Son, who wasting his substance in riotous living, at length came to himself, arose, and return'd to his Father, and was receiv'd by him with the highest demonstrations of love and regard.

In speaking of the first of these, the life of a sinner, I observ'd that in the case of this prodigal was pictur'd out to us the several gradations of sin, the steps by which men descend from iniquity to iniquity; for all vice has its beginning, and it is an old remark, that no man in an instant arriv'd at the very height of wickedness: which should make every one for himself as well as others particularly careful of the smallest and very least appearances of evil: for
The Son first departed from his Father's house: the restraint of which he could not brook: that was contrary to his evil desires. So the sinner departs from God, throws off religious restraint: looks upon it, (or is willing to do so) as the bugbear of mothers and nurses: begins to jest at what he before esteem'd: flies from the public and omits the private service of God: despises conscientious and religious men, and every thing pertaining to God becomes his mockery and contempt: or if he keeps up an outside form of religion—as the pharisaical sinner often finds necessary for worldly ends—yet remaining in sin, his heart is as much estrang'd to God, as if he never approach'd the place where his honour dwelleth.—Thus perhaps he fails prosperously along for a while on a smooth and even sea: the prodigal, for some time led a joyous and a cheerful life: he crown'd himself with rose buds, and enjoying the present hour dreamt not at all of the future evil day. Lull'd by the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, thus the sinner goes on happily, as it seems to him, in his carnal course: still he has a relish for all these delights, still his sensual appetite is not cloy'd, and still the
things of God are mere madness to his ear, and very folly to his indulging and rejoicing heart. The flesh can yet enjoy its raptures, the eye and heart can still be fed with honour and worldly applause, and the procurement of wealth and earthly treasures, engrossing the attention, can yet amuse and occupy the soul. He dreams not of any evil day to come: nor of that blackness of darkness which will seize the soul when worldly objects and enjoyments are totally secluded from it.—But a famine we find arose in that land where the prodigal had wasted all his substance: he began to be in want: and was compelled to join himself to the service of a master, that put him to the most servile occupations:—So will it be found with every sinner: a famine will surely arise in his soul: and after having wasted his talents, the portion of goods entrusted to his care, after having run thro’ every length of riot, after having tried every worldly sin and pleasure, to satisfy the hunger and cravings of his immortal soul, all will be found insufficient: and tho’ now become the slave of sin and lust and the very bond-slave of hell and Satan, he will find nothing but bitter famine in the service, horrible hunger and uneasiness to a disturb’d and miserably wrack’d conscience. It is wise-
ly order'd of God, that no earthly thing, no worldly enjoyment should be complete on all parts, or capable of affording solid happiness: and it is equal wisdom that he is pleas'd so to lay his hand upon us, in afflictions and calamities of different kinds, that we may come to a due sense of ourselves and a serious recollection of our state here below. By these, he never fails to call upon and stir up the least as well as the greatest of sinners: and herein is our wisdom and happiness to behold the chastising hand of God upon us, to come to ourselves, to enter into a serious examination of our state, and like the prodigal take up our resolution of returning to our offended Father. When God is pleas'd to bring this spiritual famine on the soul, men are apt to try other means, and apply to other methods, than those which alone can avail them. When conscience begins to do its work, and presents in horrible array before the sinners eyes a long and fearful train of his aggravating and hainous offences: when uneasiness and disquietude, when melancholy and distress, when guilt and shame, almost absorb the afflicted soul: then worldly pleasures or the physicians aid are most likely to be call'd in to hush and compose the storms of such a troubled conscience. But as well might they attempt
On the PARABLE

attempt to compose the ocean, when the tempests blow, by throwing a pair of fetters into it, like proud and foolish Xerxes, as hope by such means to compose such a conscience: experience fully proves that thus the malady is rather encreased. Despair too often is the consequence, and the load unremov'd becomes too heavy to be borne.—Oh could you but have the least idea of such a conscience, so oppreft, so burden'd, so pierc'd thro' with the stings and arrows of reproaching guilt: could you but for one moment feel the agonies and terrors of a soul so bejet on all sides with horrible dread and the fears of futurity: then would you make haste to fly from the power of sin; then would you be stir'd up to a due consideration of your present state, and with the prodigal take up the resolution of returning and confessing yourself to a merciful Father.—For this alone can deliver us from the tortures of an awaken'd conscience; this alone can deliver us from the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is not quenched: and this parable of the prodigal, as it affords the greatest comfort, and encouragement to repenting sinners, so doth it set before us in the clearest light, the IId thing proposed to be consider'd; namely, the nature and fruits of true repentance.
II. You see the repentance of this Son was not nominal: it was active and real: he felt and deplored his sinfulness: he was convinced of his depravity, sorry for it, arose and turned from it.—The first step towards which, was the feeling of his present misery, and the sense of his former happiness: when he came to himself, he said, how many of my Father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger! he did not come to himself, till he felt this hunger: and this join'd to the recollection of the blessings of his Father's house, caus'd him to resolve as he did, and to put that resolution into act: I will arise, said he, I will leave my present wretched state, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, confessing my offences before him, making no excuse, but only imploring his mercy, Father, for that name perhaps may move him to compassion, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son—that grace and favour I can by no means expect: but do not utterly cast me from thee, relieve my dreadful wants, satisfy the hunger of thy poor destitute half famish'd Son, and make me, only make me, as one of thy hired servants. Having formed this resolution, he straightway put it into practice, otherwise the resolve had been fruitless
fruitless and ineffectual: *He arose and went to his father.*

