

A SERMON

PREACHED

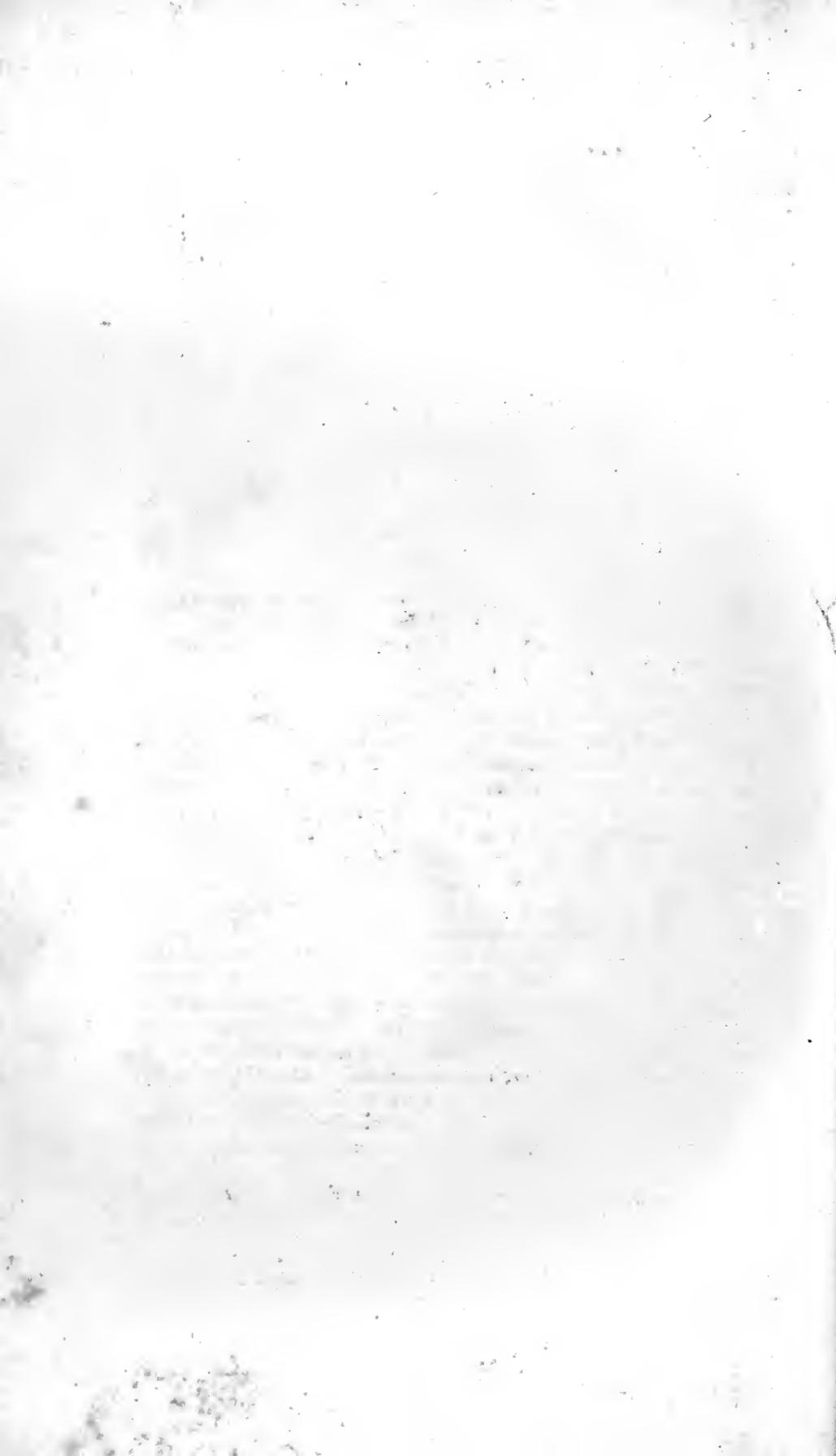
ON THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER, 1703.

READER,

THIS discourse was preached without any, the least thought of its being made more public; and a considerable time passed afterwards, without any such intention. I thought it indeed too uncomposed, to appear in the world; but in a matter of no worse consequence, I make no difficulty of acknowledging, that I at length chose rather to follow the judgment of the many hearers, that moved for this further publication, than my own. Therefore amidst much other business, and great infirmities, that are sufficiently monitory to me to be unconcerned for the gratifying of curiosity, in myself, or in any others; I so far revised it, as very imperfect memorials would enable me. If anywhere it be somewhat enlarged, that can be no prejudice to them that heard it; and much less to them that heard it not.

