

**THE LOVE OF  
GOD AND OUR BROTHER,**

CONSIDERED IN

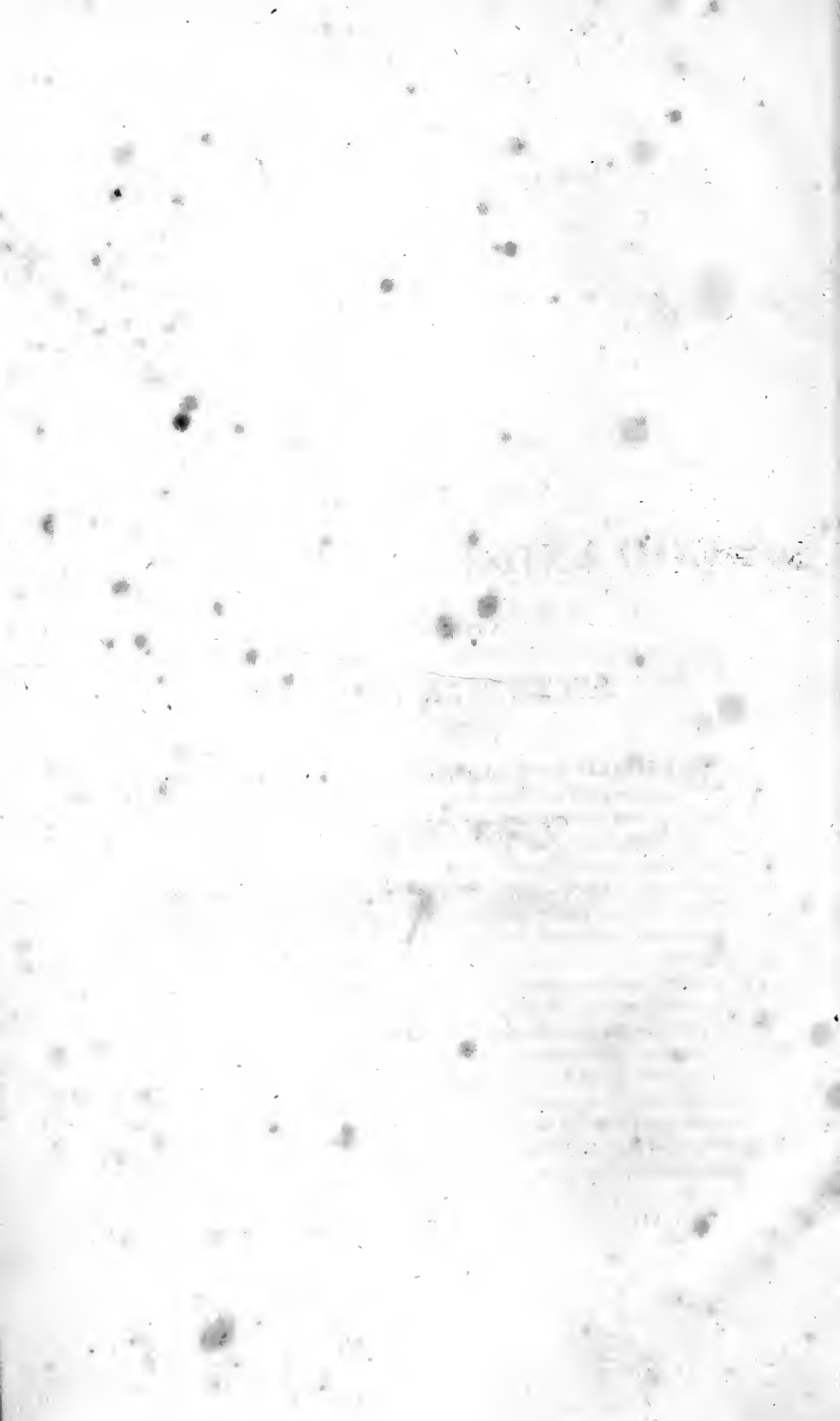
***SEVENTEEN SERMONS,***

On 1. John 4. 20.

PREACHED AT A WEEKLY MORNING LECTURE,

**At Cordwainers' Hall,**

In the Year 1676.



## SERMON I.\*

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1 John iv. 20.

*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen ; how can he love God whom he hath not seen.*

**M**Y purpose at present is not to speak from these words either of love to God, or our brother, absolutely and singly : but comparatively only, according to that connexion which they have one with another ; and the difference of the one from the other respecting their objects, as the object of the one is somewhat visible, and of the other somewhat invisible. There is one thing necessary to be premised to this intended discourse concerning the acceptation of love here, and it is this ; that the apostle in this little tractate of love, as this epistle may for the most part be called, doth not design to treat of love as a philosopher, that is, to give us a precise formal notion of it ; but to speak of it with a latitude of sense ; not so indeed as to exclude the formal notion of love as it is seated in the inner man, but so as to comprehend in it such apt expressions and actings of it, as according to the common sense of men were most agreeable and natural to it. And therefore speaking of love to God in 2 chapter, ver. 5. he tells us, that “ Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected :”

\* Preached May 24, 1676

that is, the very perfection of the love of God stands in this, in keeping his word. So in chapter 5. ver. 3. "This (saith he) is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." And speaking of the other branch of this love in chapter 3. ver. 17. he saith, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The apostle calls this the love of God also; it being one and the same divine principle of love implanted by God himself, which spreads itself to several objects all under one and the same communication, as having more or less of the divine beauty and loveliness appearing in them.

So that if any one should go about here to play the sophister, and say, "Love is a thing, which hath its whole nature, and residence in the inner man. Define it never so accurately, you will find it to be wholly, and entirely seated there. Now therefore, since nothing can be denied of itself, let it be confined and shut up there never so closely, admit that no expression be made of it one way or another, yet I need not be solicitous on this account: for let me walk and do as I list, the love of God may be in me for all that; since love is such a thing, wherever it is, as must have its whole nature within one." To this the apostle would reply, No, I do not speak of love in so strict a sense. Love, as I intend it, is not to be taken so: or if it were, it must however be supposed to have that strength and vigour with it, as to enable it to be the governing principle of a man's life; to affect and influence his own soul; and so to run through the whole course of his daily practice. I speak of love according to what it virtually comprehends in it; namely, conformity to the will of God, and obedience to his laws whereby that will is made known. And thus love is elsewhere taken in Scripture also. Our Saviour you know gathers up our duty into love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself; upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matt. xxii. 37. 40. The apostle also tells us, that "love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13. 10. Therefore love to God and our brother, in this place, must be taken for the summary or abridgement of our whole duty; an epitome of the two tables; a virtual comprehension of all we owe either to God or man, that is, universal holiness, and an entire obedience to the divine will. But still in this system or collection of duties, love, strictly and formally taken, is to be considered as the primary and principal thing; as seated and enthroned in the heart and soul; and as the original principle, upon which all other duties do depend, and from whence they must pro-



ceed. The acceptance of love being thus settled, there are three things that I chiefly intend to shew from this scripture.

FIRST. That there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love to God than towards man, upon this account, that he is not the object of sight, as man is ; and consequently, that the duties of the second table are, according to this our present state of dependence on external sense, more easy and familiar to us than the duties of the first. Hence proceeds that general propensity, which it greatly concerns us to be aware of ; to acquiesce and take up our rest in a fair, civil deportment among men, without ever being concerned to have our souls possessed with holy, lively, and powerful affections towards God.

SECONDLY. I shall shew, that this impossibility of seeing God, doth not however excuse us from exercising love to him in this our present state. It is indeed one reason why he is actually so little loved in the world, but it is no sufficient excuse. For the impossibility of seeing God doth not render it impossible to love him, and to live in his love, while we are here in this world, dwelling in the flesh. And this also is plainly grounded in the text ; for this vehement expostulation of the apostle, "If any man do not love his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?" plainly supposes it to be an intolerable thing not to love God. And therefore hence he takes the advantage of enforcing the duty of loving our brother, because otherwise we should be convicted, and proved to be no lovers of God ; taking it for granted, that this would be esteemed a most horrid thing, even at the very first sight. Otherwise his exhortation would have no force, nor pungency in it ; but would be flat, and insignificant. Therefore he plainly supposes here, that though God's not being the object of sight doth render the exercise of love to him, upon that account, more difficult ; yet it doth not render it impossible, or the neglect of it at all excusable ; but considers it as a thing to which men are most indispensably obliged. This therefore will be my second head to discourse upon from this scripture. And then in the

THIRD place, my design is to shew you the absurdity of their profession of love to God, who do not love their brother also ; and how false and fulsome a thing it is for men to pretend to any thing of sanctity and religion, while they neglect the duties of the second table. Of these we shall speak in order, and begin now with the

FIRST observation, that the impossibility of seeing God renders the exercise of our love to him more difficult, than the exercise of it towards man whom we do see. In this doctrine there are two branches, which are to be distinctly considered.

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother.

II. That one great reason of it is, that we cannot see God, as we do our brother.

I. As to the former of these, that there is a greater difficulty in the exercise of love to God than to men, we may collect from the common observation of the world. For it is very plain and evident, that the common course and practice of men shews what is more easy to them, and what less; it plainly discovers which way they are most inclined. This is the thing, which I understand here by difficulty; and it answers the intent and force of the apostle's expression, "How can he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, love God whom he hath not seen?" This plainly must be understood in a relative sense, and have respect to some agent, and here must have reference to ourselves. It is less easy to us, that is, it is a thing which our nature in our present state doth less incline us to, actually to live in the exercise of love towards God, than towards men. And, I say, what men are more or less inclined to, is to be seen in their common course; and from the common observation of the state and posture of the world we may gather, that men in general are less inclined to love God, than one another. And though it be very true, there is too little of love, kindness, and mutual affection among men, and a great neglect of justice, common honesty, and the other duties of the second table, which love must be understood to comprehend; yet certainly the instances are not so rare of persons that are kind, courteous, affectionate, and well-humoured one to another, as of persons well-affected towards God. This is a thing which commands our assent even at the very first sight. Nay further, though it is also no less true, that men are too much lovers of themselves, to the exclusion not only of God, but of men too; yet certainly there is more of love to men, than to God, prevailing in the world. And to make this out let us go to the usual evidences and expressions of love; such as mindfulness of others, trust in them, a readiness to be concerned for their interest, a studious care to please them, loving to converse with them, or seeking and being pleased with it, and the like. If we descend, I say, to the consideration of such evidences of love as these are, we shall find that man is generally better beloved, than God is. And that this may gain the greater possession of our souls, let us a little consider these particular evidences of love; and then see whether men are not generally more beloved by one another, than God is by them; hereby we shall plainly see, what is most agreeable to their temper, and what not. And,

1. *Mindfulness*, or a kind remembrance of others, is a

most natural evidence of love. But what ! are men who transact affairs one with another, so apt to forget each other, as they are to forget God ? It is given us as a common distinctive character of a wicked man, that he is one that hath not God in all his thoughts. For thus saith the Psalmist, "The wicked in the pride of his countenance," that is, his heart expressing itself in the haughtiness of his countenance, and his supercilious looks, "will not seek after God ; God is not in all his thoughts." Ps. 10. 4. And by the same divine penman a wicked man, and a forgetter of God, are used as exegetical expressions. Ps. 9. 17 But there is many a wicked man that will kindly remember his friends, his relations, even his very companions in wickedness. And if we demand an account of ourselves, do we not find it more easy and familiar to us to entertain thoughts concerning our friends, and relations, from day to day, than we do to think of God ? Are we not also more inclined to love them than God ? What we love we are not apt to forget. "The desire of our soul is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name." Isa. 26. 8. Our love to thee, which naturally works by desire, will not let us forget thee ; it is too deeply impressed and rooted in us ever to lose the remembrance of the object of our love. This is one thing that sheweth, that God is a great deal less loved by men, than they are by one another. Again,

2. To be apt to *trust* in one another, is a very natural evidence and expression of love. Whom we hate, we cannot trust ; whom we love entirely, we know not how to distrust. One of the characters of love is this, "It hopeth all things, it believeth all things:" (1 Cor. 13. 7.) it abhors to entertain a jealous surmise of the person, who is the object of it. Now let the matter be tried by this also, and how much more ready are men to trust to one another, than they are to trust to God ? What is there so vain, so uncertain, so unstable, which they are not more forward to repose their trust in, than in him ? Therefore, saith the apostle to Timothy, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded ; nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." 1 Tim. 6. 17. Which charge implies the propensity of men's minds, rather to trust in the most fugitive, uncertain, vanishing shadows, than in God himself. This is an argument, that he hath but little love among men ; that he cannot be trusted ; and that few will give him credit. But how safely and quietly do men repose a trust and confidence in one another ? And indeed if faith and trust were not natural to men, there would be no such thing as commerce, which is the bond of human society. The world must dissolve and break up ; all must live apart in

dens, and caves, and wildernesses, and have nothing to do one with another, if they could not trust one another. Without mutual confidence, there would be an end of all traffic. But to this, human society shews there is a disposition; and you can easily find out persons, in whom you would as safely repose your trust and confidence, as in your own hearts. You can say, "I would put my life in such a man's hands, or whatever is most dear to me." And if that person should but promise to undertake an affair, saying, "I will do such a thing for you, trust me with it, leave it upon me;" you would be as quiet, as if you saw the business done and already effected. But how unapt are the hearts of men to trust in God! and this it is, that holds off the world from him. He hath sent the gospel of peace and reconciliation to mankind, and therein declares the good tidings, how willing he is that the controversies should be taken up between men and himself; yet none will believe it, none think him in earnest, till he is pleased himself to draw them. "Who hath believed," saith the prophet, "our report? or, to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah 53. 1. Plainly intimating, that the arm of God must go forth to make a man believe him, and take his word. A strong argument, that he hath but little love among men, when he cannot be trusted; or, at least, when so few will give him credit!

3. A *readiness* to be concerned for one another's interest and reputation, is also a natural evidence of love. And we know how easily men are drawn in for one another, and take part with a neighbour, or a friend, when they are traduced, and evil spoken of; and especially when they see indignities and affronts put upon them. There is usually a great siding among persons upon such occasions. "Such a one has spoken ill of my friend, I must stand up for him to the uttermost. Another has injured him, purloined from him that which was his, and the like; I must right him." Should we not reckon him a base fellow, who should behold an act of stealing committed upon the estate of another, and not make a discovery of it, or endeavour to have him righted? But how little generally are men concerned for God, and his affairs! What robberies are every where committed against him, and yet how few do lay it to heart! How evil is he spoken of many times, and his truth, and his ways! But how few can say, "The reproaches wherewith they have reproached thee, have fallen upon me?" Ps. 69. 9. It is true, this is the sense of David, when he cries out, "As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say unto me daily, Where is thy God?" Ps. 42. 10. It is to me as if one was forcing a sword into my

bones, even into my marrow; a most intolerable torment to be upbraided in respect to my God : that he is either impotent, and cannot help me ; or that he is false to me, and answereth not the trust I have reposed in him. But how few are there of David's mind, in this case ? How many oaths and blasphemies can they hear, wherein the sacred name of God is rent and torn, and yet their hearts are not pierced at all ! Further,

4. An earnest study to *please* men is a natural expression of love. Now let the matter be estimated by this, how much less God is loved in the world than men. It is an ordinary thing with them to study to please one another, to humour one another. "Such and such things I do, and such I omit, lest I should displease a relation, a friend, or one that I have frequent occasion to converse with." But how few are the persons, who can say, "This I do purposely to please my God ?" or with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God !" Gen. 39. 9. A man will oftentime cross his own will, to comply with that of another ; and reckon it a great piece of civility to recede from his own inclination in order to gratify another person, when he can do it without any great inconvenience. But how rare a thing is this with respect to God ! To be able to say, "In such a thing I displease myself, that I may please God ; I cross my own will, to comply with his." Among men there is especially one sort, that we are more concerned and obliged to please, so far as we can ; and that is, such as rule over us. We are bound to please our superiors ; and to obey them, that we may do so. And there is no obedience either to God or man, that is right in its own kind, but what proceeds from love, and is an evidence as well as an effect of it. "If ye love me," saith Christ, "keep my commandments." John 14. 15. "And this is the love of God," saith St. John, "that we keep his word." 1 John 5. 3. Moreover the duties of the second table, which we owe to men, particularly that of obedience to superiors, are summed up all in love. The apostle having, in the 13 chapter of his epistle to the Romans, pressed subjection to the higher powers, in that they are of God, adds in the 10th verse, that "to love one another is the fulfilling of the law." "Render," saith he, in the same discourse, "to all their dues : tribute, to whom tribute is due ; custom, to whom custom ; fear, to whom fear ; honour, to whom honour." Rom. 13. 7, 8. Yet observe, all is wrapt up in love ; for the command is immediately after, "to owe no man any thing, but to love one another : " and in short there is nothing which love doth not comprehend, or to which it doth not incline us.

But however, though such obedience be due to our human superiors as proceedeth from love; yet how apparent is the case, that herein is greater love shewn to men, than to God, though too little to both? There is indeed too little regard to laws both human and divine, in the most important matters; yet surely a great deal less to the latter, than to the former. The thing speaks itself as to common observation: and we daily see how much more human laws do influence men's practice, than those which are divine; and persons that are a great deal more prone to be precisely observant of them about matters, which they themselves do otherwise count indifferent, than of the laws of God, which are about the most necessary matters, and which also are acknowledged as such. Thus it hath long apparently been in the Christian world. A greater account hath been made of this and that arbitrary circumstance, than of the substance of religion itself. More stress hath been put upon the cream, the salt, and the oil, and such additionals of human invention, than on the great obligations of the baptismal covenant. And if it were not so, it could never have been desired by any, that we should rather be all infidels, than not be christians after their fashion, and in their way. For that it hath been evidently so, may be seen in this; that this whole nation itself hath at once suffered under the interdict of excommunication in former days. All the doors of our churches and chapels have been shut up, only for some non-compliance, with this or that human addition; thus they chose we should rather be no christians at all, than not have Christianity with those additions. This shews a greater disposition in the minds of men to obey human laws, in circumstantial matters; than divine laws, in those points which are most necessary and important.

What then is more apparent, than that God is less loved in the world than men are; since persons are more forward to shew respect to them, than to him? Not but that we are bound to shew respect to them too, especially to those who represent him, and as his vicegerents rule over us. But surely it was never intended, that when we are to obey men for God's sake, we should regard him less; we should rather do it so much the more on this very account.

In a word, love ought to be an ingredient in every act of obedience; even to human government, as I have said before, as well as to that which is divine. What love is expressed in that great canon of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! "Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" (Matt. 7.12.) that is, you ought to judge the case

thus ; "What would I wish to be done to me in such a man's circumstances? Would not I expect to be obeyed and revered, if I were a magistrate? My love to myself would incline me to expect it. Therefore my own love to myself, being the measure of that love which I owe to another, should oblige me to shew the same respect to him in his circumstances, that I would wish to be shewn to me in the like circumstances." But here is the iniquity of the case : those whom we should honour and love in the Lord for his sake, men are apt to put the supreme respect upon ; which is to dethrone the supreme Lord of all, and to set up his creature in his place. And as to other persons, who are not invested with power and authority over us ; how many are there of those, who will not wrong men, or do them any injustice ! How many that are most highly civil, and candid in their converse with them, and strictly careful not to disoblige them by their behaviour ! But who sticks at disobliging God, or makes a difficulty of disobeying him ? Again,

5. Towards men there is a disposition deeply to *regret* any offence we unwarily have given them. When we, though undesignedly, have done another an injury ; if, for instance, we but casually tread on his foot, or some such like matter, we presently say, "I am afraid I have hurt you, I am sorry for it." Common civility would oblige one to express such a regret. And if we by any rash word or weak action have trespassed upon another, we are reckoned almost unfit for society, if we do not shew a sense of our having offended such a person. Men that are not very ill-natured indeed, are apt to make apologies, and desire to be forgiven in cases where they have offended through inadvertency. But how much is it otherwise with men towards God, who trespass upon him every day, and never cry to him for mercy ! who wear away their lives, from one month, year, and day, to another, in continual deviations from him, and rebellions against him, without its ever coming into their thoughts to say, "Lord forgive me, that I have lived so long in the world, as it were, without thee ! that I have carried it to thee as if I owed thee no duty nor service ! Lord, I have offended, I desire to put an end to this course, and to do so no more." Finally,

6. A *love* of converse or delight in each other's company, is another expression of that regard which men have for one another. Man is naturally a sociable creature ; and how few do you know, or ever have known, who do not affect company ? Some few instances there are of persons, that are of a gloomy retired temper ; but generally men seek to converse with one

another, and take pleasure in it. But alas, how little do they care to converse with God! They had rather be any where, than in his presence. Many, otherwise ingenious persons, men of good dispositions and of facetious tempers, who, as they delight in converse themselves, so their conversation proves delightful to others; yet care not at what distance they keep themselves from God. How many, I say, of such ingenious persons do we know; who yet neglect to pray to God; take no pleasure in having any thing to do with him; take his holy name in vain; and set themselves at a distance from him, by their own evil practices? It may be they will come to the solemnities of public worship for the sake of order, and to express their respect to others; so that even in those things which are peculiarly appropriated to him, they shew more respect to men, than God. And how sociable soever their temper is, one with another; yet with the Almighty they care not to converse at all, but say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Job 21. 14. From whence we may conclude, that to man in his present state, it is even natural to wish the great God out of being. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Ps. 14. 1. "I would there were no God, my vote shall go for it, that there were none; I could wish him out of the universe."\* But you never heard of such a monster among men, as to wish there was no man beside himself. You never heard of such a hater of mankind, as to wish the whole human race into nothing.

Now all these things concur to evidence or prove to us, that God is much less beloved in the world, than men are by one another. And it must be allowed that the common practice of men sheweth their inclination. This is discovered by constant experience and observation, and the very aspect of men's deportment doth represent this as the true state of things. And, as I observed before, men may find something of it by the experience they have of themselves; even those who have applied themselves to the business of religion, seriously and in good earnest. They find they can presently set their love on

\* For it is in the Hebrew text, *אמר ככל כלבו אין אלהים* that is, *The fool hath said in his heart, no God.* And so it may as well be understood to signify the fool's wish, as his judgment. And this is the more likely to be the meaning; inasmuch as it is manifest, that this is not the speech of some particular persons, or of some rare instances of most monstrous horrid wickedness; but it is spoken of apostate man in general, concerning whom it is said in ver. 3. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one.



work towards this or that creature ; but how long an exercise of the thoughts doth it require, and how great is the difficulty and toil, before the heart can be wrought up into a frame actually loving God !

So that the former branch of this truth, that men are more inclinable to love one another, than they are to love God, is abundantly clear. The latter is, that it proceeds in a great measure from this cause, that God is not seen by us, as we are by one another ; but this must be reserved for another discourse.

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## SERMON II.\*

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**I**N my Former Discourse I told you, that my design from this scripture was not to handle singly and apart either the love of God, or of our brother: but to speak of them comparatively, with respect to the greater or less facility attending the exercise of the one or the other, according to their different objects; the object of the one being visible, and of the other, invisible.

The First Observation raised from the words, after settling the acceptation of love, was this: That it is more difficult to live in the exercise of love to God, than towards men; because he is not the object of sight as we are one to another. In which doctrine, as we observed, there are two things to be considered.

I. That it is more difficult to love God, than our brother. This has been proved from experience, and the common observation of the world, in several particulars. The,

II. Branch contained in this proposition, which we are now to speak to is this; that one great reason of this difficulty is, that men cannot see God, whereas they do see one another. In the prosecuting of this part of my subject it will be more necessary to insist on the explication, than on the proof of it; and still more upon the application than on either of the former. Something I shall endeavour to say to all, as the time shall allow.

1. For the explication of this matter : namely, How we are to understand, that the not seeing God as we do men, is a cause of its being more difficult to love him than it is to love them, take these few propositions, As,

(1.) That it is not an impossible thing in itself to love the unseen God : for if the not seeing him, did make it impossible to love him; he could never be loved by any one ; because he is seen by none with the bodily eye, as we see one another. But it is plainly implied in our text, that there are some that love God, notwithstanding his invisibility. And the apostle therefore endeavours only to evince the absurdity and guilt of not loving our brother, because from thence a man may be convicted of being no lover of God, which he accounts as a most intolerable thing. The not seeing him therefore doth not make it impossible to love God, but only renders it less easy. That is, it is not simply impossible, and therefore he who can do all possible things, can make the nature of man to love him ; he, I say, can form the nature of man to the love of himself.

(2.) The not seeing of God cannot be understood to be a necessary cause of this sad thing. It is not such a cause as doth necessitate this evil, and horrid effect. For that would be to reflect upon God, as if he had made a reasonable and intelligent creature, that was by the necessity of his nature prevented from loving him. This would be to suppose, that the seeing of God with the bodily eye, were necessary to the loving of him ; which would make it altogether impossible that he should be loved by any of us at all, since he is visible to none. Nay, we might say further, he was never to be loved by any being, no not by himself, on the same grounds. The cause therefore of this difficulty is such as doth not necessitate the thing caused : for that indeed would imply that the nature of man is such as would never admit of his loving God, and so there would be a contradiction in men's very nature ; to wit, that they should be capable of being blessed in him only, whom at the same time they are not capable of loving. For experience sheweth, that there is nothing else in which we can be blessed ; nothing below, or besides God. Therefore this would infer, that man must be a creature made on purpose for misery ; for it is evident he can be happy in no creature ; neither in God could he be happy, if it were simply impossible he should ever love him, which is to cast the whole matter upon God himself. For if this were the case, then a man might say, " God hath given me such a nature as renders it impossible for me even to exercise love towards him." But far be it from us that we should entertain such a thought of

God ! that he should make man, a creature indued with an intellectual mind, and yet not capable of loving him, who is the Author and Original of his life and being ! This it were even horrid to think of. And again,

(3.) Nor hath this always been the cause of such an effect ; for there are some that are actually brought to love God, though they never saw him in the sense we speak of, to wit, with the bodily eye. It was not so with man from the beginning, that because he could not see God, therefore he loved him not, or was for that reason the less inclined to love him. He was formed at first for the love of his Maker, so as to take the highest complacency in him, and to make him his supreme delight. Man, I say, was made thus upright ; but he hath since been trying inventions, to see if he could be happy any other way, or upon other terms. And therefore since this is not the necessary, nor the constant cause of such an effect as this, we must add,

(4.) That it cannot be a cause of itself alone, but must needs be a cause in conjunction with some other cause ; by the intervention of some other thing, by the concurrence of which this sad effect is brought about. For if it be true, that there have been men who have loved God, though they never saw him with the bodily eye, there must be some other cause of the want of love to God in those persons who love him not, besides his invisibility. Because otherwise, since God was always invisible, and never seen with the bodily eye, it would necessarily follow that he could never have been loved at all. And hence again we may observe,

(5.) That the other cause therefore, which is considerable in this case, must needs be the degeneracy of man's nature. It is not to be imagined, that man in a state of integrity should be incapable of loving God further than he could see him : or that the sight of his eye should be the conductor of his affections, and of the motions of his soul, which is a reasonable intelligent spirit. But the nature of man is not now, what it was. Certainly the case was better with him formerly, than it is now in this lapsed state, in which we must confess him to be ; since there is so great an alteration in his very nature. This even the heathens themselves have seen, confessed, and lamented. I remember Plato brings in Socrates, somewhere speaking to this sense, upon a supposition of the pre-existence of his soul : "There was a time, says he, when I could have seen, and did see the *first beauty*, the highest and most perfect comeliness, and loveliness ; but now being subject to the body, all that impression is vanished and gone." And divers others have complained of that great darkness and ignorance,

which was in them; and of the bonds and chains that held their souls fast, so that they could not tell how to exercise the powers of them towards invisible things. It cannot be then, but the matter must be resolved into this; that if our not seeing God is the reason why he is so little loved, it is because our nature is grown so corrupt and degenerate, that what we see, takes with us most. And again,

(6.) We may add hereupon, that this degeneracy of the nature of man must needs stand very much in the depression of the mind, or intellectual powers, and the exaltation of sense. For the mind and the understanding, by the light which God had placed there, were to guide and govern the man; instead of which, sense usurped the throne and took the government of him into its own hands. During the distraction and interruption of that order, which God had originally set between the superior and inferior powers of man's soul, sense, I say, usurped the throne, and took the government into its own hands, and man has ever since basely yielded, and subjected himself to its dominion, so that nothing moves him now but what is sensible. In this therefore the degeneracy of man very much consists, that sense dictates, and is become the governing principle of his life. And,

(7.) We add further, for of this more will be said when we come to the use or application, that the not seeing God can be only a temporary cause of our not loving him; inasmuch as it is only a cause, with the intervention or concurrence of another cause, I mean, the disturbance of that primitive order, which God had settled between one faculty and another, belonging to the nature of man. Our not seeing God could never have prevented us from loving him, if things had not been so deplorably out of course with us, or if this confusion of order had never been brought in among us. Therefore this cause is only temporary, that is, so long as this great depravation of our nature doth prevail. But there are those, with whom it either doth not, or shall not prevail always. There are some, blessed be God, in whom this distemper and disorder of the soul of man is cured. For God hath sent his Son, the Redeemer, into the world on purpose to undertake this cure, and to rectify and set things right in men's spirits. And "Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity,"\* and therefore surely from this monstrous kind of iniquity, the most horrid of all the rest, to wit, that most unrighteous unequal thing, that man should not love his own Original; and the Author of his life and being. Therefore it

\* Tit. 2. 14.

was the resolution of the Redeemer, "I will die, but I will remedy this matter. I will give myself, I will sacrifice all that I have, but I will bring this matter to rights again." I say then it is only a temporary cause, which has been assigned of men's not loving God, subsisting only so long as man's nature continues depraved : which is not only curable, but in part is actually cured, when the work of regeneration is set on foot, and the Spirit of the Redeemer has begun to obtain in the soul; and it is completely cured, when the new creature becomes mature, and is risen up to its full growth and perfection. But in the mean time, so long as this distemper in the nature of man continues, our not seeing God is one great reason why we love him not. For that way of apprehending God, which should be the same with respect to invisible objects, that sight is with respect to those which are visible, is wanting. And this apprehension will still be wanting, that must supply the room of sight, so long as this degeneracy remains in us. While it is thus with us, that we are subject to the power of sense which has usurped the throne, the soul is destitute of those clear conceptions, those lively and vivid apprehensions, that issue in love to God. And so the great neglects of God, and the intolerable disrespect and affronts that are put upon him in the world, are, in a great measure, according to the present degenerate state of man to be resolved into this cause, namely, that he is not seen. Hence it is, that so many persons neither love, nor regard him at all.

2. Having thus explained the point we are upon, I now proceed to evince this truth, that one great reason, why men are not so apt to love God as they are one another, is because he is not the object of sight as we are. And this I shall do from the following considerations, namely,—that the object is such as would certainly command our love, if it could be apprehended aright ; and—if it be not so, it must proceed from some defect in ourselves.

(1.) That the object is such as would certainly command our love, if it were rightly apprehended. For he is most amiable in himself ; and has infinitely more obliged man, than they can ever oblige one another.

God, I say, is most amiable in himself, who is chiefly to be loved by all, though he is not actually so ; as he is confessed to be the Supreme Object of our understanding, while in reality he is least known. "God is light,"\* says the apostle in one place of his epistle ; and "God is love,"† as he affirms in two others : a Being of pure light, and glorious love. Would

\* 1 John 1. 5—† 4. 16.

he not be loved therefore, if apprehended aright? "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods!" as we find Moses speaking with admiration, "Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"\* God is a Being wherein the most perfect wisdom, goodness, power, truth and righteousness, make so admirable a temperature, that it is not possible he should not be loved, if he were but known.

Besides, he has infinitely more obliged men, than they ever have or can oblige one another. Take any man whatsoever, whose soul you may suppose to be utterly destitute of the love of God, how low and abject soever be his state, yet you may say, "Thou impious wretch! thou hast not the love of God in thee; though he hath done more for thee, than all the men in the world whatever could do, even though they should all join together to oblige thee. For is he not the Author of thy life, and being? Could the invention of all the men in the world have formed such a creature as thou art out of nothing? Is he not a continual Spring of life to thee? Thou livest and movest, and hast thy being in him every moment. And it is with this design, that God doth continue to thee thy breath and being, that thou mightest feel after him, though thou canst not see him, and also labour to find him, though he be not far from every one of us. Thou art his offspring as even heathen poets tell us:† no creature could ever have made thee. No man is always doing thee good every moment, and at all times; but thou art continually sustained by the divine hand. The great God who made thee, feeds thee with breath from moment to moment, and is always exercising towards thee sparing and sustaining mercy; for his patience and bounty always concur together, in every moment's addition to thy breath." It were altogether impossible then but that God should be loved, more than all other beings, if he were but known. And then,

(2.) Since an object so excellent in himself, and beneficent towards us, must have been loved by us, if there were not some defect in ourselves, therefore it plainly appears that there is a defect; and it is owing to this, that sense has got dominion over us, and the ruling sway within us. For if he be not loved by any one, it must proceed from hence, that those lively apprehensions are wanting, which sense is the instrument of with reference to visible objects. This is in itself most plain, that such an object as the blessed God is, could not but attract our love, if there were not some great defect in our-

\* Exod. 15. 11.    † See Acts 17. 27, 28.

selves, or if sense had not the power and dominion over us. And that it has such power and dominion, may be seen by comparing these two things together : to wit, that generally the objects of sense do make great impressions upon us ; but the things that fall not within the reach thereof, or exceed its sphere, usually make little or none at all.

[1.] The things of sense, I say, do usually make a great impression upon us, and are the things that have the deepest influence and operation upon the minds of men, so long as they are destitute of the grace of God. Hence it is, that men, who are yet in an unregenerate state, are said to be "in the flesh."\* And a wicked man is spoken of as one, that is lost in the flesh ; so that there is nothing comes near him, nothing affects the soul, nothing reacheth his heart, but what some way or other doth slide in upon him, through the mediation of his external senses. It is true, sense is the instrument of conveying to us the knowledge of many things that are not the objects thereof. But when any are spoken of under this character, of being in the flesh, it bespeaks the degeneracy of man while unrenewed to be so great, that he is a creature so wrapt up in the flesh, as that nothing can come at him, but what is sensible. And therefore of such persons it is said, "They savour the things of the flesh."† While this is the state and case of any man, it is no wonder that things, which are not the objects of sight, should move his heart but little. It is evident to all that make any observations upon themselves, how mighty a power sensible things have upon them. A danger that we see, how do we start at it ! Without using any intervening thoughts, as soon as we see it we dread it. How apt are we also to be amused, by the variety of sensible objects ! How apt to be ensnared and enticed by them ! Therefore such as have a due care of themselves, what a watch and guard do they set upon their sense ! For this purpose holy Job is said to "make a covenant with his eyes."§ And we also read of a heathen philosopher, that would outdo Job, by putting out his eyes, that he might be able to contemplate the better ; acting herein agreeable to this Arabian proverb, shut the windows, that the house may be light. Thus it is evident how great a power sense has over us, to draw us this way and that. And,

[2.] On the other hand, it is also obvious to experience, how little power, in general, those things have usually over us which fall not under the senses. Not only the objects of our love, but of our other affections signify nothing, make no impres-

\* Rom. 7. 5. † Rom. 8. 5. § Job. 31. 1.



sion if they be invisible. Therefore it is spoken of as a characteristic note of the saints, that "they look not at the things which are seen, which are but temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and are eternal."\* We read particularly of Noah, who "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, and through faith prepared an ark for the saving of his house."† Do but consider; here was one man, and only one in a whole world, that was actually moved by the discovery and report of things not seen as yet, who when he was warned by God of such and such things coming, though unseen at present, admitted into his soul a pious preventing fear. I say there seems to have been but one such man in a whole world, and he is thereupon recorded with honour in the book of God for it. So rare a thing is it that a man should be influenced by things not subject to sight, that if there be but one Noah, any one such person in the world, Record him for it (saith God) to future ages, for his excellency in this, that he took notice of the monition, or warning from God, as to things not seen as yet, so as to do what was agreeable to the exigence of the case. Accordingly he stands at this day as an eminent example to all succeeding ages. And you find, that it is the same faith which distinguisheth those who belong to God, and is the principal rule of their life; to wit, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."‡ Plain therefore and visible it is to us, and so it must be to all the world, that most persons are governed by their senses; while things not sensible never move, nor signify any thing with us. How plainly doth experience every day speak in this case! When we tell men of a judgment to come, a dreadful tribunal where they must all appear, and an endless state of things, that is before them; we are to them as men that mock. They cry out, "Surely, you are but in jest; you mean not as you say, when you tell us of such dreadful things; we see nothing like it, nothing tending that way." Thus in like manner it is said, that when the inhabitants of Sodom were admonished by Lot, that fire and brimstone were ready to come down upon their heads to punish the most flagitious enormities of that people, "he was to them as one that mocked."§ So we are told this will be the language of scoffers in the latter days, "Where is the promise of his coming?"|| As much as to say, "You have told us often of the great and terrible day, when the sign of the Son of Man shall be seen in the heavens, and that there shall be most terrible concomitants of

\* 2 Cor. 4. 18. † Heb. 11. 7. ‡ Heb. 11. 1. § Gen. 19. 14.  
|| 2 Peter 3. 4.

his appearance ; but we see nothing like it, no token of its approach, "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Thus the judgment of sinners is framed only by what is seen ; and what is not seen, is not at all minded ; not regarded by them. So David says, "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."\* They say, "All things are as they were. There is no alteration fallen out so important, as seems to portend such dreadful things, as you talk of. The sun runs its course as it has been wont, and there is the same succession of day and night, summer and winter, as in former times. Who therefore can make us believe, that there is such a day coming as that, which is so much talked of?"

Now, since we find, that God is such a one as you have heard ; namely, most amiable in himself, and beneficent towards us, and consequently that he would most certainly be beloved, if there were not some great defect in us which hinders so blessed an effect ; and since we find, that there is such a defect, that we have promoted sense to be the ruler in us, and that sensible things make a deep impression on us, while things that are not subject to the senses have little, or no regard from us ; we have all the reason in the world to conclude, that the great reason why men love not God is, because they do not see him. He is out of sight, and they regard him not.

I THOUGHT to have insisted on many things by way of use, as I proposed, after having explained, and evinced, this second branch of my first proposition ; but I shall now only hint at some things, which I propose to speak more largely to in the next discourse.

In the first place, we may infer and gather from hence, that the apostacy and degeneracy in which this world has been, and is still involved, is very dreadful ; in that it hath destroyed man's right disposition towards God. If it had wrought only so far as to deface men's limbs, and turn them into monstrous shapes, it had not been by many degrees so tremendous ; but it hath deformed the mind, and spoiled the temper of the spirit as it hath reference to God most of all, which is a thing never enough to be deplored.

Again secondly, we may further infer, that there is a necessity for something or other to supply the room of our not seeing God, as man did in the state of innocence ; inasmuch as he is not seen by us now in this lapsed state, so as to furnish us with such apprehensions of him as to engage us to love him. There

• Psalm 55. 19.

must be something analogous to sight, some communications of God's grace, that must influence our hearts to love him; without which it is impossible.

Moreover thirdly, I would observe, It is a wonderful mercy that God hath not wholly concealed himself from men: that though he cannot be seen by the bodily eye, yet he hath vouchsafed to shew us, how we may attain to the knowledge of him. No man, saith John the Baptist, hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.\* How then ought divine grace to be admired for this!