Herein you see the most lively and affecting picture of the penitent and returning sinner, whom spiritual hunger, whom some afflicting providence, sent in love and much mercy, hath happily stirred up to a sense and feeling of his own wants: For it is that which causeth us to come to God. *The Son* thought not of returning till he was ready to perish: and the sinner thinks not of coming to God, till some outward afflication, for the most part, fall upon him, depriving him of his worldly enjoyments, shewing him the nothingness of earth; and of consequence the necessity of a care for better things.—Hence on a sick bed, we find, for the most part, mens resolutions turned towards God, for which there was the same reason, when they were in health: but outward things can then please or engage no longer; when health however returns, the penitent, too often, for this reason forgets his resolutions. Happy are they, whom afflictions, set home by the divine word, have fixed in full and firm dependance on their God, and the convictions of whose troubled conscience have led to perfect conversion.

If such a troubled conscience hath been the lot of any amongst you, easily can you tell
Of the Prodigal Son.

tell the miseries of such a state, and the uneasy sorrows that have distracted your minds, under the sense of your guilt and rebellion against the best of fathers.—If it should be the case of any amongst you,—(and may God so open the eyes and convince the mind of every unawakened sinner!) then remember not to fly to improper means of relief: but learn, with this Prodigal, to arise from your state of sin, to leave feeding swine, to leave the service of your filthy lusts and appetites, and to hasten, with his humble confession, flowing from a truly contrite heart, to a God of Mercy, a father of compassions: stand not upon any attempts to lessen your past offences, but confess them in all their guilt before your merciful father: call him by that name, and remind him, by whom and by what means you were made his child, even thro' the suffering Jesus only, who hath procured for us that Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father: implore that father for the sake of that only begotten son to pardon and receive you; press him with ardent importunity to accept you into his house; throw yourself at his feet in full resignation to his will, and be well-contented with holy David, rather to be a door-keeper in his house, than to dwell in all the pomp and elegance of sin.—And surely,
On the PARABLE

surely, nothing should stir up the soul to this resolution so much, as the reflection on the joys of his father's house, the blessing of his love, and the enjoyment of his favour, with whom is the fulness of joy, in whose protection is peace, quietness and assurance for ever, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore. If you come thus in humble confession to almighty God, if thus, like the prodigal, you arise, and come to your father, for your encouragement you may learn from him,—for to this end was the example given,—what your reception will be.

While the son was yet afar off, his father saw him: the eyes of parents are quick and discerning; miserable and distress'd as he was, he yet knew this poor returning destitute to be his own, his beloved son; his bowels yearned towards him; he had the tenderest compassion for him: he could not refrain, he could not austerely wait till he should approach, but behold he runs to meet him! —Not one word of upbraiding falls from his lips, not one look of discontent lowrs on his brows, no distant coldness gives him a half and unpleasing welcome; but he falls on his neck and bedews him with kisses and witless tears.—Let the parents heart, which hath at any time experienced the tenderness of such
a melting scene, speak for those affectionate feelings, which must have past on either part, and which no other heart can conceive, and no words express. The Son yet forgot not his own undeserving and offences, and began to make his resolved confession: the gladened Father hears him but in part; rejoiced to receive the returning prodigal, he stops him in the midst, and orders the servants to prepare all things to testify his joy, For this my son, said he with the voice of rapture, This my son was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found!

How affecting a representation of paternal love is this; which must melt every heart that hears it, and force unwilling approbation even from those most backward to imitate it! But when, my brethren, every living soul of man shall be told, "For thee is this example written — to thee it speaketh." Must it not cause us deeply to consider, must it not arouse us to serious consideration, to tender shame and conscious guilt, upon the sense of having offended so good, so long-suffering a father?—Thou beholdest, oh sinner, in this most affectionate father, the love of thy almighty father to thee! he desireth not thy death: he wisteth not that thou shouldst be still rebellious and perish: but on the
the contrary, he earnestly desireth, that thou shouldst come to thyself, see thy dreadful want and danger, and make haste in true repentance to his house and favour. This if thou wilt do, the arms of his tender compassion are extended wide to receive thee: while thou art yet afar off, only coming to him he will behold thee, and present thee with the blessings of his grace, and the riches of his pardoning love! Arise therefore, arise from thy base servitude of sin, arise and go to thy father; so shall thy soul find sweet comfort and inexpressible peace—so will thy God receive thee, thy God, thy father, and thine exceeding great reward.

