

Readings of M. Deering upon

uerlasting truth, That to obey, is better than sacrifice: and to hearken, is better than the fat of Rams: for to disobey, is as the sinne of witchcraft: and to change the Law that is set before vs, this is wickednesse and idolatry. Let vs not bee wise in our owne conceits, to frame God a religion, such as we will. This is to draw iniquity with cordes of vanity, & to pull sinne after vs as with cart ropes. A iust recompence of such weary labours, when God shall say vnto vs: *Who hath required these things at your hands?* Let vs then follow so as wee bee called, and bring into captiuity euery thought of man, to the obedience of Christ. And the Lord our God for his Christs sake, giue vnto vs, hearts full of humility, that we may think him wisest, and rest in his decrees: that we be neuer spoyled through vaine Philosophy, and the traditions of men, but hearken vnto him who is only wise, that at the last we may liue with him, who hath alone immortality, and shall fill vs with his glory for euermore.

Which times, the Lord God bring speedily vpon vs, and finish the daies of sinne, for his mercies sake, that wee may enter into the heauens, whither Christ is gone before vs, and reigne with him for euer, who is our onely Sauour: to whom with the Father and the holy Ghost, three persons and one God, be all honour and glorie, world without ende. Amen.

The

the Epistle to the Hebrewes.

Cap. 5.

The five and twentieth Lecture, vpon

the 10. verse, and so forth

therelidue of the

Chapter.

10. *And is called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedech.*

11. *Of whom we haue many things to say, which are hard to be uttered, because ye are dull of hearing.*

12. *For, when as concerning the time, yee ought to be teachers, yet haue yee neede againe that we teach you what are the first principles of the word of God: and are become such as haue neede of milke, and not of strong meat.*

13. *For euery one that vseth milke, is inexpert in the worde of righteousnesse: for he is a childe.*

14. *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of age, which through long custome haue their wits exercised, to discern both good and euill.*



EE haue heard before, what comparison the Apostle hath made betweene Christ and Aaron: and how the excellency of Christ is incomparable aboue him in all workes of the Priesthood, and our benefite by him vnspeakable greater, as of whome alone is all saluation. The conclusion of the same disputation, is added now in the tenth verse: *And hee is called of GOD an high Priest after the order of Melchisedech*: which words doe conclude in short summe, all that hath beene spoken: first, that Christ is our Priest, and hath therefore the name of the high Priest giuen him.

A a 1

Secondly,

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Secondly, what kinde of Priesthood hee hath: not Aarons, for for it Aaron himselfe was sufficient and appoynted of God: but another spiritual Priesthood, after the order of Melchisedech. Thirdly, that vnto this Priesthood he was called of God: to this sense and meaning, the words are plainelie set downe in this 10. verse, as you haue heard, of all which wee haue spoken alreadye. Now, because this Priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchisedech, was not well vnderstood, what kind of Priesthood it should be, of what vertue and grace: therefore the Apostle meaneth more at large to speake of this, that they might vnderstand it, as his manner is often to make exhortation to stirre vp their dull spirits, least they should heare in vaine: so here in the 11. verse, and after following, he maketh a long digression vnto the beginning of the seuenth chapter, both to perswade them to holde a good vnderstanding of all that hath been spoken, and to prepare them more diligently to other things that should be taught, that so they might all glorifie God, in good wisdom and knowledge of the mysterie of his will. And this exhortation he beginneth thus: *Of whom wee haue many things to say, which are hard to bee declared, because you be dull of hearing.*

Here, first the Apostle, the more to stirre them vp diligently to learne this mysterie of Melchisedech, how hee was a figure of our Sauour Christ, and the Priesthood of Christ was represented in him: he saith, first, that the matter is hard and difficult to be declared, and therefore requireth great heed and diligence.

This place (dearely beloued) let vs learne well, for it hath many good instructions in it: it is hard, saith the Apostle, and therefore you must adde more diligence to it.

