

Lecture XXIII.

Of The State Wherein Man Was Created, And How The Image Of God Is Defaced.

Eccl. vii. 29.—“Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.”

The one half of true religion consists in the knowledge of ourselves, the other half in the knowledge of God; and whatever besides this men study to know and apply their hearts unto, it is vain and impertinent, and like meddling in other men's matters, neglecting our own, if we do not give our minds to the search of these. All of us must needs grant this in the general, that it is an idle and unprofitable wandering abroad, to be carried forth to the knowledge and use of other things, and in the mean time to be strangers to ourselves, with whom we should be most acquainted. If any man was diligent and earnest in the inquiry and use of the things in the world, Solomon was. He applied his heart to seek out wisdom, and what satisfaction was in the knowledge of all things natural; and in this he attained a great degree beyond all other men. Yet he pronounces of it all after experience and trial, that “this also is vanity and vexation of spirit,”—not only empty and unprofitable, and not conducing to that true blessedness he sought after,—but hurtful and destructive, nothing but grief and sorrow in it. After he had proved all, with a resolution to be wise, yet it was far from him; “I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me,” ver. 23. And therefore, after long wandering abroad, he returns at length home to himself, to know the estate of mankind. “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” When I have searched

all other things, and found many things by search, yet, says he, what doth it all concern me, when I am ignorant of myself? There is one thing concerns me more than all,—to know the original of man, what he once was made, and to know how far he is departed from his original. This only I have found profitable to men: and as the entry and preparation to that blessedness I inquire for,—to have the true discovery of our misery.

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There are two things, then, concerning man, that you have to search and to know; and that not in a trifling or curious manner, as if you had no other end in it but to know it as men do in other things, but in a serious and earnest way, as in a matter of so much concernment to our eternal well-being. In things that relate particularly to ourselves, we labour to know them for some advantage besides the knowing of them, even though they be but small and lower things; how much more should we propose this unto ourselves in the search and examination of our own estate, not merely to know such a thing, but so to know it that we may be stirred up and provoked in the sense of it to look after the remedy that God holds forth. There are two things that you have to know,—what man once was made, and how he is now unmade; how happy once, and how miserable now. And answerable to these two, are branches of the text: “God made man upright;” that he was once; “and they have sought out many inventions;” not being contented with that blessedness they were created into, by catching at a higher estate of wisdom, have fallen down into a gulf of misery; as the man that gazed on the stars above him, and did not take notice of the pit under his feet till he fell into it; and thus man is now. So you have a short account of the two estates of men; of the estate of grace and righteousness without sin, and the estate of sin and misery without grace. You have the true story of man from the creation unto his present condition; but all the matter is to have the lively sense of this upon our hearts. I had rather that we went home bewailing our loss, and lamenting our misery, and longing for the recovery of that blessedness, than

that we went out with the exact memory of all that is spoken, and could repeat it again.

“God made man upright.” At his first moulding, the Lord showed excellent art and wisdom, and goodness too. Man did come forth from under his hand in the first edition very glorious, to show what he could do; upright, that is, all right and very exactly conformed to the noble and high pattern,—endued with divine wisdom, such as might direct him to true happiness,—and furnished with a divine willingness to follow that direction. The command was not above his head as a rod, but within his heart as a natural instinct. All that was within him was comely and beautiful; for that glorious light that shined upon him, having life and love with it, produced a sweet harmony in the soul. He knew his duty, and loved it, and was able to perform it. O how much is in this one word “upright!” Not only sincerity and integrity in the soul, but perfection of all the degrees and parts; no part of holiness wanting, and no measure of those parts; no mixture of darkness or ignorance,—no mixture of indisposition or unwillingness. Godliness was sweet and not laborious. The love of God, possessing the heart, did conform all within and without to the will of God; and O how beautiful was that conformity! And that love of God, the fountain-being, did send forth, as a stream, love and good-will to all things, as they did partake of God's image; and so holiness towards God did beget righteousness towards men, and made men to partake of one another's happiness.

This is a survey of him in his integrity as God made him, but there follows a sad “but,”—a sad and woful exception,—“but they have sought many inventions.” We cannot look upon that glorious estate whereunto man was made, but straightway we must turn our eyes upon that misery into which he hath plunged himself, and be the more affected with it, that it was once otherwise. It is misery in a high degree to have been once happy. This most of all aggravates our misery, and may increase the sense

of it, that such man once was, and such we might have been, if we had not destroyed ourselves. Who can look upon these ruins, and refrain mourning? It is said, that those who saw the glory of the first temple, wept when they beheld the second, because it was not answerable to it in magnificence and glory; so, I say, it might occasion much sadness and grief, even to the children of God, in whom that image is in part repaired, and that by a second creation, to think how much more happy and blessed man once was, who had grace and holiness without sin. But certainly, it should and must be at first, before this image be restored, the bitter lamentation of a soul, to look upon itself wholly ruinous and defaced, in the view of that glorious stately fabric which once was made. How lamentable a sight is it to behold the first temple demolished, or the first creation defaced, and the second not yet begun in many souls, the foundation-stone not yet laid! It was a sad and doleful invention which Satan inspired at first into man's heart, to go about to find out another happiness,—to seek how to be wise as God, an invention that did proceed from hell,—how to know evil experimentally and practically by doing it! That invention hath invented and found out all the sin and misery under which the world groans. It is a poor invention to devise misery and torment to the creature. This was the height of folly and madness, for a happy creature to invent how to make itself miserable and all others. Indeed, he intended another thing—to be more happy, but pride and ambition got a deserved fall, the result of all is sin and misery.

