

THE
CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

AUGUST, 1829.

Religious Communications.

LECTURES ON THE SHORTER CATECHISM OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY OF DIVINES—ADDRESSED TO YOUTH.

LECTURE XL.

The third commandment, which we are now to consider, is thus expressed:—

“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.”

This commandment, according to our Catechism, “requireth the holy and reverent use of God’s names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works.”

There is in the decalogue a beautiful order, not I believe generally observed, in the statement of the duties which we owe to God. In the first commandment, the only proper object of religious worship is clearly set before us; in the second, the only acceptable mode or method of worship is distinctly prescribed; and in the third, the right temper of mind for the performance of God’s worship is specified and required. In view of this close connexion of duties enjoined by these precepts, I remark, that it is not easy nor indeed practicable, to treat of them separately, and yet distinctly and fully—they unavoidably include or involve each other. Accordingly, in the three or four lectures which precede the present,

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a great part of what is required in the third commandment, has been anticipated. Another part we had occasion to consider in the very beginning of our course, in speaking of the Being, attributes, word, and works of God—subjects to which the first twelve answers of our catechism chiefly and directly relate. The ordinances of divine institution, I further remark, will hereafter demand our particular attention, both as to their nature, and the reverent manner in which they ought to be observed. In speaking, therefore, of what is required in this commandment, I shall confine myself to a brief notice of two or three particulars; and

1. The names and titles of God may need some farther explanation. In assigning names to men, the design, you know, is to discriminate one individual from another; and among the ancient nations, names were not entirely arbitrary as with us, but were often intended to be indicative of the character of the individuals to whom they were applied. Agreeably to this usage, the Supreme Being, in condescending to make himself known to men, has assumed names that discriminate him from all other beings, and which most impressively indicate his infinitely glorious nature or character. Thus we are told that when Moses first received a command to return from the land of

unfrequently, are occasioned by the use of ardent spirits. "It generates a *bad habit* of body, which renders the individual liable to violent attacks of disease from slight accidents, and causes various disorders to terminate fatally, which might otherwise be cured. The greater mortality of their diseases is particularly observable in young men, of which I might relate several melancholy examples."* The aggregate of deaths occasioned directly and indirectly by the use of ardent spirits, is probably greater than that arising from the combined influence of wars and famines, pestilences and earthquakes!

The *domestick* concomitants of intemperance are of yet more frightful aspect. "Houses without windows, gardens without fences, fields without tillage, barns without roofs, children without clothing, principles, morals, or manners"—Parents whose locks are like the fleecy snow, deprived of their only earthly solace; the staff on which they meant to support their tottering steps serving but to pierce their hands! Behold the *disunited* head of the family—A husband, noisy, swaggering, profane, obscene; a wife pale and mute, too sorrowful to weep, despairing! Her hard-earned pittance laid aside to cover her nakedness, and that of her children, has been stolen by her —! and consumed upon his lust! Her ragged and starving children are in vain importunate for bread! How changed from the sprightly and blooming form which once shared a tender father's fireside! She was allured away by the man of her affections, who pledged himself in the most solemn manner to cherish her as his own soul—now she is a stranger to every social enjoyment,

* A Discourse on Intemperance, delivered at Cincinnati, March 1st, 1828, before the Agricultural Society of Hamilton County, by Daniel Drake, M.D., Professor in the Medical School at Cincinnati—This pamphlet merits a careful perusal.

chilled by neglect and poverty, and not unfrequently, perhaps, assailed by curses and threats and blows! Yet this man, who sets before society such an example, who taxes the community for his own support and the support of his children, who brings down the grey hairs of his parents with sorrow to the grave, who breaks his solemnly plighted faith, and causes his partner's heart to bleed at every pore—*This* man thanks his Maker that he harms no one but himself.