We may hereupon, fourthly, see the great necessity of much gospel-preaching, and that very lively and serious too. There are a great many that are apt to say, "What needs such ado? why must we have sermons so often?" Surely the exigence of the state of man is but little considered by them that say so. Do not we need to be often put in mind of the invisible God, when men love him not, because they see him not? If they should hear of him neither, what would become of them? Certainly they misunderstand the state of things among us, who think every little in this kind is too much.

Finally: We may see how little reason we have to be in love with this state of dependence upon sense, which amuseth our souls, usurpeth the power over them, and so disturbs and muddles our minds as to divert them from their true objects. How little reason have we to be fond of living in, and walking after the flesh; which is to live the life of a creature, as it were, buried alive. Surely, I say, we have no reason to be fond of such a life.

\* John 1. 18.

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## SERMON III.\*

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**H**AVING told you in the introduction to the First Discourse, that love to God and man, is the summary of our whole duty, I proposed to insist on these three things.

FIRST, that there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love towards God than towards men on this account, that he is not the object of sight, as man is : or, in other words, men are much more disposed to love one another, rather than God, inasmuch as they can see each other.

SECONDLY, that although this is one great reason why men in reality love God so little, yet it is no excuse.

THIRDLY, I proposed also to shew you the manifest falsehood and absurdity of any one's pretending to love God, who does

\* Preached September 6, 1676.

N. B. The author begins the third sermon on the subject after the following manner :

"It will be necessary, after so long an interval, to be somewhat larger than usual, in the recollection of what has been said from this scripture." And accordingly he proceeds to give a large recapitulation of the two former discourses, which he had preached about three months before; of which this is only an abstract.

There is a like interval or chasm, with respect to time, between the VIII. and IX. of those posthumous sermons, published by Dr. Evans; and there are several more of the like nature in the manuscript volumes, out of which these discourses are selected.

not love his brother also. The **FIRST** of these we have made some progress in, and, in the handling of it, told you, that it contained these two parts :

I. That it is more difficult to love God than our brother.

II. That one great reason of it is, that we cannot see God as we do one another.

As to the former of these, we have shewn you in several particulars, that how much soever mutual love is wanting in the world ; yet it is not so hard a matter to find out instances of kind, goodnatured men, who are friendly and fair in their deportment one to another, as it is to find persons who are kindly affected towards God. In the prosecution of this matter the usual expressions, or evidences of human love were considered. Such as mindfulness, or a kind remembrance of one another ; mutual trust ; a readiness to be concerned for each other's interest, and reputation ; an earnest study to please, and oblige ; and a disposition deeply to regret an offence, though given unwarily ; and finally, a love of converse, or 'delighting in each other's society, is another expression, as we observed, of that regard, which several persons have for one another. In all which respects it appears from constant observation and experience, that men are more disposed to shew love and respect to one another, than to God.

As to the latter of these propositions, that all this proceeds for the most part from this cause, namely, that God is not seen by men as they are seen by one another, several propositions were first laid down for the explication of this point ; and then two considerations for the eviction of it, tending to shew, that it must necessarily be from some great defect in the nature of man, that the most excellent and most amiable objects of all others, should not be generally loved by us. After which, two or three hints by way of use were given you, and so we concluded the last exercise on this subject.

3. I now proceed to a larger and more close application of this important truth.

(1.) Hence we infer, that man is in a very low and lapsed state. The present state of man, I say, is a lapsed state. He is fallen, and fallen very low indeed, when this is the case with him, that he is less apt to love God than man ; and only for this reason, because he cannot see God. It argues, I say, man to be sunk very low, and greatly fallen. And can we hercupon think otherwise ? For what ! can it ever enter into the imagination of any of us, that God did ever create such a thing as the reasonable intelligent spirit of man, his own offspring, image, and glory, with an original indisposition to the

love of himself? Do we think that God gave such a nature to man at first, as was capable of being employed about spiritual objects, and yet with this strange defect or flaw in it, that it should be impossible to this nature of man to love the Author of itself, and the Original of its own life and being? This cannot be. It can never be, that a reasonable spirit, the immediate issue of the great Father of spirits, should be so alienated from its own Father; and that it should be so dependent upon sense, as not to be able to love him from whom it came, or anything which is above the sphere of that base principle, which now presumes to give laws to the immortal mind. It is not to be supposed, that God ever created man so, as that his invisibility, which is the excellency of his own being, should be the reason why man should not love him. For he is therefore invisible, because he is excellent. And to think that the nature of man at first was so formed, that the excellency of things should be the reason why they should not be loved, and his own excellence a reason for his creature not to love him, is too absurd for any rational person to imagine. It is therefore plain, that the present state of man is a very lapsed state.

Some of the heathen, as we observed before, have acknowledged and lamented this. We find one of them complaining, that the darkness of ignorance clouded his mind, and that this body and flesh was but as a living sepulchre to the man. Another complains of certain bonds and chains, that tied down the mind of man to the body, and the things of sense. And a third speaking of the excellent state of man at first, says, that he then lived in a sort of familiarity and converse with God, but that now it was become quite otherwise with him. Such things as these we find in the writings of divers of the heathen. And how incongruous a thing is it for us who have all the concerns of our souls, and what relates to our being, so expressly discovered and made known to us; how incongruous a thing is it, I say, that such a malady as this should be so little minded as it is by us! Many have very slight notions of the degeneracy of man, and make a little matter of it, and the most have a much slighter sense thereof in practice. How few are there, who carry it as those who apprehend themselves fallen, and cast down from great excellencies! fallen short, very far short, of the glory of God! we live as if we apprehended no such malady, as if we knew not that there was a disease or distemper inwrought into our natures. Oh, how little is there of the sense of this to be found in the bulk of mankind! And hence I would farther infer,

(2.) That this depravity or lapsedness of the nature of man consists greatly, in the depression and declination of his mind, and intellectual powers, as to the particular work and office of guiding his passions, his affections, and practical inclinations. This was just mentioned before in the last discourse,\* but shall now be more largely considered. I do not say, with some, that this is all that is meant by the corrupt state of man; but certainly it stands very much in this, that his mind and rational powers are become unfit for their proper business; and, that sense hath got the throne, usurped the reins, and governs his passions and affections. Herein I say, consists, in very great part, the corruption and depravedness of man's present state. And do not we find it to be so? Do not we see, as to the objects that draw men's affections daily into a certain course that it is not the mind, but sense which prescribes? Sense dictates and says, "Love here," and they do accordingly: "Love not there," and they obey. "Let that be the object of your love, which sense tells you is amiable and lovely; and that which sense says no such thing about, you may slight, neglect, and take no further notice of." Thus men are dictated to, and they do accordingly. It is plain then, that the depravedness of man's state stands chiefly in this, that sense takes upon itself to do the business of the mind and intellectual powers, and we consent it should be so.

But is not this a dismal thing? more dismal that it is not laid to heart! Is it not a dismal thing, I say, that the first rank and order of creatures in this sublunary world should be sunk into that low bestial life, so as to be governed by no higher a principle than what is common to them with brutes; and that the incongruity of this should not be reflected upon, and more deeply considered? That men should so seldom consider with themselves the unfitness of their course, or labour to shake off the usurped dominion over them? This, I say, is most sad and doleful to think on, that matters should have gone on thus from age to age, and from generation to generation, in so many successions to this day, and we have heard of so few in all that time, who have regretted to be so imposed upon, and forborne to live the life of beasts and brute creatures through so many ages! One would think it should some time or other have come into the mind of man, to think thus with himself. "What! is it a becoming thing for me, a reasonable and intelligent creature, one formed after the image and likeness of God, one of those creatures made at first for his immediate service and fel-

\* See Prop. (6.) p. 17.

lowship, that I must now be imposed upon, and dictated to by sense? that vile and base principle of sense, so as to love nothing but what that counts lovely, and neglect every thing which that takes no cognizance or notice of?" It is an amazing thing, that there should not be so much apprehensiveness left among men, as to remember, that they were men, in their original, once at least that they were men, "Remember," saith the prophet in a like case, "and shew yourselves men." Isa. 46. 8. But alas, how little is there left of a sense of this degeneracy among us! how little resentment of the vile indignity that is done to the whole kind, and which the whole species of men have suffered to come upon them! to be degraded and brought down into an inferior rank and order! to do, to act and live, as if they were also made to die like the beasts that perish!

There are indeed many, in the mean time, who proudly arrogate and give to man that which belongs not to him in his present condition, and which this state does not admit of. They say him to be that which he is not, but in the mean time really see not, nor lament that he is neither what he was, nor what he should or ought to be. And to how little purpose is it to magnify human power, when it is manifest how forlorn the present state of man is? He is fallen very low! And what are these men intent upon, who make it their business now to magnify the nature and power of man in this condition? those parasites of mankind, as I may call them, what mean they by it? When he is become a lost perishing creature, they adorn him with shadows, and think they make up the matter by attiring him with magnificent titles and attributes. As if when a person is condemned to suffer the execution of the sentence of death passed upon him, one should clothe him with a majestic robe, and bestow great compliments upon him. This is to add scorn to his ruin, and is only insulting over the wretchedness and calamity of the man's condition. And yet this is the course of them that go about to persuade man, that although the case is thus with him, he can recover his own excellence that he hath lost; that he can anew create himself, or repair the ruins of his decayed and shattered state. This is the way to add incurableness to his misery, by tempting him to neglect the only means of taking it off, and so make him miserable without remedy. But that persons out of a deep concern for the honour and glory of man as the top of the creation, should go about to make him believe himself now in an honourable state, and that he can even now do great things; now unsuitable and insignificant is this, as well as inconsistent with truth! And again,



(3.) We infer hence, that man is most especially prejudiced and impaired by his lapse or fall, in respect to his disposition and inclinations towards God. The wound is principally in his mind, and consists in the depression and enfeebling of its powers; but the mind itself is most especially hurt and impaired in respect of those inclinations by which it should be guided towards God. For in the state in which he is at present he is indisposed to the love of God; and for this mean reason, because he cannot see him. And that he is not able to love what he cannot see, shews him to be a very mean abject creature, and that his powers are mightily impaired. Surely the time was, that he could have loved what he could not have seen with his bodily eye; and how comes it to pass that because he cannot see God, therefore he cannot love him? This shews that his mind is impaired, that he is hurt chiefly in what respects his Creator; and that his propensity, the bent and bias of his spirit towards God is lost.

This is the sad and dismal thing that is befallen the nature of man, because God is far beyond the reach of his sight, and he himself is sunk into flesh, lost in earth, and always imposed upon by sense, he cannot see him, cannot lift up the dull heavy eye of his mind to his God, which is the eye he must be seen with by his creatures. So that, as the apostle Paul expresses it, he is become alienated from the life of God, and without God in the world. Eph. 2. 12. And how much is this to be lamented, that man is so fallen off from God! that his original propensity to him is lost and dropped from his nature! If we had heard but of one man since the creation of the world with whom this was the case, it would deserve to be very much lamented. But that this should come upon the whole kind, that it should be thus, as I may speak, with the whole race of men; methinks the sense of it should never wear off from our hearts. Strange! that it should be the course and fashion of this world all over the earth, to live in an oblivion of him that made us, and with hearts devoid of his love, and only because he is so excellent as not to be seen by us with the bodily eye! It was reckoned a sad and terrible day, when a tribe was cut off from Israel; but if we consider what man was made for, what were the design and end of his creation, we see as it were a whole race of beings lost from the creation of God. For what can we think man was made for but to love, admire, triumph, and glory in his great Maker? But to all this he is lost, and abstracting what is done in order to the recovering him again, it had been as well if there had been no men at all, and for themselves unspeakably better. How strange then is it, that

such a matter as this is, should ever escape our thoughts ! If we speak of the corruption and depravedness of human nature, they are words of course that drop from us now and then, and some slight notions of the matter hover in our minds ; but how few are there to whom it is a familiar thing to roll themselves in the dust before the Lord, in the sense of that vile and abject state, which man in common now is in ? How few lament that they are by the fall cut off from God ; and spoiled as to all their capacities, whereby they were suited to the divine love, service and communion ! And yet the most tragical calamities that could possibly have fallen out in the world, or of which we could form any imagination, had been nothing in comparison of this. Nay if all mankind, as to shape, or impossibility of external enjoyments, were the most monstrous and most miserable creatures living, it were nothing when compared to the mischief and misery, which are the fruits of man's apostacy from his Maker.

(4.) We further infer hence, that man upon all these accounts must necessarily be at a very great distance from true blessedness. Whoever understands, or considers the connexion between blessedness and love, will soon perceive the reasonableness of this inference. It is impossible to be blessed without love ; and it is necessary to every one's satisfaction, that it be a full and sufficient good that is the object of his love. If either of these be wanting, it is impossible it should be satisfying, or a suitable good to me. Or if on the other hand, there be a good never so self-sufficient or all-sufficient, yet if I cannot love it, if my heart be averse to it, this also is a sufficient bar to my happiness. The things that are seen, though a man love them never so much, can never satisfy, because they are not sufficient. The infinite incomprehended good is all-sufficient, and fit for every purpose ; but this cannot make him happy, because he doth not love it. In the creature therefore man cannot be happy, in God he will not. He cannot in the creature, because that hath not in itself to give ; in God he will not, because his heart is disinclined to him, and will not be brought to a closure with him by love.

Consider man according to this state of his case, and you must look upon him as one, who by his very constitution and present temper of his soul, is formed for misery ; I say so long as he continues in his present situation. His heart inclines him truly to visible things, and to love the objects of sense, which can never make him happy. The good that is unseen hath enough in it to make him blessed, but then he will not love it. He will not apply himself to love God, merely be-

cause he is out of sight. You must needs think then that it is a great thing that must work the cure of man, who is thus involved in so great an abyss of depravedness and misery. And therefore I must add,

(5.) That there is a very great necessity of much gospel-preaching in order to persuade men to the love of God. For what is the design of the gospel, but to render God amiable to men? What is it but a method of rendering God lovely, and of restoring men's love to God? And since his loveliness is not the object of sight, there needs such a supplemental representation of himself, to supply the want of vision. And since the things that court our senses are obvious, and occur to us every day, yea every hour of the day, it is needful that we should be frequently put in mind of God; and that those discoveries of him which tend to beget the love of him in our hearts, should be very much urged and inculcated upon us. For otherwise what should countervail sense, or what shall we set against the sight of our own eyes? "No man hath seen God, at any time." What is it then that must supply that defect, and be in the stead of the sight of God to us? Why, "the only begotten Son of God, he hath declared him." John 1. 18. So that we have now a revelation of God himself. And our Lord Jesus Christ, who lay in his bosom, and came from thence to declare the Father to the world, has ordained that this revelation, of which he is the prime Author, shall be held out before us from time to time, by the use of inferior and subservient instruments.

I have often considered the strange prevarication, and sophistry, which some men use in stating things that are necessary to salvation; and the use they make of that state. That is, because they can make a shift to gather up the main principles of religion into a little compass, as they may very easily, they say, "Here is all that is necessary to salvation. And therefore since in that way, or in that church all things necessary to salvation are taught, what need is there of any more? why should not we come over thither? or why should we separate from it?" Methinks it were an obvious easy thing to most people to detect the fallacy. They state what is objectively necessary to salvation, without considering the condition of the subject, and what is necessary for that subject. That is, they state what is necessary to be known and believed in order to our being saved, but consider not what is necessary to bring men to this knowledge and belief of these necessary things, so as to make a due impression of them upon their hearts. If, for instance, you were to prescribe to a sick languishing person a

remedy for the taking off his distemper ; would you only tell him of such and such good substantial food that you would have him eat ? and would you then think you had done the business ? Alas ! the poor man is sick ; he desires nothing, can take nothing, can digest nothing, and casts up all you give him. Why then do you talk to him of such things as will make wholesome and substantial food, when he can neither receive nor retain it ! So in like manner in the present case and exigence of man, considered as a fallen creature, if the bare proposal of the sundry heads of religion, necessary to be known and believed were sufficient ; then to have a sermon once in a man's lifetime might do the business ; or a mere system of the principal parts of the Christian religion would do what it is urged for, and answer the exigence of the case. This, I say, were a thing easily to be granted, if it were really so with men, that a doctrine would be understood as soon as proposed, and received when understood, and so beget its due and proper impression upon the hearts of men. But truly the case is manifestly otherwise, since man is fallen into so depraved a state. And to talk thus, is to speak of a scheme of divinity suitable only to innocent men in paradise ; when no more was needful to be done than barely to propound things with respect to the clearness of the understanding, the rectitude of the will, the agreeableness of the powers one to another, together with the truth and goodness of their objects. But to say that this is all that is requisite, that there is enough held forth or laid before men, the knowledge and belief of which is sufficient to save them, is just as if one should say, that such and such things proposed to a sick man would do him good if he were not sick. So in like manner this way of propounding the gospel would serve the turn for men, if they were such as when they were at first created. Indeed it were no gospel, if it were only enough to save men from sin, who as yet were no sinners. The very notion implies a contradiction. For doth not the same sin which makes them stand in need of a gospel for the reconciling them to God, disaffect at the same time their hearts unto God, and make them unwilling to close with him ? Therefore they need to have precept upon precept, and line upon line ; here a little, and there a little. And they that preach the gospel to men, are urged " to be instant in season and out of season, to admonish, exhort, reprove : (2 Tim. 4. 2.) and all little enough, indeed all too little.

Surely then there is somewhat else to be considered in the matter. When we consider what is objectively necessary, it is also to be considered what will bring men to believe these

necessary things. And in order to that there is need of their being frequently inculcated, inasmuch as things that are seen are more the objects of our love, than the things which are not seen; and what we ought to set our hearts most upon, are out of sight. God himself is the great Object men are to be directed to, and to whom they must be united, or they are lost. He is invisible, and they are apt, as you have heard again and again, to mind nothing but what is seen. Therefore it is a strange unapprehensiveness of the real state and condition of mankind, which those are guilty of, who decry preaching as a needless thing. Surely they that do so, have little studied the nature of man!—There are several other things that remain to be spoken to, which I cannot insist upon at this time.

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## SERMON IV.\*

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**WE** have gone through the first part of my design from these words, which was to shew, that men are less apt or disposed to the exercise of love to God than to one another. And we have made some progress in the application, by way of inference; and therein have endeavoured to shew,—that the indisposition of man to the love of God is a proof of his being in a lapsed and very degenerate condition—that this degeneracy must consist principally in the depression of the mind and its intellectual powers—that more especially man is prejudiced by the lapse or fall with respect to his inclinations towards God—that in consequence of this, he must needs be at a great distance from true blessedness, which is inseparably connected with the love of God—and in the next place, it was further inferred, that there is great occasion for frequent gospel-preaching, which is the method instituted by Christ for restoring and reviving love to God in the souls of men. But though this is necessary, yet we are also to know that it is not sufficient; for all the preaching in the world cannot alone make the sensual heart of men to love God. And therefore we proceed to infer further,

(6.) That since men are so very unapt to love God, and for

\* Preached September 13, 1676.

this reason, because they see him not ; there is great need of the communication and influence of that glorious and mighty Spirit of life to relieve him in this sad extremity and distress. For surely it is a very distressed case, that man cannot love his own Maker, the Author of his life and being, him in whom is his eternal hope, and all because he cannot see him. It is a case that calls for a very great and powerful hand to redress ; and no other hand is proportionable to the exigence thereof. Though he works by means, and even by that of the gospel-revelation, yet it doth not follow that the means will do the business alone ; but the contrary follows, that because they are means, therefore there must be an agent, and an efficient, to use them, and one proportionable to the work of forming and disposing the spirits of men towards God, that they may be capable of his love, and admit it into their hearts so as to rule and govern there. And what can do this but the Spirit of God ? What else is it that can awaken and rouse the dull, sluggish, drowsy spirits of men ? What else, I say, can quicken, purify, and refine spirits lost in pleasure and sense ? The way of bringing any soul to love God, is to give it the spirit of love. There is no other way of doing it. Now the apostle says, that " God hath given to us not the spirit of fear ; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."\* One and the same Spirit is all these at once. And till that Spirit is given us, there is nothing but enmity and disaffection towards God ; there is nothing but feebleness and impotence, as to any thing that is good ; there is nothing but distemperature and diseasedness in man, which have pierced him to the very heart. This Spirit therefore, in reference to these several exigencies, is a Spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind. That same Spirit that makes the soul capable now of doing things that require power ; that same Spirit that rectifies the mind, and heals it of those distempers under which it was wasting and consuming before, is a **SPIRIT OF LOVE**. It is said to be a Spirit given, a Spirit superadded to our own, a Spirit that we had not before. Indeed it must be some other spirit than ours, which must render us capable of loving God.

You know, that the apostle recounting the several fruits of the Spirit, (as he had done those of the flesh before) sets this of love in the front of them. "The fruit of the Spirit is love joy, &c."† And after telling us, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him ;"§ he

\* 2 Tim. 1. 7. † Gal. 5. 22. § 1 Cor. 2. 9.

tells us also of a Spirit different from that of the world, the Spirit which is of God, which such as they had received. "We have received," says he, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God."\* And in this same chapter, wherein is our text, you have the apostle John speaking to this very case, to wit, the impossibility of our seeing God: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."† Love to one another as christians or saints, is also a fruit of that same blessed Spirit. And if there be such a principle of love within us, it plainly speaks that God dwells in us, and we in him, and that he hath planted his own love in our souls, which is perfecting there. It is manifest now that he hath taken possession of us, and drawn us into union with himself, so as to become the great Fountain of that principle of love in us, whereby we are capable of loving him, and loving such as are his, for his sake.

And because the act of the heart in loving supposes some foregoing act of the mind by which the object is perceived to be lovely, therefore this same Spirit is elsewhere called "A Spirit of wisdom, and revelation, in the knowledge of him, whom we are to love."‡ The apostle is there praying earnestly on behalf of the Ephesians, that this Spirit might be given them, by which they might be capable of knowing, and knowing practically, as the word *ἐπιγνωσις* signifies, and of coming into union with that blessed One that is known. And on this union love hath a great influence. St. John says, "We know the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. That is the true God and eternal life."§ The understanding here spoken of is said to be given by which we so come to know God in Christ, as to be brought into union with him by love: it is, I say, a given thing, men have it not of themselves.

It is very requisite, and therefore I so long insist upon it, that we understand how necessary it is, that there be another and a better Spirit than our own, to render us capable of loving God, whom we have not seen; for otherwise we shall never love beyond the sight of our own eye. And it is very strange, that this necessity, since the case speaks itself, and the Holy Scriptures so often declare it, should be no more understood. If there be no such necessity, what is the reason we are taught

\* 1 Cor. 2. 12. † 1 John 4. 12, 13. ‡ Ephes. 1. 17. § 1 John 5. 20.



to "pray for the Spirit,"† as starving children do for bread? That we are bid to "live in the Spirit,"\* "to walk in the Spirit,"† and "by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh?"§ And are we not told, that we must "be born of the Spirit, or else we shall never enter into the kingdom of God?" John 3. 3. All this is plain language one would think, and easy enough to be understood by those that have a mind to it. But it is very observable, that those notions which tend to make as little as possible of the depravity and corruption of man's nature, to magnify beyond measure the power of man in his fallen state, to depress preaching, and to make light of the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the minds of men, are all of a sort, all of a piece. These are notions that hang upon one thread, and when we see wherein they issue and terminate, we may easily discern the danger of them; and into how great hazard they bring the eternal concerns of the souls of those men, who suffer themselves to be tainted with them. We again farther in-

(7.) That the work of regeneration must needs stand in very great part in the implanting and seating in the souls of men such principles, as may directly tend to control the dictates of sense, and in opposition to it rule and govern in men. The infirmity and distemper of man's nature easily shew, wherein this cure and renovation must consist. This is at present the great distemper of his soul, it cannot love but where it can see. It is the sight of the eye that carries the heart, and draweth it this way and that way. A most dreadful distemper this! But as we know the distemper, we know wherein the cure must consist. Regeneration is that which restores the man to his right mind, and sets things to rights again with him. Though his former state is expressed by being in the flesh, he is now said to be in the Spirit, from the spiritual frame created in him by the great work of regeneration. Thus, says the apostle, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Rom. 8. 9. And the thing produced in the work of regeneration is called spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3. 6. While man is in flesh he is capable of loving nothing but what is seen, nothing but what to his senses appears amiable and lovely. Herein therefore stands the work of regeneration, to take a poor sensual creature, a mere lump of flesh, and to make him spiritual; and then it is he becomes capable of loving God. There must be a new creation: and

† Matt. 7. 9, 10, 11. \* Gal. 5. 25. † Rom. 8. 1. § ver: 13.

right principles planted in the mind, to influence the heart, and to direct and determine souls towards God, from whom they were cut off and so dreadfully alienated. Again in the

(8.) Place, we further infer, that the power by which it comes to pass that there are any lovers of God in the world is highly to be adored and magnified. You see it is far more difficult to love God, whom we see not, than our brother whom we do see. How then can this difficulty be overcome, unless divine power implant this principle of love? We ought therefore to make the representation of that power, that hath wrought this work in us, appear very glorious in our own eyes, that so with reference to this matter our hearts may be put in an adoring posture. Let us then bless and adore that glorious Being, who hath done such a thing as this; who hath made a stupid sensual heart, which could never rise beyond the sphere of flesh, ascend and enlarge itself, and fix and terminate its love upon the blessed God. "How great is the power" (should one say that finds it thus) "which hath done this in me! to make a clod of earth, a lump of clay to love God! This is as great a thing as out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham." In reality we ought not to think little, or meanly of this. And again,

(9.) We may further infer, that the life of christians in this world cannot but be a conflicting life. The life of a christian as such must be influenced throughout by the love of God. He is to act according to the direction of St. Jude, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." John 3. 21. Is this the business of a christian, and what must be his very life to live in the love of God all along? then he must indeed live a conflicting life all his days. That is, there must be a continual conflict kept up against imperious sense, and its dictates, which always is crying to the heart of man, "Love what is seen, what you perceive to be lovely:" there must, I say, be a continual striving in the heart of a christian against this; since he must keep up a continual love to him whom he cannot see, to him who is far above out of sight.

This sheweth, that they who know not what a continual striving against sense, its dictates, and inclinations means, are yet to learn what the business of the Christian life is. How can a man love God whom he seeth not? When there is a continual difficulty, there must be a continual striving and vigorous endeavours always used. Loving God is not swimming down with the stream of nature, it is quite another thing. And agreeable to this, what a strife is represented all along, throughout the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, between

the "law of the flesh," and the "law of the mind;" the inclinations of sensual nature, and the spiritual dictates and prescriptions which are by the apostle called "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus;"\* which doth as it were repeal, and abrogate the law of sin and death; and so far as it obtains, delivers a man from its impositions, and imperious commands, which lead to death.

It is highly needful for us to state our own case to ourselves, and to consider what we are like to meet with in our Christian course; and if we mean to persevere, we must resolve upon a striving conflicting life all our days, for thus it must be. How much then are they beside the Christian course, who know not what it is to strive against any inclination of their own, nor to oppose the earthly tendencies of their own spirits; who can never find occasion to contend with themselves; who espy no fault in the temper of their own spirits, but carry the matter to themselves as if all were well; who can pass a whole day with no rebukes nor checks, when their hearts have run after their eyes only! These persons perhaps have never minded, never loved any thing better than what came within the reach of their senses, or could be seen with the eye; and yet they are innocent creatures in their imagination, and think they have no cause to blame themselves. But let us not be deceived, who see that the life of a christian must be a continual running counter to a man's own eyes, and the dictates of sense; since these prescribe to a man to love only what he sees, whereas certainly he is no christian who liveth not in the love of God whom he doth not see. In the

(10.) Place, we further infer, that the proneness of men to acquiesce in a civil deportment, and to rest in the mere formalities of religion, hath one fixed common cause, and that is, the want of the great principle of love. In this respect it is fit that we should consider what the case of man is. Men are very apt to satisfy themselves with a fair and unexceptionable carriage to others, or at most with a little formality in the duties of religion, and never look further; which certainly must proceed from one and the same cause, namely, the want of love to God. This, I say, in the

[1.] Place, is the reason why persons are so prone to acquiesce in a fair and civil deportment towards men. It is necessary for us to know this, that so the danger of it may be more carefully avoided and deeply dreaded. What is it that is really the principle of duty even towards men? Certainly it is love. This is easy, as the text supposes, towards men, in comparison of what it is towards God; men therefore are apt to take up with what they find most easy.

\* Rom. 8. 2.

The state of the case lieth thus. There are characters of the ancient law, which God at the creation impressed upon the spirit of man ; *Lex non scripta sed nata ! the law not written, but born with us*, as one heathen writer expresses it, or the νόμος φυσικός, *natural law*, as another heathen writer calls it. There are, I say, still some broken parts, some scattered fragments, some dispersed characters of this law, which was by our Maker put into our very frame, which lie discomposed and dispersed here and there in men, whereof some refer to our duty towards God, and others to our duty towards men. Those relating to men are more legible, are oftener read, and come more frequently under view. For how much more prevalent is this sense in the minds of men, "My neighbour is not to be wronged or disobliged," than this, "God is not to be forgotten, neglected, disobeyed?" Why, the matter being so, that the characters representing our duty to men are oftener in view, and so more frequently furbished as it were and brightened, than those which express our duty to God ; being, I say, more frequently reflected upon, they are more put into practice. And therefore here men are apt to take up, saying, "I do that which is just, honest, and fair before men, and there are none that can charge me with the contrary." And so they think their case is good.

Indeed there are several things concurring to make such principles, as point out to us the duties we owe to man, more influential upon practice. As for instance, men have sensible kindnesses from one another, which work upon ingenuity, and so influence to a suitable behaviour to them that shew such kindnesses. When they receive a kindness from the hand of a man, it is from a visible hand. They see who doth them good. Though there is a thousand times more good done them by the invisible God, but his invisible hand they take no notice of.

Again, they are sensible continually of their need of men. All persons sensibly find they need some other, for they cannot live alone. They are not only obliged to a mutual dependence upon one another, but they are very sensible of it ; and therefore are very apt to carry it so much the more fairly to men, as those who stand in need of one another.

Besides, men find a sensible advantage from the reputation of a fair, just, and honest carriage to others. "If I have not the repute of being a person kind, goodnatured and well-humoured, I shall have no friend ; no body will converse with me, but be shy of me. If I have not the reputation of being a just man, honest and square in all my dealings, I shall have no trade,

no one will trust me, every one will be afraid to have to do with me." These considerations dispose us to good behaviour towards one another.

Finally, men are frequently sensible of hurt or some great inconveniencies accruing to them, if at any time they misbehave themselves to others. They that are morose and churlish do often fall upon tempers as cross-grained and perverse as their own, and so meet with such measure as they bring. If they be quarrelsome, it falls out sometimes that there are those who will quarrel with them, and will not take an affront at their hands. And though there are some that scorn the tutorage and instruction of fear, which should govern them in the conduct of their affairs; yet many others are more prudent, and are not apt to follow the hurry of their own pride and inclinations. They consider how much it concerns them, not to provoke those who will right themselves, nor to injure those who will be sure to meet with them one time or other. Yea, those who are more considerate will be very cautious how they make any man their enemy, even the meanest; for no man is so mean but it may be sometime or other in his power to do him a shrewd turn.

Such inducements there are, I say, as these unto a fair and unexceptionable deportment towards men, whom we see and converse with every day. And with this men are inclined to take up their rest; contenting and satisfying themselves with this, that they carry it to others, so as that none have any great reason to find fault with them, and thereupon think that God will find none neither.

[2.] There is also a proneness in mankind, as we observed, to take up with formality in the matters of religion. For what besides formality can there be in the religion of those who love not God? If I pretend to worship him and not love him, though I spend all my days upon my knees will it signify any thing as to real religion? But because this is more easy, that is, bodily exercise than that of love, or an inclination of mind and heart to God, it is natural to take up with it for that reason, and to rest there.

The pharisees among the Jews, one would think should not have been to seek where religion really lay; but, alas! where did they place their's? In ceremonial sanctity, in washing their hands before they did eat bread, in cleansing their cups and platters, and in frequent purifications of themselves; all which they made to be as significant things, as the instituted rites of worship by God himself. Moreover they were very exact in tithing mint, rue, and all manner of herbs, while in the mean

time they "passed over judgment and the love of God." Luke 11. 42. What a strange oversight was this! that the pharisees, those devout men, those zealous pretenders to the greatest strictness in the observance of the law of God, as well as to the profoundest knowledge of it, even beyond all other men, should be guilty of such an oversight as to pass over the sum and substance of it, to wit, the love of God! And yet our Saviour speaks of it as their common character. If then the pharisees, those knowing and strict men, as they would be thought to be, were in such an error as this so commonly, we may well conclude that the spirits of men are generally prone to acquiesce in the mere externals of religion, and to take up with the outside thereof without ever going any further. They think their case is well enough with God if now and then they bow the knee, compliment him in duty, and put on some face and shew of devotion; while in the mean time the love of God is an unthought-of thing. So that how many must say, if they would speak as their case truly is, "I never thought that the love of God must go into my worship." Since then the proneness of mankind to acquiesce in a fair and civil deportment, and in the mere formalities of religion proceeds from one common, fixed cause, to wit, the want of this divine principle of love, it is necessary that we consider the matter, lest we ourselves be thus dreadfully imposed upon.

And now to conclude the First Part of our subject, it appears that temptations to atheism must needs find great advantages in the temper of men's spirits, while they are so depressed and overborne by sense. For its essence, particularly of practical atheism, consists in the alienation of the heart from God. And how easy a step is it from hence to speculative atheism, when a man has lived so long "without God (*αθεοι*, the apostle's phrase is.) in the world!" Eph. 2. 12. For if he do not love God whom he hath not seen, for the same reason he will not fear him; neither hope nor rejoice in him as his chief good. How obvious is it for such a man to entertain such a thought as this? "Is it not as good to say, there is no God, or I will own none; as to say there is no one that I will love or fear, nor any one with the thoughts of whom my heart is at any time affected?"

Let us therefore hence take occasion to admire the patience and much more the bounty of God towards his revolted creatures in this world. How wonderful is it that he spares and maintains them also! that he should make constant provision for such as put the highest affronts and indignities upon him, by loving and preferring his own dust, before him who formed

it into what it is ; by exalting the work of his hands above him ; and finally, by profusely bestowing their affections on the creature, but none upon God the great Creator of all ! Do not we think this is a thing not to be endured ? and do not we wonder that it is actually endured and that men are permitted from age to age, to continue in this course, and are suffered by vengeance to live, when the whole business of their lives is to express how much more they value despicable nothings, creatures like themselves, than the great, the blessed, and glorious Lord of heaven and earth ! Certainly it should be often our business to set ourselves to admire the sparing and sustaining mercy which God exerciseth towards this world while this is the state of things between him and apostate men.

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## SERMON V.\*

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**WE** have hitherto been shewing you from these words, That men are less apt to love God than one another, principally for this reason, because God is not the object of sight as men are. We are now to go on to the

**SECOND** thing observed from them, namely, That we are most indispensably obliged to the exercise of this duty though we see him not, and therefore notwithstanding this excuse, it is a most intolerable thing not to love God.

This hath its manifest ground in the text, and doth fundamentally belong to the apostle's reasoning in this place. For the argument or medium which he reasons from is this, that if we do not love our brother whom we have seen, then we cannot so much as love God whom we have not seen. By which he endeavours to represent how grievous a thing it would be, if christians should continue in a mutual neglect of one another. Now all this would fall to the ground, and signify nothing, if they were disengaged from loving God upon the account of his invisibility. But the apostle takes it for granted, that all men must esteem it a most horrid thing to be convicted of not loving God; otherwise his argument would be altogether to no purpose. For it might have been replied to him, "Though we be convicted of this, that we do not love God, inasmuch

\* Preached September 20, 1676.



as we do not love one another, yet what is the inconvenience of such a neglect? We grant the whole, but what are the ill consequences that follow upon it?" Now the apostle doubts not but they would see the consequences, and that every man must needs take it to be an intolerably hateful thing to pass for one that is no lover of God. This therefore is supposed by the apostle as a fundamental circumstance in his discourse—that not to love God, though we see him not, is a most horrid hateful thing, as well as absolutely inexcusable.

Now as this is plainly to be collected, so it is very necessary to be insisted upon. For as it is apparent, that as men commonly do not love God, or at least are less disposed to it, because they see him not; so they are very apt to excuse and exempt themselves from guilt upon this account. "Why should I look upon it, says one, as so abominable a thing not to live in the exercise of love to God? He is out of sight, sure he expects no such thing from us who cannot see him, and who live at so great a distance from him!"—What multitudes are there who can wear out the whole time of life, and never charge themselves with any fault all their days for not having lived in the love of God? As if the old heathenish maxim were their settled notion, *Quæ supra nos, nihil ad nos*: we have nothing to do with what is so far above us.

And besides, this is not only the latent sense of most, or that which lies closely wrapt up even in the very inwards of their souls, to wit, that they have little to do with God, and need not concern themselves about him; but it is also what many have the confidence to speak out, and to declare in plain express words. It is very notorious that there are sundry persons in the world, not of one denomination or party only among the professors of the Christian name, who are not afraid to avow this very sense. Those who have made it their concern to look into the doctrines that have been handed about in the Christian world, do well know whose casuistical divinity this is, "That we are not obliged to love God, unless it be once or twice a year." Or as some have presumed to say, "If it be only once in a man's life-time it may serve the turn," as a worthy person, now removed from us, hath largely shewn; as also what the morals and practical divinity of that sort of men are. And another\* of quite a different strain, who hath disciples more than a good many in our time, in his discourse of the human nature, would slyly insinuate, that we are not obliged at all to formal direct acts of love to God, from

\* Hobbes.

this very passage of Scripture in the next chapter of this epistle, This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments†. As if because the apostle would there include all the external effects virtually in the principle, it was therefore fit to exclude the principle itself by the external effects. Nor indeed was there ever any time or age wherein the heart and life of practical religion and godliness were so openly struck at as in our days, by the perverse notions of some, and the scorn of others : as if it were thought a very feasible thing to jeer religion out of the world ; and that men ought to be ashamed to profess love to God, because they can have the impudence and be so daring as to laugh at this and such like things.

We are therefore so much the more concerned to bestir ourselves, and to look more narrowly into the very grounds and bottom of our own practice in the ways of religion. We are to consider whether indeed we have a reason to oblige us to be godly, yea or no; and especially is it incumbent upon us to defend this great principle and summary of all godliness, *The love of God*. For certainly if we must yield to the extinction of this principle, if a love to God may be banished from among us, we turn all our religion into nothing else, but a mere piece of pageantry. How vain and foolish, how absurd and ridiculous things were the forms of religion, which we keep up from time to time, supposing this great radical principle was to have no place nor exercise among us ! To come together, and make a shew of devotion to him whom we do not love, nor think ourselves obliged to love, is nothing but inconsistency and contradiction. And those who come on such terms, as oft as they undertake to worship God, must needs offer nothing but the sacrifices of fools. But it is our business to defend this principle ; to vindicate it against every thing that can be alleged against it by those who would excuse themselves from the obligation to this duty, from their not seeing God. And that we may the more fitly prosecute the present design, we shall endeavour to do these two things.