That it may be of some use to direct our thanksgivings (and supplications also) so as, without the neglect of lower and subservient mercies, they may have principal respect to blessings of the highest value; is the serious desire, and prayer of an earnest and well-willer to the true prosperity of the Christian church,

J. H.



A SERMON:

Col. 1, 13.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

YOU already know, that the occasion of our assembling together this day is twofold ; to commemorate some former national mercies, and deliverances from certain very considerable efforts of that power of darkness, which is peculiar to the devil's kingdom : and also, to prepare for the commemoration, at the approaching season, of the much more general mercy of our common redemption, in the observation of a solemn rite belonging to the kingdom of Christ.† The two parts of this text give us an apt, and suitable ground for each of these. For giving God thanks, for great former mercies ; and preparation for that designed holy solemnity.

First. We begin, for the former of these purposes, with the first part of the text, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." And that we may see how accommodate this will be to the former mentioned purpose (as comprehended within the import of this clause, and but comprehended, it being of much greater latitude) some things I must previously note to you. As,

1. That there is a kingdom manifestly implied in these words, "The power of darkness," unto which the kingdom of God's dear Son is opposite.

2. That this kingdom can be no other than the devil's kingdom, whom our Lord himself doth own to have a kingdom. If

† It being our usual monthly season of preparation for the Lord's supper.

Satan be divided against himself, how then can his kingdom stand? Mat. 12, 26. These are our Lord's own words, and joined, in that context, with what sufficiently intimates that kingdom to be directly opposite to his own.

3. That the distinguishing characters of these two opposite kingdoms, the kingdom of the devil, and the kingdom of God's dear Son, are darkness, and light; the one is a kingdom of darkness, and the other is a kingdom of light. The devils are called the rulers of the former, so stigmatized, Ephs. 6, 12. principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Our Lord's is implied to be a kingdom of light, in the words immediately foregoing: Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, &c. It is a kingdom they are to inherit, Mat. 25, 34. In its most perfect state it comprehends brightest light, purity, and glory; as the opposite kingdom, consummate, is utter darkness. And so are the beginnings and first principles of each. Ye were darkness, now are light in the Lord—Ephs. 5, 8. Both are seen, in the unconverted, and converted state; to turn them from darkness to light, and (which shews that darkness to be satanical) from the power of Satan, unto God, Acts 26, 18. As what their inheritance is hereupon to be, the next words shew, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified. And yet again,

4. That the darkness, which characterizes the devil's kingdom, includes those things that are directly opposite unto those included in the light, which characterizes the kingdom of Christ. The light that characterizes the kingdom of Christ, includes these two things, truth and holiness.

These are the principal things, comprehended in the notion of light, as it is characteristical of the kingdom of the Son of God. The light of truth, objectively revealed, and subjectively received, the frame of Christian doctrine, with the knowledge, and belief thereof; and the light of holiness, so shining in the lives of christians, that men may see their good works, (Mat. 5, 16.) Accordingly the darkness, that doth characterize the devil's kingdom, doth comprehend in it falsehood and wickedness.

It comprehends in it all manner of falsehood, truth obscured and perverted, ignorance, error, deceit, blindness of heart, (Eph. 4, 18.) a wilful overlooking of the great and most necessary truths, which the souls of men are, above all other, concerned to take in, and admit into their inward parts. And it comprehends wickedness in the whole compass of it; wickedness against God, all manner of impiety, idolatry, blasphemy,

neglect and profanation of the ordinances and institutions, wherein he claims to be worshipped, in the proper seasons thereof. Wickedness against men, all comprehended and summed up in their hatred of one another. He that hateth his brother, is in darkness, even diabolical; for they who emerge, and are recovered out of it, are said to have overcome the wicked one. 1 John. 2. 11, 13. And both these sorts of wickedness are put together, Rom. 13. 12, 13. Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. And those works of darkness are said to be chambering, wantonness, rioting, drunkenness, strife and envying. And Ephes. 5. 11. We are warned to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Which works are (ver. 3. and 4.) said to be fornication, uncleanness, covetousness (which is also said to be idolatry) filthiness, foolish talking, &c. as things that bar us from any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, or of God. And christians are therefore forbidden to be partakers therein, (ver. 7.) because they are light, and children of light, ver. 8. And as it is, 1 Thes. 5. 5. of the day, not of the night, nor of darkness. They are of the opposite kingdom, and must walk conformably thereto. Our way being thus far plain, we go on to add,

5. That the power which the devil exerts and exercises, in this darkness, is twofold, first, spiritual and internal. Secondly, secular and external.

