

THE WAY HOME.

And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.—MATT. II. 12.

WHEN these wise men had presented to Christ their gifts; which, indeed, he first gave them, for the earth is his, and the fulness thereof; yet he rewards them. They emptied their treasures of gold, myrrh, and frankincense; and he filled the treasure of their hearts with heavenly graces.

For their gold, he returns them pure wisdom. They were called wise men before; but their wisdom was infernal, downwards to hell, perhaps consulting with devils. Now he gives them 'wisdom from above, pure' and refined as gold, James iii. 17.

For their frankincense, he purgeth them of their former superstitious idolatries, from sacrificings to Satan; and instructs them to whom frankincense is due, and all other offerings of piety: to their Creator and Saviour.

For their myrrh, he gives them charity, a true love to him that so truly loved them; and for his sake, a love to others. They made then a blessed exchange with Christ, when, for gold, frankincense, myrrh, they received wisdom, devotion, charity.

Now, to testify how highly the Lord favoured them, he speaks to them in a dream, and reveals his mind for the safety of his Son; 'that they should not return to Herod.' And to witness how truly they served the Lord, they gave obedience; 'they departed into their own country another way.'

The whole may be distinguished into, I. An informing; II. A performing: I. A word; II. A work.

God gives the *word*, the magi do the *work*. God doth *inform*, and they *perform*. He instructeth, and they execute. He gives direction, they obedience. His word, informance, instruction, direction, is: 'He warned them in a dream that they should not return to Herod.' Their work, performance, pliable obedience: 'They departed into their own country another way.'

I. In the direction or monition informing are considerable these three circumstances:—1. The men, *wise men*, magicians; 2. The manner, *in a dream*; 3. The matter, *that they should not return to Herod*.

1. The persons to whom God gave this admonition are expressly called *wise men*. Some say they were also great men. If so, then was this revelation made, (1.) *Potentibus*; (2.) *Potentibus*:—

(1.) To great men. It is the opinion of some that these magi were kings; and that the evangelist in calling them wise men, gave them a more honourable title than if he had called them kings. So Ludolphus says that *magus* was in those days more noble than *magnus*. But we must know who they are that thus style them. Friars and Jesuits, such as can by no means endure the superiority of princes; that are *derisores hominum maxime potentum*. Hereon some of them have mooted strange problems, able to fill whole volumes: *An sacerdotes regibus preferendi*,—Whether priests be not above kings? But still the conclusion is against princes. Some more moderate on that side have confessed them not *reges*, but *regulos*, little kings, petty princes: like those one-and-thirty kings that conspired against Joshua, chap. xii. 24; or those fifty that met at Troy. There is a kind of king in France whom the common people call, *Le Roi d'Yvetot*. But that these were but three in number, and kings in power, it may be painted in a Popish window, is not in the Catholic's Bible, therefore needs not be in a Christian's creed.

(2.) Howsoever these magi were *potentes* or no, they were *petentes*. Though they were great men, yet they humbly seek the greatest of men, yea, the great God, Jesus. And behold, graciously the Lord offers himself to their search: according to his infallible promise, that he will be found out of all that seek him. *Dedit aspicientibus intellectum, qui prestitit signum, et quod fecit intelligi, fecit inquiri*.* So he offers himself to all faithful searchers. But we cannot find him we seek, unless he find us first 'that came to seek and to save that which was lost,' Luke xix. 10. We seek in vain, unless we seek him; and we seek him in vain, unless he find us. *Nos ad se quærendum suscitât, se ad inveniendum porrigit*,†—He stirs up our hearts to seek him, and offers himself to be found. There was never faithful heart sought the Lord Jesus, but he found 'him whom his soul loved,' Cant. iii. 1. His patience might be exercised, his fidelity tried, his desires extended, by God's hiding himself for a season. In the night of obscurity, security, ignorance, he may miss him, ver. 1. Though he inquire among the deepest philosophers, and honestest worldlings, ver. 2, he may not find him. But, ver. 3, the watchmen will bring him to him; yea, ver. 4, Christ himself will appear in gracious mercy. He may say for a while, as the poet of Anchises—

'Quæ regio Christum? quis habet locus? Illius ergo venimus,'—

Where is Christ? In what country may I find him? But the Lord Jesus will reveal himself; yea, meet him half-way, as the merciful father met his unthrifty son when he returned, Luke xv. We shall conclude with joy: 'We have found the Messias: even him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth,' John i. 41, 45.