I. To shew the vanity and impertinence of this excuse for not loving God, to wit, our not seeing him.

II. To demonstrate the intolerable heinousness of this sin notwithstanding, and to shew its horrid nature though God is not visible to us. Because persons are apt upon this ground or reason either totally to excuse themselves, as if there were no iniquity at all in it ; as there are multitudes of people who can pass over their days one after another, without any emotion of

† 1 John 5. 3,

heart to love towards God at all : or else because if they cannot obtain of themselves against the clearest light to believe it is no sin ; yet they would fain have it to be only a peccadillo, or a very little one. “God, say they, cannot expect much love from those, who cannot see him ! or that such beings to whom he is invisible should mind him much, or concern themselves with him from day to day !” Therefore, I say, we shall endeavour both to shew, how most impertinently this is alleged as an excuse for not loving God, or how unreasonable it is to infer from his invisibility, that we are under no such obligation, and after that, to represent to you the hateful nature of the sin ; or to shew, that if we love not God, it is not only a sin notwithstanding this pretence, but a most prodigious and horrid one too.

I. That we may evince to you the vanity of this excuse, or the impertinency of alleging that we are not obliged to love God, because we see him not, there are these two things that we charge this excuse with, and shall labour to make out concerning it ; to wit, that it is both invalid and absurd. It is invalid, because it hath nothing in it which a valid excuse ought to have. And it is monstrously absurd, and draws most intolerable ill consequences after it, if such an excuse should be admitted in such a case.

1. I shall shew the insufficiency of this excuse, or that it is vain and hath nothing in it which a valid excuse should have. “We do not see God, therefore we are not concerned to love him.” This will easily be made out to you thus. Whenever any thing is charged upon us by a law, and the exception lies not against the authority of the lawgiver, but only the matter of the law as applied to us, no excuse can be valid in that case, but where the matter brought in excuse shall be able to prove one of these two things : either that what is enjoined, is in itself impossible to us, or at least that it is unfit and unreasonable to be expected from us. But our not seeing God can never infer either of these. It neither renders our loving him impossible ; nor unfit and unreasonable, supposing it to be possible.

(1.) Our not seeing God doth not render our loving him impossible. This it is needful for us rightly to understand before we proceed any further. The thing that we intend to make out to you is, not that it is possible to us to love God by our own natural power. You have heard already enough to the contrary. He can never be truly loved by us, till the Spirit of love is given us ; which is also at the same time a Spirit of power, and of a sound mind. Till then, I say, it is impos-

sible that any should love God. But when he implants this principle in us, he doth not therefore render himself visible to our bodily eye, which is the seeing here meant, for we must understand the word in the same sense in both parts of the text. All that we have to evince then is, that our not seeing God as we do our brother, does not make it impossible for us to love him. So that our present inquiry is not concerning the power, that gives the principle of love; but only concerning the means that should be made use of, in order to the begetting or planting that principle. Which being understood, the several considerations following will plainly evince to us, that our not seeing God doth not render it impossible for us to love him,

[1.] Consider that the sight of our eye is not the immediate cause, or inducement of love to any thing, but only a means to beget an apprehension in our minds of the loveliness of the object. And then it is, that is, upon the perception of this loveliness, that we are brought to love the object itself. For after the sight of the eye there must pass in the mind an act of the judgment upon the object, before we can be brought to love it; otherwise we should love or hate every thing that we see promiscuously, and not distinguish objects of love, from objects of hatred. It is only the apprehension of the mind, even in reference to objects of sight, that brings us to love them. If there be any other means of begetting an apprehension in our mind concerning such and such objects, that they are lovely and fit to be loved, it is not necessary that we should see them with our eyes. To this we add,

[2.] There are other sufficient means to possess our minds with an apprehension of the loveliness of an object, and more especially those objects that are never liable to the sight of our eye. We do not need to insist much on so plain a case. It is plain that there are sundry ways, by which the apprehension of the loveliness even of an invisible object, may come to have place in us; invisible at least so far as to be out of the reach of our eye. To be a little particular here:

There is, for instance, with respect to the unseen God naturally a divine impression upon the minds of men, by which, when they are put upon reflection, they must needs own that he is not only a lovely, but the most lovely and amiable Object, and has the best right to claim their love. Whosoever they are that do acknowledge a God,\* must also read such attributes and

\* As Epicurus himself confesseth this to be a proleptic notion, that prevents every man's reason, so as that he needs not argue the matter with himself, but if he will but read what is written in his own soul, must read *that there is a God*. See more of this in the Author's Living Temple, Part 1. Chap. 2."

properties of the being of God engraven there, importing that he is the first and supreme Object of our love. No one that acknowledgeth a God but presently acknowledgeth too, that he is good ; that he is true ; that he is holy ; that he is wise ; and the like. And then his own heart must tell him, whether he will or no, that he ought to be loved above all.

Again, our own reasonings from the manifest visible effects and characters of divine wisdom, and power, and goodness, that are to be seen every where, may also beget an apprehension or judgment in us that he should and ought to be loved. Do we live in a world full of the divine glory, that arrayeth and clotheth every thing we can cast our eyes upon ; and do we want ground to perceive, that this is the lovely Object that ought to captivate all hearts, and draw into a closure with itself the will of every intelligent creature ? Moreover,

The express testimony of the gospel is another means more apt still to beget this apprehension within us, that God is one we should love, and whose excellencies do every way entitle him, with a most indisputable right, to the highest degree and supremacy of our love. "No man hath seen God at any time." What then ? Is it therefore impossible that he should be loved ? Hath not "his only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, declared or revealed him ?" John 1, 18. Surely he hath made such a declaration of him, given such a prospect and view of him to the world, as that every one who will believe a God, and receive his report, must confess him to be the most amiable and excellent Being. Here all hearts ought to meet and unite ; and this ought to be the universal centre of love. "He is in Christ reconciling the world to himself ;" (2 Cor. 5. 19.) giving mankind a lovely prospect of himself. And in him, who is the Emmanuel, God with us, he is ready to communicate himself, and to draw souls into union with him, and to a participation of his own likeness and felicity. Who then is there but must acknowledge, that upon this representation he lays a just claim to our highest love ? Finally,

There is also the inward revelation of the Holy Ghost, by which the want of seeing God is abundantly supplied. It is true, this Spirit of wisdom and revelation, by which we come to the practical knowledge of God so as to love him, is but the portion of a few. But it is in the mean time the great fault and wickedness of every one who seeks it not, values it not, and makes it not his business, with an earnest and restless importunity to sue for it till it is obtained. God hath given no man any cause to despair ; but if he seek that Spirit, by which he

may be so known as to be certainly loved, he hath given him ground to hope that he shall have that knowledge of him, which shall be efficacious of that love. God has given no ground to any to despair, or fear that they shall seek in vain; but as our Saviour says in this very case, If they seek, they shall find, for he is more ready to give the Holy Spirit, than parents are to give bread rather than a stone to their children, Matt. 7, 7—11. And now that there are so many ways for conveying the apprehension into the mind, which is to be the immediate parent of love, to wit, that this Object is most amiable; it is most evident, that the not seeing God, doth not render it impossible for him to be loved. And we may further consider to this purpose,

[3.] That in sundry cases besides, other means than sight, do suffice to convey such apprehensions into the mind, as to excite and raise proportionable affections in the soul. Then why should it not be so in this case? For what can any man say why he ought not to be moved by such apprehensions concerning God, as are by other means brought into his mind than by sight? What! do you love nothing? do you never find your hearts taken with any thing but that which your eyes have seen? Is it an impossible thing, or what your ears never heard of, for a person to love only upon report, as being informed of such and such excellencies and perfections in the object? Have not many been taken with the description of a country they have not seen? Or do we think it impossible for a blind man to love his children, his wife, his friend? Do we imagine that such persons, because they can see nothing, can therefore love nothing? Do you not love your life? You cannot see that, but only in the effects; and in the effects also you may see the blessed God himself, who is the life of your life. And who can deny, that they have notions in their own minds of things that are altogether unliable to sight: which, if they will but ask themselves the question, they must acknowledge to be lovely, and which many are actually brought to love. For instance: the notions of truth; the abstract ideas of this, and that, and the other virtue; things that are never discoverable by the eye; who that considers, but must acknowledge a loveliness in them? And how many in fact are brought into a real and hearty love with such fair and orderly contextures of truth, when they see things do well cohere and hang together? The ideas of justice, fortitude, humility, patience, temperance; how many are there that do really love and admire these virtues though they only perceive the beauty and usefulness of them by the mind, and in their effects?

So then it is no impossible thing that there may be that apprehension in the mind concerning God, upon which he shall be confessed to be lovely, and that he ought to be loved though he is never to be seen. The case is the same as to other affections, and there is a parity of reason between them. If it were impossible to love any thing but what one sees, we are proportionably incapable of fearing, hating, or admiring any thing but what we see. But let any one ask himself the question, whether he is not many times offended at the mention of things he doth not see : and whether his heart is not really afraid of things as yet invisible ; or whether he hath not been many times raised into an admiration of sundry things, of which he has only heard the report. And again, I add in the next place,

[4.] That many persons have lived in this world in bodies of flesh as we do, exercising a holy love to God, notwithstanding they never saw him. Therefore it is no impossible thing ; for *Quod fieri potuit, potest*, what has been, may be : according to the old maxim. Do we think that there have been no lovers of God in the world, who have lived in bodies and depended on sense as we do ? God knows there have been but few, in any time or age of the world ; yet have there not been some who have loved him, and have not loved their lives unto the death for his sake ? What professions of love, what raptures of phrase and expression do we find many times in Scripture from those whose hearts were full of, and overflowed with love ? When the fire burned within, it could not be withheld from flaming out. “ I will love thee, O Lord my strength,” says David ; and again, “ I love the Lord,” that is from my very bowels, “ because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.”\* How full are the psalms of these expressions ! and we must suppose the Psalmist to be full of an answerable sense. “ As the hart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God ! My soul fainteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ? † How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts ? ‡ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. § For whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” ||

Such expressions as these verbal ones, and some significantly real actions and sufferings on the account of love to God, will not

\* Psalm 18. 1. 116. 1. † 42. 1, 2. ‡ 84. 1. § 27. 4. || 73. 25.

suffer us to doubt but that there have been true lovers of God, whatever there are in our days. And it is to be hoped, that there is some even now. However it is to be feared, that there are persons in the world who are heartily grieved, and vexed at the very heart, that there should be such expressions as these now mentioned, in those writings which they think it convenient to acknowledge as divine. For if they did not think thus, how loudly and clamourously would David and those who speak such words, have been cried out upon; and perhaps be charged with being fanatics and enthusiasts, as much as any in our days!

And that an unseen God should be loved, and an unseen Christ, who is also out of sight, is spoken of in Scripture not only as the true character, but the high glory of Christian believers. "Whom having not seen," says St. Peter, "ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."\* This is not barely affirmed, concerning these primitive christians, but spoken of them as their high praise and encomium; as being a discovery of the refinedness, excellency, and greatness of their spirits, who could so far lift up themselves above sense and sensible things, as to place their highest and most vigorous love upon an unseen Object. That was glorious joy, and glorious love, placed upon what was not seen; a deserving Object, at least believed to be such, though not seen.

And so it is we know that the blessed God becomes visible. "By faith Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible."† The word of God is a representation of himself, and makes report of all the glorious excellencies belonging to him. Among the rest this is his peculiar and distinguishing attribute, "that he cannot lie."‡ His truth is one of those excellencies; therefore it is impossible that he should misrepresent himself, or say that he is other than he is. "For," as the apostle says, "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."§ He sure can best tell what an excellent and glorious Being he is, and as he has told us he is such a one (which it was impossible he should do if he were not really possessed of those excellencies) then there is all the reason in the world to acknowledge, that he ought to be loved infinitely above all. And this hath been the sense of many, whose practice also hath been answerable to it; who have been in this world, living in tabernacles of clay and

\* 1 Pet. 1. 8. † Heb. 11. 27. ‡ Heb. 6. 18. § 1 Cor. 2. 11.



earth as we do. Therefore it follows, that it is no impossible thing that God should be loved, though he be not seen. And supposing it not impossible, then

In the next place it is easy to be proved also, that it is not unfit to love God, for that reason. Sundry suggestions might be used to enforce this, and afterwards the absurdities of this excuse might also be brought in view. Indeed I have had it most in my eye, to expose this absurd principle, that men have no need to concern themselves with things unseen; I would fain, I say, drive it out of the world. And if men would but examine it thoroughly, it would appear to them monstrously absurd. To do this therefore, and set it before their eyes, would be worth our time, and shall accordingly be done hereafter.

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## SERMON VI.\*

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**U**PON the latter part of the text lies the main weight of the discourse we have in hand. "How can he love God whom he hath not seen?" In which it is plainly implied, that we are still perpetually bound to love God, notwithstanding his being invisible. And the vehemence of the apostle's expostulation here, implies it to be a most intolerable thing not to do so. And therefore we have observed,

That not to love God is a sin most horrid and heinous, notwithstanding the excuse that we see him not. Here we proposed in the

I. Place to shew the vanity and impertinence of this excuse; and then,

II. To demonstrate the heinousness of this sin, and its horrid nature.

In order to evince the impertinence of this excuse, there were two things which it was charged with; to wit, that it has nothing which a valid excuse should have; and if it could be admitted, it would draw the worst consequences after it.

1. It is insufficient, as we have observed, to allege this as an excuse for not loving God, that we see him not; because it

\* Preached September 27, 1676.

is not for this reason impossible, nor unfit, that God should require this by a law.\*

(1.) It is not impossible. For the sight of our eye is not the immediate cause of our loving any thing, but only the medium by which the mind discerns the loveliness of the object. For there are other means besides this of sight, to possess our minds with the love of certain things. And since there are such in the present case, which lead us to the love of God, and have actually led others to it, it is therefore possible to be done, and is by no means an improper thing to be the matter of a law. We now proceed

(2.) To shew that it is not an unreasonable law; or, that it cannot with any colour be pretended, that it was an unfit thing that God should lay a law upon men, dwelling in flesh as we do, obliging them to love an invisible being. We shall here first examine what can be pretended from God's invisibility, to make it unfit to oblige men by a law to love him: and then lay down some considerations to evince, that it is most reasonable and fit that men should, notwithstanding, be under this obligation.

[1.] Let us examine what may be thought of as a pretence to the contrary, or alleged against the obligation of this law. Perhaps some may object against it after this manner: "The admitting what hath been proved, that it is no impossible thing that God should be loved by men who see him not; yet it doth not therefore follow that it is the fit matter of a law. Many things are possible, yet very unfit to be enjoined, especially those things which are unsuitable to the common inclination of a people. The wisdom of law-givers teacheth them to study the temper of their subjects, and to suit their laws to them; and it would be thought very unfit and improper to make laws, that should cross the common genius of the people; and to urge the observance of them. But now the dependance that

\* Here we shewed that if any thing be brought in excuse for not obeying the law, and the exception is not against the authority of the law-giver, but to the matter of the law, that which is alleged as a valid excuse, must be able to evince one of these two things: either that the thing enjoined by this law, is impossible to them on whom it is enjoined; or that at least though possible, yet it is unfit, and therefore unreasonable to be imposed. Neither of which will be admitted. It is indeed impossible to men considered under the reigning power of sin, and while they remain so. It is so only by a compound impossibility; as there is a compound necessity, by which a thing is said necessarily to be, while it is. But to love God though we see him not, is not a simple impossibility; for then it were impossible, that he should be loved by any one at all.

we have upon sense, cannot but infer a disinclination to the love of such things as sight cannot reach, nor come within the sphere and cognizance of our senses. To apply this to the present case. Every man, by consulting himself, may find a disinclination in his own heart to the exercise of love to God. "And what !" hereupon may the sensualist say, "must I be obliged to a perpetual war with myself ? to run counter to all my most natural inclinations ? to neglect the things which my own eyes tell me are lovely ; and labour to love an invisible being, of whom I have none but cloudy thoughts, a very faint and shadowy idea ? Who can imagine that I should be put into this sensible world, with such senses suitable thereunto, as I find about me ; and that it must be expected from me that I must even renounce my senses, run counter to my very eyes, abandon the things which so presently court my love, and tell me so feelingly that they are delightful ? In short, that I must retire from substantial good which I know, to seek after what appears to me as a dark shadow ? and which whether there be any thing substantial in it, I know not ?" Thus may the man devoted to sense pretend on such grounds, that God is not to be loved by such as we who dwell in bodies of flesh, and have so much dependence upon the things of sense. Well ! let us examine this pretence a little, and see whether there is any thing in it to make the duty of loving God unfit to be imposed upon us in this our present state. And there are several things here to be considered in reference to this matter. As,

First. If we would have this inclination to signify any thing with relation to the fitness or unfitness of a law to be imposed upon us, we ought surely to examine whether that inclination be good or bad, and so judge. But can there be a worse inclination in any creature than to disaffect the Author and Original of its own being ? And by how much the stronger the inclination is to evil, by so much the greater is the wickedness likely to prove. For do not we think every one more wicked as he is the more wickedly inclined, especially when he indulges his wicked inclinations ? Doth not his evil inclination, I say, when indulged, add to, and not detract from his wickedness ? If one be found to have killed another, the great thing inquired into, is the inclination indulged, the intention ; whether or no it was through malice propense. If he did the thing without the design of ill to the party, without inclination or propensity to such an action, he is looked upon as innocent. An unintended fact is not punishable as a crime. Therefore to allege inclination in this case, is but to excuse one wickedness by another.

Secondly. Consider what would become of this world, if men were to be ruled only by their own inclination, or if that were to be the only rule by which all laws relating to them were to be measured. What a dreadful state would you be in, if it were permitted to any man to rob, murder, rifle away your goods and destroy your lives, only because he is inclined to it? if every one might take from you what he would, and do any imaginable mischief to you or yours, merely because he hath a mind to it!

And whereas the disaffection to God is very common, and rooted and confirmed in men by their being disused to converse with things above the reach of their senses (which might tend to invite their hearts and attract their affections) how horrid a thing were it if such a vicious custom were to obtain the force of a law! or, if men were to be allowed to do so and so wickedly, only because they have been wont so to do! if the oftener the swearer, the drunkard, the fornicator and the murderer, have indulged their respective vices, the more lawful it should be for them to continue such practices! if men, in a word, should be so far a law to themselves, as to be permitted to do whatsoever they have been used to do! or, as Seneca says, if a reasonable creature should go like a sheep, not the way he ought, but that which he has been used to; what, I say, can be more unreasonable and unfit than this?

Thirdly. It must be considered, that though it is the wisdom of a ruler to regard the inclinations of a people in making laws, yet sure there must be a distinction made between things indifferent and things necessary. But is there any thing of higher and more absolute necessity than the love of God, though we see him not? Doth not our experience tell us, that we stand in need of somewhat that we do not see, in order to the continuance of our being? much more in order to our happiness. If you had nothing but what you see to maintain life, do you think it were possible for you to live another moment? I would appeal to the considerate reason of any man, whether he were not to be thought a madman that should say, "I will be alive the next hour?" Man! there is somewhat invisible and unseen that is the continual Sustainer of thy life; "in whom we all live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17. 28. Our own experience must convince us of this, that there is an invisible Being which hath dominion over our lives, otherwise every man could measure his own time. But do not we find men die before they are willing, and when they would fain live longer? Why, it is somewhat unseen that imposes this necessity upon them, "Here thou must expire!" No man hath

power over the spirit to retain it, neither hath he power in the day of death. Eccles. 8. 8.

And again, is it at all necessary to us to be happy? Our own experience tells us that we are not as yet happy and satisfied. And common experience tells all the world, that all the things they can see and set their eyes upon, can never make them happy in this world. And if we expect to be happy in another, when will our eyes lead us to heaven? when will sense, inclination, and following the customs of this world bring us to blessedness? It were a dreadful thing, if in a matter of so absolute necessity, custom or inclination were to be the measure of the law which must govern us. And again,

Fourthly. I add in the next place, that it is true indeed that rulers do consider the tempers and inclinations of a people under their legislature. And there is good reason they should do so, and not impose unnecessarily upon the people, things of mere indifferency, and so run the hazard of urging them into tumults about matters of very little consequence. But sure there is no such need or reason that the great Author and Lord of all things should so much concern himself what the inclinations of those are whom he is to govern. If they dislike his laws, and have an inclination to tumultuate or rebel against him let their dislike and inclination be as strong as it will, He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh, and have them in derision; when they say, Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us. Psalm 2. 3, 4.

Fifthly. There is a very great difference in the consideration of laws already made, and of laws to be made. This law was made for man when he was no way disinclined to the love of God. It is a law as ancient as his being. He had it as soon as he had the nature of man. It is therefore a part of the law of nature, and one of the most deeply fundamental things in that law; for it is made the summary, and wraps up all laws whatsoever in itself; for all is fulfilled in love. And what! was it reasonable or fit that this law, so suitable at first to the nature of man, should be then repealed, when he thought fit to break and violate it? That were a strange way of superseding the obligation of a law, that as soon as it is transgressed, it should oblige no longer! Then may any subject be a sovereign; since there would be no need of any thing more to make a law cease to oblige him, than for him to disobey it.

Sixthly. Consider that our not seeing God is so far from having a necessary tendency to preclude the love of him, that if things were with men as they should be, and as they have been with some in the world, it would very much promote our

loving him. For though we cannot see him, yet we see many things that are great arguments, and should be powerful inducements to us to love him. It is true we do not see God with our bodily eyes, but we see the effects of his wisdom, his goodness, his mercy and patience every where; and of his mighty power over all, especially over those who are for God and lovers of him.

If we take a view, as we can do with these eyes, of the beautiful and glorious works of his creation, we continually behold in the visible things that are made, the invisible power and Godhead, (Rom. 1. 20.) which we are called upon to adore and love. And in the works of his providence and the ways of his dispensations towards men great arguments of love do daily occur. And into what raptures of affection do we find holy souls transported even by the help of their own eyes! the things seen, representing to them the great unseen Object of love. In what an extasy do we find David, upon the view of the beauty and glory of this creation! "How excellent is thy name in all the earth, O Lord our Lord, who hast set thy glory above the heavens!" What put him into this rapture? The sight of his own eyes. He beheld "the heavens the work of God's hands, the moon and stars which he had ordained;" and therefore as he begins, so he ends the psalm in a transport; "How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Psalm 8. And thus our own eyes may serve to be our instructors, and prompt us to the love of him the great Author and Original of all that glory, which we find every where diffused in this world.

The viewing God also in the ways of his providence, how hath it excited the love of holy men sometimes! When Moses and the children of Israel had seen that marvellous work of the sea divided, themselves conducted and brought safe through it, the waters made a wall on the right hand and on the left, and their enemies dead on the sea-shore, how did this set love on work in them! how is the blessed God adored and admired upon the account of what their eyes had seen of him! "Who, say they, is a God like unto thee? Who is like to thee among the gods, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. 15, 11. And after the people of God had seen that great salvation wrought that we find recorded in the fourth chapter of Judges, what a mighty raisedness of heart do we find in the next chapter, all shut up in this. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Judges 5, 31. Here was love set on work and raised to the height, so as even to pour out blessings upon all the lovers of God. What a phrase of

benediction is that, "Let all that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might!" which proceeded from the view of his excellent greatness.

So that this pretence, that God is not seen, doth not make it unreasonable or unfit that the duty of love to him should be imposed upon men by his law. They are not for this reason necessarily disinclined to love him, and therefore this excuse for not loving him is neither reasonable nor fit, nor can exempt men from the obligation, as the objection supposes. Let us then see,

[2.] What can be alleged to prove, that the love of God is most fit and reasonable to be the matter of a standing and indispensable law. And to this purpose, in order to shew how reasonable this is, we shall only note in general, that if any should object against the fitness of loving God on this ground, because he is not seen, and affirm that for this reason men should not be required to love him; what they have to say in this case, if it signifies any thing to the purpose, must be as strong an objection in all cases of like consideration, and must at last come to this; that it is unreasonable and unfit that men should be affected with any thing they cannot see. But the falsehood hereof, and the reasonableness of this injunction upon men may be gathered from this fourfold consideration; to wit, that we may be as sure of the objects of the mind, as we can be of the objects of our sight; that those of the former sort are generally more excellent; that we are concerned in them, as much at least, and in many of them infinitely more, than in the others; and finally, that what can only be the object of the mind may be more intimately present with us, than those things which are the objects of sense. And if we can make out all these, which I hope we may, then it must be concluded that God is so much the more to be loved, yea infinitely more than any thing our eye can see or make a discovery of.

First. We may be as sure of the real existence of the objects of our mind, as we can be of any objects of our sight; or in other words, we may be as certain of the existence of invisible beings, as of visible ones. We may frame a notion of their existence with as much assurance; and form certain conclusions concerning their nature, though they are invisible to the bodily eye. We may especially be most sure of the existence of God, though we cannot see him; more indeed than we can be generally of the existence of visible things.

Sometimes the objects of our mind and sight meet in one, there is somewhat visible and somewhat invisible. As for in-



stance, in actions that are capable of moral consideration, there is the action itself, and there is also the rectitude or ir-rectitude of that action. Now here is at once an object of my sight and of my mind ; and I may be as certain of the one, as of the other, in many instances. As, suppose I see one strike, wound, or kill an innocent person ; or, suppose I see one affront a magistrate, injuriously or barbarously ; here I have the object of my eye and mind at once. That the action was done I am certain, for I saw the stroke ; and I am no less sure of the affront, though that be an object of the mind. As soon as I see such an action done, do not I apprehend it to be ill done ? Is not the thing which my mind apprehends, as real as that which my eyes see ? Am I not as sure that it was ill done, as that the action was done at all ? though the one falls under my eye, and the other only under the cognizance of the mind.

Again, if we look no further than ourselves, our own frame and composition, we may be as certain of the existence of what we see not, as of what we do see. We have a body. We are sure we have a body, for we can see it. It is many ways the object of our senses, or the external organs that are planted there. But we cannot see our minds, yet I hope we are nevertheless sure that we have minds. We are as certain that we have somewhat about us that can think, can understand, as we are that we may be seen and felt. I go not about to determine now what it is that thinks whether material or not, mortal or not ; but every man that will consider, is as sure that he has a mind which he cannot see, as that he has a body which he can see.

To bring this matter home to our present purpose concerning the supreme invisible Being, the blessed God. It is most apparent that we may be as certain of his existence as of any thing ; and unspeakably more certain of his constant existence, than we can be of any being whatsoever. There is no man that will use his understanding, but must allow this. For, suppose an object of sight before me, I am certain that it doth exist ; for I see it. Now the following conclusion may be as certain to any one that considers, to wit, something is, therefore something hath ever been. I will appeal to any understanding man, whether this be not as certain as the other. For if we should suppose a time when nothing ever was, when nothing existed, any man's understanding must tell him, it was impossible that any thing should ever have been. Suppose a season when nothing was, and then was it possible any thing of itself should arise out of that nothing, when there was nothing at all conceivable ? that a thing should be before it was, and do something when it was nothing ? Therefore it is hence most ne-

cessarily consequent, that there must needs be some original, eternal Being, subsisting of itself, that was always and never began to be ; and therefore was necessarily, and so can never cease to be.\*

Let this be but weighed, and let any sober understanding judge, whether this conclusion be not as certain as the former. That is, compare these two conclusions together, I see something, therefore something is ; and this also, something is, therefore something hath ever been, some original Being that always was of itself, and could not but be. A man, I say, feels as great a certainty in his own mind concerning this, as concerning the other. He must renounce his understanding as much in one case, as his eyes in the other, if he will not grant this to be certain, that as some beings now exist, there has been always an original, self-existing Being.

And then supposing the existence of the thing already, I may form as certain conclusions concerning the attributes of what I cannot see, as of that which I can see. To apply this also to the invisible, eternal Being: look to any visible thing, and your eyes can tell what are its visible accidents. I look upon the wall, and see it is white. I know it is so, because I see it is so. Cannot I as certainly conclude concerning this original, eternal Being, that he is wise, holy, just and powerful ? I know that there is such a thing as wisdom, and justice, goodness, and power in the world. I know that these things are not nothing, and that they did not come out of nothing ; therefore they must needs originally belong to the original Being. Is not this as certain, and as plain, as any visible accident of any thing is to a man's eye ? Must not these attributes necessarily first be in God, as in their original Seat and proper Subject ? yea, a great deal more certainly, than any kind of quality we can suppose to be lovely in the creature can agree to it : because as for the original Being, that existed of itself ; and therefore is necessarily and by consequence eternally, and invariably whatever it is. Therefore since these perfections are originally in God himself, or derivations from him, what should rationally keep a man in suspense, when by the intervention of his mind he sees such an invisible object, but that he should fall in love with that, as well as with any visible object, that commends itself as lovely to the sight. And I should next add,

Secondly, That invisible excellency is infinitely greater than

\* This argument is urged at large, with great force and strength in the Author's admirable Treatise, entitled the Living Temple. Part 1, Chap. 2.

any visible excellency can be. As there is a reality in unseen things, and especially in this invisible Object, as much as in any thing we see with our eyes ; so there is generally a higher excellency in invisible objects, than in those that are visible, and infinitely more in this than in other invisible objects. But this and the other considerations I cannot reach to now.

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## SERMON VII.\*

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**T**HE SECOND head of discourse which we are still upon is this, That men are not released from the obligation to love God though he be invisible ; and that it is not only an evil, but a most horrid and intolerable one too, not to love him, notwithstanding the excuse that we cannot see him. And this, as we observed, you have from the plain words of the text ; inasmuch as all the force of the apostle's reasoning depends upon it. For he is endeavouring to evince how unreasonable it is we should not love one another, because upon this would ensue that infernal thing our not loving God ; rather than admit which, it is supposed that men would admit any thing. For the prosecution of this truth we proposed to evince, in the first place, that this is a very vain excuse : † and have already shewn from many considerations, that it is not impossible to love God in these bodies of flesh, wherein we have such a dependence on the senses ; neither is it unreasonable, or unfit that it should be enjoined as a duty. Against the contrary principle we have

\* Preached October 4, 1676. † See page 46.

designed to insist on sundry considerations, and have observed already in the

First place, that we may be as sure of the existence of many invisible beings, especially of God, as we are of any that are visible. This we have shewn, and also that it is as easy to form conclusions respecting the nature of the former, as it is of the latter. Both these we laboured to evince from several instances: and concluded with observing to this effect, that since all perfections are originally in God, which we may discern by the intervention of the understanding, therefore it is as reasonable to love him, as any visible object how lovely soever; and more so indeed, because he is eternally and invariably the same. For, to add something further on this head,

I see and converse often with such or such a person, who because of certain amiable qualities that I discern in him, hath attracted and drawn my love: but I am never sure those qualities will remain in him always. I know not whether they be of that kind, yea or no, that they will remain. But I most certainly know, that he will not always remain with me the conversable object of my love. And therefore if sense, if the sight of what is lovely in him be the only ground of my love to him, I could never have loved him longer than my eye could see him. For as soon as he is gone out of my sight, I know not but he is gone out of being, out of the world, and so the object of my love may be quite lost. But I know that the eternal Being doth exist necessarily, and always. It is impossible that God should ever not exist, or ever be other than he was: and therefore if loveliness and amiableness were found there at any time, it is to be found there at all times; without variableness and shadow of change, yesterday, and to-day the same, and for ever.

And now upon all this, since it is very plain and evident, that we may be as certain concerning what we see not, as concerning what we do see; as sure of the existence of invisible, as of visible being; and more especially about the nature and existence, (as far as concerns us) of the blessed invisible God; it is plain that there our love ought to have its exercise, as much as any where else, supposing such excellencies to be found in the invisible things, as may equally recommend the object to our love. Therefore we add,

Secondly: That, invisible things are really of far higher excellency, than those which are visible. As the things that we cannot see have as certain a reality as those that we can see; so, I say, they are of higher excellency: and this blessed invisible Object infinitely more excellent, as we must acknow-

ledge, while we acknowledge him to be God. If we speak of such things as lie within the compass of our being, how plain is the case and how evident the inference ! Sure the invisible world must needs be of incomparably greater excellency and glory, than the visible world. And if you reduce all kinds of being in the whole universe to these two ranks and orders, visible and invisible; certainly the latter must be unspeakably more excellent.

We who are for our parts set in the confines of both worlds, visible and invisible ; we in whose very nature both meet, unite, and touch one another, and are as it were comparted together ; we who are of a nature partly visible, partly invisible, partly flesh and partly spirit, or as the language of Plato's school was, *Nes χes*, mind and dust united into one compound ; surely we should not be partial in our judgment of this case. Who should be impartial if we are not, who are set as a middle sort of creatures between the two worlds, and so are capable of looking into, and surveying the one and the other ?

And if we contemplate both, even in ourselves, methinks it should be no difficult thing with us to determine which is of greater excellency, this bulk of flesh, or this spirit which inhabits it, and keeps it from being a dead lump, an useless, rotten, putrid carcass. Yea, if we should suppose the body of a man to be animated by some inferior vital principle to that of a reasonable spirit, yet this would be the more excellent part. It is true, we should then have before our eyes a certain sort of human brute, of which kind there are but too many in our age, at least that live and carry it as such. We should in short, to speak plainly, have somewhat before our eyes that wore the mere shape of a man, and could hear, and see, and smell, and taste, and move to and fro this way or that, and must ere long, after a few turns are fetched about, turn to dust, to rottenness, and corruption. But suppose we a spirit separately, such as is wont to animate a human body : here we have to contemplate something that can think, reason, and understand ; that can form abstract notions of things, or compare one thing with another ; something that can reflect upon itself, which our eye cannot do ; that can control and correct the errors of sense ; that can run through the vast compass of known things ; is capable of solving problems and difficult questions ; of laying down principles and maxims of truth, after having weighed and found them firm, so as that they may pass current : for such there are which pass unquestionably every where for undoubted principles. In a word, we have here a kind of being to contemplate, that is capable of taking up what lies within the compass of philosophy, policy, and the whole

human orb of learning ; of being instructed in all the great mysteries of mechanical skill of every kind ; and in short, that can turn itself every way ; and is of a nature unperishable and immortal, not liable to, nor capable of corruption, but must last for ever and always endure. Who now would make any difficulty of owning, that this is a far more excellent thing than the other ? this spirit, than that shape of a man which merely lives ? But yet even this more excellent creature which we have been supposing, is somewhat diminished, and falls beneath a brighter order of beings, by its being proportioned to a human body. And upon this account man is said to be a little lower than the angels,\* at least this is one account that may be given of this passage ; for it is a diminution of the spirit of a man, that it is proportioned to its habitation, the body. But then consider those purely intellectual creatures, of whom we know not how to form a notion, which shall be more expressive than to call them INTELLIGENCES ; inasmuch as they are, as far as we can apprehend them, beings of knowledge and light, and also of goodness and love proportioned to that light of theirs ; what can match the excellency of such creatures as these, among the whole sphere of visible beings ?

But let us further consider how vastly numerous that order of creatures is, as we may very well suppose, and partly collect from intimations of Scripture, where they are said to be innumerable. “ The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.”† How much of glory and excellency must then be in the invisible world, beyond what we can possibly conceive of in this lower visible region ! If we do but bethink ourselves and consider what a mere punctilio, a little point, this earth is in which we dwell, in comparison of that vast expanse that doth surround and encompass it about ; how unspeakably, how inconceivably more numerous must we suppose the inhabitants to be, that replenish those vast superior regions quite out of sight, than those which inhabit and replenish this point of earth ? How vast, I say, must we suppose the invisible world to be, if we consider the number of its inhabitants who are parts of God’s creation, whom we have reason to think do competently replenish all those vast regions that are, when our eye has gone as far as it can, far more exceeding the reach of our thoughts. What limits can we set to the creation of God in our most enlarged thoughts ? Finite we must suppose it to be, but alas, we are never capable of mea-

\* Psalm 8, 5. † Heb. 12, 22.

asuring the bounds ! And we have reason to believe it is every where replenished with such glorious invisible creatures as we speak of, in comparison of whom all the inhabitants of the earth, that ever where or shall be, are but an inconsiderable handful. Are we not then to think that the invisible world is far more excellent than that which is visible ?

But then if we ascend to the great Author of all things, the blessed invisible Object that we are concerned to speak about, that vast profound abyss of all excellencies, perfection, and glory, how much more must we conclude there is of excellency in that sort of being in general which is invisible, than in that which is visible ! If we consider him inhabiting his own eternity, if we consider his immensity who was before all time, whom "heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain,"\* every where existing, and never not existing ; in whom there is an infinite fulness, a rich fountain of being, life, wisdom, power, goodness and holiness, and whatsoever we can conceive under the notion of excellency and perfection : to think of such a Being that was every where before all time was, and continuing to be the same when time shall be no more, where no worlds are, and where never any shall be, replenishing all the space that we can imagine, and that we cannot imagine, all, every where, "and eternally full of being, life and glory ! what an object have we now to contemplate, and think of in the invisible order of beings ! And what ? would we confine all excellency as well as reality to this little, minute, inconsiderable earth ! the things that sense can reach unto ! As if our senses were to be the measure of all excellency, perfection and reality, and it was the same thing for any thing to be nothing, or at least worth nothing, as to be out of our sight.

How unreasonable were such an imagination as this ! And indeed well might we be ashamed, and count it a reflection upon our profession of the Christian name, that we may so often read Pagans discoursing in transports of the **INTELLECTUAL PULCHRITUDE**, of the beauty and excellency of mental and invisible things ; while our hearts, in the mean time, are taken with nothing but what our eyes can reach to see, or our senses judge of. With what raptures do some of them speak of the first pulchritude, and the self-pulchritude, or that which is lovely of itself. Plato in particular calls him, "The Being that is with itself, always agreeing to itself always existing uniformly, never varying from itself, and lasting always." Thus he speaks of the first **ORIGINAL BEAUTY**, meaning the

\* 1 Kings S. 27.

great Object that we now speak of, to wit, the invisible God. But what a degeneracy is it to measure the objects of our love by the sight of the eye! whereas there is nothing fair or good, as philosophers speak, but what hath its derivation from the first pulchritude; or as it hath a kind of precarious beauty and comeliness derived to it from him, who is the first and original Beauty. If then we seriously bethink ourselves of this, we cannot but acknowledge that the prime Object of our love lies among the invisible things. If we will but use our thoughts, we must say thus: this, I say, must be the conclusion, if we will not profess brutality, and renounce our humanity; that is, deny that we are human and reasonable creatures.

But because here it may possibly be said, "That admitting there be so great excellency and glory in the invisible sort of beings, yet we are to love where we are concerned; we are to place our love among things with which we have to do, and upon which we have dependence; but how little can we have to do with things invisible, and out of our sight?" Therefore I add,

Thirdly: We are a great deal more concerned about invisible, than visible things. They are of much more importance to us, as well as of greater excellency considered in themselves. It will certainly be found one day, that faith, holiness, humility, meekness, mortifiedness to this world, a mastery over insolent and brutish passions, tranquillity, peace, and composure of spirit, those great ornaments of the hidden man of the heart, are of unspeakably more concernment, than all the things of the visible world besides. These are of greater importance to our present comfort, and to our future and eternal well-being, than whatsoever our senses can bring to our notice. But the invisible God is so most of all, who is infinitely beyond and above all.

