

# GOD'S BOUNTY;

OR,

## THE BLESSINGS OF BOTH HIS HANDS.

(THE SECOND SERMON.)

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*Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand riches and honour.—PROV. III. 16.*

WE are looking into the left hand of Wisdom, and there have found, *first*, that riches and honour are God's gifts ; *secondly*, that every man's riches and honour are not so, 'that the mouth of wickedness might be stopped.' Therefore to satisfy our own consciences that they are God's blessings to us, I observed that they must be, first, honestly gotten ; *secondly*, justly disposed, and that by rendering sincerely that which is due, first, to God ; *secondly*, to man ; *thirdly*, to ourselves. Duties to others ended my former discourse ; I must now begin at—

(3.) Ourselves. The third act of disposing our riches well, when God hath his portion and man his portion, is to take the thirds to ourselves. It is God's will that with the wealth he hath given thee thou shouldst refresh and console thyself. Ps. xxiii. 5, 'Thou preparest a table before me : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.' Wherefore hath God spread a table before thee, but that thou shouldst eat ? Wherefore given thee a cup running over, but that thou shouldst drink ? If thou have wine, make thy heart glad ; if oil, let thy face shine ; if bread, strengthen thy spirits, Ps. civ. 15. Wear thy own wool, and drink the milk of thy own flocks. It is a blessing which the Lord gives to those that fear him : Ps. cxxviii. 2, 'Thou shalt eat the labour of thine own hands : happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.' But a curse to the wicked, that they shall plant vineyards, and not taste the fruit thereof. The riches that God truly gives, man truly enjoys. Eccles. v. 19, 'Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour ; this is the gift of God.' Now, a man may take from himself this comfort in abusing his wealth, and this many ways ; especially four—superstition, malice, riot, misery.

[1.] By spending them upon works of superstition, to the dishonour of God. And this is a high degree of ingratitude. When God hath given them a sword to defend themselves, and they turn the point of it upon his own breast. So God gave Israel sheep and oxen, and they offer them up to Baal. Many in England are beholden to God for great revenues, lands, and lordships; and they therewith maintain Jesuits and Seminaries, his professed enemies. These use their riches as the Israelites did their ear-rings and jewels: God gave them for their own ornament, and they turn them to an idol.

[2.] By malice, in abusing them to unnecessary quarrels and contentions of law, to the hindrance of God's peace and their neighbours' welfare: when men will put out one of their own eyes to put out both their neighbour's; nay, both their own for one of his. Thus what they get by the happiness for foreign peace they spend in civil wars. How unnatural is it for one hand thus to beat and wound another! Either of them gets a shell; you know who goes away with the meat.

[3.] By riot. *Quicquid dant, dant vel veneri vel ventri.* They spend more upon the tavern than upon the tabernacle, at the house of plays than at the house of praise, more upon their own hounds than upon God's poor children. Julius Cæsar seeing women carry little dogs under their arms, asked if they had no children. God asketh you, that give your bread to dogs, if he hath no children for your charity. But they answer all, as the wicked in the 12th Psalm, 'Our tongues are our own.' They stop the mouth of all exhortation to frugal courses with, It is my own; a man may spend his own as he list; I waste none of your goods; and what hath friend in private or preacher in public to do with it? But they shall find one day that they were but stewards, that these riches were but entrusted to them, and they shall give a strict account. Nothing is properly a man's own but *peccata sua*, his sins. Thy sins are thine own, thy riches God's.

[4.] By miserable niggardice, in forbearing to take his own portion; and so becometh his own consumption. No marvel if such a miser starve others, when he famisheth himself. Such a one is the worst vermin the land bears; another vermin seeks but to feed itself, but he, hoarding up his grain, feeds many thousands of them. Let him beware lest they also at last devour himself. As that German bishop,\* that having great store of corn in a grievous famine, refused to sell it to the poor, and suffered the rats to eat it; but by the just judgment of God, the mice and rats which he fed with his grain did also feed upon him, albeit he built a tower in the midst of the river Rhine to avoid them, which the Germans call still Rat's Tower. How shall they which slander heaven with pretended dearths, be admitted as friends to that place which they have belied?

