

SELECT SERMONS.

SERMON I.

MAT. x. 16., “*Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*”

THE apostle saith, “All scripture is given by inspiration,” 2 Tim. iii. 16. God’s word is compared to a lamp, for its enlightening quality, Ps. cxix. 105., and to silver refined, for its enriching quality, Ps. xii. 6. Among other parts of sacred writ, this, in the text, is not the least: “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” This is the speech of our blessed Saviour; his lips were a tree of life which fed many; his works were miracles; his words were oracles, and deserve to be engraved upon our hearts as with the point of a diamond. This is a golden sentence; “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Our Lord Jesus, in this chapter, 1st, Gives his apostles their commission; 2dly, Foretells their danger; 3dly, Gives them several instructions.

I. Christ gives his apostles their commission. Before they went abroad to preach, Christ ordains them, ver 5., “These twelve Jesus sent forth.” Those who exercise in the ministerial function must have a lawful call, Heb. v. 4., “No man takes this honour to himself, but he that is called of God.” Christ gave not only the apostles and prophets a call to their office, (who were extraordinary ministers) but even “pastors and teachers,” Eph. iv. 11.

QUEST. *But if one have gifts, is not this sufficient to the ministerial office?*

Ans. No: As grace is not sufficient to make a minister, so neither is gifts; therefore it is observable, that the scripture puts a difference between gifting and sending, Rom. x. 15., “How shall they preach unless they be sent?” If gifts were enough to constitute a minister, the apostle should have said, “How shall they preach unless

they be gifted?” But he saith, “Unless they be sent:” which denotes a lawful call, or investiture into the office. The attorney that pleads at the bar may have as good gifts as the judge that sits upon the bench; but he must have a lawful commission before he sit as a judge. If it be thus in matters civil, much more in church-matters, which are of higher concern. Those therefore who usurp the work of the ministry without being solemnly set apart for it, discover more pride than zeal, and they can expect no blessing, Jer. xxiii. 32., “I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.” So much for the first: the apostles’ commission; “These twelve Jesus sent forth.”

II. Christ foretells their danger, v. 16., “Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” The apostles were going about a glorious work, but an hazardous work; they would meet with enemies fierce and savage like wolves. As all that will live godly in Christ shall meet with sufferings, so commonly Christ’s ambassadors encounter the deepest trials. Most of the apostles died by the hands of tyrants; Peter was crucified with his head downwards; Luke the evangelist was executed on an olive-tree; John was cast by Domitian into a vessel of scalding oil. Maximinus the emperor—as Eusebius relates—gave charge to his officers, to put none to death but the governors and pastors of the church. The ministers are Christ’s *antesignani*, his ensign-bearers to carry his colours, therefore they are most shot at; they hold forth his truth, Phil. i. 17., “I am set for the defence

of the gospel." The Greek word, *στρατιώτης*, alludes to a soldier that is set in the forefront of the battle, and hath all the bullets flying about his ears. The minister's work is to part between men and their sins; and this causeth opposition. When Paul preached against Diana, all the city was in an uproar, Acts xix. This may stir up prayer for Christ's ministers, that they may be able to withstand the assaults of the enemy, 2 Thess. iii. 2.

III. Christ gives the apostles their instructions, whereof this in the text was one, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." 1. The exhortation, "Be ye wise;" 2. The simile, "as serpents;" 3. The qualification of this wisdom,—a wisdom mixed with innocency, "Harmless as doves."

This union of the dove and the serpent is hard to find, Mat. xxiv. 45., "Who then is a wise and faithful servant?" On which place, saith St. Chrysostom, it is an hard matter to find one faithful and wise. Faithful, there is the dove; wise, there is the serpent: 'tis hard to find both. If one would seek for a faithful man, questionless he may find many; if for a wise man, he may find many; but if he seek for one both wise and faithful, this is *rara avis*, hard to find, yet it is possible though not common. Moses, a man "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," Acts vii. 22., there was the wisdom of the serpent; and the meekest man alive, Numb. xii. 3., "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," there was the innocency of the dove. Daniel was an excellent person, Dan. v. 14., "Excellent wisdom is found in thee," there was the prudence of the serpent; and, Dan. vi. 4., "The presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel, but they could find no occasion nor fault," behold here the innocency of the dove. Look on St. Paul, Acts xxiii. 6., "When Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out, I am a Pharisee;" by which speech Paul got all the Pharisees on his side; here was the wisdom of the serpent; and v. 1., "I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day," here was the innocency of the dove. How amiable is this, the union of

the dove and serpent! The scripture joins these two together, "meekness of wisdom," Jam. iii. 13; wisdom, there is the serpent; meekness, there is the dove. This beautifies a Christian, when he hath the serpent's eye in the dove's head. We must have innocency with our wisdom, else our wisdom is but craftiness; and we must have wisdom with our innocency, else our innocency is but weakness. We must have the innocency of the dove, that we may not circumvent others; and we must have the wisdom of the serpent, that others may not circumvent us. We must have the innocency of the dove, that we may not betray the truth; and the wisdom of the serpent, that we may not betray ourselves. In short, religion without policy, is too weak to be safe; policy without religion is too subtle to be good. When wisdom and innocency, like Castor and Pollux, appear together, they presage the soul's happiness.

DOCTRINE. *That Christians must be both wise and innocent.*

I begin with the first, wise: be ye "wise as serpents."

1. I shall speak concerning wisdom in general. Solomon saith, "Wisdom is the principal thing," Prov. iv. 7. It is better than riches, Prov. iii. 13., "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver." If the mountains were pearl, if every sand of the sea was a diamond, they were not comparable to wisdom. Without wisdom, a person is like a ship without a pilot, in danger to split upon rocks. Job sets forth the encomium and praise of wisdom, Job. xxviii. 13, 18., "The price of wisdom is above rubies." The ruby is a precious stone, transparent, of a red fiery colour. It is reported of one of the kings of India, that he wore a ruby of that bigness and splendour, that he might be seen by it in the dark: but wisdom casts a more sparkling colour than the ruby, it makes us shine as angels. No chain of pearl you wear doth so adorn you as wisdom. Wisdom consists chiefly in three things:

(1.) Knowledge to discern wherein happiness lies.

