

FUNERAL SERMON,

FOR THAT FAITHFUL AND LABORIOUS SERVANT
OF CHRIST,

Mr. Richard Fairclough,

Who deceased July 4, 1682, in the sixty-first year of his age.

TO THE REVEREND

Mr. SAMUEL FAIRCLOUGH | Mr. GEORGE JONES,
Mr. JOHN FAIRCLOUGH, | Mr. RICHARD SHUTE,

WITH THEIR PIOUS CONSORTS,

The Brethren and Sisters of the deceased Mr. Richard Fairclough.

MY WORTHY FRIENDS,

IT is, I apprehend, a grievous thing to you, to be destitute of the wonted solace you have taken in those your most delectable relatives, the father and the elder brother of a family, whereof you were the genuine, or the ingrafted branches. Whether nature or choice gave you your interest, you had a common concern, and comfort in it; and indeed, from a love too little common to the rest of the world. The love that hath so observedly flourished among you and been your collective, unitive bond, as it hath shewn itself to be of a higher than the common kind, demonstrated its own divine original, and that it had its root in heaven; so have its effects, been a demonstration what such a love can do, for the cherishing of union, not only in a private family, but in the church and family of the living God also. And how little necessary it is unto a union, even there, that there be a sameness of sentiments, and practices in every little punctilio; for a disagreement wherein, too many have thought themselves licensed to hate, and even destroy one another. As God himself was the fountain, so he was the first object of that love with you. And as your love to him caused your entire devotedness to his interest, so your mutual love united your hearts (according to your several capacities) in serving it; without grudging, or hard thoughts, that each one served it not exactly in the same way. By that love you have been undivided in your joys and

DEDICATION.

sorrows, in reference to one another. While your very eminent father survived, how gladly did you pay a joint reverence and duty to him! what a glory was his hoary head unto you! This your worthy brother was the next resort and centre of your united respect and delight. I donbt not you feel your loss as to both, which (though God had made a former breach upon you) the longer continuance, as well as the pleasantness of the enjoyment, cannot but have made the more sensible unto you. We are somewhat apt to plead a prescription for our more continued comforts, but you know how little that avails against a statute, as that (for instance) by which it is appointed that all must die; nor is it to be regretted that the absolute Lord of all should pluck in pieces our earthly families, for the building and completing his own, in heaven.

What I have said of this your excellent brother, in the close of the following discourse, is but a small part of what you know. It serves for the solace of the survivors, not the advantage of the dead; and the solace is real, and great, when imitation makes all that is commendable our own, and most intimate to ourselves. It is, otherwise, but a faint comfort to have been related to an excellent person; when a limb is cut off, the soul retires to the remaining parts. May a double portion of the spirit and life, which were so copious and vigorous in the deceased, abound unto you! And I should be very faulty, if I put not in for some share with you, who must profess myself a great sharer for your affliction and loss; and

Your very affectionate brother,
and servant in our Lord,

J. H.

FUNERAL SERMON.

Matt. xxv. 21.

His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

IT may seem somewhat incongruous, and an indecency, that this memorial of our worthy friend, should be now solemnized so long after his very remains are gone from off the face of the earth. But two things concurred to make the delay necessary and unavoidable, namely, that his own desire, expressed in his will, limited the performance of this office to the person upon whom it now falls. And that my own great infirmities, before the time of his sickness and death, (which made it more likely he should have done this part for me, than I for him) had obliged me to begin a course, for the repairing of languishing health, which required some weeks attendance abroad, and which could not be sooner over. But if our business were only to mourn and lament our own, and the more common loss, it were not yet too late. The mention of his name, the worthy Mr. Richard Fairclough, is enough to open fresh springs, calling to remembrance such a brother, such a friend, such a preacher of the word of life, as he was.

And it should do it most of all upon the most common account ; whom would it not induce to mourn over this forlorn world, to see that every thing that is more excellent, more pure, more desirable, more capable of being useful in it, God is gathering up out of it ? O how much of spirit and life is gone from it, when one such man dies ! how are we to mourn over the world as dying gradually the worst sort of death, when the holy, divine life is thus exhaled out of it, and is expiring by degrees ? But come, we have somewhat else to do than mourn ; all this tends to make a glorious heaven, one bright star the more is now added to it ; there is nothing of this holy life lost ; whatsoever of excellency, purity, goodness, life, love-
liness, and love of that divine kind vanishes from among us,

is but transferred to its own native place, returns to its proper element, as the forsaken dust hath to its own. Heaven hath its part out of every such person, the seat of all life, purity, and goodness; as the earth draws into its bosom its own terrene part, not without a sacredness, and a rich perfume adhering to that also. And as it is not our only, or more principal business to mourn; so nor is it to relieve, and fortify ourselves against mourning. We have somewhat to do, divers from them both, and that is more considerable than either of them. We are chiefly so to consider his death, as may best serve the purposes of our own yet-continuing life, which was the scope of that desire of his, signified by his will, that an instructive sermon might be (upon that occasion) preached to the people. We are to set ourselves to learn from it what doth most concern our own daily practice and hope; so to acquit ourselves as not to neglect the duty of good and faithful servants to our common Lord, nor to come short of their reward.

And to this purpose we are more to consider his life, than his death; the life which he hath lived on earth, and the life which (we have reason not to doubt) he doth live in heaven. Nor could my thoughts reflect upon any portion of Scripture more fit for our purpose, or that was more suitable to him and us, that is, that could more aptly serve to describe him, and instruct ourselves; nor have I known any person to have left the world, within my time, to whom this text of Scripture might more fitly be applied. I shall only observe, and insist upon these two heads of discourse from it,—the character of such a servant, and—the treatment which he finds at last, from his heavenly Master.

I. His character. He is said to have done well, or it is said to him *eu, well* (no more is there in the greek text) and then he is further bespoken as a good and faithful servant, more generally, and particularly, his fidelity is commended in reference to the special trust and charge, which is implied to have been committed to him; Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I have not over-charged thee, and thou hast acceptably discharged thyself. Some think this (and the whole parable) to belong only to the ministers of the gospel, the servants of Christ in that special sense. I do not see a reason for that restriction, the words are of themselves capable of being extended further to the faithful servants of Christ, in whatsoever capacity; though being spoken to the disciples, as from the continuation of the discourse (with this evangelist) from the beginning of the foregoing chapter may be collected, it seems not unfit to allow them a more particular reference to their special office and trust.