You see how these riches must be gotten, how disposed—honestly gotten, justly dispensed; now it follows, also, in the next place, that they must be—

3. Patiently lost. When God gives riches to the good, he gives them also a heart to trust in himself; in himself, I say, not in them. 1 Tim. vi. 17, 'Trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy.' He gives abundantly, but he forbiddeth trust in that abundance. He commends riches to us, as a great man doth a servant to his friend: Work him, but trust him not; put labour to him, not confidence in him. Wealth may do us good service, but if it get the mastery of our trust, it will turn tyrant, termagant; we condemn ourselves to our own galleys.

\* Acts and Mon.

To the godly riches are never so dear but they can be content to forego them. They receive them at God's hands with much thankfulness, and they lose them with much patience. When God takes aught from us, he does us no wrong. *Retrahit sua, non abstrahit nostra*,\*—He doth but take back his own, not take away ours. So Job, chap. i. 21, 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away.' The Lord giveth, therefore he may take away. Yea, Faith says, Lord, take all, so thou give me thyself. 'We have left all, and followed thee,' saith Peter, Matt. xix. 27. *Nos sequamur Christum, cætera sequentur nos*,—Let us follow Christ, other things shall follow us. But if they do not, it is gain enough to have Christ. He is too covetous whom the Lord Jesus cannot satisfy. We may lose *divitias Dei*, but never *Deum divitiarum*. We may be forsaken of these riches of God, but never of the God of riches. *Amittamus omnia, dum habeamus habentem omnia*,—Let us lose all, so we have him that hath all.

That was never perfectly good that might be lost. Of this nature are riches; they have made many prouder, none better. As never man was better, so never wise man thought himself better for them. That wise prophet would never have prayed against riches if their want had been the want of blessedness. The devil indeed says, 'All these will I give thee;' but the two dearest apostles say, 'Silver and gold have I none.' Who would not rather be in the state of those saints than of that devil? Riches are such things as those that have them not want them not; those that have them may want them: they are lost in a night, and a man is never the worse for losing them. How many kings—not fewer than nine in our island—that have begun their glory in a throne, have ended it in a cell; changing their command of a sceptre for the contemplation of a book! Alas, silly things, that they should dare ask one dram of our confidence! *Non tanta in multis felicitas quanta in paucis securitas*,—There is not so much happiness in the highest estate as there is content and peace in the lowest. Only then God be our trust, whose mercy we can no more lose than himself can lose his mercy.

Thus you see this second general point amplified, if riches be God's blessings, (not only in themselves, so they are always good, but to us,) then they are gotten honestly, disposed justly, lost patiently. As much happily might be said, *secondly*, for honour, wherein I will briefly consider how and when it is of God.

God indeed gives honour and riches, but not all honour; as you heard before, not all riches. There are four things in an honoured person:—*First*, His person, wherein he partakes of the common condition of mankind; lives and dies a man. Even the sons of princes have their breath in their nostrils. *Secondly*, His honour and dignity; this, simply considered, is of God, who-soever he be that hath it, a Joseph or a Haman. *Thirdly*, The manner of coming to his honour; and this is no longer of God than the means are good. If it be God's honour, God must give it, not man usurp it. *Fourthly*, The managing of this honour; and this is also of the Lord, if it be right and religious. It happeneth often that *Potens*, the great man, is not of God. Hos. viii. 4, 'They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not.' The manner of getting dignity is not always of God. Richard the Third came to the crown of England by blood and murder; Alexander the Sixth obtained the popedom by giving himself to the devil. Yet the dignity is of God. Prov. viii. 15, 'By me kings reign; by me princes and nobles.'