2. You hear the persons to whom this admonition was given: the next circumstance is the manner: *in a dream*.

I might here enter into a cloudy and confused discourse of dreams, till I had brought you all asleep. But I love not to fetch any bouts, where there is a nearer way. Herein I may say with Augustine,‡ 'I would to God I could discern between dreams.' Some are, (1.) Natural; some, (2.) Preternatural; and others, (3.) Supernatural.

(1.) Natural; and such arise either from complexion or from affection.

[1.] From complexion or constitution. The sanguine hath merry dreams; the melancholy, sorrowful dreams; the choleric, dreams of fire, and such turbulent thoughts; the phlegmatic, of rain, of floods, and such watery

* Leo in loc. † Fulgent. ‡ Ad Euodium, ep. 100; et de Civit. Dei, cap. 20.

objects. And as these elemental humours do abound in a man, the dreams have a stronger force, and more violent perturbation.

[2.] From affection : what a man most desires, he soonest dreams of.

'Omnia quæ sensu voluntur vota diurno,
Tempore nocturno reddit amica quies,
Venator defessa toro dum membra reponit,
Mens tamen ad silvas et sua lustra redit.
Gaudet amans furto : permutat navita merces :
Et vigil elapsas quærît avarus opes.*'

So Augustine : † *Somnium nascitur ex studiis præteritis*,—What man desires in the day, he dreams in the night. The hunter's mind is in the forest, whiles his wearied bones are reposed on a soft bed. The soldier dreams of batteries, assaults, encounters ; the lawyer, of quirks and demurs ; the citizen, of tricks and frauds ; the musician, of crotchets ; the Seminary, of equivocations. The gluttoned epicure dreams of dainty dishes and fat morsels. The thirsty drunkard dreams of his liquor ; 'and, behold, he drinketh ; but awake, his thirst is not satisfied,' Isa. xxix. 8. The usurer dreams of his trunks, and that he is telling his gold ; and starts, as if every rat were a thief breaking in upon him. The timorous dream that they are flying before overtaking danger. The lustful imagines his desired embracings. The angry, that he is fighting, killing, spoiling. The secure, that they are whistling, singing, dancing. The jealous dreams of his wife's errors, when she lies chastely by his side. The ambitious, that he is kissing the king's hand, and mounted into the saddle of honour. The overcharged mind dreams of his employment ; 'for a dream cometh through the multitude of business,' Eccles. v. 3.

(2.) Preternatural : and these are either *ad errorem* or *ad terrorem*. Whereof the first is wrought by Satan *permittente Deo*, God suffering it ; the second by God, *mediante diabolo*, Satan being a mediate instrument.

[1.] There are dreams for error, wrought by the mere illusion of Satan : whom God once suffered to be a lying spirit in the mouth of four hundred prophets. He working upon men's affections, inclinations, and humours, causeth in them such dreams as seduce them to wickedness, and induce them to wretchedness. They write of one Amphiarus, an Argive soothsayer, that by a dream he was brought to the Theban voyage ; where *hiatu terræ absorbetur*,—he was swallowed up of the earth. So Pharaoh's baker was encouraged to hopeful error by a dream, Gen. xl. 16. So was that monstrous host of Midian overthrown by a dream of a barley-cake, that hit a tent and overwhelmed it, Judg. vii. 13, which was interpreted the sword of Gideon.

[2.] For terror. Job says, that *Deus terret per somnia, et per visiones horrorem incutit*,—God strikes terror into the hearts of the wicked by dreams : as a *malus genius* is said to appear to Brutus the night before his death ; or as the face of Hector was presented to Andromache. Polydore Virgil records the dream of that bloody tyrant, Richard the Third, that in a dream, the night before the battle of Bosworth-field, he thought all the devils in hell were haling and tugging him in pieces ; and all those whom he had murdered crying and shrieking out vengeance against him : though he thinks this was more than a dream. *Id credo non fuisse somnium, sed conscientiam scelorum*,—He judged it not so much a dream as the guilty conscience of his own wickedness. So to Robert Winter, one of the powder traitors, in a dream appeared the ghastly figures and distracted visages of his

* Claudian. in Præt., lib. iii.