And to incline him hereto, let the sinner in seriousness one moment consider, 1st. what he can gain by continuing a slave to sin; and 2dly, what he can lose by returning to God. 1st. By continuing a slave to sin, whether it be to sensual pleasures, to the love of riches, or the desire of worldly honour and ambition,—he will at length be reduced to the state of this poor prodigal: he will speedily wish to feed upon the very husks of his former enjoyments; but they will not be for him: they will all vanish like a dream. The pleasures of the flesh will pall and grow insipid; and
and he himself will become incapacitated for them; certainly by age, sooner by debauches; riches will avail him nothing, tho' he had more than ever man possessed; when diseases lie hard upon him, when conscience stares him in the face, or the grave opens its greedy jaws to devour him: and the honours or applause of men, even blind heathens themselves have confessed to be but a smoke which vaniseth with the wind. And think, what can be more base or vile, than that immortal souls made for the fruition of God himself, should spend their days and years in minding nothing but eating and sleeping and trifling: or scraping together large heaps of yellow dust, which will prove utterly useless to them in the end: or in wallowing in uncleanness and lust, which generally ends in beggary, shame, or rottenness: or in filling their bodies full of intoxicating drink,—a vice whereto even beasts are strangers,—till there be nothing but the shape of man remaining! And yet these are the principal employments, wherein vicious men busy themselves!—But what balm can all these things together yield, even when a man is tormented with the anguish a violent disease,—what balm can they yield to heal a wounded conscience, which like the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of the greatest
greatest affluence, the most luxurious entertainments, and the highest delights, makes the vicious man tremble and look pale, with the bitter reflection of his life past, and the dismal prospect of what is to come *. " At that hour, if he looks inward, there is all hell, despair and confusion: there he finds a soul polluted with sin, oppressed with intolerable loads of guilt, and filled with the bitter remembrance of former follies.—If he looks outward, he sees all his friends and companions taking their last leave of him: and as they forswake him, his great master, the devil, (whose interest he hath faithfully pursued all his life) is ready to seize upon the trembling soul, as it parts from the body. If he looks upward, he sees an angry, offended God, whom he might have made his friend and father, whose laws he hath affronted, whose threatenings he hath despised, whose grace he has turned into wantonness, and to whose holy Spirit he hath done despite. He sees the Judge of the world summoning him to appear at his dreadful tribunal, to give an account of the talents he hath misemployed, of the precious time he hath mispent, of the riots and debauches, the frauds and unjust

* See Abp. Sharp's excellent Sermon on this Parable.
dealings, the oaths and blasphemies, the lewd intrigues, wicked designs, profane words, and evil actions of his whole life! and he seems to hear that terrible sentence sounding in his ears, which will most certainly be pronounced upon him and all such at that day, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!* O miserable state, the dismal conclusion of an ill-spent, sinful life!—These are the natural fruits and consequences of forsaking God; these are the things which a man must gain, by continuing in a worldly, carnal course! And however men may affect to disbelieve these alarming truths—however they may at present soothe their consciences, and despite these things as the air-blown bubbles of enthusiasm, and the fears of distempered brains; yet let them know, there will come an hour, when they must be convinced: let them know—and oh that they were wise to consider,—that there is not any probability of preventing, or averting these consequences, unless with the prodigal, they in due time come to themselves, enter into a serious consideration of their ways, and then arise and go to their Father.*

2d.

* When I preach’d this Sermon the better to enforce the great doctrine of it, and to shew the consequences of a life of prodigality and sin—I read Dr. Young’s most excellent

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* Footnote: When I preach’d this Sermon the better to enforce the great doctrine of it, and to shew the consequences of a life of prodigality and sin—*
2d. And what can the sinner lose, let us 2dly enquire, by this conduct—He will lose fin to find a Saviour: he will lose sorrow and agony of conscience to find serenity and peace of soul; he will lose eternal flames to find a kingdom of never ending joy. But shall we meanly thus compare—compare such great things with such small—shall we say lose?

where

cellent account of the death of Altamont from the Centaur: and as I am persuaded the omission of it would be no small disappointment to many of my readers, I have here sub-join’d it—supposing it will be of no differvice to the worthy author’s performance, but rather a means to excite the curiosity of my readers to a perusal of his whole work.

"I am about to represent to you, says the author, the last hours of a person of high birth and high spirit: of great parts and strong passions, every way accomplished not least in iniquity—His unkind treatment was the death of a most amiable wife—and his great extravagance in effects disinherited his only child, p. 149.

The sad evening before his death I was with him. No one was there, but his physician, and an intimate whom he lov’d, and whom he had ruin’d. At my coming in, he said; "You, and the physician, are come too late.—I have neither life, nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raise the dead."

Heaven, I said, was merciful.

"Or I could not have been thus guilty. What has it not done to bless, and to save me?—I have been too strong for omnipotence! I pluck’d down ruin."

I said, the blest redeemer.

"Hold! Hold! you wound me!—That is the rock on which I split—I deny’d his name."

Refusing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the physician, he lay silent, as far as sudden darts of pain.
Of the Prodigal Son.

where is the soul existing, that is not well aware of the mighty gain? In truth no reasonable man can doubt of the blessings deriv'd from a sincere return to God: and scarce a man lives however sinful that doth not intend it: but sin still holds him captive, the chains are not easy to be broken, and they, continuing irresolutely resolv'd, go on from day

pain would permit, 'till the clock struck. Then with vehemence; "Oh, Time! Time! It is fit thou should'ft thus strike thy murderer to the heart.—How art thou fled for ever!"

—A month!—Oh, for a single week! I ask not for years. Tho' an age were too little for the much I have to do."

On my saying we could not do too much: that heaven was a blessed place.

"So much the worse. 'Tis lost! 'Tis lost!—Heaven is to me the severest part of hell!"

Soon after, I propos'd prayer.

"Pray you that can. I never pray'd. I cannot pray.—Nor need I. Is not heaven on my side already? it closes with my conscience. Its severest strokes but second my own."

His friend being much touch'd, even to tears, at this (who could forbear? I could not) with a most affectionate look, he said "Keep those tears for thyself. I have undone thee.—Dost weep for me? That's cruel. What can pain me more?"

Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

"No, stay. Thou still may'ft hope;—Therefore hear me. How madly have I talk'd? How madly hast thou listen'd, and believ'd? But look on my present state, as a full answer to thee, and to myself. This body is all weakness and pain; but my soul, as if flung up by torment to greater strength and spirit, is full powerful to reason; full mighty to suffer. And that, which thus triumphs with-

H h 3
On the PARABLE
day to day, and forfeit eternal pleasures for the
momentary enjoyments of a world, which
they themselves confess has no solid real hap-
piness to bestow. Oh that the sense of our
almighty Father's love was more deeply en-
graven on our heart, then as gratitude would
keep us from so grossly offending him, so when

in the jaws of mortality, is, doubtless, immortal.—And,
as for a deity, nothing less than an almighty could inflict
what I feel."

I was about to congratulate this passive, involuntary,
confessor, on his ascertaining the two prime articles of his creed,
extracted by the rack of nature; when he thus, very pas-
onately:

"No, no! let me speak on. I have not long to speak
—My much injur'd friend! my soul, as my body lies in
ruins, in scattered fragments of broken thought; Remorse for
the past throws my thought on the future. Worse dread of
the future strikes it back on the past. I turn, and turn, and
find no ray.—Didst thou feel half the mountain that is on
me, thou would'st struggle with the martyr for his sake; and
blest heaven for the flames;—That is not an everlasting
flame; that is not an unquenchable fire."

How were we struck? yet, soon after, still more. With
what an eye of distraction, what a face of despair, he cry'd
out.

"My principles have poison'd my friend; my extrava-
gance has beggar'd my boy; my unkindness has murdered
my wife!—And is there another hell?—O! thou blas-
phem'd, yet most indulgent, Lord God! Hell itself is a
refuge, if it hides me from thy frown."

Soon after his understanding fail'd. His terrified imagina-
tion utter'd horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgot. And
er the Sun (which I hope has seen few like him) arose, the
gay, young, noble, ingenious, accomplished, and most
wretched Altamont expired.
we had offended him, conscious of his readiness to forgive, we should never be backward to apply ourselves to him. The sense of his exceeding love would ever preserve us from despair, and tho' ten thousand and ten thousand condemning circumstances crowded upon our distressed consciences, we should still find room for comfort, we should still be holden up in the bitter hour of distress. For observe in how strong colours the love of the Father in this parable is painted for us: and when transferr'd to almighty love, what joyful sensations doth it raise in every penitent heart! for God, not only like this Father, runs to meet the returning sinner, but—so did he love a sinful world—that he gave his only begotten Son to die for us, while we were yet enemies: and now while men remain in sin, how doth he affectionately bear with them; how doth he strive with them: how abundant is he in mercy and long-suffering: how gracious in goodness and truth? O who can anger so much love—who can offend so much mercy! and yet how do we daily affront him, how do we heap transgression upon transgression, and multiply the aggravated number of our offences! Oh that we could but see ourselves in the true light—that we would but duly consider our own base in—

H h 4

gratitude,
gratitude, and the abundant over-flowings of the divine forbearance! how would it melt our hearts, how would it humble us in our own eyes! and were we wise, would we but return, would we but leave our sins, which bring present misery, and eternal sorrow, God hath comfort in store for us—present peace and eternal blessedness!—And what should keep thee, O man, what should detain thee from God? is he not thy Father? doth he not greatly desire thy soul’s everlasting welfare? doth he not call to thee to turn and live, and doth he not patiently bear with thee; doth he not suffer thee still to breathe this vital air: is not every thing which thou enjoyest his free gift and favour—and did he not give his only beloved Son to die on the cross, that thou mightest live thro’ him, and doth he not offer thee this only begotten Son to be thy ransom and thy mediator?—And are not these the very things, which thou thyself desirest? wouldst thou not wish to have such a Father? wouldst thou not wish to be a Son of God? doft thou not anxiously desire thy soul’s everlasting health? or art thou in love with horror, in love with the bottomless pit, and the flame unquenchable?

Surely there is no man here present, but would wish to avoid these miseries, and to be blest with God for ever? and if you seriously desire these things—as for these alone you were
were created: not to breathe away a few months and years, and then drop into an eternal nothing:—answer the end of your coming into this world, and make the salvation of your souls the one thing needful; the grand concern; for what shall it profit you to gain the whole world, and to lose the eternal kingdom? Consider duly what are the certain wages of sin; even agony, trouble, and distress here upon earth; hereafter never-ending horror! Reflect from your own experience, and a survey of mankind, upon the emptiness of all human enjoyments, the sorrows which must assuredly befall every man born of woman, and the utter impossibility of obtaining perfect peace on earth: consider what fruits you have or can have in those things, whereof ye will be sorely ashamed: remember the grievous famine which will one day fall upon your souls: remember that dreadful and exact account which we must all one day make at the awful tribunal of the judge of the whole earth! And well weighing these things ere it be too late, take up the resolution of the prodigal, arise, leave your sins, and come to God in hearty sorrow, and deep humility, confessing your great unworthiness before him. This is true repentance. And one sinner so repenting, causeth more joy in heaven, than ninety and nine just persons that need no such repentance!
repentance! How should this comfort our souls, refresh and animate our hopes. If Heaven be so interested in our welfare, and if even God, and all the angelic hosts be thus concerned for our eternal interest, let it not for shame be said, that man alone, whose cause it is, that man alone is unconcerned and unmoved in a case of such importance!

