

who have loved him while on earth, will be admitted through Christ into his presence; and will, to all eternity, be made happy with that fulness of joy which results from communication with the great object of their reverential affections, with those unspeakable pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

Let, then, the attainment of the love of God, the effectual keeping of *this first and great commandment*, be the object of our persevering endeavours, and of our most earnest prayers: and may that gracious Being, who hath prepared for them that love him such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love towards him, that we, loving him above all things, may obtain his promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

• Collect for the sixth Sunday after Trinity.

SERMON XIV.

WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS.

MATT. vi. 24.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Few things are more opposite to the love of God, and more tend to check the progress of religion in the soul, than the *love of the world*. Against the love of the world, accordingly, we are anxiously and repeatedly cautioned both by our Lord himself, and by the first teachers of his religion, the holy Apostles. "Love not the world," says St. John, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." From what follows in the following verse—"for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—it seems that the Apostle had in view those sins which are occasioned by the love of sensual pleasure, the love of show and ostentation, and the love of money. Our Saviour, when he warns us against worldly-mindedness in the sermon on the mount, and in the striking parable of the wedding-supper, appears to have had particularly in his con-

• 1 John ii. 15.

temptation, not so much acknowledged sins, as an excessive attachment to objects in themselves lawful—such an attention to the business and cares of this life as prevents us from paying due attention to the cares of the soul, and to the interests of the life to come. After cautioning his disciples against “laying up for themselves treasures upon earth,” and exhorting them rather “to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven,” and assigning the strongest reason for this advice, he goes on to say, in the words of the text, “no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

No man can serve two masters. To the truth of this maxim, when properly understood, you must without difficulty assent. To serve a master, is to obey the commands, to do the will, to perform the work of that master: and in this sense no one can serve two different masters at the same time. While, indeed, their wills are exactly the same, and they command precisely the same things, it is true, that in doing the will of one, he does the will of the other also; but even in this case, one master must in his affections and mind have the superiority over the other. And when once their commands are different from, or contrary to each other; when one master orders him to do one thing, and the other something else; when one master would send him one way, and the other in the opposite direction; he then cannot possibly obey both, but must show which is *really* his master, which it is whose authority he really acknowledges; he will then be forced “to hold to the one, and despise the other,” to act as if he loved one, and hated the other.

Having laid down the general rule, or maxim,

that no man can serve two masters, our Saviour goes on to apply it to a particular instance—“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” *Mammon* is a word of the Syriac language—the language of the country bordering on Judea—it properly signifies *riches*, and also the idol whom the heathens of that country worshipped as the god of riches. In the passage before us, however, it means not simply *riches*, but every thing *worldly*, even what are considered (and in a certain sense *justly* considered) as the necessaries of life. This appears from what follows in the very next verse, and again towards the conclusion of the chapter. In the latter place, our Lord says—“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek.) But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”^b

The truth, then, which our Saviour asserts in these words, the maxim which he lays down, is, that we cannot be the servants of God and of the world at the same time; we cannot acknowledge and obey the authority of both at once. In many instances, indeed, the service of both may be apparently consistent. We may serve God faithfully, and attend, notwithstanding, in proper degree, to the business and cares of this life. And so, on the other hand, a man who is devoted to the world may, notwithstanding, in many instances, attend to the outward service of God. But cases and occasions will arise in which their service will interfere and clash; in which God commands one thing, and the world requires another; in which, if one is obeyed, the other must be disobeyed. *Now* it appears which is *really* master, whose servant a man

^b Matt. vi. 31, 32, 33.

really is, for "his servants ye are," says the Apostle, "to whom ye obey."^c

My friends, I wish we could all be brought seriously to reflect on this text, and honestly to ask our own consciences, whether we sincerely own the authority of the Lord Almighty, or that of the world; whether we serve God or mammon. Let us examine the general turn of our thoughts, and the general conduct of our lives, and consider how we act, when the service of the world and the service of God interfere with each other; and we shall, through the divine assistance, be able to form a judgment in this matter. The inquiry is of the very last importance. We all pretend to be the servants of God; we all acknowledge that it is our duty to *serve him truly all the days of our life*, and we perhaps flatter ourselves that we do so. But let us not deceive ourselves. When the service of God requires one thing, and the service of the world another, which of the two do we attend to? which of the two is it that is obliged to give way?

My meaning may perhaps be made clear by mentioning some particular instances.

Few things have tended more to preserve a sense of religion among men, than the institution of the Sabbath. The appointment of one day in seven, on which their minds are called away from their usual occupations, and the cares of this life, and invited seriously to fix themselves on those "unseen things which are eternal," is an appointment in which the wisdom and goodness of him from whom it proceeds are both manifested. It is notorious, that this sacred day is in many places sadly profaned, and it is equally plain, that much of this profanation proceeds from a disposition to serve and obey the world, rather than the God of heaven.