(2.) Skill to judge what will be the fittest means to conduce to it.

(3.) Activity to prosecute those things which will certainly accomplish that end. So much for wisdom in general.

2. More particularly : wisdom is variously distinguished. 'Tis either natural, moral, or theological.

(1.) A natural wisdom, which is seen in finding out the *arcana naturæ*, the secrets of nature. Aristotle was by some of the ancients called an eagle fallen from the clouds, because he was of such raised intellects, and had so profound an insight into the causes of things. This natural wisdom is adorning, but it is not sufficient to salvation. St. Hierom brings in Aristotle with his syllogisms, and Tully with his rhetoric, crying out in hell.

(2.) A moral wisdom, which consists in two things *malum respuendo, bonum eligendo*. Moral wisdom lies in the rejection of those things which are prejudicial, and the election of those things which are beneficial; this is called prudence. Knowledge without prudence may do hurt; many a man's wit hath undone him, for want of wisdom.

(3.) A theological or sacred wisdom, which is our knowing of God, who is the supreme and sovereign good. Greece was counted the eye of the world, for wisdom; and Athens the eye of Greece; but neither of them knew God, Acts xvii. 23., "I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God." To know God, in whom is both *verum et bonum*, truth and goodness, is the master-piece of wisdom, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9., "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father." And this knowledge of God is through Christ; Christ is the glass in which the face of God is seen, Col. i. 15. And then we know God aright, when we know him not only with a knowledge of speculation, but appropriation, Ps. xlvi. 14., "This God is our God." This knowledge of God is the most sublime wisdom, therefore it is called, "Wisdom from above," James iii. 17.

3. But to come nearer to the text, and speak of the wisdom of the serpent: "Be ye wise as serpents."

QUEST. *But must we in every thing be like the serpent?*

Ans. No: our Saviour meant not that in every thing we should imitate the serpent.

I shall show you, 1. Wherein we should not be like the serpent; 2. Wherein we should be like the serpent.

1. Wherein we should not be like the serpent.

(1.) The serpent eats dust, Isa. lxxv. 25., "Dust shall be the serpent's meat." It was a curse upon the serpent. Thus we should not be like the serpent, to feed immoderately upon earthly things. It is absurd for him that hath an heaven-born soul, capable of communion with God and angels, to eat greedily the serpent's meat; a Christian hath better food to feed on,—the heavenly manna, the precious promises, the body and blood of Christ. 'Tis counted a miracle to find a diamond in a golden mine; and it is as great a miracle to find Christ, the pearl of price, in an earthly heart. The lapwing wears a little coronet on its head, yet feeds on dung: to have a crown of profession on the head, yet feed inordinately on these dunghill-comforts, is unworthy of a Christian. What a poor contemptible thing is the world! It cannot fill the heart. If Satan should take a Christian up to the top of the pinnacle, and shew him all the kingdoms and glory of the world, what could he shew him, but a shew, a pleasant delusion? There is a lawful use God allows of these outward things, but the sin is in the excess. The bee may suck a little honey from the leaf, but put it in a barrel of honey, and it is drowned. The wicked are thus characterized, Phil. iii. 19., "Who mind earthly things." They are like Saul, "hid among the stuff." We should be as eagles flying aloft towards heaven, and not as serpents, creeping upon the earth, and licking the dust.

(2.) The serpent is deceitful. The serpent useth many shifts, and glides so cunningly, that we cannot trace him. This was one of those four things which wise Agur could not find out, "the way of a serpent upon a rock," Prov. xxx. 19. 'Tis a deceitful creature: we should not in this sense be like the serpent, for deceitfulness. Naturally we too much resemble the serpent for fraud and collusion, Jer. xvii. 9., "The heart is deceitful above all things." 1st, Deceit towards man: (1.) To dissemble friendship,—to cover malice with pro-

tences of love,—to commend and censure, to flatter and hate,—a Judas's kiss, and a Joab's sword,—*mel in ore, fel in corde*. (2.) To dissemble honesty; to pretend just dealing, yet use false weights. *2dly*, Deceit towards God: To draw nigh to God with the lips, while the heart is far from him,—to serve God, and seek ourselves,—to pretend to love God, and yet be in league with sin,—we should not in this sense be like the serpent, deceitful, and given to shifts. O be upright! Be what you seem to be! God loves plainness of heart, Ps. li. 6. The plainer the diamond is, the more it sparkles; the plainer the heart is, the more it sparkles in God's eye. What a commendation did Christ give Nathaniel? John i. 47., "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

(3.) The serpent cast the coat, but another new coat comes in the room; in this we should not be like the serpent, to cast the coat, to cast off one sin, and another sin as bad come in the room. The drunkard leaves his drunkenness, because it impairs his health, his credit, his purse, and falls to the sin of cozenage; the prodigal leaves his prodigality, and turns usurer; this is as if one disease should leave a man, and he should fall into another as bad,—his ague leaves him, and he falls into a consumption. O be not like the serpent, that casts one coat and another comes! This is like him in the gospel, that had one devil go out of him, and seven worse spirits came in the room, Mat. xii. 45.