† Lib. de Spiritu et Anima, cap. 25.

chief friends and confederates in that treason; not unlike the very same manner wherein they after stood on the pinnacles of the Parliament-house.

(3.) Supernatural; such as are sent by divine inspiration, and must have a divine interpretation. Such were the dreams of Pharaoh expounded by Joseph; the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar declared by Daniel. Of these were two sorts:—

[1.] Some were mystical; such as those two kings' dreams, and Pharaoh's two officers', whose exposition is only of God. So Joseph answers: 'Are not interpretations of the Lord?' Gen. xl. 8. So Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel: 'Thou art able, for the spirit of the holy God is in thee,' Dan. iv. 18. The sorcerers and astrologers dearly acknowledged their ignorance with their lives, Dan. ii. 13. Thus Pharaoh may dream, but it is a Joseph that must expound it. It is one thing to have a representation objected to the fantasy, another thing to have an intellectual light given to understand it.

[2.] Others are demonstrative; when the Lord not only gives the dream, but also withal the understanding of it. Such were Daniel's dreams, and these wise men's, and Joseph's in this chapter. Wherein was a vision and provision: a vision what to do; a provision that no harm might come to Jesus. These dreams were most specially incident to the New Testament, when God at the very rising of the sun began to expel the shadows of dark mysteries: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams,' Acts ii. 17. Now the sun is gotten up into the midst of heaven,—the gospel into the full strength,—these shadows vanish: the more light the less shadow.

So that now to expect revelation of things by dreams, were to entreat God to lend us a candle whiles we have the bright sun. The superstitious Papists are still full of these dreams; and find out more mysteries in their sleep than they can well expound waking. The Abbot of Glastonbury, when Ethelwold was monk there, dreamt of a tree whose branches were all covered with monks' cowls, and on the highest bough one cowl that overtopped all the rest; which must needs be expounded the future greatness of this Ethelwold. But it is most admirable how the Dominic friars make shift to expound the dream of Dominic's mother, which she had when she was with child of him: that she had in her womb a wolf with a burning torch in his mouth. Say what they will, a wolf is a wolf still: and that order hath ever carried a burning torch to scorch their mother, the church. But there is no dream of theirs without an interpretation, without a prediction. And if the event answer not their foretelling, they expound it after the event. If one of them chance to dream of a green garden, he goes presently and makes his will. Or if another dream that he shakes a dead friend by the hand, he is ready to call to the sexton for a grave; takes solemn leave of the world, and says he cannot live.

Beloved, God hath not grounded our faith upon dreams, nor 'cunningly devised fables,' 2 Pet. i. 16; but on the holy gospel, written by his servants in books, and by his Spirit in the tables of our hearts. They that will believe dreams and traditions above God's sacred word, let them hear and fear their judgment, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.' Banish from your hearts this superstitious folly, to repose any confidence on dreams.

But if you desire to make any use of dreams, let it be this. Consider thy-

self in thy dreaming, to what inclination thou art mostly carried; and so by thy thoughts in the night, thou shalt learn to know thyself in the day. Be thy dreams lustful; examine whether the addictions of thy heart run not after the bias of concupiscence. Be they turbulent; consider thy own contentious disposition. Be they revengeful; they point to thy malice. Run they upon gold and riches; they argue thy covetousness.