Here first wee learne a good cause, why it pleased God to leaue places in scripture harde to vnderstand, like as other

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other places are easie; for as the easinesse is because none should be discouraged, but all learne: so the hardnes is, because none should be negligent & carelesse: and herein, the Lord hath dealt also mercifully with vs; for seeing all carelesnes in reading his word, in which his wisdom is reuealed, is the taking of his name in vaine: our owne profite doth now make vs take more heede of this sin: for we cannot vnderstand or bee edified by it, but with our care and diligence, for so the Apostle here exhorteth his brethren: the thing is hard and difficult whereof we speake, therefore marke it more carefully and giue greater heede to vnderstand: this then is a good cause why the Scripture is hard, even that we shuld put far from vs, all idle sluggish thoughts, and prepare our selues with a good conscience, and great diligence, as oft as either we heare or read the same: and why should it not bee so? Is there any knowledge & wisdom learned, but by labor & diligence? to plow thy field, to dresse thy vineyard, to keepe thy cattell, to build thy house, to euery worke, hath not God appoynted care and trauell: no otherwise hath God dealt with his word. The papists not knowing this, or else dissembling it, they haue tolde vs another cause why the Scripture is harde, and that is, that either we should not all presume to reade it, or if we do read it, yet we should not presume of any vnderstanding of it, otherwise than the Church of Rome hath taught vs. I do not speake one word vntuelie of them, not one of them but this day they will confesse it. This day teach. The scripture is hard, therefore euery man must not read it: and if any do read it, yet he must vnderstand it after the interpretation of the Church of Rome. Here (I beseech you) consider it diligently, and tell me whether in such doctrin there be any reason, truth, or godlines: we

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have a controversie with these men, whether the church of Rome be the church of Christ, or of Antichrist: the cause must be tried by the scriptures: is it any reason now for the to challenge, that we must beleue the scripture, according to their interpretations? Is not this to make them iudges of their own cause? When the Apostle bad vs try the spirits, whether they be of God or no: meant he (trow you) we should trie them according to the testimonie of the church of Rome? When the men of Thessalonica tried the Apostles doctrine, whether it were true or no: asked they the iudgement of the church of Rome? Surely (dearly beloved) al this is but childish folly; which of vs euer heard of any men, who would be Iudges in their own cause, except those, of whom it is said: aske my fellow if I be a theife: and beside this their vnreasonable talke, haue they any truth in their words? Was there euer true and iust man that claimed this manner of triall? Is it not confessed and agreed vpon among all men, that truth seeketh no corners? And why runne they for defence to their own darke home, & feare the open iudgement of all men? Learne of our Sauour Christ, who is truth it selfe, saith he not? *If I should beare witness of myselfe, my witness were not true: & againe: if I honour myself, mine honor is nothing worth:* then, if beside the words of his own mouth, who was the son of Dauid, he had had no testimony, he could haue bin no true Prophet: but therefore he was true, because his heavenly father bare witness to him, both in his glorious voice, and in the assured testimonie of the law & the Prophets, & in all his miracles, which made it manifest that he was the sonne of God. If thus our Sauour Christ confirmed his credite vnto men, and offered himselfe to be tried by the Scriptures: what proude people are these, & what proud words are in their mouthes,

1. Ioh. 4. 1.

A. 2. 17. 11

Ioh. 5. 31.

Ioh. 8. 54.

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mouthes, that would haue no triall of their doings, but the censure and iudgement of their owne mouthes? Again, this vnreasonable and vntrue speach, that the church of Rome onely must expound the Scriptures, because they be hard; is there any godlines at all in so saying? Is it not taught vs many times, that if we loue, feare, honor, serue God, we must obey his word, keepe his ordinances, make all his lawes the rule of our life? How then do they loue God, or what godlines is in them, that giue not Gods word credit in it selfe, but make the truth of it, to stand vpon their owne vnderstanding? This now we know: the hardnesse of Scripture is not, that we should abstaine from reading and hearing it, nor because we should trust the interpretation of the church of Rome, but because we should with great and earnest affection, applie our studie, and pray vnto God to lighten our mindes, that we may be taught of his spirite.