But remember, tho' God is all love and mercy, willing to receive and glad to pardon every returning prodigal, yet he pardons none who do not return: Tho' ready to run and meet the afflicted, humble, penitent sinner, he is yet afar off, and will not be sought by the hardened offender, who retains his offence, and yet vainly hopes for mercy. Can the traitor expect a pardon for his treason, while his sword is drawn against his prince? Before the sinner can be accepted, the sin must be put away—must be crucified—the rebellious arms must be laid down; he must leave feeding swine, arise, and return home. Then the father of mercy, with an eye of love, will behold, receive and embrace the repentant mourner! and one moment enjoyed under the sense of God's redeeming grace and pardoning love, will as much over-balance all the delights of a life of sin, as the joys of heaven are superior to the flames of hell! Re-
ceived into favour and forgiven for the sake of Christ his ransom and peace, the christian's tongue will ever be sounding his father's praise, as his heart will ever be dictating songs of thanksgiving. The fears of death and of hell will vanish from before his eyes; the troubles and uneasiness of the world will become no longer burdensome, but rather profitable to his soul; his enjoyments here will be pure, solid, and substantial: and the blessed hope of everlasting life will so elevate his soul above-all earthly hopes and fears, that he will live cheerful in expectation of the glory which shall be revealed; and die triumphant, as knowing whom he hath trusted, and as assured, that when his earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, he hath a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

This peaceful life, and this happy death, we may all by God's grace enjoy—(and who that is wise would not wish to enjoy it?) if we will return in sincerity to our merciful father, confess our sins before him, and receive from him the free pardon of all our offences, and the free gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ, which is represented to us in the IIId part of the parable, and comes in the next place to be considered.

D I S.
DISCOURSE X.
On the PARABLE
Of the PRODIGAL SON.
PART III.


But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

O D is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him: so great is the love of God to his offending creatures, that rather than they should perish, he gave his Son: he sent his only begotten Son into the world,
world, to die in their stead, that whatsoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life! Herein is love! Love which makes him forbearing and merciful, long-suffering, and very pitiful, even to the greatest offenders, but to the returning penitent sinners, full of inexpresse;ible grace and favour. For, as I live, faith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner—wherefore turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? To manifest this exceeding great love of God to man, to shew it in the most amiable colours, and to give comfort to every soul burdened with the heavy load of guilt and sin, our Saviour delivered this most affecting parable, wherein we see, "that like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful and gracious to them that fear him."—But his grace and mercy can be extended to none who do not fear him: wherefore it is no handle for licentiousness, no excuse for the prodigal sinner: for the same God who is all love to the humble penitent, is consuming fire to the obstinate persevering profligate. The father went not to the son, when in his state of riot and debauchery, but when he arose and left that state, he then ran to meet him. Repent was the first word both in
in St. John's and in our Saviour's preaching, and the first step to salvation is repentance: whoever therefore have not known true repentance, have never been truly converted to Christ, and of consequence are not yet in a saving state, are not yet entitled to the benefits of his gospel: and whoever delay repentance under a notion that it will be time enough hereafter, greatly mistake the matter; for it is not in a man's power to repent when he will: this also is the gift of God; and whoever neglects or despises the calls of God to repentance from time to time, great reason there is to fear, that he will be like the man described by the poet*, who after many determinations, at length,

— chides his infamous delay,
    Pushes his prudent purpose to resolve,
    In all the magnanimity of thought
    Resolves and re-resolves, and dies the same.

No man that lives, wants calls to repentance: a variety of accidents, outward evils, and outward blessings, and the different dispensations of providence towards us are all designed to promote this end. It was distress you find that awakened the prodigal, that

* Dr. Young in his Night Thoughts.
brought him to his senses, and to a serious consideration of himself; and amongst men, nothing is more common than for sickness and sorrow, worldly afflictions of whatever sort or kind, to awaken the mind to a due reflection, and to stir up the soul to an earnest seeking after its eternal welfare. All worldly afflictions should be received in this manner; and with this view: and whenever they fall upon us, we should immediately descend into ourselves, examine our present state, and above all, consider the happiness and perfect fruition of our father's house, from which we have departed for the poor pleasures of sin, which even pall enjoyments, and at best are but for a season.

This is the first step to repentance: to which we find from the prodigal's proceeding, that a departure from our state of sin, an humble application to God, and a sincere confession of our unworthiness must be joined. It is not enough to feel the guilt and own the sinfulness of sin: we must arise and go to our father: leave sin and turn to God; put off the old man and put on the new: be dead to sin, and alive to righteousness: and make our humble confession to Almighty God, not trusting in our own merits, but in his manifold and great mercies, throwing our-
On the PARABLE

ourselves at his feet, and humbly imploring his pardon, for the sake and thro' the satisfaction of that mediator, thro' whom alone we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.

This alone is true repentance: and certain it is, that as, whoever have not known this repentance, are yet strangers to God; so, whoever suppose repentance to consist in any thing but this absolute departure from sin, and humble confession to an all-forgiving father, deceive their own souls, and deprive themselves of the benefit of pardon.—On the contrary, whenever the sinner stirred up by what cause soever, sees and feels his misery, is conscious of the guilt and condemnation of sin, is sensible of the affronts and indignities committed by him against a loving father—and thro' this leaves his sin, and turns to God in meek acknowledgment, deep contrition, and humble confession of his manifold and grievous offences—Whenever a sinner doth this, the arms of God's mercy are opened wide to receive him, he will prevent him with the blessings of his grace, and with affection greater than can be paralleled, but such as may in some degree be imagined from this father of the prodigal, with such affection will he run to meet him, and give him the most substantial proof of his forgiveness and love.

And
Of the Prodigal Son.

