

should seek it in fervent and persevering prayer; fervent and persevering, as proceeding from a heart which knows that it is undone, if it obtains not what it asks. We should say with the afflicted father in St. Mark, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief:"\* or with the Apostles, Lord, "increase our faith."<sup>y</sup>

Being thus, by the aid of the Spirit of God, grounded and established in the faith; and showing our faith to be real and active, by the effects which it produces upon our temper and conduct; we shall at length, through the merits and death of Christ, receive "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls;"<sup>z</sup> shall be admitted into that abode of blessedness, where faith shall be terminated in sight, and hope in never-ending enjoyment.

\* Mark ix. 24.

<sup>y</sup> Luke xvii. 5.<sup>z</sup> 1 Pet. i. 9.

## SERMON II.

### BELIEF IN GOD THE FATHER.

TITUS i. 16.

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him.

HAVING discoursed to you upon the necessity of faith in general, and upon some of its properties, some of the marks by which we may be enabled to judge, whether it exists in us in reality or only in pretence; I now wish to direct your attention more particularly to the great article of faith, BELIEF IN GOD; and to the practical effects, which such belief ought to produce on our conduct.

Belief in God is the first principle, the foundation of all religion. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is."<sup>a</sup>

Whether the idea of a God is implanted in the mind of man by his Creator; or whether, as is more probable, it has been handed down from the first parents of the human race, and by them communicated to all their descendants—there is hardly any nation upon the face of the earth, which has not some notion of a Supreme Being, to whom prayer and praise are to be addressed. Where the idea has once been entertained, it gains support among all men of thought and reflection, from the

\* Heb. xi. 6.

contemplation of the works of nature and providence. Thus the Apostle argues, that among the nations God left not himself without witness, giving them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.<sup>b</sup> And thus the Psalmist—“the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work:” “their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the end of the world.”<sup>c</sup> This latter passage is expressly applied to our present purpose by St. Paul, when, speaking of the corruption and consequent condemnation of the heathens, he says, that the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen by the things that are made.<sup>d</sup> This argument is of a plain and convincing nature. When we consider any piece of workmanship, as, for instance, a house, or a watch, we are satisfied that it must have had some maker: and in proportion as the several parts, of which such piece of workmanship consists, appear to be well contrived and fitted to answer the purposes for which they are designed, is our opinion of the maker’s ability and skill. And thus, when we contemplate either the fair frame of the universe, or any of the objects of nature around us, we feel convinced that they must have had a Creator, “that their builder and maker is God;” and both the vastness of some of his works, and the minuteness of others, as well as the fitness of every thing, and of every part of every thing, to the end for which it was intended, furnish proof of the unbounded power and wisdom of their great Author. Whether we consider the heavens the work of God’s fingers, the moon and the stars which he has ordained;<sup>e</sup> or whether we turn our attention to the members and

<sup>b</sup> Acts xiv. 17.  
<sup>c</sup> Psalm viii. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Psalm xix. 1, 4.

<sup>e</sup> Rom. i. 20.

motions of our own bodies, and reflect how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; or whether we contemplate the meanest insect that crawls on the earth, or the humblest plant that grows, our minds must be equally led to admire the power, and the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator.

I am fully persuaded, my friends, that you all acknowledge these things; I am persuaded that you are sensible that it is the fool, and the fool only, who can say in his heart, There is no God; I am persuaded, that you all profess to believe in GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. But do you really and truly believe in him? Do you believe in him such as he is represented in the Scriptures? Does your belief show itself to be real in your words, and in your actions? Suffer me, in two or three instances, to call your attention to what is said of God in the Scriptures, and to point out some of the practical effects, which belief in him ought to produce. I most earnestly beg of you, as I proceed, to ask your own consciences, whether such effects have been produced in you.

The Scriptures, then, represent God as being every where present, as seeing every thing that we do, hearing every word that passes our lips, and witnessing every thought of our hearts. “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? or he that made the eye, shall he not see?”<sup>f</sup> He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. If we say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover us, then shall our night be turned into day, for the darkness is no darkness with God; the darkness and light to him are both alike.<sup>g</sup> The same Scripture assures us, that there is not a word in our tongue, but God knoweth it altogether; that he un-

<sup>f</sup> Psalm xciv. 9.

<sup>g</sup> Psalm cxxxix. 2, 10, 11.

derstandeth our thoughts long before, and spieth out the secret thoughts and intents of the heart.<sup>b</sup> They tell us, that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good:"<sup>c</sup> that he "is a God of judgment;"<sup>k</sup> and "by him actions are weighed:"<sup>l</sup> that "the Lord alloweth the righteous, but the ungodly, and him that de-lighteth in wickedness, doth his soul abhor."<sup>m</sup>

Do we, my friends, seriously believe these things? Do we live, and do we speak like men, who are sensible that they are continually in the presence of God, that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without displeasure? Consider how you act when in the presence of some man, to whom you look up with respect; who, as you think, will blame or punish you, if you do or say any thing that is wrong. In the presence of such a person you would not be guilty of drunkenness or indecency; you would not steal, nor swear, nor in any way speak unadvisedly with your lips. And shall the presence of man, of a fellow-worm, make you thus guarded in your behaviour; and shall not the presence of the great God, in which you continually are, have equal weight with you? If a man is guilty of pilfering, or stealing, or any other sin, because he thinks that no one's eye is upon him; or, if he gives way to fleshly lust, or any other wickedness, because he thinks the darkness shall cover him, he acts like an unbeliever. Though he professes that he knows God, he denies him in his works.

