

THE
PECULIAR MERCY
AND
BUSINESS OF LIFE,
OPENED UP, AND APPLIED.

Several Sermons preached at Ettrick, in the year 1727.

ISAIAH XXXviii. 19.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

IT is much to be desired, that men would consider the great business of their life: but few do it, till it is just going, or gone out of their hands. Hezekiah had been at the brink of the grave, and learned those just thoughts of life, which he gives us with much concern in the text. Wherein we have,

1. The mercy of life: "The living, the living, he shall praise thee," &c. Ver. 18, he had been speaking of the dead, the inhabitants of the gloomy mansions of the grave: and in opposition to these he here speaks of the living, and in a triumphant manner proposeth to speak of them, as seeing the mercy of life. A serious view of death is the way to get just thoughts of the mercy of life.

2. Wherein the mercy of life, the peculiar mercy of it consists. And the decision of this is in a vein of thought peculiar to the spiritual man, in a spiritual frame.

1st, Ask the carnal man, where lies the mercy of life? And,

(1.) If he is in prosperity, with health and wealth, he reckons the mercy of life lies, in that the living man may enjoy the pleasures of sense, mirth, and jollity, and may lay up wealth for him and his; all which stern death robs a man of. But there is not one word of this here.

(2.) If he is in adversity, poverty, and sore sickness, he either cannot see the mercy of life at all, but thinks they are well that are away, that are out of poverty and pain, and lie at ease in the dust.

So crosses make him wish to be away. At best, he reckons it the mercy of life, that he is not there where it may be he would be worse, viz. in hell. But there is not a word of all this neither in the text.

2dly, Ask the renewed man in an ill frame of spirit, where lies the mercy of life? If he is in outward prosperity, he will be ready to reckon it lies in the comforts of this life. If he is in adversity, the troubles of life are so great, that the mercy of it is small in his view; only heaven bulks in his eyes, and that as a place of rest from trouble. But there is nothing of this neither in the text.

The decision is, The mercy of life lies in the business of life, to wit, being serviceable for God in the world: "The living, the living, he shall praise thee," &c. Hezekiah counts that the great mercy of life, to have access to be useful for God in the world. Which speaks (1.) A high esteem of God and his service, as men count it a favour to be allowed to serve their prince. (2.) An ardent love to him, as men delight to serve the interests of those they dearly love. This will be to a spiritual man in a spiritual frame the most desirable thing in life: Phil. i. 20, 21, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." This is a just endearment of life. Now, the business of life for which it is desirable, is twofold.

1. To praise or glorify God in the world; to speak of the perfections of his nature, and show forth the praises of him who hath called us, among men, to the advancement of his kingdom here under the sun: to strike up beams of his glory in a dark world, and commend him and his way before and to others. Now, here consider,

1st, Whose is this privilege: "The living, the living," *i. e.* the living all along in a succession of generations to the end of the world. That is the import of the doubling of this word. This access to the praising of God in the world, is peculiar to the living. And,

(1.) It is not those that are now dead, but those that are now living, that have access to shew forth his praise, and glorify him, in a world where he is so much dishonoured; to side with him, and take his part against his enemies. It is true, the souls of dead saints are praising God in heaven in the loftiest strains: but what the better is the world of these praises? No more than they that are sitting in the dark room down stairs, are the better of a glorious lamp shining in the upper room. Is there ever a poor sinner brought

acquainted and to fall in love with Christ by their means? No; their praises of God are to sinners here as if they were not; they hear them not. Is the kingdom of Christ in the world advanced by these praises? No. It is the living, the living only, that have access to those pieces of service to God. The living man that sits in a cote-house has the access to glorify God in the world that no saint in heaven has.

(2.) If those that are now living were once dead, they will have no more access to praise him in the world; but those that will be then living: and so on to the end. Men will go off the stage one after another, but they will not carry that work with them; but it will still be left in the hands of the living, and no other, whatever they make of it. There are heads, tongues, and hands of ministers and Christians lying in the grave, that have contrived, spoken, and acted well for God in the world: but now, if the cause of God and religion, which is very low, were at the last gasp, there is no more help to be had from those heads, tongues, and hands. The living only must speak and act for it, or it must lie.

2dly, An instance of it: "As I do this day." Hezekiah was recovered from sickness, and he gives God the praise of it. He looked on it as his bounden duty to fall closely again to that business of life, which was likely to have been taken out of his hands by death. What time of life the Lord lengthens out to us, after threatening a removal, we should be careful to use for the honour of God.

2. To propagate his name and praise: "The father to the children shall make known thy truth." It is the special business of life, to endeavour that the name of God may live and be glorified in the world, when we are dead. It is a black mark for persons not to care what come of the world if they were out of it. A child of God will be concerned, that religion may be kept up and propagated in it: and while he is living, he has access to contribute to it. And here consider,

1st, What he has access to do for that end; namely, to praise God to the younger sort, that are likely to live after he is gone; especially to his own family, and particularly his own children. (Heb.) "The father to the children;" *q. d.* The father ["shall praise thee"] to the children. They may shew to them how lovely God is, and how desirable his way: and when they have children, they may do the same to them; and so on, God's praise will be kept up in the world.

Now observe, he is still speaking of the living, for these are the subject expressly proposed to be spoken of. *Q. d.* As for the living, the living father may praise thee to the living sons. It imports,

(1.) If the father die, though the children live, he can do God no

more honour, and them no more service that way. If he has neglected his duty to his family in his life, he cannot come back again to mend the matter. If he left them ignorant of God, and strangers to him, though one word from him again could save their souls from the pit, he has no more access to give them it.

(2.) If the children die, though the father live, he can do God no more honour, and them no more service that way. He may take care of their dust, to bury it: but he can do no more for their souls: "As the tree falls it must lie." While they are both standing and living together, he has access to serve their souls: but when one of them falls, that work is at an end.

2dly, How he may do it, how he may commend him to them; namely, by making him known to them as an object worthy of their faith, trust and confidence: "Shall make known thy truth." The expression in the Hebrew is concise, "He may make known, unto thy truth." The word rendered to hope, ver. 18, properly signifying intensely to look, Neh. ii. 13, 15, is understood. *Q. d.* That they may look unto thy truth or faithfulness. So in it are two things to be considered.

(1.) The proper method of praising or commending God to the rising generation; and that is, by making him known. The more he is known, the more lovely will he appear. "God is light." The best way to commend the sun to one sitting in a dark room, is to open the windows, and let in its light, and bid him look to it with his eyes: the best way to commend God and religion to the generation rising, is to labour that they may know and understand them, by teaching.

(2.) The great thing we are to have in view in that work. It is, that they may look intensely unto his truth; that they may look away from the lies and vanities the world is holding out to them, to be embraced as their portion: and that they may look unto the truth of God in Christ, in the promise of the gospel, by an eye of faith, trust, and confidence, fixed on it, and hold by that as their portion, their sure portion.

This is what men may do for the rising generation, and the view they should do it on: but God only can give it efficacy. No doubt Hezekiah did as he said, commended God, and made him known to Manasseh his son: but how unsuccessful all he did that way was, is notour from the wicked life his son led. Yet Hezekiah's work was accepted, and his prayers heard in the end; and perhaps his words were minded too, in Manasseh's conversion at long run.

Three doctrines are deducible from the words.

DOCT. I. It is the peculiar mercy of life, that the living only are, and all along will be, those that have access to praise and glorify God in the world.

DOCT. II. It is the special business and privilege of life, to propagate religion, God's name and praise, the standing generation to the rising generation, the fathers to the children, all along.

DOCT. III. The true way of propagating religion, the standing to the rising generation, is, That the former make God known to the latter, so as they may betake themselves unto him, his truth and faithfulness, by faith and trust.

We shall handle each of these doctrines in order.

DOCT. I. It is the peculiar mercy of life, that the living only are, and all along will be, those that have access to praise and glorify God in the world.

In prosecuting this doctrine, we shall,

I. Consider the praising or glorifying God in the world.

II. Shew how it is a valuable mercy and privilege of the living, that they have access to praise God in the world.

III. How this access to praise God in the world is and will be the peculiar mercy of the living.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

1. We shall consider the praising or glorifying God in the world. And here we shall shew,

1. What praising of God is.

2. What are the peculiarities of the praises of the living.

First, What praising of God is. It is the acknowledging and declaring of the glorious excellencies of God, as he has manifested himself in his word and works; and imports,

1. The belief of the being of God: Heb. xi. 6. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is." Atheism wholly cuts off the the praises of God; for who can praise that which he does not believe to be? The works of creation and providence proclaim his being: but such is the natural enmity of man against God, and his addictedness to his lusts, that he secretly wisheth there were not a God, and so is disposed to believe so, if he could get any footing for it: Psalm xiv. 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God:" and that is at the root of men's living to a contrary end to his praise. Tit. i. ult. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

2. The knowledge of God. To whom he is an unknown God, he will be an unpraised God. Hence ignorance is ruining: Hos. iv. 6,

“ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Isa. xxvii. 11, “ It is a people of no understanding : therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them, will show them no favour.” To live to the praising of God requires,

1st, The knowledge of who he is, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, 1 John v. 7. In the name of the three persons, we are baptized by divine appointment : if we know him not so, we know not the God to whom we are engaged in baptism ; and so cannot praise him.

2dly, The knowledge of what he is : the discerning of his glorious perfections, which are the matter of his praise. We must know him to be the greatest and best of beings, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth ; more excellent than any creatures, or all of them together, as being the fountain of all excellency in them.

3dly, The knowledge of what he has done. His works are glorious—creation, providence, and redemption. By them he shews what he is, (Psalm xix. 1, “ The heavens declare the glory of God : and the firmament sheweth his handiwork,” and affords us matter of praise : and we are to think on them for that end, that we may from thence praise him, Psalm cxi. 2, “ The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.” And it is highly offensive not to regard them : Psalm xxvii. 5, “ Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.” That is to deny him his praise.

3. The love of God. Love is the mother of praise, and natively brings it forth, they that do not love God, can never kindly or acceptably praise him. 1 John iv. 16, “ God is love,” not only subjectively, infinitely loving ; but objectively, wholly lovely. And so he is in the eyes of all who live to his praise. To them the Father is lovely, the Son lovely, the Holy Spirit lovely. Every attribute of God is lovely. The holiness and purity of his nature, the great eye-sore of carnal men, is most lovely to them : Exod. xv. 11, “ Who is like unto thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?” Psalm xxx. 4, “ Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.” His works are lovely. The creation of the world is a lovely work ; the guiding of it by providence a lovely work ; but the most lovely is the redemption of the world by the blood of Christ.