And here we must note that these words of commendation "Well done, good and faithful servant" do speak both the *truth* of the thing, and the *judgment and estimate* which his Lord makes thereof accordingly. We are now to consider them under the former notion, as they express the *truth* of the thing, the matter of fact, whereof we cannot have a more certain account than (as here we have it) from his mouth, who employed him; was his constant Supervisor, must be his final Judge, and will be his bountiful Rewarder at length. We shall here, in opening his character, note—some things leading and introductive, or that belong to his entrance into this service: and—some things that belong to his performance, afterward.

1. For the introductive, supposed part of his character. He is

(1.) One that hath disclaimed all former and other masters, all in co-ordination, for of such, no man can serve two; other lords had dominion over him, but by their usurpation, and his unjust consent, who was not his own, and had no right to dispose of himself. The faithful servant repents, and retracts those former engagements as bonds of iniquity, by which he will be no longer held, renounces any former inconsistent master, or service. A truly subordinate master he must own, for the same reason upon which he acknowledges the supreme, and do all that such derived authority challenges, by his direction who gave it; otherwise, he hath learned to call no man master on earth.

(2.) He is one that hath, by covenant, surrendered and resigned himself to this great Lord, and his service. Some relations have their foundation in nature, this of servants to a master (we except slaves) in their consent, or in mutual contract. And though this general relation between God and man, have the most deeply natural foundation imaginable, whereupon all are his servants; yet the special relation must have the other ground, namely, that of consent, or contract superadded; not to give God a right to our service, but more expressly and effectually to oblige ourselves to it, and that we may have a right to his rewards. It is but acknowledging and recognizing his former right in us, which is part (and the initial part) of our duty to him. He requires and justly insists upon it, to be acknowledged as our only rightful Lord; which till we do, we are in rebellion against him, and in the condition of servants, broken away from their masters, run-aways, fugitives, and who keep ourselves out of the family; and though that cannot however destroy his right, yet it is inconsistent with our duty, for our service must be throughout voluntary; and with our reward, for nothing that is not voluntary, is rewardable. Therefore

the good and faithful servant, in the text is one that affects and chooses the state, first, and says with the Psalmist (psal. cxix. 38.)—Thy servant who is devoted to thy fear. And (psal. cxvi. 16.) O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thy hand-maid; thou hast loosed my bonds. He doth as is required, Rom. vi. 13, 19. Yields himself to God, and all his parts and powers servants of righteousness unto holiness. He reckons it neither dutiful towards God, nor comfortable to himself, to do him only occasional service, but *ad libitum*, at his pleasure and as an unrelated person. He thinks it not honourable to the great Lord of heaven and earth, but to borrow (as it were) another's servant, nor can he satisfy himself not to be of the family; therefore he consents first to the relation, and enters himself his covenant-servant. Faithfulness supposes having covenanted and hath the samereference to our part of the covenant, that God's faithfulness hath to his.

(3.) He is one that hath thereupon made it his earnest study to know his Lord's will. His first inquiry is, What wilt thou have me to do, Lord? he is solicitous to understand the duty of his station, Psal. cxix. 125. I am thy servant, give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. To enter one's self the servant of another, without any concern to know the business of his place, shews an insincere mind, and argues he hath more a design to serve himself upon his master, than to serve him.

(4.) He is one that hath an inclination to the work he is to do, when he knows it, a *προθυμία*, an inclining bent of mind to it: that which the Scripture means, by having the law of God written in the heart, spoken of our Lord himself, in reference to that peculiar service he was to perform: Lo, I come to do thy will, O God, thy law is in my heart, (Psal. xl. 8.) Who though he were a Son, yet taking the form of a servant, applied himself to that severe part assigned him, with a most willing mind; and had, hereupon, the highest approbation imaginable, Isa. xlii. 1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. And it is spoken of all the inferior true servants of God, besides, Jer. xxxi. 33. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. It is the same thing with being God's workmanship (Ephes. ii. 10.) created unto good works; and with that readiness to every good work, *ετοιμὲς εἶναι*, Titus. iii. 1. If a man's heart be not so framed to God's service, how awkwardly and untowardly does he go about any thing that is enjoined him, he is habitually disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, Titus. i. 14.

2. And for that part of the character, which being a good and faithful servant includes,

(1.) He is one that endeavours to extend his obedience to the whole compass of his duty, hath a universal respect to all God's commandments, is not partial in the law.

(2.) He peculiarly minds the work most of his own station. Thinks it not enough, or possible to be a good christian, and at the same time an ill magistrate, minister, parent, master of a family, or servant in it, if it be his lot to be in any of these capacities.

(3.) He is diligent in all the service that belongs to him, any way; not slothful in business fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, Rom. xii. 11.

(4.) He is, with most delight, exercised in the most spiritual part of his work. In the great, vital acts of faith, love, self-devoting; and those most immediately proceeding from them, meditation, prayer and praise.

(5.) He balks not the most hazardous, or more costly part. Thinks it mean to serve God at no expence, or with what costs him nothing. Measures not his duty by the advantage, or safety of his own secular interest; so as to decline it when nothing is to be got by it, or if any thing be in danger to be lost.

(6.) He grudges not that others are less exposed to danger, in their work, than he; and have that liberty of serving God, which he hath not. Let me seriously recommend this property and disposition, of a faithful servant, to my brethren in the ministry. While some have opportunity of serving our great and common Lord, without fear of the interruption and suffering to which we are liable, and when we have reason to judge they do it with sincerity (though we may think they gained their greater liberty, by their mistake) there can be no more genuine expression of our fidelity, and sincere devotedness to our Master's interest, than to behold, with complacency, all the good which we observe done by them. If the great apostle rejoiced, and declared he would rejoice that Christ was preached, though not sincerely (and whether in pretence, or truth) much more should we, when we ought to judge that he is sincerely preached. And if he envied not those that preached Christ, even of envy, how horrid would it be, should we behold with envy, what we are to suppose done out of love, and good-will! They are great admirers of themselves, and lovers of some interest of their own more than his, that cannot endure to see his work done by other hands, than theirs; or that have nothing of that disposition in them which those words express: Let him increase, and me decrease.