^c Rom. vi. 16.

One instance of the profanation of the Lord's day arising from such disposition, is the custom which some persons fall into, of purchasing on the Sunday morning whatever necessaries may be required for the consumption of the week. This practice is not only a profanation of the Lord's day—that day which both the laws of God and the laws of the land command us to keep *holy*—but too often has a tendency to prevent both the buyer and the seller from joining in public worship. And why do they thus fly in the face of the laws both of God and man? simply because mammon is their master; because they think that their worldly interest in some way requires it. The buyer will not spare for this purpose a quarter of an hour on any one of the "six days on which men ought to work;" and the seller fears, that if he refuses to sell on the Lord's day, he shall offend a customer. His profits, he thinks, will be a trifle less; and that, in his eyes, is of more consequence than the service of his Maker. Now, can such a person for a moment flatter himself that he is the servant of God? He cannot help confessing, that *mammon*, that the world, is his real master. He cannot help acknowledging, that he habitually sacrifices the welfare of his soul, to the subsistence of the body.

When the practice just mentioned is occasioned by the payment of weekly wages on the Sunday morning, he by whom they are thus unduly paid clearly partakes in the guilt. Nearly the same may be said of those tradesmen who prevent themselves from attending to the public service of God, by carrying out goods—articles of clothing, for instance—on the Sunday morning.

It is, too, from this undue attention to the service of the world, that very many habitually absent themselves from the Lord's supper. They know, and acknowledge, that all Christians of ma-

ture years ought to partake of this sacred ordinance; but they know also, that they ought not to partake of it without some preparation; and for such preparation, the world, whose servants they are, will never allow them time. As the men in the parable of the wedding-supper excused themselves from coming on account of their worldly business, and went "one to his farm, and another to his merchandize;"^d so do too many still neglect every branch of the service and of the worship of God, for the sake of some worldly occupation; for the sake, perhaps, of obtaining some trifling gain, of advancing some paltry interest.

Do not misunderstand me, my friends. I am by no means exhorting you to neglect your worldly business. I am not encouraging you to be *idle*. I well know that it is your duty to be diligent and industrious in that state of life in which the providence of God has placed you. I well know that it is the direction of the Apostle, "that with quietness" men should "work, and eat their own bread"^e—their *own bread*—bread procured by their own exertions, by the toil and labour of their own hands. Neither am I exhorting you to neglect the care of your families. The word of God requires you to take care of them to the utmost of your power; and tells you, that "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house,"^f *his own family*, "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." What I wish to impress upon you is, that you *must* seek "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" in the first place;^g that you must not so labour for the "meat that perisheth," as to neglect "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life;"^h that you

^d Matt. xxiii. 5; Luke xiv. 16.

^e 1 Tim. v. 8.

^f Matt. vi. 33.

^c 2 Thess. iii. 12.

^h John vi. 27.

must not be so careful about worldly things as to neglect the one thing needful.ⁱ

You must, I am sure, be sensible, that all who suffer the business, or the amusements, or the mistaken courtesies of the world, to interfere with the duty which they owe to their Maker; still more those who make use of any unfair means of increasing their wealth, who are guilty of any kind of fraud and dishonesty, are all chargeable with the sin and folly of obeying the authority of mammon, rather than the authority of the living God.

And now, my friends, to which class do we really belong? Which of the two shall we choose for our master—God?—or the world?—Our Saviour tells you, that you must choose between them; that you cannot serve them both.

When a man is about to engage in a service, one of the principal things that are apt to occupy his thoughts is, the *wages* which he is likely to receive. From the world you know what treatment you have met with hitherto; and the wages which you will receive from it when your time of service is expired, is *destruction*. The "world," in the scriptural sense of the word, "lieth in wickedness,"^k and they who have lived and died its servants, will, at the last day, be "condemned with the world."^l

On the other hand, God invites you to his service, and proffers the noblest rewards, wages of inestimable value. Indeed, on the plea of *gratitude*, you ought to devote yourselves entirely to him. It is from him that you received your being; it is he that preserves the life that he gave you; it is he that supplieth you with food and raiment, and giveth you richly all things to enjoy. From the work of his own hands, from the creature of his providential care, he surely has a right to ex-

ⁱ Luke x. 42.

^k 1 John v. 19.