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And now from the first devilish invention, the heart of man is possessed with a multitude of vain imaginations. Man is now become vain in his imaginations, and his foolish heart is darkened. That divine wisdom he was endued withal is eclipsed, for it was a ray of God's countenance, and now he is left wholly in the dark without a guide, without a director or leader. He is turned out of the path of holiness, and so of happiness. A night of gross darkness and blindness is come on, and the way is full of pits and

snare, and the end of it is at best eternal misery. And there is no lamp, no light to shine on it, to show him either the misery that he is posting unto, or the happiness that he is fleeing from. There is nothing within him sufficient to direct his way to blessedness, and nothing willing or able to follow such a direction. And thus man is left to the invention and counsel of his own desperately wicked and deceitful heart, and that is above all plagues, to be given up to a reprobate mind. He is now left to such a tutor and guider, and it is full of inventions indeed. But they are all in vain, that is, all of them insufficient for this great purpose. All of them cannot make one hair that is black, white, much less redeem the soul. But besides, they are destructive. They pretend to deliver, but they destroy. A desperate wicked heart imagineth evil continually, evil against God, and evil to our own souls. And a deceitful heart smooths over the evil, and presents it under another notion, and so, under pretence of a friend, it is the greatest enemy a man hath,—a bosom-enemy. All men's inventions, thoughts, cogitations, projects, and endeavours, what do they tend to but to the satisfaction of their lusts,—either the lusts of the mind, as ambition, pride, avarice, passion, revenge, and such like,—or the lust of the body, as pleasure to the ears and eyes, and to the flesh? Man was made with an upright soul, with a dominion over that brutish part, more like angels, but now, all his invention runs upon that base and beastly part, how to adorn it, how to beautify it, how to satisfy it, and for this his soul must be a drudge and slave. And if men rise up to any thoughts of a higher life, yet what is it for, but to magnify and exalt the flesh—to seek an excellency within, which is lost, and so to satisfy the pride and self-love of the heart. If any man comes this length, as to apprehend some misery, yet how vain are his inventions about the remedy of it. Not knowing how desperate the disease is, men seek help in themselves, and think, by industry and care and art, to raise them up in some measure, and please God by some expiations or sacrifices of

their own works. Now, this tends to no other purpose but to satisfy the lusts of man's pride, and so it increases that which was man's first malady, and keeps them from the true physician. In a word, all man's inventions are to hasten misery on him, or to blindfold himself till it come on; all his invention cannot reach a delivery from this misery. Let us therefore consider this which Solomon hath found out, and if we carefully consider it, and accurately ponder it in relation to our own souls, then have we also found it with him. Consider, I say, what man once was, and what you are now, and bewail your misery and the fountain of it—our departure from the fountain of life and blessedness. Know what you are, not only weak but wicked, whose art and power lies only in wickedness, skilful and able only to make yourselves miserable. And let this consideration make you cast away all your confidence in yourselves, and carry you forth to a Redeemer who hath found a ransom—who hath found out an excellent invention to cure all our distempers and desperate diseases. The counsel of the Holy Trinity that met about—if I may so speak—our creation in holiness and righteousness after his own image, that same hath consulted about the rest of it, and hath found out this course, that one of them shall be made after man's image, and for this purpose, that he may restore again God's image unto us. O bless this deep invention and happy contrivance of heaven, that could never have bred in any breast, but in the depths of eternal wisdom, and let us abandon and forsake our own vain imaginations, and foolish inventions! Let us become fools in our own eyes, that we may become wise.

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Man by seeking to be wise, became a fool, that was an unhappy invention. Now it is turned contrary, let all men take with their folly and desperate wickedness. Let not the vain thoughts and dreams of our own well being and sufficiency lodge within us, and we shall be made wise. Come to the Father's wisdom,—unto Jesus Christ, who is that blessed invention of heaven for our remedy. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you? O

when will you be washed from them? How long shall not your thoughts transcend this temporal and bodily life? How long do you imagine to live in sin, and die in the Lord,—to continue in sin and escape wrath? Why do you delude your souls with a dream of having interest in the love of God, and purchasing his favour by your works? These are some of those many inventions man hath sought out.