

LECTURES

ON THE WHOLE

EPISTLE OF ST PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

TO THE MOST REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
GEORGE, LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

HIS GRACE, PRIMATE OF ALL ENGLAND AND METROPOLITAN, AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE
PRIVY COUNCIL.

MOST REVEREND FATHER,

I COULD not presume to shroud this unpolished work under so high a patronage, if I did not hope that, as David loved lame Mephibosheth for his good father Jonathan, so your gracious favour to this author (now with God) would excuse and pardon, yea accept, this unperfected issue of his pains. These papers were never intended for the common view, being fitted in a plain and familiar style to a popular assembly, and therefore, I confess, not worthy of your acceptance. Yet I thought it injustice either to deprive the church of God of the benefit of his labours, or not to consecrate them to your Grace's hands, to whom the author was so much obliged. Your gracious countenance and love unto him, upon experience of his integrity, whereof you were long a witness and sometime a judge, did much comfort him amidst other occasions of grief and dejection. His only requital were holy prayers for your happiness, which he forgot not in the extremity of his last sickness, even then devoutly entreating the Lord for his blessing upon your person and government. Besides, your Grace is pleased to make your favours, as it were, hereditary, extending them in great measure to his successor, our present governor, and to our college; in which respect the best of all our labours are justly devoted

to your Grace, as a small discharge of our duty, if not rather as an acknowledgment of our obligation. These lectures, which now I present, are an exposition of Saint Paul's divine letter to the Philippians; an exposition, indeed, not suitable to the niceness and curiosity of our times, not elegant in words, and without all affectation, unless of plainness. But yet, lest I too much disparage the author and his work, if I be not mistaken, the naked and natural sense of this holy text is here so faithfully opened, and withal so powerfully and thoroughly applied, that, I doubt not, God's church and people may hence reap much benefit, which was the author's only aim in the exercise of his ministry, and shall be my chief comfort. Whatsoever it is, I humbly commend it to the blessing of God and to the use of his church, desiring to honour it with your Grace's name, whose patronage shall procure it respect from others. The Lord Jesus long preserve your Grace (after the joy of our hearts and the breath of our nostrils his most excellent Majesty), a great and sure friend of religion, and a worthy instrument of the welfare and peace of this holy and happy Church of England!

Your Grace's humble Orator,

CHRISTOPHER POTTER.

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

IT was a just taxation of our times by grave and reverend Beza, *Dum tempora superiora cum nostris comparo, dicere consuevi plus illos conscientia, scientia minus habuisse; nos contra scientia plus, conscientia minus habere*: the brains of men were never more stuffed, their tongues never more stirring, and yet their hearts never more empty, their hands never more idle. The disease of our forefathers was ignorance, ours is impiety; they were ill in the head, we are sick at the heart; they were blind, but (after their manner) devout, we are skilful and profane. No

age was ever blessed with such a light of knowledge, and yet none more fruitful of the works of darkness. The main reason undoubtedly why wisdom and holiness, learning and sanctity, are so usually now-a-days divorced, is because, as that heathen of old could complain, *disputare malumus quam vivere*. If men can argue and discourse of religion, it suffices; not one of a thousand thoroughly digests his knowledge, or turns the holy precepts of divinity into practice. Hence the world abounds with polemical books, which do not so much compose as breed contentions (though

I confess the fault is not ours, but our adversaries', whose perverseness will not be convicted even when they are convicted). But for practical divinity and lively devotion, it is an argument not more necessary than rare, handled but by few, and not by many regarded. Yet in this iniquity of times, wherein the affections of men had more need to be ordered than their judgments informed, in my opinion those treatises are of best service and use which reduce Christianity into action, and warm the heart and conscience with devotion. In this rank I account this commentary, which was a principal motive unto me, as we all owe ourselves unto the common good, not to smother a work so serviceable for this age, nor to bereave God's church of such a furtherance, especially being herein encouraged by sundry reverend and judicious.

A commentary perhaps not to the taste of many men in this age, whose nice palate doth loathe the dry manna, and can best relish the unsavoury sauces of Egypt. Others, who cannot fancy divinity unless she be wantonly trimmed up in the light colours of human art and eloquence, will here require elegance of words, and quarrel at his careless style. I answer, *mores non verba composuit, et animis dixit non auribus*, the scope of his labours was his auditors' instruction, not his own applause, nor did he care to please so much as to profit. To come with the 'enticing words of man's wisdom,' and to preach only themselves, is the note of false teachers. The charge of Christ's minister is, 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,' to 'divide the word of truth aright' unto his people; and this was our author's aim. God's oracles are to be faithfully expounded, not curiously minced, not loosely dallied with. And surely the plain song of Scripture is the best music, without these quavering descants of man's wit. How licentiously and profanely popish friars have abused God's holy word by their trifling postils, it is too manifest. Yea (be it spoken with due modesty and reverence to those worthies to whose industry and wit the Christian church is so much beholding), some of the ancient doctors were too far in love with quaint interpretations, especially Origen, whose excessive allegorising (by the confession of Eusebius,* who yet was his great favourite and partial in his praises, caused the apostate Porphyrius to blaspheme and to scoff at the Scriptures; which consideration, no doubt, moved Calvin, Melancthon, Martyr, and the rest of our late and learned expositors, to stick so close to the letter of the text, and in all simplicity to deliver the meaning of the Holy Ghost. Their judgment our author approved, and followed their example, opening, in these lectures, the simple and most naturally-intended sense of the holy apostle, and thence urging and applying the observations so effectually, that many, not only of his ordinary hearers, but even of the university, by whom he was much frequented, blessed God for the direction and comfort

* Lib. vi. c. xviii.

they received from his mouth. The life of delivery in him was very powerful, and made great impression on his hearers. This book wants that advantage, which yet is here supplied, because those things which then were only delivered in the ears of few, are here submitted to the eyes of all.