^l 1 Cor. xi. 32.

pect unwearied and zealous obedience. Still more, however, than that; when we were exposed to eternal death, he rescued us from the ruin which awaited us, by giving his only Son to die for our sakes. Being thus bought with a price, no less a price, than the blood of the eternal Son of God, we clearly are not our own,^m are not at liberty to give our service to what we please,—to the flesh or to the world,—but by every tie of common justice and common gratitude, are bound to devote it to him, who has so dearly purchased it. We are bound to do this also by the motives of common prudence, by regard for our own interest; for the wages which God holds forth to his faithful and true servants, are great and valuable beyond description. They consist of happiness eternal and unchangeable in heaven,—of “an exceeding weight of glory, that fadeth not away.”

“Choose you,” then, my friends, “this day, whom ye will serve,”ⁿ whether God or mammon. I must again remind you, that our Lord assures you, that you cannot be the servants of them both at the same time;—you cannot acknowledge the authority of both;—one must have superiority over the other in your hearts. You must not “halt between two opinions,”^o and at one time consider God as your Lord, and at another take the world as your master;—but must resolve to give yourselves up either to one or to the other. Let us pray fervently for the aid of God’s good Spirit, that we may be directed and enabled to make the only wise choice. You must all, I trust, be ready to exclaim, “The Lord he is the God, the Lord he is the God!”^p—or, like the Jews in the book of Joshua, “The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.”^q

^m 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. ⁿ Jos. xxiv. 15. ^o 1 Kings xviii. 21.
^p 1 Kings xviii. 39. ^q Jos. xxiv. 24.

If we make this choice in truth and good earnest, and sincerely endeavour by God’s grace to adhere to it, we may at length, through the merits of the Redeemer, hope to hear the encouraging voice, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;”^r—to receive the gracious invitation, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”^s

THE PRAYER.

Gracious Lord, mercifully grant us grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

^r Matt. xxv. 21.

^s Matt. xxv. 34.

SERMON XV.

CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

ROM. xii. 2.

Be not conformed to this world.

In the journey, which we all profess to be traveling, towards the heavenly Jerusalem, we are on every side surrounded by temptation. Of these temptations, one of the most powerful, and most dangerous, is that which arises from our proneness to fall in with the customs and maxims of this *world*, of those whom we see around us, and with many of whom we are connected by the ties of social intercourse. In proportion to the prevalence of this temptation is the earnestness of Scripture in warning us against it. Both the Old and the New Testament abound in passages, bidding us beware of the dangers which await us from this quarter; and the first teachers of Christianity in particular repeatedly admonish us, *not to be conformed to this world*. To this subject, therefore, I now wish to draw your attention; and in doing this shall, First, make some remarks on the nature of the danger to which I allude: I shall, Secondly, point out some of the evil consequences of giving way to this temptation; and shall conclude with an exhortation to a vigorous resistance to it.

In our earliest years we necessarily acquire the habit of imitating what we see done by others; and this habit gains strength as we advance in age, until it becomes almost a second nature.

We willingly think, that what is generally practised, what is usual with all around us, what is done by *the world*, must be right, or at least not greatly wrong; and easily allow ourselves to fall in with the stream. To set up our opinions and practice against theirs, we choose to consider as a degree of presumption, and cannot bear the imputation of being singular, and unlike the rest of mankind. Those, among whom we live, of course wish to strengthen and encourage these impressions. They wish to have all others like themselves, to increase the numbers of their party; and regard any one who does not conform to their maxims and habits of life, as throwing a sort of blame upon them. "Thus doing," say they, "thou reproachest us." Consequently, they habitually endeavour to keep all they can in their ranks; and if they see any one professing principles, or adopting a line of conduct, superior to those of the times, they assail him with ridicule or with censure, and upbraid him for being singular. These temptations to *conformity with the world* are strengthened by the support which they derive from the insinuations of the great enemy of our souls, and by that which they find in our own native corruptions. The power of these temptations shows itself in the conduct and language which are commonly maintained. A large proportion of the sins both of omission and commission, both of leaving undone what we ought to do, and doing what we ought not to do, are occasioned by conformity to the world. The practice of the generality furnishes, at once, a great part both of the temptation and of the excuse. Multitudes, both old and young, if asked why they per-