And this naturally brings me to consider the

IIIId and last thing which I proposed to consider in this parable, the son and sinner in a state of grace and favour. And surely the reflection on the almighty and unspeakable love of God, as beautifully displayed in the tenderness of this father to his returning child, must incline all your hearts to a mutual love of God, and a serious sense of your ingratitude, if you continue to offend so bountiful, so beneficent a Father! must surely incline you to a serious examination of yourselves, and an earnest desire, that his Spirit may work such true repentance and conversion in your hearts, that you may indeed so turn to God, as to meet with the most affectionate reception from him: and would you but one moment consider, as was suggested to you in the last sermon, what are the consequences of a life estranged from God, and in the service of sin—what the consequences of a life devoted to his service, of a heart dedicated to his love,—you would not hesitate a moment in your choice, assured that the one is continued, yea everlasting disquietude, that the other is continued, yea everlasting blessedness and peace: may none of you be found such enemies to your own souls, as to chuse the
one and reject the other—but may each one of you be found so wise as to fly unto God, while it is called to-day, so happy as to receive the gifts and graces, which the Father will give to those who in true faith and hearty repentance turn to him—and which are figured out to us by the gifts of the father to his returning son in the parable.

The father said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet."

By the best or first robe*, as it is called in the original, is meant, the robe of righteousness, the robe which is put on in Christ, nay which is called Christ himself: put ye on the Lord Jesus†—that robe of righteousness which covers all the sinner's iniquities, justifies him in the sight of God, who beholds and accepts him in and for the merits of his only beloved Son. This righteousness is represented by fine linen, clean and white, in the book of the Revelation: and is that wedding-garment, which is the gift of the king's son, the earnest of our welcome at his marriage-feast,

* Τὴν Σταυρῷ τὴν πειστήν.
† Rev. xix. 8. For the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. I shall have occasion to speak more on this head, when I come to the parable of the wedding-feast.
and the want of which, as in the parable, will cause us to be rejected and cast out.

Every sinner as soon as returning to God in true faith and repentance (without which he can never obtain the robe) has this robe put upon him—or in other words, is justified before God, by his free grace and favour: his past sins are blotted out, as if they had never been committed, and he, for the sake of Christ, is freely pardoned and forgiven: thus he is brought into a state of acceptance and favour, and thus of an enemy, made a son: and this our church agreeably to the voice of sacred scripture, continually declares to all her children and members—"He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel."

This is the immediate consequence of true repentance, which implies true faith, because truly to repent and turn to God, we must believe and have confidence, that he is a God, willing and ready to pardon.

But thus clothed with the robe of righteousness, thus pardoned and justified, we must be sanctified also: made holy or conformable by the Spirit to the image of God in Christ Jesus: have our old nature destroy'd or changed, and a new one derived to us from God by the Spirit. This great and essential
branch of Christianity is signified by the ring, which the father put on his son's hand—
Rings formerly were worn only as seals or signets *, and to this the holy Spirit is compared, to a seal, whereby when the soul is, as it were, melted like wax, by real contrition and godly sorrow, it is sealed, receives the divine impression, and is transformed into the image of God. For the Spirit is the earnest of our salvation, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And rings with the seal of the husband were such as in ancient times were given to the wife; as a pledge and earnest of their mutual compact and betrothing either to other. So by this seal or gift of the holy Spirit, we are assured, that God has betrothed us unto him for ever †—and that no creature shall be able to separate us from his love in Christ Jesus.

Thus must we be sanctified as well as justified: not only repent and be pardoned, but "thro' the Spirit, have the rest of our life

* See particularly Esther, chap. iii. ver. 12. It would have been easy for me to have confirmed these interpretations by the most numerous and unexceptionable authorities, but the compass of the present volume being already exceeded, I must refer my reader to the usual commentators quoted in the discourses, for want of room.

† The ring, says St. Chrysostom on the parable, put upon his finger, is the sign of marriage made by faith. See Leclercq's beautiful reflections on this parable.
Of the Prodigal Son.

hereafter pure and holy—so that at the last we may come to the eternal joy’—we must receive the Spirit of God, as an earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption, and whereby we are enabled to cry, Abba Father. Our old nature must be changed and destroyed, and a new nature we must have derived to us from God; for certain it is, however we may talk of repentance, however we may boast of justification, the free pardon of our past offences, and our present state of acceptance with God,—yet this is the test—“the works of the new nature shewn in our new life”—if we find not this change from sin to holiness, the work is not yet perfected—we are not sealed by the Spirit of God, and consequently belong not to God *; we have not received this token, pledge or earnest of his love, and so are not betrothed to him, and have no right to the possessions and inheritance of our heavenly spouse: for St. Paul declares the sum of the truth as it really and verily is in Jesus, to be placed herein: 1st. That we put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts:

* For seals distinguish property: a man knows his own goods by the seal or mark he sets upon them. Where the divine seal of the Spirit is, there is God’s property.
—and 2d. That we put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. That this is not instantly done, but that our feet must run continually in the way of God’s commandments—we are shewn by the 3d thing which the father conferred upon his son—He put shoes on his feet. Amongst the other parts of a Christian’s armour and accoutrements which St. Paul recommends—is, the having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Our feet are compared to our carnal affections, which are apt to carry us astray, and to lead us into by-ways and thorny paths: it is necessary therefore that they be guarded and defended by the preaching of the Gospel, the word of truth: that we may walk in the ways of God, and study to perform those things which he requires of us; that our conversation may be such as becometh the gospel of Christ, that we may adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour in all things. This is that newness of life, which, as I observed, must be the fruit of our true conversion to God, and the real produce of the holy Spirit dwelling in us. For if we have not the robe of righteousness by true faith put upon us, if we are not conformed to and led by the Spirit, if we walk not in unlimited obedience to the commandments of God, as set forth in
Of the Prodigal Son.