(4.) The serpent is a venomous creature, it is full of poison, Deut. xxxii. 24. In this be not like the serpent. It is said of wicked men, their poison is like the poison of a serpent, Ps. lviii. 4. What is this poison? It is the poison of malice. Malice is the devil's picture. Lust makes men brutish, and malice makes them devilish. Malice carries in it its own punishment; a malicious man, to hurt another, will injure himself. Quintillian speaks of one who had a garden of flowers, and he poisoned his flowers that his neighbour's bees sucking from them might be poisoned, and die: Oh be not venomous like the serpent! Malice is mental murder; you may kill a man, and never touch him, 1 John iii. 15.,

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." Malice spoils all your good duties; the malicious man defiles his prayer,—poisons the sacramental cup,—he eats and drinks his own damnation. I have read of one who lived in malice, and being asked how he could say the Lord's prayer, he answered, "I leave out those words, 'As we forgive them that trespass against us.'" But St. Austin brings in God replying thus to him: "Because thou dost not say my prayer, therefore I will not hear thine." The malicious man is not like to enjoy either earth or heaven; not the earth, for the "meek shall inherit the earth," Mat. v. 5.; nor is he like to enjoy heaven, for God "will beautify the meek with salvation," Ps. cxlix. 4., so that the malicious man is cut off both from earth and heaven.

(5.) The serpent is given to hissing: so it is said of the basilisk. In this be not like the serpent to hiss out reproaches and invectives against the saints and people of God; they are the seed of the serpent that hiss at godliness. The Lord will one day reckon with men for all their hard speeches, Jude 15. Lucian was such an one who did hiss out and scoff against religion; and as a just judgment of God, he was afterwards torn in pieces by dogs.

(6.) The serpent stops her ear: it is an obstinate deafness, Ps. lviii. 4., "They are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear." In this be not like the serpent, obstinately to stop your ears to the voice of God's word. While God calls you to repent of sin, be not as the basilisk to stop your ear, Zech. vii. 11., "They refused to hearken, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear." The word denounceth threatenings against sin; but many, instead of being like the publican, smiting on their breast, they are as deaf adders, stopping their ears. If you shut your ear against God's word, take heed God doth not shut heaven against you; if God cries to you to repent, and you will not hear, when you cry for mercy, God will not hear, Zech. vii. 13., "As he cried and they would not hear, so they cried and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts."

(7.) The serpent casts her coat, but keeps her sting: in this sense be not like the ser-

pent, to cast off the outward acts of sin, and keep the love of sin: He whose heart is in love with any sin, is an hypocrite.

1. A man may forbear sin, yet retain the love of it; he may forbear the act of gross sin, *formidine pœnæ*, for fear of hell, as a man may forbear a dish he loves, for fear it should bring his disease upon him, the stone or gout. 2. A man may forsake sin, yet keep the love of sin; he may forsake sin either out of policy or necessity. 1st, Policy: vice will impair his health, eclipse his credit, therefore out of policy, he will forsake it; or, 2dly, Necessity: perhaps he can follow the trade of sin no longer,—the adulterer is grown old,—the prodigal poor,—either the purse fails, or the strength. Thus a man may refrain the act of sin, yet retain the love of sin; this is like the serpent, which casts her coat, but keeps her sting. O take heed of this! Herein be not like the serpent; remember that saying of Hierom, *gravius est peccatum diligere quam perpretare*; it is worse to love sin than to commit it. A man may commit sin through a temptation, or out of ignorance, and when he knows it to be a sin, he is sorry for it, but he that loves sin, his will is in the sin, and that aggravates it, and is like the dye which makes the wool of a crimson colour.

(8.) Serpents are chased away with sweet perfumes; the perfume of harts-horn, or the sweet odour of the styrax will drive the serpent away. In this be not like the serpent, to be driven away with the sweet perfumes of holiness. Carnal hearts are for things only which delight the senses; they will discourse of news or traffic, here they are in their element; but let a man bring with him the sweet perfume of religious discourse,—let him talk of Christ, or living by faith,—this spiritual perfume drives them away: Oh, be not in this like the serpent! How do you think to live with the saints in heaven, that cannot endure their company here? You hate the sweet savour of their ointments, the fragrant perfume of their graces.

(9.) The serpent (as is noted of the stello, a kind of serpent) doth no sooner cast his skin, but he eats it up again: in this be not like the serpent to forsake sin, and then take it up again, 2 Pet. ii. 22., “It is hap-

pened unto them according to the true proverb, “The dog is returned to his own vomit again.” Such were Demas and Julian. Many, after a divorce, espouse their sins again; as if one’s ague should leave him a while, and then come again; the devil seemed to be cast out, but comes the second time: and, the end of that man is worse than his beginning, Luke xi. 26., because his sin is greater; he sins knowingly and wilfully, and his damnation will be greater.

(10.) Serpents are great lovers of wine. Pliny, who writes the natural history, saith, “If serpents come where wine is, they drink insatiably.” In this be not like the serpent; though the scripture allows the use of wine, 1 Tim. v. 23., yet it forbids the excess, Eph. v. 18., “Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess.” Be not like the serpent in this “lovers of wine.” Because this sin of drunkenness doth so abound in this age, I shall enlarge something more on this head. It is said of the old world, “They did eat, they drank, till the flood came,” Luke xvii. 27. Drinking is not a sin, but the meaning is they drank to intemperance, they disordered themselves with drink; and God let them have liquor enough, first they were drowned in wine, and then in water.