And what! will any pretend, that they have no concern with God, because they cannot see him? no concern with him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and in whose hand our breath is," without whom we cannot move a hand or lift a foot, or think a thought, or live a moment? Have we no concern with him? none in this present state? Or are we the less concerned with God, because we see him not? May we not be convinced, if we will allow ourselves to think, that it is somewhat invisible, which our life and being depend upon? For we know ourselves to be depending beings. We do know and feel, yea our own thoughts and hearts must instruct us in this, that we are not self-subsistent. We have not in our own hands the measure of our time, nor the command of our own



concernments. We find ourselves controled and over-ruled in many things every day. There are many thousands of things that we would have otherwise, if we could tell how. There is something invisible to which we owe our breath, and that hath dominion over us, whether we mind it or not. And have we no concern with that Being, which hath such immediate power over our lives, and all our comforts, in this present state and world? But what talk we of measuring our concernments by this present state? Have not our own souls a secret consciousness in them, that they are made for eternity? for a world where they are to be perpetual inhabitants, after a little short time is over? And have we not therefore now in this life, most to do with invisible things, especially with the great invisible Lord, both of the visible and invisible creation?

We should soon know ourselves to be most concerned with what is invisible, and most of all with God, if we would but understand the state of our case. We know ourselves to be creatures. We did not come into this world of our own choice, or by our own contrivance. We made not ourselves, neither was it the object of our choice, whether we would be of this or that rank or order of creatures; but were put into that rank of beings wherein we are, by a superior and higher hand. Yea considering whatsort of being it is we have, and what a nature the great Author and Parent of all nature hath furnished us with, it is easy for us by a little reflection to come to this knowledge, that we are not what he made us; that we are fallen creatures as well as reasonable ones; that we have incurred the displeasure of him that made us; that we are absolutely at his merey; that there is such a darkness and blindness upon our minds and understandings, and such a stupidity and death possessing our very souls, that can never be supposed to have been in the first formation of such a creature by the hands of God. Lastly, we may find, that we are become impure and corrupt; that there are perverse sinful inclinations and affections, which we ourselves cannot but disapprove of, and disallow upon reflection: and that hereby we are under a very egregious guilt, and so subject to wrath and eternal punishment. If we would but allow ourselves to consider this as our state, we should soon know that we have more to do with the invisible God, than with all the world of visible things. Yea further, how amiable would he appear in our eyes, if we did but understand ourselves! if we would but take notice what dark, blind creatures we are, how would it recommend him to us, who is represented as the light of our eyes, and the life of our hearts! In a word, if we would

but consider what deformed creatures we are, how impure, and alluding to the expression in Job,\* so plunged in the ditch, that our own clothes might abhor us, Oh how delectable would the thoughts of him be ! how lovely would he be in our eyes that brings such overtures of purification to us ! I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness ; and from all your idols will I cleanse you.† And he that offers this, will certainly effect it in all those, who are designed for a blessed commerce with him for ever, in order to make them perfect in his own comeliness.

Then again, if we consider how liable we are to his wrath, how fast bound with the cords of our own guilt, how amiable would that notion and name of God be to us, which was proclaimed to Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin."‡ But we measure things by the sight of our own eye, because we will not allow ourselves to take any cognizance of the true state of our own case. Whereas if we did but consider the matter, and give ourselves leave to think and inquire, we should know there are things which concern us unspeakably more, that are out of sight, than what come under our view day by day ; and that especially we are most concerned with him who is least in our sight, and most remote from the view of our external eye. And then add to all this,

Fourthly : That invisible things are a great deal more capable of being intimate to us, or we may be infinitely more conversant with them, than it is possible for us to be with things that are seen. We love a friend whom we have often seen ; and it may be, the oftener we have seen him the more we love him. But we cannot be with this friend always. The dearest friends must part. We cannot have him perpetually in our bosom to converse with in a friendly manner. A great many things must concur to the entertainment of our friends with delight, and to converse with them with pleasure. For instance, they must be in a pleasant humour, and at leisure for converse. We many times wait for visits, and they are not given ; or we design them, but are disappointed. Messengers may be sent to this or that place, one after another ; and yet two friends, that would converse, cannot be brought together. Besides, when we are conversing with such lower objects of our love, we must make use of speech, and are fain to employ words, those necessary but imperfect instruments, or media of conversation. But we cannot convey by words our full and clear

\* Job 9. 31. † Ezek. 36. 25. ‡ Exod. 34. 6. 7.

apprehensions to others, so as to let them know all that we would have them know. And most of the controversies in the world, about matters of opinion in religion, do arise from hence, that men cannot be brought to understand one another. I cannot tell how to make another master of my thoughts, but one way or other the notion will be misrepresented, and so not lie so distinctly clear in another's mind, as it doth in his that would propagate it. But if we could this way infuse into them a full and clear knowledge of what we ourselves do intend, yet we cannot thereby infuse a living sense, nor convey the affections that are in our own bosoms to another by words.

But how intimately conversant may we be with the invisible God, and that blessed Spirit that understands not only our words, but our sighs and groans, and the living sense thereof that is unutterable. God can also be conversant with us whithersoever we go, wheresoever we are, so that as soon as we are minded to retire, we find him with us. As soon as we retire into ourselves with a design to converse inwardly with the living God, he is immediately present with us, and it is as easy to converse with him as with our own thoughts. As soon as we think, so soon are we with God, and as soon is he with us. In the twinkling of an eye we find him. We look unto him and are lightened. Thus with a cast of the eye the soul is filled; it finds itself replenished with a divine and vital light, that diffuseth the sweetest and most pleasant influences and savours through the soul.

Surely then, what is invisible, and most of all the blessed God, is most fit for our converse : an omnipresent God, who is every where present with us in the very first instant : so that there are no bodies, or other circumscribing circumstances to withhold and divert that commerce between him and us ; but he is with us in our walking in the way, in our sitting down in our houses, in our lying down in our beds, in any wilderness, in any den or desert. Certainly it can be no way unfit, that he should be chosen for our converse, and for the great Object of our love, though we cannot see him. Our not being able to see him detracts nothing from the reasonableness of placing our love there, upon all these accounts. Therefore the pretence for our not loving God because he is invisible, is altogether insufficient, and carries nothing in it that a valid excuse should have to make it so. I should now proceed to shew the intolerable absurdities of not loving God because he is invisible ; but the time doth not give me leave to speak to them.

## SERMON VIII.\*

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**H**AVING in the three last discourses shewn the invalidity of the excuse for not loving God, drawn from his invisibility, we now proceed in the

2. Place, to evince more fully the obligation we are under to this duty, and to shew the intolerable absurdity of this excuse, that is, of pleading that we do not love God, only because we cannot see him.† For

(1.) It would infer, that we are to be affected or moved with no invisible thing whatsoever; or that nothing but what can strike our senses, ought to touch our hearts. For if this be a good reason in the present case, we do not love God because we cannot see him, wheresoever the case is alike, the reason will be so too; and so we are to be moved by nothing at all, but what is to be seen. No threatening danger then is to be feared or provided against, and no distant good to be cared for; and so our greatest concernments that should urge us more than all others, must be quite thrown aside. Our business for eternity and another world, the apprehensions of which, men cannot quite abolish out of their minds, must all stand still; and we live at such a rate that no man will be able to give a tolerable account what he liveth for, or what his business in this world is. For it is altogether inconceivable for what pur-

\* Preached October 11, 1676. † See Sermon V. p. 47.

pose such a creature as man is, should be here in this world, furnished with so much higher and nobler faculties than the brute beasts, and yet to do no other business but what they might do as well as we.

(2.) It would hence be consequent, that the blessed God would be everlastingly excluded our love, or that he could never be loved by his reasonable intelligent creature, for an eternal reason; because he can never be seen, as we see our brother with eyes of flesh. None of us in this sense can ever behold God; and if this reason be conclusive, to all eternity he must be excluded our love. And so it may be affirmed even of his reasonable creatures, "None do love him, nor ever shall." And again,

(3.) According to this way of reasoning, God would lose his interest in our love by the excellency of his nature. And how monstrously absurd is it, that by how much the more excellent an object is, so much the less it should be loved! For it is owing to the excellency of his nature and being, that God cannot be seen. And is it not a horrid consequence, that because he is so excellent as he is, therefore he is not to be loved? Nothing is more manifest, than that by how much the more excellent any thing is, so much the more it is remote from our sight. And shall this be admitted as a principle, that by how much the more excellent any thing is, the less it shall be loved? Shall God lose his interest in our love, merely because he is so excellent and perfect as he is? or shall he for this reason be less loved than visible objects are? Again,

(4.) All commerce would hereupon cease, or rather never be, between the blessed God and his intelligent creature, at least all intellectual commerce suitable to such a creature. For if this were a good reason, He is not to be seen, therefore he is not to be loved, it would also follow, that he is not to be trusted, feared or obeyed. All which would infer, that God hath made an intelligent being with whom he can converse no way suitable to its nature, than which nothing can be thought more absurd. Further,

(5.) All differences of moral good and evil, in such a case, would be quite taken away, or all apprehensions of them, from among men. For the rectitude or irrectitude of actions is not to be judged of, nor discerned by the sight of our eye. We cannot by this means alone, tell whether this or that thing be right or wrong. And this by consequence would necessarily render mankind incapable of being governed by laws; because the reason why a law should oblige, doth not fall under any man's sight. The decency and fitness of a thing the eye does

not reach; for to discern this is the business of the mind. And so it would be left altogether impossible for any one to assign a reason, why it should be more congruous to equity and justice for one to embrace his friend, than to murder him; why a man should relieve the poor who cannot help themselves, rather than oppress them; or why a man should not as well, and with as great reason and equity, affront a ruler, as obey him and be subject to his authority? So that in short you take away the foundation of converse with man, at the same time you take away the foundation of religious converse with God and invisible things. By this kind of argument you not only overturn the practice of godliness and piety, which is a great part of that love to God we ought to be exercised in, but you do as effectually by the same means destroy all civil commerce between man and man, howsoever related; and leave no foundation for human society, considering the members of it in relation to governors or rulers, and to one another. And

(6.) It would hence follow, that the original constitution of man's nature was made up of inconsistencies; nothing else but a piece of self-contradiction. That is, it would be necessary to do a thing, and yet at the same time impossible. It is necessary by the constitution of the human nature that man do love a known good, and therefore most of all the Supreme Good, which may be certainly known to be what it is, the absolutely best, the highest and most excellent Good, as hath been already shewn; and yet by this argument it would be impossible to do this. So absurd is this maxim or pretence, that we are not to be affected with invisible things, and are under no obligation to love God, because we see him not! In the last place,

(7.) It would also be consequent from hence, that man must be a creature from the very first, made only to be miserable. For it is impossible that sense should ever afford him relief against internal evils, or ever supply him with suitable and satisfying good. How then can he be otherwise than miserable?

Sense cannot afford him relief against internal evils, and no man can exempt himself from them, nor give himself any security that he shall never be invaded by such. Let there be never so great a calm, and according to his present apprehension let all things be never so well now; yet no man can assure himself, that he shall never meet with any inward pangs; that he shall never have cause to complain of the terrors of the Almighty besetting and overwhelming his soul, even ready to cut him off. These things have invaded as fortified breasts as any our age can afford; and no man knows when he is secure from them.

And suppose they do invade a man, and conscience molested by known and often repeated wickedness does at length awake, and grow furious; pray where shall relief be had? Will the things of sense afford it? Will they ease such pangs, or work off agonies of this nature? In such a state of mind, for a man to feast himself with the objects of sense, or with that which pleases the eye, would be as impertinent as music to a broken leg, or fine clothes for the cure of a fever or an ulcerous body.

Nor can sense be the inlet to a man of any suitable or satisfying good. Let experience witness. To those who have all sensible enjoyments to the full, I would say, "Are you happy? Can you pretend to want any thing that sense can possibly supply you with to give pleasure to your spirits? Have you not what you would have? and yet can you say, All is full and well?" Undoubtedly what was the wise man's experience, would be every man's that were at leisure to consider the case; The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. Eccles: 1. 8. Sense, let it be gratified never so much, will still live unsatisfied, will be always craving and never contented. And therefore by this supposition it must needs be consequent, that man could be created for no other state, than a state of misery. But how absurd were it to suppose, that the God of all goodness had made a creature, whom it should be impossible, even to himself, to make happy! (for it is impossible to his nature ever to make himself visible to an eye of flesh) and that it should be only possible to terrify and torment his creature, but not to satisfy it and do it good! All these things do plainly evince that this excuse, to wit, we cannot love God, because we see him not, is not only insufficient, but also most absurd. Then, say we, it ought not to be admitted as an excuse at all, and men are still under an indispensable obligation to the love of God notwithstanding.

But here it may possibly be suggested to the thoughts of some, "Admit it to be a duty to love God, although we cannot see him. We acknowledge that his invisibility renders it not impossible nor unreasonable to love him; and therefore we see the excuse is insufficient, and that many inconveniencies and absurdities would ensue upon making it. But though it will be no entire excuse, yet it will sure be a great alleviation. And methinks the love of God in this world should not be so strictly urged; or though we should not live in the exercise of this duty, it should not be represented as so very great a crime." Therefore in answer to this we are to evince to you according to what was proposed:\*

II. The greatness and heinousness of the sin of not loving God, notwithstanding this excuse that we do not see him : that it not only leaves it a sin still, but a most horrid one. And this will appear if we consider sundry things that I have to mention to you, which will shew it to be injurious to ourselves and others, but chiefly to the blessed God himself, the great Author of our being.

1. It cannot but be a most horrid thing, inasmuch as it is a most injurious distortion of our natural faculties. And therein it is injurious even to ourselves, to our own nature, and to God the great Author and Parent of all nature, at once. For what do we think he has given us such faculties for, as we find the nature of man to be enriched with? Why hath he given us a mind, originally capable of knowing him, and that could once retain God in his knowledge; or a will that could then embrace him by love? It must needs be a very injurious perversion of our own faculties, to withhold and divert them from the prime, the best and highest use, whereof they were originally capable. And it is a very unaccountable thing that it should be thus, that man should have a power given him, originally ordained by the very designation of the God of nature to such and such purposes, and that it should never be applied thereunto. Not to love God is to set those faculties one against the other, and both of them against him.

2. It is a most vile debasing of ourselves, and a sordid depression of our own souls. By love we most strictly join ourselves to that which is the object of our love, and enter into the closest and most inward union with it. And what is it that we love, while we love not God? Are not the things which our love terminates upon, such as we should even be ashamed to think of separately and apart from him? What is there that is not base, when severed from God, or if we do not eye and consider him in it? We cannot conceive of any creature whatsoever, not even of the best and most noble, but as of a most horrid idol, if made the terminative object of our love, taken apart from God, and not considered or regarded in subordination to him who is supreme. And as to the mind and spirit of a man, there is nothing that so defiles it, that renders it so impure as spiritual idolatry does. A vile and filthy thing, that the spirit of a man should be alienated from God, and prostituted to an idol! For we make any thing so, that we make the supreme object of our love. And so in effect we join ourselves to vanity, as idols are wont to be called; to that which is not only vain, but by this means made odious and loathsome.

And how deep a resentment should this be to us, that so ex-



cellent a thing as the spirit of man, God's own offspring, should suffer so vile a dejection ! that it should be depressed and debased unto such meanness as to join itself to vanity and dirt, when it might be united with the God of glory, with the fullness and excellency of the Deity ; yea, and when it is apparent, that by the original designation of that nature he hath given us, we were at first made capable thereof ! For how came we by that love which we find in our nature ? We plainly see we can love somewhere ? While we love not God there is something or other that we do love ; yea and ~~it~~ it is altogether impossible to our nature, not to love something or other. And hath he "planted a vineyard and shall he not eat of the fruit thereof?" 1 Cor. 9. 7. He hath planted that love in our natures which we have made vile, by alienating it from him, and which may yet be made a sacred thing by being sanctified and turned upon God again. For it is the object and a suitability thereunto, wherein consists the sanctification of the affections. And again,

3. Not to love God is a most merciless self-destruction. It is a divulsion of ourselves from him who is our life. It is to rend our souls from the Supreme Good, and so abandon ourselves by our own choice unto misery. How infamous among men is the name of a *felo de se*, one that hath done violence to his own life, and perisheth by his own hands ! Though the nature of the thing doth exempt him from personal punishment in this world ; yet you know that human laws do very severely animadvert upon, and punish the crime as far as the matter can admit. Juries are impanelled, a strict inquiry is made into the nature of the case. "What did he do it voluntarily? was he *compos sui* ? did he understand himself when he did it?" And if this be found to be the case ; his goods are confiscated, and his memory branded with all the infamy that can be devised. And there is a great deal of reason for it. For the wrong that is done does not terminate upon himself, or his own relatives ; but the prince is wronged, being robbed of a subject ; and the community is wronged also, being deprived of one that otherwise might have been a useful member.

No man, as I remember Cicero somewhere speaks, *Nemo sibi nascitur, is born for himself*. Many claim a part in us besides ourselves, to wit, our prince, our country, and our friends. And when one destroys himself, many are injured by that self-destruction. And though some heathens have spoken of self-destruction as a very noble and generous act, yet Plato who had more light (speaking, as I remember, to this very case) says, "We are here in the body like soldiers in a garri-

son, who are not to stir out without the general's order and direction ; no more may any one dare to go out of the body, till the great Ruler of the world, who hath placed him there, gives him leave, or a call." And he appeals to men themselves. "If you" (saith he) "had a slave that should kill himself, would you not say he had wronged you, as well as himself, who had an interest in him and his service?" And what ! do we think all this while that God's dominion is less over our spiritual and eternal being ? over these souls of ours that are capable of being employed in his love and praise eternally ? And is not this injurious to him, that men, who are naturally capable of all this, should yet throw themselves off from God, and cast themselves among a crew of damned spirits, whose business will be always to curse their Maker ? Is not this, I say, an injury to the blessed God himself, who is the Author of that being and capacity to serve him, which we find ourselves possessed of ? Moreover,

4. By not loving God we render ourselves altogether incapable of doing him any faithful service, upon which our great comfort and advantage, and his honour and glory do at once depend. For God is glorified only by our voluntary action and devotedness to him, And is it not also more pleasant to serve God cheerfully than otherwise ? but can we do that without loving him ? And doth it not cast a most intolerable calumny upon him, that we should serve such a master unpleasantly, and with uncheerful service ? Further,

5. We should, in breaking of this one law of love to God, break all. It is a breach of all the law at once, and so makes us incapable of doing God any service at all. For we can never serve him while we obey him not, and we can never obey him without love. We find that the whole law is summed up in it. Therefore we break the whole law of love to God in epitomè, when we do not love him. All the law is fulfilled and comprehended in the one word *Love*. And though it is plain that the Apostle when he says (Rom. 13. 8. 10.) "Love is the fulfilling of the law," speaks there with a more direct reference to love to men, or one another ; yet it is plain too that both branches may be reduced to one ; for no man loves his brother or neighbour truly, if he do not love him for God's sake, and upon his account. That great law against murder in the book of Genesis (9. 6.) is founded upon this reason, "For in the image of God made he man ;" so that it is God who is principally struck at, when one man murders another. Thus our Saviour made the summary of the law twofold, when he said, (to the lawyer, who had asked him, which was the great command-

ment,) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matt. 22. 37—40.

The whole of our duty therefore centers in this one thing, love to God. This is the radical principle whence all is to proceed; and every command doth bind us with this reduplication, "Do this and love God, and do that as a lover of God," otherwise what we do is no more the same thing which the law enjoins, than the carcass of a man is the man. That which is the soul of the duty is wanting, and that is love. What signify, think you, those prayers to God, which are put up by one that does not love him? or of what avail is any other act of worship that is performed by such a one? And if we do any part of our duty which respects man, and that duty be not animated by the love of God, the love that one man can have to another in this case is nothing else but a sort of friendly intercourse among rebels, that have cut off themselves from their supreme Ruler; and take no more notice of his interest which he hath in common in them, but as they are confederated, and join in a conspiracy against him. Love among men, why do we talk of that? To love such men as have quite cut off themselves from God, as well as we ourselves have done, is only such a love as is among rebels, that treat one another kindly in a state of rebellion. To proceed,

6. It is a violation of the most merciful indulgent law, enjoining us a duty most agreeable to our own necessities, and the least toilsome and expensive of all others. How intolerable then is it to affront God, and even to do it with no pretence of advantage to ourselves, but greatly to our own disadvantage and loss! How merciful is the law of love! how direct a provision is there made in it for the necessity of man! Pray what shall we do, nay what can we do with ourselves, if we place not our love upon God? It may be we do not find our present need of him, as long as we find objects of sense courting and flattering us in our way; but do not we know that this world must break up, and this frame of earth and flesh in which we dwell, dissolve! What then will become of him at last that will be found to have been no lover of God? How dreadful a thing is it for a soul to be stripped naked and to have nothing to enjoy! It cannot enjoy God, because it never loved him. For sure, what we love not, we can never enjoy.

Therefore it was a most merciful law that said unto us, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." It is a law teaching us to be

happy, and to solace ourselves in the rich plenitude of divine goodness. Our necessity doth at once urge us, and the divine goodness invite us here to place our love. This is the true solution of Plato's riddle, "That Love is the daughter of Pluto and Penia." For it plainly appears that the rich plenty of divine goodness, and the poverty and indigence of the poor creature that cannot otherwise dispose of itself, are the true parents of love.

This is a thing also that will cost us nothing. To love God therefore is the most unexceptionable thing in the world. It is what we are capable of in the worst external circumstances. If a man be never so poor he may yet love God. If he be sick and infirm, if he be never so mean, if he have no estate, no interest, or be never so little in repute, he is yet capable of loving God. This he can do any where, in any place, in any desert, or cave, or upon the most afflictive bed of languishing. There is no pretence against loving God, let a man's case be what it will, or supposed to be. It is therefore a most intolerable thing to offend against a law that provides so directly for our happiness and most urgent necessities. It is such a law, an obedience to which will cost us nothing, neither can there be the least pretence of gaining any thing by the neglect of it. The sin is therefore the more horrid: and foul and shameful it is to disobey in a case wherein we have nothing to say for ourselves. And again,

7. It is a direct contradiction to our own light, and the common sentiments of mankind. For this is no disputable thing, whether we are to love God yea or no. There are many things in religion, and many things more that are affixed to it, that make much matter of disputation, and great ventilating of arguments. there is *pro* and *con*, this way and that; but pray who can tell how to form an argument against the love of God? To deny this is to affront our own light, and that of the world in common; for there is no man that will profess himself to be no lover of God. Did you ever meet with any one that would profess enmity to him? And the soul of man cannot be indifferent in this case. It must either be a friend or an enemy, must either love or hate. God is not indifferent, or a mere nothing to us, and how should we be affected to him, if not by love? And we further add,

8. It is a most unnatural wickedness to the Parent of that being which we are each of us furnished with, to disaffect our own Original. That men should disaffect him from whom they immediately sprang, and whose image they expressly bear, is, I say, a most unnatural crime. Suppose there were a son to be

found that never could love his father, and always hated the womb that bare him ; what a strange prodigy in nature would he be thought ! But is not this infinitely more prodigious to disaffect the entire and supreme Author of our own life and being, of which parents are but partial, or at most but subordinate authors. And in the

9. And last place, not to add more, it is blasphemy against the divine goodness. It is a practical blasphemy. It is the most emphatical way of denying God. For as the man that does not believe him, denieth his truth and makes him a liar, so by manifest parity, he that doth not love him denieth his goodness, a great deal more significantly than can be done by words. For men many times earnestly speak what is not their settled judgment, and what they are afterwards ready to retract. But how horrid a thing is this, that a man by a continued course and series of practice should discover this to be the fixed sense of his soul, that God is not worthy of his love ! that a race of reasonable creatures should bear their joint testimony against the great and blessed God, the common Author and Cause of all being, that he is not worthy the love of any of them ! For we practically say so while we live in the neglect of this duty. What do we talk of words in this case, when deeds and our constant practice do more significantly and directly speak ? and what doth the course of a man speak, who loves not God, but this, that he is not to be loved ? Therefore sure, not to love God, though we see him not, is not only a sin, but a most monstrous and horrid one.

We should go on to make some practical inferences from all that has been said on this part of our subject, that we might thereby the more closely apply all ; but of this hereafter.

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## SERMON IX.\*

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**I**N speaking to the second part of our subject we have largely insisted in shewing you, that our not seeing God is no excuse for our not loving him. We have shewn particularly, that it is insufficient, and also very absurd to be alleged as an excuse; and that it is not only a sinful omission, but a most horrid wickedness, not to live in the exercise of love to God, notwithstanding this excuse that we cannot see him.

It now remains, as we promised in our last, to deduce from the whole some practical inferences, by which (if God will so direct his word) all may be applied, and brought home with the greater pungency to our own hearts. And,

1. We may hence take notice of the insolent wickedness of the world, that they so generally agree to confine the little love that is left in it to one another, and to exclude the Blessed God. That men do not love God speaks them very wicked: that they continue in the neglect of this duty, without any excuse, speaks the insolency of their wickedness. While they have not a cloak left them, not a colourable pretence, nor any thing to say for themselves that is so much as plausible, yet they continue their course of excluding God out of their hearts,

\* Preached October 11, 1676.

and live as if they owed him nothing, and had no concern at all with him.

That men do not love God is a thing that cannot be excused, as you have heard; and it is as little capable of denial, as of excuse. The matter is open and manifest. The general face and aspect of this world sheweth, how little there is of the love of God in it. The very shew of its countenance speaks it plainly. Men do in this matter even declare their sin as Sodom. They openly testify to one another that they are God's enemies. So that every man that runs, may read how the matter commonly is with men in this respect.

Alas, how little doth God's interest signify in this world! this shews how little he is beloved. How little is his interest valued, in comparison of that which is merely secular, and human! We have instanced to you already in this and many other things, for the eviction of the matter of fact in this case. As for the matter of right and wrong in the case, you have fully seen, from the demonstration which hath been given you, that our not seeing, excuseth us not from loving God. Nothing can be more plain, than (as we noted heretofore) that although too little respect be paid in the most important matters to human laws, yet there is a great deal less paid to divine. Men are more prone to be observant of the laws of men than of God. But there is no true obedience to the one or the other which doth not proceed from love, so far as it is true. We are to owe nothing to any man but love, or what may spring from thence. It was the complaint you know of old, "The statutes of Omri are kept." Micah 6. 16. A very scrupulous care, as is intimated and complained of, there was to observe them; while the statutes of God were neglected, or not so much respected among those that professed his name.

Yea, and which is more than that; how much more frequent are the instances that may be assigned of laws made directly against God's interest, and the precepts of the first table, than against those of the second! The world in the several successive ages of it, hath been full of instances of laws made for polytheism, infidelity, idolatry, the worshipping of false gods, and the abolishing, or very much depraving the worship of the true. But when did you ever hear of laws made for theft, false witness bearing, and the like? so as to oblige men under certain penalties to invade each other's interests, as they generally make bold with God. We have heard and read very frequently of men persecuted even to the death by laws, for not burning incense to idols, for not denying of Christ, and the like; but when did you ever hear of a man exposed to such penalties for not steal-

ing, for not cozening, not defrauding this, or that, or the other man? So apparent is it, that men can express somewhat of tenderness one to another, in respect of their own private and secular interest; when, in the mean time, there is no concern at all for the common interest of the Lord of all this world. So that what interest is in the world is shut up almost entirely among men themselves. And though there is too little regard to that interest; yet they confine what there is among one another, excluding the blessed God from having any part or share in their love at all.

And truly, sirs, I fear we are too little concerned about this sad case. We do not consider this matter as it deserves, nor with that solemnity that it challenges. We are not so affected about the rights and interest of him, whom we call our God, as we ought to be. It doth not pain us to the heart as it should, to think how little God is made of in his own creation, and among the works of his own hands. We sometimes, when we hear the matter spoken of, say it is a sad case, but we know not how to help it, and so pass it very slightly over. But do not we indeed know how to help it? And should not this affect us ten thousand times more, when it is a case, that we can only lament? Sure methinks, at least we should do that if we can do no more. But how prone are we to alleviate the matter by considering it as a common case. "Oh! this is a matter of observation every day. It may be seen in every place, that there is little of the love of God to be found among men." And is it a common case? Is it not then a thousand times more horrid that it should be so common? If there had been but one apostate creature from God in all the world, one person of whom it might be said, "He doth not love God," how shocking and horrid would this man look in our eye! But is it not inconceivably worse and more horrid, that there should be so general a revolt from God? and that the hearts and love of his poor creatures are so averted without cause, and wickedly alienated from him all the world over?

2. We further collect hence, that the conviction of the unreconciled part of the world must needs be very clear and easy in the great day. When this shall be the common case brought into trial (as indeed it will be with every man) "Was he a lover of God, or was he not?" how easy and clear, I say, must the conviction needs be, since, as you have heard, it is a matter that admits of no excuse? If this be a matter not defensible at our own bar, among ourselves, when we controvert the matter one with another; how easily and gloriously will divine justice triumph in the eviction of his right, and of the wrong



that hath been done him by his creatures in the matter? Behold a whole race of creatures, originally capable of his love and communion, gone off from him with one consent! alienated in heart and spirit, from the life and love of God! transmitting their enmity and disloyalty from age to age, from generation to generation! and, in a word, emboldening themselves in wickedness against him, because they see him not; and as they vainly think, because he sees not them.

And yet in the mean time it is very plain, that men might know him if they would; for they live, and move, and have their whole subsistence in, and by him. He is not far from any one of them. He supplies them with breath from moment to moment. They entirely owe themselves, their being, and preservation, to an every where present, and apprehensible Deity. Yet they do not, neither will they know him; and in this voluntary ignorance they sufficiently shew, that they love him not. How glorious then will the triumphs of justice be, when this case comes to be stated! when this shall be the charge brought against men, be they who they will, or whatsoever they have been in other respects, that they have been no lovers of God.

3. We are hence to note, and admire the wonderful patience, and bounty of God to this wretched world. How admirable are the riches of his goodness, and his sparing and sustaining mercy! that the treasures of wrath are shut up, and the treasures of bounty opened to a world, where he hath, upon the matter, but little or no love! One would wonder that this world should not have been in flames many an age ago, considering how enmity against God hath been transmitted from age to age. But how much more reason have we to wonder, that he so concerns himself about, and takes such care for a company of wretched miscreants, among whom he is not valued! Still his treasures are opened to us; his sun shines, his rain falls, and in ways of grace and mercy he leaves not himself without witness, in that he is continually doing us good, "Giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness;" (Acts 14, 17) though in the mean time men will not know who feeds them, and maintains their life; and parcels out their breath to them, every moment, from time to time.

Surely it becomes us deeply to adore that patience and bounty, that are so continually exercised towards such creatures, who are here shut up in the dark, as it were, from one day to another. God appears not to them; they see him not, and in the mean time agree in this, that they will have no thoughts of him, but have him in perpetual oblivion. Yet all the while they

have natural powers and faculties, which if employed in the inquiry, might easily inform them, that they did not make themselves ; that they have not their life in their own hands, neither can they prolong it at their own pleasure, inasmuch as all of us "live, and move, and have our being in God." Acts 17. 28. However, they content themselves with their ignorance of him; and yet he hath sustained the world, and upheld the pillars of it, when sometimes it hath been ready to dissolve, and burst asunder, with that weight of wickedness that hath overwhelmed it for a time.

We ought surely in the contemplation of this to say, "How far are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts !" Men sometimes when they receive but a petty injury, and an apparent wrong from another, are presently wondering, that the earth doth not swallow up the man that hath done them this palpable wrong; that vengeance spares him; or that God suffers such a one to live. Oh! why do not we turn all our wonder this way; that God spares those that are perpetually affronting him! making it as it were the whole business of their life to testify to all the world, how little they care for him that made them! We ought then to consider with great admiration that vast and immense goodness, which is so indulgent to men all this while. Again,

4. We may hence learn too, the absolute necessity, and proper business of the Redeemer; how great need there was of a Redeemer, and what work and business he has to do on the behalf of sinful men. We may learn, I say, how great need there was of such a one. For who can stand under the weight of this charge, to have lived days, and months, and years in this world, destitute of the love of God? Any man that apprehends the horror of the thing, and knows how inexcusable a wickedness it is, and how horrid, notwithstanding any pretence of excuse, cannot but be greatly affected by it; methinks paleness must possess his face, and pining his heart, to be subject to so heavy a charge, and also liable to be convicted of not loving God. And then, one would think, it should be easy to understand what need there was of a Redeemer. The creation would not be able to sustain this burden, to have creatures in it that loved not God, and were disaffected to their own Original. If this guilt were to be parceled out among the creation, how soon would it make all things fly asunder! and how impossible would it be for things to subsist and hold together! How great then was the need of a Redeemer in this case!

And we may see what his business hereupon must be also; that is, both to expiate the guilt of such as have not loved God,

and to procure that they may do so for the time to come. And these two we are to consider not as separate and apart from one another. We are not to fancy or imagine, that Christ hath only this to do, namely, to procure pardon for our not having loved God. Sure he is to procure grace also, that we may, and effectually shall do so for the future, or else he will profit us but little. If we have to do with Christ at all, if ever we receive any benefit at all by him, it must be this double benefit in conjunction; not the one separate from the other.

The imagination runs in common among men, as if Christ's business as mediator was only to reconcile God to man, and not man to God. But how expressly doth the Scripture speak of this part too! You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. Col. 1, 21. He must reconcile us to God. And therefore the apostle again saith, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. 2. Cor. 5, 19. To take out of the hearts of men the enmity that is reigning every where against God, and bring them into love with him, is the very business of the gospel.

There did not need a gospel to be preached to heaven, to incline God to man; but there was a necessity of dispensing one on earth to men, to incline them to God. If the business had only been to reconcile God to man, there had been no need of a gospel at all. The affair of our redemption might have been transacted between the Father, and the Son, in God's eternal counsel. Christ might have died as he did, and the ends of his dying be never known to us, were it not that this was the means, that the Spirit of Christ was to work by, in order to overcome men's hearts, and slay the enmity in them, not to be done by any other way. And shall any of us think, that Christ came into the world to procure the salvation of those, that loved not God? This were to think, that he came into the world to banish the love of God out of it.

Therefore we must know, that if ever we be the better for Christ it must be both in his expiating our guilt, for not loving God; and in removing our enmity, that our love may be set upon him, our hearts joined with him, and engaged in communion and fellowship with him, in our future course. For this is the business of a Mediator between God and man: to salve the breach on both sides; to make a mutual agreement between both parties; to vindicate God's right, and so to act the part of a just Redeemer, and to procure man's righteousness, which is the part of a merciful Redeemer. This was his thought: "This case must be either redressed in men by

working a change in them, or else vindicated upon them." This he is obliged to as Redeemer. The Father hath given all judgment into his hand; and as it were, deposited his rights there, to be vindicated by him, or restored. John 5. 22.

5. Learn hence the generous nature of divine love in men. The love that we owe, and that good souls do live in the exercise of, and actually bear to God, of how noble and generous a nature I say, is it? Their love is of so refined and solid a nature, that it breaks through the whole sphere of sense, and flies above all visible things, and pitcheth upon an invisible object. There it terminates, and takes up its residence. It never rests till it has flown up thither, and seeks no excuse from the duty of love to God, merely because he is invisible. It despiseth to be so excused, and neglects, and disregards the dictates of sense in the case. This is the genius of divine love and the inward spiritual sense of the new creature, whereof this love is the heart, and life, and soul. "What! shall external sense impose upon me, and tell me what is fit for me to love, and what not? What! shall I love no higher than so? no higher than a brute?" Therefore, how much more noble and excellent a spirit is that of the truly good man, than the men of this world are of! and how excellent is the spirit of divine love, which is in the saints, above that which is earthly and sensual! Let us believe this therefore, and be convinced, that the spirit that is peculiar to godly men is quite another thing, from a vulgar and mundane spirit; and its strain and genius different, from that of the men of this world. These love only what they see, and think they are excused from loving any but sensible objects. But says the good man, "When I have seen, and viewed all the good, and all the excellency that this sensible creation can offer to my view, I must have something unseen for my love to pitch upon which is beyond all this." Therefore a gracious spirit is an excellent spirit. It cannot grovel upon this earth. It must ascend above all visible things, and get up to that God who is invisible.

6. Since we are so strictly obliged to the love of God though we cannot see him; what reason have we to charge and condemn ourselves, and even loathe and abhor ourselves that we have loved him so little, and that so small a part of our life can be said to have been spent in this divine exercise! It is high time for us to understand the state of our case, and to consider it in this respect: though it is very much to be feared that it is but little considered; for alas, how generally do people carry it as if they thought themselves innocent in this point! After all the injury that has been done to God by our not loving him, this

is the most intolerable aggravation that we should think ourselves innocent therein, and maintain that temper of spirit as if we apprehended all was well. And how plain is it that it will not enter into the souls of men, that they are guilty creatures before the Lord on this account, that they have not loved him?

If a man had secretly and privily been guilty of the death of another on such a day, and the matter was closely covered up and no body knew it; yet how would his own thoughts dog him and accuse him at night! The blood of that man would so cry in his conscience, that certainly he would have but a hard matter of it to compose himself to quiet peaceful repose. Why, men in not loving God are guilty of deicide, as much as they can be, or as far as their power extends. It is an attempt against God. It is saying in their hearts, "No God!" For it is a plain denial of his goodness, and therefore of his being. It is as much a denial of his goodness, as infidelity is of his truth. What a strange thing is it, that men can be so much at peace with themselves, can pass over whole days one after another, yet no such thing as the love of God to be found among them! and at night can sleep and rest, and their hearts never smite them for it.

Methodists it is strange that men can make so slight a matter of breaking all laws at once, as you have heard this is of not loving God; of subverting the whole frame of the divine government over us. For how do we obey it in any thing, who comport not with the first principle of obedience, namely love to God? Oh that men should be guilty of a more horrid fact, than it would be, if it were in their power, to turn all things out of order, and yet not only be able to rest but even to think themselves innocent all the while!

These things, in my apprehension, do make a most wonderful conjuncture, where they happen to meet together; these four things especially,—that it should be so plain to every man that he ought to love God,—that it should be so plainly demonstrable, as to the most, that they do not love God;—that it should be so confessedly a foul and horrid thing not to love him, even by every man's acknowledgement; and yet,—that so many can be guilty of this horrid crime all their lives, and yet live as if all was well, and they were innocent all the while.—All these things make, I say, an amazing conjuncture. I appeal to you if they do not.

But that none of us may be so stupid under such guilt as this, let us since we cannot excuse it, freely condemn ourselves. For who is there among us but must be forced to acknowledge, that the love of God is too little exercised, or is very faint and

languid among us ? Methinks we should hate ourselves for this, that we do not love God. It ought to be looked upon as a frightful thing, a monstrous indisposition in us. We should then in our own thoughts, commune with ourselves, and reason thus. "Why, what a creature am I ! what a strange creature am I ! of how amazing a composition ! I have an understanding about me. I know that which is good and what is best. I know the Author of all goodness and excellency, must needs be the highest excellency and goodness himself. I have also love in my nature, which I can employ upon inferior things, and which I confess to be of unspeakably less, and of diminutive goodness. How monstrously strange is it then that I cannot feel daily emotions of love in my heart to God ! that I cannot find my heart to beat for him ! that every thought of him is not pleasant to me ! How amazing and wonderful is this !" Why sure it is a very befitting posture, that we should be covered with shame and confusion before the Lord ; and be even wallowing in our own tears, lamenting that there should be so stupid and cool an ascent in our hearts towards him : that we can spend whole days without him ; give him no visits, and receive none that are of concernment to us ; and in a word, lead our life as it were without God in the world.