It is one of the marks of a good man that he sets the Lord alway before him;<sup>n</sup> that he lives with a constant view to his presence; that the habitual feeling and language of his heart is, "thou, God,

<sup>b</sup> Psalm cxxxix. 3, 1.  
<sup>l</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 3.

<sup>i</sup> Prov. xv. 3.  
<sup>m</sup> Psalm xi. 6.

<sup>k</sup> Isaiah xxx. 18.  
<sup>n</sup> Psalm xvi. 9.

"seest me." And it is a mark of the wicked man, that "God is not in all his thoughts:"<sup>o</sup> he is represented as saying, "the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."<sup>p</sup> Which of these characters, my friends, do we most resemble? Is God much in our thoughts, or do we think of him but little or not at all? Are we preserved from sin by a sense of his presence, or do we speak and act, as if we believed that there was no God to take notice of our conduct?

If we really believe that God's eye is continually upon us, certainly such belief ought to make us guarded and circumspect in our actions, our words, and our thoughts. If we are not thus guarded, we have cause to fear that we are wanting in faith in the first great article of religion, that we believe but imperfectly in God the Father Almighty.

It may here be proper to notice an error which is very dangerous, and I fear very prevalent. The error I mean of those men, who, though they profess to believe, and really do believe, in God, yet imagine him to be so abundant in mercy, that he will not punish the sins of men, at least not the particular sins of which they themselves are guilty. They are truly taught that God is merciful and gracious, and therefore suppose that he will pass over their transgressions, even though they wilfully persist in them; especially if their transgressions are of such a nature, as not to be clearly and immediately injurious to their neighbour, or not glaringly hurtful to the well-being of society. The mistaken courtesy, or, what is called good nature, of the world, encourages them in their error, and nourishes the persuasion that God will see no faults in men, who are *nobody's enemies but their own*. The ministers of religion have too often reason to la-

<sup>o</sup> Psalm x. 4.

<sup>p</sup> Psalm xciv. 7.

ment this fatal delusion. It repeatedly happens to us, when endeavouring to turn men from the evil of their doings, by setting before them the terrors of the Lord, to hear them express their belief, that the threatenings of God's word would not be carried into execution.

But consider, my friends, that men who hold this idea, if they believe in God at all, do not believe in the God of the Scriptures, but in an idol of their own imaginations. The Scriptures indeed represent God as merciful and gracious, and, for the sake of his Son, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin to the truly penitent. But as he is merciful, so is he also just and true; and both his truth and his justice appear to require the infliction of punishment upon those, who refuse to embrace his offer of mercy, and walk on still in their wickedness. He is spoken of accordingly as "a consuming fire"<sup>q</sup> to the impenitent, as a God who "will by no means clear the guilty,"<sup>r</sup> as one who will execute wrath upon every soul that doeth evil, and that refuses to turn from the evil of his doings with hearty repentance, and lively faith in the merits of a Redeemer. I beg of you to believe, that if a man, in defiance of the threatenings of God's word, shall still "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in the Scriptures shall lie upon him."<sup>s</sup> If, in short, you so far presume upon God's mercy, as to think that you may fearlessly continue in wilful sin; if you imagine that he will so forget his justice and

<sup>q</sup> Deut. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29.  
<sup>s</sup> Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

<sup>r</sup> Exodus xxxiv. 7.

his truth, as that one event will happen unto all, and that the wicked will not fare worse than the righteous; you do not believe in God as he is revealed in the Bible; you cannot consistently join in the Apostles' Creed; you cannot say, I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, in the sense in which that profession is made by real Christians.

One of the most interesting features in the representations which the Scriptures give of the Most High, is his providential, his *fatherly* care of all the works of his hands. We profess to believe in God the *Father* Almighty—the Father in a peculiar sense, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father also of the whole creation, and in particular of man; *our Father*, as he graciously permits us to call him. He not only at first made every living creature, but still continues to watch over and uphold them by the word of his power. He preserveth both man and beast, and "giveth food to all flesh."<sup>t</sup> Holy David says, of the brute creation, "these wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them meat in due season: when thou givest it them they gather it, and when thou openest thine hand they are filled with good."<sup>u</sup> And with regard to ourselves, he is styled the *Preserver of men*; we are told that "in him we live, and move, and have our being." We are assured that "they that fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good;" that he hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Surely, my friends, if we believe these things, if we thus believe in God the *Father* Almighty, it will have a strong tendency to prevent our being over anxious and careful about worldly things. It will induce us, in compliance with the admonition of our Saviour, to

<sup>t</sup> Psalm cxxxvi. 25.