There is no sin which doth more deface God’s image than drunkenness, it disguiseth a person, and doth even unman him; drunkenness makes him have the throat of a fish, the belly of a swine, and the head of an ass; drunkenness is the shame of nature, the extinguisher of reason, the shipwreck of chastity, and the murder of conscience; drunkenness is hurtful for the body, the cup kills more than the cannon; it causeth dropsies, catarrhs, apoplexies; drunkenness fills the eyes with fire, and the legs with water, and turns the body into an hospital; but the greatest hurt is that it doth to the soul; excess of wine breeds the worm of conscience. The drunkard is seldom reclaimed by repentance, and the ground of it is partly, because, by this sin, the senses are so enchanted, reason so impaired, and lust so inflamed; and partly, it is judicial, the drunkard being so besotted with this sin, God saith of him as of Ephraim, Hos. iv. 17., “Ephraim is joined to idols, let him

alone;" so, this man is joined to his cups, 'let him alone,' let him drown himself in liquor till he scorch himself in fire. How many woes hath God pronouced against this sin, Isa. xxviii. 1., "Wo to the drunkards of Ephraim!" Joel i. 5., "Howl ye drinkers of wine!" Drunkenness excludes a person from heaven, 1 Cor. vi. 10., "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God:" a man cannot go to heaven reeling. King Solomon makes an oration full of invectives against this sin, Prov. xxiii. 29, 30., "Who hath wo? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath redness of eyes? they that tarry long at the wine. Who hath contentions?" Drink when abused, breeds quarrels, it causeth duels. 'Who hath babbling?' When one is in drink, his tongue runs, he will reveal any secrets of his friend. 'Who hath redness of eyes?' Redness of eyes comes sometimes from weeping, but too often from drinking; and what is the issue? v. 32. At last, the wine bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. The wine smiles in the glass, but stings in the conscience. Drunkenness is a sin against all the ten commandments. 1. Drunkenness casts off the true God, Hos. iv. 11., "Wine takes away the heart:" it takes the heart off from God. 2. It makes the belly a god, Phil. iii. 19. To this the drunkard pours drink-offerings; there is a breach of the second commandment. 3. The drunkard in his cups takes God's name in vain by his oaths. 4. The drunkard makes no difference of day; he is seldom sober on a sabbath; he on that day worships Bacchus. 5. The drunkard honours neither his natural father nor the magistrate his civil father; he will be intemperate though the laws of the land forbid it. 6. The drunkard commits murder. Alexander killed his friend Clytus when he was drunk, for whom he would have given half his kingdom when he was sober. 7. The drunkard's wine proves lust. Austin calls wine *fomentum libidinis*,—the inflamer of lust. *Nunquam ego ebrum castum putavi*; I never did believe a drunken man to be chaste, saith Hierom. 8. The drunkard is a thief; he spends that money upon his drunken lust, which should have been given to charitable uses; so he robs the poor. 9. The drunkard is a slanderer; he cares

not, when he is on the ale-bench, how he doth defame and belie others; when he hath taken his full cups, he is now fit to take a false oath. 10. The drunkard sins against the tenth commandment; for he covets to get another's estate, by circumvention and extortion, that he may be the better able to follow his drunken trade. Thus he sins against the ten commandments.

If this sin of drunkenness be not reformed, I pray God, the sword be not made drunk with blood. And whereas some will go to shift off this sin from themselves, that they are no drunkards, because they have not drunk away their reason and senses,—they are not so far gone in drink that they cannot go,—he is a drunkard in the scripture-sense who is "mighty to drink wine," Isa. v. 22. He is a drunkard, saith Solomon, that tarries long at the wine, Prov. xxiii. 30. He who sits at it from morning to night,—that drinks away his precious time, though he doth not drink away his reason,—he is a drunkard that drinks more than doth him good, and that, though he be not himself drunk, yet he makes another drunk, Hab. ii. 15., "Woe to him that gives his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken!" Oh, I beseech you, be not in this like the serpent, lovers of wine! This I fear is one cause why the word preached doth so little good to many in this city, they drink away sermons; they do as the hunted deer when it is wounded runs to the water and drinks; so, when they have been at a sermon, and the arrows of reproof hath wounded their conscience, they run presently, and drink away those convictions; they steep the sermon in wine. The tavern-bell doth more hurt than the sermon-bell doth good. Thus you have seen wherein we should not be like serpents.

2. Wherein we should be like the serpent, and that is in prudence and wisdom: "be ye wise as serpents." The serpent is a most prudent creature, therefore the devil made use of the serpent to deceive our first parents, because it was such a subtle creature, Gen. iii. 1., "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." There is a natural wisdom and subtilty in every part of the serpent, and we should labour

to imitate them, and be “wise as serpents.”

(1.) The serpent hath a subtilty in his eye, he hath a singular sharpness of sight; therefore among the Grecians, a serpent’s eye was a proverbial speech for one of a quick understanding; in this we should be like the serpent. Get the serpent’s eye, have a quick insight into the mysteries of the Christian religion. Knowledge is the beauty and ornament of a Christian, Prov. xiv. 18., “The prudent are crowned with knowledge.” Get the serpent’s eye, be divinely illuminated. Faith without knowledge is presumption; zeal without knowledge is passion, Prov. xix. 2. Without knowledge, the heart is not good; for one to say he hath a good heart, who hath no knowledge, is as if one should say he hath a good eye, when he hath no sight. In this be like the serpent, of a quick understanding.

(2.) The serpent hath a prudence and subtilty in his ear; the serpent will not be deluded with the voice of the charmer, but stops its ear: in this we must be “wise as serpents,”—stop our ears to false teachers who are the devil’s charmers. 1. We must stop our ears to Arminian teachers, who place the chief power in the will, as if that were the helm that turns about the soul in conversion, 1 Cor. iv. 7., “Who maketh thee to differ from another?” *Ego me ipsum discerno*, said Grevinchovius, I have made myself to differ. Be as the serpent, stop your ears to such doctrine. 2. We must stop our ears to Socinian teachers, who raze the foundation of all religion, and deny Christ’s divinity. This the apostle calls “a damnable heresy,” 2 Pet. ii. 1. 3. We must stop our ears to Popish teachers, who teach merit, indulgencies, transubstantiation; who teach that the pope is the head of the church. Christ is called “the head of the church,” Eph. v. 23.: for the pope to be head, is, to make the church monstrous, to have two heads. Popish teachers teach the people nonsense and blasphemy; they cause the people to pray without understanding,—to obey without reason,—to believe without sense; it is a damnable religion; therefore worshipping the beast, and drinking the cup of God’s

indignation are put together, Rev. xiv. 9. Oh, in this be “wise as serpents;” stop your ears to the charming of false teachers! God hath given his people this wisdom, to stop their ears to heretics, John x. 5., “A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him.”