4. The admiration of God ; which is, love and esteem raised to a high pitch. This is the nearest cause of praise ; for it is the heart swelling with admiration of the object, that bursts forth in praises,

Exod. xv. 11, above cited. They that live to God's praise, are admirers of him: they see all excellencies in him to be transcendent—nothing comparable to them in the whole creation, and believe there are infinite treasures of excellency in him, which they cannot comprehend. So their heart saith, with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Launching into the ocean of the glories of his nature and works, they see it is shoreless; Psalm cvi. 2, "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?"

5. *Lastly*, The expressing that love to, and admiration of him: Exod. xv. 11, forecited. Micah vii. 18, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." This is it in which the essence of praising God consists, and is the great end for which man was made: and it is the native becoming return the creature is to make to its Creator, from whom it has received all, and to whom it can give nothing, but only commend him, and set forth his glory. And this not being confined to words, is twofold.

1st, Vocal, by words. It is called "the calves of our lips," Hos. xiv. 2; and the "the fruit of our lips," Heb. xiii. 15. Man's tongue is called his glory, Psalm xvi. 9, as being a prime instrument wherewith he is furnished for praising and glorifying God. And thus we are to praise him, solemnly and stately, in the duties of worship, singing his praises; and occasionally, in speaking to his praise, as we have occasion offered.

2dly, Real, by deed or actions, though it be not accompanied with words: for as there is a practical atheism, Tit. i. ult.; so there is a practical praising or glorifying God. And this is the main thing in that praise which is the end of life, without which vocal praise avails not. It is twofold.

(1.) In heart: 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God—in your spirit, which is God's." Men's praise of men from the teeth outward may pass, but God knows the heart; and if the heart harmonize not with the tongue, it cannot be accepted of him, Isa. xxix. 13. He must be praised in our understanding, thinking and esteeming him above all, Psalm lxxiii. 25; in our will, choosing him above all, for our portion, Psalm cxlii. 5: and in our affections, loving, rejoicing, and delighting in him above all, Psalm xxxvii. 4.

(2.) In life and conversation: Matth. v. 16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify

your Father which is in heaven." A holy life is a shining light, to let a blind world see the glory of God; for as God has expressed his nature in his word, so his word is expressed again in a holy life, Phil. ii. 15, 16. The study of holiness says, God is holy; mourning for every sin proclaims him spotless; and horror of secret, as well as of open sins, is a testimony of his omnipresence and omniscience.

Secondly, What are the peculiarities of the praises of the living? The praises of living saints have these peculiarities, which the dead have no access to.

1. They are the praises of the whole man, in soul and body too: 1 Cor. vi. 20, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Those of the dead are of their souls only; but the living have access to praise God, soul and body in concert. Even the clay body hath, for the time of life, access to join in this honourable work: but death breaks it in pieces, that it can no more bear a part in God's praise.

2. They are praises which may spread among the living, as in their land, from whence the dead are cut off: Col. iii. 16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The voice of the praises of living saints, may be heard under this vault of the heavens; but the praises above, as high a strain as they are in, reach not hither, to this our native earth.

3. They are praises raised by the way to the heavenly kingdom, which the dead have no more access to join in. The living are upon the road, the dead are at their journey's end. There is a song of praise raised in the house of our pilgrimage, Psalm cxix. 54; but there is a deep silence in the grave. The wilderness-song is peculiar to the living.

4. They are praises of faith, not of sight: 2 Cor. v. 7, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." The saints in glory raise a song of praise to God, upon their seeing and enjoying; the living saints, upon their believing what their eye hath not seen, 1 Pet. i. 8. Praising God on what one sees of him, is more comfortable to the party himself: but praising him, upon what one believes of him, if other circumstances be alike, is more to the honour of God: John xx. 29, "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Rom. iv. 20, 21, "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

5. *Lastly*, They are praises to God amidst a deal of dishonours done to him. David takes notice of God's covering a table to him in the midst of his enemies, Psalm xxiii. 5; and God will take notice of praises given him in the midst of those that dishonour him: Rev. ii. 13, "I know thy works," [writing to the angel of the church in Pergamos], and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." The saints in glory praise him, there being none to open a mouth to his dishonour: but living saints praise him, in the face of contradiction by a wicked world: Prov. xxviii. 4,—“Such as keep the law, contend with the wicked.”

II. The second general head is, to shew how it is a valuable mercy and privilege of the living, that they have access to praise God in the world. The living should value this as their privilege.

1. In regard that they might justly ere now have been put beyond all possibility of praising God at all; but might have been blaspheming in hell, through extreme anguish and despair: Lam. iii. 22, “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.” The rich man in hell, tormented in the flame, had no access to praise God: the burden of wrath lying on the damned there, will hold down for ever their praises, and change them to howlings.

2. In regard of the honour thereby to be brought to God in the world; which in itself is most valuable, and therefore is man's chief end: 1 Cor. x. 31, “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Compared with Psalm l. 23, “Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.” He lives to good purpose, that lives to the honour of God; and he that doth not so live, doth at best but trifle away a life, never reaching the main end of it. Nothing should be so dear to us as God's honour; and therefore our all must be laid out on it as he calls for it, Luke xiv. 26. And it is the mercy of life, that we have access to honour him in the world.

3. In regard of the good to be thereby done to others. The view of this made Paul content to abide out of heaven for some time; as you may see, Phil. i. 23, 24, “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you.” O what a satisfying thought must it be, to be instrumental towards the saving of a soul from hell, and bringing it to acquaintance with Christ! Nobody knows what a good word, or a good example, at a time may do: and to this the living have access only; but once

dead, men can be no more serviceable to the world of mankind Eccl. ix. 10.—“For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.”

4. It is an honour to serve and honour God in the world. This makes a man truly worthy and honourable. The dignity of the master, and the work, reflects an honour on the servant that does it. Therefore says the Psalmist, Psalm lxxxiv. 10, “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” And since no master is so honourable as God is, it must be then a peculiar honour to be serviceable to him, Heb. xi.

5. This is the only true balance of that meanness, misery, and trouble, that attends this life. Considering the spiritual original, make, and vast capacity, of the soul of man; it will appear but a very mean thing to be taken up in eating, drinking, decking; yea, in building, planting, working, &c. on this cursed earth. From the seat of the blessed could we take our prospect, men so employed here would appear but as a company of emmets busy in a hillock. The troubles that attend this life are innumerable, and they fly about us as the midges do on a hot summer day. All which, viewed by the soul, are apt to make a noble mind sick of this life, in its best appearances; as a bird would be of the cage. The only balance for all this is, that in it there is access to praise God in the world. Hereby the meanest things are ennobled, and the hardest things softened, that God is to be honoured in these.

6. As men have access to praise God in this world, they have access to raise their reward in another world. Men think it a great matter to have access to raise an estate for themselves and theirs: but we have access, by our honouring of God in this world, to raise our reward in the other. For though the Lord doth not give eternal glory for our works, he gives it according to them: 2 Cor. ix. 6, “He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.” And they that have shined here in usefulness most, will shine there in glory most: Dan. xii. 3, “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.” Compared with 1 Cor. xv. 41, “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.”

7. *Lastly*, The praising of God carries a reward in its bosom, to be enjoyed in time: Psalm xix. 11,—“In keeping of them [the judgments of the Lord] there is great reward.” It is good, pleasant,

and comely, Psalm cxlvii. 1. There is a secret satisfaction in one's having done his duty, endeavouring to live to the honour of God, 2 Cor. i. 12. And particularly it makes a pleasant reflection, when one is come to the end of his course : as in the case of Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Compared with what our Lord says, John xvii. 4, "I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And he that praiseth God to others, is himself partaker of the fruits.

III. The third general head is, to shew how this access to praise God in the world is and will be the peculiar mercy of the living.

1. It is the peculiar mercy of us who are now living on the face of the earth : it is peculiar, I say, to us at this time. They who are yet unborn, can do nothing, since as yet they are not : they who are now dead, though yet they are in being, have no access more to praise God in this world, Psalm cxv. 17. There have been many generations on earth before us ; and millions of men and women are gone by death from hence into another world, who sometimes had their turn of access to this praise : but now, though they are, yet not one of them all has access to join us in praising God.

2. In all time to come, to the end of the world, this privilege will be confined to those who for the time shall be on the stage. There will be generations after us, as there have been before us ; and the work will be devolved on the next generation for their time ; with whom we, being gone off the stage, will have no more access to join, than those already dead have to join with us. And then they will go, and another rise up in their stead, and get the work put into their hands, none of the former to meddle with it : and so on to the end. The reasons are,

1st, There is no returning to this world when once gone. Death is a flitting for good and all, never to come back, Job vii. 9, 10. Job was sensible of this, chap. x. 21, when he said—"I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death." We must praise him before we lie down in the grave, or never ; for there is no rising out of it to that work, Psalm lxxxvii. 10. We cannot come back, and God will not bring us back.

2dly, The state and business of the two worlds are, by an unalterable purpose, made quite different. Here men are in a state of trial ; there in a settled state for ever, according to their management in the trial. Here is the place of working at the command and for the honour of the Master ; there is the place of the reward of their works. If the sun should come back over from west to east, and so make night day the ordinance of heaven would be quite

altered; so nobody expects it. As little is the access of any but the living, to praise God in the world, to be expected or looked for.

3dly, This world is under a peculiar mark of divine indignation, as defiled by sin, Gen. iii. 17; and should have been destroyed when it was first defiled, had not the Mediator interposed to keep up the tottering fabric for some time for the elect's sake, Isa. xlix. 8. So men are hastened through it, as through a defiled place, and have an opportunity of praising God by the way. And therefore it cannot be expected that ever that opportunity shall be repeated.

Lastly, When the dead shall live again, this world shall be destroyed, and be no more. As long as we shall lie in our graves, incapable to praise, this world will last: but when we shall live again at the resurrection, it shall be consumed by the general conflagration, and be no more. So there is no access to praise God in the world, but for those that now live, and those that shall live to the end: Rev. xx. 12,—“The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Chap. xxi. 1, “And I 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.” In the new heavens and earth, no doubt God will be praised, 2 Pet. iii. 13: but he will have no more praises here off the hand of any, when once they are gone off the stage, which will fall down under the last generation to be on it.