\* Greg. in Mor.

It is a hard question wherein honour consists. Is it in blood, descending from the veins of noble ancestors? Not so, except nature could produce to noble parents noble children. It was a monstrous tale that Nicippus's ewe should yean a lion. Though it be true among irrational creatures, that they ever bring forth their like,—eagles hatch eagles, and doves doves,—yet in man's progeny there is often found not so like a proportion as unlike a disposition. The carthy part only follows the seed, not that whose form and attending qualities are from above. Honour must therefore as well plead a charter of successive virtue as of continued scutcheons, or it cannot consist in blood. The best things can never be traduced in propagation: thou mayest leave thy son heir to thy lands in thy will, to thy honour in his blood; thou canst never bequeath him thy virtues. The best qualities do so cleave to their subjects, that they disdain communication to others.

That is then only true honour where dignity and desert, blood and virtue meet together; the greatness whereof is from blood, the goodness from virtue. Among fools dignity is enough without desert; among wise men desert without dignity. If they must be separated, desert is infinitely better. Greatness without virtue *laudatur ore alieno, damnatur conscientia sua*, is commended by others' tongues, condemned in thy own heart. Virtue, though without promotion, is more comforted in thy own content than disheartened by others' contempt. It is a happy composition when they are united: think it your honour, ye great men, that you are ennobled with virtues; not that you have, but that you deserve honour. Let this that hath been spoken teach us some lessons concerning honour.

1. Take it when God sends it, but be not ambitious of it. *Indigni est arripere, non accipere honorem*. It is an argument of unworthiness to snatch it denied, not to accept it offered. 1 Pet. v. 5, 'God resisteth the proud,'—opposeth himself in a professed war against him, as if he held a sword against his breast, when he would rise up in glory, to nail him fast down to the earth,—but 'he giveth grace to the humble;' like a great and good prince, he gives those servants grace and honour whom he perceives least ambitious of it. Such men seek not for honour as for a jewel they would fain find, but only stumble on it, as Saul sought but his father's asses when he lighted on a kingdom. Pride, like smoke, will surge upward, though it vanish into air; massy virtue, like gold, keeps below, and is more precious respected.

He that would mount, cares not what attendance he dances at all hours, upon whose stairs he sits waiting, what enormities he soothes, what deformities he imitates, what base offices he does prostrate himself to, so he may rise. His carriage is *alienum a se*, quite another thing from himself; he doth glue it on indecently, that he may screw himself into favour. This man never understood the charge that goes with honour, which the most wise disposition of God hath coupled together. Charge without some honour would overlay a man. If a man could have honour without some trouble, it would so transport him that he were continually in danger of running mad. The poor man envies the great for his honour; the great perhaps envies the poor more for his peace, for as he lives obscurely, so securely. He that rightly knows the many public and more secret vexations incident to honour, would not, as that king said of his crown, stoop to take it up, though it lay at his feet before him.

2. Live worthy of that honour thou hast. Greatness not gooded with grace is like a beacon upon a high hill: *qui conspiciunt, dispiciunt*.—they that behold it hate it, though perhaps they dare not censure it. The knee

may be forced to reverence, but the mind cannot but abhor so unworthy a statue. In his pride he stomachs the covered head or the stiff knee of a good Mordecai, fretting that other men do not think him so good as he thinks himself. But indeed he doth not think himself more honourable than others think him base. All the poor honour that he hath is only kept above-ground with his body; both corrupt, fall, and rot together: and if it be conjured up at the funeral to present itself, yet it fails not to go back with the heralds.