Now further let vs consider yet these wordes of the Apostle. *Because you be euill of hearing:* not onelic (as I haue saide) they teach vs, because of the hardnesse of the Scripture, to take more heede vnto it: but also very plainly and manifestly they teach vs, by what meanes the Scripture becommeth hard vnto vs; that is, through our dull hearing. And who so euer he be, to whom the Scripture is hard; let him accuse his owne dulnesse; and whoso euer blameth the Scripture in this behalfe, he blameth himselfe, both of slowe eares, and of a faithlesse heart: for, is there any thing more plaine than those words; Therefore it is hard, because you bee dull of hearing? Take away from the man a deafe eare and a carelesse minde, and thou hast taken from the Scripture all obscuritie and darkenesse: leaue the man in his negligent minde, and thou makest the Scriptures, as hard as anie darke speache, or riddle: and I beseech you, the more to confirme your faith in this

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persuasion, marke how often in the Scriptures this is taught vs; that nothing maketh the Scripture hard, but our infirmitie: our Apostle heere once taught it before, *the word* (saith hee) *did not profit them, because it was not mingled to them with faith.* Saint Peter, when hee had said of Pauls Epistles, that many things in them were hard to vnderstand, hee addeth: *Which the vnlearned and the vnstable doe peruert, euen as they doe all other Scripture:* heere you see againe the Scripture is hard, but you see to whom, and why: to the wicked, because they are wauering minded, and will learne nothing, be it neuer so plaine. S. Paule also speaking of the vnderstanding of the mysterie of the Gospell, saith plainly, it is the Carnal man that perceiueth not the things of God, and in deede hee can neuer vnderstand them, because they bee discerned spirituallie. Our Saviour Christ himselve, being asked this question, why he spake so darkly and in parables, hee answereth thus: *To you it is giuen to know the mystery of the kingdome of God, but to those that are without, all things are done in parables:* could hee speake more plainely? His worde is not hard vnto his children, but to strangers, to infidels, to men without GOD in the world, to those hee speaketh darkely: then (dearely beloved) this case being so cleere, let vs be bold to say to all that accuse the word of God of hardnesse, as S. Paul hath saide before vs: *If the Gospell be yet hid, then is it hid to those that perishe, in whom the God of this world hath blinded their unbeleeuing minds, that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should not shine vpon them:* for otherwise, the secret of the Lord is reuealed to those that feare him, and his worde is a lanthorne vnto their feete, and a light vnto their steppes: it is not hard, but as Salomon saith, *It is easie to him that will vnderstand: he is a scorner that seeketh it, and cannot finde it.* Moses saith; *This commandement which I commaund thee this day,*

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day, it is not hid from thee, nor far off; it is very neere vnto thee, euen in thy mouth, and in thy heere to do it. The Prophet Ose saith of the iudgements of God vnto his people, that they were *as the morning lights.* And the Lord saith by the Prophet Esay, *I haue not spoken in secret, nor in a place of darknesse in the earth: I said not in vaine to the house of Iacob: Seeke ye me.* And if thus the doctrine of saluation were preached, while yet the people were taught by signes & figures; how cleare is it now since the sunne of righteousnesse hath shined in perfect light? what wrong is it to say still, the scriptures are hard, & to make them to be Sphynx his riddles, or the winding Oracles of Apollo, which are the cleare words of the liuing God. I appeale to your owne consciences, all that haue experience, whether haue you found such hardnesse in scripture; or whether do you easily see how wee are saued in Iesus Christ; and what obedience wee owe againe vnto God. I am sure, there is none of you, that with a single heart haue come to reade the scripture, that were euer driuen back with any hardnesse of it. How is it then, and why doe the Papists still crie out of the hardnesse of the word? why see they not this easines as well as wee? sure, I will tell you, and the Lord is witnesse, how I tell you true. Those men, they haue come *neere vnto God with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips: but their hearts haue bene farre from him: and they haue worshipped God in vaine, teaching doctrines which were precepts of men:* and for this cause, God hath couered them with a spirit of slumber, and hath shut vp their eyes: and the Gospell is vnto them, as the words of a booke that is sealed, so that, whether they bee learned or vnlearned, they can reade nothing. This is the great & hidden cause: their sinnes haue found them out, and Gods iudgements haue blinded them. Another cause, and that I told you before, is, because they would leade vs blindfold