(1.) There is a spiritual power which he exercises in this darkness, acting more immediately upon the minds and spirits of men. The God of this world blinds their minds, who believe not, 2 Cor. 4. 4. And he is said to be the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, Ephes. 2. 2. And the impenitent, such as have not hitherto repented and turned to God, it is said: He leads them captive at his will, 2 Tim. 2. 26. And

(2.) There is a secular power which he also exerts, in the midst of that darkness that he hath brought upon this world, relating, as far as he can obtain leave, to the bodies of men, and their external concerns and affairs; and not only of particular persons, but of nations and kingdoms, especially where he observes any design, to be more directly formed against his kingdom, and interest in this world; he thereupon comes to be engaged in a more open and explicit opposition. And so when he is the author of this or that bodily or outward affliction, to a particular person, as he can obtain divine permission; this is an effort of his power, in the midst of that darkness. Such as are rescued out of his kingdom, his design is to vex, because he cannot destroy them, whom he cannot

mortally touch; namely, such as are born of God, and have a new nature, by that divine birth, the wicked one touches them not, (1 John. 5. 18.) that is, not mortally to make them sin unto death, as ver. 16. But if he can however have leave to touch them in their bodies, or external concerns, he will rather do that than nothing; ruin them he cannot, but he will afflict them as he can. Therefore is he said to go about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; which is there meant, immediately, in reference to their external concerns, as will appear if you observe the context, 1 Pet. 5. 8. For it follows in the 9th verse, Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren, that are in the world. It is true, being uncertain of the event, he hath a further aim to overthrow their faith, and by his roaring to fright them out of their religion; therefore it is said: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, defeat his final design. But as the means to his end, when he roars like a lion against any of the servants of Christ, it is with design to bring them into the most afflicted condition he can; that so he may, at least, make them signify the less in that state of opposition wherein they are engaged against him, in the world. So you find the imprisonment of Christ's servants imputed to Satan, Rev. 2. 10. The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation for ten days, which some understand of the ten persecutions. Whatever the devil meant, God intended their trial, as it is there said, and the demonstration of the victorious power of the divine principle, their faith, and his spirit in them, that being tried, it might be found unto praise and glory—1 Pet. 1. 7. And we cannot but doubt he let Job come on the stage, as his champion to combat Satan, who was the prime author of his manifold calamities; his accuser first, and his persecutor afterwards. He accuseth him of want of integrity, Doth Job serve God for nought? (chap. 1. 9.) and at the same time complains of his own want of power to come at him: Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? ver. 10. Whereupon, for the trial of Job's fidelity and patience, God puts all he had into the devil's power, his person only excepted, which as yet he must not touch; manifest therefore it is, the devil animated the Sabeans, and Chaldeans to take away his oxen, and asses, and to slay his servants with the edge of the sword; (ver. 14. 15, 18.) that kindled the fire in the lower heavens, that burnt up his sheep, and servants; (ver. 16.) that raised the storm from the wilderness, that smote the four corners of the house, where his sons and his daughters were eating, and drinking, and buried them in its ruins, ver.

18. And we are expressly told that it was the devil, upon his enlarged licence, that smote him with those venomous boils. chap. 2. 7. It was the devil that bound that daughter of Abraham eighteen years, Luke. 13. 16. It was the devil that brought, upon the Christian church, the famed ten persecutions, under the pagan Roman empire, understood to be meant by the great red dragon, Rev. 12, 3. Whence also, he wears that very name, ver. 9. The great red dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan—These are some of those efforts, amidst that darkness, wherein the devil hath, and uses so great power. But yet further,

6. It is manifestly a far greater deliverance to be freed from his spiritual power, and the horrid effects thereof, than from that which he may use in reference to our outward concernments.

Therefore now, upon these mentioned considerations, on this former part of the text, that we may apply it suitably to our present purpose, these two things are to be asserted and evinced.—That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, is a real and great deliverance: But that—To be delivered from his power, in spiritual respects, is a much greater deliverance.

(1.) That to be delivered from the devil's power, in external respects, either personal, or national, is a real, and very great deliverance. We are to look upon that deliverance, which this day we more particularly commemorate, now almost a hundred years ago, as a defeated plot of the devil. It carries that manifest aspect with it to every eye, a contrivance formed, and designed to be executed, by the subtilty, and power of the prince of the darkness of this world. I need not repeat the narrative of it, being sufficiently known to you, or may be read in our histories; but nothing can be plainer, than that here was a design and plot of hell and devils, contrived in the dark, and so to have been executed, till the execution itself should have brought it to light. For what darkness, but that of hell, could have so much fire in it? so much of destructive rage and fury? And though there was hazard in the undertaking to the instrumental actors, what did the devil care what became of them? If his main design succeeded, he had been a great gainer, and glutted his ravenous appetite; if it succeeded not, but turned upon the heads of the undertakers, he had been no loser, but only less a gainer, having some prey however to feed, but not satiate a devouring appetite, which must be eternally insatiable. And what can be more devil like?