(7.) He is much less apt to smite his fellow-servants, or hinder them in their work, unless they will work by his rule and

measure, unprescribed by their Lord himself. He takes no pleasure to see the hands tied up of useful labourers in the harvest, wishes not their number diminished; but, because the harvest is really plenteous, but the labourers are few, rather prays the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest, Mat. ix. 37, 38.

If any, of their own private inclination, would have the necessary work of their Lord hindered, and take pleasure in the exclusion of industrious labourers, for their conscientious disuse of things, by their own confession, not necessary; good Lord! What spirit are they of? I understand it not, nor let my soul enter into their secret! I had rather a thousand-fold bear their anger, than be of their spirit! Would any faithful servant rather wish his master's work should be in any part undone, than done by those he dislikes; upon no more important reason than that their cloaths, perhaps, are not of the same colour with his?

But thanks be to God that, among those that differ from each other in the lesser things, there are so many that rejoice, being under restraints themselves, for the liberty of others; and that mourn, while they enjoy themselves, an ample liberty, for other's restraints, and among whom there is no other contention, but who shall think, and speak, and act with most kindness towards one another: And that not whole parties, but an ill mind and spirit, only in some persons, can be charged with what so much unbecomes faithful fellow-servants.

(8.) He is less at leisure to mind what others do, or do not, than what he is to do himself. Is above all things solicitous to prove his own work, that he may have rejoicing in himself, and not in another, Gal. vi. 4.

(9.) He esteems the utmost he can do but little, and counts, when he hath done his best, he is an unprofitable servant.

(10.) He approves himself, in all that he doth, to the eye of his great Master. Here we cannot serve too much with eyeservice, or be too apprehensive of the constant inspection of our heavenly Lord. One may be too much a pleaser of men, but no man can too much study to please, and approve himself to the eye of God.

(11.) He laments lost time, and labours to redeem it.

(12.) He greatly rejoices in the success of his work. If, for instance, it be his business to bring home souls to God, nothing is more grateful to him than to prosper in it. My beloved, my joy, and my crown—(Phil. iv. 1.) So he counts such as he can make proselytes to Christ. I have no greater joy, than to hear that my children walk in truth, iii. John. 4. It is said of Barnabas, (a great number believing, and turning to the Lord

Acts xi. 22, 23.) that, when he saw the grace of God, he was glad; for (it is added) he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.

(13.) He loves his work, and his Master, is willing to have his ear bored, and serve him for ever. If any thought arises of changing, he presently represses it, by some seasonable check and counter-thought,* and confirms his resolution of cleaving to him unto the end.

(14.) He puts the highest value upon such present encouragements, from his Lord, as are most expressive of peculiar favour. The blessed God knows what is most suitable to the genius, and spirit of his own new creature. They who are his sincere servants, are his sons too, born of him; and to the divine and heavenly nature in them those things are most agreeable that are most spiritual, and whereof others, of terrene minds, no more know the value, than that dunghill-creatures did of the gem it found there: they must have great stores of corn, wine, and oil. His better born servants are of a more excellent spirit, and better pleased with the light of his countenance; he differently treats them accordingly. As that victorious Persian monarch, (Cyrus) entertaining at a feast the principal men of his army, gave among them costly gifts; but for *Chrysantus*, † a more peculiar favourite (*εφιλησε ως σαραγαγομενος*) he only drew him near to him, and gave him a kiss; which was intended by the one, received by the other, and envied by a third ‡ as an expression of more special kindness. And of the divine love, which that borrowed expression signifies, pious souls upon all occasions shew their highest value, Cant. i. 2.

(15.) He trusts his Master for his final reward, and is content to wait for it, as long as he thinks fit to defer. Paul professes himself a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, in hope of eternal life, which he that could not lie had promised; and hereupon resolutely encounters all the difficulties of that hazardous service.

II. The acceptance, and reward which such a servant finds above. His acceptance is expressed in the same words (as was said) which have generally given us his character; not only shewing what he was, and did, but that his Lord esteemed, and passes an approving judgment of him (as it was not to be doubt-

* As holy Mr. Herbert.

—Well, I will change the service, and go seek

Some other master out.

Ah, my dear God! though I be clean forgot,

Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.

† Xen. de Ped. Cyr.

‡ Artabazus, who had a golden cup given him at the same time.

ed he would) accordingly. Concerning this judgment we are to note, both what it *supposes*, and what it *includes*.

1. It supposes both an account taken how this servant demeaned himself, and a rule according whereto the matters, to be accounted for, were to be examined and judged of.

(1.) That our Lord calls his servants to an account, so we find it expressly said, ver. 19. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And here it is implied, when he says: Well done—it implies he takes cognizance, and inquires whether they have done well or ill, he is not indifferent or regardless how they quit and behave themselves; nor doth he pronounce rashly and at random, without searching into the matter. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God, Rom. xiv. 12.

(2.) That there is some certain stated rule, by which their doings must be measured. Well doing stands in conformity to some rule or other, and what is the next and most immediate rule of our duty, is also the rule of God's judgment; such a rule it must suppose, as according whereto a true judgment is possible of our having done well. That cannot be the law of works, according whereto no flesh can be justified in his sight; it must therefore be the law of grace: and so this servant is only said to have done well, according to the *επιεικεια* *evangelica*. The *indulgence of the gospel* can say *εϋ*, it is well, to that which the rigour of the law would condemn. *Bonum oritur ex causis integris, &c. well doing arises out of the concurrence of all requisites, evil from any, the least defect*; and so indeed whatever the rule be, all things must concur that are requisite to acceptance, by that rule. But here simply every thing of duty is requisite, so that the condition of acceptance and life was not to be distinguished (as a thing of less latitude) from mere duty, in its utmost extent. Jam. ii. 10, For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them, Gal. iii. 10.

