

SERMON XVIII.

Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.—1 JOHN iii. 12.

THE apostle having urged the precept of brotherly love, now speaketh of the contrary, which is hatred to the power of godliness, and of this by way of instance and example. This instance is fitly chosen—

1. As being a most eminent example, or an early discovery of the malignity of corrupt nature. Therefore Tertullian calleth Cain the patriarch of unbelievers. Enmity to religion began betimes, and the world keepeth its old wont, then, and now, and ever. Those that will live godly in Christ Jesus must expect troubles, 2 Tim. iii. 12.

2. As best to represent the tragical effects of envy and hatred. When once brotherly love faileth, there is nothing so bad and cruel which you may not be drawn to do against your brethren; for corrupt nature is cruelly bent against all that stand in the way of our esteem and desires. When once a brother is represented as an enemy, if it be in the power of our hands, what will we think unlawful to be acted against him? If malice be curbed and restrained, we seek to draw those in with us who have power to serve our private quarrels and revenges; and hatred given way to will not be slaked without blood and ruin.

3. It showeth that devouring malice is the true devilish nature: 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one.' It was one of Œcolampadius' observations in a sermon to the children of Basil, that the ordinary pictures of God and Satan were in good books for the instruction of children either in the nature of God or Satan. The truest representation that can be made of God to children should be to teach them what truth is, what mercy is, what love is, what goodness is, for this is God; and the best picture that can be taken of Satan would be the true characters of malice, falsehood, envy, and hatred. God is love, God is mercy, God is goodness; but falsehood, envy, and hatred, and cruelty are natural to the old serpent: 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.'

In the words observe—(1.) Cain's fact; (2.) The reason of it.

1. His fact, 'He slew his brother.'

2. The reason. In this latter, one reason is expressed, viz., contrariety of practice; *acerbissima sunt odia ex diversitate morum*. The other implied envy at God's favour to him, for envy soon runneth into malice.

First reason. Abel is seldom spoken of in scripture, but he is honoured with the title of righteous: Mat. xxiii. 33, 'From the blood of righteous Abel.' So Heb. xi. 4, 'By which he obtained witness that he was righteous.'

Second reason. Envy at God's favour: Gen. iv. 4, 'God had respect to Abel and his offering.' It must be known by some visible token, for thereupon Cain's countenance fell, and in his wrath and envy he slew his brother. Some say, as Claudius Marius, that the smoke of

Cain's sacrifice went downward to the earth, and Abel's upward to heaven ; others say other things, but without any clear warrant. Probably the sign was fire coming down from heaven, and consuming Abel's sacrifice to ashes. The apostle telleth us, ' God testified of his gifts,' Heb. xi. 4. Theodosius saith, Surely this was the sign of God's favourable acceptation afterwards: Ps. xx. 3, ' The Lord accept thy burnt-offerings ;' in the margin it is, ' turn to ashes.' So Lev. ix. 24, ' At Aaron's sacrifice there came a fire out from the Lord, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the fat.' So in Elijah's contest with Baal's priests: 1 Kings xviii. 38, ' Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.' So in Gideon's sacrifice: Judges vi. 21, ' And there rose up a fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh.' So Manoah's sacrifice: Judges xiii. 20, ' The flame went up towards heaven, and the angel ascended in the flame.' So 1 Chron. xxi. 26, ' The Lord answered David by fire from heaven on the burnt-offering.'

Doct. That there is such a sin as antipathy against the power of godliness, or a hatred of others because of their strictness in the service of God, and diligence in heavenly things.

1. I shall give you instances of this in the word of God.
2. Some discoveries of this malignity.
3. The reasons of it.

I. Instances of it from scripture. The world's hatred is disguised under other pretences. Now what doth the word of God say? The word of God doth tell us doctrinally that it is so, and giveth instances and examples of it.

1. Doctrinally that it is so: let us take notice of that place which describeth the first rise of it: Gen. iii. 15, ' I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.' There is a natural enmity between the two seeds, as there is between a wolf and a lamb.

2. By way of instance and example, to see how this spirit of enmity hath been working, and how the men of God have had bitter experience of it. Thus Abel was slain by Cain; Isaac was scoffed at by Ishmael; and Jacob was driven out of his father's house by his brother Esau.

II. Discoveries that this hatred that is commenced against the people of God ariseth from an antipathy to godliness, though wicked men will not own it to be such. But to remove cavils, let us see how it appeareth that this hatred is the effect of their abhorrence of that which is good and holy.

1. This is some discovery of it, because the servants of God have been hated most, and troubled by the worst of men.

2. Because the best men, who have the least allay of corruption, and are most eminent for strict and exemplary conversations, are most hated and maligned.

3. Because when religion is accompanied with other things, that a man would think should assuage malice and allay the heat and rage of men against them, yet it escapeth not. Thus godly meek men, that are guilty of nothing but worshipping God in sincerity, and desiring to go to heaven with all their hearts, are most persecuted in this world.