It should make us ashamed to read that precept of an heathen emperor,\* who expresses himself to this effect, and, "You must lead your lives with God. Then," says he, "you will be said to lead your life with God, when you approve yourselves well pleased with every thing that he dispenseth to you, and take all kindly at his hands ; and when also you obey that leader and ruler," (he can mean nothing but the conscience that is in man) "which he has set to be the guide of your actions. So shall you lead your lives with God, and have daily converse with him." And now to have daily our conversation in the world without God, and yet have no scruple about it, nor remorse upon it, is a marvellous thing ; especially among us, who hear of him and from him so often, and know that we must be happy in him at last, or else eternally miserable. In the

Last place, Since our not seeing God cannot excuse us from loving him, how much we are concerned to see to it that it be no hindrance or impediment to this our duty of loving God. And that it may not, it is very necessary that it be some way or other supplied. Since it is impossible for us to see God, we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, whether there

\* Antoninus.

be not something or other that may serve us instead of the sight of God, and be a means of our living in his love. And here I had several things in my thoughts to have hinted to you, and intended to have gone through them at this time; but I must leave them to the next opportunity.

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## SERMON X.\*

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**S**INCE it is necessary, that our not seeing God should be so supplied, as that we may be capable of loving him, notwithstanding; I now proceed to give some directions, which I hope will be of use to us in this great and important matter.

As,

1. Let us fix the apprehension deep in our souls, of his certain necessary existence, and supreme excellence. Our sight doth not serve us to the loving of any thing, otherwise than as it is a means to beget an apprehension in our minds of the loveliness of it. Sight is in no case the immediate inducement of love, but only as it is ministerial and subservient to the nobler powers of the mind. And if by any other means than by seeing, we can come to apprehend so much concerning the blessed God, to wit, his most necessary existence, and supreme excellency, we shall not be at a loss then for an apt medium, by which our love is to be excited in us towards him.

These two things are the same in effect with those that the

\* Preached October 5, 1676.

apostle tells us we ought to be assured of, in order to our coming to God with acceptance, namely, that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Heb. 11. 6. We may easily understand how he is a rewarder, if we compare this passage with what is said to Abraham, I am thy exceeding great reward. Gen. 15. 1. God is at once both a rewarder, and a reward to those whose hearts are towards him. He is a rewarder by communicating himself, and not by giving rewards alien and diverse from himself. And it is necessary that we be assured, that he both is, and that he is in this sense a rewarder, as being in himself the highest excellency, or the supreme and best Good. For without a persuasion concerning both these, it is intimated, that we cannot come unto him in an acceptable manner.

Now loving him is one way of coming to him. It is that by which the soul moveth to him in desire, and then rests in him in delight. There can be no such motion in the soul towards God, without this double persuasion concerning him ; namely, of his certain existence, and highest excellency, as our terminative good. And you have heard that we may be as sure of both these, as of any thing that we see with our eyes. For if our eyes tell us, that any thing is in being, our minds tell us as certainly, that there is an original Being. And if we can be any way sure, that there is such a thing as goodness, and excellency in the world ; we may be as sure, that there is an original excellency, an original good, which must needs be the supreme good, and can be no where, but in the original supreme Being. For goodness and excellency are not nothing, and therefore cannot come out of nothing, but must proceed from the same fountain, from whence all being comes. We are not more sure of any thing that our eyes inform us of, than we shall be of this, if we do but consider, and use our understanding in the case.

So that we should endeavour once to fix the apprehension of these things, as being most certainly true ; and from our very souls should bless God, that we are at a certainty in these things ; that we do not feel the ground loose under us, but are in this respect on firm ground, when we affirm that God most necessarily is, and is the highest and most excellent Good. And being once sure of this, it would be very unreasonable to be recalling this matter into doubt, or to be perpetually moving questions and disputes concerning it in our minds. It is what we may be as sure of, as that there is a world in being, or that any thing is, that we ourselves are, who being nearest to ourselves, may be surest of our own being.



And it would make strange confused work in the world, if in reference to all the actions of man, they should be ever moving disputes about them, whether they really are or are not. As if a man could not tell how to eat, but he must fall a doubting presently, "Is this real food before me, or is it not? or am I awake to eat it, yea or no?" Or as if he could not tell how to converse with any one, about never so important a business, but he must fall a disputing, "Is this a real man, or but a spectre? may it not be only the umbra of a man?" In short, what could be done, what business transacted in the world, if about such plain matters, doubts must be perpetually raised?

Every man that hath understanding, as hath been said, may be at as great certainty concerning the existence of the supreme and first Being, as of any thing whatever. Nay, a great deal more, because his existence is supremely necessary. So that if I confine certainty to the eye, then I am sure of nothing but what I see. But I am certain that God always was of himself, and therefore is necessarily; and so, not to be, must to him be simply impossible. This, therefore would be one great supply to our not seeing him, once to make the matter plain and clear, that he exists, and that he is the most excellent and supreme Good. Which would be a great deal in our way, towards the exercise of love to God, though we do not see him.

2. It will concern us much to use our thoughts in being conversant with other invisible objects. For certainly, minds and hearts that are continually busied about things of sense only, will be but in a very defective capacity, at all times, to converse with the invisible God. It needs a very refined temper of mind to behold him with the intellectual eye, and thereupon to love and embrace the blessed glorious God. And as while we converse with things that are vain, our minds are vain; while with things that are earthly, our minds are earthly, and bear the impress and image of those things with which we have most to do; so, if we did but converse with spiritual things, or those which are above the reach of sense, it would be a means to make our minds and hearts grow more spiritual, and consequently more fit for the love, and converse of the eternal, supreme, invisible Spirit.

It is a mean base thing, since God hath furnished our natures with a thinking power, to use our thoughts only about those things that lie in common to us with brute creatures. "Can I, have I, a power to mind higher and nobler objects, and will I so vilely debase myself as not to mind them! to mind

only things that are earthy, drossy, and terrene ! By this means I shall always keep myself in an incapacity to have to do with God."

We should therefore consider with ourselves, that as we have faculties by which we are rendered capable of conversing with men and visible things ; so we have faculties too in our natures, whereby we are capable of conversing with things that are not visible, and that are of a higher nature. It is easy to turn all the things of this visible state into a dusky shadow to ourselves. We can clothe all the world with darkness, in a moment, only by shutting our eyes. And therefore as our eyes would signify nothing to visible things, if we did not use them ; so nor will our thoughts signify any thing in reference to the invisible world, unless we employ them upon their more proper, and peculiar objects.

We should also recollect with ourselves, that there is such a thing as an invisible world, which is the best and noblest part of the creation of God. We ourselves, as to the better part of our natures, belong to it. Therefore we should not behave as strangers, and unrelated to that world. We should consider how glorious the invisible world is, and recount who are its inhabitants, what are the affairs and pleasures, the excellencies and ornaments of those inhabitants. Let us think with ourselves, what vast numberless myriads there are of glorious spirits, creatures of God, that are composed all of mind and love, whose perpetual business and employment is to behold, and adore the great Father of spirits, the **PATERNAL MIND**, or **REASON**, as the Heathen have called him, the original intellect, that is every where and **ALL IN ALL**.

We should think with ourselves, that the affairs of those innumerable multitudes of glorious spirits, and their pleasures and delights, are the same. Their business is to be always beholding the divine glory ; and by adoration and praise to return it to him, reflecting it back again to its own Original. We should think with ourselves, what the lovely ornaments and excellencies are of those blessed inhabitants : we should consider their vast knowledge, their mighty power, their pure holiness, their profound humility, the benignity, love, and serenity, that are every where to be found among those happy beings.

And when we have thought and considered all this, then let us ask ourselves, "Why am I a stranger to this invisible world?" For indeed we are strangers to it, while we are unrelated to God, and his Christ. But this is not our necessity, but our great folly, that we continue in so distant and unrelated a state.

We are naturally aliens, strangers, foreigners ; but there are overtures made to us by Christ, to become of the household and family of God. Eph. 2. 19. And his family is made up of heavenly ones, though part be in heaven, and part on earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, besides his natural, hath an acquired dominion and lordship over the whole of it. By him were all things made, both visible and invisible ; and even besides that, by the blood of his cross, he is become the Head over all principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions ; whether they be in heaven, or earth, or under the earth. Col. 1. 16—21.

So that if we be of those who profess themselves to be christians, and are united to him, we are come to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect. Heb. 12. 22, 23. We are actually joined as members of that body, which is all but one community of glorious creatures above, and holy ones here below, in whom the beginnings and first principles of the new creature, and the work of sanctification are to be found. So that we may again demand of ourselves and ask, "Why do we estrange ourselves and carry it as if we were unrelated to those invisible creatures?" Those blessed spirits are continually mingling with us, if we will believe the divine testimony concerning them. The angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Ps. 34. 7. And what are all the angels? But ministering spirits sent forth for the good and service of them who are heirs of salvation. Heb. 1. 14. They are conversant in our assemblies, as some understand that passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians, where the woman is directed to have power over her head, that is, a vail, in token of her subjection to power, "because of the angels;" (1 Cor. 11. 10.) though some understand this passage otherwise. And again, more expressly it is said, that unto powers and principalities in heavenly places is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. Eph. 3. 10.

Therefore in that we do not entertain more frequent thoughts, and exercise our minds more about what the Scriptures reveal in this matter, we are certainly injurious to ourselves. We keep back our minds from being clarified from earth and sensible things, by which they might be raised up to the honour and advantage of being employed about the blessed God himself. For if we were filled, all the day long, with becoming thoughts of the state and condition of the affairs of the inhabitants of the

invisible world, how easy were it to fix upon God the great Ruler of all, the Father of spirits.

And being of the same community, making but one society with those blessed creatures, as being under the same Head with them, we make a great schism in the body if we break off ourselves from them, and their employments and affairs, and involve ourselves with things that are visible, and the objects of sense. Of all men in the world the sensualist is the greatest schismatic. He breaks himself off from all the affairs and concernments of the invisible world; and wraps himself in this narrow sphere, as one quite cut off from God, and all that are more immediately conversant with him. We, I say, quite rend ourselves from that body, that happy society, if we do not apply ourselves more to mind the concernments of that other world, and to have our spirits, thoughts and affections, exercised and carried up thither. And again,

3. It is necessary in order to supply our not seeing God, that we most firmly believe the report and testimony that is given of him in the gospel of his Son. What we cannot know by our own eyes, we must be beholden for the knowledge of to the report of others. And it is the business of the gospel to make a report of God to us, and the errand of his Son into the world was to bring us this report. He who best knew him, and from eternity was in his bosom, "hath declared him;" and that on purpose for our relief in this case, because "no man hath seen God at any time." Since therefore God is invisible, and we are creatures that depend so much upon sense, he "hath spoken to us by his Son, the express image of his person." Heb. 1. 3. So that it is by no mean one that he hath sent us an account of himself, though we cannot see him.

All reports signify as they are believed. They signify nothing where no credit is given to them. But what should induce us to doubt, whether the revelation which Christ hath made to us of God, in his word, be true or no? What should make us imagine, that God should misrepresent himself? What! Doth he need to beguile us, his creatures, whom he hath entirely in his power? the works of his hands, whom he can wink and beckon into nothing? Do you think he means to beguile us with specious representations of himself, otherwise than the matter really is?

Therefore we should thus consider with ourselves. "We have not indeed seen God, nor is he liable to so mean a thing as human sight. But we have an express discovery of him by his own Son, who came upon this very errand: and what he has said was not casually, and on the by, as words dropped

by chance ; but he came for this very end, that he might acquaint the world what God is, and give to men an account of him, since he is not to be seen with eyes of flesh." And sure, upon the account we have of this blessed and glorious Object, he must be acknowledged to be the most lovely Object. We are not then at a loss for an object of our love, if we will but believe the record, and testimony of the blessed God in his own word ; and take it as a revelation from heaven with so merciful a design. How awful an acquiescence therefore doth that challenge and command ! So that our hearts should readily suggest to us, that it is the greatest profaneness, if we do not with reverence, and veneration admit that testimony.

In what honour and veneration had those poor deluded creatures the image that was said to have come down from Jupiter ! Acts 19. 35. Why, God's own word is his own lively image, a true representation of himself, which certainly came down from himself. He hath sent many on this message ; his own Son, his prophets, and apostles, on purpose to draw men into communion and fellowship with himself. These things, saith St. John, are written, that we might have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1. 3. And then he goes on in his epistle to tell them, that the message which the apostles heard of him and declared unto them, was this—that God is light, and God is love. 1 John 1. 5. &c. Surely then such a Being is the most worthy of our esteem and love ; and the message sent to men is most worthy of their acceptance, to wit, that such a God is offered to them for their God. Thus men are acquainted with him by the revelation they have of him in the gospel, that so they may be drawn into a communion and fellowship with him, the life and soul of which is love.

4. It is necessary, that we bend ourselves much to contemplate and study the nature of God, according to the discovery we have of him in his revelation. That which we do know and believe, makes an impression upon us only as it is improved by our thoughts ; as it is considered or not considered. A great many things lie asleep in our souls, and signify nothing to us, for want of actual thought. At certain times and seasons, therefore, we should say to ourselves ; "Well ! I will now go on purpose, and sit down, and meditate upon God. This shall be the business of the present hour." For surely nothing can with higher right lay claim to our entire thoughts, than the Author of all. And it is a strange piece of negligence, that he, with whom we have such great concerns, and who is

our All in all, should be so seldom the Subject of our solemn, designed, purposed meditation; that the thoughts of God should be casualties with us; that we should think of him only now and then by chance, and never find a time, wherein we may say to ourselves, "I will now on set purpose think of God."

How doth this correspond with the practice of the saints, who had communion with him of old? as we find the Psalmist intimating, that he thought of God on his bed, and meditated on him in the night-watches. Ps. 63. 6. I would not here propound to you the indulging, or gratifying of a vain curiosity, inquiring into the unrevealed things of God; but would recommend to you the study of those plain intelligible attributes of his, that are obvious to the understandings of the generality of men, because the Divine Being is not capable of a strict and rigid definition. These are enough to suggest such a notion of him, as renders him an Object worthy of our love and worship; while a multitude of things may be supposed concerning God, which it is not necessary for us to be acquainted with.

Consider then his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and the like, which are his communicable attributes; and add to these the incommunicable properties of his eternity, his immensity, his self-sufficiency, his self-subsistence, his necessary existence, and so we have an account of God. And then how excellent and glorious an Object both of love and worship have we before us! a Being of himself originally perfect; who is essential wisdom, goodness, love, truth, righteousness, and holiness. In what a transport should we be upon such a representation of God! We have his name often in our mouths, when it is with us but as an empty sound; as if that great, and venerable name signified nothing. He is near in our mouths, and ears, but far from our hearts; and then no wonder he is so little loved all the while. But would we once admit to have our souls possessed with the apprehension of the import of that mighty and venerable name, which was given to Moses; how would it engage us to bow our heads and worship him, who is "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exod. 34. 6, 7. Our Lord told the Samaritan woman, "Ye worship ye know not what." John 4. 22. So do they, who make his worship nothing else but a ceremonious compliment; the mere bowing of the knee, and the honouring him with the lip. But if it be the worship

of love, it is impossible then that we should worship we know not what. For the interior faculties of the soul, as to love and desire, cannot be wrought upon by a shadow. They must be moved by something substantial, and set on work by something on purpose which really exists. When therefore we hear the name of God spoken, how should it make us stoop and bow before him ! and into what an awful and pleasing commotion should it put all the powers of our souls at once ! But to go a whole day, and forget God ; and to let many days pass, without ever choosing a time to think of him, is a great iniquity. And while that iniquity abounds, the love of such must needs grow cold. And then again,

5, We must take heed, that we entertain no horrid and dismal thoughts of God, and that we believe nothing that is contrary to his own revelation of himself. Take heed lest the belief of a God suggest only a guilty enslaving fear. I mean not the fear of reverence, which the angels owe and pay ; but that fear of horror, which is most proper to devils, and is the product of a diabolical faith. "The devils believe and tremble." Ja. 2. 19. They believe and are full of horror, as the word *φρίσσειν* signifies. Do even shiver with the belief they have concerning God. As "perfect love casteth out fear," so such fear will always put out love. For a fear proceeding from gross and horrid mis-persuasions concerning God, must needs stifle all dutiful, ingenuous, loyal affection to God.

It is the great art of the devil to possess men with the apprehension, if it be possible, that their case is the same with his own, that so thereby they may make it their own. If the devils can once persuade men, that God is as unreconcilable to them, as he is to themselves, who sinned with open eyes, without a tempter, and all at once in their own proper persons ; if they can, I say, but make men believe this, then it is a most easy thing to keep the love of God from ever having any entrance into the soul. It is natural to hate those, whom we fear or dread ; therefore, I say, the fallen angels believe and tremble, believe, and are full of horror.

But, do you believe, and bless God ? Believe him actually reconciled, if you find your hearts do yield to him. Believe him willing to be at peace. Believe him when he testifies, that whosoever cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out. John 6. 38. Believe him saying, "Though thou hast forgotten me, and hast set up thyself to be thine own idol, and hast been perpetually affronting me ; yet do thou but accept my Son, and of pardon in and through him, and I will make thee my friend, my associate and my son." Do but believe this,

and try if it be in your power not to love him. This faith will certainly work by love. But take heed of believing what God hath never said ; and what the destroyer of souls would make you believe he hath said. For whatsoever thoughts tend to the making him unlovely, or not amiable in your eyes, have them far from you. And

6. Make him your own by an entire, and cheerful choice, and acceptance of him for your Lord and your God. How mightily doth relation, interest, and property command love ! You cannot see him it is true, but you may choose and apprehend him for your God ; which relation, once understood, will happily supply the want of seeing him. Surely you would love your own child, your own father, your own husband, or wife, though you were born blind and could never see them. How many are apt to say, when they observe any thing lovely, in such or such a relation in another family ; for instance, a dutiful, ingenuous child, "Oh had I such a one, how should I love him !" Why, you have an amiable description of your God ; and do not your hearts say within you, "If he were my God, how should I love him ?" And why is he not your God ? he offers himself to be yours, and has put no harder terms upon you, than that you receive him for your God. Comply then with his righteous law, "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." Exod, 20. 3. Say therefore, "Thou shalt be my God wholly and alone." As every covenant is made up by a mutual stipulation, so his willingness and yours make the bargain. He hath declared his own willingness, do you but make out yours, and the matter is effected, so as that none can tear you asunder.

And how pleasant a thing is it to have such a God your own to glory in, and to walk in his name ! to be able to say, "God, even my God shall bless me ! I need no other." How high matter of triumph was this to the Psalmist ! Let it be told to the generations following, This God is our God for ever and ever ; he will be our guide even unto death. Ps. 48. 13, 14. As if he had said, We are willing that this should be known, in the present, and succeeding ages. Let it be transmitted to posterity. Let there be a perpetual everlasting monument of this, that we have had the Lord for our God. Thus a certain noble person would have an inscription put upon his tomb, without any further enlargement, to this effect, That he had been a servant to queen Elizabeth, counsellor to king James, and friend to sir Philip Sidney. By this it appears he would have all ages know whose servant, counsellor, and



friend he had been.\* In like manner should every good and pious soul declare to the present, and all future ages, that **THE LORD IS HIS GOD.**

7. Let your souls be filled with this apprehension, that God is always and every where present. How sweetly moving are those thoughts of God's omnipresence in the 139 Psalm ! They were so to the Psalmist and are so to all the saints. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me ; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day ; the darkness, and the light, are both alike to thee." And when the royal Psalmist considered, how God insinuated himself into every bone of his flesh, and particle of his frame, saying, "Thou hast possessed my reins, thou hast covered me in my mother's womb ;" he breaks out at last into these words, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them !"

Let us then but habituate ourselves to the apprehension of an every where present Deity, conceiving all things filled with the divine fulness, and this will supply the defect, or the want of seeing God. Let every creature, every place, every providence, put us in mind of God. Thus begins, and ends the eighth psalm, the design of which is to contemplate God in these things, regarding them all as the works of his hands ; "How excellent is thy name, O God, in all the earth, who hast set thy glory above the heavens !" And what an ecstasy do we find Moses in, while he is celebrating a particular providence ! "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods ? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?" Exod. 15. 11. If then we did but labour to make this thought familiar to ourselves, that whithersoever we go, or

\* The noble personage here alluded to, is Fulke Grevill, Lord Brooke ; whose funeral monument is yet remaining in St. Mary's Church in Warwick, and has on it this inscription

FVLKE GREVILL  
SERVANT TO QVEENE ELIZABETH  
CONCELLER TO KING IAMES  
AND FREND TO SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

wherever we are, we have a God to behold ; that there are footsteps of God, every where, for us to take notice of, or impressions, and prints of his glory ; this would habituate us to his converse, and make the motions and exercises of love, easy and familiar to us. This effect it had on the Psalmist in the 104 Psalm, who, after a glorious description of God, thus closeth it up ; " My meditation of him shall be sweet, I will be glad in the Lord." Ps. 104. 34. He had been viewing God, as he was to be seen in the works of his hands ; and his spirit was now drenched deeply in the thoughts of God's active power and providence, every where diffused in the world.

We, in like manner, should always have such thoughts injected into us, if we would but consider with ourselves, that wherever we are, still we live, and move and have our being in God. The whole earth is full of his glory. By him all things consist. We can set a foot no where but still we tread upon his ground, and are in his dominion. We cannot live, but by a vital influence derived from him, How much would this contribute to the facilitating the exercises of love ! By converse love insinuates itself into persons, they are captivated before they are aware. And there is no man of so morose, sour, churlish a nature, but will have a sort of kindness for such, whom he converseth frequently with. Assiduous converse wins hearts. How much more, when we have such an amiable object, should we associate with him ! It will then ensue of course, that we shall be taken with him, and drawn by the cords of love into the happy bonds.

8. And lastly: Let us pray much and earnestly for the Spirit of life and love, which is his own gift. Among the many excellent fruits of the Spirit you see love leads the van. Gal. 5. 22. It is of considerable moment to state the case to ourselves thus ; " The love of God is one of the fruits of his own Spirit." How intent then should we be upon this, that he who claims to be the Object of our love, is pleased to be the Author of it ? even of that pure, refined love, that is fit to be set upon so glorious an Object. Whereas such a carnalized, impure, drossy love as ours, can never turn itself unto God ; will always decline, and shun that blessed Object. He must form our love for himself, or it will never do.

As he therefore makes our love the sum of his law, and of all his precepts, so we should make it the sum of all our requests. For it is at once indeed both our privilege, and our duty. Both what we are to do, and what we are to enjoy, are

all summed up in love. And if we make this the sum of our desires, how much of ingenuity would there be in this prayer, when we come to the Lord and say, "Lord if I should cast all my desires into one request, it is *love*! Love is the only thing. I beg only a heart to love thee." How much ingenuity is there, I say, in such a prayer! and how great also is the necessity of it! For we can as soon pluck down a star, or create a new sun, as plant in our own souls this principle of love to God, without his aid. Every good and perfect gift is from him; and certainly this is good, and a matter of high excellency, to have the heart possessed with his love. We can never understand the love of God to us, till our souls are, as it were, trans-elemated into a love to him. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. 1 John 4. 16.

And now, after all this would we be excused from the duty of loving God? that is, from being happy, from living a life of pleasure, from solacing ourselves with the immense Good? We should methinks as little wish to be excused, as a poor indigent man from having all his wants supplied; or a sick languishing person, from returning to health and strength; or a hungry fainting person, from receiving convenient food; or a weary person, from receiving refreshing ease and rest. Would we be excused from having God for our portion, our health and strength, our rest and all in all? We cannot indeed see God; but will that excuse us, when so many things present us with an idea and image of him? or when we have the privilege of addressing ourselves to him by prayer? The Scriptures do not speak to us in this matter with any intention or design to excuse us from this duty. There it is intimated, that all the good, which concerns a man's present state, comes from love to God. All, says the Apostle, shall work together for good, to them that love God. Rom. 8. 28. And with respect to the other world, it is said that, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath laid up for them that love him. 1 Cor. 2. 9.

And if we would but consider the matter, it is plain we cannot excuse our conduct, to ourselves; much less to God. For do not our consciences tell us, that nothing is so easy, nothing so ready? And it is likewise to be considered, what will be made of this one day. I make little doubt but one very great part of the torture of hell, will lie in a too late repentance; that we never loved what our convicted consciences must needs have told us was most congruous, and fit to be

loved. When an awakened soul shall make reflection, and consider, what infinite reason there was for the loving of God, and yet it could never be brought to it; we can conceive no sort of mental torture to be more tormenting than this. So that they, who live destitute of the love of God, and content themselves with so doing, are busily preparing their own hell all their days. Oh, how tormenting will be the reflection! "I lived a life's time in the world, and knew how reasonable a thing it was, how just and righteous to love God, and yet I never did love him!" This will be a most amazing subject for thought to feed upon, and to find torment by, throughout an eternal state. And therefore we are the more concerned to be restless in our spirits, till we feel the fire so to burn within us, and can make our appeal to God, saying, Thou knowest all things, Lord! thou knowest that I love thee. John 21. 17.

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## SERMON XI.\*

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**WE** have endeavoured from these words to evince to you the indispensable obligation there is upon us to the continued exercise of love to God, notwithstanding that we cannot see him. This hath been doctrinally discoursed of, and also insisted upon by way of use, and particular application of that doctrine; but before we pass from it, it will be requisite to add somewhat further of a casuistical import.

It is very plain, that though there are not many sincere lovers of God, in this world; yet there are but few, who pretend not to be so. They are apt to please themselves with the conceit that they love God, and so take the matter for granted, though there be nothing of any such affection in their hearts at all. Others there are, who are apt to suspect that they do not love him in sincerity, and are too forward to conclude, that they have none of this divine affection, because they do not perceive it to work towards God, as their love does towards other objects. Finally, there are others again, who are very prone to censure those that speak of more passionate workings of affection to God, as mere hypocrites for this pretension. For since they experience nothing of such workings

\* Preached November 1, 1676.

on their own hearts, they think it impossible there should be any such thing at all in the world. There are therefore three sorts of persons that our present discourse must have reference unto.

I. Such ignorant and careless souls as do, at random and without ever considering the matter, pronounce concerning themselves, that they are lovers of God; though if the matter be strictly looked into, they have no such thing as a motion of love in their heart to God at all.

II. Those that are prone to suspect, and conclude themselves to have no love to God at all, because they do not find this affection to work with that fervour and constancy, that they think it should, and which they perceive on other occasions.

III. Such as are very apt to suspect, and accuse others of hypocrisy or folly, who seem to express the most passionate and fervent love to God, and think that such an affection towards him cannot have place in a human breast. What therefore is pretended to be of a spiritual and holy kind, must be resolved, they imagine, wholly into enthusiasm; or be attributed to the power of fancy, or imagination; or to the temper, and disposition of the bodily humours, and the various structure and fabric even of the inferior parts of the body itself. To each of these sorts, reference must be had in what is now to be discoursed upon at this time.

I. As to those who confidently give out themselves to be lovers of God, though they never felt any motion of love to him at all in their hearts, such things as these it would be very fit for them to consider.

1. That it is a very rash and unreasonable, as well as dangerous presumption, for them to conclude there is that in them which they have never perceived at all. For what might not one imagine, or fancy upon such a pretence? Supposing it possible, must I believe every thing to be true which is barely possible to be true? How many absurd things should I then believe! For there are many things that possibly may be, which yet it would be a very great absurdity to believe are in reality. It is a known rule, that of things that appear not, nor exist, the same esteem is to be had. If then it no way appears, or however appears not to me, that I am a lover of God; with what confidence can I pretend to it, or say that I am so?

2. It is to be considered that it is a most natural thing to men to be very indulgent to themselves, and to think that of themselves, which none would think or imagine but themselves.

It is natural to every wicked man to "flatter himself in his own eyes, until his wickedness be found out to be hateful." Ps. 36. 2. Thus says the Psalmist, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart," that is, suggests to me, "that there is no fear of God before his eyes." Ps. 36. 1. And truly this does as effectually speak or declare, that he hath not the love of God in him; yet at the same time he flatters himself, as it there follows, in his own eyes, till the matter comes to be plainly observable to every eye. Hence it may be very well understood, how it comes to pass that men are so apt to judge themselves any thing, which it would be horrid for them not to be thought to be, only from the kindness they have to themselves. For how horrid is it for any man to admit himself to be no lover of God! Therefore he must needs think himself such, or affirm that as true, which it were a horrid thing to confess and avow to be false. And so, upon the matter, their love to God depends upon, and runs into nothing else, but a partial and fond love to themselves.

3. They should consider how obvious the mistake is, to take a conviction of conscience in this case for an affection of the heart. That is, because they are convinced that it is a very reasonable and fit thing to love God, therefore they conclude, that they do love him. But how most irrational is the conclusion! They may as well conclude their approbation of any thing else, to be the possession of the thing itself. For instance, that they are rich, because they approve of riches; or that they are in very good health, because they approve of a sound habit of body. It is plain that this is all which the most can say, as to the bottom of their pretence. They have nothing at all in them, like the love of God, but only this conviction of conscience, that it is fit he should be loved. Of this there is a necessary and unavoidable approbation imposed upon their judgment, from the evidence of the thing itself. And as all men are convinced, that the obligation is indispensable, therefore they are willing to take it for granted, that they have the love of God in them.

4. It follows, as another thing to be considered, that if the love of God in itself be really a distinct thing, and different from such a conviction, then their love to him is reduced to nothing: for it is really nothing, distinguished from such a conviction, or apprehension in their own minds. And under a notion of its being an affection of a finer kind and nature than to be obvious to common observation, they have refined it quite away, even into a mere nothing. For doth not every

man's own sense tell him, that the love of this or that thing, is quite another thing than a mental approbation of it? Or may not I be convinced in my judgment of the excellencies of one, to whom I have yet a settled aversion in my heart? How many cannot endure such persons, of whom upon conviction they cannot say they are not excellent men? And certainly it will put every sober considerer of this state of the case upon quite new thoughts, when we shall find he is not able to tell, what the thing is, that he calls love to God, if it must be distinguished from the mere conviction of the reasonableness of it.

5. It is also to be considered, that since love to God, if it be any where, is to be discerned and felt, and must be a ruling principle; it is then a most absurd imagination, that such a principle should be in men, of which they have no perception. For is it not absurd, that a principle, which is to have the conduct of a man's life, and so very great power in and over him in his whole course, should yet be neither discernible, nor felt? Indeed there are many thoughts and motions that stir in our minds, of which we take very little notice; nor can we in a little time say positively, whether we have such a thought or no. But that a principle, which runs through the universal course of a man's life, and which of all things should most frequently come under his notice, should yet be neither felt nor perceived by him, is the most unimaginable of all things we can conceive of. Therefore those who have so hastily pronounced themselves to be lovers of God, and yet never felt any thing by which this love is to be discerned, are besought to think again, to allow the cause a rehearing, to take it into new consideration, and not run away with a groundless conceit that they are what it so much concerns them actually to be, while they are only so in their own fancies and imaginations.

II. I now come to the next sort, namely, those who are apt to judge themselves wholly destitute of sincere love to God, because they do not find those passionate motions of it towards him, as they do towards many inferior objects. And there are sundry considerations, which will be very requisite to be weighed in this case too. As,

1. That certainly the actual exercise of love towards God may be often intermitted, when an habitual propension of heart towards him doth remain. The soul may frequently be put beside the direct acts, and exercise of this duty; and yet that virtue and principle, which hath touched their hearts, and by gracious vouchsafement is seated there, may still habitually



incline them the same way. As the needle touched with the load-stone, is frequently diverted from its direct tendency towards the north ; for being moved it shakes and quivers, and hath its various vibrations this way and that, yet there is a virtue in it that will bring and reduce it to the right point again. Therefore it is not this, or that act of love towards God, that gives the denomination ; but the habitual propension, and bent of the heart. A man then is to be esteemed a lover of God, according as his heart stands habitually propense to him. But if the denomination depend upon this, or the other act ; then a man would cease to be a lover of God, as often as he loveth, or thinketh of any one else, or is diverted from it by this or that though never so necessary an occasion. And again,

2. It is very necessary, that we consider the act and the passion of love as very distinguishable, or different things. The act of love in a reasonable intelligent creature, is nothing else but the complacential motion of the will towards this or that object, that is apprehended amiable, or worthy to be loved. The passion of love is the impression made by an object, upon the animal and vital spirits of the brain and heart, which, being sensible, are reflected upon, and by many are taken notice of (through a great mistake) as if the very notion and being of love was placed there. Whereas the whole entire nature of divine love is separable from that passion, and may be without it ; otherwise if passion were of the essence of love, it were altogether impossible, that the separate soul should be capable of loving God, or any thing else. This is a mere accident to our love, and a result that depends upon our present union with the body ; which body is essentially necessary, neither to our soul, nor to our love, for both may be without it. And I add,

3. That those acts which are performed, as I may call it, in the upper region of the soul, and which are more peculiar to its intellectual nature, are as truly discernible, as the passions are which rebound upon, and affect the body. The acts of the mind, and of the will, are no more imperceptible than the passions ; and it is as possible for me to be able to discern and feel the former, as the latter. Cannot I as well tell that I think such a thought, if I do think it ; that I intend and purpose such a thing, if I do really entertain in my heart such a resolution, as that I feel the motions that affect my outward man ? If therefore a person with a practical judgment esteems the blessed God to be his highest and best good, and accordingly chooses him as such, and settles this resolution in

his own soul, saying, "This God shall be my God, my best and supreme Good, here will I seek my felicity, and take up my rest, and to him will I be an entirely devoted one for ever;" in this person certainly lies the substance and essence of love. And is not this perceptible? are not such acts as these capable of being reflected on, and taken notice of, if men would but more frequently turn their eyes inward, and habituate themselves to converse with themselves? But I further add,

4. That most certain it is, that during our abode in the body, the affections of the soul have more intimately an influence upon it. Such is the close and mysterious union between these two natures of flesh and spirit; that the influences between the one and the other are reciprocal. And therefore it is that the very temper or complexion of our souls doth so naturally, some way or other, represent itself in the outward man, as that it is very difficult, almost impossible, to hide and conceal what are the sentiments of our spirits upon certain occasions. Whence it hath grown into a maxim, *vultus est index animi*: that the face is the character of the mind. *Hæc, quam difficile est crimen non prodere vultu!* How hard is it for a man not to betray guilt in his countenance, if he has the sense of it in his own mind and heart! And therefore we should consider with ourselves, how our affections work towards God; even according to the usual way, wherein human affections are wont to shew and discover themselves. For I add,

5. That even spiritual, holy affections, such as respect the invisible God, and other invisible objects, do frequently so work in those pious souls in whom they are, as to make very great and deep impressions upon the body, and are accompanied with such passionate expressions, as are discernible, even to the inferior senses which belong to the animal nature. Let passages of Scripture to this purpose be looked into. How was the Psalmist affected and wrought upon by one affection towards God, when he tells us, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments." Ps. 119. 120. There is a proportion between fear and love, in this case. As for love, the same devout Psalmist says, "My soul thirsteth for thee, O God! yea my flesh longeth for thee." Ps. 63. 1. And again, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Ps. 84. 2. Now these are not to be understood as mere rhetorical strains; for indeed they are not so, but do plainly carry this signification with them, that though the flesh be more immediately incapable of desire, of thirsting, and longing after God, whereof the soul alone is primarily capable, yet, mediately,

the flesh partakes thereof. That is, the heart and soul did so much long after God, that the flesh was affected and bore the impression of that vehement desire, which was in the soul, as in its original and proper seat. We are therefore to consider, that even the more passionate workings of love towards God are very agreeable to that kind of affection, which in respect to the object, and principle of it, is spiritual and divine. And therefore,

6. It must further be added, that if persons be very apt to be passionately affected in other kinds, and towards other objects, but do always find themselves dull, and insensible of such motions towards God and invisible things, they have a great deal of reason to suspect themselves to be under a very bad distemper. Indeed, when persons are equally, and alike, unapt to feel such passionate resentments in their hearts towards any kind of objects, the matter is quite otherwise. But if they can ordinarily say, "I feel my love to work towards the creature, a relation, or other amiable objects in this and that passionate manner; but I can feel no love working towards God," they are far from being in a good condition. They have, at least, a good deal of reason to suspect, that a distemper prevails upon them. Their love languisheth, and needs re-enforcement; and they ought not to content themselves to have the matter so, as if it were a case to be approved of, and that needed no redress. But yet again,

7. We must consider, that tempers are very carefully to be distinguished. The temper of some men's minds is more composed, according as the bodily temper is more fixed, and their natural spirits are less volatile. Hence some are of a more even deportment to every object, even to the observation of others, and seldom are seen to be exalted, or depressed, whatever occurrences happen to them in the course of their lives. They are not often seen, it may be, either to weep or laugh, to be either remarkably sad or cheerful. And grace, or this holy affection wherever it is in its subject, is somewhat conform to the natural temper of the person; as water poured into a vessel, resembleth the form of that vessel. If the vessel be round, then it resembles a round figure; if triangular, then it resembles a triangular figure. So I say grace and holy affections, where they are, resemble their subject, and receive in some sense a likeness and conformity to it, so as not to change the natural temper of the mind. Indeed the great business of the grace of God is to influence men as to morals, and not as to naturals. Therefore it were an unreasonable thing for any one to make himself a measure to all other per-

sons, how much soever they differ in temper from him. Or that any one should make another such a standard to himself, that however it be with him as to his natural temper, he must be just such as others are ; which is equally to aim at a thing both unnecessary and impossible. Further,

8. We must warily distinguish between the exercise of love upon extraordinary, and sudden occasions, and such as are common and less surprising. As you know one may converse daily among the nearest relatives, and never feel any discernible pang of affection working towards them, as one does to an object that suddenly appears. This proceeds from frequency and familiarity with them ; when possibly the very same person would be in a transport upon the sudden and unexpected sight of the face of a friend, whom he had not seen for many years before. Now this is not inconsiderable as to our present case. It may be thus with many persons, who do not feel such a passionate pang of love towards persons, they daily converse with, as they do towards others, at the sight of whom they are surprised : yet notwithstanding this their love may be far dearer, and habitually much more strong to those relations whom they daily converse with, as occasions when administered abundantly shew ; that is, they would do more for them, and be more deeply concerned if they saw them in distress, pain, and anguish. They would with much more regret endure separation from them, or take their deaths much more impatiently ; which things shew their affections to be habitually much stronger, though upon sudden occasions, or in a certain juncture, they may work much more observably. And thus it may possibly be with some persons, who walk more evenly in their spirits before God. They have it may be fewer transports than others, who are of such uneven spirits, that the sight of God is often a new thing to them. They have him less frequently out of sight, and are daily more conversant with him, and therefore are not subject to such violent emotions of mind. And if we compare these together, certainly we can never think, that there is a greater excellency in that temper which subjects a man, now and then, to higher transports of spiritual and divine affection, than in that temper of spirit, which is more steadily determined to a continual course of walking with God, in whom there is also an habitual complacency.

Lastly, This is further to be considered, that if at any time one would try the sincerity of one's heart towards God, it is much more clearly to be evinced by the influence this hath on a man's life, than by the passionate or sensible impressions

made upon the body. I say, we have a far surer evidence of our love to God, from the influence it has to govern and manage the course of our lives, than from all the passionate emotions, and resentments we may feel in the inferior parts of the outward man. Suppose such raptures, and transports, and ecstatical motions, as are very strange, and not without their delectation and pleasure : alas ! these signify but little towards the evincing of true sincere love to God, in comparison of a stable course of living under his government, as persons who are beyond all things loath to offend and displease him. If you seek an evidence of the truth of your love to God, take this ; “ If ye love me keep my commandments.” John 14. 15. And again, “ This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” 1 John 5. 3. Though we must take heed here of thinking, as was formerly said, that the external effect is sufficient without the principle ; or that a course of obedience, in outward acts, to the rules set before us, will do the business, though there be nothing of the principle of the love of God in us. But take these in connexion, the principle with the effect, and they are a great deal more pungent demonstrations of love, than mere transports of extraordinary affection, now and then, are. Agreeably to which our Lord says, “ He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father ; and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him.” John 14. 21. And again, as it afterwards follows, “ If any man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” ver. 23.