Thus God may be said to teach a man by his dreams still: *non quid erit, sed qualis est*,—not what shall be, but what he is; not future event, but present condition may be thus learned. Neither day nor night escapes a good man without some profit: the night teacheth him what he is, as the day what he should be. Therefore said a philosopher, that all waking men are in one common world; but in sleep every man goes into a world by himself. For his dreams do signify to him those secret inclinations to which he thought himself a stranger, though they were home-dwellers in his heart. Even those fancies are speaking images of a man's disposition. And as I have heard of some that talk in their dreams, and then reveal those secrets which awake they would not have disclosed, so may thy dreams tell thee when thou wakest what kind of man thou art. The hypocrite dreams of dissimulation; the proud woman, of paint and colours; the thief, of robbery and booties; the Jesuit, of treasons. Let them ask their very sleep, *quales sint*, what manner of men they are. For so lightly they answer temptations actually waking, as their thoughts do sleeping. Thus only a man may make good use of his dreams.

Here let us observe, that God doth sometimes draw men to him *suis ipsorum studiis*,—by their own delights and studies. No doubt these magi were well acquainted with dreams, it being amongst the Ethnics and Peripatetics a special object of divination. Therefore there is a book bearing the name of Aristotle, *De divinatione per somnium*. Many errors these men had swallowed by dreams; now, behold, in a dream they shall receive the truth. So God called them by a star whose profession was to rely too much on the stars. *Quare per stellam? ut per Christum, ipsa materia erroris, feret salutis occasio*,*—Why by a star? That through Jesus Christ the very matter of their error might be made a means of their salvation. *Per ea illos vocat, quæ familiaria illis consuetudo fecit*,—God calls them by those things which custom had made familiar to them. They that are stung with scorpions, must be cured by the oil of scorpions. Thus God allures men to him as fishermen fishes, with such baits as may be somewhat agreeable to them. Paul is occasioned by the 'altar to the unknown God,' Acts xvii 23, to make known the true God, the everlasting Jesus. Doth David love the sheep-folds? He shall be a shepherd still: Ps. lxxviii. 71, 'From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.' Doth Peter love fishing? He shall go a-fishing still, though for more noble creatures; to catch souls. Do these magicians love stars and dreams? Behold, a star and a dream shall instruct them in the truth of God. Old Isaac takes occasion by the smell of his son's garments, savouring of the field, to pronounce a spiritual blessing: Gen. xxvii. 27, 'The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.' Jerome notes of Amos, that he begins his prophecy with roaring,—'The Lord shall roar from Zion,' Amos i. 2,—because he being a field-man, kept the woods, where he was wonted to the roaring of lions. *Judæi signa quærunt?*—'Do the Jews seek a sign?' Why Christ will there, even among them, work his miracles. Doth Augustine love eloquence?

* Chrysolog. Hom. 6 in Matth.

Ambrose shall catch him at a sermon. 'All things shall work to their good,' Rom. viii. 28, that are good: *omnia, etiam peccata*,—all things, even their very sins, saith Augustine. Montaigne in his Essays writes, that a libidinous gentleman sporting with a courtesan in a house of sin, chanced to ask her name; which she said was Mary. Whereat he was stricken with such a remorse and reverence, that he instantly not only cast off the harlot, but amended his whole future life.

Well-beloved, since this is God's mercy to allure us to him by our own delights, let us yield ourselves to be caught. What scope doth thy addiction level at, that is not sinful, which God's word doth not promise and afford? What delight can you ask which the sanctuary gives not? Love you hunting? Learn here to hunt 'the foxes, the little cubs,' those crafty sins skulking in your bosoms, Cant. ii. 15. Would you dance? Let your hearts keep the measures of Christian joy; and leap, like John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb, at the salvation of Jesus. Delight you in running? Paul sets you a race: 'So run that ye may obtain,' 1 Cor. ix. 24. You shall have good company: David promiseth, that he 'will run the way of God's commandments,' Ps. cxix. 32. Peter and John will run with you to Jesus. Love you music? Here are the bells of Aaron still ringing; the treble of mercy, and the tenor of judgment, Ps. ci. 1: Levi's lute, and David's harp. There are no such songs as the songs of Zion. Would you be merry? 'Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice,' Phil. iv. 4. If ever you found joy like this joy,—'the peace of conscience, and joy of the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17,—back again to the world. Lovest thou dainty cheer? Here be the best cates, the body and blood of thy Saviour, the bread of life; no hunger after it. Wilt thou drink much? 'Drink my wine and my milk; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved,' Cant. v. 1. *Bibite et inebriamini*, as the original imports,—drink, and be drunken with loves; pledge the health that Christ began, even 'a saving health to all nations.' Are you ambitious? There is no preferment like that is to be had here, in the court of the King of kings. David judged it no little thing to be son-in-law to a king; but what is it then to be a king? Desire you stately buildings? Alas! the whole world is but a cottage, a poor transient tabernacle, to the mansions promised by Christ, John xiv. 2. Lastly, are you covetous? Yet I need not ask that question, but take it as granted. Why, then, here is gold; more precious than that of Arabia, or of Havilah. Rust or thief may distress that; this is a treasure can never be lost. What should I say more? What can win you? Which way soever your desire stands, God doth allure you. The best things in earth or in heaven are your bait. With these doth the Lord seek you; not for any need that he hath of you, but for your own salvation. When the fairest of all beloveds doth thus woo us, let him win us; and espouse us to himself in grace, that we have the plenary marriage in glory. You see the *manner* of their warning.