2. This judgment includes

(1.) Well-pleas'dness, *εϋ*, it is well, as though he had said, I like well thy way and work, it pleases and is grateful to me, and so art thou.

(2.) An acknowledgment of his title to the designed reward, according to the gospel-constitution. It is said to be well, not only according to the absolute and abstract consideration of what was done; but according to its relative consideration and prospect to what was to ensue; and therefore follows, in the subjoined words, the collation of the reward, of which reward we have

here a twofold expression: I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

[1.] I will make thee ruler over many things. In the evangelist Luke's account of this parable (if his account refer to the same thing, as spoken at the same time, which some of old, upon the manifold diversity, have doubted, how reasonably I shall not here dispute) it is said: Have thou authority over so many cities. Either expression represents the remuneration here vouchsafed, by a metaphor which nearly approaches that very usual one, by which the felicity of saints is represented under the notion of a kingdom, as though he had said, thou shalt have an honourable prefecture, be a glorious viceroy, shalt according to thy capacity, share with me in the dignity of my royal state. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12. This I pass, and shall stay a little more upon the other expression, which is plainer, and without a metaphor.

[2.] Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Wherein, as expositors observe, our Lord slides insensibly out of the parable, into the thing designed by it; using words indifferently applicable to either, but such as wherein he might be easily understood ultimately to mean the joys, and glories of the other world or state. Expressions serving to signify, as an ancient speaks, *την πασαν μακαριότητα*, *the sum of all felicity*, as what can more fitly signify that, than joy, the joy of his Lord, and wherinto he was to enter? Let us consider these severally, though but briefly.

First. Joy, as though he had said, The laborious part is over with thee, now follows thy rest and reward. Joy, the very notion whereof is rest, *quies appetitus appetibili** (as it is aptly defined) *they that sow in tears shall reap in joy*. When the dark shady vale is past over, with much toil, the path of life leads into that presence where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, Psal. xvi. 11. The fulness of joy speaks the purity of it, that is pure which is *plenum sui*, &c. *full of itself*, and without mixture of any thing else, which hath so entirely all degrees of itself, as not to admit the least degree of its contrary; such is this, it is joy, and no sorrow with it, perfect and most complete joy. This cannot therefore be meant of a slight and momentary act, but a perfect and permanent state of joy; which state is made up by the continual concurrence of a twofold everlasting perfection, viz. objective, and subjective—*Objective*. That there be a perfect, and never-failing good to be enjoyed: and—*Subjective*. That there be a perfect and immutable contemperation, or a thorough undecaying disposition of the subject to the enjoyment of it. From these two cannot but result a most permanent, everlasting state of joy. And of the

* Chrysost: in loc.

concurrence of these two, the holy Scripture sufficiently assures us, when it makes God himself to be the object of our eternal vision, in that other state; and tells us that in order thereto: we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is: signifying all that proportion and agreeableness of the blessed soul to the beatific object, which is requisite to a most pleasant, perfect, and perpetual enjoyment.

Secondly. This joy is more expressly specified, by being called the joy of our Lord; which signifies it to be not only,—the joy whereof he is the object, a joy to be taken in him, (as before) but also,—whereof he is the Author. As he now puts gladness into the heart, Psal. iv. in this our imperfect state, he is not less the Author of our most perfect joy. And—also that, whereof he is the possessor, as though he had said, enter into that joy that is now to be common to me and thee, and wherein thou shalt partake with me. So one glosses the words: *Be thou partaker of the same joy with thy Lord, enjoy thou the same joy that thy Lord enjoys. Amazing thought! yet so Scripture speaks: Where I am, there also shall my servant be John xii. 26. The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. And ver. 24. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me. And that beholding cannot mean a merely contemplative, but a fruitive intuition. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (*συνδοξασωμεν*) Rom. viii. 17. Other joys are in comparison mean and sordid, this is the highest and most excellent, for it is the divine joy.

Thirdly. It is that they are to enter into, which notes both the plenitude of their right, their Lord bids them enter; and the plenitude of this joy itself, they are to enter into it, and the dominion it must for ever have over them, they are to be absorpt of it, lose themselves in it, not so much to possess it, as be possessed by it. And the perpetuity is intimated of that possession, we are told of their entrance into it, nothing of their passing out of it any more; the last thing we hear of them is that they are gone into joy,

III. Now let us see what brief useful reflections are to be made, upon all this, And,

1. How blessed a thing is it to be a faithful servant of Christ! if any have not yet learned to value his service for itself, let them make their estimate by the end of it, and by what is even at present most certainly annexed to it. To be accepted with him to appear gracious in his eyes! An euge from such a mouth!

* *Esto particeps, &c.* Luc. Brugens. in loc.

Where the word of a king is, there is power, How joyful a sound do these words carry from the mouth of God: Well done, good and faithful servant! The persic version (as it is rendered) most significantly paraphrases this passage: *Dominus pecuniã illum blande excepit, et cordi verba grata dedit; Euge, inquit, O bone et fidelis serve, &c.* The owner of the money received him pleasantly, and uttered words to him grateful to his heart, saying, Well done, O thou good and faithful servant, &c. What can be more grateful and reviving to the heart of a good man, than that the glorious Lord of heaven and earth should say to him: Well done? to have him say to us, as to Moses: Thou hast found grace in my sight, (Exod. xxxiii. 12.) to have gained this testimony, as Enoch did, (Heb. xi. 5.) that we have pleased God; and that our case might truly admit of such an angelic salutation (though upon a less peculiar account) Hail thou that art highly favoured! how great a thing is it! So great a thing, in the apostle's account, that living, or dying, being in the body, or out of the body seemed little things to him, in comparison of it: he was willing rather to be absent, but is more solicitous whether present or absent, that he might be accepted of him, 2 Cor. v. 8, 9. Yea, and the more abject spirit of a very Cain resents so deeply his not being accepted, that his troubled mind imprints characters of sorrow in his face, shews itself in a fallen countenance, and dejected looks.