So that we should take heed of putting too much upon the mere matter of passionate love in this case ; unless, as we said before, it be manifestly discernable, that we can be passionately affected to any other kind of objects, while we find a stupidity, and dulness upon us, with respect to those, which are spiritual and divine. Therefore lay the great stress always here : “ What doth the love, I pretend to, signify as to the conduct of my life ? Do I live as a lover of God ? as if it were an ungrateful matter to me, above all things, to displease him ? as that I study, by all means possible, to maintain an intercourse of union, and communion between him and me ? Is it such a love as makes his honour dear to me, so that I am above all things concerned not to disgrace the name which I bear, or be a reproach to him to whom I profess a relation ? Is there such a principle in me as makes distance from God a wearisome thing ? And would I fain be nearer to him daily,

more acquainted with him, more conformed to him, and changed into his divine image and likeness?" If this is the influence that love to God hath upon our lives, it is the evidence, it is the thing, if any thing can be so, that must prove and demonstrate to ourselves the sincerity of our love.

## SERMON XII.\*

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**WE** have already in the preceding discourse offered sundry considerations to those, who are apt to take it for granted that they are lovers of God, though they never really discerned any motion of love to him in their hearts at all; or who fondly imagine that the conviction of their judgment in this matter, is to be taken for the affection of the heart. We have also spoken in several particulars to another sort, who suspect they are no true lovers of God, and are many times ready to conclude so; because their love to him is not so fervent and passionate as they think it ought to be. And now

**III.** We come to the third sort that we have to do with, to wit, those who are apt to censure other persons, merely upon this account; because they make profession of such a fervent love to God, as they themselves are altogether strangers to. All expressions of such a fervent passionate love to God fall under a suspicious censure, and accusation from these men. As for instance, they charge all such expressions of love with hypocrisy, or with enthusiasm: thinking it proceeds from nothing else but a fantastic representation of the object they pre-

\* Preached November 8, 1676.

tend to love ; or else, they resolve it all into the temper of the body, and say it owes itself to nothing else but to such or such a crisis, a present habit and temperature, or a freer circulation of the blood, and quicker agitation of certain brisk and agile spirits. And thus they think that a mechanical account is to be given of all such kind of affections ; and that whosoever well understands the structure of the brain, or the nature of the spleen, and hypochondria, and the various twistings of the nerves about the veins and arteries, may very well be able to give a good account of all such kind of love.

1. Now as to the first of these, to wit, the charge of hypocrisy, we must allow (as there will be further occasion to evince hereafter when we come to the last doctrine) that if any do pretend to such a love to God, and join with it an immoral conversation, there is a great deal of reason for the charge ; and in such a case we must fall in with the accuser and say the same. But if this charge be fastened upon persons, whose walk and conversation is sober and just, we have then several things to say to it. As

(1.) It is a most uncharitable censure to say that all pretence to a more fervent and vehement love to God, is for this very reason hypocritical. I wonder why so ? Does not this seem to say, that there can be no such thing as a real, and fervent love to God ? This is surely a very strange accusation, at once without warrant, and against the express law of charity, which requires us to "think no evil." 1 Cor. 13. 5. And it is an essential character of it to be absolutely disinclined to take up an evil surmise, or bad thoughts of any one, where there is not a very manifest and apparent cause.

(2.) The charge is most unreasonable. There is not the least ground for such a censure, supposing the persons to be in the main of a sober, just, and unexceptionable deportment among men. Of such it may most unrighteously be said, that they are hypocrites, while they pretend to love God. But how will you prove your charge ? by what medium will you make it out, that all pretences of love to God, by such persons, are hypocritical ? And surely that is a most unreasonable censure, for which no reason can be given.

(3.) Such a charge or accusation must needs proceed from a most idle and pragmatic temper. For these censurers shew themselves to be vain busy-bodies, who meddle out of their own province. But what have they to do to judge the hearts of other men ? That is a province they have nothing at all to do in. What is it then but a vain pragmatic humour that prompts

them to meddle in a sphere wherein they have no concern? "Who art thou," saith the Scripture, "that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth". Rom. 14. 4. Nay,

(4.) It is to be guilty of the most insolent presumption; for it is to encroach upon the prerogative of God, to whom alone it belongs to search, and judge the heart. Who are they that take upon them to judge one another? "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Rom. 14. 10. Whoever they are that do judge so, they subject themselves to the judgment of God. Therefore says our Lord, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Matt. 7. 1. That is, in effect, if you judge so at random, and where you have nothing to do, you shall know what judging means, when you shall be judged also.

(5.) I would further say, by way of question, Pray what is the thing you find fault with in this case? Is it this love itself, or is it the appearance of it? Sure it will not be said, it is the love itself. Who would be so impudently profane as to say, it is a crime to love God? or that such love is criminal, when it is warm and vehement? as if it were possible to love God too much. Sure this will never be said by those who consider that we are required to "love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind." Matt. 22. 37. And besides, this were to make the accusation to contradict itself; for whensoever the charge of hypocrisy is alleged against any one, the thing pretended to is implied to be good and commendable.

Or is it the appearance of such love that is found fault with? That is just the same thing as to find fault with the sun for shining. It is true, all discovery of this or any other excellency whatsoever ought to be modest, and sober; most remote from any thing of boasting or vain-glorious ostentation, than which, in such a case as this, nothing in all the world can be more fulsome. But what! should a man be ashamed to become, and appear an earnest lover of God? Was the Psalmist shy of appearing so, when he again and again avowed it with so much solemnity? when he made professions of his love to God, which he designed, and no doubt knew would be recorded to all future times? And the noble personage whom we spoke of before, was he ashamed to have it recorded, that he was such a one's friend? It is so remarkable that we cannot look over a page in the book of Psalms, but we shall find some or other expression now made public to the world, of an avowed love to God. "I love the Lord," says he, "because he



hath heard my voice and my supplications." Ps. 116. 1. And again, "I will love thee, O Lord my strength." 18. 1. The word there used is most emphatically expressive of the most vehemement, ardent, fervent love. "I will love thee from my very bowels." And what! is this a thing for a man to be ashamed of? to profess himself an earnest lover of God, if indeed he is so. He only has reason to be ashamed of saying he is so, who is not so in reality. But I say further,

(6.) That this same accusation is hypocritical. It carries the most palpable hypocrisy in it; for it is manifest that such persons do only pretend to be angry at the pretence of love to God; when it plainly appears they are angry that the love of God should really be in any one. And this is easy to be made out. For do not all men generally profess love to God? Now they are not angry with those that profess, but love him not. But what religion is there without love? and whoever professes religion, does consequently profess love to God. But let them make it appear by their practice, that their profession is but a mockery, that they do but say, "Hail!" and strike at the divine Majesty at the same time; let them I say with their pretence of religion, or love to God, but join some practical signification that they are not in good earnest, and they please well enough, no fault is found with them.

So that it is very plain the fault they are bent against is not hypocrisy, but sincerity. They are angry that there is any such thing as sincere love to God in the world. Therefore as Plato said to the Cynic, who trod upon a fine bed of his, and cried out, "I tread on Plato's pride," that he the Cynic discovered greater pride by this action; so we may say to these men who accuse professors of love to God, with hypocrisy, that it is with more hypocrisy. It is not the mere pretence of love to God, that they intend to accuse, as supposing it false, or that there is no such thing, but because they really suspect it is true. They think that such men have that in them, which they have not, and therefore they pass a kind of judgment upon them in their own consciences. This they cannot endure; and since they would fain malign them in their report, therefore they would do it as plausible as they can, and are more witty than to say, they censure them for loving truly, but for pretending to it falsely. But then again

2. The affection of this kind is by some charged with enthusiasm. "If (say they) there be any such affection, it is altogether enthusiastic. It owes itself entirely to the fantastical representation of the object, and so can have nothing sincere, or genuine belonging to it." To this, I say,

(1.) Why so? why must it needs be thought enthusiastical? What! because it is more than ordinarily vehement or fervent? as if no sober exercise or expression of love to God could be so. And we know too, though I lay very little stress upon it,

(2.) That the name of enthusiasm hath sometimes had a gentler sound than now it hath; since the *Εμπνευσοι*, and phrases signifying inspiration from God, are so frequently to be found in the writings of Plato, and others of the philosophers. And yet they were never twitted as enthusiasts, nor treated as if that name carried any thing of evil signification, or the import of a bad character in it. But

(3.) Why should it be wondered at that there should be expressions of love to God which import great fervour and intensity; since we know that such as have been professedly related and devoted to God heretofore, and of whom Scripture-records give us an account, have been all along very full of such expressions? What would they think of such expressions as these of David? "I opened my mouth, and panted; for I longed for thy commandments," Ps. 119. 131. "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." ver. 20. "Oh how love I thy holy law!" ver. 97. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." 42. 1. Yea we find that there have been such appearances, and expressions obvious to view, of this divine spiritual affection, that have incurred the censure of insanity; and yet they have been reckoned a glory. Thus it was with David, who when he was censured for dancing before the Lord, answers, "I will play before the Lord, I will yet be more vile, &c." 2 Sam 6. 21. 22. And says the apostle, "Whether we be besides ourselves it is to God; or whether we be sober it is for your cause: for the love of Christ constraineth us." 2 Cor. 5. 13, 14. It is very likely he speaks here with reference to the censure of those false teachers, with whom you find him conflicting in that very chapter; as very frequently he does in both the epistles to the Corinthians, and also in others. They perhaps went about to represent him as a wild enthusiast; as one that was acted by an enthusiastical fury. Therefore he speaks according to their sense. Admit it, be it so; If I be really besides myself as they talk; it is the love of Christ which constrains me! He thinks himself not at all disparaged in the case. But I further say,

(4.) I make little doubt but many do attribute too much to rapture, and ecstatic motions and transports of otherwise pious love. I refer therefore to what was said under a foregoing head,

especially to that distinction which was given you of the act, and of the passion of love, which are not only distinguishable, but sometimes plainly separable things. There may be very intense love, very strong and mighty love, where there is nothing of passion felt. This is a thing altogether accidental to the nature of love, which may be diverse and distinct from passion; otherwise there would be no such thing as loving God at all in any other way. And we must further say,

(5.) That no doubt it is a very great fault to frame representations and ideas of God, and of divine things in our minds by the use of a liberty indulged to our own fancy and imagination, if therein we go beyond, or besides the warrant of his own revelation. And even there too we must be very careful, when we find God representing himself, or other matters of a divine and spiritual nature under borrowed expressions or similitudes, that we mind the thing that is to be represented, and held forth to us, and that we drain and defecate it from all the dregs of materiality, which belong to the metaphor; otherwise we may be greatly injurious, more than we are aware of, both to the divine honour, and to ourselves.

Too many do greatly gratify the luxury of their fancies in such cases. We read of one, but very likely there may be more instances than one, I say we read of one, a popish female saint, who pretended in vision to such a communion with our Saviour, that forsooth she took upon her to describe him; what sort of eyes he had, and what kind of features; and pretended to be most passionately enamoured of him. And perhaps there are too many over-prone to frame imaginations concerning the Deity, altogether unworthy of, and disagreeable to that glorious and ever-blessed Being; and having thereupon formed such and such ideas of him in their own minds, are variously affected according to the import of the idea about him. For instance, those of very melancholy tempers are apt to frame ideas altogether unlike God, and such as render him in their eyes a dreadful, and hateful object. Or if the idea be such as imports loveliness; yet if it be fantastical, and an affection of love be raised thereupon, it is most plain and evident that such a person is all the while but hugging his own shadow, and entertaining himself with an empty cloud, or an idol of his own forming. And I do not know wherein he is less guilty, than in falling down before an image. When we do in our own fancies create a God to ourselves, and an extraordinary motion of affection is working towards it, in one kind or another, it is our own creature that we are all this

while entertaining ourselves with, and not God. Therefore we ought to take heed that our apprehensions of things be scriptural and regular; such as that light which shines in God's word, or that clear flame which reason, when it argues according to the word of God, doth give us. Otherwise we are mere idolaters, while we imagine that we have only complacency in doing homage to God. But I add,

Lastly, That the most regular, true, and rational apprehensions of God, do give ground for the most fervent and vehement love of him that is possible. And therefore it is a very foolish, idle thing, to charge love to God with being enthusiastical merely because it is fervent. For though it be such as answers truly, it can never answer fully such apprehensions of the object, as are agreeable to God, and such as God's own revelation gives ground and warrant for. Certainly there is no warrant to say that there is any thing of enthusiasm in such a pretence as this. There is no need that any such exorbitant digressions and excursions should be made to by-ways of representing God to ourselves, that so he may be amiable and lovely in our eyes. A true, and right apprehension of him, that is most agreeable to the Object itself, and his revelation, is the best and truest ground of the strongest and most vehement love. And certainly to a sober christian, a fantastical representation of a divine object will rather greatly cool and check his love, than contribute to the heat of it. But

3. Such an affection, as we are speaking of, is by others resolved into the temper and disposition of the bodily humours; or the various structure of our frame, and the freer motion of the blood and animal spirits. And to this also it is,

(1.) To be acknowledged that there is undoubtedly very much truth in the matter so far as that the affection may be the more intense, and exercised with a more sensible vigour, according as the body is so and so disposed, or as the habit of it is at that time.

(2.) Do not we also know that there are pious men of all tempers and constitutions of body? and is not every man the more pious, by how much the more he is a lover of God? And

(3.) Admit that bodily tempers signify any thing in this matter, that is, in the present exercise of the affections in general, what is to be inferred? Will it follow, that such an affection as this, in which the blood and spirits may be so and so concerned, hath therefore nothing spiritual and divine in it? which way should that follow? Why is it not as apprehen-

sible, that divine and spiritual love may run in the same natural channel, and follow the same common course of operations with other love, as that wine and water may alternately flow through the same conduit pipes? Or why should it be more unreasonable and absurd, that divine and spiritual love should exert itself by the same corporeal organs with love of another kind, as having the same seat and subject, the faculties of the soul? I hope it is not one faculty in the soul that common love hath its seat in, and another faculty that divine love hath its seat in. Why should it be necessary there should be other internal organs for divine than for common love, more than other external ones? Why may not divine love run the same course with common love in the respect that hath been mentioned? And why may not that be promoted, in its bent and exertions, by a brisk and quick agitation of the vital and animal spirits? What great inconvenience is there in this? Or what greater necessity is there for it to be otherwise, than there is for a man to have one pair of hands to do his common business, and another to lift up to God in prayer? May not a man speak of God or of divine things, and of other matters with the same tongue? and may not the same eyes which serve to read the Bible, serve to read any other book? But this carries more of folly, and foolery at the bottom, than to deserve more words to be said about it.

Therefore to wind up all, Will we severally resolve, upon all that hath been at so many times discoursed to you upon this subject, namely, the love of an unseen God, are we I say resolved to apply ourselves in good earnest to the exercise and practice of it? It is a very dismal thing, if all our hearing at such times and occasions as these are, must be for nothing else, but only to give the ear a present pleasure. Or that we must take such an opportunity as this to meet together, only to see one another's faces, without ever minding to lay up a stock, and to add to a treasure of that light and grace, that may actually influence our future course. Certainly we should be most inexcusable persons, if after all this we should make as little conscience of the actual frequent exercise of love to God as heretofore. If any that have heard so much of this matter, shall go hereafter from day to day, and have reason to say, "This day I have not loved God at all, I do not know there has ever been a pleasant thought of him," and so indulge themselves in the liberty of running on in this course, it will not admit of being said all this hath been to no purpose. For it will certainly be found to have been to some purpose, but to a sad and dismal one, when the day comes, that every one

must be judged according to the light they had. And the word that hath been spoken to those that live under the Gospel is that by which they must be judged.

Let us bethink ourselves, What is our life, if love run not through it? if a vein of love to God be not carried through the course of it? Alas, without this, life is but a dream, and all our religion but a fancy! What do such assemblies as these signify! What a cold pitiful business is it, for so many of us to come together, if no love to God stir among us! We pretend to come to a God, whom we do not love. What a pitiful account can we give of our coming together, if this be all! The shew, and shadow of a duty! a holy flourish! and that is all. This, I say is all, if the love of God do not animate our worship.

We cannot pretend to doubt whether God ought to be loved or no. It is a plain indisputable case. There are a great many things in religion, that are matter of doubt and disputation, and many things are made so more than need. And truly I take this occasion to say, it is no wonder there is so little love of God, and of true, living religion; because there is so much unnecessary disputing about the formalities of religion. It is a very sad and dreadful contemplation to think of, that so many persons can make the matters of religion a topic barely to please themselves with. If they can but toss an argument, cavil, and contend about this or that matter, then they are enamoured with, and highly applaud themselves, as if they could do some great thing in the business of religion; but all this while, and even by these very means, the love of God, and all practical religion vanishes. These things have exhausted, and wasted the strength, spirits, and vigour of religion itself, and made it look so languidly, and become so pitiful a thing as it is grown to be in our days; so that professors are now but the spectres, and umbræ of christians, mere skeletons. They are so in comparison of what christians were in former days, when every one might discern that in their behaviour, which might justly make them cry out, Aye! these are heavenly persons indeed! Heaven was seen in their converse, and all savoured of love to God. The Lord knoweth to what degree our religion is degenerated, and what it is like to come to at last!

And let us consider with ourselves, that we fill up our days with calamities, and make our souls desolate, and forlorn; we involve ourselves in all manner of miseries by estranging ourselves from God, and not living in the actual exercise of love to him.

Moreover let us consider that we are not always to live in

this world. A dying hour doth expect us. We are hovering upon the brink of the grave. And what ! is it a good preparation for death to live strangers to God, as long as we live in this world ? Oh ! with what horror must that thought strike a man in a dying hour, when his own heart shall tell him, "Thou hast not lived in the love of God !" Dare we, can we think, have we, I say, the confidence to think of going to God at length ! to one that we have never loved, and to whom we have lived strangers all our days. But, oh blessed preparation for death ! when a man shall be able, under the expectation of expiring his last breath, to reflect and say, that his life hath been a continual walk with God. How easy a death must that man die ! Death conveys him to no stranger, to no unknown presence ; to die, in regard to him, is but to know that Being better, whom he knew before ; and to love him better whom he loved before ; and to have those enjoyments improved in degree, with the nature and kind of which he had a former acquaintance.

Let us then be serious, and in good earnest in this business ; and know, we can never do any thing to purpose in it, if we labour not to have our spirits more entirely abstracted from the world. Alas ! do we think we can serve two masters, God and the world ? If we love the one, we shall despise the other ; for as our Lord tells us,\* we cannot love both. How often should these monitory, these weighty and wounding words be thought of, by them, whom they more especially concern ? "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2. 15. Therefore saith the apostle, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And is not this a cutting word of our Saviour's to the Jews, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you :† And would we be branded for such ? We had need then to watch the more strictly over ourselves, when we have to do with the affairs of this world, that our spirits be not ruffled, nor suffer a discomposure by the amusements of sensible things, or the variety of occurrences and affairs that we meet with in this our earthly pilgrimage.

\* Matt. 6. 24.—† John 5. 42. See a moving discourse on these words by the Author in Vol. II. p. 481. entitled, A Sermon directing what we are to do, after a strict inquiry, whether or no we truly love God ? It is only one single discourse out of seven or eight upon the same subject ; and seems to have been published without his full consent, on account of the great impressions it had made upon the audience.

Constant watchfulness, and much dependance upon God, and having him still before our eyes, would be a great help to us in this matter. It might make you wonder to hear, what some have professed to have attained unto, who were not of your religion. For instance, we are told of a nobleman of a foreign country, a romanist, who professed to have had such times, that when he passed along the streets of Paris, where continual diversions might easily have disturbed him, and could scarce be imagined to do otherwise, his soul was so taken up with God as to be no more moved, than if he had been in a desert. And Seneca himself, a pagan, writing a letter to his friend says to this purpose ; for I remember not the very words, nor have lately seen the book. “ You write to me to give you an account how I passed yesterday. Truly you have a very good opinion of me, to think I so pass a day as to be able to give you an account of what took it up. But since you desire it I will tell you. My window opens to the theatre, where are all the shews, and the noise and clamour that you well know the theatrical sports carry with them. Why (saith he) all these things (so much have I been taken up with divine matters) have no more moved me, than the whistling of the wind among the leaves of the trees in a wood &c.”

These things that I mention should be upbraiding to us, that we so little mind our spirits, and inward man, with the operative motions, and reflections thereof, and never look after a composed spirit, that is employed in minding God and taken up with the exercise of his love, through the worldly affairs and occurrences we meet with here. If we would do any thing to purpose in the exercise of love to God ; if we would not be as those, that busy themselves about trifles ; like the pharisaical hypocrites whom our Saviour speaks of, who were so zealous in tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, that in the mean while they forgot judgment, and mercy and the love of God ; I say, if we would not be like them, but would do any thing to purpose, there must be times set apart for us to quit the world, with the torturing and distracting thoughts thereof, and let us labour to do it so totally as to forget that there is any thing in it but God, and misery.



## SERMON XIII.\*

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**WE** have largely insisted upon a twofold truth from these words, and told you,

**FIRST**, That there is a greater difficulty of living in the exercise of love to God than towards man, upon this account, that he is not the object of sight as man is. And

**SECONDLY**, That our obligation to the love of God is most indispensable, notwithstanding that we see him not ; or, that the impossibility of seeing God, is no excuse for our not loving him. There is yet another point which remains to be considered, and which was at first proposed with the former ; and that is

**THIRDLY**, That they do most falsely, and absurdly pretend to the love of an unseen God, who love not their brother whom they do see. This point is full and direct in the eye of the text.

It is manifest the apostle speaks here upon the notice he had taken, that there were some persons of very high pretensions to religion, and the love of God, who were yet manifestly and notoriously defective in the exercise and expression of love towards men, and even towards their fellow-christians. And

\* Preached November 15, 1676.

he counts it therefore necessary to cast a slur upon that empty kind of profession, and to give a dash unto that spacious fancy and gilded nothing of a pretence to the love of God, disjoined or severed from that other branch of love, namely, that towards men. In speaking to this it will be requisite to do these three things, in order to the rendering this truth more capable of belief.

I. To shew in what extent, or with what limitations, we are to understand this form of speech here in the text, the loving our brother.

II. To shew whence it comes to pass, that any should take upon them to pretend love to God, who yet have no love to their brother. And

III. To shew the absurdity and falsehood of that pretence. Upon which the use will ensue.

I. It will be needful to consider a little in what extent, or with what limitation this form of speech is to be understood, namely the love of our brother : that is, how we are to understand the expression, our brother ; and what is meant by love, as it refers to him in this and other such like passages.

I conceive we may very warrantably extend the meaning of this expression, as was formerly hinted to you in the first opening of the words, to such a latitude as to understand by it the duties of the second table ; as love to God includes all the duties of the first. So our Saviour hath taught us to understand both these, in the answer which he gave to that querist, who asked him which was the great commandment of the law. The answer was this ; “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matt. 22. 37. And the apostle you know also tells us, that “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Rom. 13. 10. All is summoned up in this one word Love.

And the same apostle in the very epistle from whence my text is taken, in insisting so much upon love to our brethren, as he doth throughout this epistle, guides us to his own drift and scope ; and particularly when he tells us, that, “This is the love of God that we keep his commandments.” 1 John 5. 3. It is manifest, that sometimes in this epistle he intends by this expression, the love of God, not merely that love which terminates upon him as the Object of it, but that love which is from God, as the Author of it, divine love. And he speaks of this divine love indefinitely, and says it is the keeping of

God's commandments ; and of these commandments too we are to understand him speaking universally, and intimating that to love God is to keep all his commandments. It is love which runs forth in obedience to all his laws, which you know are divided into these two tables : the one is a comprehension of the precepts touching such things as relate to himself ; the other of those which concern man. Therefore I doubt not but the word, brother, here in the text, may be taken in the same latitude, that neighbour is taken in, when it expreseth and signifieth to us the duties of a christian to his neighbour, as in that place before mentioned, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," that is, any man. So that the duties that we owe to men, as men, are all to be collected and gathered up in this, as that great summary, namely, love to our brother.

It is very true indeed, brother is a title that many times in Scripture doth distinctly, and with some limitation hold forth to us a community and fraternity in religion ; a brotherhood, who are in a state of subjection and devotedness to God, and are really his servants and children, as we shall have occasion further to speak by and by. But it is plain also, that it is sometimes used in Scripture in a far more extensive sense ; as Adam in a more extensive sense is said to be the son of God. You find it was part of the accusation against Job, (injurious enough no doubt, but that is nothing to our purpose) that he did take away the pledge from his brother, and made the poor naked, and sent them away unclothed. Job 22. 6. And so you know Paul bespeaks all that great assembly before whom he was convened, and with whom he was disputing, after this manner, "men and brethren;" though they were far from being all christians as he was. Acts 23. 1.

And I wish that there were not too much need to insist upon this business of love to our brother according to this latitude : that those were not many in our days, who make a very great shew of piety towards God, and hold forth an appearance of religion even in a more eminent degree ; and yet indulge in themselves a very great liberty (most injuriously assumed God knows) as to their dispositions and deportment towards men as men, with whom they are cast into human society. Yea, and there hath been a way found out to make little of all matters of this nature : a way to depreciate and speak diminishingly of whatever is of that import, by affixing characters upon persons which it is intended should lessen them ; as such a one is a good moral man, and the like. Truly, if it were only to assign to each man his proper place, or to determine that to be of less value and account which really is so, this were tolerable and very fit ; but it is too manifest that very often religion is profes-

sedly magnified, not to the lessening only, but even the nullifying and exclusion of what is called morality. As if the tables were again to be broken, by being dashed one against another : or as if there were such incompatible things in the laws of God, that it is altogether impossible that a man should carry it as does become him towards men with whom he has to do, but he must intrench upon, and offer violence to the duty he owes to God ; or, as if on the other hand, the duty which immediately terminates upon God, must quite shut out the world, and whatsoever relates to men as men.

Though yet by the way too, it is to be noted, there is all the while a very great mistake and misapplication in the use of the term morality. And I wonder whence we or any of us have learned to appropriate moral to the duties of the second table ; as if the duties of the first table were not as much moral, as those of the second, and in a higher and more eminent sense so. Certainly he is but a person of bad morality that does not love God, and whose heart is not set upon him as the best, the supreme Good. It is a great injury to take the term moral, and affix it only or chiefly to the duties of the second table. I hope there is such a thing, which ought to obtain in our notion and practice, as being well-mannered unto God, or behaving ourselves well and fitly towards him. And that is the meaning of morality, when a man is in general well-mannered. Therefore he that behaves himself ill to God, doth very ill deserve the character of a moral man.

But the thing is, men intend civil by the term moral, and so mistake morality for civility. Civility indeed is only between men and men, as they are cast into societies one with another ; but morality must needs run through the whole law of God. Every commandment of his law, which he hath distinguished from all other laws by vouchsafing himself to speak it by an audible voice, in ten words, to a vast assembly of men, we ought surely to account moral ; and not elevate the authority or obligation of one part, by using terms with an intention to lessen or diminish another part of the same law.

But as to the thing itself, waving the name, (as it is pity there should be so much logomachy, or contention about the use or misapplication of bare words) it is I say the thing itself, wherein the religion of christians hath been so very deficient, and by which it hath been so much shured, that a great many have learned in their practice, not to care what their deportments are to men, so they can but keep up a continual profession of, and course of pretence to, sanctity, piety, and devotion towards God. And therefore the exigence of the

case so much requiring it, and the text so plainly inviting to it also, it will be very fit to say somewhat of the duty of loving our brother in this latitude, as comprehensive of all the duty we owe to men as men. Though what I shall say at present will be in general. What is particular I shall refer to be enlarged upon in the use or application. And here I must hint to you that a twofold extreme is carefully to be avoided, that when we speak in this latitude of loving our brother we do not,

1. By that love to our brother so intend the inward principle of that love, as to cut off the external acts of it : Nor

2. So confine the notion of this love to the external duties of the second table, as to exclude or shut out the internal principle. These are two extremes which men are very propense to run into, either into the one or the other of them. On the one hand,

1. Some are very apt to satisfy themselves that they are blameless, and not liable to exception, if their external deportment be fair and candid, just and equal, and also charitable now and then as occasion offers ; though, in the mean time there be no such thing as the inward root and principle of this love in their hearts. It would be as great an absurdity for any one to say, that this love doth virtually include and comprehend in it all the external duties that flow from such a principle, as it would be to state those duties so abstractly, as to exclude the principle itself whence they are to proceed. They no way answer the intention and design of the Holy Ghost in this matter who only comply with the external part and letter of these laws, when, in the mean time, the spring and fountain of all these duties hath no place in the soul, namely love itself. For the external acts may proceed from another principle. A man may carry himself justly to others, for the sake of his reputation ; and from the same motive may do many acts that carry in them mercy, pity and compassion to those that are in distress : but the principle from whence all this proceeds is self-love, and not love to his brother. Thus a man may do such and such an act of justice, such and such charitable actions, as the occasions of them are administered, merely because he would gain the reputation of being a most unexceptionable just man, a good-natured man, a charitable man. And many apprehend that they are greatly concerned to do so upon the account of prudence, out of a prudential respect, I say, to their own interest and advantage ; such especially whose way of living in the world depends upon trade and commerce with men. They know, if they do not obtain and preserve the reputation of justice, none will have to do with them ; every one will shun them ; they will be

thought unfit for any kind of commerce whatsoever. This is one extreme therefore that is carefully to be avoided in this matter. When we say that love to our brother includes all the duties of the second table, yet we must not say it excludes the inward principle whence those external duties flow; that is, such a love to our neighbour, as that which we bear, and owe unto ourselves, as we know our Lord resolves it, in the forementioned scripture. The other extreme is,

2. That we lay not the whole stress of the business upon the internal principle, without the external acts and expressions: that is, that none should content themselves with the imagination and conceit, that they have in their own hearts and bosoms the principle of love to their brother; but in the mean while never express it nor let it be seen. No, that must be a great secret to themselves, and kept close in their own consciences; they have love in their breasts, but they can find no time or occasion to let it be seen: that is, they can, it may be, give him a good word, or as the apostle James expresses it, say to one in distress that wants food, or raiment, "Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled," but give them nothing for the body. They say that they pity such and such persons; and perhaps there may be some low degree of pity, but not such as exerts itself and commands the consonant act which is agreeable to compassion, and should be consequent or ought to follow thereupon.

But we must understand this duty of loving our brother so as to comprehend the internal principle, and external expressions of it together. It is necessary that there be a sincere love in the heart, and that it demonstrate its own sincerity by such expressions and discoveries, from time to time, as the providence of God gives us opportunity. As occasions offer we should, as the apostle exhorts, do good to all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6. 10.

And if love to man is to be taken in such a latitude as hath been said, if it gather within the compass of it both the principle and all the actions that properly belong to it, we are not then to think we have a mean, low, ignoble object for our love. There is an image of God that man as man doth bear upon him. It is true, there is an image that hath been lost, but there is one still that is not capable of being so. The spiritual supernatural image wherein man did resemble God in holiness was banished from the nature of man universally, till he was pleased to renew it, and make us his own workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But there is besides that a na-

tural image of God, which man still bears, inasmuch as he partakes of a spiritual, intellectual nature, resembling that of God. So that it is a noble object of love we have. We are to love men, even as God's own offspring, his sons, as he is the Father of spirits. There is in every man a spiritual nature, of which God owns himself to be the great Parent and common Father. Therefore to have a heart universally inspired with love to men as men, which flows even as far as the nature of man reaches and extends itself, even to all mankind, this, I say, we must understand to be the sum of the duty given us in charge under the expression of love to our brother.

We are to be lovers of mankind under one common notion ; that is, to love upon a universal reason, which reaches to man as man, and so consequently to every man. "This is one of my own species whom I am required to love ; of that rank and order in which God hath set me in the creation, and who all of us bear the image of the common Lord upon us." And you know it is the thing we find superadded, as the enforcement of one of the great precepts of the second table, namely "Thou shalt not kill ;" and a reason why the breach and violation of it should be punished, that "in the image of God created he man." Gen. 9. 6. Certainly the reason is the same as to all the other laws of that table. And besides what is appropriated to the conditions of some men by the very terms of this law itself, yet men as men, under that common notion, and for that very reason, are the objects of that required duty. As when we are forbidden to kill, is not every man whatever the object of that prohibition ? When we are commanded not to steal, or bear false witness, are we not equally barred up from doing that injury to all mankind ? When we are inhibited the coveting another man's property, is it not every man's property which we are thereby forbidden to covet ? But then

It must also be understood that there is a stricter notion of loving our brother, to which we are to have a more particular reference, without excluding that more common extensive notion (as there is no quarrel at all between things that are in subordination to one another) that is, we ought upon the Christian account, in a special distinguishing manner, to love those who under that notion are to be esteemed or reputed brethren : I mean christians, in the truest and strictest sense, as far as they appear so to us ; that is, those who are the regenerate sons of God, who are the children of one and the same Father, and therefore are brethren to one another, on that account.

And you find that the apostle hath his eye to these brethren

here, as it is manifest by many passages in this and the next epistles. If you consult the beginning of the next chapter, you will see who are to esteem one another as brethren in the most special sense. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God ; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten. 1 John 5. 1. You see those are to be principally esteemed as brethren, who can look upon themselves and one another as related, upon the account of regeneration, unto the holy, blessed God as their common Father. So the notion of sons is manifestly taken in the third chapter of this epistle at the beginning: Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! 1 John 3. 1. Those, who are God's own sons by gratuitous adoption, are to be accounted by us as brethren, if we have any reason to look upon ourselves as of that character. Those who are sons by adoption, and thereupon are entitled to the inheritance of sons, and are designed to that blessed state of the vision of God, and participation of his likeness, are characterized more eminently as his sons ; which plainly tells us who are brethren to one another, and should, I say, be eyed and respected under that notion.

But here we must take heed of narrowing and limiting the object any further. This is limiting and restraining it enough, we need not do it any more. Many will allow this measure, that we ought to love a godly man, or one that bears God's image as such ; but they will after this be the measurers of their own measure, or they will cut God's measure according to the square of their own fancies. And when they have said they ought to love a godly man as such, that is every good man, they will have him to be of their own opinion in the smallest matters, one of their own persuasion and party, one of their own temper and humour. So that in short, upon the whole matter, that same Christian love, that ought to flow to all good men, to all christians as such, is confounded with that which ought to be called the love of friendship.

There is a vast difference between the love, which does, and ought to lie in common, between christians and christians, and that which should be particular, as between friends and friends. It is indeed true, if I were to design and choose out myself a friend, an intimate, one whom I would trust, and with him deposit my secrets and the like, I might warrantably enough make choice of one with those qualifications before-mentioned ; that is, as near my own temper as possible, or of such a lovely, amiable temper as would render his friendship acceptable to me. I might choose one of as much prudence as I could, of



my own rank and condition, whose ends, interests, and designs lay very much the same way with my own. But it were a most unjust thing to think, that Christian love ought to be so confined. That must run to all christians as such, and under that very notion. So that it is not merely one of such a rank in the world, of such a temper and humour, of such or such a party, holding certain opinions in smaller and more disputable matters, that is the character of one who is to be loved as a christian.

Though indeed that has all along been in all times, and among all sorts of persons pretending to religion, a very usual practice, to fix the church, and set the boundaries of God's house, just according to the measure of their own fancy, and of their own persuasion. So the romanists will pretend to have the church only among those of their communion. And so we know there are others also, who would so confine the pale of the church. Besides, of others among ourselves there are not a few, who will allow none to be of the church but who will bear such external badges. One may as truly judge of a man by his clothes and garb of what profession or calling he is, and we may as well confine all human love and commerce to persons of such and such a complexion, as Christian love and converse to men distinguished only by certain external adjuncts. But I shall not here insist further on the extent and limitation of this form of speech, loving our brother. When we come to the use there will be occasion to say more on this head.

II. We are next to inquire, whence it is that any should pretend love to God, and yet be destitute of Christian, or even human love to their brethren. We have formerly shewed you, that the exercise of love to God is a thing of far higher difficulty than that which terminates on men. Love to an unseen God is unspeakably more difficult in the exercise of it than towards men that we see, and have occasion to converse with daily. Now though this be most true and apparent, yet the pretence of love to God is much more easy than the real exercise of love to our brother. It is a far more difficult thing to love God, than our brother; but withal it is a far more easy thing to pretend love to God, than really to exert it to our brother. We have in the one the real exercise of love, and in the other case only the pretence to it. And there are two things particularly that do much more facilitate this business of men's making a shew, and putting on the pretence of love to God, rather than really exercising it to men.

1. That it is more cheap, and less expensive. And

2. It is more glorious, and makes a more glittering shew than the other does ; therefore men are a great deal more apt, and more easily induced to it.

1. It is more cheap to pretend love to God, than really to exercise love to our brother. It will cost them less. The things by which men acquire to themselves a reputation of love to God, may stand them in little ; only to be at some small pains to get notions into their minds, by which they may be furnished with talk upon such and such subjects. They are not one straw the poorer for this, it costs them nothing. Their keeping up the external duties of religion, going from time to time to Christian assemblies, waiting as much as they can upon the ordinances of God ; all this may be done, and they be at no expence. There may be little or no cost in all this. But really to exercise love to our brother, will many times prove a costly thing, A man must deny himself, his own interest, gain, and advantage very often, that so he may be just or merciful as the circumstances of the case may be.

And it is plain, the great temptations that men have to encroach upon the rights of other men, and intrrench upon the businesses that come within this summary of love to our neighbour, are principally from self-love, and self-interest. Men would be just if they did not find or imagine, that they should gain by this or that trick, by putting this and that cheat and fraud upon their neighbours with whom they have to do. They would be charitable if it did not cost them much, if they were to expend nothing. And thus to pretend love to God is a cheap thing : but to exercise real love to our neighbour according as various occasions may be, to draw forth the principle into act and exercise, may frequently prove very costly and expensive.

2. There is also more of glory in the shew, and glittering in the appearance of religion (in some times more than others, and it may be in our times as much as any) than there is in the discharge of the duties of justice and charity to men. He that acquires to himself the reputation of a godly man, by an ability to discourse of godly matters, having gotten a great stock of notional knowledge, gains thereby also the reputation of a man of a very refined mind. As the gnosticks in their age, an age of errors, were men of much pretence ; had very high and sublime notions ; but as to their morals they were as bad men as ever the world knew, if you will take the testimony concerning them, not from their professed enemies the christians, who opposed themselves to them, but even from a heathen who characterizeth them at large. (Plotinus) There were not a

viler sort of men, as to matters concerning the duties of the second table, and what lay between man and man. But they were men of high speculative knowledge, had very airy, and sublime notions, wherewith they did seduce and captivate not a few. A great reputation was acquired by them of that kind, when they could recommend themselves as persons, who had made it their business to separate from the rest of the world, to give themselves up to the study of all wisdom as the wise man's expression is. Eccles. 7. 25.