USE 1. Of information. Hence learn,

1. That the business of life is to honour God in the world. And if that be so, many have been many years in it, that have never yet fallen to their business, nay, nor once seriously laid to heart what their business is. O hear the great Master saying to you, Matth. xx. 6, “Why stand ye here all the day idle?” and see how ye will answer that question. Ye are busy doing nothing, worse than nothing: but what have ye done, are you doing, will ye do, for God? Ye are living: but what praise, what honour comes to God by your living? What more honour comes to God by your living, than ye would do him if ye were in the grave? I beseech you, consider this, as ye will answer it to God, who hath said, Mal. i. 6, “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?”

OBJECT. 1. Some I fear will think, though not say, that they have other business to fill their heads and hands with, how to get a through-bearing in the world for them and theirs. ANSW. Ah, is another world not worth your consideration? Or can ye think that ever ye shall enjoy God in that world, who are not careful to

honour him here? Consider what the Lord says, 1 Sam. ii. 30,—“Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.” To spend all the time you live in wrestling with this world for a through-bearing, and after ye are dead to wrestle with the wrath of God for ever, is a sad tryst; better ye had never been born. Be concerned to honour God while ye live: and God will see to your provision while ye live, and make you happy after.

OBJECT. 2. But I have no access to do any thing for the honour of God, in respect of my circumstances in the world: worldly business is by providence laid to my hand for the business of my life.

ANSW. *1st*, It is a common mistake in point of practice, that there are any who have no access to honour God in the world. Though some are placed in higher and more extensive spheres of activity for God, yet there is no station so low in the world but it is a sphere wherein people may honour God, if they have a heart for it. This you may see verified in the parable of the talents, Matth. xxv. 14, 15, “The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods: and unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey.” If one is in life, though never so low, according to the text, he may honour God. If one is a magistrate, or a church officer, he has access to honour God among those over whom he is set. Though he be neither, if he is a person of weight and consideration in the place where he lives; as far as that weight goes, so far goes the sphere of his activity for God, which he is to fill up by honouring God. If he is a master of a family, there is a sphere of activity for God he is put in. If he is a single member of a family, he has a sphere of activity among other single members of it. To this purpose speaks the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 24, “Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God.”

2dly, It is the honouring of God in our several stations that is the true honouring of him, 1 Cor. vii. 24, just now cited. That we cannot do for the honour of God what does not belong to our station, is so far from being our sin, that it would be a dishonouring of him to attempt it. The moon is useful to the world, though it shines not by day; the stars too, though they shine not so bright as the moon. The hands are useful to the body, though one does not walk on them; the feet, though one does not see with them, &c. Are you a child of a family? your business of life as such is to be an obedient, dutiful, pliable child: are you a servant? yours is to be a faithful, honest, dutiful servant. Whatever relation you stand

in ye are to honour God by a conscientious practice of the duties of your relation.

3dly, Whatever business God has laid to your hand, follow it as duty from God laid upon you; so ye will live to his honour. Hence is that exhortation of the apostle, Col. iii. 17, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." And ver. 23, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord." Set about your business as commanded you of God, acting in it as under the eye of God, and looking to his word as your rule, and to the merit of Christ for God's acceptance of it. Whatever trials and sufferings the Lord lays on you, bear them patiently, because it is his will; and bear them for the sake of Christ that bare greater for us; and look for the acceptance of your bearing them through Christ. So shall the honouring of God be the business of your life whatever your circumstances are, high or low.

2. The business of honouring God in the world, formerly in the hands of the former generation, is now devolved on you. See what ye will do with it. To this purpose prophesies the Psalmist David, Psalm cxlv. 4, "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." The former generation of the righteous, by keeping the law, contended with the wicked, and maintained the honour of God in the world; they rowed against the stream of an ungodly crew, in the face of persecution, fining, confining, banishment, violent death, till they fell by death, holding up the standard for the honour of God: and then they gave it to you, saying, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth." On this I would say,

1st, Ye must answer for the standard now. If it go now while ye live, your life shall go for ever for it, though ye were left alone to hold it up: Psalm lx. 4, "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee: that it may be displayed because of the truth." Mark viii. ult., "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Take heed then, there is a sacred trust committed into your hands; the generations of martyrs all along have conveyed it to you at the expense of their blood, it having been set up first at the expense of the blood of Christ.

2dly, Ye must either hold it up, or treacherously desert into the enemies' camp, formed to dishonour God. Hence says our Lord, Matth. xii. 30, "He that is not with me, is against me: and he that

gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Many set up for neutralists; they go not into all excess with the openly profane, but they are as far from making it the business of their life to honour God. God will rank such with his enemies: Psalm cxxv. ult., "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

3dly, The saints of former generations will condemn you, as a spurious brood of treacherous men, that made so little account of what they wared their all on to transmit to you: 1 Cor. vi. 2, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" Ye do by your ungodly lives, dishonouring God, declare them fools: the day will come, that they will declare you fools, worthy to perish for ever, though ye have come out of their loins: Rev. xix. 3, "And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

3. The business of honouring God in the world ye are to transmit to the succeeding generation, since it is the living, all along in a succession of generations to the end of the world, that have access to the praising of God. Hence says the Psalmist, Psalm lxxviii. 2, 3, 4, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord; and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." As ye have received the standard from the former, ye are to hand it down to the succeeding generation; that when ye are gone, instead of the fathers, there may be the children. See to it then, what ye do, that God may be honoured when ye are in the dust.

1st, It lies on every one of you to do it for something: Rom. xiv. 7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Love to God and your neighbour binds it on you; and none of you can want occasion for it, while ye live among persons, some of whom may live after you; and have a tongue to speak, and hands to act.

2dly, If ye do it not, the honour of God is far from your heart. They that have nothing of God to communicate to others succeeding them, have nothing of God within themselves. Grace is a fire, and fire will go about to set on fire whatever is next it; so that if it do not burn, it is because it is not combustible. In the creation of plants, every tree was made with its seed in itself: so it is in the new creation of the trees of righteousness, John iv. 29.

3dly, If ye do it not, ye lay a stumbling-block before the succeeding generation, which they may be ruined by. The generation of Jews in Christ's time rejecting the gospel, as they murdered Christ, they have murdered sixteen or seventeen generations of their off-

spring since. What will come of the succeeding generation that looks to you, that live not to the honour of God? When God calls for the standard for his honour at their hand, they will say, they never saw it; though that will not excuse them, it will aggravate your condemnation.

4. Know that ye must honour God in the world now or never, Eccl. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Now is the accepted time, wherein ye may act for your own salvation; miss this time, and the door will be shut on you never to be opened again, Prov. i. 24, &c. Now is the working time for the honour of God, wherein ye may do something for God; miss it, and the occasion you will never more have. I would ask you,

1st, Does it concern you to honour God? or is it none of your business? If the Father created you, certainly ye are bound to live for his honour, Rom. xi. ult. If the Son redeemed you, there is a double tie on you to live for him who died for you, Philip. i. 21. If the Holy Ghost has sanctified you, he has dedicated, fitted, and disposed you for it.

2dly, When will ye lay out yourself for it then? It is not a work to be done at any time, but confined to one time, the time of life. Hence said our Saviour, John ix. 4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Now the glass is set up to you: there is much of it run, as ye may see by looking to the lower end, the time ye have lived: the upper end ye cannot see, what time ye have yet to live; how soon it may run out then, ye know not. But it will never be turned for you. When the last sand runs out, the word is given, The Master allows no more time for his work to you, Give account of your stewardship.

5. *Lastly*, Life is valuable, as giving access to honour God in the world. Hence says Hezekiah in the text and context, Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19, "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth." There are many impressions of vanity on life. In itself by sin it is become a puff of wind, that passeth away; a vapour suddenly vanishing: it is like a post for swift passage, a dream for vanity, and a dung-hill for vileness. It is the place of rendezvous for innumerable troubles and afflictions; and is a low station for an immortal soul, with much meanness about it. There are only two things which it is valuable for, viz. that there is access in it,

1st, To act for eternal salvation to ourselves, which the dead can no more do; 2 Cor. vi. 2,—“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” And in this respect an hour’s life may be worth a thousand worlds, because eternity may depend on it, and heaven be secured.

2dly, To act for the honour of God in the world, John ix. 4, fore-cited, which the dead have no more access to. To a good man an opportunity of doing good is valuable, as to an ill man to do mischief. What folk love, they will value access to serve: so the sinner values access to serve his lusts; and the saint to serve his Lord, and his neighbour. So, on this consideration,

(1.) Life is carefully and honourably to be preserved, as a valuable thing; and not to be thrown away, by neglect of the means of its preservation, or exposing it wilfully to means of destruction: Exod. xx. 13, “Thou shalt not kill.”

(2.) The access to honour God in life, is to be laid in balance with the troubles of life, that the former may downweigh the latter, by that overweight that God’s honour bears to our case: Phil. i. 20, “According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.”

(3.) It is nicely to be improved to its proper ends, as a precious non-such, passing opportunity; every filing of it is to be gathered up as gold-sparkling. Hence Paul exhorts to “redeem the time, because the days are evil,” Eph. v. 16.

USE 2. Of reproof to several sorts of persons.

1. To those who look on the business of praising and honouring God in the world as a burden. In itself it is the mercy of life; but they treat it as the plague of life. They are, as Doeg, detained before the Lord; and any holy exercise is a weariness to them; as was the case with Israel, Amos viii. 5, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?” The Lord takes notice of this temper of spirit, Mal. i. 13, “Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it, and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts.” O how would ye take with heaven? but be sure that ye will never get there in that case, as not being “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” Col. i. 12. Ye will be eased of that burden, but for a heavier one, Rev. xvi. ult.

2. To those who look on it as none of their business, whoever else be concerned in it. They make no profession of living to the honour of God, and their practice is conformable. This says you

neither to look on God as your Master, nor yet as your Father, Mal. i. 6. And if so, doubtless, ye cannot look for his reward; nor for the eternal inheritance of his children: where then will lie the gain of this liberty which you take to yourselves?

3. To those who spend their life without consideration of the chief business of life. They "spend their years as a tale that is told," Psalm xc. 9. O how many are dreaming away a lifetime, out of which they are not like to awake till death awake them! They can consider any thing but their soul's state: but the thought of that they cannot dwell on. They that cannot consider the great business of life, will certainly lose the opportunity of that business, and it will speak to them in the end: Prov. xx. 4, "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."