his holy Gospel, with which we must be continually prepared, and which is as necessary to our spiritual walking, as shoes are for our feet—if this be not the case, our repentance is false, our faith pretended. But these are the certain consequences of real repentance: and in less than this, you must not rest satisfied: if you have really left sin, cleaved to God in humble confession for pardon and acceptance thro' Jesus Christ, if you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, and have put on the new man, treading with diligence and the utmost care in all the commandments of God, labouring to approve yourself in his sight, and to walk before him blameless, according to the Gospel rule, and in diligent attendance thereto—then without searching further, and without desiring more uncertain tests of your adoption—then you may rest fully assured, that you are a child of God, and if a child then an heir—an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ:—and heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than you shall fail of that divine and promised inheritance. But if you are wanting in any of these, if you have never known what true repentance meaneth, what true conversion and free pardon of your sins for the sake and merits of Jesus Christ: (for these things pertain to all men,
men, tho' not in the same degree, yet after
the same manner—for all are sinners,
tho' not all equally offending)—where-
fore, I say, if you have never known for-
row for and forsaking of sin, pardon and
acceptance thro' Jesus Christ, newness of life,
and uniform obedience to the commands of
God, a constant endeavour to do his will, and
a labour after evangelical holiness,—be af-
sured, that as certainly as God and his Gospel
are true, so certainly you are yet not his chil-
dren, and if not his children and heirs—
oh that every soul would consider of whom
they are the miserable children and heirs!
That so they might take up the prodigal’s re-
solution, and at length be admitted into the
number of the true saints and servants of God,
to sup with him here, that they may sup with
him in glory hereafter.

For, the son, you observe, after he was
duly prepared, clothed, sealed, and shod, was
immediately brought to the feast of joy:
Bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let
us eat, and be merry, for this my son was dead
and is alive again, was lost and is found.—
This is that feast, to which our Lord invites
all his returning, repenting children: This is
that feast where Christ our sacrifice is offered
up, and where his blessed body and blood are
presented
presented for the spiritual food and support of every penitent and believing soul.——It is a feast of joy: let us eat and be merry, said the father: and why so? because my son was dead and is alive again, was lost, and is found. And so our Saviour declares that there is joy in heaven, in the presence of the holy angels, over one sinner, who "1st, repenting truly for his sins past, 2, having a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour, 3, amending his past life, following the commandments of God and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, and 4, being in perfect charity with all men, draweth near with faith, and taketh that holy sacrament to his comfort *." Such a penitent hath not only cause of everlasting joy and thanksgiving in himself, for these inestimable blessings, vouchsafed to him by his heavenly Father, but even that heavenly Father himself rejoices for the sake of this his recovered son: even the holy angels strike up their celestial harps with improved melody, and the heavenly regions resound with music and gladness, while such, we may suppose, their triumphant song, "A son of our God was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found!"

* See the Communion Service.
And who would refuse these gracious invitations, who would continue in sin, and withdraw himself from this holy communion here, and that heavenly one hereafter: who would deprive himself of this joy unspeakable—nay more, who would rob God and his holy angels of a cause for rejoicing*, and if I may be allowed the thought and expression, even silence the celestial harps and tongues, and make an interval in the bliss of heaven—grieved for the loss and silent for the everlasting destruction of a soul, created with a power of reigning with them in glory? Who would destroy his immortal soul and lament thro' endless ages with insufferable horror, the madness and folly of a life of sin, which upon earth brought no solid peace, and in hell will confine him to a place of everlasting torment?—Surely, my brethren, the knowledge of ourselves, the worth of our immortal souls, and the infinite love of our redeeming God, will awaken us to a serious sense of these things: and to a full resolution to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. For we are called by a God of infinite love only to a state of infinite happiness: we have nothing, but our own unwillingness, to

* See an excellent sermon of Dr. Lightfoot's, on the subject, vol. 2. of his works. p. 1265.
stand in the way of our acceptance; Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: the arms of our Father are ready opened to receive us: the great Shepherd is seeking for us his lost and wandering sheep: and the whole choir of heaven stands ready to rejoice; soon as we shall come to our senses and be wise, soon as we shall be sensible of our true happiness and seek after it, soon as we shall be found, and our loving, tender Shepherd shall bring us to his fold and flock, even on his own shoulders, rejoicing! Oh may his love and care incline all our hearts and turn all our affections towards him! May the consideration of the infinite worth of our own souls, and the infinite love of our Redeemer, cause us to arise and make haste from sin and slavery: and surely, if we have the least apprehension of that most invaluable privilege, becoming the sons of the most high God, we shall use every means and exert every endeavour to attain it: and can we be so base and unworthy, so void of every laudable affection, such strangers to gratitude, as to contemn the bowels of our Father's compassion, to despise his tender calls, and pathetic admonitions, and finally to disinherit ourselves (which nothing but ourselves can do) of that kingdom of glory, which even the whole blessed
bless'd Trinity joined in council to secure unto us, and for which great end each condescended to become our father, redeemer and sanctifier.