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after the Church of Rome: and this cause I make not of mine owne head, themselves (as I said) will confesse it. For this is a solemne decree in their late generall counsell of Trident, the 4. session, the 2. Canon; that it belongeth to their holis mother Church, to iudge of the sense, and interpretation of the scripture; neither must wee presume to leaue those interpretations, although they were such as were neuer meete to bee openlie taught and published. And their great Doctor Hosius saith thus; if we haue the interpretation of the Church of Rome, although wee see not how it can agree with the words of the text, yet we must beleue it. But are not these (thinke you) vnreasonable words; if they be not, examine moe of their witnesses, and at last you shall find it and confesse it, that they are not only vnreasonable, but exceeding shameles men, while they hold this; that the scripture is hard, and to be vnderstood after the Church of Rome: for thus they haue termed the scriptures, *dead yoke, a thing without life, a dumbe iudge, a nose of waxe, a blacke Gospel, ynken diuinity*: these and such other words are witnesses against them to all the world; and their owne bookes are extant: and with what spirit then haue these men spoken? surely, not with the spirit of the father Dauid, or of his sonne Salomon, who say: *The law of the Lord is perfect, and conuerteth soules: it giueth to the simple sharpnesse of wit, and to the children knowledge and discretion*: nor with the spirit of Paul, that saith: *All scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable to reprove, correct, instruct, and to make a godlie man perfect to euery good worke*: this is not to call the scripture a waxen nose, or inken diuinitie, but these speeches are much more agreeable to the spirit of the olde heretiques, which said, the prophecies were dreames. But to let their vncomelie speeches go, and to come againe to our purpose. They crye out still, that the interpretations of the Church

Miricus, in norma concilij. Sleyd. lin. 23. Kemp. in exa u. concil. Trident. sess. 4. can. 1. Psal. 19. 7. Pro 2. 4. 1. Tim. 3. 16.

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of Rome are the sense of the scripture. And would you not now thinke, that these interpretations of the Romaine Church, were merueilous wise, graue, mysticall, seeing they would haue all the world thus to reuerence them? See therefore what they are, and iudge: I will alledge vnto you some of them, in the weightiest matters of faith. You are wise, iudge what I say: these are their most learned expofitions of all other, in which they boast not a little. Christ saith: *Thou art Peter, & vpon this rocke will I build my church*: ergo, the Pope is head of the Church? how groweth this conclusion? forsooth thus: if vpon this rocke Christ will build his Church, then vpon Peter, for Peter signifieth that rocke. If vpon Peter, then vpon Peters successour; for the truth doth cleaue vnto the chaire, and Peter maketh his successour inheritour of all his goodnesse. If to Peters successour, then to the Pope, for Peter was Bishop of Rome. And if the Church bee built vpon Peter, then Peter was chiefe of all other, and so the Pope is head of the Church: if these collections be not theirs, let mee be reprooued as a slanderer: if they be theirs, then be you wise to vnderstand what their religion is: for all these collections are vtterlie vntrue. It is vntrue that Peter is that rocke vpon which the Church is built: for our Sauour Christ himselfe saith, hee that heareth my words and performeth them, he buildeth vpon the rocke. It is vntrue, that what faith Peter had, the same must bee left to Peters successours: for Scribes and Phariseis, buyers and sellers, succeeded Moses and Aaron. It is vntrue, that Peter was Bishop of Rome; for he was the Apostle of circumcision, therefore it was vtterlie vnlawfull for him, to be a Bishop among the Gentiles. Againe, they reason thus. The Apostles say to Christ, *Lord behold, here are two swords*: therefore the pope hath both ciuill and ecclesiasticall government: might they not better haue

Cusan ad Bozmos. Epist. 2. Dist. 40. Non nos, in glossa.

Mat. 7. 24.