The domestick evils inflicted by intemperance are in part unintentional. They arise necessarily out of the moral malady their subject labours under. He has no positive design to beggar his wife, or to starve his babes—perhaps he labours earnestly in his sober moments to ward off so dire a result: but intemperance adds to his expenditures, and subtracts from his days of profitable employment. It places himself and family between an "upper and nether millstone," which grind them to powder. The death of the drunkard "spreads a solemn gratification through society, and the members of his own family can scarcely conceal from themselves, and from each other, how much they are relieved."

(To be concluded in our next.)

FOR THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF CYPRIAN,
BISHOP OF CARTHAGE.

Of the early life of Cyprian we have scarcely any information, except that he was by birth an African, and by profession an orator. Lactantius and Augustine both speak of his fame as a teacher of eloquence. Before his conversion to Christianity, he was known by the names of Cyprian and Taschius; but being convinced of the truths of the Christian religion, by the instrumentality of Cæcilius, a Pres-

byter of Carthage, he assumed his name for the remainder of his life. The baptism of Cyprian is supposed to have taken place about the year 246 of the Christian era. While he was a catechumen, he manifested the sincerity of his profession, by giving to the poor the greater part of a large estate. Not long after this, he addressed a letter to Donatus, which is still extant, and which abounds more than his later works in the decorations of oratory.

About the close of the succeeding year, he was made a presbyter, and within a period unusually short, was called to the Episcopal chair of Carthage. It is remarkable, that we hear nothing of his having passed through the degree of Deacon, either in the memoir left by Pontius, or in any of his own works. It is equally remarkable, that we hear no one named as his predecessor; which the Bishop of Chester is constrained to acknowledge, although, by an unwarrantable conjecture, he fixes upon Donatus as the person. Whatever may have been the extent of his episcopal powers, he undoubtedly received the office, notwithstanding the opposition of five co-presbyters.

From the time of his accession to office, he seems to have proposed it to himself as an inviolable rule, to take no measure without the counsel of the clergy, and the consent of the people. This is a fact too important to be omitted, or to be stated without authority. In a letter written during his retreat from persecution, he thus expresses his opinion: "As to the point concerning which my co-presbyters, Donatus, Fortunatus, Novatus and Gordius have written, I can of myself say nothing; since from the commencement of my episcopate, it has been my determination to do nothing without your counsel, and without the consent of the people." It was during the year in which he was constituted Bishop, that he wrote his book "De Habitu Virgi-

num."—[Concerning the dress of Virgins.]

In the year 249 commenced the grievous persecution under the emperor Decius, commonly known by the name of the *Seventh Persecution*. Cyprian being a prominent character, was selected as a signal example; but deeming it more conducive to the interests of the church to save his life, than to commit himself to the hands of persecutors, he retreated from the rising storm. On this occasion, as on many others, he declared that he had been directed by a heavenly vision to the course which he pursued. This seems, indeed, in every case, his "*ultima ratio*," his standing argument. He appears to have been favoured, in every difficult question, with some divine intimation of this nature. Cyprian found it necessary, in more than one instance, to enter upon a formal justification of his conduct, even when what he did appears plainly to have been a measure of prudence and duty.

During his retreat, he was by no means unmindful of the interests of the church. By frequent letters, he exhorted his brethren to remember the duties incumbent on them, and to be faithful unto death. It was at this time the more necessary to stimulate the courage of believers, as many were induced by the severity of their torments, to relinquish their Christian profession, and to sacrifice to idols. Those who yielded to their persecutors were known by the name of *Lapsi*, [the lapsed or fallen] in opposition to the firm and resolute, who were called *Stantes* [the standing or stable]. Such as burnt incense, in token of symbolizing with the heathen, were styled *Thurificati*, [incense offerers,] and those who received instruments of writing from heathen authorities, for their protection, were the *Libellatici** [protected petitioners]. Those who boldly pro-

* *Libellatici*—Those Christians, who, that they might not be forced to idol wor-

fessed their faith, even at the risk of their lives, were universally denominated Confessors. It was in the year 250, during this voluntary exile, that four of the presbyters, whose names are mentioned above, requested his opinion upon the question—whether the Lapsed should be received again into the bosom of the church, even upon their repentance? This is deserving of notice, since it is the first mention of a question, which afterwards rent the Christian church.* This was likewise the question which he felt himself incompetent to answer, without an appeal to the body of the church, *laity* as well as clergy. On another occasion he says, in terms even stronger, that he deemed it necessary to consult, not only with the clergy, but with the people at large, “*cum universâ plebe.*”† [With the whole congregation.]