3. Forget not your original, ye whose brows the wreaths of honour have, above hopes, engirt. If the Lord hath 'raised you out of the dust, and lifted you up out of the dunghill, and set you among the princes of the people,' Ps. cxiii. 7, 8; yet forget not your father's house, nor the place of your beginning. *Miseranda oblivio, originis non meminisse*.—He never truly understands what he is, that forgets what he hath been. Solomon's observation is often true, 'Folly is set in great dignity,' Eccles. x. 6; albeit this be not the right *ubi*,—folly in excellency. Now these excellent fools soon forget from how low estate they are risen. They consider not how glad their carcases would once have been of a warm covering, that are now richer than lilies, more gorgeous than May; scarce 'Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these,' Matt. vi. 29. They consider not that need once made them trudge through the mire, even many tedious journeys, that climb by unjust riches to that dignity, as in their caroches to be whirled through the popular streets.

It was Jacob's humble acknowledgment of God's mercy to him, Gen. xxxii. 10, 'With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.' If blind ingratitude would suffer many proud eyes to see it, how justly might divers say, With my staff came I hither walking, and now I ride in triumph with attendants! To these let me apply the words of the prophet, Isa. li. 1, 'Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.' Remember your poor beginning, that you may bless God for your advancing. Say, not only in general, *Quis homo?* Ps. viii. 4, 'What is man, that thou, O Lord, art so mindful of him?' but, *Quis ego?* 1 Sam. ix. 21, 'What am I, and what is my father's house, that God should thus raise me up?'

4. If thou have honour, keep it, but trust it not. Nothing is more inconstant; for it depends upon inconstancy itself, the vulgar breath, which is *bellua multorum capitum*,—a beast of many heads, and as many tongues, which never keep long in one tune. As they never agree one with another, so seldom do they agree long with themselves. Acts xiv., Paul and Barnabas come to Lystra, and raise an impotent cripple; hereat the amazed people would needs make them gods, and draw bulls and garlands to the altars for sacrifice to them. Not long after they draw Paul out of the city and stone him. They suddenly turn him from a god to a malefactor, and are ready to kill him, instead of killing sacrifice to him. Oh the fickleness of that thing which is committed to the keeping of vulgar hands! Trust not then popularity with thy honour, so it is mutable; but trust virtue with it, so it is durable. Nothing can make sure a good memory but a good life. It is a foolish dream to hope for immortality and a long-lasting name by a monument of brass or stone. It is not dead stones, but living men, that can redeem thy good remembrance from oblivion. A sumptuous tomb covers thy putrified carcase; and be thy life never so lewd, a commending epitaph shadows all: but the passenger that knew thee tells his friends that these outsides are hypocritical, for thy life was as rotten as is thy corpse; and so is

occasioned by thy presumed glory to lay open thy deserved infamy. Neither can the common people preserve thy honour whilst thou livest, nor can these dull and senseless monuments keep it when thou art dead. Only thy noble and Christian life makes every man's heart thy tomb, and turns every tongue into a pen to write thy deathless epitaph.

5. Lastly, if God gives to some men honour, it is then manifest that God allows difference of persons. He ordains some to rule and others to obey; some masters, others servants; he setteth some up on high, and placeth others in a low degree. To repine at others' greatness and our own meanness, is to cavil with God, as if he wanted wisdom and equity in disposing these inferior conditions. It is a savage and popular humour to malign and inveigh against men in eminent places. That rhyme—

'When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then a gentleman?'—

seems to be made among Jack Straw's followers, and to savour of rebellious discontent. God allows no man to vilify where he hath honoured; no scurrilous libels, disgracing those that live, yea, disparaging to the very dead, shall pass the court of God's justice uncensured. Where the Lord confers and confirms honour, woe to the tongue that shall traduce it!—This second point hath held us long, the brevity of the rest shall ease it.

III. Observe that Solomon, in the donation of the left hand, couples together riches and honour, as if these two were for the most part inseparable companions. Ecclea. vi. 2, 'God gives to a man riches and honour.' First riches and then honour, for it is lightly found,—so much riches, so much honour,—and reputation is measured by the acre. I have wealth enough, saith the worldling, Luke xii.; I will turn gentleman, 'take my ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' Riches are the stairs whereby men climb up into the height of dignity, the fortification that defends it, the food it lives upon, the oil that keeps the lamp of honour from going out. Honour is a bare robe if riches do not lace and flourish it, and riches a dull lump till honour give a soul to quicken it. Fitly, then, riches and honour, wealth and worship, do bear one another company.