And what was the deliverance, by which God did again signalize this very day fifteen years ago, but a repetition of the same mercy? The same in substance, though different in circum-

stance. It was from the same enemy, the same invisible, and the same visible enemy, that we were preserved then, and more lately since. And what is our continued peace and quiet hitherto, but the same mercy continued, under the care and conduct of our present sovereign? It is preservation from the same enemy, and from the powers of the same darkness, that we continue hitherto to enjoy. And this mercy is not only real, but great, both in itself great, and great in respect of what it incloses, and subserves. In itself, for it is preservation from a great enemy, the greatest in all the world: a daring one, that feared not to contend perpetually with the Almighty, and without hope of self-advantage; who loves mischief therefore for mischief's sake, and working with mighty power, and power that works in such darkness, as to us mortals is impenetrable. And great, in respect of what it incloses, and is subservient unto; for it incloses the precious gospel of our Lord, yet continued unto us, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the gracious communications we partake in, by and through them; and is subservient to their true and proper design. And therefore mercy, of that kind, ought to be looked upon as real, and very great, which way soever you consider it. We should therefore take heed of being guilty of so vile ingratitude, as not to commemorate, with a suitable impression upon our spirits, this sort of mercies, which were the foundation of the mercies we have in so long a course enjoyed; for former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The expression is very emphatical, and worthy our most serious regard, which we have, psal. lxxxix. 2. For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever. And how is mercy said to be built up, but as former mercies are fundamental to later ones? Thus are the present mercies, that we enjoy this day, founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we ought joyfully and thankfully to recount, with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the most High. But yet,

(2.) I must also note to you, that however we are to esteem mercies, of that kind, namely, deliverances from the external power of the prince of darkness, real, and very great mercies; we are yet to account deliverance from the spiritual power, exerted in that darkness, much greater. I hope all your minds and hearts will close with me in this, as soon as you hear it, it carrying its own light and evidence in itself. For if you do but compare the cases of them, who have been all along the authors of those great calamities and miseries, to the inhabitants of this lower world, and especially to the church of Christ in it, with theirs that have been the sufferers, upon the most peculiar account; you cannot but say, the portion and lot of the sufferers is most unspeakably rather to be chosen. We know

who have been the authors of those great calamities in the world, and in the church of God in it, for many ages by-past; the same who were to have been the authors of our intended destruction. And in taking a view of their case, let us consider both their character, and their doom; both which you may find set down together, in one place, viz. 2 Thes. ix. 10, 11, 12.

[1.] Their character, which really is enough to fright any man that is but master of his own reason, to see how and in what way they have abandoned and lost theirs, to behold men so stigmatized, as indeed they have marked out themselves: they whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power; here is the devil's power at work in them, the horrid cause of their stupendous demeritation. The effects do follow: and by them in signs, and lying wonders, among all which wonders the greatest wonder is themselves; that the thing called man in them should be so metamorphosed, and transformed into so brutal, and diabolical a monster! so destitute of understanding, so full of malignity, (as we shall further see, by and by) and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. So far their character is continued, and it partly further follows, interwoven with some part of their present doom; as also their final doom is both inter-erted, and distinctly expressed. Therefore take into their character, their being under strong delusion, the energy of deceit, as the greek signifies, to believe a lie; spoken indefinitely, to note that any, the most absurd figment they can be imposed upon to believe, that God sends them, as belonging to their doom, we shall consider afterwards. And we might enlarge their character, by taking in from ver. 3. that they are apostates, such as were fallen away from a state of excellency; and spoken of as one person, from their oneness in spirit and design, as a man of sin, a son of perdition (capable of the active, as well as passive sense) and ver. 4. who opposes, exalteth himself above all that is called God, sits in his temple, is worshipped as God. And ver. 8. the wicked or lawless one. This is their character that are, and have been, through many centuries of years, the authors of the miseries and calamities the church of God hath suffered, and partly doth suffer, and is endangered by at this day. In this their character, I shall take notice of two things.

Of the great infatuation that is upon their minds.—Of the monstrous degeneracy, not from Christianity only, but even from humanity too, that is to be found in the temper of their spirits.

First. The great infatuation that is upon their minds. It appears that they are under strong delusions, potent, efficacious ones, they are most effectually deluded. And of this I could give many instances, but shall content myself only with the mention of two.

The first is, That great fundamental wild conceit which they have laid at the bottom of their whole enchanted fabric, by which one would wonder, how they could hope to impose on any part of the rational world; or could be imposed upon themselves, that all the power they claim, and use, to the disturbance of mankind, and oppression of the Christian church, they pretend to have by deputation from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and by succession from the holy apostle Peter. By deputation from Christ, as if they were his deputies, in doing such monstrous work as this! as if Christ had deputed them to destroy Christianity, to render it a ridiculous thing, by their inserted fooleries; and odious, by their barbarous cruelties! That He, who was the light of the world, should appoint them to overspread it with darkness! That he, who so freely shed his blood to redeem it, had commissioned them so copiously to shed human, and Christian blood. To make even his church, the temple of the living God a shambles and slaughter-house, and affright the rest of mankind from coming near it; who yet could be as little safe in declining it, if they were within the reach of their arm! What fearful havock did they make, unprovoked in America, as soon as they could get any footing there; destroying multitudes of (towards them) harmless, innocent creatures, and who (as strangers) received them with all possible kindness, even to the number of no less than forty millions; as hath been acknowledged by some of their own historians. † Their kings and princes were put to death, with most exquisite torture, upon the unjustifiable pretence of their being infidels; but with design to make them confess their gold and treasure, which they did but suspect they concealed. By these inhuman cruelties they laid waste whole fruitful countries, and turned well-peopled lands into mere desarts. And what other tendency could this have, than to engage the nations of the earth against christians, and Christianity itself, as a thing by no means to be endured in the world; and were such multitudes destroyed by Christ's direction, and to propagate the Christian faith! And what commotions, wars, and bloodshed did they introduce into that large country of Habassia, disturbing that quiet and peaceful empire, though Christian, only because it would not be Roman! § And have we not reason to add the many horrid tragedies acted by them, more within our near notice, in the several parts of Europe, and in this kingdom particularly; and that all this should be pretended to be done by a power derived from Christ! in so open, and contemptu-