(3.) The serpent hath a chief care to defend his head,—a blow there is deadly: so in this we should “be wise as serpents;” our chief care should be to defend our head from error. The plague in the head is worst. Loose principles breed loose practices. If the head be tainted with erroneous opinions,—that believers are free *a lege morali*,—that there is no resurrection,—that we may do evil that good may come of it,—what sin will not this lead to? Oh keep your head! Error is a spiritual gangrene, 2 Tim. ii. 17., which spreads, and, if not presently cured, is mortal. Heresies destroy the doctrine of faith, they rend the mantle of the church’s peace, and eat out the heart of religion. The Gnostics, as Epiphanius observes, did not only pervert the judgment of their proselytes, but brought them at last to corporeal uncleanness: error damns as well as vice. Vice is like killing with a pistol, and error killing with poison. Oh be wise as serpents; defend your head! “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Our Saviour Christ here commends to us the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocency of the dove. The elect are called wise virgins, Mat. xxv. 4.; virgins, there is the dove; wise, there is the serpent. We must have innocency with our wisdom, else our wisdom is but craftiness; and we must have wisdom with our innocency, else our innocency is but weakness. We must have the innocency of the dove, that we may not circumvent others; and we must have the wisdom of the serpent, that others may not circumvent us.

This union of the dove and serpent is hard to find, but it is possible; Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Acts vii. 22.; there was the prudence of the serpent; and he was “meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,” Numb. xii. 3.; there was the innocency of the dove. But the most famous

instance of wisdom and innocency was in our Saviour: when the Jews came to him with an ensnaring question, Mark xii. 14., "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" Christ answers wisely, v. 17., "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's,"—deny not Cæsar his civil right, nor God his religious worship,—let your loyalty be mixed with piety; here he shewed the wisdom of the serpent. And would you see Christ's innocency? 1 Pet. ii. 22., "There was no guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again,"—he opened his mouth in praying for his enemies, but not in reviling them; behold here the innocency of the dove.

The second thing I am to speak of is the dove: "be harmless as doves." The dove is an excellent creature; it was so acceptable, that in the old law, God would have the dove offered in sacrifice. The Holy Ghost, when he would appear in a visible shape, assumed the likeness of a dove, Mat. iii. 16. We should be as doves in three respects: 1. In respect of meekness; 2. In respect of innocency; 3. In respect of purity.

1. In respect of meekness. The dove is the emblem of meekness. It is *sine felle*, without gall; we should be as doves for meekness; we must avoid unruly passion, which is *brevis insania*, a short frenzy; we must be without the gall of bitterness and revenge; we must be of mild spirits, praying for our enemies: so Stephen, Acts vii. 60., "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This dove-like meekness is the best jewel and ornament we can wear, 1 Pet. iii. 4., "The ornament of a meek spirit, which is in the sight of God, of great price." Passion doth disguise, meekness adorns.

2. We should be as doves for innocency. The innocency of the dove is seen in two things: 1. Not to deceive; 2. Not to hurt.

(1.) Not to deceive. The dove is, as without gall, so without guile; it doth not deceive or lie at the catch: thus we should be as the dove, without fraud and craft. There is a holy simplicity commendable, Rom. xvi. 19., "I would have you simple concerning evil;" to be a bungler at sin, not to have the art to beguile, this is a good

simplicity; as Nathanie^l, in whose spirit there is no guile, John i. 47. Where almost is this dove-like innocence to be found? We live in an age wherein there are more foxes than doves; persons are full of guile, they study nothing but fallacies, so that one knows not how to deal with them, Ps. xii. 2., "With a double heart do they speak."

(2.) Not to hurt. The dove hath no horns or talons to hurt, only wings to defend itself by flight; other creatures are commonly well-armed; the lion hath its paw, the boar its tusk, the stag its horns, but the dove is a most harmless creature, it hath nothing wherewith to offend: thus we should be as doves for harmlessness,—we should not do wrong to others, but rather suffer wrong. Such a dove was Samuel, 1 Sam. xii. 3., "Whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?" He did not get men's estates into his hands, or raise himself upon the ruins of others. How rare is it to find such doves! Sure they are flown away! How many birds of prey are there! Micah vii. 2., "They all lie in wait for blood, they hunt every man his brother with a net;" these are not doves, but vultures; they travail with mischief, and are in pain till they bring forth.

3. We should be as doves for purity. The dove is the emblem of purity; it loves the purest air, it feeds on pure grain; the raven feeds on the carcass, but the dove feeds pure. Thus let us be as doves for sanctity, Cleansing ourselves from all pollution both of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Christ's dove is pure, Cant. v. 2., "My dove, my undefiled." Let us keep pure among dregs, 1 Tim. v. 22., "Keep thyself pure." Better have a rent in the flesh, than a hell in the conscience; the dove is a chaste, pure creature; let us be doves for purity.

Use 1. See here the nature of a good Christian; he is wise and innocent; he hath so much of the serpent, that he doth not forfeit his discretion, and so much of the dove, that he doth not defile his conscience. A godly man is looked upon by a carnal eye as weak and indiscreet, as having something of the dove but nothing of the serpent; to believe things not seen, to choose

sufferings rather than sin, this is counted folly; but the world is mistaken in a believer,—he hath his eyes in his head,—he knows what he doth,—he is prudent, as well as holy;—he is wise that finds the pearl of price,—he is wise that provides for eternity,—he is the wisest man that hath wit to save his soul,—he is wise that makes him his friend who shall be his judge. The godly man acts both the politician and the divine; he retains his ingenuity, yet he doth not part with his integrity.