This was a season of great commotion in the church. The question had arisen whether the Lapsed were not to be forever excluded. Upon this subject, the people, in the violence of their opposition, were running to extremes. Novatus, a presbyter of Carthage, who had gone to Rome, maintained that the Lapsed were upon no conditions to be received into the bosom of the church. Felicissimus and his faction held, on the contrary, that they were to be received, without even waiting for their penitence. Cyprian became offensive to both parties, by maintaining the moderate and correct opinion, that after well attested penitence, the Lapsed might be admitted anew to the privileges of the church. In this opinion he was upheld by the decision of the Synod of Carthage, which was held in the year 251.

In this notable controversy, the parties seemed to be inflamed to the highest degree of fiery zeal, so that

ship, gave their names in petitions; or, perhaps, subscribed their names to pay a fine.—Ainsworth's Dictionary.

* Ep. 15.

† Ep. 34.

scarcely any other subject engaged the attention of the Christian church. In the year 252, however, the wrath of conflicting churchmen was checked by a desolating plague. The whole of the Mediterranean countries, were visited with the scourges of famine and pestilence. The malady had originated in Arabia, whence, in a most destructive manner, it pervaded Egypt and other parts of Africa. To arm Christians against the fear of death, and to promote among them submission to the will of God, Cyprian composed his treatise *De Mortalitate*. [Concerning mortality.] It abounds in lively exhortation, and glowing descriptions of the heavenly state.

In the year 253 peace was restored to the Christian church, and in consequence of this, a synod was convened at Carthage, consisting of sixty-six bishops. Among other questions proposed for their consideration, we find one arising out of a complaint lodged against a certain Therapius, who had refused baptism to infants before the third day. From this it is most clear, that there was an entire unanimity as to the baptism of infants; and that the disputes were only respecting incidental circumstances.

Not long after this time, the treatise *De opere et Eleemosynis* [concerning labour and alms] was composed. It has been observed that primitive piety was in nothing more remarkable, than in the noble and enlarged spirit of charity manifested in their alms-giving. Cyprian's treatise is a synopsis of the Scriptural commands and motives on this subject.

About the year 255, the controversies in the African church rose to a great height. Novatus and his coadjutor Novatian, were excommunicated. Their doctrines were declared heretical, and their body of followers anti-christian. It now became a matter of dispute, whether persons received from their body should be rebaptized, or, in other

words, whether the ordinances administered by them were valid. Cyprian warmly took part against the Novatians; and upon this subject, as one of vital importance, all his powers were concentrated. In the year 256, a council was held at Carthage, in which this question was very solemnly discussed, and by which the opinion of Cyprian was sustained.

The eighth persecution was in the ensuing year commenced by Valerian, and our good bishop was now summoned to appear before the Proconsul Paternus. It appears strange to us that his life should have been spared; yet his immediate punishment was nothing more than exile. He was banished to Curubis, a town of the province of Zeugitara, upon a peninsula of the Libyan sea, near Pentapolis. He was accompanied by his faithful deacon Pontius, from whose narrative we glean these facts. He appears to have departed with cheerfulness from his church and his home, to this dreary solitude. The remark of his companion is striking:—"This whole world is but one house to the Christian. Hence, although he be banished to some secluded and concealed place, still, mingling in the concerns of his God, he cannot be considered as in exile."* In this his place of confinement, he was not without new revelations of a miraculous kind. We shall not discuss the question whether these accounts are true, but shall give the narrative in the words of Pontius. "On the very day in which we entered upon our exile," says Cyprian, "there appeared to me, before I had fallen asleep, a youth far above the ordinary size of man, who conducted me to the prætorium, where I seemed to be brought before the tribunal of the Proconsul. He, upon beholding me, began immediately to write upon a tablet a