† D. Barth. dc. l. Casas B. of Chiap.

§ Of which see Ludolphus, and at large, D. Geddes Ethiop. histor.

ous opposition to the laws, and spirit of Christ! the design of his coming into this world! and the very genius, and natural tendency of christianity itself. The things themselves are full of black horror. But that they should be said to be done in that name, speaks the most monstrous impudence, and infatuation! As if Christ had changed names with the devil, and laying aside that of a Saviour, had chosen to be called Abaddon, or Apollyon, the common destroyer of mankind. And having changed his mind, and his very nature, did now set himself to counter-act, and defeat the design for which he came into the world!

And that they have this power, by succession from St. Peter, is as idle and absurd a pretence. If he were their predecessor, they were sure very unsuitable successors. Did he ever go before them in such work? What precepts, what footsteps of his have they followed? Did he ever claim a power to annul, at his own pleasure, the laws and ordinances of his Master and Lord? to amass treasures, to accumulate dignities, acquire ample revenues, to dispose of crowns and sceptres, and, as he should think fit, to dethrone, or unthroned the princes and potentates of this earth?

If he had such power, what is that to them? How came they by it from him? was it because he was bishop of Rome, that therefore the assumed, usurped name, without the apostolical office, and the (inseparable) spirit, and spiritual power, acts, and design, could create them such? As well might the habit make a monk, or a beard a philosopher; by their fruits and works they are to be known. Our Lord reckoned himself sufficiently to have refuted their vain pretence, who gloried in being Abraham's successors, by telling them: So did not Abraham, John. 8. 40. But all their learning, wit, and sophistry will never answer what hath been written†, to make it highly probable that St. Peter was never at Rome, much less sat twenty five years there. It must therefore be a strong delusion must make them build so mighty a fabric, upon so infirm and weak a foundation.

The second thing I shall instance in, is their worshipping a piece of bread as a deity. What a strange infatuation is that, that one cannot distinguish a piece of bread from a God, or an object of worship! And to believe this against the most irrefragable reason, and common sense, and without any pretence from Scripture, more plausible than it would be to say, the

† In the modest enquiry, upon that subject; a work, that though anonymous, the author needed not be ashamed of: besides what hath been said by divers others.

sun in the firmament is a God, or that a buckler, which one turns with his hand this way or that, and wherewith men defend themselves in battle, is a deity, or an object of worship; because God is said in Scripture, to be a sun and a shield; with a thousand like instances that might be given.

Secondly. But we are to consider also, as we proposed, and as belonging to the character of these men, the monstrous degeneracy not from Christianity only; but also, from common humanity itself, that appears in the temper of their spirits. This depends upon the former, which could not be spoken of, without some excursion into this; but they are distinct things, and therefore the latter requires to be distinctly, but briefly touched upon. And this depravedness of their spirits is that which is unspeakably more horrid (if any thing can be thought to be more so) that men, and who profess themselves christians, could impose it upon themselves to be so barbarously bloody and cruel, to every one that is not so stupidly foolish in these things as themselves, that they would destroy all the rest of mankind, if it were in their power, for not agreeing with them in the same sentiments; though to agree with them, I must disagree with myself, and with all other men that have yet their reason, and their senses left them, and the faith of christians, in other points, most essential to religion. If I will not believe that they are deputed by Christ, as the successors of St. Peter, to do what they please, in secular governments, and religion; if I will not believe a piece of bread ought to be worshipped as a God; I am to be tortured to death, for this my disbelief! which is so horrid a transformation of a human creature, as no power of thought can frame an idea of any thing more monstrous, throughout the world! Namely, a christian, because he is so, must be made the common butcher of mankind! to destroy as many human lives as he can reach! For if this treatment be for this reason deserved, it ought to take place to our utmost every where. Whence also is to be collected, that men might, had they not been christians, have been sociable, kind, friendly, and have lived quietly, and pleasantly with one another! So that Christian religion is the transforming principle, and obliges men to be the destroyers of their brethren, as much as in them lies; and with exquisite torment that of burning alive, such as common humanity would abhor to use, towards a beast. And besides, the tortures of their inquisition must be thought a thousand times worse than burning for an hour or two! And let now this matter be impartially considered, doth it not already appear, that the authors of such miseries and calamities to the rest of men, and the rest of christians, especially such as are sincere, are in

much worse case than the poor sufferers? We cannot but judge so, on the following accounts : namely,