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hane reasoned, when Peter would haue vsed one sword, Christ commaunded him to put it vp, therefore no such sword at all belongeth to him. Againe, they say: Christ promiseth to his Apostles, the comforter which shall teach them all truth, therefore the Church of Rome cannot erre: how bring they all the Apostles to the Pope of Rome? how doe they drawe it that was spoken in Ierusalem, two thousand mile out of Italie, that it was ment onely of the Citie of Rome? Againe, they say, the sinne against the holie Ghost, shall neuer be pardoned, neither in this world, nor in the world to come: Ergo, there is a purgatorie; such are their proofes in their greatest mysteries. And is not this (trow you) a miserable doctrine, which hath no plaine and direct scripture, but by such wrested & strange expositions can onely be prooued? And this I speake of their best expositions, which to this day they hold and reuerence: but infinite other expositions they haue, and in times past of greatest accompt, for they are written in their Masse bookes, their Portesses, their Pontificals, their Legends, their Decrees, their Counsels, their lawes, that you may be sure they were expositions of generall consent & greatest force, how so euer now some would dissemble them; and these are such expositions, as I assure you, and I beseech you to beleue it; for before the living God you shall find it one day true: the mad men in Bedlem cannot speake more foolishlie; they reason thus. Peter drew his sword & cut off Malchus eare, therefore the Pope is head of the Church. The world was finished in seuen daies, therefore none must marie within seuen degrees of kintred. God made two great lights, the Sunne and the Moone, therefore as much as the Sunne is brighter than the Moone, so much the Pope is greater than the Emperour. The Prophet saith, behold the face of thine annoynted: this, saith the pontificall, is a Bishops

Vide pet.
Cra. to 1.
conc. to.
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Antoo. in
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Bishops praier ouer the Popes Legate, when he kneeleth before the Altar. Behold I send my messenger to prepare thy way before thy face; saith God by his Prophet Esay: the pontifical vseth this as a prophetic fulfilled, when the Popes Legate meeteth the Emperour, to receiue him into any Citie. I haue found David my seruant; and annoynted him with holie oyle. My loue is beautifull among the daughters of Ierusalem. This they applie to Kings and Queenes when the Cleargie receiue them personallie into their Churches. The Prophet saith: sprinkle me Lord with ysope and I shall be cleane: that they applie to the Priest sprinkling with holie water. Lift vp your head, O ye gates, and ye euerlasting dores lift vp your selues: that is, when the Clarke openeth the Church doore for the Priest to come in with the Crosse on Palme Sunday. Ten thousand such applications and expositions are in their bookes, such (I say) as I thinke no bedlem man could deuise more vaine and foolish. Now, if any of them bee ashamed of these doings, I pray GOD that shame may bee the triall of their countenance, which testifieth against them, and so be in them a good colour of repentance; if they will not bee ashamed, then the wrath of the Lord is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, till he make their madnesse knowne vnto all the world; & make them a hissing among his people, who haue so prophaned his word of life. And thus much touching the hardnesse of the scripture, which the Apostle heere speaketh of.

It followeth in the Apostle: for whereas considering the time you ought to bee teachers, yet haue you neede againe that we teach you the first principles of the word of God, and are become such as haue need of milke and not strong meat: this is the cause why the Apostle said they were slowe of hearing, because they had profited no more in knowledge: a great while the Gospell

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Gospell preached and professed among them, yet they still so ignorant, that they knew not the principles of their Christian faith. Wee haue had a great while the Gospell preached, wee might haue beene by this time Doctors, if wee would haue learned, I say not euery day, or weeke, or moneth, but euery yeere a little: and what a shame is it for vs, if yet wee bee ignorant in the principles of faith? How many sermons haue wee heard, or reade in vaine? how many times haue wee made the sower to sow his seede in the high waies, or among the thornes, and stones? If in 15. yeares, we be scarce past our A. B. C. when doe wee hope that the secrets of the world shall be reuealed vnto vs? Are so many yeares so small a portion of our life, that wee may giue them to vanitie and learne nothing? the Lord grant that wee may better looke vnto our selues; and seeing euery day taketh away part of our life, and maketh this earthly Tabernacle more to corrupt, let euery day bring increase of knowledge, and adde to our life; that when our course is runne, our faith may be kept, and wee may finde the crowne of righteousness, which God hath laide vp for those that bee wise of heart. Or, if this counsell of the Apostle will not perswade vs, but by leasure in fiftene yeeres to come, wee will learne heereafter, I assure you, our graues will meete many of vs in our waies, while wee are yet dull in learning; and when then shall bee the time in which wee will enioye our knowledge? Let vs looke therefore to our selues, for I am afraide this sharpe rebuke of the Apostle, is as iust against vs, as it was against them: and it must needs make vs at last ashamed, except it make vs in time repent our sluggishnes.