sentence, the import of which I did not know, for he had proposed to me none of the usual interrogations. The youth, however, who stood behind him, seemed with great curiosity to read what he was writing. And because he was unable to declare it in words, he showed, by a significant gesture, what was inscribed upon the tablet. With his hand expanded, so as to represent a sword, he imitated the usual stroke of execution. I understood it as the sentence of my death." The account goes on to state, that he prayed for a reprieve of one day, which was accordingly granted. It was a prophetick day,—and in one year he suffered martyrdom. Towards the close of the year, Maximus, the Proconsul, ordered Cyprian to be brought from his exile, and gave him permission to remain in his gardens. This was no doubt for the purpose of a more convenient apprehension. The proconsular court was held at Utica, about forty miles from Carthage, and Cyprian was ordered to repair thither for trial. Upon hearing this, he retreated from the gardens into a concealment which had been prepared for him. This step was taken, not for the purpose of avoiding death, but that he might leave his dying testimony at Carthage, among his own people, rather than at Utica. From this retirement he wrote his last epistle to the presbyters, deacons, and people of Carthage. In the mean time, the Proconsul returned from Utica to Carthage, the capital of his province, and the metropolis of the African church. Cyprian now returned to the gardens, notwithstanding the importunities of many friends, who besought him to save himself. He was permitted, as was frequently the case, to hold a feast with his brethren, on the day before his death.

On the day of trial, being brought before the Proconsul, he was enabled to make a good profession of his faith before many witnesses. There

* "Christiano totus hic mundus una domus est. Unde licet in abditum et abstrusum locum fuerat relegatus; admixtus Dei sui rebus, exilium non potest computare."

is a conciseness and sublimity in the discourse of the martyr, which scarcely admit of a translation. We may preserve its meaning, but must lose its point and elegance. "The Proconsul said to Cyprian the Bishop, *Are you Tascius Cyprian?* Cyprian the Bishop answered, *I am.* The Proconsul said, *Hast thou not acted as High Priest to men of a sacrilegious mind?* Cyprian answered, *I!* The Proconsul said, *The most sacred Emperors have commanded you to do sacrifice.* Cyprian said, *I do it not.* Galerius Maximus said to him, *Consult your safety.* Cyprian answered, *Do what has been commanded you. In so just a cause, there needs no consultation.* Thus far the words that were spoken.*

The Proconsul, after consultation with his court, proceeded in the following words: "Thou hast been living with a sacrilegious mind; hast collected around thee many who have conspired in this nefarious course; and hast held thyself forth as an enemy to the Roman gods, and the sacred laws. The pious and most sacred princes, Valerian and Gallienus, have been unable to recall thee to their own ceremonial. Since, therefore, thou art detected as the head and standard-bearer in these most flagrant crimes, thou shalt serve as an example to those who have been associated with thee in wickedness. The law shall be sanctioned by thy blood." Sentence was then pronounced, *Taschium Cyprianum gladio animadverti placet.*—[Let Tascius Cyprian suffer death by the sword.] To

which he replied, *Deo gratias.*—[Thanks to God.] He was beheaded in the sight of all the people, in the month of October, A. D. 258.