Use 2. Reproof. It reproveth them who have too much of the serpent, but nothing of the dove, Jer. iv. 22., “Wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge;” these are like the devil, who retains his subtilty, but not his innocency. 1. We have many in this age like the serpent for craftiness, Dan. viii. 25., “Through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper.” Men have the head-piece of subtilty, but want the breast-plate of honesty; they are wise to contrive sin, to forge plots, to study compliance, rather than conscience; the port they aim at, is preferment; the compass they sail by, is policy; the pilot that steers them, is Satan. These have the craftiness of the serpent, “They are wise to do evil.” 2. They are like the serpent for mischief. You know the fiery serpents did sting Israel: these have the sting of the serpent,—they have a sting in their tongues, stinging the people of God with bitter slanders and invectives, calling them factious and seditious,—and they sting with their indictments and excommunications, Gal. iv. 29. Such stinging serpents were Nero, Dioclesian, and Julian; and their spirit is yet alive in the world. These have too much of the serpent in them, but nothing of the dove, 2 Pet. ii. 3., “Their damnation slumbereth not.”

Use 3. Exhortation. To put in practice our Saviour’s counsel in the text, join the serpent and the dove together, wisdom and holiness; here lies the knot,—this is the great difficulty,—to unite these two together, the serpent and the dove, prudence and innocency; if you separate these two, you spoil all.

QUEST. Wherein doth a Christian join these two together, the serpent and the dove, prudence and holiness?

Ans. This I shall answer in twelve particulars.

1. To be wise and innocent consists in this, to be sensible of an injury yet not revenge it. A Christian is not a stoic, nor yet a fury: he is so wise, that he knows when an injury is done him; but so holy, that he knows how to pass it by; this is a most excellent temper of soul,—I had almost said, angelical. As the wind doth allay the heat of the air, so grace doth allay the heat of revenge. Moses herein shewed a mixture of the serpent and the dove: Miriam murmured against him, Numb. xii. 2., “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses?” is he the only prophet to declare God’s mind to us? Moses was so wise as to discern her pride and slighting of him; yet so meek as to bury the injury. When God struck her with leprosy, he prays for her, Numb. xii. 13., “Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.” And upon his prayer, she was cured of her leprosy. A good Christian hath so much wisdom as to discern his enemy’s malice, but so much grace as to conquer his own; he knows it is the glory of a man to pass by a transgression, Prov. xix. 11. Though a Christian hath so much prudence as to vindicate himself, yet so much goodness as not to avenge himself. Behold here the serpent and the dove united, sagacity and innocency.

2. The mixing wisdom and innocency is seen in this, to be humble, but not base. Humility is part of the dove’s innocency, 1 Pet. v. 5., “Be ye clothed with humility.” St. Paul, though the chief of the apostles, calls himself the least of saints. A gracious soul hath low thoughts of himself, and carries himself lowly toward others; but, though he be humble, he is not base; though he will not saucily resist his superiors, he will not sinfully humour them; though he will not do such proud actions as to make his enemies hate him, yet he will not do such sordid actions as to make them despise him; here is the serpent and the dove united. A good Christian is so humble as to oblige others, but not so unworthy as to disobey God. St. Paul, as far as he could with a good conscience, did “become all things to all, that he might save some,” 1 Cor. ix. 20, 22 but he would not break

a commandment to gratify any. When God's glory lay at stake who more resolute than Paul? Gal. ii. 5. The three children were humble, they gave the king his title of honour, but they were not sordidly timorous, Dan. iii. 18., "Be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods." Though they shewed reverence to the king's person, yet no reverence to the image he had set up. A good Christian will not do any thing below himself; though he is for obeying of laws, yet he will not prostitute himself to men's lusts. He is humble,—there he shews the innocency of the dove; but not base,—there he shews the wisdom of the serpent.

3. The prudence of the serpent and innocency of the dove is seen in this, to reprove the sin, yet love the person. We are commanded to reprove, Lev. xix. 17., "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt rebuke him, and not suffer sin upon him." Not to reprove sin is to approve it; but this sword of reproof is a dangerous weapon, if it be not well-handled; to reprove and yet love is to act both the serpent and the dove.

QUEST. *How may a Christian so reprove sin, as to shew love to the person?*

Ans. 1. In taking a fit season to reprove another; that is, when his anger is over. As, when God did rebuke Adam, he came to him, "in the cool of the day," Gen. iii. 8.: so, when we are to reprove any, we are to come to them when their spirits are more cool, and fit to receive a reproof. To reprove a man when he is in a passion, is to give strong water in a fever; it doth more hurt than good. By observing a fit season, we shew both prudence and holiness,—we discover as well discretion as affection.

A. 2. Reproving sin so as to shew love to the person is seen in this, when, though we tell him plainly of his sin, yet it is in mild, not provoking words, 2 Tim. ii. 25., "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." Peter tells the Jews plainly of their sin in crucifying Christ, but useth suaves and gospel-lenitives, to allure and encourage them to believe, Acts ii. 23., "Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified;" v. 38., "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the

remission of sin: for the promise is to you, and to your children." Reproof is a bitter pill, and hard to swallow, therefore we must dip it in sugar; use those sweet mollifying expressions, that others may see love coming along with the reproof. David compares reproof to oil, Ps. cxli. 5.: oil supple the joints when they are hard and stiff; our reproofs being mixed with the oil of compassion, they work most kindly, and do most soften stiff obdurate hearts.

A. 3. Reproving sin, yet love to the person, is when the end of our reproof is not to revile him but to reclaim him. While we go to heal men's consciences, we must take heed of wounding their names. The chirurgeon, in opening a vein, shews both skill and love,—skill in not cutting an artery,—and love, in letting out the bad blood; here is the mixing the serpent and the dove; the wisdom of the serpent is seen, in not reproaching the sinner; the innocency of the dove is seen in reclaiming him from sin.