IV. Lastly, observe, that though riches and honour be God's gifts, yet they are but the gifts of his left hand: therefore it necessarily follows, that every wise man will first seek the blessings of the right. Matt. vi. 33, 'First seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and these things shall be added unto you.' Godliness is the best riches, riches the worst. Let us strive for the former without condition; for the other, if they fall in our way, let us stoop to take them up. If not, let us never covet them. It is no wisdom to refuse God's kindness, that offers wealth; nor piety to scratch for it when God withholds it. When the Lord hath set thee up as high as Haman in the court of Ahasuerus, or promoted thee to ride with Joseph in the second chariot of Egypt; were thy stock of cattle exceeding Job's, chap. i. 3, 'seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen;' did thy wardrobe put down Solomon's, and thy cupboard of plate Belshazzar's when the vessels of God's temple were the ornamante,—yet all these are but the gifts of Wisdom's left hand; and the possessors may be under the malediction of God, and go down to damnation. If it were true that *sanctorum qui ditior*,—that goods could make a man good, I would not blame men's kissing this left hand, and sucking out riches and honour. But, alas! what antidote against the terror of conscience can be chymed\* from

\* That is, extracted by chemical processes.—ED.

gold? What charm is there in brave apparel to keep off the rigour of Satan? *Quod tibi præstat opes non tibi præstat opem*,—That which makes thee wealthy cannot make thee happy.

Jonah had a gourd that was to him an arbour: he sat under it secure; but suddenly there was a worm that bit it, and it died. Compare, secretly in your hearts, your riches to that gourd; your pleasure to the greenness of it; your pomp, attendance, vanities, to the leaves of it; your sudden increase of wealth, to the growing and shooting up of it. But, withal, forget not the worm and the wind. The worm that shall kill your root is death, and the wind that shall blow upon you is calamity. There is a greater defect in this wealth and worship than their uncertainty. *Non modo fallacia quia dubia, verum insidiosa quia dulcia*,—They are not only deceitful through their fickleness, but dangerous through their lusciousness. Men are apt to surfeit on this luxuriant abundance: it is a bait to security, a bawd to wantonness.

Here is the main difference between the gifts of God's right hand and of his left. He gives real blessings with the left, but he doth not settle them upon us; he promiseth no perpetuity. But with the graces of his right he gives assurance of everlastingness. Christ calls riches the 'riches of deceitfulness,' Matt. xiii. 22; but grace 'the better part, that shall never be taken away,' Luke x. 42. David compares the wealthy to a flourishing tree that is soon withered, Ps. xxxvii. 35; but faith stablisheth a man like 'Mount Zion, never to be removed,' Ps. cxxv. 1. He that thinks he sits surest in his seat of riches, 'let him take heed lest he fall.' When a great man boasted of his abundance, saith Paulus Emilius, one of his friends told him, that the anger of God could not long forbear so great prosperity. How many rich merchants have suddenly lost all! How many noblemen sold all! How many wealthy heirs spent all! Few Sundays pass over our heads without collections for shipwrecks, fires, and other casualties; demonstrative proofs that prosperity is inconstant, riches casual. And for honour, we read that Belisarius, an honourable peer of the empire, was forced in his old age to beg from door to door: *Obolum date Belisario*. Frederic, a great emperor, was so low brought, that he sued to be made but the sexton of a church.