Thus died this eminent man, honouring, in his martyrdom, that Saviour whom he had delighted to serve in life. The charge of the Proconsul, that he was the leader and standard-bearer of the Christians, contains in it a eulogy well deserved. In all his writings, and in the whole history of his labours, he stands forth as the head and representative of the great body of African Christians. The church of Rome appealed to him on the most important questions, and the clergy of Europe as well as Africa, applied to him for his counsel. No single year of his life seems to have been free from controversy, and much of his voluminous writings is taken up in the discussion of contested points. Yet, in the midst of these labours, so detrimental to the warmth of true religion, we find him constantly inculcating the practice of true piety, stimulating the churches to love and good works, and striving for the purity and unity of the body of Christ. We cannot but regret, however, the frequent recurrence of expressions which seem to intimate a belief in the merit of good works, and an ignorance of the freeness and fulness of salvation by Christ. A minute observer might, perhaps, discover traces of a lordly spirit, and an assumption of too great authority. Yet the simplicity of primitive times had not yet been worn away; and these faults, if they did indeed exist, seem scarcely separable from the bold independence and uncompromising love of truth and order, which are so conspicuous in the character of this truly great man. In his style of writing we detect something of the meretricious glare of African oratory, yet often so ingenious and so polished, that we can scarcely condemn it. He was an indefatigable labourer in the vineyard

* Proconsul Cypriano Episcopo dixit, *Tu es Tascius Cyprianus?* Cyprianus Episcopus respondit, *Ego sum.* Proconsul dixit, *Tu Papam te sacrilegæ mentis hominibus præbuisisti?* Cyprianus Episcopus respondit, *Ego.* Proconsul dixit, *Jusserunt te sacratissimi Imperatores ceremoniari.* Cyprianus Episcopus dixit, *Non facio.* Galerius Maximus ei, *Consule tibi.* Cyprianus Episcopus respondit, *Fac quod tibi præceptum est. In re tam justa nulla est consultatio.* Hactenus verba."

of his Lord, and spent his Christian life in striving for the salvation of men.

S. L. R.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.

ON ORIGINAL SIN.

Philadelphia, July 25, 1829.

Mr. Editor,—Having read a good deal of some recent discussions on original sin, in which, as it seems to me, the old notions of Pelagius are brought forward in something of a new form, I was much struck this day, with a few paragraphs in Milner's Church History, which I hit upon while looking for something else. Having noticed the fact, that A. D. 253, a council of 66 bishops, with Cyprian at their head, had decided a question relative to infant baptism, the historian takes the opportunity to give his own views of that subject, and then adds the following remarks:—

“I could have wished that Christian people had never been vexed with a controversy so frivolous as this about baptism, and having, once for all, given my views and the reasons of them, I turn from the subject, and observe further, that there is in the extract of the letter before us,* a strong and clear testimony of the faith of the ancient church concerning original sin. One may safely reason in the same way as in the case just now considered, but the fulness of Scripture concerning so momentous a point precludes the necessity of traditional arguments. A lover of divine truth will be glad

however to learn, that Christians in the middle of the third century did believe, without contradiction, *that men were born in sin and under the wrath of God through Adam's transgression, conceiving themselves as one with him, and involved with him in the consequences of his offence.* Modern self-conceit may say to this what it pleases; but thus thought ancient Christians in general, and the very best Christians too, with whom was the spirit of Christ in a powerful degree. The just consequence of such facts is not always attended to by those who are concerned in it. ‘Yes, but reason should be attended to.’ So I say; but what is right reason? To submit to the testimony of the Divine Word. This alone is sufficient and is above all; if men will not abide by this, it is not unreasonable to tell them, that their strained interpretations of Scripture are confuted by the sense of the primitive church, who had every opportunity of knowing the truth; that to deduce Scripture doctrines from what we should fancy to be reasonable, is not reason, but pride; that an argument drawn from settling the question, ‘What did the ancient Christians think of these things?’ deserves some attention; but that an argument drawn from our own fancies, what we think *ought* to be in Scripture, deserves none at all. It may be called the language of philosophy; nothing is more confused than the use of that term in our days; but it is not the language of one disposed to *hear the word of God and to do it.*”

L. N.

EMBLEMS FROM NATURE.

See yon pale moon,
Hanging upon the skirt of that black cloud,
Which, in its slow majestic motion, soon
The lovely orb will shroud.

* A letter of Cyprian.