4. To those who do delay the business of honouring God, till they shall be near death. Many such off-putters are there, who can never find the time to begin their work, though they do not want thoughts of it; as was the case with Felix, Acts xxiv. 25, who said to Paul, "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." When they are young, they put off till they be old; then, till they be going to die; when sickness takes them, they put off still in hopes of recovery; when they are past hopes, they are not capable for it; and so the soul is lost. Meanwhile, all they are concerned for at best, is but their own safety, not God's honour; and being regardless of this latter, no wonder they fall short of the former.

5, *Lastly*, To those whose life is a life of dishonouring God, by secret and open wickedness and untenderness. And this seems to be the general case of this generation, by which we appear to be a generation of God's wrath: Micah vii. 2, 4, "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood: they hunt every man his brother with a net. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge: the day of thy watchmen, and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity." Corruption of life and manners is become universal, so that people are become shameless in their sin, and proof against conviction from the word, being so hardened under the softening means of grace, that the case is grown hopeless; all which cannot miss, soon or late, to bring down some rousing stroke, Jer. vi. 15, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord."

USE 3. Of exhortation. Make it the business of your life to live to the honour of God.

QUEST. How shall we do that?

ANSW. 1. Honour him by faith: Rom. iv. 20, "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Faith gives God the honour of all his glorious perfections as manifested in the word; and without faith there is no acceptable honouring of him. Therefore the Christian life is a life of faith, Gal. ii. 20. And honour him,

1st, By believing on his Son for salvation, receiving and resting on him as your Saviour, to save you from sin and wrath: 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." If ye honour not God this way, ye honour him not at all, John v. 23. God has sent his Son in the character of Saviour of the world, 1 John iv. 14: put your case in his hand, that ye may be saved from your sin, and sanctified by him, and saved from wrath through him. If ye live in your sins, and will not be healed; if ye do not believe him able and willing to save you, ye dishonour God egregiously in a most tender point: 1 John v. 10, 11,—"He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son."

2dly, By trusting God in Christ in all times and cases: Isa. xxvi. 4, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever." The established way of communication with heaven, is by trust in God: and faith is productive of hope, which is the anchor of the soul, keeping the soul safe and spiritually at rest, in all storms public or private, Psalm xxxvii. 7. Trusting in the creature, is a putting it in God's place; and hence bearing such a weight, it bows under it, and fails. But God is honoured by trusting him.

3dly, By believing his word in all the parts of it. Hence is that exhortation of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 20—"Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." God is to be honoured by faith's acting on every part of the word; on the commands, believing the divine authority, equity, and goodness of them, as a transcript of the divine nature, Psalm cxix. 128; on the promises, believing the certain accomplishment of them, however unlikely, Rom. iv. 20, 21; on the threatenings, believing the justice and truth of them, Isa. xxxix. ult, and lxvi. 2.

2. Honour him by the practice of holiness: 1 Pet. ii. 9, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar

people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." To lead a holy, tender life, is the way to honour God, conforming to him, and labouring to be like him in all conversation, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. If ye be not uniform and universal in your obedience, that part ye are deficient in may bring a blot on all the rest; as Judas' covetousness and treachery wiped out all his good deeds. And if ye would live to the honour of God, I would recommend to you particularly,

1st, Diligent and reverent worshipping of God: Matth. iv. 10, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Psalm lxxxix. 7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints: and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." Worship him in your families, morning and evening; worship him in secret by yourselves; worship him in the public assemblies; set up for his honour in the world; make conscience of joining therein for the honour of God. And be reverent in the frame of your heart, and in your outward gesture, as knowing that he is a great God with whom ye have to do: and there can be no reverence in their hearts, who behave irreverently.

2dly, Be nice and exact, in point of justice, in your dealings; shaking your hands of all gain of unrighteousness, as in the sight of a holy, just God. Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: he shall dwell on high," &c. That baseness of spirit, disposing to pick and steal, cheat, and catch any little advantage they can get of their neighbour without being discovered, that one can trust them no farther than they see, is most dishonouring to God, as if either he did not see, or else did approve of their wicked practices, Psalm l. 21, 22.

3dly, Be readily disposed to the duties of humanity, doing good to your neighbour, being kind, merciful, and compassionate to them that are in distress and need: Col. iii. 12, "Put therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." This honours God in a very particular manner: Luke vi. 35, 36, "But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful, and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." And it has much encouragement by promise: Prov. iii. 9, 10, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase.

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Psalm xli. 1, 2, 3, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness." A selfish, unkind, unsympathizing, narrow spirit, is a great stain on an otherwise fair character.

4thly, Be the same in secret when no eye sees you, that you would be in public. This will much honour God, when the conscience of his eye being on you, is as forcible to restrain you from evil, as the eyes of the world would be; as was the case with Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9, when he said to his lewd mistress, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" O what do the practisers of secret mischief think of God! They can do a mischief unseen, and then cover it with a lie. But alas! is there not a God in heaven, that sees himself dishonoured by such practices? See Prov. xxvi. 26. Open shame, or else a secret stroke, will be the consequence, Job xx. 26.

5thly, Shew yourselves on God's side, in the midst of the dishonours done to him in the world. For ye must either join issue with the dishonourers of his name, or else testify against them: hence says our Saviour, Matth. xii. 30, "he that is not with me, is against me: and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." If you have no heart nor brow to appear for God, while ye see him dishonoured, remember what God accounts of that, and how he will treat it: Mark viii. ult., "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Beware of being partakers with other men's sins; but set yourselves to be a check upon sin in others, and witnesses against it, else ye honour not God.

6thly, Commend the way of God and religion to others, and encourage good motions where ye can perceive them. Grace is communicative for the honour of God; and every gracious person is disposed to propagate religion. Hence said the Lord of Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment," &c. The wearing out of that so much now, from what it was in former years, is one of the black symptoms of the decay of religion at this day.

7thly, Learn to bear troubles in the world with a Christian pa-

tience, meekness, resignation, and holy cheerfulness. This doth exceedingly tend to the honour of God; as you see exemplified in the worthies mentioned, Heb. xi. There is a despising of the chastening of the Lord, wherein the proud and foolish scorn to be lowered by the rebukes of Providence, wherein the atheism of the heart, and contempt of God appears. There is a fainting under the rebukes of Providence, wherein unbelief appears. Both are dishonourable to God, and to be guarded against, Heb. xii. 5. The middle course is to God's honour.

Lastly, Walk with God in a conscientious performance of the duties of your station. Hence is that exhortation of the apostle's, 1 Cor. vii. 24, "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." That is the sphere wherein ye are set to honour God: and God is much honoured that way. It is exemplified in the case of the priests, Mal. ii. 6, in that of wives, 1 Pet. iii. 5, and in that of servants, Tit. ii. 10. No man can live to the honour of God, who does not carefully notice, and diligently pursue the duties of his station, to the honour of God.

I shall give you a few motives to live to the honour of God.

MOT. 1. God is the author of thy life. The life and being thou hast, thou hast from God: Rom. xi. ult., "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Therefore, "remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," Eccl. xii. 1. And since he is your first cause, is it not reasonable that he be your chief end? The life which you had from him, will ye not improve for him?

MOT. 2. God is the preserver of thy life. Hence says David, Psalm xxxvi. 6, "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast." For every moment's life thou hast had, thou art his debtor. Thy life is continually in his hand, to prolong it, or take it away, as seems good in his sight. If he should but withdraw his upholding hand, thy life would presently go. Every moment there must be a new out-letting of influence from him for preservation of thy life. How unaccountable must it be then not to live to his honour? This was a grievous charge against Belshazzar, Dan. v. 23—"The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

MOT. 3. God is the giver of all thou hast whereby thou mayest honour him. Hast thou a tongue whereby thou art capable to speak for God, and hands to act for him? he gave them to thee. Hast thou any health, strength, wealth, and reputation, whereby thou art in capacity to honour him? all is from him: and shall not his own be used for him? Hence saith David, 1 Chron. xxix. 14,—

“ All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”
Is it not sacrilegious to do otherwise ?

MOT. 4. God puts opportunities in thine hand for honouring him. As he has given thee means whereby thou mayest honour him, so his providence lays to thy hand opportunities calling thee to use them, Luke xix. 13. Every opportunity is a providential call, to lay out what the Lord has put in thy hand for his service. And it will be found dangerous to hide one’s talents in the earth, and not lay them out for God.

MOT. 5. There are some who are deprived of those abilities or occasions ye have to honour God. So the whole Pagan world is deprived of gospel-light, which we all have ; the sick of those which the healthy have. The not improving of them then will aggravate your condemnation, Matth. xi. 21. It is sad to be cumberers of the ground in God’s vineyard, taking up room in it uselessly, which others might improve to good advantage.

MOT. 6. Ye have forfeited by sin all your abilities, opportunities, and your very life. God might justly have taken them all from us and made us as incapable to speak or act for his honour, as we have been unwilling to it. But his patience has suffered us long, and he has done us good though unthankful and evil, if peradventure these might lead us to repentance. Shall not this engage us to live to his honour ?

MOT. 7. This was the design of the redemption purchased by Christ, Tit. ii. 14, “ Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Man was made at first for the honour of God: sin entering rendered him unfit for that his great work. Therefore Christ died that they might be again brought to live to God’s honour, Eph. v. 25—27. If then ye are not so living, it is an evidence Christ’s redemption is not applied to you as yet: and if ye continue so, it will evidence that ye are none of the redeemed ones.

MOT. 8. It is the design of the sanctification of the Spirit. Hence says the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 9, “ Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” When God puts his Spirit into a man, it is that he may walk in his way, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. So that if ye live not to the honour of God, it is an evidence that ye have not the Spirit, but are dead while ye live.

MOT. 9. *Lastly*, It is a lost life that is not lived to the honour of God, lost in death, eternal death. Hence says our Lord, Matth. xvi. 25, 26, “ Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever

will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Consider, this life is short, it is soon away; it is uncertain, none knows how soon: but such as it is, eternity depends on it: Eccl. ix. 10—"For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." If ye live not to the honour of God here, never expect to live with him hereafter in heaven. Remember the end of the slothful servant, Matth. xxv. 30, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For your help to live to the honour of God, take these following directions:—

1. Allow yourselves the justice once seriously to consider, now that ye are living, and must die, what will be the best way for you to spend that bit of life. It is a pity that people should not propose to themselves a design of living, and consider what is that design of life that will come to the best account at length. Sure if ye do, ye will find no design so reasonable and advantageous as this.