sist in some bad practice, or the neglect of some known duty, notwithstanding the injunctions of the divine law, will answer, that they merely *do as others do*. Why, for instance, are so many guilty of the foolish but dreadful vice of cursing and swearing—a vice which they know exposes them to God's wrath, and at the same time is unattended with either pleasure or advantage? They have no reason to give but *custom*. Why do men, who have really no taste themselves for the shameful sin of drunkenness, often suffer themselves to be guilty of it? From conformity to the world; from compliance, *weak compliance*, with the wishes and example of their company. Why do so many pursue a thoughtless careless life, with no appearance of that fear of God, that religious watchfulness, which they ought habitually to maintain? Because this is the mode of living adopted by the generality of those around them. Why do so many—of the young especially—live in the wilful neglect of the Lord's supper? From falling in with the practice of the majority. Young persons, who have been confirmed, acknowledge their obligation to comply with the precepts of Scripture; they know that the Lord's supper is *generally necessary to salvation*; they know that Jesus Christ *hath commanded* them to receive it, and that he gave the command in the same night in which he was betrayed, when he was just going to die for their sakes. They know all this, and yet act contrary to it all. And why? They have no reason to give for their neglect, except, that most young persons neglect it as they do. Conformity to the example of numbers weighs more with them than the laws of God.

In short, in all ranks and stations in life, conformity to the world, or *fashion*, as it is called, furnishes the most usual rule and guide of conduct.

Powerful, however, as are the temptations to

such compliance with the maxims and customs of those around us, it greatly behoves us to resist them. "Be not conformed to this world," says the Apostle in the text. However much by habit and inclination, and by the love of ease, you may be disposed to fall in with the general practice and prevailing opinions of the world, yet be careful that you do not comply with them, except so far as you are warranted in doing so by the revealed will of God.

The danger of such conformity or compliance may be inferred from the description of the world given in the Scriptures, and from our own observation and experience. The representation given in the oracles of truth of the general state of the world is most unfavourable. In the beginning of things, it is true, every creature of God was good, and man was made innocent and upright. Very soon, however, we find, that "through envy of the devil,"^a sin entered into the world, and in a short time increased and spread so rapidly, that we read that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."^b In the time of Noah, we find that the world was so generally corrupt, that God was induced to destroy it by the waters of the flood. In that state, St. Peter emphatically calls it the "world of the ungodly."^c Again, from the records of inspiration, we find how soon after the flood, notwithstanding that awful visitation, the world was again overspread with ignorance of God, idolatry, and wickedness, which seem to have generally prevailed at the time of the calling of Abraham. When God separated to himself a peculiar people, and made them the depository of his laws and his wor-

^a Wisdom ii. 24.

^b Gen. vi. 5.

^c 2 Peter ii. 5.

ship, it would have seemed probable that they at least would have kept themselves pure and separate from sinners. Their history, however, is little else than a history of their repeated rebellions and defections to idolatry, and of the punishments which, in consequence, were inflicted on them. There was but too much cause for the pathetic lamentations of the divine Psalmist—"Help me, Lord," says he, "for there is not one godly man left: for the faithful are minished from among the children of men."^d And again, "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men: to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God." And what is the result of this examination or scrutiny? "They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable: there is also none that doeth good, no not one."^e

In this depraved state did the world continue until the coming of our blessed Lord. But you will ask, did the pure precepts which he gave, and the holy example which he set—did the teaching and the exemplary lives of his Apostles produce no alteration, no change for the better? We acknowledge, and acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude, that they did. In proportion as the religion of Christ, as the Gospel of peace, extended itself, the wickedness of mankind was diminished, and righteousness and holiness increased.

Isaiah had foretold, that the blessed effects of the coming of Christ would be, that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together;"^f that is, that the angry and violent passions of men should be subdued into gentleness and meekness. And in very many instances these effects have been produced. Peace

^d Psalm xii. 1.^e Psalm liii. 3, 4.^f Isaiah xi. 6.

and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, have more and more flourished, and the general tone of morals and sentiment have been raised and improved, even among many who have not embraced the faith of Christ.

All this we thankfully acknowledge; but when, from this brighter side of the picture, we turn to that which is less favourable, we still find much to deplore; we still find that iniquity abounds, that corruption too generally prevails. The chronicles of the times, both in this and other countries, are filled with records of the crimes and the follies of men. And if we look around us as far as our own observation will extend, how much do we see of what is wrong, and how little comparatively of what is right! It is, no doubt, unpleasant to think ill of any, and a readiness to find fault is justly regarded as unamiable; but, after making all possible allowance, and taking every thing in the most favourable point of view, we cannot help perceiving, that the *world*, the generality of mankind, is still not effectually influenced by religious principles. For how many of those around us appear to be utterly regardless of religion and its sanctions! how many are addicted to swearing, or drunkenness, or dishonesty! how many are the backbiters, and the railers, and the spiteful! how many live in the neglect of God's public worship, and how many of those who outwardly are present, appear to be uninfluenced by any feelings of devotion! We still, I fear, must confess, that the world, in the scriptural sense of the word, lieth in wickedness; that the way trod by the many is the broad and easy way that leadeth to destruction; that they who live as the world lives, will perish with the world. Therefore it is that the Apostle says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;" and again, in

the language of the text, "Be not conformed to the world."