And heere by the way, I beseech you to marke well this place, to see the difference of the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. The Apostle checketh the people, because they
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bee so dull of hearing, that the worde of GOD is hard vnto them, which ought to be most familiar and easie. He rebuketh them of ignorance, that in so long time they haue not learned to be Doctors in Christianity, able to teach others. He threatmeth them, that if this great sinne be not amended, let them looke for no other, but that vengeance and wrath shall be a recompence vnto them. Thus the Apostle saith: but what saith the false Apostolicall man; the Pope of Rome? forsooth, he praiseth them of great modestie, that will not presume to reade the Scripture, as those which are darke and obscure writings: hee alloweth well of learning nothing, and after many yeeres to bee neuer the wiser; for ignorance (saith he) is the mother of deuotion. He blesteth the men that haue no wisdom in them, and though they know not how to giue accompt of their faith; yet hee bidde them beleue as the Church beleueth, and they shall be saued: Can any thing bee more contrarie to other, than the Apostles doctrine is contrary to this? why then doe wee not yet cast him off for shame, and bid, sic vpon the beast, that speaketh so presumptuously against the worde of God? let him and his foolishnes perish together; but let vs learne the knowledge of the Lord.

It followeth. *For euerie one that useth milke, is inexpert of the word of righteousness, for hee is a babe.* The Apostle before, prouoked them to diligence: first, because otherwise the Scripture would be hard vnto them. Againe, because it was a shame, after so long time to haue profited so little. Now, he exhorreth them by shewing the great hurt which shall be vnto them by their ignorance and rudenesse: and saith, that while they are such, they can neuer know the precious and hidde treasure of righteousness, which Christ hath giuen onely to those that are wise, and haue learned his blessed Gospell. For better vnderstanding of this,
you

you must know this figurative speech of the Apostle, of milke and strong meate: by milke, he meaneth the generall principles of doctrine, as himselfe after declareth, as of repentance, of faith in Christ, of baptisme, of the resurrection, and such like, set out brieflie in generall termes, and according to the capacite of children, with which they are prepared to the kingdome of heaven; and must still grow vp in more vnderstanding, till they do see with all the Saints; the height, the depth, the length, the bredth, of Gods vnsearchable goodnesse in Iesu Christ, which the Apostle calleth here the word of righteousnes. Now, if we will abide still in our first instruction, and when gray haire shall be mingled with our blacke, yet then still we will be children in vnderstanding, the Apostles words shall be justified in vs, we are not meete disciples of the excellent knowledge of the Gospell: for he that is still at his milke, hath not yet tasted of the word of righteousnes, which is strong meate.

And it followeth in the Apostle. *For strong meat belongeth to them that are of perfect age, which through long custome haue their wits exercised to discerne good and euill.* In these words the Apostle maketh it more plaine, what is milke, and what is strong meate, and why they are so called; that is milke, which agreeth to beginners, and such as haue little experience: that is strong meate, which is for old practitioners, and such as haue wisdom to iudge betweene truth and falshood. And thus much brieflie of the sense of the words: out of which, what instructions we haue to gather for our owne edifying, I will speake more at large, God willing, the next time. Now let vs pray, &c.

The

The sixe and twenty Lecture, vpon the 13. and 14. verses, before mentioned, and so forth vpon the 1. and 2. verse of the sixth Chapter.

13 For euerie one that useth milke, is inexperienced in the word of
14 But strong meate belongeth to them that are of age, which
through long custome haue their wits exercised, to discern
betwixt good and euill.

CHAPT. VI.

Therefore leaving the doctrine of the beginning of Christ, let vs be ledde forward vnto perfection, not laying againe the foundation of repentance from dead workes, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisme, and laying on of hands, and of the resurrection from the dead, and of eternall iudgement.



We haue heard already, what reprehension the Apostle hath hitherto made, of the slacknesse of the people, in learning the mysteries of Gods worde. First, because they haue bene so carelesse, that they haue made the worde hard vnto them, that they cannot vnderstand it: where I tolde you, that who so euer hee bee that accuseth the Scripture of hardnesse, the Apostle concludeth against him, that hee hath a hard and dull heart. Secondly, hee rebuketh them in respect of the time, which hath bene so long, that they might now haue taught other, yet they need