What ingenuous mind but knows how to value, even the (unprofitable) kindness of a mean friend? Can the love of a God seem little with us? it adds greatly to the value of mere kindness, abstracted from beneficence, if it be borne me by a judicious, wise person, such a one honours whom he loves; we less esteem the love of a fool. There can be no greater contempt of God, than to make light of being accepted with him. But how transporting a thing should it be, besides the present sense of such acceptance, which (with more or less expressness) accompanies diligence, and fidelity in his service, to have it judicially declared, with solemnity, and publicly said to us before angels and men: Well done thou good and faithful servant? When so great consequences depend, and are to ensue upon it, as that it should be further said: Come, be thou ruler over many things, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, enter into the joy of your Lord. Who would think meanly of being the accepted servant of the most high God? They that finally despise so privileged a state, will see it with their eyes (exemplified in others) but shall never taste the sweetness of it.

2. How easily accountable is it why our Lord lets his ser-

vants suffer hard things, in this world awhile? He may permit it to be so, who hath it in his power to make their sorrow be turned into joy. It is not strange if weeping endure with them for a night, unto whom such joy is coming in the morning; it is unworthy to repine in this case. It is want of foresight that makes any wonder and censure. Consider well those weighty words, (1 Pet. iv. 12, 13.) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

3. How wicked, and foolish a thing is it to refuse this service! it is horribly unjust towards our most rightful Lord, and most imprudent for ourselves. Do men know what they do in this? whose right they invade and resist? and what cruelty they use towards their own souls?

4. How much to be lamented is the condition of the sinful world, who so generally decline this service, and make themselves slaves, in the mean time, to the worst of masters? how do men drudge to the devil? what slaves are they to themselves, and their own vile lusts? As indeed no man serves himself, but hath a fool and a mad tyrant (as one well says) for his master. We do not enough live up to the principles of our religion, while we consider not, with more compassion, the condition of infatuated mankind, in this respect.

5. What may be expected by unfaithful negligent servants that hide their talent in a napkin? The others joys serve to measure their sorrows, what a killing word will it be, when instead of Well done, good and faithful servant, it shall be said: thou wicked and slothful servant! and instead of enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, they must hear, and feel: cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (ver. 30.)

6. See what estimate we are to make of the nature of God, especially of his large, munificent goodness (which is his nature, God is love) for consider the various emanations and discoveries of it, which may here be taken notice of.

(1.) That he should seek to have any for servants (which the text supposeth that he doth) in this world of ours! A world of apostate, degenerate, impure, impotent creatures, disaffected to him and his government, hating him, and (as in themselves they are) hateful to him. He who hath so little need of servants for any real use! who can do all things with a word! and if he thought it fit to have them for state, and as a thing becoming his majesty and greatness, is attended above by so excellent God-like creatures! So suitable, and obsequious! So

powerful, and agile! Those ministers of his that do his pleasure, hearkening to the voice of his word. A world of ministering spirits, that might be used for purposes less kind to us than they are! That he should seek servants among us! (for his having them implies it, whoever served him unsought unto) invite men into his service, with so importunate solicitation! whom he might despise for their vileness, and destroy for their rebellion, which he can in a moment! And that he should seek such to become his servants, not with indifferency, but with so great earnestness! and use afterwards so various endeavours to retain them in his service! When they gradually decline, that so graciously upholds them; when ready to break faith with him, and quit his service, that by so apt methods he confirms them; when they actually wander and turn vagabonds, that he should be so intent to reduce them! How admirable is all this! View the whole case at once. They neglect his first invitations, he repeats and inculcates them; they faint, he encourages and supports them; they revolt, he follows to bring them back; the cause of our admiration still rises higher and higher. How much is it, in this last instance, above all human measures! Most men would disdain so to sue to servants that forsake them and are loth to confess their real need and want of them (were it never so great) the Cynic [Sen.] scorned to look after his servant that left him, counting it a disgrace, when Manes thought he could live without Diogenes, that Diogenes should not be able to live without Manes. The all-sufficient Deity stoops to that, which indigency and wretchedness think even too mean for them!

(2.) Consider the frankness of his acceptance, even of the least. For how many omissions, how much laziness and sloth, how many incogitances and mistakes, how much real disservice must he forgive, when he accepts them, and says (yet) it is well done? How little is it they do at the best? and how unprofitable to him? and yet that little also he forms and even creates them to, and continually succours, and assists them in it, works in them to will, and to do, otherwise nothing at all would be done; and how full, how complacential his acceptance is!

(3.) Consider the largeness and bounty of his rewards, too large for our expression or conception. So that we even say most to it, when (even lost in wonder) we only admire, and say nothing.

(4.) Consider the kind of the service which he thus bespeaks, accepts, and rewards. The best and most acceptable service, any are capable of doing him, is, when they accept him, take and choose him to be their portion, and blessedness. Trust, love

and delight in him as such, live upon his fulness, and (according to their several stations) persuade as many as they can to do so too. They that, in the most peculiar sense, are his ministers or servants, as they are more earnestly intense upon this, and win more souls are the more amply and gloriously rewarded. They that turn many to righteousness, shine as stars. And for all the rest of his servants, wherein do they serve him most, but when by their converse, and example, they induce others to entertain good thoughts of God, and religion, and thereupon to make the same choice which they have made, and become seriously religious; which is most certainly connected with their being happy, and indeed, in greatest part their very happiness itself? And when they relieve, support, encourage, and help on those that are in the way, or whom they are endeavouring to bring into the way to final blessedness! We as much need our servants, as they can us; they are our living, reasonable, but most necessary instruments. The whole universe of created beings subsists by mutual dependancies, the uncreated Being without any; creatures are made to need one another. Infinite self-fulness, not capable of receiving additions, is most highly gratified by our cheerful reception of its communications.

Let us learn now to conceive of God answerably to all this, we do him not right, that we consider not his admirable goodness, in so plain instances of it, with more frequent seriousness, and intention of mind and spirit, and shew ourselves stupid, unapprehensive creatures; have we a thinking faculty about us? a power to use thoughts? and can we use it upon any thing more evident, more considerable, or that more concerns us? or do we never use it less pertinently?