4. Prudence and holiness is seen in this, to "know what we should do, and do what we know." To know what we should do,—there is the wisdom of the serpent; to do what we know,—there is the innocency of the dove, John xiii. 17. Knowledge is a jewel which adorns him that wears it; it is the enriching and bespangling of the mind; knowledge is the eye of the soul, to guide it in the right way; but this knowledge must be joined with holy practice; to separate practice from knowledge, is to separate the dove from the serpent. Many illuminated heads can discourse fluently in matters of religion, but they do not live up to their knowledge; this is to have good eyes, but to have the feet cut off; they know they should not break the sabbath, they should not defame nor defraud: but they do not practise what they know,—here they separate the dove from the serpent, virtue from knowledge. How vain is knowledge without practice! as if one should know a sovereign medicine and not apply it. Satan is a knowing spirit, he hath enough of the serpent; but that which makes him a devil is, he wants the dove, he doth not practise holiness.

5. To mix the serpent and dove, is to keep two trades going. To understand

worldly affairs,—there is the wisdom of the serpent; yet not neglect the soul,—there is the innocency of the dove. God hath said, “six days shalt thou labour,” Exod. xx. 9. Religion did never grant a patent to idleness; there is a lawful care to be had about secular things; to have insight into one’s calling is a commendable wisdom, but with this wisdom join the dove’s innocency; so follow your calling, as not to neglect your soul. The soul is a precious thing, it would beggar the angels to give half the price of a soul. Our greatest care should be to get grace. While you put gold in your bag, do not forget to put oil in your vessel. Trade beyond the East Indies; drive a trade of holiness. “This merchandize is better than the merchandize of silver,” Prov. iii. 14. Live in a calling, but especially live by faith; look to the providing for your families, but especially to the saving of your souls. The soul is the angelical part, the loss of this can never be made up again. God (saith Chrysostom) hath given a man two eyes, if he lose one, he hath another; but he hath but one soul, if he lose that, it is irrecoverable, it can never be made up again. Oh unite the serpent and the dove,—prudence and holiness! Use the world, but love your soul; trade on earth, but beware of breaking in your trade for heaven. How many part these two, the serpent and the dove? They are wise for the world, but fools for their souls. It is too often seen, that men pull down their souls to build up an estate.

6. To join the serpent and the dove, prudence and innocency, consists in this, to know how to give counsel, and how to keep counsel. He hath the wisdom of the serpent that can give counsel; he knows how to advise another in difficult cases, and speak a word in due season, 2 Sam. xvi. 23., “The counsel of Ahithophel was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God.” But this is not enough to have the wisdom of the serpent, in being able to give counsel; but there must be the innocency of the dove too, in keeping counsel. If a friend’s secret be imparted to us unless in case of blood we are not to reveal it. A friend is *alter idem*, as one’s own soul, Deut. xiii. 6.; and what he imparts of his

heart should be kept under lock and key, Prov. xxv. 9, 10., “Discover not a secret to another, lest he that hear thee put thee to shame,” &c. To disclose a friend’s secret, though it be not treason, it is treachery, it is most unchristian; a word may be spoken in secret, which, when it is trumpeted out, may occasion quarrels or law-suits. He that cannot keep a matter committed to him, is like a vessel that runs out, or a sick stomach that cannot keep the meat, but brings it up again. He that publisheth his friend’s secret, doth publish his own shame.

7. To mix these two, prudence and holiness, is to know the seasons of grace, and improve them; to know the seasons of grace,—there is the wisdom of the serpent. It is wisdom in the husbandman to know the fit time for pruning of trees, sowing of seed: so it is no less wisdom to know the golden seasons of grace; while we hear the joyful sound,—while we have praying hours,—while the Spirit of God blows on our hearts,—here is a gale for heaven. The day of grace will not always last; the shadows of the evening seem to be stretched out; things look as if the gospel tended a pace to a sun-setting; be wise as serpents, to know what a prize is put in your hands. And with the serpent join the dove, that is, in improving the seasons of grace. The stork and turtle not only know their season but improve it; they approach to the warmer climate against the spring, saith Pliny: here is the serpent and dove united, knowing and improving the day of grace; when we profit by ordinances,—when we mix the word with faith,—when an ordinance hath stamped holiness upon us, as the seal leaves its print upon the wax,—this is to improve the seasons of grace.

8. The serpent and the dove, wisdom and innocency, is to be moderate yet zealous. Moderation is good in some cases, Phil. iv. 5., “Let your moderation be known to all.”

(1.) Moderation is good in case of anger. When the passions are up, moderation sits as queen and governess in the soul; it allays the heat of passion. Moderation is *frænum iræ*, the bridle of anger.

(2.) Moderation is good in case of law-suits; so the Greek word for moderation is properly taken. If there be a dispute in

law between us and others, we are not to take the extremity of the law, but use Christian equity and mildness; nay, for peace's sake, *cedere de jure*, rather part with some of our right, than oppress them: this much honours the gospel.

(3.) Moderation is good in things indifferent. Things ought not to be rigorously imposed on God's worship which are not of divine injunction; God never made governors of the church to be like pilots of a ship, to steer men's consciences which way they please. Moderation and Christian forbearance, in things indifferent, would much tend to the peace and unity of the church. All this moderation is commendable, and shews the wisdom of the serpent: but remember to join the dove with the serpent,—we must so exercise moderation as withal to cherish zeal. St. Paul in some things was moderate, he did not press circumcision, Acts xv. 25., he was tender of laying a yoke upon the consciences of the disciples; but he had zeal with his moderation; when he saw their idolatry at Athens, the fire of his zeal broke forth, Acts xvii. 16., “His spirit was stirred in him.” It was good advice Calvin gave to Melanethon, that he should not so affect the name of moderate, as to lose all his zeal. To be cool and silent when God's blessed truths are undermined or adulterated, is not moderation, but lukewarmness, which is to God a most hateful temper, Rev. iii. 15., “I would thou wert cold or hot;” and any thing but luke-warm. This is to shew prudence and holiness, when we are moderate, yet zealous.