3. The matter: *that they should not return to Herod*. Why not to Herod? Because the Lord now lets them see his hypocrisy. For howsoever he pretended, ver. 8, 'to come and worship him;' yet he intended not *servire*, but *savire*,—not to honour him, but to murder him. He calls the wise men privily, as if he quaked at the propagation of this news, for it came upon him like the pangs of death. He commands them to inquire *de infante*, not *de rege*,—of the babe, not of the king; for that title galled him to the earth. 'That I may worship him.' *Dirum facinus tingit colore pietatis*,—It is a monstrous wickedness, which he would dye in the colours of godliness.

The Lord doth disappoint the purposes of tyrants. Though their bows be

bent, and their swords whetted, yet the mark shall be removed; and they shall rather wound themselves than the innocent. Though they be 'great with child of iniquity, and conceive mischief, yet they shall bring forth but falsehood,' Ps. vii. 14. Though those Jews had 'bound themselves under a curse neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul,' Acts xxiii. 12; yet if they had kept their vow, they had fasted to death. Though Sennacherib purposed to swallow up Jerusalem at a morsel; yet the Lord mocked his menaces: 'He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor cast a bank against it,' Isa. xxxvii. 33.

Herod made himself sure of Christ, but the Lord deceived him again and again. First he stroke him with extreme sottishness; that learning by the wise men the birth of Christ, though the matter in his thought touched his crown, he sends none of his courtiers with them under pretence of gratifying them; which might so have seized on that innocent Lamb, and not worshipped, but worried him. But the Lord so confounded his wits with the spirit of giddiness, that the magi go alone. Next, now that his bloody hopes depend upon their return, behold they are sent home 'another way.' So that, ver. 16, 'he saw that he was mocked.' Herod mocked the wise men, and God shall direct the wise men to mock Herod. He pretended to adore whom he did abhor; and they do *cum vulpe vulpinare*,—beguile the fox; yea, rather *ovicula lupum fallit*,—the lamb deceives the wolf. Simplicity goes beyond subtlety. *A cane non magno saepe tenetur aper*. Here was Herod's folly, that he would not suffer the King of the whole world to be king in Jewry; that in fear of a successor, he would kill his Saviour. Nay further, for fear of a strange heir, he kills his own heir. Which occasioned Augustus to say, that it was better being Herod's hog than his heir. Here, then, see his cruelty: if his strength cannot take Jesus, he will try his cunning; and last, when his cunning fails, he falls to open violence again, 'sending forth men of war.' Thus when tyrants fail in their politicians' rhetoric, they fall to the carters' logic.

II. You see the informance; let us look upon their performance: 'They departed into their own country another way.' All which (wanting time to prosecute the history) I will apply to ourselves. Their course home shall teach us a course to our home, even to heaven and glory; wherein I desire to observe these circumstances:—1. Ourselves naturally lost; 2. Our finding of Christ; 3. Our charge not to return to Herod; but, 4. To go to our own country; and, 5. That by another way.