Oh, then, let us not adhere to these left-hand blessings, but first seek length of days, eternal joys never to be lost. A man may enjoy the other without fault: the sin consisteth *preferendo vel conferendo*, either in preferring riches or in comparing them with faith and a good conscience. *Utere caducis, fruere æternis*,—thou must necessarily use these transient things; only enjoy and rest upon the everlasting comforts of Jesus Christ. When God hath assured to a Christian spirit the inheritance of heaven, he joyfully pilgrims it through this world: if wealth and worship salute him by the way, he refuseth not their company; but they shall not stray him out of his path, nor transport his affections, for his heart is where his hope is, his love is where his Lord is; even with Jesus his Redeemer, at the right hand of God. Now this man's very riches are blessed to him; for as from the hand of God he hath them, so 'from the hand of God he hath to enjoy good in them,' Eccles. ii. 24. Whereas to some, saith Solomon, Eccles. v. 13, 'I have seen riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.' To the good man 'they shall work to the best,' Rom. viii. 28; blessing his condition in this life, and enlarging his dition in heaven; as the wise man sweetly, Prov. x. 22, 'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it.'

Thus, in particular, if we confer the right hand with the left, we shall generally learn—

1. That both God's hands are giving: it is enough if man give with one hand, but the Lord sets both his hands a-doling his alms of mercy. *Nemo tuarum unam vincet utraque manu.* No man can do so much with both hands as God with one hand, with one finger. He hath *manum plenam, extensam, expansam*,—a hand full, not empty; so full, that it can never be emptied with giving. Innumerable are the drops in the sea, yet if one be taken out, it hath, though insensibly, so much the less; but God's goodness can suffer no diminution, for it is infinite. Men are sparing in their bounty, because the more they give the less they have; but God's hand is ever full, though it ever disperse: and the filling of many cisterns is no abatement to his ever-running fountain. Our prayers, therefore, are well directed thither for blessings; whence, though we receive never so much, we leave no less behind. Let this Master of requests in heaven have all our suits: we are sure either to receive what we ask, or what we should ask.

It is *extensa*, a hand put forth, and stretched out: 'Stretched out, not to receive, but to give,' Ecclesiasticus iv. 31. The prophet speaks of rulers that stretch out their hands for bribes, and cry, 'Give ye,' Hos. iv. 18; but the Lord's hand is put forth to offer good things. Rom. x. 21, 'All day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient people.' Indeed God hath a hand, and woe to the man against whom it is stretched! Homer saith, that all the gods could not ward a blow of Jupiter's hand. His hands are not only *χῆρῆς ἀαρῶν*, hands that cannot be sufficiently praised, but *χῆρῆς ἄεττοι*, hands that cannot be resisted. It is a heavy hand when it lights upon men in anger: 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' When revolting Israel fell to serve Baal and Ashtaroth, Judg. ii. 15, 'whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil.' When the men of Ashdod were smitten with emerods, 1 Sam. v. 6, it is said 'the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them.' So David, in his grievous misery, Ps. xxxviii. 2, 'Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.' It is not this hand that God here stretcheth out. Bernard saith,\* God hath two hands—*fortitudo* and *latitudo*: a hand of strength, *qua defendit potenter*, wherewith he protects his friends and confounds his enemies; a hand of bounty, *qua tribuit affluenter*, whereby he disperseth and disposeth the largess of his gifts. This is the hand here put forth, *manus regalis*, and gives *munus regale*,—a royal hand, full of real mercies; let us humbly kiss it.

It is *expansa*, not a shut hand, but open. Ps. cxlv. 16, 'Thou openest thy hand, and fillest all things living with plenteousness.' 'God gives richly,' saith Paul, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Man is poor, because he is a creature: the very name of creature infers poverty; it implies a receiving of all. *Quid habes quod non accepisti?* The Creator hath the possession of all, and the disposition of all, at his own pleasure. James i. 17, 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' Bread, in the Lord's prayer, is called *ours*: 'Give us this day *our* daily bread;' but, *ne putetur a nobis, dicimus 'Da nobis,'*†—lest we should imagine it our own from ourselves, we are taught daily to beg it of our Father in heaven, whose it is. It is the Lord's hand that barreth the gates of our cities, 'that filleth our garners with plenty,' Ps. cxliv. 13, that sets peace about our walls, and prosperity in our palaces; that blesseth our goings out and comings in, even all the works of our hands.