And as those men looked big and talked high in those former ages upon this account, I mean the reputation they had acquired for their knowledge and wisdom, which they boasted of; so many do now, and think to make a glitter in the places where they live, as men of high, notional knowledge in matters of religion: but in comparison of this they think that to do good in a place where a man lives, to be a useful member of a civil, or a Christian society, to observe the strict rules of justice, charity, and compassion, are mean things and very low matters, compared with that glorious shew and glitter, which the appearance of a great measure of notional, speculative knowledge casts upon men in their own eyes, and the eyes of them that are about them. Thus knowledge puffeth up, while true love would edify. But in the mean time that which so puffeth up makes a better shew, than that which does substantially, and solidly edify the soul.

It is too apparent a truth, which hath been hinted to you thus far, that there are persons, who upon such accounts as these, are easily induced to pretend to religion, and to make a shew of love, and devotedness to God, who are strangers to the effects of love to their brother. But from this so very apparent truth men are apt to induce as manifest and gross a falsehood; that is, because there are those who pretend love to God, that are found manifestly peccant as to the exercise of that duty which love to man would command, and ought to be the spring and principle of, that therefore all pretences to stricter religion than ordinary are hypocritical. No man who makes a more strict profession than his neighbours, and is more frequently conversant in the exercises of religion than they are, but he must needs be a pharisee and a mere pretender, only because some such persons are manifestly capable of being convinced as such. But this is no more reasonable, than because there is some counterfeit coin in the world, that therefore all is to be rejected as false, and not current; or because spectres and ghosts have been seen to walk in human shape, therefore there are no true men; or as if, because some do hypo-

critically pretend loyalty and devotedness to the government, while they carry on conspiracies against their rulers, that therefore there is no way for others to approve themselves blameless, but presently to turn open and contemptuous rebels. This is strange kind of logic !

And in truth, none are honest men in their account, but such as will swear, and drink, and run into all wickedness and excess of riot with them. Of such a one they will be ready to say, "A very honest gentleman !" and then all the talk flies against such and such persons that addict themselves to a course of religion. And if some who are the notorious scandals of it have shewn themselves to be what they are, then those who make it their business to keep up a course of strictness in piety and religion, have the common infamous brand of hypocrites put upon them.

Now at this rate we must certainly quite turn the tables. Virtue must be called vice, and vice be called virtue, and the names of things be utterly altered. And we must account, that God's children and the devil's are to change families, fathers, and states one with another. For we shall have none left to be called honest men, or the children of God, but such as are no better than good-fellows : and all serious fearers and sincere lovers of God must be abandoned for none of his, only because some false brethren creep in among them.

And yet it very greatly concerneth those, who are actually and truly of the family and household, or the church of God by faith in Jesus Christ, though men do never so causelessly and injuriously scandalize the whole fraternity, upon the delinquencies of some false pretenders, to learn instruction by it, and to be abundantly more wary in all manner of conversation, upon the account of their calling him Father. All therefore that I shall by way of use leave with you at this time is the admonition of the apostle, If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear. 1 Pet. 1. 17.

## SERMON XIV.\*

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**W**E are endeavouring to shew you, that their pretence to the love of God is both untrue and absurd, who love not their brother. And as to this we proposed to shew in the

I. Place, how we are to understand the duty of loving our brother; that is, in what extent and latitude, and also with what restriction and limitation.

II. Whence it is that persons pretend to the love of God, who never loved their brother. We now proceed,

III. To shew the falsehood and absurdity of that pretence; or to evince to you, that the pretence of love to God, where there is no love to our brother, is both false and absurd. That it is false is expressly enough said in this very verse, and we need go no further for the proof of it. "If a man say he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." What need we more to prove this pretence false? That it is also absurd, is to be evinced to you from the considerations we shall give you for that purpose; which are especially two: namely, the necessary connexion that there is between the love of God, and the love of our brother, in the nature of things; and the greater

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difficulty of loving God whom we have not seen, than our brother whom we have seen. So that it is absurd for a man to pretend, that he has mastered the greater difficulty, who has not overcome the less.

1. The absurdity of this pretence may be evinced from the necessary strict connexion there is between the love of God, and the love of our brother, even in the nature of the things themselves. And here we shall shew you that there is a four-fold connexion between them—they are connected in respect of their object—in respect of their root and principle—in respect of their rule, and—of their end.

(1.) They are connected in respect of their object. Love to God and love to our brother, will be found to have in some sort the same object. I would not go about to prove any great affinity between the things themselves, but it is plain, I say, they have in some sort the same formal object. That is, our love to our brother if it be right and true, falls in with our love of God; so as that our love of God must be the very formal reason of our loving our brother, whom we can never truly love, if we do not love him for God's sake and because we primarily love God.

The truth is, whatever specimens of beauty or excellence we find any where in the creature, we are then only said to love them duly, when our love is pitched upon them as so many rays and beams from the first and supreme Good. And so it is the original primary Goodness which we rightfully love, even in this or that creature. It is true indeed, goodness in its original, and in its descent and derivation are not univocally the same. Nothing can be univocally common to God and the creature. But they are analogically the same. Goodness is primarily in God, and so descends, and is imparted to this or that creature. But it is only there by dependance upon him, from whom and in whom it originally is. And our love to our brother, in the strictest sense of that expression, is exerted, when it meets with that goodness, which is the most express and vivid image of God's own. We there love the representation of God in that subject wherein he has proposed himself to us as our pattern, even the excellency and glory of his holiness.

They that are in the strictest sense our brethren, as you have heard, are God's own regenerate sons; and because we are to love him that begat, we are to love them that are begotten of him. 1 John 5. 1. And it is therefore to be observed, that elsewhere in this epistle, our states Godward are to be measured by this one thing, namely, our love to the brethren. "We know that we have passed from death

unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John 3. 14. So that if we compare place with place, it is very plain that the measure here is but *mensura mensurata* ; that is, it is itself to be measured by a supreme measure, namely, our love to God. It is a mark or character, which itself is tried by a higher mark. "By this," says the apostle, "we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments." 1 John 5. 2. So that no man may depend further upon this as a mark and trial of his state with respect to God, that he loves such and such his children, than as he is able to evince the love of them to be for God's own sake, and as they bear his image and likeness. And so the trial finally and ultimately resolves in this, "Am I a lover of God, yea or no?"

It is very true, that I may first and more sensibly have the perception perhaps of my love to this or that particular man. But I must run the matter higher, and particularly inquire, what is the reason I love this man? Is it because he is a good man? taking goodness in the strictest and most noble sense. Is it because he hath participated of the divine goodness? and is a follower, imitator, representer of God's moral goodness, which is his holiness? We must be capable of concluding ourselves lovers of our brethren, as they are holy ones, as they bear, or appear to us to bear, the image of God. And hereby, and not otherwise, can we conclude our love to our brother to be of the right kind, by our being able to evince that we love God primarily and above him, that is, that we love him for God's sake. And whatever is to be said of any thing for such a reason, and only upon that account, is much more to be said of that reason itself. We do not therefore love our brother aright, if God be not loved much more; our love to God being the very reason, why we truly and aright do love our brother.

Thus they stand connected in their object. You see they cannot be severed; and that a man cannot possibly love his brother aright, if he love not God: therefore the love of God must needs draw in the love of our brother, as a thing inseparably connected with it.

(2.) They are connected also in the root and principle, which in both is one and the same; namely, that very spirit of love, which is mentioned by Paul to Timothy, and which God has given us, as well as that of power, and of a sound mind. 2 Tim. 1. 7. We must know that love to our brother is a fruit of the Spirit as well as love to God. We have an enumeration of the several fruits of the Spirit in the epistle to the Galatians, "and love is

set in the front of them all." Gal. 5. 22. Now if you consider what fruits of the flesh those of the Spirit do stand in opposition to, you will find yourselves necessitated to admit and conclude, that love there, is not meant of love to God alone, but of that love which diffuses and spreads itself duly according as the objects are presented or do invite; in which the divine goodness is found, in himself primarily, and derived to this or that creature, and especially to such as bear, as was said, the more lively image and representation of his goodness.

We are not therefore to think, that love to God is one gracious principle, and love to our brother is another gracious principle: but we must know, that it is one and the same gracious principle of holy love which works towards this or that object, according to the excellency and amiableness thereof; that is, proportionably to what I see of divine goodness in it, which is the formal reason of my love. Holy love is the affection of love sanctified; which affection is not many but one, but yet turns itself towards this or that object according as the object claims and requires.

And therefore we find expressly that love to our brethren is resolved into the spirit of holiness, as its original cause, which is the thing that I would mainly, and principally inculcate, that so it may not be looked upon as a thing of an inferior nature; since we are too apt to look with a diminishing eye upon this duty of love to our brethren. It is really one of the fruits of the Spirit of holiness, a part of its production in renewed souls. See how expressly the apostle Peter speaks to this purpose. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." 1 Pet. 1. 22. So again we are told, that "the end of the commandment is charity (or love, for it is the same word that is rendered sometimes one way and sometimes another) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." 1 Tim. 1. 5. By the end of the commandment is meant the perfection, the top, the sum of it; or that which does virtually include all that lieth within the whole compass of the commandment. And what we are to understand by the word commandment, which is expressed indefinitely, we may see in what follows; namely, that it is the same thing with the law. "The law," says the apostle, "is not made for a righteous man; but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, &c." ver. 9. which supposes the commandment and law here to be meant of the law in its extent, as it comprehends both tables; not only our



duty to God, but to our brother also. And therefore that love which is the *coronis* and very sum of it, goes to both. Now it is said concerning this love, taken thus extensively, that it must proceed out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned. It must proceed from that faith, which is peculiar to the regenerate sons of God. "They that believe are born of God." 1 John 5. 1. "And as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1. 12, 13. Now this same faith is the immediate production of the Spirit in the work of regeneration. It works out into love, and even into that love, which exercises itself upon our brother. Love to him, I say, must proceed from faith unfeigned. Therefore when the exercise of love was required by our Saviour, in forgiving an offending brother; and the question was put, how often they should forgive? and he replies, "unto seventy times seven;" presently the disciples, as knowing the great need and exigency of the case, said, "Lord increase our faith." Luke 17, 5. There needs much faith in order to the exercise of such love.

Wherefore this love is in most necessary connexion with what is intimate to the new creature, and what most essentially belongs unto the constitution of it. It is part of the work of regeneration, and of that holy creature, which is, when produced, called the new creature. You find therefore in that scripture, 2 Pet. 1. 5, 6, 7. where several graces of the Spirit are mentioned together, that brotherly kindness comes among the rest, in conjunction with faith, patience, and the like.

Yea, and to evince this a little further, you find that in this very epistle in which is our text, love to our brother, even an indigent brother, is called by the name of love to God; that is, not with reference to him considered as the object (though in some respects, as was said before, God may be considered as the object too) but in reference to him as the Original and Author of this love. "He that hath this world's good," saith the apostle, "and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 John 3. 17. It is as if he had said, it is plain, that this divine love, which God is the Author of, and of which this poor indigent brother is an object, is not in him, if he has no bowels of compassion towards him at such a time, when the exigency of his case calls for relief.

The apostle Paul tells the Thessalonian christians, that con-

cerning brotherly love they needed not that he should write unto them, "for (saith he) you yourselves are taught of God to love one another." 1 Thess. 4. 9. Sure we are not strangers to the import of that expression in Scripture, or what it is to be taught of God. The expression is paralleled by those which represent men as drawn by him, efficaciously moved, and acted by his almighty Spirit. "Every one," saith our Saviour, "that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." John 6. 45. That hearing and learning of the Father, is expounded by that of being drawn, or powerfully attracted by the Father. Therefore the meaning of this expression, "You have been taught of God," is this; your hearts have been powerfully drawn by God into the exercise of this love to one another. "You need not that I write to you concerning this matter, for ye are taught of God." As in another case it is said, (the passage is taken from the prophet Jeremiah, 31, 34.) "They shall not teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest." Heb. 8. 11. The same form of expression you see is used here, and must be taken in the same sense.

In the second chapter of the same epistle of John, ver. 20. we read of an unction of the Holy Ghost, by which the spirits of those who belong to God are so seasoned, and tintured, that they are even connaturalized unto the truth; and this is the way of God's teaching, even to love, as well as any thing else. It is a mighty, potent work of that Spirit of holiness, by which men are taught to love. He teaches so as none besides does. His way of teaching is by working in us the things that we are taught. And therefore they who think that whatsoever is required of goodness and holiness, may be the product only of human endeavour and acquisition, are to understand that we cannot do so much as this, without being taught so to do by the mighty power and Spirit of God; not so much, I say, as truly to love men as such, upon whom the stamp and impression of God's holy image is to be found. And indeed, they who think that all may be the effect of our own endeavour which is herein required of us, or of moral suasion, might learn better Christianity even from some heathens of Plato's school. A heathen philosopher, I remember, in one of his dialogues discusses this question, Whether virtue is to be taught or not? And he undertakes to demonstrate, that it is not a thing to be taught, but is infused, or inspired by God himself. Particularly he says as to this virtue of love, love to good men, that it is a divine thing infused by God. And he gives the reason of

this general assertion, namely, that whatsoever virtue any do partake of, it is not taught by men, but infused from heaven above: "For, (saith he,) if it were a thing to be got by mere human teaching, then certainly good men might easily teach others to be good and virtuous; and only they must do it, because they alone have virtue, and so are alone capable of teaching it. But if they were capable of teaching it to others, nothing could hinder it but their envy and ill-nature; or unwillingness that any should fare as well as themselves. But a good man cannot be envious. Therefore (he concludes upon the whole) virtue is a thing not to be taught, a thing that cannot be got by teaching." We see then how it is to be understood, when love, which is so great a part of it, is said to be taught of God. So that love to God and the brethren agree in their root and principle. They have there a firm connexion; so as that it is impossible they should be severed, or that a man can be a lover of God who is not a lover of his brother.

(3.) They are connected also in their rule, which is one and the same law: for indeed the whole law of God is summed up in love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," as we had occasion to shew formerly. Rom. 13. 10. And you see what the apostle means there by law, from the occasion of this discourse. "And this commandment have we from him, that he that loveth God, should love his brother also." 1 John 4. 21. He hath laid this law upon us, that we should thus dispense our love; that if we pretend to exercise our love to him, we must do it to our brother too. He will never otherwise take us into the *census*, or account, of lovers of himself.

And when the apostle James insists upon it, that "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," pray look back there, and see upon what occasion, and with what reference he says this. "If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors." James 2. 8. 10. You find he has reference to this very thing, our love to our brother; which is what he calls the royal law. The law enjoined us is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And if we be found *peccant* as to this, and obey it not, nor comply with the authority of the law and the Lawgiver in this instance, we make ourselves rebels throughout; we break the whole law, and all that we do besides signifies nothing. Therefore he gives an instance. The same law that hath said, "Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill." ver. 11. The law doth equally and alike forbid

inordinate love and unjust hatred : inordinate lust and impure love, as that which offends against one command ; and inordinate hatred and ill-nature which equally offends against the other, as it is the root of murder. In opposition to which this law stands, as the summary of all that duty, which we must understand to be implicitly enjoined in that law.

(4.) Love to God, and our brother concentre and agree in one end ; that is, the glory of God, and our own felicity : which two, you know, do make up the end of man. We ought to love God, in order to our glorifying him ; and we ought also to love our brother, for the same reason. So we ought to love God in order to our enjoying him, and being happy and blessed in him ; and in like manner ought we to love our brother, in order to our enjoying God, and being happy and blessed in him.

The glory of God first depends upon our loving him, but it also as truly depends upon our loving our brother. Yea this glory of God which is the end, and some way ought to be the effect of our actions, shines a great deal more, sometimes, in the exercise of love to men. Thus saith David, "My Goodness extendeth not unto thee, but unto the saints, that are upon the earth, in whom is all my delight." Ps. 16. 2. 3. As if he had said, Thou art never the better for it, but they may be. Here it is that we make the glory of God to shine forth in our course and practice when we do visibly exemplify the goodness of his nature in our own goodness, that is, in doing good ; in those continual fruits and acts of goodness, which issue and flow from the principle of divine love (with which our souls are possessed) to those that are related unto God, according as their relation to him is larger or more special, as we have formerly shewed.

It is by our doing good that we shew to whom we belong, though that goodness of ours can reach only to men and saints. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness:" (Eph. 5.9.) namely, that goodness which can flow and diffuse itself according as we have objects here below, upon which it may be continually pouring itself forth, and spreading itself. Herein we bear testimony to God, that we are the very children of his love. We do, as it were, herein justify and honour our great Father. We own our Father, and own ourselves his children. "Love, that ye may be the children of God, says our Saviour, who doth good both to the evil and the good ;" that is, that ye may appear to be his children. Matt. 5. 44. 45. And again, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." John 13. 35. This refers to that more special

love which we ought to settle upon nobody but those, who are particularly related and united to Christ. "You will own me in the world, and your relation to me ; and I shall be owned and honoured among men by you, if ye love one another." And this was the character of christians in the primitive times of the Christian church, "See how these christians love one another, and refuse not to die for one another."

Yea, and again, our own felicity is promoted (which is another part of our end) by the love of our brother. For though God himself be the supreme felicitating object, yet he intends to be enjoyed by his in a community. He gathers them all unto himself in one body, of which body love is the common bond, the unitive thing which as it were embodies and holds the members together ; being the same bond of perfectness the apostle speaks of, or the most perfect bond which, says he, is charity. Col. 3. 14.

And the case is plain and manifest, that where there is a languor and deficiency of Christian or brotherly love, the way of access to God is obstructed and barred up. Such persons have no free converse with God. A spirit that is full of rancour, under a distemper, filled with animosity though but to this or that one particular person, knows not how to go to God. The new creature is starved and famished this way. The soul cannot heartily enjoy God, hath no liberty towards God. Therefore our Saviour considering the state of the case gives this general law and rule: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar (he speaks in the phrase and language of the Jews under the Old Testament administration, designing the instruction of christians under the New) and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way (thou hast nothing to do at the altar, there can be no commerce between God and thee except thou go) and be reconciled first to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matt. 5. 23, 24. Love must flow, and have a free course between thy brother and thee, or it can have none between God and thee. And if it were possible how monstrous would it be, if in a man's natural body all the nutriment should be drawn to one side ! Would any one think fit to feed and cherish but one side of himself ? Especially, would the new creature cherish only a love to God, and at the same time famish what may be called the other side, a love to his brother ? He attempts a thing impossible to be done ; and it were extremely monstrous if it could be done, or should ever take place.

Thus far you see then, that by an inseparable connexion

which there is, in these four respects, between love to God and love to our brother, it must needs be an absurd pretence that men make of love to God, who exercise not love to their brother also.

2. I proceed to speak briefly (and so shall shut up for the present) to a further consideration, whence the absurdity of such a pretence ariseth; which is drawn from the greater difficulty of loving God whom we have not seen, than our brother whom we have seen. It must needs be an absurd thing for a man to pretend that he hath mastered the greater difficulty, who hath not overcome the less. Which you see is the plain and full sense and meaning of the apostle's reasoning here.

But here it may perhaps be said, that "These two considerations do seem to contradict one another, or that the latter is repugnant to the former. For if love to God and to our brother be so connected as hath been shewn, then how can it be that love to our brother should be less difficult than love to God? Yea and if there be such a connexion, as it appears there is, it may rather be said that love to our brother seems more difficult: for we can never truly love him, till we have first been brought to love God; and so we love our brother secondarily, that is, upon his account and for his sake." For the clearing of this I shall briefly say two or three things to you.

(1.) That when we say, love to God is more difficult than love to our brother, we speak not (as formerly you may have taken notice) of implanting the principle of this love; but we speak of the exercise of it. It is God that implants the principle, and all things are equally easy to him; but it is we that are to exercise it.

(2.) Whereas we cannot exercise it neither without his concurrence, we are to consider that concurrence of his with reference not to his absolute, but to his ordinary power. Not, I say, according to the extraordinary, but the ordinary workings of the power of God. And though it be true, that according to the extraordinary working of his power he can make it equally facile to love himself and any creature in which his image shines, and more facile or easy many times; yet according to his ordinary working, his people find by their own sad experience, that they have more to do in getting their hearts to act that way, than towards the creature, according to that degree of divine goodness which they can take no-

tice of. But though this be clear enough, yet we answer further.

(3.) There are many persons, who in some degree love christians and good men upon lower and less sufficient motives ; and not upon the account of what peculiarly respects godly men as such. And we are principally to understand the apostle as speaking to such persons, as pretended to love their brethren, professed christians, upon these lower motives. As if he had said, " You are not yet arrived so far as to love your brother upon motives sufficient to establish your love, though you see him as one, with whom you have sensible converse. Are you then got so high as to love God ? Is it a credible thing you should be able to love an unseen God ? " So that the pretence carries the same absurdity with it, as if one should pretend this or that more difficult thing to be easy and facile, when many things that are unspeakably more easy he cannot do or effect. As if a man should pretend it easy to fly to the stars, who cannot walk upright on his feet. Or as if another were vaunting to be able to outface the sun, whose eyes are perpetually dazzled with the light of a candle. A likely thing you should love God, whom you have not seen ; who cannot so much as love your brother, whom you have seen, but upon the lowest motives ! Wherefore these things have a connexion, and it appears from these considerations, that true love to our brother must be inseparable from the love of God. And so we have sufficiently seen the falsehood, and absurdity of such a pretence as this is.

The *Use* of all remains ; and for the present it concerns us to bethink ourselves and reflect, that whereas all of us profess and pretend to love God (I presume there are none here but will avow themselves to be lovers of God, for to profess any religion is virtually to profess love to God ; I say, we are concerned to bethink) whether our want of love to our brother carries not in it a conviction of the falsehood of that pretence. The languishing of this love shews a deficiency of the exercise of that noble principle of love to God. Love to God cannot be fervent, when love to christians is so cool and feeble. And we have not only reason to complain that love is cold, but that envy and hatred are flagrant and burning hot. So far from loving one another are christians now-a-days, that they cannot endure one another, nor tell how to live by one another !

## SERMON XV.\*

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**T**HE truth which we have in hand from these words, I mean the last of those which have been proposed from them, is to this purpose; That their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who join not therewith love to their brother. And here

I. We have already shewn, in speaking to this proposition, how we are to understand love to our brother; with what latitude, and with what limitations.

II. We have shewn you whence it is that some may pretend to love God, who do not love their brother. And

III. We have shewn both the falsehood and absurdity of such a pretence: the former from plain words of Scripture; and the latter from such considerations, as do plainly demonstrate it to be a most unreasonable pretence, and therefore such as carries the most manifest absurdity with it.

The *Use* doth yet remain. And that which I more principally intend is to put you upon reflection: to engage you to reflect upon yourselves, and the common practice, but more especially upon your own; to consider how disagreeable it is to that love, which we owe to our brother; that so we may la-

\* Preached November 29, 1676.



ment the great miscarriage that is to be seen in the common practice of the world, and reform it in ourselves.

And consider as to both, since we all of us profess love to God (as all implicitly do who profess any thing of religion, of which love to God is the very life and soul) whether want of love to our brother doth not too generally carry with it a plain confutation of that profession. And that I may the more distinctly pursue this *use*, and more comprehensively, as to the cases and persons concerned, I shall, according to the double notion of the duty in the text, take notice how little love there is to be seen towards men as men, or towards christians as christians.

*First*, Towards men as men : whom we may consider either universally, that is all men in general ; or indefinitely, that is any man in particular with whom we have to do, or have occasion to converse withal.

I. How little love is there to be seen towards men universally considered ! To love men as men, is to love them upon a universal reason, that extendeth or should make our love extend unto all men. As you know all the commandments of the second table are all founded in love, resolved into that duty, and gathered up into that one sum. And we find that this or that particular command being reduced thither doth oblige us to duty even to men as men, and that upon a universal reason common to all men. As we instanced before in that one negative precept, "Thou shalt not kill," enforced by that universal reason, "For in the image of God made he man." The obligation of this in reference to the object, extends as far even as that natural image of God does ; which as an ancient speaks, "every man bears whether he will or no, and can no more part with it than with himself." It is indeed his very nature. But how little of such love is there to be found among us ! How few true lovers are there even of their own species, who have a real and fervent affection (such as the object claims and challenges) for such as partake of the human nature with themselves ! For I pray consider

1. How little is our resentment of the common calamities of the world, whether in reference to their eternal, or temporal concernments ! How few regret it, or take it deeply to heart, that men are so generally without God in the world, and without Christ ! That the knowledge is so imperfect among men of their own original, and of the end of their being ; of him who made them, and what they were made for ! That the knowledge of a Redeemer (the sweet savour of which the apostle tells us it was so much his ambition to have manifested in every place,

2 Cor. 2. 14.) is yet so little among men! Who regrets or lays it to heart, that the world is so filled with violence, barbarism and blood? that a deluge and inundation of misery is with sin spread over the world, and transmitted and propagated from age to age, and from generation to generation? When we hear of wars and devastations, and garments rolled in blood here and there, how few are there who concern themselves for it, as long as they are quiet and at peace in their own habitations! And again,

2. How cold and faint are our supplications on the behalf of men so generally considered! though we are expressly directed by the exhortation of the apostle to make prayer and supplication for all men. 1 Tim. 2. 1. How little comprehensive are our spirits to take in the common concerns of the world with seriousness as the case requires! How little do we imitate the blessed God in this! for a general philanthropy, or kindness to men is even a most godlike quality, and that wherein he hath represented himself as a pattern to us. And

II. We may consider men indefinitely, that is, any whom we have to do or converse with. And though there may be, as there ought to be the inward workings of love towards men considered under that formal and extensive notion, yet there may not be so much as the external expressions and exercises of love to men considered this latter way. This external exercise of love requires a present object, determined by such circumstances, and such particular occurrences and occasions as render it liable to the exercise of our love. So the apostle limits particularly our benefaction; "As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6. 10. The poor, says our Saviour, ye have always with you, but me you have not." John 12. 8. A present object so circumstanced, is required for the exercise of such love as goes forth into external acts. We cannot ourselves actually do good unto all. We cannot reach all, for our sphere is not so large. The most we can do in that kind is by prayer to our utmost to engage a universal agent, who can adapt himself to every one's case and exigence. But within our sphere; I say, and in reference to those we have to do with and where we have opportunity, how little does there appear of love to men!

The rule according to which we are to exercise our love, is that royal law, as the apostle James calls it, to love our neighbour as ourselves. Jam. 11. 8. Or as our Saviour elsewhere expresses it, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them." Matt. 7. 12. A rule that hath been very

highly magnified even among some of the heathen ; and the Author of it also, our Lord Jesus Christ himself, upon the account of it. That is a known thing of the emperor Alexander Severus, who caused it to be inscribed up and down in the most noted places of his palace ; and professed to bear so high an honour unto Christ, upon the account of his being the Author of so good a rule, as to desire to have him placed among the other deities. This indeed was designed before, but providence ordered it so as that it should not be said he came into so mean a copartnership for a Deity.

And that rule it is plain doth oblige us in reference to men indefinitely, or to any man whatsoever. For we would not only wish that this or that good man should deal well with us, or regret he should deal ill, but that any man whatsoever should do so. We take it ill to be traduced, detracted, oppressed by any man. And so we have the object of our love in that extent plainly pointed out to us. Now we might here shew you, how this royal law is violated : namely, by such carriages and dispositions as are directly repugnant to love ; or else by such a temper, disposition, and behaviour, which (though it doth not carry in it repugnancy to love, but would consist very well with it) proceeds from other principles, and not from a genuine, and pure principle of love. And here

1. We shall animadvert upon some things which are more directly repugnant to this love. As

(1.) A morose unconvertible frame and temper. When men are become unsociable, and nobody knows how to deal with them ; such sons of Belial (as was said concerning Nabal) that one knows not how to speak to them. Such as, although it has been a proverb that every man hath two handles, have themselves never a one that one can tell how to take hold of them by. It is impossible to know how to converse with them, so as not to give them offence ; always sour, captious, snarling, supercilious, and tractable on no terms. And this is a great deal more odious when religion is pretended for it ; and when because they would be taken for persons more strictly and severally godly, they must needs therefore in their great zeal for such a reputation shew themselves uncivil and humoursome. As if religion, which beyond all things else tends to cultivate men's minds and manners, must quite destroy humanity out of the world, and render men incapable of civil converse.

If we did but read and consider such passages of Scripture, where we are enjoined to be courteous, and kindly affected to men ; or consider such instances and examples as that of Abra-

ham treating with the sons of Heth, or that of the apostle Paul's deportment towards Felix, Festus, or Agrippa: we should soon see that much acquaintance with God is no way at all inconsistent with the most comely, fair, and even genteel deportment unto men; and that there is no inconsistency at all between religion, even at the very highest pitch, and a civil and ingenuous behaviour to them with whom we have to do.

(2.) We may instance in what is still worse, namely, an unmerciful temper and disposition, and a practice suitable to it. There is a heart that is hard as a stone, which hath no bowels, no compassion, even towards the most moving objects, which do from day to day occur. And this the apostle in this very epistle tells us very plainly doth argue the love of God not to have place in us. And again

(3.) Injustice, or unrighteousness is fitly reducible hither also as a violation of that royal law of love, inasmuch as love ought to be the principle of all the duties of righteousness. Else how can the duties of the second table be gathered up in that sum, as you heard before, of love to our neighbour as ourselves.

And here comes in all falsehood, the violations of men's words and promises, so that one does not know whom to trust; which is the thing that directly tends to break up all human society. For every thing of commerce between man and man depends upon human faith, as commerce with God depends upon a divine faith. A man that cannot trust in God can have no fellowship with him; and when there is no such thing as trust in men, there is no place for commerce between man and man. For if that should be once banished out of the universe, the world must disband, all human societies must break up; men must resolve to live as beasts, retired in cells and caves and wildernesses.

All that oppression also, extortion, and fraudulent commerce that are among men, belong to this head. If men did but love others as themselves, or if they would but do to others as they would be done unto, (which is the great measure of the exercise of love) none of this would be.

(4.) We may add as another instance, furious passions, rash anger, and precipitous choler, and the contentions and strife which are so frequent, and so hotly maintained among men. And we may add to these, fretting, envy, secret repining in men's spirits when others are better, or do better than themselves. This is a disaffection of soul, which, as some heathens have noted, speaks a direct quarrel with God, and a fighting with him. Because a

wise providence sees fit to favour such and such persons, therefore we will be sure to be none of their friends. And most of all repugnant to this duty of love are hatred, malice, revengefulness, a continual watching, and waiting for opportunities to do others an ill turn, from whom we conceive ourselves to have received one. And I instance,

Lastly, In that from whence almost all this doth proceed, namely, inordinate self-love which bath set all the world at variance. This is what the apostle means by lust; an affection of drawing all to ourselves, by an inordinate and extravagant affection to which we indulge ourselves and our own interest, each minding his own things. And so, whereas we should each of us fill up the sphere we converse in with love, that so dwelling in love we might dwell in God who is love, most men shrink their sphere into one point. They make themselves the only object of their love; all is confined there, and terminateth there.\*

And therefore, because men's private interests do interfere and clash with one another, hence it comes to pass that the world is filled with all those strifes, quarrels, contentions, wars, and blood, with which it is afflicted from day to day, and age to age. Whence are all these but from lusts? and what are those lusts all gathered up into one, but inordinate self-love, that knows no regulation, and will be confined by no just measures? It is a most apt and elegant expression of the Roman

\* There is an excellent passage to this purpose, which I beg leave to transcribe verbatim from one of the author's discourses on self-denial, never yet published.

"Consider the great incongruity, yea the monstrous incongruity of his self-addictedness, that a creature should be addicted to itself; a creature I say, be it as good and great as it will! For what is the creature itself, the whole collection of all creatures together, but a mere drop unto the ocean, the drop of a bucket? Such a minute thing, a little inconsiderable thing that sprung up out of nothing into something but the other day, now to set up for itself! Monstrous incongruity, horrid absurdity! most of all for that self, that most addict themselves to serve, fleshly self. A fit thing to be a Deity! a thing whose wants and cravings continually might convince one, that it is not nor can be alone. How does it hug, and cleave, and cling to a sojourning soul for a merely borrowed life! feeling itself going when the soul is going. Is this a fit thing to subsist alone; by itself and of itself?" And so the author goes on to shew, that "to set up for ourselves as if we were born for ourselves alone, or as if we owed nothing to our brother, nor had any dependance upon God, cuts us off from him and forfeits all interest in his common care."

emperor Marcus Antoninus to this purpose, who says, "Such an inordinate self-love is like an ulcer, or imposthumated part, that draweth all to itself, and starveth the body to which it belongs." But there may be also

2. A violation of this royal law of love to others, not only where things directly repugnant to it are indulged, but also where there are external carriages which would well comport with it, while they proceed not from a principle of love to one another, as the root and fountain of them. As in the opening of the doctrine we observed to you, that so waywardly are the spirits of men affected, that sometimes they will make the principle exclude the external acts and expressions, and sometimes the contrary. Men may carry it fairly and without exceptionableness to others, but it proceeds not from the principle of love, but some other principle.

As for instance, with respect to acts of charity, some express their compassion to those who are in distress, by relieving them in their exigencies; but it is out of vain-glory, and to procure themselves a name. They sound a trumpet before them and proclaim that they give alms, as our Saviour speaks of the pharisees. So a man will be just and square in his dealings, but it proceeds not from love to his neighbour, such as we owe to ourselves, but only from prudence; for if they do not carry it fair, they shall undo themselves as to their name and commerce in the world. Or it may proceed from fear; "I will not wrong or injure such a one for fear he should right himself upon me, and prove too hard for me at the long run." It may also proceed from deceit, and a treacherous disposition. They will carry it with all kindness to such till they can have an opportunity as it were to smite them under the fifth rib, as Joab did Abner, while he spoke to him peaceably. 2 Sam. 3. 27.

These are manifest violations of this great and royal law; that is, they may be manifest to the persons themselves who are guilty, if they would but allow themselves the liberty to reflect, and take a view of the temper of their own spirits. In the exercise of this kind of love, *αγνητη αντοκριτος*, an unhypocritical love is required, love without dissimulation. Rom. 12. 9.

Now concerning all these things many are apt to think them but little matters. "They are but offences against men, say they, such as ourselves." Conscience as to these is little sensible or smitten in most men, because it is stupid, and cannot feel by reflections of this kind. But indeed these are very far from being light matters in themselves. They are things of dreadful import, if we consider what it is they argue or prove;

that is, they argue little or no love to an unseen God. For whether it is that the apostle's argumentation directs us to run up the business. If it appear by these instances that there is no love to our brother, whom we have seen; how can there be any love to God, whom we have not seen? These things argue the little respect men bear to an invisible God, to an unseen Ruler and Lord. They argue how low the interest of the blessed God is among men, how little his authority and law do signify with them, and that men are sunk into a deep oblivion of him that made them.

These miscarriages where they are more common, prevailing, and customary with men, are all rooted in atheism. Where there is but little respect to the duty between man and man, it is an argument there is a much less respect to that which we owe to the unseen God, the Lord both of them and us. It argueth that when he hath settled an order in this world among his creatures, designed and appointed such a thing as human society, and directed that human love should be the common bond of that society; it argues, I say, a great want of respect unto God that men should make a rupture of that sacred bond, and so at once break themselves off from one another and from him.

This is a matter of dreadful consequence if we do but run it up to its original, and lay the stress and the weight of the matter where it ought to lie. As was said of a certain country, "The fear of God is not in this place," (Gen. 20. 11.) where it was apprehended there was a danger of suffering violence in reference to property; so it may equally be said, there is no love of God in that place; that is, in that heart and soul where so many manifest violations are continually offered (habitually and without regret) unto a law upon which he lays such weight; a law which God has made so fundamental, and built the frame of so great a part of all our other duty upon it.

And it may be now upon all this, some will be ready to say; "Truly it is a very sad thing there should be so little love among men as such, and highly reasonable it is that such love should obtain more than it does." But they withal think it very reasonable that they should be dispensed with, especially in two cases; that is, where men are very wicked, or where they are enemies to them. In the former case they would be dispensed with upon the account of their pretended respect to God, who is injured by men's wickedness; and they would fain be excused in the latter case, upon a real but very undue respect to themselves, whom they apprehend to be injured by such and such persons.

Therefore I would say somewhat more particularly (before I leave this head of love to men as men) to these two cases; that is, to evince to you how great iniquity it is, that such limitations should be admitted of as these; namely, that we would extend our love to men in general, except the more wicked sort of men, and also such as are particular enemies to ourselves.

I. As to the former, the pretence is more plausible; they cannot apprehend how they should be bound to love a wicked man. And yet I shall shew you briefly what exercise love ought to have in that case, and upon what considerations; what place there is, and what room for love to those who are profligately wicked, whom we are thus urged to love.

(1.) It is plain, negatively, that we ought not to love a man the better because he is a wicked man, and yet it is plain that most men do so. It is as ill to love a wicked man for his iniquity, as to hate a good man for his goodness; as Cain did his brother Abel, which is noted also in this epistle. For there are persons, "Who (knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death) not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Rom. 1. 32. But this is very remote from the temper of a gracious spirit. The Psalmist makes his solemn appeal to God concerning this case; "Do not I hate them that hate thee, O Lord? I hate them with a perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies." Ps. 139. 21, 22. That is, barely considered as wicked, or upon the account of their wickedness and enmity to God; which is the thing upon which this professed, avowed hatred is founded. But notwithstanding,

(2.) There is room still for the exercise of love to such persons several ways. As

[1.] Love ought to be exercised in assuaging and repressing of undue and inordinate passions, which are apt to tumultuate, even in reference to cases of that nature. A fretting corroding spirit, when we find wickedness and a prosperous state in conjunction, is most expressly forbidden. "Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass." Ps. 37. 7. And again; "Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Prov. 23. 17. The daily and assiduous fear of God will be a check able to restrain such an ebullition of spirit where it doth prevail.

In like manner a vindictive temper of spirit as to such is not allowed. There are those, many times, who cannot have patience till providence has run its course, when they see wick-



edness prosperously triumphing and lifting up the head, but with impatient heat they are presently for calling down fire from heaven to destroy such. As it was with those over zealous disciples of our Lord, when entertainment and lodging were refused by the Samaritans. But see how our Saviour resents it, who rebuked and said unto them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Luke 9. 55. There ought to be the exercise of love to the mitigation, and depression of the inordinate workings of the heart in such cases. And also

[2.] In serious and affectionate compassion, from the consideration of the tendency of their course, and of what these poor wretches are doing against themselves. The same compassion, I say, that we would have towards a distracted man, who we fear every moment will suffer by his own violent hands; and of whom we apprehend extreme peril, if he should be left a quarter of an hour to himself. These are persons that are likely to undo themselves, and in danger finally of piercing their own souls as they are wounding them every moment. The true spirit of Christian love to men as men, considered as never so wicked, ought to be exercised towards these persons upon that account, and because they are so. We reckon it as a very unnatural inhuman thing not to have great motions of pity and compassion, upon the hearing of towns, villages, and cities, in which pestilential diseases are raging, and tumbling thousands daily into the dust. But how much more dreadful is this case! and therefore how much more pitiful, compassionate love doth it require and challenge! And again,

[3.] Love should have its exercise in offering up very earnest prayers for them. It is a very sad case when the hearts and consciences of too many may witness and testify, that they could tell how to rage against such persons as they have observed to be wicked, and find their hearts ready to storm at them; but never can find, from time to time, an occasion to put up a prayer to God for them, who have no disposition themselves to seek for mercy to their poor souls. And

[4.] In prudent and kind admonitions too, and rebukes, when providence administers the occasion; which is to be judged of by more rules and circumstances, than our present design will suffer us to mention. But besides what hath been said, as to the particulars in which this love is to be exercised in such cases, the considerations to move us to the exercise of it are manifold. As for instance,

We ought to consider that such have human nature and reasonable immortal spirits, capable of service to God as much as

ourselves, and also of being in God as well as we are. And what ! is there no place for love to them, who are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and even of the same reasonable nature with ourselves ?