2. Then take him for your God in Christ, that ye may live to his honour; and do not think that it is by your living to his honour that he must become your God. Faith must go before obedience, if ever the obedience be kindly. Faith, first embracing salvation in the free offer of the gospel, natively engages the heart to honour God, as a son doth his father.

3. Labour to keep up the love of God in the heart, by believing his love; and that will be a strong band. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

4, *Lastly*, Firmly believe that there is a reward of grace for the righteous; and that not a good word or good work, spoke or done for God, shall want a reward. Hence is that exhortation of the apostle's, 1 Cor. xv. ult, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Doct. II. It is the special business and privilege of life, to propagate religion, God's name and praise, the standing generation to the rising generation, the fathers to the children, all along.

In discoursing this doctrine, I shall shew,

1. What it is to propagate religion, God's name and praise, to the rising generation.

II. Who are the standing and rising generation, the fathers and the children, among whom this propagation of religion is to pass.

III. In what respects it is the special business of life.

IV. In what respect it is the special privilege of life.

V. *Lastly*, Apply.

1. I shall shew what it is to propagate religion, God's name and praise, to the rising generation. It implies these four things :—

1. The having of religion ourselves. None can propagate what they have not. If men have not the knowledge and love of God themselves, how can they praise him to others? Men are sensible, that if they gain not a competent portion of the world to themselves, they can leave none to their children: so if they be idle or wasters, they are unjust to their families, 1 Tim. v. 8. Even so if ye are not religious, ye not only dishonour God, and destroy your own souls, but ye are unjust to the rising generations, and destructive to their souls too.

2. The profession of religion. Hence says the apostle, Rom. x. 10, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Men may have a profession without the practice of religion; but the practice requires the profession of it. And no man will ever propagate religion that is not himself a professor of it. And the profession must be such as is not visibly contradicted by the practice: for if example destroy what precept builds up, there is no propagating religion to others by that means. So a credible profession of religion is a debt owing to the rising generation.

3. A desire to continue and spread religion in the world. Without this none will propagate it: for what men have no desire of the continuance or spreading of, they will be loath to propagate. And it is the want of concern for the continuance and spreading of religion, that makes men so careless about the propagating thereof. They have no due concern for their own souls: therefore they have none either for God's honour, or the good of those that come after them.

4, *Lastly*, Contributing our endeavours to bring others, and particularly the rising generation, to the knowledge and practice of religion. Hence says the Psalmist, Psalm lxxxviii. 2—4, "I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord; and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." Man is born like a wild ass's colt, wanting both knowledge and experience. We see such as come into

our world, come in naked among us; and we judge ourselves obliged to clothe them, feed them, and teach them how to do for themselves. But withal they can have and can do as little for their souls, as for their bodies; and shall we leave them destitute in that point? How will we answer that to God? Now, to contribute endeavours to bring them to religion, lies in endeavouring,

1st, To bring them to faith in Jesus Christ, which is the foundation of all religion: Psalm lxxviii. 7, "That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments." They come into the world lost sons and daughters of Adam, under God's wrath and curse. There is a Saviour provided; but they know it not, till the standing generation tell them of it. They are averse naturally to come to that Saviour, and are not aware of the danger of slighting him: it is justice and charity then to deal with them, in order to convince and bring them in.

2dly, To bring them to holiness of life; as did Abraham, Gen. xviii. 19, "I know him, (says the Lord), that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." When they come into our world, they bring a corrupt nature with them, which begins early to sprout. Satan will begin his temptations with them as soon as they are capable, losing no time. The longer sin continues in them uncurbed, the stronger does it grow. It nearly concerns the standing generation then to contribute their endeavours to quench the hellish flame, and to turn the stream and course of their life from sin to holiness. And this,

(1.) By precept and counsel, Gen. xviii. 19, forecited. Thus we are to praise God to them, by word of mouth. We should shew them what we have to say in God's behalf, commend religion to them, disparage the way of sin and of the world to them; bind duty on their conscience, by shewing them the tie of the word, and oblige them thereto by any authority we have over them.

(2.) By example. Let us write out religion in our own walk before them, that they may be brought to copy after us. Those precepts that are illuminated with example, are most ready to take. Beware of casting an ill example before their eyes; for the corruption of nature lies that way; and he that sins before a child, sins twice; for his sin lies fair to be repeated by the young spectator.

(3.) By dependence on the Lord for a blessing on the means used for their good. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 4, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Whoever he be that plants, if God give not the increase, there will be none, 1 Cor. iii. 6. That is a

a great truth in all cases, in spiritual as well as worldly things, I Sam. ii. 9,—“By strength shall no man prevail.” If a man should use the best arguments, the strongest motives, the most feasible measures, for bringing others into the way of religion; and upon the suitability of the means promise himself success, he takes the way most likely to render them ineffectual. The word spoken needs to be mixed with faith in the speaker. And he is most likely to succeed that uses the means of God’s appointment for doing good, with entire dependence on the Lord for success.

(4.) *Lastly*, By prayer for them. Thus it is promised concerning Christ, Psalm lxxii. 15, that prayer shall be made for him continually, viz. that his kingdom may come, by the daily coming in of new subjects to him. Since the success of all that we can do for the good of the rising generation depends on the Lord’s blessing, it is necessary that we plead for them at the throne of grace, quickening ourselves thereto, by consideration of the honour of God, and their eternal welfare, that depend upon it.

II. The second general head was to show, Who are the standing and rising generation, the fathers and the children, among whom this propagation of religion is to pass. And this must be stated according to the language of the Holy Ghost, and the analogy of other parts of scripture, if we would rightly see whose is this duty. In general I shall premise,

1. All superiors and inferiors are in scripture-style comprehended under fathers and children. This is plain from the fifth commandment, which, under the name of father and mother, whose relatives children are, prescribes the mutual duties of superiors and inferiors. Therefore every one is to propagate religion to his inferiors.

2. Forasmuch as there is no perfect and absolute equality among men, but some who are inferior in one respect to others, may be superior to them in another respect; it is the duty of equals and inferiors to propagate religion among themselves, and to their superiors, mutually communicating their light and warmth.

3. Some may belong to the standing generation in one respect, who belong to the rising one in another; as a person who is inferior to some, and superior to others. So they are to have it propagated to them, and they are to propagate it to others again.

4, *Lastly*, The same command of God that binds the standing generation and fathers to propagate religion, binds the rising generation and children to receive it. God, by binding parents to instruct, binds the children to receive instruction. And they that are the rising generation now, will be the standing in a little. But more particularly,

1. Fathers of the state; magistrates, supreme or subordinate, are to propagate religion to their political children, their subjects. They are God's vicegerents on earth, clothed with dominion and authority over others, to be employed for God in whose name they act. Hence is that promise, Isa. xlix. 23, "Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers." And it is one of the blackest symptoms of the corruption of the world, that oft-times they are found set to extirpate religion.

2. Fathers in the church, ministers and other ruling church-officers, to their ecclesiastical children, the people whom they are set over, 2 Kings ii. 12. It is for this very end they are put in office. Hence says the apostle, Heb. xiii. 17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Jesus Christ brought this religion from heaven, employed his apostles to propagate it: to them they succeed in the office of propagating religion; and must see to make it their business, as they will be answerable.

3. Fathers of families to their children. For every family ought to be a church, wherein holy worship, doctrine, discipline, and government ought to be maintained, by the heads thereof. And particularly,

1st, Fathers and mothers to the children procreated of their bodies. This is the chief thing in the text, "The father to the children shall make known thy truth." Compared with Gen. xviii. 19, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." It is but an inferior part of your charge, to provide meat and clothes for your children, and to put them in a way of living: the chief part is to see to their souls, that they may be recovered out of the lost state they are in by nature. It will be but a sorry kindness, to be concerned for their provision in time, if ye neglect them as to their eternal concernus. It is by them your name is to be propagated, and you are to propagate God's name to them, in point of gratitude to God, justice and natural affection to them.

2dly, They are to do it also to all others in their family, whether they be servants, or whatever they be, if they be members of the family for shorter or longer time. Being in your family, ye are instead of fathers and mothers to them, and owe them that benefit. Hence masters are called fathers, 2 Kings v. 13; and the duty of propagating religion is expressly extended to one's household, Gen. xviii. 19, forecited. And whosoever have the chief authority in a

family, though they be servants themselves, are the fathers of it in this sense.

4. Fathers in gifts or grace, to those who are children in these respects in comparison of them, 1 John ii. 12, 13. So Joseph was a father to Pharaoh, Gen. xlv. 8. If God has bestowed on you more gifts or grace than on others; mind ye are thereby made fathers to those that are weaker than you, and are obliged to communicate your light to them, 1 Cor. xii. 7. So teachers are called fathers, Gen. iv. 22; and the Spirit of God the common Father, 1 Sam. x. 12. It will then make a dreadful reckoning, for men to have gifts, and not lay them out for the benefit of others; to use their gifts just for ostentation, and instead of helping, to brangle and confound, and perplex the weaker with them.

5. Fathers in years, to those who are children in respect of age to them, 1 Tim. v. 1, 2. It is Elihu's observation, Job xxxii. 7, that "days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." The more days the more experience, the more access to improve in knowledge: and so to be the more useful to the younger. Mind, then, that your superiority in years constitutes you fathers to those younger than you. Ye will not forget it in point of the regard ye expect from them, and God allows you it, 1 Pet. v. 5; but then ye should make conscience of the duty too—propagating religion to them.

Thus ye see the rising and standing generation. And if these fathers would set themselves to the propagating of religion to their respective children, the work would go on.

III. The third general head was, to shew in what respects it is the special business of life. The business of life appointed by the great Master is manifold: but the sum of it is to honour God, Rom. xi. ult.: and the chief branch thereof, the special business of life, is to propagate religion, the standing to the rising generation. This will appear in the following particulars:—

1. It is the business of life, that would have been the business of it though sin had never entered into the world. The business of the lawyer, and physician, and many handicrafts now in the world, owe their original and necessity to sin's entrance. Nay, the very business of our own salvation does so too; for if Adam had stood the time of trial, all his posterity's eternal happiness would have been thereby secured to their hand. But God having settled the manner of the propagation of mankind, as Gen. i. 28, it was an evidence that the succeeding generations were not to be created in their prime as Adam was; but to be born infants, and grow up by degrees, in knowledge of religion, and other things, as appears from Luke ii. ult. And this would have afforded this business.