7. How unreasonable is it, either to quit the service of our blessed Lord, or to serve him dejectedly! Quit it! Who hath more right in us? or where will we mend ourselves? O the treacherous folly of apostacy! and how severely is it wont to be animadverted on! 2 Chron. xii. 1. It is said Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him; and what followed? Shishak, the king of Egypt, comes against them with a great power, and God sends them this message, by Shemai-ah the prophet; that because they had forsaken him (ver. 5.) therefore he also had left them in the hands of Shishak. And afterwards, that though upon their humbling themselves, he would nor quite destroy them, but grant them some deliverance; yet he adds: nevertheless ye shall be his (that is, Shishak's) servants, that ye may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries, ver. 8. Since they would abandon God, and the true religion, he would by a very sensible instruction, and costly experience teach them to distinguish and understand the difference, and make them know when they

had a good master. And if we serve him despondingly and with dejected spirits, how causeless a reproach do we cast upon him, and his service? it is a greater iniquity than is commonly considered, implies dislike of his work, and the rules and orders of the family, impatience of the restraints of it, distrust of his power to protect, or bounty to reward us; and we may expect it to be resented accordingly. So we sometimes find it hath been, Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things, and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

8. How are we concerned to follow the example, and expect the acceptance and reward of any such faithful servant of Christ? And that we may imitate such a good and faithful servant, let me briefly set the example of such a one before you, in this excellent person lately taken from among us; which were it possible to represent entirely, were one of the fairest copies to write after, that this, or perhaps many former ages could afford us. That indeed, which it is fit should first be noted of him, is least of all imitable; I mean his natural temper (with its more immediate dependancies) which no man can have the privilege to choose. His indeed was one of the happiest that I ever knew, and did so set off all that was superadded and inserted into it, by human culture or divine grace, as an advantageous setting, doth the lustre of a diamond. He had all the advantages of education from his childhood, which the pious care of an affectionate, prudent, learned father could give him, that were proper, and preparatory to the function he was intended for; namely, that of the sacred ministry. An office whereof his excellent father (the eminent, holy, heavenly, reverend, ancient, Mr. Fairclough, of Suffolk, whose name in that country hath still a grateful savour with all good men, of whatsoever persuasion) shewed his high esteem and love, not only by the most diligent discharge of it himself, but by dedicating all his sons (which were four in number) to it; and giving his two daughters in marriage to such also. So that he was the father of a sacred tribe, an offspring and race of ministers, or that (even naturally) united with such. This was the eldest of his children, and of whose education the first care was to be taken. Scarce any mind could be more receptive of the proper impressions, from an ingenuous institution. About twelve years he continued student (whereof divers, a fellow) and great ornament of Emanuel-College, in Cambridge, as he was also

much adorned by it. He went from it furnished with such a stock of rational, substantial, as well as polite literature, that shewed him to have been no loiterer there. He was a man of a clear, distinct understanding, of a very quick, discerning and penetrating judgment, that would, on a sudden (as I have sometimes observed in discourse with him) strike through knotty difficulties, into the inward centre of truth, with such a felicity that things seemed to offer themselves to him, which are wont to cost others a troublesome search. Nor were his notions merely book-learned, borrowed from systems, and taken on trust, but formed by a due (but more speedy) comparing of things; as if truth were more a kin, and connatural to him than to most others, sooner digested, made his own, and inwrought into the temper and habit of his mind. Which afterwards, he liked not to muddy and discompose by busy agitations with others, about that truth which he found himself in a pleasant secure possession of; nor to contend concerning that which he had not found it necessary to contend for. He declined controversy, not from inability, but dislike; for as he less needed it for a further good end, so he was most remote from loving it for itself; he was satisfied to have attained his end, and was better pleased to know, than to seem to others that he knew. He was of curious sublime fancy, and a lofty style both in speaking, and writing, even in his most familiar letters; though he industriously depressed it, in his popular sermons, and other negotiations with those of meaner capacity.

But his moral, and holy excellencies were his chief lustre, being in themselves of a more excellent kind, and shining in him in a very eminent degree. The bent of his soul was towards God, I never knew any man under the more constant governing power of religion, which made it be his business both to exercise, and diffuse it to his uttermost; he was a mighty lover of God and men, and being of a lively active spirit, that love was his facile, potent mover to the doing even of all the good that could be thought (in an ordinary way) possible to him, and more than was possible to most other men. To give a true succinct account of the complexion of his soul, he was even made up of life and love. Such was the clearness and sincerity of his spirit, his constant uprightness and integrity, so little darkened by an evil conscience (and indeed, little overclouded with melancholy fumes) that he seemed to live in the constant sense of God's favour and acceptance, and had nothing to do but to serve him with his might; whence his spirit was formed to an habitual cheerfulness, and seemed to feel within itself a continual calm. So undisturbed a serenity hath, to my observation, rarely been discernable in any man; nor was his

a dull, sluggish peace, but vital, and joyous; seldom hath that been more exemplified in any man, (Rom. viii. 6.) To be spiritually minded is life, and peace. Seldom have any lived more under the government of that kingdom, which stands in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. His reverence of the divine majesty was most profound, his thoughts of God high and great, that seemed totally to have composed him to adoration, and even made him live a worshipping life: he was not wont to speak to God, or of him at a vulgar rate, he was most absolutely resigned and given up to him; devotedness to his interest, acquiescence in his wisdom and will, were not mere precepts with him, but habits. No man could be more deeply concerned about the affairs of religion, and God's interest in the world; yet his solitude was tempered with that steadfast trust, that it might be seen the acknowledged verities of God's governing the world, superintending and ordering all human affairs, by wise and steady counsel, and almighty power, which in most others are but faint notions, were with him turned into living sense, and vital principles, which governed his soul! Whereupon his great reverence of the majesty of God, falling into a conjunction with an assured trust, and sense of his love and goodness, made that rare and happy temperament with him, which I cannot better express than by a pleasant seriousness. What friend of his did ever, at the first, congress, see his face but with a grave smile? when unexpectedly and by surprise he came in among his familiar friends, it seemed as if he had blest the room, as if a new soul, or some good genius were come among them.