1. Let it be granted that we have all wandered from the way of life: Isa. liii. 6, 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.' I would to God every one would *sentire*, feel this in particular; and not only *consentire*, consent to it in general. 'I am not come to call the righteous,' saith Christ, 'but sinners to repentance,' Matt. ix. 13. And, Luke xv., he leaves the hypocritical justiciaries to their own high-conceited purity, and seeks the lost sheep. We may here pause, and wonder at our misery, at his mercy. We were so lost, that we could never find him; he is so good, that he sought and found us. *Invenit non quærentes, non perdet inventos*,—He found us, not seeking him; being found, he will not lose us. 'Come to me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' Matt. xi. 28. The proud sinner who doth not find his sin, the careless who doth not feel his sin, is not called. Only *sentientibus morbum promittitur medicina*,—health is promised to those that feel their sickness.

2. Christ calls us; but how shall we come? Behold, he sends us a star for direction, his holy word: John vi. 68, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?

Thou hast the words of eternal life.' Would you come to him that is *vita*, the life? You must come by him that is *via*, the way. It is he *quo eundum*, whither we would go; it is he *qua eundum*, by which we must go. To his word then let us come with an honest heart: not to sleep, not to carp, not to gaze; but to observe attentively, to remember faithfully, and to practise obediently, what is there taught us. Neither must God only, for his part, afford us a star for guidance; but we must also, for our part, bring feet to walk to him. These are three:—

(1.) Contrition: a heart truly sorrowful for our former iniquities. He that is cast down by repentance shall be raised up with joy. It is not possible to walk to God without this foot. He that goes to heaven must wash his steps with tears. And he that hath this foot shall make large paces to glory. Though he hath long lingered, he will now haste; as the malefactor stepped by this foot from the cross to paradise.

(2.) Faith. Sorrow may cast down too fast, too far. Though the head have leave to ache, yet let not the hand of faith be wanting to hold it. Though the eye be blubbered with tears, yet must it look through all that water to the clear sun, Jesus Christ. When the law hath done its office in making thy sin manifest, thank it, and take thy leave of it; as thou wouldest do of a friend that hath done thee a good turn, but now grows troublesome. Put Moses behind thee, saith Luther; and fix thine eyes upon Christ, that 'Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world,' John i. 29. Without this foot thou shalt step short of comfort. Faith must bring thee to the fountain of that blood which shall 'wash away all thy sins,' 1 John i. 7.

(3.) Obedience. This foot must be continually used; all the days of thy life must thou travel in the ways of God with this foot. It knows and keeps celerity, integrity, constancy.

[1.] Celerity: 'I will run the way of thy commandments,' Ps. cxix. 32. It makes haste, knowing that God will not be pleased with halting obedience, or with that zeal that only goes a parliament-pace. The cripple was carried to the temple, Acts iii.: God loves not such limping zeal, that is carried to church on two crutches, law and custom; but that which, with Peter and John, runs to the place where Christ is. But it is God that 'maketh our feet like the feet of hinds,' Ps. xviii. 33.

[2.] Integrity: it turns not to the right hand nor to the left, but goes straight on, 'running with patience the race that is set before it,' Heb. xii. 1. Therefore, saith the Apostle, 'make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way,' ver. 13; for all false ways the Lord doth utterly abhor. 'The wicked walk on every side,' Ps. xii. 8; they have circular goings on every side of the truth, but the true way they cannot find. But integrity is not so light-heeled, to skip out of the way of righteousness at every dog that reproachfully barks at it, nor at every Siren that temptingly would call it aside. The devil, with all his force of terror or error, cannot seduce it.

[3.] Constancy: it is ever travelling, though through many hindrances. It hath a heavy load of flesh to burden it, and to make every step tedious, yet it goes. Cares for family, troubles of contentious neighbours, frowning of great adversaries, the malicious turbulency of the world, all offer to stay it, but it goes on. As if it had received the apostles' commission, Salute none of these *remoras* by the way, it resteth not till it see the salvation of God. The Lord 'delivers the feet from falling, that it may walk before God in the light of the living,' Ps. lvi. 13.