4. It appeareth by their inventing of lies and ridiculous crimes to palliate their hatred; as against the primitive christians, their worshipping an ass's head, their drinking the blood of a child in their meetings.

5. Because if a man be strict, mortified, sober of life and behaviour, the world is apt to judge him one of such a hated party; as if any named the name of God with reverence, they suspected them for heretics if they said, 'If the Lord will.'

6. The consciences of wicked men are a thousand witnesses.

7. It appeareth by the joy that wicked men take when they have anything offered to justify their opposition, as the scandal of any that profess the ways of God.

III. Having given the instances of the world's hatred, I come to the reasons.

1. The difference and estrangement in course of life is a provoking thing; therefore men that live in any sinful course are loath that any should part company with them.

2. This is not all; it is not only a difference, but a difference about religion; and usually hatreds that arise from difference in religion are very deadly.

3. It is not only difference about religion, but between the true religion and the false.

But why is there such a spite and enmity at the sincere and serious profession of the true religion? I answer—

[1.] The devil's instigation is one cause; he hath great rage against the saints.

[2.] On man's part there seemeth to be a double reason—pride and envy.

(1.) Pride, which is impatient of reproof.

(2.) Envy at God's favour bestowed on them.¹

Use 1. Is to press us to avoid this sin and snare of death, especially in these times of dissension. Whatever party and sort of christians you stick unto, be not drawn to hatred against the power of godliness. We are told that in the latter times men shall be despisers of those who are good, 2 Tim. iii. 3, not-lovers, or haters, as the word signifieth. It is a more common sin than we are aware of. Indeed this spirit of enmity and malignity walketh under a disguise, seeketh other pretences wherewith to mask itself. But the children of God should beware of it, lest the sheep act the wolves' part, and cry up a confederacy with the wicked world in their spite against others of God's children. Now that we may avoid this snare, I will represent—(1.) The commonness of the sin; (2.) The heinousness of it; (3.) Some remedies against it.

First, The commonness of the sin.

It appeareth by this, that the scripture everywhere divides all the world into two ranks—the godly and the ungodly, the converted and unconverted, the unsanctified and sanctified, the carnal and spiritual, the earthly-minded and the heavenly-minded, the children of God and the children of the devil; and Christ will at last divide all the world into sheep and goats. Thus standeth the case, not only between the

¹ See this subject largely handled in the author's sermons on the 17th of John, in Volume X. of this edition.—ED.

church and the world, but within the church, between the serious and profane, the real and nominal christians; though they have the same bible, creed, and baptism, yet they hate one another, malign one another. It must needs be so, for otherwise these things are said in vain, for the scriptures are not written to infidels. Therefore it concerneth us to look to ourselves, our own soundness and sincerity with Christ. If we engage in the differences and espouse quarrels before we are gained to Christ, take heed the quarrel be not rather against the life and practice of religion than a pure zeal for the truth; and that we do not reproach those for heretics and schismatics that are more diligent and serious in God's service than ourselves; for the zeal of the carnal is always to be suspected. First plant the fear of God, and then men will best own the cause of God. Certainly it is usual for the formal to hate the serious, and the christian in the letter to despise him who is so in the spirit. An outward, superficial, apocryphal, bastard holiness filleth us with this hatred. Cain had his sacrifice as well as Abel, but Abel goeth thoroughly to work, and was accepted, which Cain doth not, and therefore hateth and killeth him: Isa. lxvi. 5, 'Your brethren that hate you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let God be glorified.' Men that are brethren, that profess the same religion, yet being loose and false in it, may hate others that are strict and true; as it is said in the Revelations, they pushed with the horns of the lamb. Therefore it concerneth us to consider—

1. What is our state, what is the ground of our quarrel, what are the ends and motives in all contests that we have with others.

2. If the cause of the quarrel be never so good and just, yet it may be carried on with too great heat and animosity against godly brethren; bitter zeal argueth some breach made upon brotherly love: James iii. 14, 'If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.' Those that have this bitter contention, or feverish kind of zeal, have seldom a true zeal for God, but a partiality to their own interests, if not a hatred against their brethren. It is a spirit of carnal envy against the credit and reputation of others, a kitchen, not a celestial fire; and though it be not downright mischievous hatred, yet it is a great unkindness, as Job was too deeply censured by his godly friends.

3. There may be a secret rising of heart and envy against the purity and strictness of others, even by some of those who are right for the main themselves. It should promote holy emulation and imitation; so the apostle saith, 'Your zeal hath provoked many,' 1 Cor. ix. 2, and Heb. x. 24, 'Let us provoke one another to love and good works.' But many times it draweth envy, and then natural malignity beginneth to work. You had need to suppress it betimes, for lusts stirred will grow more tumultuous. One eminently godly man may reprove the conscience of another by his life; they cannot look upon it without some shame and check: it should stir in us only a holy emulation, not a carnal envy.