2. It is the business of life, that most singly looks to the honour of God. God is honoured by our working out our own salvation: but then our own advantage bears great weight in it allowably, as well as his honour; but this is a business carried on not for ourselves, but for God allenerly; and in that respect is the more noble. Hence we find the apostle willing, for the great end of the propagation of religion, either to live or die, to put off his own eternal happiness for a time, Phil. i. 26, downwards. And he prefers one's edifying the church, to his own comfort, 1 Cor. xiv. 4, 5. He edifies the church that edifies his house, Neh. iii. 28, 30.

3. It is the business of life, that is the end of life and salvation given to the elect, and all their comforts and enjoyments. Hence said our Lord to Peter, Luke xxii. 32, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." We get life and salvation by believing in Christ; and are as really possessed of eternal life that we can never lose, upon our first believing, as the saints in heaven are, though not in that measure, 1 John v. 11, 12. When the Lord had a mind to honour Paul to propagate religion, he reached his own heart first by his grace: and then having so furnished him, he set him to work. Is not that the special business of life, for which God brings people into a state of salvation?

4. It is the business of life, that the new creature as natively falls to, as the new-born infant falls a-breathing. Hence it is said, Psalm xxii. 30, 31, "A seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this." So the woman of Samaria, John iv. 29, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Paul, as soon as he was converted, fell a propagating the religion that before he persecuted. Grace makes people communicative; and there is never a soul in which the leaven of grace is received, but would, if it could, leaven the whole world with the same.

5. It is the business of life, that is most useful to mankind. And we should remember, that both conscience and interest requires us to live so as to be useful to our fellow-creatures: Rom. xiv. 7, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Some have been great blessings to mankind by their usefulness, in propagating arts and sciences, in relieving the oppressed, and helping the needy: but none so useful as those who have propagated religion among them; as extending not only to their good in this, but the other world, Isa. xix. 24, 25. And a disposition to be useful to mankind would prompt men to this duty.

6. It is the business of life of the most diffusive usefulness. It brings honour to God, comfort to one's self, and advantage to others; it brings advantage to their souls, tends to make them holy here, and happy hereafter. It reaches not only to the present generation, but to the generations yet unborn: in so far as, you propagating religion to your children, they will propagate it again to theirs, and theirs to theirs, and so on. It is to be lamented, that some children follow not the steps of their religious parents. But every body may observe, that there are some families wherein one generation after another appears for God; others wherein, generation after generation, religion can never get place among them. Trace these back, and ye may come to one that was careful to propagate religion to his children, and his children propagated it again to theirs, and so on; and to another that had no care that way about his children, and his children had as little again about theirs, and so on.

7. *Lastly*, It is the business of life that is the most valuable, most worthy of the dignity of an immortal soul, and likest the life that Christ led in the world. The business of most men is nothing but laborious trifling: their thoughts, cares, and time, are wholly spent on things pertaining to this life; as if they had souls of no other constitution than their bodies. It is nothing like the life of Christ, who went about doing good, propagating religion: 1 Pet. ii. 21, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Compared with 1 John ii. 6, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, to shew in what respect it is the special privilege of life.

1. It is that whereby we may honour God most, and so answer the end of our creation most. In our own embracing of religion we receive the light, in propagating it we diffuse the light received to the greater glory of God: 1 Pet. ii. 9, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Hence among those who turn from sin unto righteousness, those who turn most of others to it will have the greatest glory; Dan. xii. 3, "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."

2. It is that whereby we may be most useful in the world to others. No benefit done to our fellow-creatures is comparable to it. We have indeed access to do for their temporal advantage, but this

is for their eternal. And when the opportunity of life is over, there is no more doing that way, Luke xvi. 27, downwards.

USE 1. Of reproof to several sorts of persons. And,

1. To those who make no conscience of propagating religion to their families, among their children and servants. Every man is, by divine appointment, the prophet of his own family to teach them, the priest to worship God with them, and the king to rule them. Each will maintain his own authority to his power; but family worship with many is not so closely stuck to, but family teaching least of all, which is yet commanded of God: Deut. vi. 6, 7, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The want of this makes ministerial teaching in preaching and examination so unsuccessful. How will men answer this neglect of the special business of life?

2. To those who are backward and averse to receive family instruction, or submit to family discipline, checks and reproofs for their miscarriages. They will get away from family catechising on Sabbath nights, shift family-exercise, and cannot endure to be checked for their miscarriages: and therefore they like best to be in those families where least of these is to be found. But if it is the duty of others to propagate religion to you, it is on the peril of your souls ye refuse to receive it. It will aggravate your condemnation, John iii. 10.

3. To those who set an ill example before those that are younger than they. Much of the corruption of children is owing to the ill examples set them by parents, servants, and others whom they are near. This lets them see much ill which they would otherwise be ignorant of; and the bias of their nature lying that way, they are by that means carried down the stream. So a wo is brought on themselves, and them that set them the copy: Matth. xviii. 7, "Wo unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come: but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh." Oh that men would consider, that they do in effect teach that which they do or say before the younger sort; for childhood is the imitating age.

4. To those who do not check the outbursts of corrupt nature in those of the younger sort, especially parents to their children. O the cruelty of some parents, who, by their ceasing to nip sin in the bud in their children, betray them into such habits of sin, as afterwards is too late to correct. They will neglect prayer, profane the Sabbath, swear, lie, and meet with no check: they will steal little things, and

the parents will make them welcome. And thus, by their parents' means, some are so accustomed to sin, that as they grow, it grows, till it brings some to an ill end. Remember the children of Bethel, 2 Kings ii. 23, 24.

5. To those who propagate irreligion to the rising generation; who teach a young generation to despise serious godliness, to contemn the ordinances of God, and to lead loose and licentious lives, impatient of restraint. Do they not propagate irreligion, who keep up their minced oaths, Haith, Faith, &c. which would die out of their language, were it not that they were propagated from father to son, from the old to the young; who keep up the observation of superstitious times and customs, Yule, Fastens-even, &c., the relics of Popery and Paganism, which might be razed out of memory, were it not that they are carefully propagated from one generation to another?

6. To those that go about to debauch a young generation, by instilling into them loose and licentious principles, which youth is ready to fall in with; by taking a liberty with them in obscene filthy speaking, making youthful lusts the subject of their mirth and sport, leading them into drunkenness, an inlet to all other vices; tempting them to the commission of the sin of uncleanness with them, which will be bitterness in the end to the seducer and the seduced; encouraging them to acts of dishonesty, cheating and stealing from their parents or masters. These are factors for hell, who do what in them lies to destroy souls Christ died for.

7. To those that are ready to hide and cloke the scandalous sins of others, working that they may not be brought to light. How many poor souls of the younger sort, whom Satan has got led aside into the ways of sin, might have been recovered out of the snare of the devil, if it had not been the cruel kindness of some, who bestirred themselves to cover their sin? But thereby they have been hardened in their sin, and have gone from evil to worse, till at length they have been ruined altogether. See what an awful threatening there is pronounced against such, Lev. v. 1, "If a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity."

8, *Lastly*, To those who cannot see themselves under any obligation to propagate religion, and concern themselves as little about it. They think that may be the business of ministers, and possibly of fathers to their own children; but not theirs. As soon as the Spirit of God touches your hearts in earnest about your own salvation, ye will change your mind; ye will find a natural concern for the ad-

vancing of the kingdom of Christ: John iv. 29, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" The love of God, and of your neighbour, planted in the heart, will create a concern this way: and not daring to be against him, and scatter, ye will be for Christ, and gather with him.

USE 2. Of exhortation. Make it the special business of your lives to propagate religion to the rising generation.

MOT. 1. There is the strongest obligations on you for it. Ye are in that point under the tie of,

1st, Divine authority. God commands you to do it, requires it of you. It is commanded to all to edify one another, 1 Thess. v. 11; yea, all things must be done for that end, 1 Cor. xiv. 26. And the reason is plain, that God has placed men in society, and in Christian society for that end, Rom. xiv. 7. And the elder sort are made tutors and teachers to the younger for that end, Deut. iv. 10, and xi. 19.

2dly, Gratitude to God. Is not God your Creator, Preserver, and Sustainer? And what can ye do for him, for all the goodness bestowed on you, if ye do not propagate his name and praise, and strive to stir up the love and fear of him in the rising generation? If ye have any share in the redemption of Christ, ye cannot but find yourselves under the strongest ties of gratitude for redeeming love, to labour that his name may be transmitted from generation to generation. Hence says the Psalmist, Psalm lxxii. 17, "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed."

3dly, Justice to former generations, who have propagated religion to us. What case had we been in this day, if it had not been for the sufferings of confessors, and the blood of martyrs, which they underwent, that religion might be transmitted to us, and by us to succeeding generations? Had they given up with it, it had been lost as to us. Now, they have an interest in succeeding generations: and if we propagate it not to them, we betray our trust, and are unjust to them, and denude the succeeding generation of the inheritance of their fathers. We should, like those spoken of, Psalm lxxviii. 3, 4, "utter the things which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us; not hiding them from our children, shewing to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord; and his strength and his wonderful works that he hath done."

4thly, Our own interest. That maxim, Prov. xi. 24, "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty," holds in this, as much as

in any thing. Religion is a fire, which, being smothered, goes out, but, getting a vent, increaseth. It is like the widow's oil, that increased in the pouring out; and like the bread that increased in the breaking. Were men more set on propagating religion to others, they would have more to themselves.

5thly, Charity to the rising generation. Their eternal state, as to well or wo, depends on their embracing or continuing strangers to religion. They need your help: for the bias of their nature lies the wrong way; the devil and an evil world cease not to ply them to walk according to that bias; and if their spiritual enemies gain their point, they are ruined.

MOT. 2. This is the chief part of your generation-work. The work of our own salvation must be seen to, Philip. ii. 12; but that is not all we have to do. We are to do that for ourselves; but then for the honour of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures, we are to ply our generation-work, Acts xiii. 36; and that mainly lies here: Psalm cxlv. 4, "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts:" Ye are all doing: but what are ye doing for the honour of God, for the service of your generation? Ye have a room in this generation; and God who set you in it, will call you to account how ye fill it up.