3. We must not return back to Herod. Why not to Herod? He was a fit type of the devil; and they that are recovered and escaped from him should not fall back into his clutches. The devil is like Herod, both for his subtlety and cruelty. The Herods were all dissemblers, all cruel. There was Herod Ascalonita, Herod Antipas, and Herod Agrippa, all cruel in the butchering of God's saints.

'Ascalonita necat pueros, Antipa Johannem,
Agrippa Jacobum, mittitque in carcere Petrum.'

Ascalonite makes an earnest show of zeal to Christ, but he desired not *subjicere se Christo, sed sibi Christum*,—not to become subject to Christ, but to make Christ the subject of his fury. Antipas seemed to love John the Baptist, but he suffers a dancing foot to kick off his head. The cruelty of the other Herod was monstrous. He slew all those whom he could suspect to issue from the line of David, all the infants of Bethlehem under two years old, at one slaughter. He slew his kindred, his sister, his wife, his son.* He cut the throats of many noble Jews whiles he lay on his deathbed. Yea, he made it in his will, that so soon as ever the breath was out of his body, all the sons of the nobler Jews, shut up into a safe place, should be instantly slain, to bear him company. By this means he resolved that some should lament his death, which otherwise would have been the cause of great joy. A wretched testament, and fit for such a devil to make.

That devil we are charged not to return to exceeds this both in subtlety and cruelty, even as much as a father may his son. Herod was not so perfect a master of his art. The wise men deceived Herod; he must be a wise man indeed that overreaches Satan. Herod was a bungler to him: he trusted to instruments to destroy Christ; the devil looks to that business himself. 'He can transform himself into an angel of light;' and rather than not draw men to hell, he will dissemble a love to heaven. He will speak good, that he may work evil; and confess the truth, that thereby he may procure credit to greater falsehood. He can stoop to the reprobate, like a tame horse, till they get up and ride him; but when he hath them on his back, he runs post with them to hell.

When he hath thus exercised his policy, will he spare his power? When his fox's part is done, he begins his lion's. Blood, massacre, destruction, are his softest embraces; horror and amazement are the pleasures of his court; 'Kill, kill, burn, burn,' is the language of his tongue, to those miserable wretches which must ever be burning, never consumed, ever in suffering, and never die. Oh, then, let us never return to Herod, nor venture on his mercy! The poor bird that hath escaped the hawk's talons is careful to avoid his walk. The strayed lamb, fallen into the wolf's cave, and delivered by the shepherd, will no more straggle out of the flock. If the Lord Jesus hath sought and brought us to himself by the star of his gospel, let us no more go back to Herod; flying the works of darkness, and serving the living God with an upright heart. Indeed, they that are truly freed from his servitude will never more become his vassals. Many seem escaped that are not. If the adulterer return, like the 'hog to the mire,' and the drunkard, 'like the dog to his vomit,' 2 Pet. ii. 22, it is likely that they love Herod well, for they go back to him. The minister may desire to 'offer them up a living sacrifice to the Lord,' Rom. xv. 16, but, like wild beasts, they break the rope, and will not be sacrificed. But we, 'being delivered by Christ out of

* Joseph. Antiq., lib. xvii., cap. 8.

the hands of our enemies, must serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life,' Luke i. 74.

4. We must go to our own country. In this world we are but strangers : though perhaps we think too well of these vanities, yet they are but foreign things ; we have another home. We may be ravished with this earth, as Peter with Tabor,—*Bonum hic*, It is good being here,—but if we look up to that heaven which is our country, *mundi calcamus inutile pondus*. Behold, the very outside is fair : the outmost walls are beautified with glorious lights ; every one as a world for greatness, so a heaven for goodness. All those spangles be as radiant stones, full of lustre, pure gold to the dross of earthly things. What may we, then, think there is within ?

Yea, whatsoever the wicked think, yet this world is but the thoroughfare ; and it is not their home neither, though indeed they have their portion in this life. It is said of Judas going to hell, that ' he went to his own place,' Acts i. 25 ; therefore that, and not this, is their own country, as sure as they think themselves of this world. In heaven there is all life, no death ; in hell, all death, no life ; on earth, men both live and die, passing through it as the wilderness, either to Egypt or Canaan. This earth, as it is between both, so it prepares us for both, and sends every one to their own country—eternal joy, or everlasting sorrow.