4. In opposing those that are godly, you had need be tender, that you go upon sure grounds, and that your opposition proceedeth not to mischievous violence: Mat. xviii. 6, 'He that offendeth one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone

were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' As was said concerning Paul, 'Take heed what you do, for this man is a Roman.' Men that know the danger will not easily kick against the pricks, at least do not join with the opposite: 'Eat and drink with the drunken, and beat your fellow-servants,' Mat. xxiv. 49; and cry up a confederacy with wicked men to promote your private differences with more advantage; there may be much of the hatred of godliness in it. The devil will be a defender of the truth and church with a bloody and killing zeal, so the soundest and holiest members be destroyed; those go in the way of Cain, Jude 11, if slaughters and massacres will do, and so think they serve God by murdering his servants, John xvi. 2.

5. If you be glad when you find any blemish to eclipse the lustre and glory of their innocency, this argueth a secret hatred to them as godly: 'Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,' 1 Cor. xiii. 6; and Phil. iii. 18, 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ.' They were not real christians, but enemies to the cross of Christ. You are glad at the miscarriages of some, and those few are cast upon all.

Secondly, The heinousness and greatness of the sin.

1. A malicious opposing of those that are good, and do belong to God, under that consideration, bordereth near to the great transgression, which is a malicious desertion or opposition of the truth after sufficient conviction; it is not it, but it cometh near to it in the height of it.

2. Religion is a commendation of kindness on the one side, so it is an aggravation of malice on the other: Mat. x. 40, 'Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, he shall not lose his reward.' Therefore to hate men for their godliness is a provoking sin.

3. It is a mark of a child of the devil, the express image of Satan. Thereby our Saviour convinced the Jews to be of their father the devil, because they hated him that came from God, John viii. 40. You express Satan's image to the life when this is the ground of hatred.

4. When you have no other quarrel against them but their goodness, that which should be the cause of the greatest love is the cause of the greatest hatred; and so God himself is despised when his image is despised and the devil's had in reverence and honour.

5. This sin is the greater because of the many blessings we enjoy by them; they are the honour and blessing of a country. Elijah, that was counted the troubler of Israel, yet is by the prophet called the chariots and horsemen of Israel, 2 Kings ii. 12, that is, the defence of the country. When such are gone, it is the worse for any people: Gen. xix. 22, 'I cannot do anything till thou art gone thither;' Acts xxvii. 24, 'And I have given thee the lives of all that sail with thee in the ship.'

Thirdly, The means to avoid it.

1. Keep up the love of all men. He is not godly that loveth not all men with the love common to christianity, and those that fear God with a special love; the one is the preservative from dashing against the other. Free the mind from malice, and you will free it from

hatred to the power of godliness, for malice blindeth men that they cannot see the good in those they hate. You are at the greatest distance from this sin when you take heed of the hatred of any man. We should love all with the love of good-will, though our delight should be in the excellent ones of the earth. Live in enmity and malice with none, though you take just offence at their sins. Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day, 2 Peter ii. 8, yet he lived peaceably in Sodom. They are an abomination for caution to ourselves, but not with a mischievous hatred.

2. Take heed of an uncharitable appropriating of Christ; this is the readiest way to confine your love, and hate all the world besides; but love the gifts and graces of God in any party and sort of men, for God's interest lieth not in one party; do not therefore impale the common salvation, 'theirs and ours,' 1 Cor. i. 2. If God hath received him, though weak, we should own him. The devil hath a great hand over those that enclose all religion within the lines of their communion, either because their party is the best, or greatest, or uppermost, or chief in the house, city, or kingdom; they are all the church. Alas! often it is so, but God will not reckon his children by the opinion of an angry brother.

3. Do not think evil of any without constraining evidence, for 'charity thinketh no evil,' 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6. Charity doth not force and wrest things by a strained interpretation. For our caution, if they be as bad as malice can imagine, and you certainly know any fault by them, take warning to avoid it; and consider what need there is of watchfulness, when they that set their faces heavenward do so fall and stumble in their way thither; and see what need you and others have to be better. This is to improve the failings of others, not to censure them.

4. Cherish those that invite you to love, as messengers from the God of love: 'For this is the message we have from the beginning.' But those censurers, backbiters, and slanderers, that make the worst of other men's actions, look upon as Satan's messengers inviting you to hate your brother, as if they said, I pray hate such a one; for he that speaketh evil of another without a just cause and call doth but entice you to hatred and mischief, at least to abate your love; for to persuade you another is bad is to persuade you to hate him.

SERMON XIX.

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.—1 JOHN iii. 13.

IN these words you have an application of the instance of Cain—(1.) For the support of present believers; (2.) As a new motive to brotherly love.

1. For the support of present believers. The world is of the same spirit that Cain was; he envied his brother and slew him, to presignify