Here is first a transformation of minds. The minds of men, of reasonable creatures are transformed into the most horrid things ; that is, they are turned, excepting the mere human shape, (and every one that understands what belongs to the human essence, easily apprehends how little mere external shape doth, to the making of a man) they are turned into ravenous wild beasts, into lions, tygers, bears, wolves, destroying and tearing in pieces whatever comes in their way ! And do but consider, were it not a much more eligible thing to have the nature of man, the understanding of man, common humanity remaining, though the external shape were altered ; than to have the shape of a man remaining, but to be in the temper of one's mind a tiger, a bear ravaging and destroying wheresoever one goes ? Such are set up as portents, prodigies, and as monitory signs, both to astonish mankind, that the impression may be deeper and more permanent ; and thereupon to warn them, seasonably to repress the beginnings of any such disposition, fearing whither it may grow. And therefore to consider, with dread, how fearful a thing it is that there should be such a sort of creatures, in human shape, as can take delight in tormenting them that never did or wished them harm ; as with pleasure can torture others, for no other cause but merely because they take the same liberty of thought, which as a common right themselves assume ; and cannot be of their opinion, against common sense, and the common reason of mankind, and without pretence any way. If a man were to express his sense as to this matter, in a solemn prayer to the Almighty, would he not say : Lord, let me rather be the most monstrous deformed creature, in external shape, that ever was produced in this world ; only let me have in me a right, nor give me up to a reprobate mind ! And what can we conceive more essential to man, than these two things, reason, and love ; and both these are abandoned and lost, in those men whose character hath been given. Their reason and love do, at least, suffer the highest violation both together. They believe themselves, and would have all others believe, against the common reason and sense of men ; and are become haters of mankind, otherwise than as they shall fall in with their absurd sentiments, and will be subservient to their cursed designs. Again,

We shall secondly be easily induced to look upon the author's case, as much the less eligible, than the sufferer's, upon this further account ; that this horrid degeneracy, and depravedness of spirit is most entirely voluntary, and proceeds from their plenary consent with the devil, as an inactuating spirit

in them. Such is the import of those tremendous words (that would make one shrug to think of them)—that spirit that in-worketh (or hath energy) in the children of disobedience, Eph. 2. 2. Their perfect voluntariness appears, in their most complacent self approbation, under so direful a transforming change, from man, into part brute, part devil. Others feel in themselves some disaffections, and distempers of spirit, which they deplore, lament, and contend against. These men glory in their own shame, and what ought to make them a hissing,† and reproach to the nations of the earth, they applaud them for. They declare their sin, as Sodom, justify the prodigious deformities of their own spirits, write volumes to defend them, and put on a countenance, unaccustomed to blushing; as if in good earnest they expected other men should think their cause to be good! And to what a stupendous height doth this raise the horror of their case!

But hence also it is that the devil hath that access to the inward parts, into the more secret receptacles, and chambers of their souls; unto which he could have none, if their consenting will did not open him the door. Not that there is any formal bargain, or contract between him and them, for his power, you find, works in darkness; but he and they agree upon the same things, so doth the devil lead them captive at his will, 2 Tim. 2. 26. The sufferers, in the mean time, are only such; and as they endure evils, in themselves incomparably less, they do but endure them; not being active to procure them, otherwise than by being, and doing what they ought. And so they have, in their suffering, that great matter of relief and rejoicing, the testimony of their conscience, (2 Cor. 1. 12.) besides the expectation of a glorious reward; while, for the authors of their sufferings, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude. 13. Which leads to the consideration of,

[2.] Their doom (for hitherto we had chiefly considered but their character) and this is partly present, partly final.

Present, That for this cause, God sends them strong delusions, (2 Thes. 2. 11.) not by active infusion of malignity, whereof, on God's part, there was no possibility, nor on their part, any need. They have enough of their own, besides the addition of what that text notes, that their coming is after the working of Satan with all power. These are a sort of men abandoned of God, delivered over to Satan, under whose conduct they have put themselves. A fearful case! They are, not by divine commission, but permission only, left in his

† — Populus mihi sibilat.

hands ; and now, the lusts of their father they will do, John. 8. 44.

Final. That they all might be damned—A severe sentence ! but justified by what went before, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved ; but struck off from the Christian religion, what should make it amiable and self-recommending (and by what follows,) that they took pleasure in unrighteousness ; hence they are left of God, in order to their future damnation. Not that God made any men, on purpose to damn them ; but when they had contracted such guilt, by sinning against the clearest light, against the law of their own nature, and against the law of Christ ; they are damned, as having marked themselves out for hell, and the society of devils, whose associates and subjects they were before. And if it be said, of them who do evil, that good may come, “their damnation is just” much more of them that love mischief, for mischief’s sake. And who would not now choose the tortures of a flaming fire, for an hour or two, rather than be turned into hell, to endure infernal flames for ever !