We should also consider that we have a corrupt nature as well as they have, even the same corrupt nature. And if it has not broke forth into as ill practices, we owe it not to ourselves but to that mercy which distinguisheth persons, and doth exercise itself as it will. And it may be even as to practice too, such we have been in times past, as the apostle speaks of some of the Corinthian christians. 1 Cor. 6. 11. Therefore the wickedness of such is separable from their nature, otherwise if we think the case better with us, how came it separable from ours ?

Finally. Let it be considered, that God expresses a common love and kindness and indulgence to such. He does good to the evil and the unthankful, to the just and the unjust ; and makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall upon the one and the other. Matt. 5. 45. Yea and his particular love hath fallen upon many such, and doth mostly fall upon such, where it does fall. For herein " God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5. 8. If God did not know how to love sinners, not indeed for their wickedness, but notwithstanding it ; where were we, and what would have become of us !

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## SERMON XVI.\*



**W**E have already shewn from these words, that their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who do not join with it love to their brother. And by way of use or application we have animadverted upon the common temper and frame, so very unsuitable to what this scripture plainly requires and calls for; namely, the little love that appears among christians in our days. And after we had pressed and recommended love to men universally considered, and shewn also that we are obliged in our carriage and practice to shew our love to men considered indefinitely, that is, every one with whom we have anything to do; it was observed, that some would fain indulge themselves in the neglect of this duty, and particularly in two cases think that they may challenge a dispensation. We therefore proposed to consider them severally.

1. The case of those who think themselves to be under no obligation to love wicked men, especially such as are persons of profligate wickedness. In speaking to which we have briefly shewn what sort of exercise, love ought to have in this case. The

2. Case is that of those who think they may be dispensed

\* Preached December 6, 1676.

with or excused from loving those that are their enemies, which we now proceed to consider. In the former case, as we have observed, persons are prone to think they may be dispensed with out of respect to God, or on his account; in the latter case out of respect to themselves. A great piece of hardship many think it to be compelled to love them who they know are no friends of theirs, but are continually contriving mischievous designs against them. What room or place there can be for the exercise of love in such a case, we shall here briefly shew you, and then upon what considerations it ought to be vigorously exercised.

(1.) For the former of these, on which I shall not insist very largely.

[1.] There ought to be the exercise of love, even to enemies, in calming and subduing whatever is contrary thereunto in ourselves. All opposite passions, and the workings of them must be restrained; every thing of anger, wrath, malignity, bitterness of spirit, revenge or vindictiveness more especially. Thus ought love to be exercised in the maintaining of a calm in our own minds and hearts, that there may be no tumultuations of any undue or forbidden passion upon any such account. Yea and again,

[2.] There ought to be love exercised in a more positive way; in forgiving or passing by whatever trespasses are done against us, as we expect to be forgiven ourselves. Love ought to be exercised to such even in doing them good; which is yet more positive. "Do good," says our Saviour, "to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." Matt. 5. 44. We should do them what good we can ourselves, and pray for them that they may have that good which we cannot procure for them. The order and gradation of this precept is very observable. We are first in general enjoined to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us; and then we are enjoined to do them good, and to pray for them. As if our Lord had said, "First do all the good you can to them yourselves; but when you are gone as far as you can, then engage and set on work an almighty agent by prayer. Pray that God would do them good when you can do them none."

We should take heed of looking on this as a Platonical chimaera; as a thing that can only have place in the imagination, or as a matter altogether impracticable. Christ has enjoined us no impracticable things. And there have been great examples in the world, that of his own and others, who have been so influenced by the grace of God as to give demonstration that this was no impracticable matter. And have we never heard

of any that have rendered themselves remarkable on this account? of those of whom it hath been said, "No man could take a readier course to make such a one his friend, than by doing him an injury?" I believe some of us have heard of such instances even in these lower dregs of time. This we should then fix with ourselves as our resolutions. "Doth any man make it his business and design to trouble and molest me? Is he from time to time seeking occasions to vex me? The next opportunity that occurs to me of doing that man a good turn, I will be sure to lay hold upon it. I will be even with him that way. If I can do him good, I will. This I would fix upon my heart as a law."

(2.) I will now proceed to give you some considerations that evince to us the reasonableness of such an exercise of love to our enemies; to such as bear us ill will, and are ready to do us an ill turn. As

[1.] Consider it is the law and glory of Christianity to do so. That it is the Christian law is plain, and you have heard it already. You see how in the sermon on the mount, our Saviour reflects upon that mean, sordid, narrow principle of the Jews, which mostly in those times did possess and steer that people. "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, &c." Matt. 5. 43. He then plainly, as to the matter of the exercise of love, takes away the distinction between neighbour and enemy. Our Saviour will allow no such distinction. And it is very plain, that by neighbour and brother he means the same thing in that fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, where expounding the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," according to its spiritual sense and meaning, he makes the object of that law to be our brother; plainly intending by brother all those, whom it was unlawful to kill. "I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." It is plain he means anger and killing with respect to the same object. We are therefore to love our enemies under that common notion of brother. This, I say then, is most clear that our Lord Christ hath made this law with respect to enemies, Love them, bless them, pray for them, and do good to them, are his express precepts.

And it is the particular glory of Christianity, that such a constitution as this is, is to be found in it as a law. This must be acknowledged to be peculiar to Christianity. "To love friends, that is common to all men; to love enemies, that is proper to christians;" as said an ancient in the Christian church long

ago. It is true indeed such a temper as this hath been well spoken of among the heathen : but a great deal more praised, than practiced ; more applauded, than imitated. I remember one of them says, that "It is to imitate God himself not to hate any one at all, and more especially to terminate the exercise of our most fervent and complacential love upon the best." And we have heard of some who in lower things have done somewhat like this. As a great man of Athens, when on a certain night one followed him all along the street, reviling him and calling him most injurious and contumelious names, as soon as he came to his own house, he only commanded his servants to light the man home again. And every man must acknowledge it an amiable and lovely thing, when but a specimen has appeared, though never so faint, of such a kind of practice.

But I say it is the peculiar glory of Christianity to form and habituate the spirits of those who are sincere unto this temper ; that so the instances of this nature may not be rare, and that love may be exemplified in men's course and behaviour, according as the occasions of human life do require. And who can but reckon it a glory ? For is not every creature upon that account the more excellent as his spirit is more conformed unto God ? It is with this enforcement that this law is given by our Saviour, in the verse immediately after the precepts before mentioned ; "That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." As if he had said, Love your enemies, and do good to them that use you ill, that you may hold forth a visible resemblance of God ; that his image in this kind may appear and shine in you ; and that it may thereupon be made known to all whose children you are, and by whom you are begotten ; that it may be seen, that there is a nature truly divine conveyed and transmitted into you, and so inwrought into your temper as demonstrate you to be the children of God. Certainly it is the glory of a creature to resemble its Maker ; and by how much the more it does so, by so much the more glorious is that creature, for what is the glory or excellency found in the creature, but the reflection and impress of the divine excellency and glory ? And again, in the

[2.] Place, let it be considered, that by this exercise of love to our enemies we make ourselves superior to them, according to the injunction which is laid upon us by the apostle : "Be not ye overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Rom. 12. 21. The latter part of the verse we may take notice of by and by. All the while that a man can continue and keep up a spirit of kindness, and benignity, and goodness to his enemies,

it is plain he is not overcome ; he is upon the upper ground, and hath unspeakably the better of them. And it is the easiest and surest defeat of malice that can be imagined or thought of. For it is certain where an ill-minded, mischievous person doth bend and set himself against such a one as you, he will not only set himself to hurt you but to vex you. It is not only your hurt that he aims at, but he would disquiet you, and put your mind to torture. So then it is plain, let a man have never so much hard usage from another, if there are manifest evidences that his spirit sinks not, but rather that he maintains a great spirit under all, it retorts the vexation upon him who designed it, and he himself alone is vexed who aimed at that design. Therefore he still keeps the superiority in this case, the temper of whose spirit remains within him placid, calm, and undisturbed ; free from any unmanly, and most of all unchristian passions.

And it is love which hath that dominion, that it will not let such impure and unbecoming things as envy, hatred, or malice come into that state, which is all made up of goodness, kindness, and love. The strength of that gracious principle, working with its due vigour, expels and keeps them from coming into the soul, or making inroads there. And all this while there can be no vexation, no disquietude in the spirit of such a one. It is fortified, and so strengthened as to shut out whatever would disturb and break the peace within. And so he that hath set himself against you hath not his design, because you are not overcome by him.

And to be sure whatever hand the devil hath in such attempts he is defeated ; for he only desires you should sin against God, which certainly you do when you admit of any breach of charity. He does not care whether it be well or ill with you in external respects, only as it is a means to induce you to commit sin. So that if he stirs up a quarrel between any one and you his design is to transfer it between God and you ; and having put it into the heart of any one to be your enemy, he would fain excite enmity in your heart against him, so as to render you God's enemy. This is the design he wholly aims at. Now he is defeated thereof, when your spirit remains conform to the law of God in this case ; and you are not conscious of any evil temper of spirit towards them, who are in the mean time, working you all the mischief that they can.

[3.] This temper of spirit carries in it, and a suitable deportment expresses, a holy, great, and generous independency upon external things. For any man's ill will to you, and whatsoever effects there can be of it, are all to you external things.

Such a temper of spirit then, I say, shews your independency upon all outward things, and a superiority unto all external good and evil; that you do not take yourself to be greatly concerned in matters that are so foreign to you as such a man's ill will, or any ill effects thereof. For whither can they reach if you do not betray yourself, or be false to yourself? "Fear not them that can kill the body only, and after that have no more that they can do." Luke xii. 4. We are addressed to there as if we were hardly to reckon the concernments of the body any part of our own concerns.

So indeed some heathens have been wont magnificently to speak, reckoning up such things wherein good and evil may be said to consist; and upon stating the notions of the one, and the other, all the good and evil things of the body are cast out of the account. "For," says one, "do you think I take my body to be *me*, and this flesh to be *myself*?" And so another, "They can kill me, but they cannot hurt me." So when one was to be beaten to death with hammers and axes, he cried out, "Strike on! thou mayest break in pieces this vessel of Anaxarchus, but him himself thou canst not touch." And another discoursing upon that question, *An injuria sit referenda?* denies it peremptorily, and reasons against it most strongly. "A good man, says he, is neither capable of being affected with injury, nor of affecting any one with it. Injuries can properly have place only among ill men, who are upon that account offenders and breakers of laws. But among good men there is no one that can do an injury because he hath that virtue that will not let him; and he cannot suffer injury neither, because his virtue keeps it off, so as that it cannot have access to his spirit. It cannot invade or disturb his inward man. There is nothing to be detracted or taken from him by such an injury. For as to external good he doth not reckon it his, he cares not for it, and so parts with it without loss."

Thus many of them have talked at a high rate, but it is the great concern of christians that they may feel in themselves what may answer the import of such expressions; and as one said, "Live rather than talk great things." And certainly it is a great thing when the temper of a man's spirit is such, as that in all his course he shall discover an independency upon externals; so as to hold it forth that he is little concerned with, or moved by any kind of good and evil as can only reach the outward man, which ends with his life, and will shortly be as if it had never been.

Such a temper of spirit as this is will soon keep a man out



of the reach of this lower, and more troublesome sphere. He is above, liveth in another world, in another region. His mind and spirit are not within the reach of storms and tempests, but above that region which is liable to the stroke of such things; and so he continually keeps the possession of his own soul. It is a dominion over himself, a dominion in himself, the peace and tranquillity of reason that such a man enjoys. Thus says our Saviour, "In your patience possess ye your souls." That is a thing not very remote and alien from that temper of spirit that we are speaking of. For what think we patience is? It is not a mere sturdiness of spirit, a stoutness by which we are able to endure whatever comes; but it is that sweet and pleasant tranquillity, that repose of rest and spirit, by which it remains undisturbed whatever evils fall out to be our lot in this evil world. It is not merely to be able to bear, but to bear well; to bear becomingly and with a composed and quiet temper of mind, which admits no ill impression or resentments under what it happens to be our lot to bear.

So it falls in with love, and is animated by it. Love is the life and soul of it. Patience towards him by whom I suffer evil, is influenced by love to him; and then that evil which I suffer by him signifies nothing. And it is by this I possess my own soul; otherwise, I am not master of myself, but am an impotent slave to this or that passion, raised and stirred up in me by this or that outward affliction. And thus I betray myself to an injury, which otherwise could not hurt or touch me. And again

[4.] It is further to be considered that the person that maligns me, or suppose them to be many that do so, they may yet have many excellencies, and on other accounts may be very worthy persons. And it would be a useful consideration, to keep and preserve a good temper of spirit in us, and to quicken love to its due exercise, if we would turn off our eye from that one particular thing, the ill will they bear to us, and look upon the many things that are good and commendable besides. And whatever real goodness there is, that doth certainly challenge love. For what! do we think love is to have its exercise nowhere, but where there is perfect goodness? Then are we to love no creature at all.

What if in that respect we apprehend such a man to be evil or to do evil, who bears ill will to us or to our way, and those who bear our character upon them; yet may they not have very good things in them besides? Such may be sober, prudent, learned persons, and useful men in the world. And what! must all that good be lost and buried, only because they have some

particular animosity and ill will to us ? It is too much to take our measure of what is to be loved, and what not, by ourselves and by our own interest ; and it would argue a very private and narrow spirit, that we should judge of what is lovely and commendable, only by what has reference to us. We have no reasonable warrant to do so.

And perhaps it is a disputable thing that such and we differ in ; and it is not altogether impossible, that they may be in the right, and we in the wrong. And it becomes such persons as we are, conscious to ourselves of human frailty, not to be too confident that every man is in the wrong who opposeth himself unto us. At least, it would become the modesty of christians to search so much the more, and inquire the more diligently into the matter, that they do not a double injury by being opposite to such persons wrongfully at first, and then persevering in it ; and letting an unworthy, unsuitable temper of spirit obtain thereupon, and take place in them.

[5.] Suppose we be unjustly maligned by certain persons, then we have certainly God on our side ; and consequently have a very good cause if we do not spoil it. If such and such bear us ill will, and we on our parts maintain the law of love inviolate, we are well as to the matter we suffer for, and we shall be tolerably well as to the manner of suffering too. Suppose we suffer hard things through their ill will, this is not so much, so we do but quietly bear our wrong ; but if we miscarry here, we perfectly spoil a good cause. Whereas before we were right as to the matter, now as to the manner of our suffering under any one's displeasure, we have involved ourselves in guilt, and consequently have done so much to disoblige God from interesting himself for us. And certainly then we have done very ill for ourselves.

[6.] If we do suffer the displeasure and ill will of any unjustly with the effects thereof, and yet keep up love in our own hearts, those persons who injure us, do first a great deal more injure God. Therefore we have all the reason in the world to turn private, selfish anger upon that account, into a resentment of the indignity and offence done to the common Ruler and Lord of all. And certainly by how much more the exercise of our spirits worketh out towards him, his interests and concerns ; so much the less shall we find ourselves prejudiced in our own spirits, by what does more directly tend to us, and hath an aspect that way. We shall less consider that he hath injured us, and so be less tempted to render ill for ill, and hatred for hatred. He hath injured him that made him as well as us, which is a superior thing and a greater crime. And

therefore that anger which turned the other way before, ought to turn against the dishonour that is done thereby to God, and into pity of the offender, upon the account of the anger of God incurred thereupon. And it ought to be considered further,

[7.] That if any such do never so unjustly malign us, and therein wrong us, they wrong themselves much more. That would be a great allay to our passion to consider they slightly hurt us, but greatly hurt themselves. They are more injurious to themselves, than to those they design hurt unto. They do us but some external injury, but they wound themselves to the heart and soul. Sure then there ought to be that love in us, which should work pity in us upon that account. Nay further,

[8.] We ought to consider that if they have wronged us, we have at one time and in one way or other wronged ourselves worse. We have done ourselves more wrong, than all the men in the world or the devils in hell could ever have effected against us, with their combined powers. If we have long lived in this world strangers to God, wandering from him who is our life: if we have lived in impenitence, disobedience, and rebellion to him, and strangers to his converse; we have then infinitely more wronged ourselves, I say, than men or devils can possibly do. And yet we can tell how to love ourselves for all that. Why then shall we not know how to love them who do us unspeakably less wrong, and are in no possibility of being so prejudicial to us as we are to ourselves? We can be indulgent to ourselves, who have done more wrong and hurt; why not to them, who have done us less?

[9.] We shall do ourselves a great deal more wrong than it is possible for them to do us, if we requite them with ill will, and do not maintain the law of love inviolate to them. We shall do ourselves a greater injury than they can make us suffer, though it were in their power to do as much as one creature can do to another. For they can but hurt us externally, unless it be our own fault; but we hurt ourselves internally, if there be any unbecoming passion working or raging within. And what reason is there, because one giveth me a light scratch, that I must therefore give myself a mortal stab? And yet further consider,

[10.] That whatsoever exercise our love shall have in this kind it will rebound upon ourselves, and turn to our own great advantage. For, in the first place, we shall have present peace and tranquillity within, which is a great reward; and we shall

be also entitled unto that reward which is future, as all sincere obedience is, by the law of God and the Redeemer.

First. There is a great reward in this temper of spirit which it carries in itself. For do but consider what it is plain the law of Christ requires in this case. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matt. 5. 44. Let us allow ourselves to pause here a little. What advantage is there in this temper of spirit, whereby a man without forcing, or straining the habitual frame thereof, desires the fulness of all good to them, who perhaps rashly or injuriously wish all harm to him ! Certainly the very sense of those words, "Bless them that curse you," if they were but transferred into and impressed upon our souls, is of unspeakably more worth than all the wealth of both the Indies. For a man to bear that temper of soul in himself, and to be able on reflection to conclude, though he be assaulted on all sides by the unjust displeasure of men, that there are yet no other but good propensions of kindness and mercy, tenderness and compassion, and a readiness to do them all the good he can, as soon as ever he has an opportunity ; the pleasantness of such a temper, if known and experienced, no one would change for the greatest advantage this world could afford him. How happy is it to be able to say with the apostle, "Being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we intreat," 1 Cor. 4. 12, 13. As if he had said, "He that looks into our ways, nay into our breasts, shall be able to discern nothing but calmness there ; even an undisturbed composure of spirit, and benignity towards them who are full of malignity to us." And

Secondly. This is that temper of spirit also to which the blessed God hath particularly promised a reward. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat ; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink : for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." Prov. xxv. 21, 22. Rom. xii. 20. It may be the person himself will not reward thee for so much good done to him. Concern not thyself for that ; if he will not, God will. The Lord will reward thee for all that good which thou hast done, in lieu of the evil which he has done to thee. And I add,

Lastly, In this way you may quite conquer him at last, to whom you exercise love to that height. And how glorious a conquest is this ! The apostle says in the forementioned place, which is quoted from the Proverbs, that you shall by this means, (by returning good for evil) "heap coals of fire upon his head." I know there is a controversy about these words ; some under-

stand them in a good, others in an evil sense. Some say thereby is meant, that you shall engage God on your side, and his wrath and vengeance shall vindicate your quarrel. Others think that we may understand by coals of fire, the melting warmth of love; which will dissolve and mollify the obdurate, malicious spirit of the unjust adversary. And I for my part make little doubt but that is the meaning, and I am the more induced to believe it from what we find conjoined in both these scriptures. It is in the Proverbs, "The Lord shall reward thee," as one that hath been a subordinate benefactor to himself; who doth good to those, who carry it very ill towards him. But to this passage quoted by the apostle is subjoined this exhortation; "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." Your goodness makes you glorious conquerors, and will melt down your enemy, and subdue him to you at the long run.

And there is no way wherein we can contribute so much to the accomplishment of God's promise, to wit, "If a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him." Prov. 16. 7. And we have the most reason (though we are not to limit God as to the time or method of working things) to promise ourselves a happy issue and success this way, that is, to make our enemies at peace with us; when we in our whole deportment express and hold forth nothing but benignity, kindness, and sweetness to them, however harsh in their words and actions they are to us.

And we ought to bethink ourselves too (with which I shall conclude) that let us be put to forgive them never so much, God has forgiven us more. It is impossible they should ever offend us so much as we have transgressed against him. Therefore let us not grudge to extend our love to our enemies, for if God had not done so to us, what had become of us? Miserable creatures had we been! "When we were enemies Christ died for us." It was for enemies he laid down his life, and exposed himself to those cruel sufferings which he underwent. And when we expect eternal life by him, who hath done so much for enemies; will we not at his word, and upon the obligation of his own law, conform our spirits and practice to our utmost herein? For it is impossible we can have any enemies so injurious to us, as we have been to Christ; all which injury and wrong he is yet willing to bury in everlasting oblivion.

## SERMON XVII.\*

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**T**HE truth which we have more lately handled from these words is this : That their pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who do not conjoin with it love to their brother.

We have insisted a little upon this doctrine, and have made some progress in the use, which was mainly intended to be this : namely, To animadvert upon the common practice of the world ; and especially to put us upon animadverting on our own practice, wherein it is contrary to the law of that love, which we are required to exercise towards our brethren, considered as men, and as christians. We have already in the

*First* place, shewn and complained that there is but little of that love which ought to be exercised to men, as men, and we have particularly spoken to two cases, wherein many would plead an exemption ; namely, the case of those who are profligately wicked, and of those who are their particular enemies : And we have shewed you how reasonable and necessary it is that love should be exercised to them as men, notwithstanding either of these circumstances. We are now to speak

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*Secondly*, According to the other and more restrained notion of brother, to that love which we should have for one another as christians ; or which should be generally exercised by us upon a Christian account. And is it not worth our while to take notice, how the law of such love is most commonly violated among them who bear the Christian name, and to give instances hereof? We will do this in two kinds. That is, we shall give you both private and positive instances, and let you see by both, how the law of love is too frequently broken and intrenched upon, even as if it were not a sacred thing.

I. We shall give you some private instances of this, wherein persons appear not to do what the law of love doth require. As

1. When the object of this love is mistaken ; that is, either stated with too much latitude, or else is too much narrowed and limited.

(1.) I say when it is stated too largely, and men do give exorbitant measures of Christianity. There is a love to be exercised to all, as you have heard before ; but there is, many times, a very unwarrantable extension of the notion of Christianity. There is so manifestly, when persons think the very assumed name-itself a criterion enough of a christian, and so would stretch that which is peculiarly Christian love to a proportionable latitude. As very often the Christian name is assumed, and taken on by such persons as understand not, nor believe any more of the Christian religion than mere pagans. As to them it is by mere hap that ever that name comes upon them. As if it were enough to make a christian, only to live on such or such a turf ; or as if because they think it fit and convenient to call themselves christians, therefore they must be accounted as such ; and under that consideration be owned, respected, and loved as such without any difference, though all their practices hold forth nothing less than a perpetual avowed hostility unto Christ, as it is with too many others.

I would indeed allow to that profession as much of respect as can, with any appearance of justice, be understood duly to belong to a name ; and such are to be loved suitably to the state and condition they are in. But totally to mistake their state and condition, and then to exercise love to them without discrimination according to that mistake, certainly there is a great injury done in this case : especially where the case is so very apparent that persons more significantly shew themselves what they are by what they do, than can be known by what they are called. And then,

(2.) When the notion of Christianity is too much narrowed

and restrained, or of those whom we are to account and love as, christians. The whole christian fraternity is confined by some to those of their own party, or particular way and persuasion in respect of some little things, altogether extra-essential and circumstantial only to religion. And so Christian love comes to be confined to, and is exercised only within this little circle. This is a very great injury on the other hand; and the same thing in effect as to say, Lo, here is Christ, and there he is, yea, it is to say exclusively Here he is, and no where else! And it is as great a fault to say he is not where indeed he is, as to say he is where he is not. Love to christians, as christians, surely ought to run a larger course. And again,

2. When the principle of love doth languish. Suppose the object of it to be stated never so rightly, without any error or mistake, the languor and decay of the principle does every whit as much intrench upon the law of love, and is a more injurious violation of it, than a mistaking the object. When love so exceedingly fails among christians, as such, that upon reflection it is hardly to be known whether any such thing be alive or at work or no; when, I say, our love so waxes cold, it is, as our Saviour intimates, a time of great iniquity. And it is plain he means it of that love that ought to have its exercise to christians, fellow-christians, and not merely of love to himself. For in the context you will find him speaking of persons betraying one another; and hating one another; and then he adds, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matt. 24. 12. And indeed the cause is very manifest and obvious to be from thence, from the abounding of iniquity.

He that loveth a christian as a christian, must be understood to love Christianity itself proportionably more. That which makes a thing such, is more such; that which makes a person lovely, is more lovely. To love christians as christians, is to love their religion. But now, when once the iniquities of the times abound, many who loved professors before grow cool in their love. It was taken up for their conveniency, and it is laid down for their conveniency, according as may best serve their turn.

Now this coldness of love among christians considered as such is a dreadful token, how little and slight an account soever is made of it. The law of love doth not only say, Love your brother or one another; but with a pure heart fervently." 1 Pet. 1. 22. And it is not a little that is contributed to the life and vigour of religion itself, by the vigour and lively exercise of this love. Therefore this great duty is recommended



upon the very account, and with this design that our hearts may be established in holiness. "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you ; to the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." 1 Thes. 3. 12, 13.

3. An unaptness to take care of avoiding offences among christians is another breach of this same law of love. Too many lay no restraints upon their spirits in this matter at all, or have no consideration of the case ; never saying, " Shall I offend by this or that, or shall I not ? " And others are as faulty in being apt to take offence, where the matter carries none in it. They are testy, froward, and captious, so that no one knoweth how to converse with them, or careth to have to do with them, or to be of their society. And again,

4. That I may hasten through many things, which I would at this time say to you in the close of all this long discourse, a very great difficulty either to give or receive satisfaction, is very unsuitable to the love of our brother.

To give satisfaction : how are the spirits of many straitened and bound up in this case, by their own pride and self-conceit, and the great opinion which they have of themselves ! As if it were a far greater reflection to say, " Sir, I have done wrong ; " than it is to do another wrong. Or that men must needs give out themselves to be of something above a mortal human race, that it is impossible they should ever have offended, or ever do amiss. How great mischiefs would one such word as this sometimes prevent, among those with whom we have a familiar converse, " Sir, I confess I have not done well in such a thing, pray pass it by ! " That great precept of confessing our faults to one another, and praying for others, (Jam. 5. 16.) how is it quite thrown out of doors now-a-days ! how rare instances are there of any such kind of practice.

And there is as great an unaptness on the other hand to receive satisfaction. Persons insist highly upon the wrong, and cannot abate so much as one punctilio. Such things as forbearance and forgiveness, where there is an offence and wrong done, how little do they obtain in common practice in our time ! And it is amazing to think that the moving enforcements which we have in Scripture of that one thing, should signify so little among us. Forgive ye one another the trespasses that ye commit one against another, even as God for Christ's sake freely forgave us. Oh what ! should not such a consideration as that is prevail with Christian hearts to forgive, when it is considered

how freely God for Christ's sake is said to forgive us? "Be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph 4. 32. Col. 3. 12. 13. And again,

5. A mutual shyness and strangeness to one another, without a sufficient cause, is also unsuitable to this Brotherly love. Many Christian friends grow of a sudden strangers to one another, and no one can tell how or whence it should be. It may be the person that is passive in the case is altogether at a loss to account for it. For a long while he observes such a one to grow a stranger to him, and he cannot devise what should be the reason, or whence it should proceed, but upon a surmise. As if it were so great a difficulty to ask a person the question, Is it so? or if so, were it well? But instead of this, alienation must be the next thing, the first thing done without any more ado.

How intolerable is this among christians! And surely if we should live to see a day wherein the Christian community should be scattered, and we tossed and driven to and fro, it may be it would be a grateful sight to meet such a man, to see such a face in a wilderness or upon the tops of mountains, whom formerly we could not endure. Cordial then perhaps would be the embraces among those persons, who almost mortally hated one another before. We have reason to pray to God that such distempers of mind among us be not thought fit to be cured by such means.

6. Another instance is neglect of mutual admonition and exhortation among christians concerning known sins or manifest neglects of duties. We know that this is frequently pressed in Scripture, and the charge and weight of it is laid upon our love. Yea to neglect this is an interpretative hatred. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Levit. 19. 17. How often are we called upon to exhort and admonish one another? "Exhort one another daily while it is called, To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. 3, 13. And how strange a thing is it, that any should take upon them to pass over such commands as these, as if they were reversed, as if they were repealed, as if such laws were abolished! Do we take upon ourselves arbitrarily, and at our own pleasure to abolish the Bible? or to abandon in our practice things as plainly pressed upon us, as any thing in the world can be? And how little is it considered how great a share such persons as neglect this duty of admonition, hath in the miscarriages of such as they converse with? How much do they par-

take of their sins ! " Such a man would have been a more reformed man, less passionate, more orderly in his family, not so light and vain, if I had but, when occasion was offered to me, dropped a seasonable word to him." And so instead of having the benefit of Christian society, and partaking the fruits of one another's graces, we partake of one another's sins, and share the guilt with them. That is a sad part of Christian community !

And there is many times as much fault in the undue manner of reproving, as in the neglect of the thing itself ; when it is done in so proud, and imperious, and passionate a way, as if the design was not to correct such a man's faults, but only to vent my own passion. Or while I pretend to mend the faults of another, I myself shall commit a greater. For it may be, the fault in the manner of reproving, is greater than the matter which I take upon me to reprove. But when this duty issues from love, and is so managed as that it may plainly be seen to be the product of love, then as it is in itself a great duty, so a great blessing doth often accompany and go along with it.

7. The neglect of doing good and kind offices for one another, as occasion doth require and call for, is altogether unsuitable to this law of love. For you know how we are charged and required, as we have opportunity, to do good to all, but especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal. 6. 10. And undoubtedly the apostle, using expressions of such import as he does there, is not to be understood as if he meant that this kindness, or doing good, was to be confined to the poor and indigent only, or to necessitous persons ; though that is one great part of the sense : it is then to be referred to those good offices we should do to all who stand in need of our help, though it may be they are not indigent ; but notwithstanding are the objects of our love, in such or such a particular case, wherein they may possibly receive assistance from us. But when persons are bound up in themselves, and so are little capable of minding any one's interest but their own, how greatly is love hereby suppressed, and stifled in the exercise of it ! But besides these privative instances,

II. We shall give some positive instances too of the violation of this law of love, and so hasten to a close. And

1. Hard thoughts and rash censures of one another do very little comport with the love that should be exercised towards brethren. With respect to their particular actions, words or expressions, we are many times guilty of great injustice, and wrong is done to this law of love. That is, when upon this or

that action that we see done by such or such a one, it may be against our inclination or judgment, we put the worst construction upon it that we possibly can devise. So in like manner we are faulty when we torture the words of another, and wiredraw them, that we may if possible make them speak a bad sense, when it may be a much better might be put upon them. Persons also are guilty in this regard, when they are prone to load the differing opinions of others in some smaller matters with the most odious, and many times with the most ill-grounded consequences ; putting them as it were into bears and wolves skins (as some did the christians in the primitive times) that they may be the more exquisitely worried, and torn all to pieces.

But the matter rises many times much higher than this ; and men proceed, upon some small matters of difference, to pass censures concerning such and such persons, as to their states Godward. They sit in judgment upon their souls, and pass determinations concerning them in reference to their very life or death. And yet it many times so happens, that such as contend for that small matter of difference are hypocrites, and they that are against it are hypocrites also. The one party is censured and judged as formal, superstitious hypocrites ; and the other as phantastical, self-conceited, perverse hypocrites : and nothing less than the charge of hypocrisy will serve the turn, in this case, on the one hand or the other. So persons arrogate to themselves the peculiar business of the Almighty. But “ Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant ? (This is spoken of such smaller matters as we are speaking of) Why dost thou judge thy brother ? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother ? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ :” Rom. 14. 4, 10. “ Let us therefore (as it is afterwards inculcated and urged) follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” ver. 19.

2. Rash anger is another positive violation of this law of love : or tumultuous and insolent passions, that suddenly rise and storm and rage in Christian breasts one against another ; many times on very small and little provocations, but to that height as no provocation can justify. How little is it considered that our Saviour, in the interpretation which he gives of the law in his sermon on the mount, does so interpret the sixth commandment, “ Thou shalt not kill,” as to make anger against our brother a kind of murder, and to bring it within the compass of that prohibition ! Moreover,

3. Which is a great deal worse, inveterate grudges are also inconsistent with that love which we owe to our Christian bro-

ther. These strike at the very root of love, and tend to the starving and famishing the principle itself. Thus persons lay up something in their minds against this or that fellow christian, and there it shall lie, corrode, work and fret, till it is the occasion of their doing him hurt ; but it is much more mischievous to themselves, and turns to their own far greater hurt and damage. "Grudge not one against another," says the apostle, "the Judge is at the door." Jam 5. 9. An intimation that this is a matter that will be brought before the Judge. Here now is work for the Judge when he comes, that such and such have allowed themselves to harbour grudges in their hearts, till they are grown old and turned into rankling and festered sores within.

And certainly to a truly Christian spirit that is itself, and in a right frame, nothing will be more agreeable than to say, "I would not for all this world know or experience any thing as a settled grudge in my heart to any one who or whatsoever he be ; so as to wish that his finger should ache, or that he should have the least harm or hurt upon my account, or for any disaffection he may bear or express to me." This now is a truly Christian spirit. But to allow myself to treasure up such things ; to let them remain (*alta mente reposita*, as it were) against such a man, is very much against this law of love. He has offended you ; it may be you are as prone to offend him, or to offend another.

It is little considered what is the true, the proper and right notion of the Christian church, or the churches of Christ in general. They are hospitals, or rather one great hospital wherein there are persons of all sorts under cure. There is none that is sound, none that is not diseased, none that hath not wounds and sores about him. Now how insufferable insolence were it, that in an hospital of maimed and diseased persons, one sick or wounded man should say ; "Such a man's sores are so noisome to me, that I am not able to endure the being neighbour to him ?" Is it fit to talk thus in an hospital where all are sick ? Cannot sore, and wounded men endure one another, when they are all there for cure ? Indeed if a person is stark dead, apparently stark dead, it is not fit he should remain there to be an annoyance to the rest. But further,

4. A secret delight taken in the harm of another is yet worse than the former. When those that call themselves christians, or to whom that name may belong, secretly please themselves to see inconveniencies befall this or that person, this, I say, is a horrid violation of the law of love. It is a most unnatural thing to rejoice in the harm of another. In the body, as the apostle intimates, (1 Cor .12. 26.) when one member is suffering, all

the members suffer with it. And to delight in the harm of others is as contrary to the spiritual nature, which is diffused in the true body of Christ, as if the head or any other member should rejoice that the hand or foot is put to pain. And

5. Directly opposite to this, but no less inconsistent with this duty of loving our Christian brother, is envy at the good of another. When I behold the good of another with an invidious, displeased eye, because such a man is better than I am; or is better reputed, or reported of; or has better gifts, or parts; or there is more appearance of his grace; and he doth more good, has more to do good with: these are most insufferable things, most directly contrary to love.

6. Most of all inconsistent with this duty is hatred. This is directly contrary to it, and, in the tendency of it, aims at no less than the destruction of the person himself. And how frequently is the case so even among some christians, that nothing can satisfy them but the destruction of those who differ from them! Nothing less than their destruction will serve their turn. This is a thing so common and manifest, as if it were quite forgotten that ever there was such a portion of scripture in the Bible as this; "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." 1 John 3. 15. And it is yet worse, when the very reason of that hatred is because such and such persons are better than themselves; as it is with many profane persons that go under the name of christians, and yet hate christians all the while for Christianity's sake; for living the Christian life, and observing the precepts of their common Lord: as Cain did his brother Abel, because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. To shut up all,

7. Another positive instance of the violation of this law of love to our Christian brother (in the last place) is bearing hardly on one another's consciences in matters of external form relating to religion. I speak this with respect to private persons, for such I suppose my hearers to be. That is, when they do in their own minds wish, or any way within their own compass or capacity endeavour that the consciences of such who differ from them may be hardly borne upon.

It is very true indeed that the pretence of conscience, for apparent flagitious crimes, is a most wicked and blasphemous pretence. For that is to entitle God to my wickedness, or to charge him with it; inasmuch as I cannot allege conscience for any thing, but I must in that case look upon it, and refer to it as God's substitute and vicegerent, and as doing his part within me. Therefore to pretend conscience for any thing that

is in its own nature wicked and flagitious, is to cast all upon God ; and to pretend that he hath enjoined me to do such or such a wicked thing. But when the difference is about small matters, which are (as we said before) extraessential to religion, even by common consent ; it is a great violation of love for christians in this case to affect and desire to have those who dissent from them hardly dealt withal, and their consciences grievously imposed upon on this pretence, that they must be, in such forms and external modes of religious worship, just as themselves, or they are not to be endured.

We do not count it necessary that it should be so as to the natural body. For I look upon matters of external form in the church, as I do upon the external vestments or coverings of our bodies. Now we do not think it necessary, that every member of the natural body, should have a covering of the same shape, size, and colour. And if this case were but considered as it should be, and Christian love did but do its part (abstracting from what necessity there may be by an authoritative sanction) we should not think it more necessary, that every member in such a Christian community should be clothed in external form alike, than that every part of the body should have the same sort of garment ; or, that for conformity's sake, a man should wear a cap on his foot as well as on his head.

Love, if it might be allowed its place and exercise, would consider the necessities of the several members. Love to ourselves, in the natural body, teaches us to do so. Sometimes it may be I have a sore toe or a hurt finger, that will not endure a pinching shoe or a strait glove : yet I do not think it necessary to cut off that finger or toe, or to let it go naked ; but I provide a covering for it that it will bear, and that is suitable to it. Certainly, Christian love would lead us to act in like mannner to the members of the Christian body, if it had but the place and exercise that belongs to it and which it claims.

Therefore now to conclude, let it be seriously considered by us how happy a world, and how happy a church it would make, if we could but learn according to what we have heard, to exercise this love to men as men, and to christians as christians. There would then be no contention in the world, or the church, but only a striving who should do the most good, and who should be most good and kind to others.

And it is a vain thing to hope, until the spirit of love revives ever to see good days. It is no external thing that will do the business. To be brought under the same form in every punctilio, in every minute circumstance, what would that do ? What

I say would this do if love be wanting, which is the life and soul of all communities, especially of the Christian community? Without this, the body would hang together but as a rope of sand. Love then alone is the unitive, living cement, that joineth part and part and all to the head. It is this that must make Christianity to flourish, and the Christian church a lovely and a lively thing; a thing full of loveliness, life and vigour. And happy will it be when hearts are knit together in love, and all aim at the edification of one another, and also at the good of the whole; bearing with one another in tolerable things, and labouring to redress what is intolerable and not to be borne. Therefore as we are to direct our prayers this way, so let us direct our practice also amongst ourselves, and all those with whom we converse. And so I have done with this scripture.

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