\* Serm. 8 in Cant.

† Aug. Epist. cxliii.



But what speak I of temporal things, the gifts of his left hand, in comparison of 'length of days,' everlasting joys, the treasures of his right? Repentance, humility, charity, and the lady of all graces, faith, come from his hand, and are the fair gifts of God. *Ipsium velle credere, Deus operatur in homine,\**—The first will to believe is wrought in man by God. If any ask, *Cur illi ita suadeatur, ut persuadeatur; illi autem non ita?*—Why doth this man believe, and another man remain in infidelity? *hic digitus Dei,*—the hand of God hath been here, working faith in the soul of him that believeth. All comes from this hand of mercy. *Quisquis tibi enumerat merita sua, quid tibi enumerat nisi munera tua?†*—He that reckons to God his merits, what doth he reckon but God's mercies? *Quæ bona mea, dona tua,*—Those that are my goods, as God's gifts.

2. Though hands be here attributed to God, yet it is but by way of metaphor; not literally, and in a true propriety of speech. To conceive God to be as man, with human dimensions, was the heresy of the Anthropomorphites; and he that thus grossly thinks of God, saith Jerome, makes an idol of God in his heart. But herein God stoops to the quality of our understandings, ascribing to himself anger and displeasure, as it were passions to the impassible; whereas *nec Deus affectu capitur, nec tangitur ira,*—they are not passions, but perfections. God hath a mouth by which he teacheth man wisdom; he hath feet, by which he walketh on the earth his footstool; he hath hands, by which he giveth food to all flesh. He hath none of these organically, as men have, but in the variety of effects which he produceth. So Bernard, † *Per effectum hæc habet, non per naturam.*

3. Observe that in the left hand there is a double benefit, riches and honour; in the right but a single one, length of days; yet this one far transcends both the other. For if we should restrain it to this world, long life is a great blessing, and more valuable than wealth or worship. But taking it, as it is meant, for eternity,—for this life is but a span long; a span then, now scarce the length of a finger; as Ps. xxiii. 6, 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;' originally, 'to length of days,' but fitly translated, 'for ever,'—the left hand is as far exceeded by the right, as short mortality is by everlastingness. Aged Israel to his grandchildren, Ephraim and Manasseh, two sons of Joseph; when the father had placed the first-born Manasseh to his right hand, and Ephraim the younger to his left, he crossing his hands, laid the right upon Ephraim, and the left upon Manasseh, Gen. xlviii. 14. When Joseph would have removed his hands, he refused: 'I know it, my son, I know it. Manasseh also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he.' The Lord doth bless many Manassehs with his left hand in riches and honours; but blessed be that Ephraim to whom his right hand is commended. Lord, let others enjoy the treasures of thy left hand, but lay thy right upon our souls!

4. I conclude. Since the Lord out of both his hands pours and showers upon us these mercies, what should we do but be thankful? Shall we receive benefits by heaps, and is the incense of our gratitude of so thin a smoke? *Et capitur minimo thuris honore Deus?* All these blessings seem to say to man, Take, and take heed: *accipe, redde, cave,*—receive, return, beware. Take warmth from me, saith apparel; heat from me, saith fire; strength from me, saith bread. Restore thankfulness to the Giver. Or else

\* Aug. de Spiritu, cap. 84.

† Aug. Confes., lib. ix., cap. 13.

‡ Serm. 4 in Cant.

beware lest the fire burn thee, water drown thee, air choke thee : lest all give destruction that should give comfort. *Receive* in the name of God, *return* in the praise of God, or *beware* in the fear of God. To whom, for the blessings of both his hands, be glory ascribed from all lips and hearts, for ever and ever ! Amen.