MOT. 3. As ye carry yourselves in this matter, your sin or your good works will be going on, after ye are dead and gone, in this world. The last judgment we must undergo, is not without reason delayed to the end of the world; for the sins of wicked men, and the good works of the godly, will then be hugely increased beyond what they are at their death. Good Abel is useful to this day: Heb. xi. 4,— "He being dead yet speaketh." Haman, in his life, set a mischief agoing which continued after he was gone, Esth. viii. 3; and the sin of Jeroboam the first king of Israel, continued till that kingdom was at an end, 2 Kings xvii. 22, 23. If ye propagate religion to the rising generation, that good work will survive you; and if ye neglect it, your criminal omission may live and destroy souls long after ye are gone, which will be laid to your charge at the great day.

MOT. 4. It is a noble and beneficial work. Hence says the apostle James, chap. v. 19, 20, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." To save a soul from perishing, is such noble work, that it is an honourable working to be aiming at it, and using means to compass it.

MOT. 5, *Lastly*, The doom of unprofitable servants is dreadful:

Matth. xxv. 30, "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." No man can profit God, but every man may and ought to profit others, Job xxxv. 7, 8, laying out their talents for the good of others: and if they do it not, they will be cast into outer darkness, as those who would not work when they had the light.

OBJECT. But they are froward, and will not receive instruction, nor take advice. ANSW. That is a part of their natural disease, Job xi. 12. Men take pains to break young beasts, till they make them tractable: and shall they not be at pains with those of their own kind? The waters wear the stones; and what has often slipped off, may at length come to stick. And a word spoken to them for their good, may lie long under the clod, but spring up at length. But our success is not the rule of our duty; we must do our part.

But more particularly, let heads of families be exhorted to propagate religion to their children and families.

MOT. 1. Consider ye have a charge of their souls from God who has committed them to you. Hence the fourth commandment, the bond of all religion, is directed to heads of families. And in Abraham's example their duty is laid before them: Gen. xviii. 19, "I know him, (says the Lord), that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."

MOT. 2. They are born like wild asses' colts, and have a natural bent to the way of sin and destruction: Psalm lviii. 3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." It is too fond and blind a love to your children, that makes you take no notice of the corruption of their nature. And if they are naturally corrupt, what can ye expect but that they will run to their own ruin, if ye are not at pains with them for their souls' good? Hence says Solomon, Prov. xxix. 15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame."

MOT. 3. Parents propagate that corruption of nature to them, by natural generation. The sinful nature of children is a glass wherein the parents may get a humbling view of their own: Gen. v. 3, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Compared with Job xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Have ye been instrumental in conveying the poison to them, and will ye not be thereby stirred up to minister the antidote to them?

MOT. 4. They are in the midst of many snares, entered into a world wherein offences abound, Matth. xviii. 7. Their youth makes

them raw and unexperienced, and disposes them to be rash and heedless. They have need of a monitor, and instructor and guide. How shall they learn if they are not taught ?

MOR. 5. Ye must die ; and it is like will die before them, and leave them in this evil world. Will ye not be concerned for them, that it may be well with them when ye are away ? Your concern for their temporal provision will not make it well with them, while ye are not concerned to sow the seeds of religion in their hearts. That will be but to give much sail to an empty ship without ballast, that may sink her in the deep sea, as is seen in the sad experience of many.

MOR. 6. They must die ; and it may be they may die before you, and leave you ; and then they will have no use for all the temporal provision ye have laboured for, for them. But religion propagated, by you to them, will then appear a precious treasure. But if ye have neglected that duty to them, that will then appear a criminal neglect which ye will never more be capable to mend ; and it will leave a galling sting in your conscience, if ye be not quite stupid.

MOR. 7, *Lastly*, What comfort can ye have in their case, while ye can have no comfortable prospect of their eternal happiness ? If they were to be lords and ladies in this world, but to perish eternally in another world, what comfort can be there ? The barren womb and dry breasts are preferable to the bringing forth children to the murderers ; much more to the bringing forth children for hell-fire.

Let these things work upon your consciences, and on your natural affection, to bestir yourselves towards the propagating of religion to the rising generation. If ye have any conscience of duty towards God, any humanity towards your fellow-creatures, neglect it no more. For particular directions, I propose,

DOCT. III. ult. The true way of propagating religion, the standing to the rising generation, is, That the former make God known to the latter, so as they may betake themselves unto him, his truth and faithfulness, by faith and trust. This is the sense of the words of the text, and agreeable to the matter, Hezekiah's life being prolonged in virtue of that promise, 1 Kings viii. 25,—“There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel ; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.” So this notification is not a matter of speculation, but a practical thing, that the rising generation may be brought to God.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall consider,

I. The end to be aimed at in our teaching the rising generation.

II. The means to be used with them for that end.

III. Give the reasons why this is the true way of propagating religion, the standing to the rising generation.

IV. *Lastly*, Apply.

1. We shall consider the end to be aimed at in our teaching the rising generation. And that is, that they may be brought to betake themselves unto the truth of God by faith and hope. This is expressly taught, Psalm lxxviii. 6, 7, "That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise, and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments." Now, here we are to consider,

1. What is this truth of God we are to endeavour to bring the rising generation to. 2. How one betakes himself unto God's truth, which is that we should aim to bring the rising generation to.

First, What is this truth of God we are to endeavour to bring the rising generation to? The truth of God may be considered three ways.

1. In the divine doctrine in general. And thus whatever the Lord teaches in his word, is true to a tittle. Hence says David, Psalm cxix. 160, "Thy word is true." All the discoveries made to us therein, are to be relied on as most firm truth. But that truth of doctrine is not here meant; for it belongs to the means, the object to be made known.

2. In the divine threatenings. They are not mere scarecrows, as the wicked world looks on them, and disregards them, Deut. xxix. 19; but shall have a certain accomplishment in their true meaning and intention: for which cause believers of God's word tremble at them, Isa. lxvi. 2. But neither is this here meant; since it is not the object of hope, but of fear.

3. In the divine promises. These are of two sorts.

(1.) Law-promises; as, "He that doth them, shall live in them." This cannot be here meant neither; for no man can be happy that way, Rom. viii. 3. (2.) The gospel-promises; such as, John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Heb. viii. 10, "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." The belief of these is more difficult; but it is by them a soul can only be made happy, 2 Pet. i. 4. Therefore it is the truth or faithfulness of

God in the promise of the gospel that is here meant. That is it we are to endeavour to bring the rising generation to.

Now, the promise of the gospel is held forth under the notion of God's truth, on these accounts.

1. In respect of the weight of the things promised therein. They are so great and weighty, that were not the infallible truth of God impawned for them, they could not be believed by sensible guilty creatures: 2 Pet. i. 4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." Compared with Luke xxiv. 25, 26, "Then Jesus said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" That the eternal Son of God should take on man's nature, and suffer the most ignominious death therein, for sinners—who could have believed on another than God's own testimony? That God freely gives eternal life in him to sinners, as 1 John v. 11, who otherwise could believe?

2. The foundation of believing it, is in God only. A true believer "receives the kingdom of God as a little child," Mark x. 15, on the mere testimony of his Father. There is nothing in nature's light to bring us to the belief of the gospel. So faith is called "the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. The threatening of death in the law, a natural conscience prompts men to believe, Rom. i. ult. and ii. 15. But the promise of life in the gospel, depending altogether on revelation, the belief of it rests on the truth of God only; yea, nature rises up against it. The corrupt mind looks on it as foolishness; the corrupt will rejects it; the corrupt affections muster themselves up against it; and the natural conscience, the more it is awakened, the more hard it makes the belief of it. So the truth of God has all these to drive over, and pull down. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

3. In opposition to the falsehood, vanity, and lies of the world, which sinners naturally betake themselves to.

1st, The world swarms with lies, and has always since Satan hatched the first lie in it. The things of "the world are lies, 1 John ii. 16; the men of the world are liars, Rom. iii. 4; yea the best of them a lie, Psalm lxii. 9. There is no trusting of them, Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

2dly, The world itself is one great lie, Eccl. i. 2. Its appearances are unfair and deceitful; it appears to vain man quite another

thing than it is ; its shadows appear substantial, and so catch the unwary heart, Hos. xii. 1, 3. Yet it is that which is not, Prov. xxiii. 5. It is not what it seems to be. Its promises are false, it never performs them : the good things of it are always greater in expectation than fruition ; they disappoint, which is lying in scripture style, Hab. iii. 17.

Secondly, How one betakes himself unto God's truth, which is that we should aim to bring the rising generation to. It lies in these five things,

1. In a conviction of the vanity of the world, and its deceitful lusts. Hence says David, Psalm cxix. 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection ; but thy commandment is exceeding broad." The false and vain world offers itself as a satisfying portion to the rising generation, as soon as reason begins to dawn in them. To the infant it makes its court by the lust of the flesh in meat and drink ; to the child by that and the pride of life in clothing ; and it is long ere they know there is any thing better than these. To the youth it spreads out its all, "the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ;" and whatever notions of religion they may have in their heads, till grace open their eyes, they will never truly see any thing to be better. Now, we should labour to convince them of the vanity of the world, that it will never satisfy, nor afford a rest to the heart ; that its lusts are deceitful, and there is a running hook hid under that bait.

2. In renouncing the world for a portion, and its lusts for our way, as being a broken reed, that will not only not bear our weight, but run through the hand that leans on it. Hence it is said, Jer. xvi. 19,—“The Gentiles shall come unto the Lord from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.” It is natural to man, and therefore to the rising generation, to stick by it, and not to give over the pursuit ; but after a thousand disappointments still to hope for better from it, Isa. lvii. 10. And the little experience youth has, makes them the more ready to do so. But we should endeavour to bring them to part with it, as a hopeless thing they will never mend themselves of, Psalm iv. 2.

3. In believing that there is an upmaking portion held forth in the promise of the gospel. This is the finding of the treasure hid in the field, Matth. xiii. 44. The carnal mind looks on the promise of the gospel but as idle tales ; it is a treasure hid in a field, which men go over without noticing what is in it, because they see it not. But Christ is there, and in him the fulness of the Godhead, and with him all things, enough to satisfy the boundless desires of a soul.

And could we bring the rising generation really to believe this, we would do a great thing.