Let me, therefore, exhort and entreat you, my friends, to beware of shaping your opinions and practice by the opinions and practice of the world, and taking them as your only or your chief rule of conduct. Do not flatter yourselves and stifle your convictions, by saying, that *you do but as others do; that you are not worse than your neighbours; that you live as the rest of the world lives.* If there is any truth in the text which I have last referred to, that very circumstance ought to alarm you. If you live as the world lives, you are in danger of perishing with the world; if you walk in the same path with the many, you have reason to fear that you are travelling in the road that leadeth to destruction. Remember, that you are cautioned not to follow a multitude to do evil. Be assured that numbers will not screen you from the penalty of your disobedience; be assured, that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Instead of forming your conduct by the maxims and customs of the world, you must form them by the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures. "To the law and to the testimony" you must have recourse for your direction. You should adopt the avowal and the resolution of the Psalmist, "Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths; I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed, to keep thy righteous judgments." We engaged as much, when at the baptismal font we engaged to keep God's holy will and commandments; let us be steadfastly purposed to adhere to that engagement, and pray for divine grace and strength to enable us to adhere to it. When our duty is clearly pointed out to us in God's word, we

‡ Psalm cxix. 105, 106.

must resolve to keep to it, although every one else should act differently; and must never be so weak as to suffer the example of numbers, or what is called *fashion*, to lead us astray. When the customs of the world are lawful and innocent, we not only may, but *ought* to comply with them; I am far from recommending, I would rather caution you against an unnecessary and affected singularity. St. Paul, in things indifferent, became all things to all men; and in similar cases we should do the same. In things *indifferent*, compliance with other men is praise-worthy. But we must take heed that compliance with others do not lead us one step farther than is warranted by the word of God. In all matters of *duty*, we must, if so required, dare to be *singular*, to whatever blame or whatever ridicule our singularity may expose us. We seldom, blessed be God, shall be left really alone in our resolute opposition to sin; we seldom shall be left without the countenance and support of men equally prepared to adhere to their duty; and we trust that the numbers of such are still increasing. But if it were otherwise, still we must not be frightened from what we know to be right. Noah stood *alone* when he was a doer and preacher of righteousness in the world of the ungodly: the holy prophets of God had the *generality* against them, so that Elijah exclaimed, though erroneously, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away;"^h the Lord Jesus was left *alone* amidst his enemies; and his holy Apostles were engaged in a continual warfare against the *generality* of the world. We must expect that the men of the world will wish to make us resemble themselves, and that they will dislike us if we refuse. Thus in the book of Wisdom, the sinners are represented as saying of the

^h 1 Kings xix. 10.

righteous, "He is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our education."ⁱ And again, "He was made to reprove our thoughts; he is grievous to us even to behold, for his life is not like other men's; his ways are of another fashion."^k The designing and the unthinking will unite in endeavouring to deter us from our religious singularity, both by expressions of blame, and by laughter and contempt. But we must not be so weak and so cowardly as to be influenced by either. "Fear ye not the reproach of men," says the Prophet, "neither be ye afraid of their revilings."^l The solemn warning, too, of our divine Master should never be forgotten by us—"Whosoever shall confess me before men;" whoever, from a sense of duty and obedience to Christ, exposes himself to persecution, or contempt, or ridicule—"him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."^m And, on the other hand, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."ⁿ Let us, my friends, never be guilty of such weak and unmanly cowardice. The approbation of our own conscience is of far more consequence to us than the opinion of the world; and the approbation of the Lord Almighty is of infinitely more value than any thing else. Our connexion with this world can last but a very little while, and it is not, it cannot be very material whether, during that connexion, it gives us its smiles or its frowns. "This I say," brethren, "the time is short—for

ⁱ Wisdom ii. 12.
^m Matt. x. 32.

^k Wisdom ii. 14, 15.
ⁿ Mark viii. 38.

^l Isaiah li. 7.

"the fashion of this world passeth away."^o Or, as it is said by St. John, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."^p Let it be our care, my friends, thus to do the will of God, regardless alike of the world's frowns, and of the world's applause. And let us pray fervently to God, that he would so strengthen us with might by his Spirit in the inner man;^q that he would so "stablish, strengthen, settle us;"^r that we may never follow a multitude to do evil; that we may never be so conformed to this world as to partake of its vices, and share in its condemnation.

^o 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.
^q Ephes. iii. 16.

^p 1 John ii. 17.
^r 1 Peter v. 10.