I need not tell them that survive, who were nearest to him, how pleasant a relative he was, nor doth any man need to tell me how pleasant a friend! No man ever more understood, than he, the ingenuities, and delights of friendship, especially the high pleasure of gratifying and obliging another; the relishes whereof were so delicious to him, that no festival could be so grateful to any man as the opportunity was to him of making another taste, and feel his kindness. Nor did I ever observe any thing so like a frequent fault in him, as an aptness to overvalue his friend. He was a man of most punctual scrupulous fidelity, his word was ever with him so strictly sacred, that, in the smallest matters, his appointments, though numerous, were through his great prudence so sure, that one might, without the intervenience of extraordinary providence, as certainly expect them, as the returns of day and night. So that they who knew him, though most delighted with his society, were never wont to urge for his stay with them, beyond his prefixed time (which he com-

monly mentioned at his first entrance) knowing it would be in vain.

He was of a large and great soul, comprehensive of the interests of God, the world, the church, his country, his friends, and (with a peculiar concernedness) of the souls of men, ready to his uttermost to serve them all : made up of compassion towards the distressed, of delight in the good, and of general benignity towards all men. He had a soul, a life, a name, darkened with no cloud but that of his own great humility, which clouded him only to himself, but beautified and brightened him in the eyes of all others : a humility that allowed no place with him to any aspiring design, or high thought, that could ever be perceived by word, look, or gesture ; except the high thoughts and designs which neither ought to be excluded, nor repressed. His greatest ambition was to do good, and partake it in the highest, and the best kind of it ; to make the nearest approaches he could to the pattern and fountain of all goodness. And now looking upon so qualified a person, as engaged by office in a peculiar sort of service to Christ, to gather and draw in souls to him, and prepare them for a blessed eternity ; how great things may we expect? What do we not find? Mells in Somersetshire was his first, and only (public) station. Thither he was brought, by so peculiar a conduct and direction of providence, as seemed to carry with it some signification what great use he was afterwards to be of, in that place. The very reverend Dr. Whichcot, being also at that time fellow of the same college in Cambridge, and presented to a living in that country, that was in the disposition of that college ; obtained of him to accompany him in a journey to visit, and make some trial of the people, he had been designed to take the charge of. Where that so accomplished person expressed a resolution fit to be exemplary to others, of profoundest learning (and which was strictly afterwards followed by this his chosen companion) preaching his first sermon (as himself was pleased to tell me) upon those words : I determined to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. After some time spent together here, the doctor's affairs recalling him, for the present to Cambridge ; he prevailed with our worthy friend to stay behind, and supply his absence among his people.

What follows, I was informed of by another hand, but one so nearly related to this our dear deceased friend, and so well acquainted with the more desirable occurrences of his life, as not to leave me in doubt concerning so momentous a thing, as how he came to be settled in a country so remote from his own, and where he was so mere a stranger. And it fell out

thus, during his abode upon this occasion, in those parts, a noted gentleman, the patron of the rectory of Mellis, being at that time high sheriff of the county, sent to Mr. Fairclough (of whose worth, fame had not let him long be ignorant) desiring him to preach the assize sermon; some circumstances having also brought the matter within so narrow a compass, that the straits of time made it necessary to press the request with more importunity than could admit of a denial. That performance was so highly acceptable, and so newly over, when the patron was surprised with the tidings of the death of the former rector of Mellis; that he immediately told our worthy friend, he could not otherwise so fitly gratify him for his sermon, as by conferring upon him such a living, which, if he pleased to accept it, was his.

The opportunity of stated service, in a calling to which he had most seriously devoted himself, more than the emolument (as did afterwards sufficiently appear) soon determined his thoughts, and fixed him in this station. There he shone many years a bright and a lively light, a burning, as well as shining one; it was soon observed what a star was risen in that horizon, and a confluence was quickly gathered of such as rejoiced in the light of it, which made an obscure country village soon become a most noted place; from sundry miles about, thither was the great resort, so that I have wondered to see so thronged an auditory as I have sometimes had the opportunity to observe in such a place, that did usually attend his most fruitful ministry. And O how hath that congregation been wont to melt under his holy fervours! His prayers, sermons, and other ministerial performances had that strange pungency, quickness, and authority with them, at sometimes; that softness, gentleness, sweetness, alluringness at others: that one would think it scarce possible to resist the spirit, and power wherewith he spake. And the effect did in a blessed measure correspond, they became a much enlightened, knowing, judicious, convinced, reformed, even somewhat generally, and in good part a seriously religious people. His labours here were almost incredible. Beside his usual exercises on the Lord's day, of praying, reading the Scriptures, preaching, catechising, administering the sacraments (as the occasions or stated seasons occurred) he usually five days in the week, betimes in the morning, appeared in public, prayed, and preached an expository lecture upon some portion of the holy Scriptures, in course, to such as could then assemble, which so many did, that he always had a considerable congregation; nor did he ever produce in public any thing, which did not smell of the lamp. And I

know that the most eminent for quality, and judgment, among his hearers, valued those his morning exercises for elaborateness accuracy, instructiveness, equally with his Lord's days sermons. Yet also he found time, not only to visit the sick (which opportunities he caught at with great eagerness) but also, in a continual course, all the families within his charge; and personally, and severally to converse with every one that was capable, labouring to understand the present state of their souls, and applying himself to them in instructions, reproofs, admonitions, exhortations and encouragements suitably thereto: and he went through all with the greatest facility, and pleasure imaginable; his whole heart was in his work. Every day, for many years together, he used to be up by three in the morning, or sooner, and to be with God (which was his dear delight) when others slept. Few men had ever less hinderance from the body, or more dominion over it, a better habited mind, and body have rarely dwelt together. No controversies arose among his neighbours, within his notice, which he made it not his business to get presently composed; and his help and advice was wont to be sought by persons of eminent rank, and in matters of very great difficulty, and importance, for that purpose. His own love of peace always inclining him, and his great prudence well enabling him to be exceedingly useful, in any such case. Nor were his labours confined within that narrower verge, his name and worth were too well known abroad, to let him be engrossed by one single parish; in how many places did he scatter light, and diffuse the knowledge of God, wheresoever, within his reach, the opportunity of a lecture, occasional, or fixed, did invite!