But if the sense of our almighty Father's love and inexpressible regard to us is a motive which no sinner can gainsay or withstand: surely it must be no less persuasive with every child of his to rejoice in the return of a brother, in the recovery of a lost and erring sinner. And yet human nature will recoil: and the man of uprightness, of a strict and unblamable conversation, sometimes be offended at the too liberal reception of sinners under the Gospel. This is our infirmity, and this we should labour to conquer: for doubtless he that loveth him that begat, ought also to love him that is begotten of him*.—You find however, that the elder brother, in this parable, was so much disgusted at the mirth and joy which he heard in the house, on account of his younger brother's return, that he would not enter: nay he expostulated with his father, and even went so far, as to condemn and disapprove his conduct, with morose and sour reflections both on him and his returned son—This THY SON, &c.—But the father shewed his usual love and condescension: and

* 1 John v. 1.
gently advised him, at once of his affection towards himself, and of his very just reasons for the present gladness, on his brother’s account. *Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine: it was meet that we should make merry, and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found.*

This in the primary sense, as was before observed, seems plainly to refer to the case of Jews and Gentiles: and to be most evidently applied to them: for the Jews, the elder brother, took it very hainously and repined much that our Saviour and his apostles admitted the Gentiles, the younger brother, to the same privileges with them, tho’ not confined to the same strict obedience, tho’ not daily labouring in the field of the legal ceremonies. But in the sense wherein I have explained the parable to you, it refers to the different sorts of men: those, who have from their youth up, lived in the fear of God, and those who have been notorious sinners, and yet are at length called to grace and repentance. A good man indeed will upon reflection rejoice at the recovery of every sinner: but as all men are but partially good, and some remains of evil still are found, it will grate and offend them, as we too commonly see, when the vilest of sinners, like this prodigal, return and
On the PARABLE

and are accepted into the same grace with themselves. They who received the penny for their work in the vineyard, thought themselves hardly dealt withal, because having borne the heat and burden of the day, they were made equal with them that had toiled only one hour. But God must and will do what seemeth him good with his own; and as to the elder brother, he said, all that I have is thine—so to men of this sort, he saith, "Son, thou art ever with me, and thy obedience and love shall not fail of its reward,—on condition thou continuest still to serve and obey me: yet consider, what I give to thy brother cannot harm thee, I have enough for both, I have enough for all: his portion in heaven shall not diminish thine, thine shall be compleat, and his happiness so far from diminishing, shall rather add too, and increase thine own."

—Some have imagined, that this elder brother pictures out to us only the scribes and Pharisees, the hypocritic and insincere Christians—but that I conceive is impossible, for our Lord could never say to them, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine—and that good men, true children of God, may be inclined thus to murmur, and thus to think God's dealings hard in receiving great sinners to the same favour with them, and to
the same reward—is a fact, which it would be well, if large experience did not fully prove. No man can imagine, that *Simon,* into whose house our Lord enter'd was a bad man, and yet he murmured at our Lord for suffering the woman that was an adulteress to approach him. And our Lord vindicated his conduct to him, even as the father in this parable vindicates his to his elder son—It becomes to many a great offence, even in God's ministers, that they confer with and strive to raise from the death of sin the vile and offending: but as *Christ* came to call the sinners not the righteous to repentance, so we may be assured, that our chief work is with these—and when men shall object to us, as they did to our Saviour, "*this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them*"—we must then labour to imitate the love and gentleness of our almighty Father, cheerfully advise such reprovers of their own blessedness, while they continue with God, and give them in meekness the true reasons, why we cannot but rejoice for a brother that was dead and is alive again—was lost and is found. And every one who finds himself in the least degree inclined to this murmuring, will do well immediately to subdue it in his heart, to consider it as an evil still remaining, a fruit of the old flock—and
and to consider the example of this elder brother, the love and condescension of his forgiving father, and the great reason there is to rejoice upon the recovery of the greatest sinners, if, as is our duty, we would make ourselves like unto God and the blessed angels. And in fine, let it be the united labour of us all, to cause this rejoicing in heaven, and to bring at least one child home to the house of our heavenly Father! If we can be brought truly to rejoice on our own account, because we were dead and are alive again, were lost and are found—we shall soon be brought to rejoice for the sake of every brother, so found and so restored to the love of his heavenly Father! And oh consider from a review of this striking picture, what must be the case, if we are not restored to his favour! Wretched prodigals, having wasted all our substance in riotous living and excess, we shall be driven to the bitterest extremity, the severest stings of conscience here upon earth—and if we return not, our famine will be everlasting—our hunger continue to gnaw and feed upon our tormented souls thro' the long long day of wonderous never-ending eternity!

But if by the grace of God, we come to ourselves, and take up our resolution to return
turn—happiest of mortals, the door of mercy is wide unfolded to receive us! Sprinkled with the blood of Christ, we shall be cleansed from all our impurities, perfect joy and perfect peace will be shed abroad in our hearts by the power of the holy Spirit, and it will be our meat and drink to do the will and run in the way of our Lord's commandments! Here we shall live cheerful in expectation of the hope which shall be revealed, and die rejoicing and full of mortality, as knowing that soon as this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens!

And may God of his infinite mercy grant, that we all may arrive at this christian temper, that so we may arrive at this blessed and eternal house,—may his grace so open all our eyes to a due sense of our present state, that we may in serious reflection enter into our own hearts, see the guilt, the sorrow, and danger of sin, and under a feeling sense of its miseries, arise, go to our Father, and humbly confess our manifold unworthiness before him—and may he of his unspeakable love and mercy extend the arms of his compassion wide to receive us, give us all a happy sense of his forgiving, redeeming love, clothe us with the best robe, put his seal on each of our hearts,
enable our feet to run in the way of his commandments, and make us such approved guests, at his divine supper here, that we may be found worthy to sit down and sup with him at his eternal feast in glory! which, &c.

Amen.

The End of the Third Volume.
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