<sup>u</sup> Psalm civ. 27, 28.

feel persuaded, that he who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, will not neglect to take care of us.

And thus also, when visited with affliction, belief that he is our *Father*, and that he is *Almighty*, will prevent us from murmuring and repining, and induce us to submit with resignation and cheerfulness to whatever he layeth upon us. The Scriptures assure us, that "as a father chasteneth his son, so the Lord our God chasteneth us;"<sup>x</sup> that "it is good for us to be afflicted;"<sup>y</sup> that "he chasteneth us for our profit."<sup>z</sup> If we really believe, that whatever befalls us, happens by the direction or the permission of him, by whom, as our Lord assures us, the hairs of our head are all numbered,<sup>a</sup> happens by the will of God the Father Almighty, we shall suffer with meek resignation. We shall be disposed to say from our hearts, "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;"<sup>b</sup> Lord, "not my will, but thine be done."<sup>c</sup> If instead of thus submitting, we give way to murmuring, and repining, and discontent, is there not reason to fear that we do not firmly believe in God's providence? Do we not, in some degree, deny by our behaviour the God whom we profess to acknowledge?

The Apostle says, "be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."<sup>d</sup> And this naturally leads me to another observation, which is, that the Scriptures represent God as being a God who heareth prayer:<sup>e</sup> if we believe this representation, we shall consider prayer not only as a duty, but as a glorious privilege; we shall "continue instant in prayer,"<sup>f</sup> and

<sup>x</sup> Deut. viii. 5.

<sup>a</sup> Matt. x. 30.

<sup>d</sup> Phil. iv. 6.

<sup>y</sup> Psalm cxix. 71.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 18.

<sup>c</sup> Psalm lxy. 2.

<sup>z</sup> Heb. xii. 10.

<sup>e</sup> Luke xxii. 42.

<sup>f</sup> Rom. xii. 12.

watch unto the same with all perseverance;<sup>g</sup> we shall pray constantly and fervently in private, and shall be regular in joining in the public prayers of the Church; shall be glad when they say unto us, "We will go into the house of the Lord."<sup>h</sup> If, on the other hand, you neglect to offer your supplications to the Most High, if you restrain prayer before God, you act decidedly in the spirit of those unbelievers, who say, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? or what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?"<sup>i</sup> And whether such a person can truly and consistently say, that he believes in God the Father Almighty, judge ye.

My friends, let us "take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;"<sup>k</sup> and let us also beware most anxiously, that while we profess that we know God, we do not deny him in our works.<sup>l</sup> Let me hope that you all really do believe in God the Father Almighty. Endeavour, then, yourselves, and pray to him to assist the endeavour, to preserve upon your minds a constant recollection of him, a constant sense of his presence. Endeavour, like David, to set the Lord always before you. Since "all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him, with whom we have to do,"<sup>m</sup> and even the secrets of our heart are not hidden from him, be very guarded and watchful in all your thoughts, words, and actions. Since he not only at first created, but still preserves and provides for you, and disposes of you and yours according to his good pleasure, resign yourselves entirely to his will, and in all dispensations, however afflictive, try to say from your heart, *Thy will be done*. In short, if you really believe in God, that belief will naturally

<sup>g</sup> Ephes. vi. 18.

<sup>k</sup> Heb. iii. 12.

<sup>h</sup> Psalm cxxii. 1.

<sup>l</sup> Titus i. 16.

<sup>i</sup> Job xxi. 15.

<sup>m</sup> Heb. iv. 13.

induce you to *fear* him; and to *love* him as much as you possibly can, with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength; it will lead you to *worship* him, to *give him thanks*, to *put your whole trust in him*, and to *call upon him*; it will induce you to *honour his holy name and his word*, and to *serve him truly all the days of your life*.

That we may thus believe in God the Father Almighty, and that our belief may produce these salutary effects, may God of his mercy grant, through Jesus Christ.

## SERMON III.

### BELIEF IN GOD THE SON.

COL. i. 14.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

**N**EXT in importance to belief in God the Father, who made us and all the world, is belief in "God the Son, who hath redeemed us and all mankind." It is from our profession of this article of faith that we have the name of *Christians*; and it is of the utmost consequence to us seriously to consider, what we really mean when we make this profession, and to reflect, whether our lives in this instance are answerable to the belief which we pretend to hold. You say, then, that you believe "in God the Son, who redeemed you;" and often in the Church Service, and probably at other times also, speak of Christ by the appellation of the Redeemer. What do you understand by the expression? The proper meaning of the word to *redeem* is to buy back. It is particularly used for setting free a prisoner or captive, by paying a price for his release. Let us consider now in what sense Christ is said to have redeemed us.

The Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament constantly represent the natural state of man as a state of sin and death. It is necessary to dwell