And we may add (to shew how much greater this spiritual deliverance is, than deliverance from the external powers of darkness) that the fearful tragedies that these men act, being by the so manifest and immediate power of the devil, he is therefore most highly gratified, by having his will so far of them. Nothing could be more grateful to him, than to have made them his tools, his instruments, to fill the world and the Christian church with such miseries and calamities, as they are the voluntary authors of ; and hereupon they will be the subjects of his triumph and scorn at last. And here, if you would but pause a little and consider, “What would I not rather choose, than to be the subject of the scorn and insultation of devils !” This is the case of this very generation of men. How will the devils insult over them ! “See what fools I have made of so great a part of mankind, how ready have they been to serve me, and my most horrid designs ! There is nothing that I would have them believe, be it never so absurd, but I could make them believe it ; there is nothing so horrid to act, but if I bid them, they are ready to act it !” And how much the greater will the matter of their insultation be, that such could be found, even in the Christian world, that should be made to serve his vile and horrid purposes, and so render Christianity hateful to mankind ! How hath the extent and growth of it, by this means, been hindered ! And it can never spread, till it have another kind of representation, than is given by this sort of men. And consider that, in opposition to what was last mentioned, from the spiritual power of the devil,

which he acts in this darkness, all the sincere are truly, and shall be fully delivered; whereas from his external power they are many times not delivered. It is not ascertained to them, that they shall not be impoverished that they shall not be cast into prison, that they shall not be put to death; but it is certain that Satan is dethroned in their souls, and that God will bruise him under their feet shortly, and they shall have opportunity and ground for eternal triumph, over all his power and malice. Therefore, upon all these accounts, this must be far the more eligible deliverance; though deliverance, in the former kind, is by no means to be made light of. They that are sincere, are sure at last of a most glorious victory over the devil. They shall overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony; not having loved their lives unto the death. And that is certainly the most desirable course and state, that hath the most desirable and valuable end.

And according hereto should the temper of our spirits be, in reference to such deliverance from the power of darkness, which we have occasion to make mention of, this day. We ought to remember, with great gratitude, our preservation from those efforts of this power, wherein it is exercised with reference to the external secular concerns of particular persons, and of nations, more especially our own. We have reason to bless God for that deliverance, that hath been wrought out for us in that kind; and that it hath been so often repeated, and so long continued. We ought to take much to heart the mercies of God herein. and although we are here met under somewhat a distinct character, to bear a part in the solemn thanksgivings of this day; we are not the less obliged to be very serious herein: and however, have for our part great reason not to expect any thing hard or grievous from such, differing from us, as understand religion; between whom and us, there is an agreement in all the substantials thereof. We have the same articles of doctrine, the same institutions of worship, and the same rules of life, conversation, and practice towards our sovereign, and fellow-subjects. And when there is so great an agreement, that which is left to be the matter of disagreement, can be only very little circumstantial things; and which they, from whom we differ, professedly call indifferent, not tending therefore, in themselves, to make either better men, or better christians. And whereas some of us do not think so, throughout, that disagreement is, we hope, the rather to be pardoned, both because it is little, so little that there are few men of considering minds that, upon strict inquiry and comparing of thoughts, will not be found to differ in much greater things; and very consistently with most entire mutual love, or at least

no design of hurt to each other. And yet the difference is real, and not to be dissembled, nor thrown off at pleasure; it being in no man's power, that would keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man, to form his judgment this way, or that, as he will.

And whereas there are churches abroad, and at home, where-with we agree, and from which we differ, in these smaller things; we are not willing quite to disjoin ourselves from either sort, in which the substance is visible of our common religion; for they are in their nature and kind, one and the same. Nor can we apprehend how a church, or a society formed for the purposes of religion, can be constituted, and distinguished for sole communion with that, and no other, by such things as are confessed, on all hands, to be no parts of religion; nor to have any necessary connection with it. The more truly catholic, the communion of christians is, it is the more truly Christian. There is a mental communion, which is more intimate than merely local; which yet we cannot have, with them with whom we judge it unlawful to have actual, local communion, if there be occasion. But one may have both, wheresoever the essentials of Christianity do appear; not subverted by the addition of other things, that are inconsistent with any of those essentials: as the case is with them, whose black character hath been given, in this discourse.