4. In trusting to the promise of the gospel allenarly for life and happiness, and a rest to the heart, upon the ground of God's faithfulness. Here is the nature of faith, a betaking one's self unto God's truth, by trusting to him in his word of promise for all, Ruth ii. 12. It implies these three things. The soul, seeing there is in the promise what is not in all the creation—enough to answer all its needs, and to make it completely happy,

1st, Believes its own common interest in the promise, that itself, as well as others, has access to claim it with all that is in it, and to rely on it as held out to him in particular to trust upon for his upmaking in time and eternity, Heb. iv. 1, 2. For no man can embrace the promise of the gospel, that does not first see himself warranted so to do. And the nature of the promise warrants all, John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2dly, The man thereupon lays the weight of his happiness wholly on it, trusting that it shall be made out to him, and expecting all happiness from it. Thus he buys the field, takes possession of it, and the treasure hid therein, Matth. xiii. 44. This is the embracing of the promise, Heb. xi. 13, as one takes an honest man's word for his security, rests there, and looks no farther. So what trust was before placed in the vain world, is now placed in the promise.

3dly, The ground on which he bottoms this his trust in the promise, is not any thing in himself, but the truth and faithfulness of God, Tit. i. 2. The man sees the promise is not yea and nay, as the promises of fickle men are: but that it is the word of God, which is surer than heaven and earth, Heb. xi. 11, and yea in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. And to this trust we should labour to bring the rising generation, which is to bring them unto a rest for their restless hearts, by bringing them to Christ, and by him to God. When we see hungry infants moving about with their mouths for something to suck, natural affection teaches to set them on the breast: but as they grow up, ye might observe their hungry souls moving up and down among the creatures for a fill, and still restless because they cannot get it. It would be as great charity in that case, to endeavour to bring them to the breasts of divine consolations from the promise of the gospel.

5, *Lastly*, In hoping and waiting for their happiness from the promise of the gospel. Hence says the apostle, Rom. viii. 24, 25, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a

man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." There is much got out of the promise, for the present in hand; but still there is more in hope, to be got on the other side of death. The natural cry is, "Who will shew us any good?" It is hard to make children wait even for temporal good things: they would ay have all presently, whenever they take it in their head: but it is harder to get them to wait in the matter of a portion for their hearts. So they greedily embrace the present world. But we should labour to get them off that, and wait for happiness in another world.

II. The means to be used with them for that end. That is, to make God known to them. He is to many of the aged among men an unknown God, as to any saving acquaintance with him: but to young ones, he is an unknown God, so much as by report or hearsay, till the aged do tell them of him. The saving knowledge of himself God only can give: but there is a doctrinal way of making him known to the rising generation: and that is our duty, Psalm xxii. ult., "They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."

Now, ye are to make him known to the rising generation, as a God in Christ, John xiv. 2: for as such only he is the object of a guilty creature's trust for salvation, 2 Cor. v. 19. The blind world pretend to trust in God as an absolute God, not eyeing him as in Christ: but so he is a "consuming fire," Heb. xii. ult. And he is not honoured, but dishonoured by such a trust, John v. 23. In Christ he appears,

1. As a God of majesty and glory, 2 Cor. iv. 6. There is no glass in which ye can represent to the rising generation the glory and majesty of God so lively as in Christ. The creating a world of nothing, the deluge, and the destruction of Sodom, are but dim glasses, in comparison of the mystery of Christ. Here the glory of his infinite holiness, and infinite hatred of sin, his exact justice, his precise and unalterable truth, his unsearchable wisdom, most fully appear.

2. As the God of grace, 1 Pet. v. 10. The former view of God is apt to fill the soul with the honour, awe, and reverence of him, fit ballast for the vain heart: this view of God is apt to fill the soul with faith and love, whereby the heart may be disengaged from the the vain world, and knit to him as the alone upmaking portion of the soul. In Christ ye can let them see majesty veiled with mercy, righteousness and peace kissing mutually, a crystal wall to go between them and the consuming fire.

III. The third thing is, to give the reasons why this is the true way of propagating religion to the rising generation.

1. Because all true religion begins with the knowledge of God in Christ. Hence our Lord says, John xvii. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." As long as ignorance of God continues in the soul, the prince of darkness rules there, the works of darkness go on there, and the party is on the way to everlasting darkness, Hos. iv. 6; Isa. xxvii. 11. Therefore cruel are they that bring up young ones, whether children or servants, in ignorance; especially considering that it is the learning age, which season missed, the loss is seldom retrieved.

2. Because vain is that religion and knowledge that brings not the soul to betake itself to God's truth for a portion, and to renounce the world and its way, 1 Cor. viii. 1. Our aim in all our teaching should be to affect the heart, to bring sinners to God, to be his only, wholly and for ever. To satisfy ourselves with filling their heads with notions of religion, while we are careless of getting their hearts to Christ, is sorry service.

3. Because the right discerning of the glory of God in Christ is the true way to bring a sinner to faith in him: Psalm ix. 10, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." John iv. 10, "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." All who are brought acquainted with him, cannot choose but take up their soul's rest in him: and whoever do not betake themselves to him, it is because they know him not. For his glorious excellency truly discerned, cannot miss to captivate the heart.

USE. Make God known to the rising generation, so that they may be stirred up to give up with the vain and false world, and to betake themselves to the promise of the gospel, therein to take God for their portion. I have given motives already, I will now give directions how to manage the work.

1. A general direction. Aim at that particularly, and keep it always in your view, to teach them to know God in Christ. Never satisfy yourselves with letting them know what God is in himself out of Christ; for that may strike them with terror, but it will never bring them to him in faith and love. But labour to discover to them the glory of God in the face of Jesus. Shew them Christ, and ye shew them the Father; for in him the fulness of the Godhead dwells. In his person, you may let them see God's willingness to take mankind into union and communion with himself; in his offices, how willing he is to teach them, justify them, and sanctify them; in his holy birth, what a nature is pleasing to him; in his

righteous life, what a conversation he requires : in his satisfactory death, how dreadful his wrath is against sin ; and in a word, how they may be made holy and happy for ever. Therefore inculcate on them the knowledge of Christ. I urge this for three reasons.

1st, Do this, and ye do all to them. Hence says the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 2, " I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." When the darkness of the night sits down on the face of the earth, as many candles as are burning abroad, so many spots of the earth will be enlightened : but let the sun arise, and there will be light over all ; for the one sun will do more than millions of lighted candles. So, whenever Christ the Sun of Righteousness ariseth, that gross darkness which covers the mind will suddenly be dispelled. There is more of the glory of God to be seen in the face of Jesus, than throughout the whole compass of the heavens and the earth, which yet were made to declare the glory of God. Life, eternal life, is in the knowledge of him, John xvii. 3.

2dly, Neglect this, and ye do nothing to them to purpose. Hence says Christ, John viii. 24, " If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." That light that is without him is but darkness, and the sparks of knowledge and religion that is without illumination in the knowledge of Christ, will leave those that walk in the light of them to lie down in sorrow at length, John i. 9. Not one truth is rightly learned, that is not learned as it centres in Jesus, Eph. iv. 20, 21.

3dly, Because the rising generation is in extreme hazard in this point at this time, beyond what they have been for many years. A religion is like to come in among them, that has no relation to Christ and his Spirit, which is in effect but refined Paganism. With some Christ is almost dropt out of their practical divinity, and morality in doctrine is justling out the gospel of the grace of God ; and hence immorality in practice comes in like a flood ; and principles are vented highly injurious to his glorious Godhead.

2. Particular directions are these :—

1st, Acquaint them with God's word. Let your children be learned to read ; and your servants that cannot read, be so charitable as to teach them. And ye servants, secure that in your hiring yourselves. And press them, and stir them up to read the scriptures ordinarily when they can do it. It is recorded of Timothy, to his honour, that " from a child he had known the holy scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Tim. iii. 15.

2dly, Neglect not family catechising. Oblige them to get the

Shorter Catechism, and labour to make them understand it by examining them. For which purpose ye have many good helps laid to your hand.

3dly, Often inculcate on them their sinful and miserable state by nature, and the salvation for them in Jesus Christ.

4thly, Join a practical exhortation with your catechising. It might be profitable to close the catechising on every question of the Catechism upon a particular head, with a short admonition to them by way of use. *Ex. gr.* on the first, Well, mind that the great thing ye have to do in the world is, to glorify God; and that the great thing ye have to seek, is the enjoyment of him.

5thly, Inculcate upon them, and train them up in a reverence and esteem of the ministry of the gospel, as an ordinance of Christ for the salvation of sinners. And oblige your family to a conscientious attendance; none of them to sit at home that are capable of profiting by the word, without a reason that will bear weight before God, 1 Cor. i. 21. I urge this the rather, that some are trained up in a neglect, or in a contempt of it, to the ensnaring of their poor souls. Mind the children of Bethel.

6thly, Inculcate and labour to impress them with the belief of the vanity of the world, and the impossibility of finding a rest to their heart in any creature. Tell it them from the word, your own and their experience.

7thly, Inculcate and labour to impress them with the belief of the full happiness to be found in a God in Christ, held forth to them in the promise of the gospel. Solemnly assure them, that there they may find a rest to their heart; and that God is offering himself to them as such.

8thly, Make it known to them how good a master God is; how pleasant the way of holiness is: what an ill master Satan is; how contrary and odious sin is to God; how dear it stood Christ; how bitter it will be to the sinner here or hereafter.

9thly, Put them on praying by any means, and teach them to pray, and inculcate on them the necessity of it.

10thly, Make known to them how God is a God of exact justice, and purest truth: and from thence, as ye love their souls, endeavour often to inculcate on them, and impress them with a horror of injustice in the least things, and of lying in any case. The sad way some are brought up in those points, leave them without any conscience of common honesty or truth.

And mind that "precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little," Isa. xxviii. 10.

And be not discouraged though ye see not the fruit. The fruit may come when ye are in your grave. Mind Manasseh's conversion when his godly father was dead and gone.

Now, ye young folk, and young ones, for whose cause so much has been said, I will leave this text, with three words to you, and a great offer.

1. Christ and the devil are striving about you. Christ is striving for you by his ministers, your parents, and masters, that shew a concern for your soul, and by your own consciences. The devil is striving to hold you, by his temptations, a vain world and wicked, and your own lusts. But the devil is a murderer, the world is false, and your lusts are deceitful, which ye will find if ye trust them.

2. Ye are between the losing and the winning now. If Christ get you when ye are young, ye will serve him with life and spirit: if the devil prevail, the elder ye grow, ye will go the farther from God; for youth goes with a great swing, right or wrong.

3. Eternity is at stake with you; eternal well or eternal wo, according to the side ye shall choose.

I offer Christ to you, and declare that he is willing to be yours, and to make you happy for ever, and be a rest to your hearts: Matth. xxii. 4, "Tell them which are bidden, behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Prov. viii. 17, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me," Remember this, and say, Amen.