The state of things, in those days, making it necessary (and not hindering) that what was to be done for the preservation of common order, must be by the spontaneous associating of the pastors of many congregations; how did he inspire those assemblies! The deference that was given to him, even by very reverend persons of great value, and much exceeding him in years, with the effectual influence he had upon all their affairs, (manifestly aiming at nothing but the promoting of religion, and the common good) were only arguments of the commanding power of true worth. And the good effects upon the people, shewed how much could be done by a naked, undisguised recommendation of one's self to men's consciences, in the sight of God. Nor would his brethren, of greatest value (and divers there were, in those parts, of very great) think it any detraction from themselves to acknowledge much more to the wise, modest, humble activity of his spirit, in their common concerns, than I shall be willing to arrogate to him. He was,

upon the whole, a very public blessing, in that country, while he kept his public station in it ; and when the time approached of his quitting it, he eminently shewed his constant, great moderation in reference to the controverted things, that occasioned his doing so, in all his reasonings with his brethren about them. And it further appeared, in the earnest bent of his endeavours to form the minds of his people, as much as was possible, unto future union, under the conduct of whosoever should succeed him, in the serious care of their souls ; and to a meek, unrepining submission to that present separation, which was now to be made between him and them ; whereof the ex-tant abridgment of sundry his later sermons to them are an abundant testimony ; though such a repression of their sorrows it was not possible to them to receive, otherwise than as dutiful children are wont to do the exhortations of an affectionate, dying father, not to mourn for his death. In the substantial things of religion, no man was more fervently zealous ; about the circumstantial, none more cool and temperate.

But he could in nothing prevaricate with his (once settled) judgment, or depart in his practice one ace from it ; yet such was the candour and softness of his spirit, that nothing could be more remote from him, than to pass any harsh censures upon those that received that satisfaction in the scrupled points, which he could not : but he continued a most entire undiminished friendship with many of them (and several of eminent note, by whom also it was equally cherished, on their parts) even to the last. His great contempt of the world, and remoteness from making the sacred office subservient to secular interest, a design of enriching himself by it, or more than to subsist, too soon appeared in the mean condition to which he was brought, by that deprivation. For though the annual profits of his living were very considerable, yet his free (but well regulated) hospitality, and large diffusive charity, (wherein his excellent consort, one of the most pious, prudent, well accomplished matrons I ever knew, most readily concurred with him) kept them from being superfluous, or flowing into coffers. He had laid no treasure, but in heaven ; and was the son of a no way unlike father, from whom the expectancy of a patrimonial estate could not be great : and whom (to his no small joy while he continued) he survived but a little. So that for some years (as I have heard him say) he did owe much of his subsistence to the bounty of some worthy citizens of London, whose temper it is to take more pleasure in doing such good, than in having it told the world who they were. His usefulness was such, since his deprivation (not in serving a party, a thing too mean and little to be ever thought of by him, without

disdain; but) in pressing the great, and agreed things, that belong to serious, living religion; that it even melts my soul to think of the overwhelming sorrows wherewith the tidings of his death must have been received, by multitudes in the west, that were often wont with greatest delight and fruit to enjoy his most lively, edifying labours.

His decease confirms it to us, once more, that nothing, belonging to this world of ours, is too good to die. But it is a great argument of God's kind propensions towards it, and speaks much of his good-will to men, that now and then such heavenly creatures are permitted to inhabit it, and such *specimina* and efforts of the divine life to appear, and be put forth in it. It shews God hath not forsaken the earth, and that his tabernacle is with men, when any such are to be found here.

It ought to be reckoned very monitory, and a great rebuke, when such are (earlier than according to natural course) taken away. It should make us love heaven so much the better, that such as he are gathered thither; not that it needs any thing to better it in itself, but that we can now better relish the thoughts that arise out of our own present knowledge; and having seen true goodness exemplified, may thence more easily take our advantage to apprehend what that state is, wherein there will be so vast a collection of excellent creatures, so perfectly good, by most liberal eternal participations from the first, and uncreated good. How taking is this notion of heaven? I especially pronounce this holy man blessed, saith a great man in the * ancient church, speaking of an excellent person deceased, † for that he hath passed from one order to another (*μετάβασις*) and leaving our city, hath ascended to another city, even that of God himself; and leaving this church of ours; is gone into the church of the first-born who are written in heaven; and hath left our solemn conventions for that of myriads of angels: referring to that of the apostle, Heb. 12.20. and magnifying (that *πανηγυρις*) that glorious convention, not for the multitude of the powers above only, but for the confluence of the good, with a perfect vacancy of envy, and an abounding perpetual joy and satisfaction of mind—love, peace, goodness, &c. and every fruit of the spirit in most plenteous fulness (to this purpose he speaks) and what an amiable heaven is this?

Yea, and it may incline us to have somewhat the kinder thoughts of this our meaner native element, and less to regret that our earthly part should dissolve and incorporate with it, to think what rich treasure, what shrines of a lately inhabiting

* Chrysost. Panegyri.

† Philogonius.

deity (now become sacred dust) it hath from time to time received, and transmuted into itself. How voluminously have some written of *Roma Subterranea!*† of the tombs of martyrs, and other excellent persons (as many of them were) collected in one little spot of this earth: And if there were as particular an account of the more refined part of the subterraneous London, much more of all places where just and holy men have dropped, and deposed their earthly tabernacles; how would our earth appear ennobled (and even hallowed) by such continual accessions to it, in all times and ages? What a glorious host will arise and spring up, even out of London? Is not the grave now a less gloomy thing? Who would grudge to lie obscurely awhile, among them with whom we expect to rise, and ascend so gloriously? It should make us diligent in the remaining time of our abode here, what should not the expectation of such a welcome carry us through? Well done, good and faithful servant, &c. How studious should we be, so to acquit ourselves, as he hath done? Blessed is that servant whom the Lord, when he comes, shall find so doing; let us then be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

† Jo. Severanus, P. Aringhus, &c.