He that here dies to sin shall hereafter live in heaven ; he that lives in sin shall hereafter die in hell. All sojourn either with God, feeding on his graces, or with Satan, surfeiting on his iniquities. They that will have Satan for their host in transgression shall afterwards be his guests in perdition. But they that obey God as their Master shall also have him their Father, and that for ever.

Contemn we, then, this world. What though we have many sorrows here, and a succession of miseries, we are not at home. What stranger looks for kind usage amongst his enemies ? As well might the captive Jews expect quiet among the Babylonians. Thou art sure of a country wherein is peace. In that heaven the wicked have no part, though here much pleasure. When thou considerest this truly, thou wouldst not change portions with them. Let it be comfort sufficient, since we cannot have both, that we have by many degrees the better.

Their own country.—Heaven is our own country. Ours, ordained for us by God the Father : Matt. xxv. 34, ' Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit ye the kingdom.' Ours, purchased for us by God the Son : Heb. x. 19, ' We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.' Ours, sealed to us by God the Holy Ghost : Eph. iv. 30, ' The Spirit of God seals us up to the day of redemption ;' Rom. viii. 16, ' The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'

Ours thus, though we are not yet fully entered into it. *Habemus jus ad rem, nondum in re.*—We are heirs to it, though now we be but wards. Our minority bids and binds us to be servants : Gal. iv. 1, ' The heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.' When we come to full years, a perfect growth in godliness, *in mensuram stature adulti Christi*,—' to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' Eph. iv. 13,—we shall have a plenary possession.

It is ours already, not *in re*, but *in spe* ; as Augustine. Our common law distinguisheth between two manner of freeholds : a freehold in deed, when a man hath made his entry upon lands, and is thereof really seized ; a freehold in law, when a man hath right to possessions, but hath not made his actual entry. So is this country ours ; ours *tenore juris*, though not yet

jure tenoris,—ours in the inheritance of the possession, though not in the possession of the inheritance. To this country, our country, let us travel; and that we may do it the better—

5. The last circumstance shews us how : ‘another way.’ We must change the whole course of our inordinate conversation, and walk another way—even the King’s highway to Paradise. *Immutatio vice emendatio vitæ*,*—The changing of the way is the amending of our life. Repentance must teach us to tread a new path. To man truly penitent, *optimus portus est mutatio consilii*,†—the best haven is the change of his life : ‘not to turn again by the same way that he came,’ 1 Kings xiii. 9. Thus must we renounce our own wills and old ways, and, being made new creatures, take new paths. So Gregory : ‘We departed from our country by pride, disobedience, doting on visible delights, and pleasing the lusts of the flesh : we must therefore return by humility, obedience, contemning the world, and condemning the flesh.’ *Qui à Paradisi gaudiis per delectationem recessimus, ad hæc per pœnitentiam, tanquam per novam viam, revocamur*,—We that departed from Paradise by lust, must return thither by a new way—repentance. Hast thou walked in lust? Take another way—by purity and chastity. Didst thou travel with pride? There is another way to heaven—humility : ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,’ Matt. v. 3. Wert thou given to avarice? There is a new way to heaven—by charity : ‘Ye have fed me hungry,’ &c., ‘therefore come, ye blessed,’ Matt. xxv. Didst thou trudge with contention, and molesting thy neighbours with suits? This is the way to Westminster Hall; there is ‘another way’ to heaven : Matt. v. 9, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.’ Didst thou trade in usury? This is the way to the Exchange; thou must exchange this way if thou wilt come to glory. Hast thou foraged with oppression? Thou must, with Zaccheus, seek out another way : Luke xix. 8, ‘If I have taken anything from any man by false dealing, I restore him fourfold.’ Let the drunken epicure, malicious repiner, seditious incendiary, dissembling hypocrite, unjust oppressor, leave their wretched paths, and seek another way to happiness. God give us all grace to find this way of repentance, that we may come at last to our own country—peace and rest with Jesus Christ! Amen.

* Euseb. Hom. 1 de Epiph.

† Tertul.