But though we are not to expect hard things from friends, we are to remember the same common enemy, to them and us, is still in being, and hath great power in the world; and that prince of darkness, that animates them, is still powerful, and as full of mischief as ever. And we know not what advantages our too common iniquities may, from the justice of a righteous God, give the common enemy against us; where-upon we have no reason to be secure. If things therefore should be brought to that state, that Smithfield fires should be kindled again, so as that we shall not be delivered from that sort of the powers of darkness; let us labour to get into that good state, as to be able to bless God, even in the midst of flames, that we are delivered from the worst sort of the powers of darkness; that the prince of this world is dethroned in our souls, that he is judged there. And let us labour to have that temper of mind, towards such as may be the authors of those sufferings to us, that our love towards them may not be extinguished. Labour that every one of us may say from our hearts: Let them discover what hatred they will towards me, God forbid that I should not exercise true love towards them. If they curse me, I will bless them; if they despitefully use me, and persecute me, I will pray for them.

Secondly. But we have also the second part of the

text to be briefly reflected upon. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" Our present limits allow us not to enlarge upon this part. And it cannot but be thought reasonable, that this occasion being monthly, and often considered, the other but annual, and rarely returning, we should choose to insist more largely upon it. But how great a privilege is this translation, and how amazing! that it should be represented to us by so endearing an expression! "Because my Son is dear to me, I will take you into his kingdom. He is not so dear to me, but I can be very well contented to make you partakers of all the blessings, that his kingdom carries in it."

And you know that there is no kingdom but what hath its particular laws and statutes and ordinances and privileges belonging to it. There is one great ordinance, belonging to this kingdom of our Lord's, that we are solemnly to attend, the next Lord's day. If we look upon ourselves as not only delivered from the power of darkness, but translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; this is indeed a great privilege, but there is no such privilege which hath not its duty belonging to it. We ought to consider how we shall carry the matter upon this translation, being translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and being to partake in the privileges that belong to his kingdom, how shall we deport ourselves suitably hereto, with what temper of spirit;

1. With an admiring temper of spirit, considering the state out of which we are delivered. He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, he hath turned us from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. This is that I am sent for, saith the apostle Paul, as a gospel minister, Acts. 26. 18. To open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God. Then into what a transport should it put us, to think that we should have been under the power of the devil unto this very day, the power of the prince of the air, that works in the children of disobedience, that works energetically, as the word signifies, his work in them hath an energy in it, Ephes. 2. 2. Oh frightful thought! to have such a horrid fiend lying continually in my bosom, preying upon the very vitals of my soul, leading me captive at his will! What the devil would have me be, and do, that I was, and did most readily!

2. We should recount, with great thanksgiving, our admission into this kingdom. Think we, first, whence we are delivered; and then into what state we are admitted, into the kingdom of his dear Son. Into what an adoring thankful frame should that put us, that our blessed God should translate us

into his own Son's kingdom! You shall hereupon be so provided and cared for, as none else in the world are besides. He will watch over your spirits, your souls shall be bound up in the bundle of life; you shall have all the supports and comforts to, that, in infinite wisdom and love, he shall judge necessary for you, in this world; and at length be brought into the presence of the divine glory, with exceeding great joy!

3. Consider that the particular ordinances, of this kingdom of his, are aptly designed for your advantage. This that we are now to prepare for, is an ordinance belonging to that kingdom; I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, saith our Lord, Luke 22. 29. 30. that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, We are to eat and drink with him, in his kingdom; and that ordinance, wherein we are to eat and drink with him, is the emblem of what is there finally designed and meant, when we are to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

4. We should consider what faith is required, on our part, being come into such a kingdom, and having the privileges thereof secured unto us, by such a sealing ordinance. There ought to be no dubious thought of him, who so kindly invites us; especially when we are, in so friendly a way, eating and drinking together.

5. It is to be considered what fidelity is required of us. We are to swear fealty to the King of this kingdom, never let it be said, we, that eat and drink at his table, have lift up our heel against him.

6. With what joy should we consider our state, in our approach to such an ordinance; we are received as friends to the King's table. Let Israel rejoice, in him that made him, let the children of Zion rejoice in their King, Psal. cxlix. 2. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, thy King cometh, meek and lowly. Zech. ix. 9. How infinitely condescending, when he treats such as we for his welcome guests! And take both the parts of the text together, and they will give us this twofold hint of use.

1. Consider how solicitous we ought to be, till we know that we are got out of that dark and horrid kingdom, and brought into this kingdom of light, and grace. When we know that these two kingdoms divide the world, and how fearful a thing it is to belong to the former, and how desirable a thing to belong to the latter kingdom; who would not be solicitous, till he knows that he is got out of that horrid kingdom, into this blissful one, and into so safe and happy a state? And how stupid negligence is it not to know, or be concerned to what kingdom I belong! Dost thou not know who is thy king?

Whether the dear Son of God, or that accursed king ; I hope you will labour not long to be ignorant, in a matter of so great concern, but drive it to a speedy issue.

2 With reference to both these, if you have a comfortable ground to hope that you are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son ; be serious in your thanksgivings, and endeavour to arrive at greater degrees of gratitude, that your hearts may be more warm, and raised in your thanksgivings. And such thanksgivings ought to be gratefully expressed, in acts of mercy to the poor and needy. Blessed are the merciful, for they have received mercy, and shall receive it.