9. To unite serpent and dove, consists in this, when we defend the truth by argument and adorn it by life; defending the truth is the serpent's wisdom; an intelligent Christian can convince gainsayers. This wisdom of the serpent was eminently in Stephen, Acts vi. 9, 10.: “There arose certain of the synagogue, disputing with Stephen, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.” We read in the acts and monuments of the church, John Fryth, martyr, being opposed by three papists, he, like another Hercules, fighting with all the three at once, did by his wisdom so convince them, that one of

them turned from popery and became a zealous protestant. Herein is the wisdom of the serpent, not only to love them that profess the truth, but silence them that oppose it. But with this wisdom of the serpent, there must be joined the innocency of the dove; together with defending the truth by argument, there must be adorning it by life, Tit. ii. 10., “That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.” There are some who can dispute for the truth, but disgrace it by their bad living; this is to act both the serpent and the dove, when we not only plead for the truth, but walk in the truth, like Nazianzen, of whom it was said, he did thunder in his doctrine, and lighten in his conversation.

10. The uniting the serpent and the dove, is to be serious in religion, yet cheerful. Seriousness puts the heart in an holy frame, it fixeth it on God; seriousness is to the soul, as ballast to the ship, it keeps the soul from being overturned with vanity; the heart is ever best when it is serious. But this seriousness in religion must be mixed with cheerfulness; cheerfulness conduceth to health, Prov. xvii. 22. It honours religion, it proclaims to the world we serve a good master; cheerfulness is a friend to grace, it puts the heart in tune to praise God, Ps. lxxi. 21. Uncheerful Christians, like the spies, bring an evil report on the the good land: others suspect there is something unpleasant in religion, that they who profess it hang their harps upon the willows, and walk so dejectedly. Be serious, yet cheerful, Phil. iv. 4., “Rejoice in the Lord alway.” Why was Christ anointed, but to give the oil of joy for mourning? Isa. xvi. 1. Joy is as well a fruit of the Spirit as faith, Gal. v. 22. One way of grieving the Spirit, saith Heinsius, is by Christians' uncheerful walking; if you would render the gospel lovely, mix the dove and the serpent; be serious, yet cheerful in God.

11. The uniting of the serpent and the dove, wisdom and holiness, consists in this, when we so lay up as we lay out. It is a duty to provide for our charge, 1 Tim. v. 8., “If any man provide not for his own, he is worse than an infidel.” To lay up for our family,—here is the wisdom of the ser-

pent; but we must lay out for the poor too,—here is the mixture of the dove, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18., “Charge them that are rich in the world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works.” The poor man is as it were an altar, if we bring our alms and lay upon it, with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Faith, though it hath sometimes a trembling hand, it must not have a withered hand, but must stretch forth itself to works of mercy; there’s nothing lost by charitable-ness, Prov. xi. 25., “The liberal soul shall be made fat,” Ps. xli. 1., “Blessed is he that considereth the poor, thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.” While men do so remember their family, that they do not forget the poor, they shew both prudence and piety; they unite the serpent and the dove.

12. The serpent’s wisdom and the dove’s innocency is seen in this,—so to avoid danger, as not to commit sin,—to preserve our liberty, yet keep our integrity. There is a sinful escaping danger, namely, when we are called to suffer for the truth, and we decline it; but there is an escaping danger without sin; as thus, when we do not betray ourselves into the enemies’ hands by rashness, nor yet betray the truth by cowardice. We

have a pattern of this in our Saviour; he avoided his enemies in one place, that he might preach the gospel in another, Luke iv. 29, 30., “They led him unto the brow of the hill, that they might cast him down headlong; but he passing through the midst of them, went his way,”—there was Christ’s wisdom in not betraying himself to his enemy; and v. 43., “I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also,”—there was his holiness. Christ’s securing of himself was in order to the preaching of the gospel. This is to mix prudence and innocency, when we so avoid danger as we do not commit sin.

Thus I have, as briefly and as clearly as I could, shown you how we must unite these two, the serpent and the dove, prudence and holiness. For want of coupling these two together religion doth much suffer in the Christian world. “What Christ hath joined together, let no man put asunder.” Observe these two, prudence and holiness; here is the serpent’s eye in the dove’s head. When these two, wisdom and innocency—like Castor and Pollux—appear together, they presage much good and happiness that will befall a Christian.

SERMON II.

1 COR. v. 17. “*Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.*”

IN this scripture consists the essence and soul of religion. I note here two things.

1st, That the true definition of a Christian is to be in Christ. “If any man be in Christ.” He may be in the church visible, yet not in Christ; it is not to be baptized into Christ’s name, makes a true Christian: but to be in Christ, that is to be grafted into him by faith. And if to be in Christ makes a Christian, then there are but few Christians. Many are in Christ nominally, not really; they are in Christ by profession, not by mystical union. Are they in Christ that do not know him? Are they in Christ who persecute them that are in Christ? Sure such an holy head as Christ will disclaim such spurious members.

2d, That whosoever is in Christ, is a new creature. For illustration, I shall shew, 1. What a new creature is; 2. What kind of work it is.

1. What a new creature is. It is a second birth added to the first, John iii. 3. It may be thus described: it is a supernatural work of God’s Spirit, renewing and transforming the heart into the divine likeness.

(1.) The efficient cause of the new creature, is the Holy Ghost; no angel or archangel is able to produce it. Who but God can alter the hearts of men, and turn stones into flesh? If the new creature was not produced by the Holy Ghost, then the greatest glory in a man’s conversion would be