Touching the author himself, I need not say much. Although, after a sort, he condemned himself to obscurity, and affected a private and retired life, yet he could not hide himself from the eyes of the world, being generally noted and esteemed for his holiness, his integrity, his learning and gravity, his indefatigable pains in the discharge of his ministerial function, his singular wisdom and dexterity in the government of our college, which, by God's blessing upon his care, hath sent forth many learned ministers into the church, many worthy gentlemen into the commonwealth. Briefly, in his whole conversation he was so sincere and unrebukable, that by some, partly by occasion of these lectures, he was defamed for preciseness. Indeed, as the times are now, the only means almost to avoid that reproach is to be notoriously wicked. But, in few words to wipe off that imputation, how much he condemned the injurious zeal of the separatists, how far he disliked all busy disturbers of the church's peace and quiet, still gravely exhorting to calmness and moderation, how heartily he revered his holy mother the church of England, and how willingly he conformed himself to her seemly ceremonies and injunctions, besides his practice, he hath so many reverend and grave witnesses, as he had familiar acquaintance. To say truth, he was not of the Laodicean temper, nor yet 'pure in his own eyes;' zealous and fervent, not turbulent and contentious; a faithful servant of God, an humble and obedient son of the church, an enemy to faction no less than to superstition. Lastly, when the few and evil days of his pilgrimage were ended, as a comfortable death ever follows a conscionable life, he patiently and meekly endured God's gentle visitation, earnestly longed after his dissolution and to be with Christ, which he knew was best of all; and at length, when the time of his changing was come, devoutly commending his soul to the mercy of his Redeemer, he closed up his eyes in peace, and was carried to his grave with honour. He now rests from his labours, and his works follow him; he hath left behind him a blessed memory, and a name sweeter than any ointment. This holy monument of his industry I commend to thy use and serious meditation, good Christian reader, which, favourably accepted, may encourage me to publish other of his labours. The Lord Jesus bless all our endeavours to the building up of his church, and our own everlasting salvation. Amen.

Thine in the Lord Jesus.

CHRISTOPHER POTTER.

Queen's College, Nov. 28. 1617.

LECTURES

ON THE WHOLE

EPISTLE OF ST PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

LECTURE I.

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: grace be with you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
—PHILIP. I. 1, 2.

WHEN first it pleased the Lord to call me to this set work in this place, by reason of my short time to deliberate, I chose for the time that text of Scripture which was appointed to be read for the epistle the next Sabbath, beginning at the 5th verse of the 2d chapter of this epistle, purposing afterward to make choice of some other scripture which happily might better fit this place. But so it pleased the Lord to dispose that I should go forward even throughout the epistle unto the end, and the last day conclude my observations thereupon in your hearing. Now I have thought good again to begin with that whereof I have made an end, that so, if the Lord will, the meaning of this whole epistle, and the doctrines thereof, may in good time be delivered in your hearing.

Paul and Timotheus. I shall not need to speak much touching the occasion whereupon the apostle wrote this epistle, because I have already spoken almost of all the things that occasioned it. The Philippians having heard of the apostle's imprisonment at Rome, sent their minister Epaphroditus unto him, with relief from them to supply his necessities. Whereupon Epaphroditus, coming to Rome, told the apostle the state of the church at Philippi, how that there were false apostles crept in amongst them, which urged circumcision and the works of the law, and that the Philippians constantly withstood them. The apostle therefore, to commend their constancy, for their further encouragement thereunto, to arm them against the false teachers, for their clear satisfaction

in the points which they urged, and to give them thanks for their great liberality towards him, wherein they shewed their care for him, wrote this epistle unto them.

Wherein, as in all other his epistles, is set down, 1, the inscription; 2, the salutation; 3, the body of the epistle itself. In the inscription we have, 1, the persons saluting; 2, the persons saluted. The persons saluting are described, 1, by their proper names, and then by a title of dignity common to them both. The names of the persons saluting are Paul and Timotheus: Paul, called also sometimes Saul, the writer of this epistle, and Timotheus, the approver of it; or Paul, the inditer of it, and Timotheus, the writer of it. The title of dignity common to them both, whereby they are described, is this, 'the servants of Jesus Christ;' servants both, and therefore to attend upon their ministry and service; and both servants of Jesus Christ, and therefore to attend upon the ministration of the gospel which he had committed unto them; but yet the servants of Jesus, the Saviour of the world, even of Jesus Christ, anointed a king to defend us, a prophet to teach us, and a priest to offer up a sacrifice for our sins. The persons saluted are generally the whole church of Philippi, and more particularly the bishops and deacons there. The whole church at Philippi generally is saluted under the name of 'all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi,' for by *all the saints in Christ Jesus* he meaneth all them which in baptism had given their names unto Christ

Jesus, thenceforth to die unto sin, and to live unto God in righteousness and true holiness, which was all the church at Philippi. Now this Philippi was a chief city in the parts of Macedonia, Acts xvi. 12, whose inhabitants came from Rome to dwell there, the first city in the passage out of Thracia, beyond the river Strymon. At the first it is generally thought to have been called Crenida, because of many fountains about the hill whereon it was built, Κρήνη being as much as *fons*; and afterward to have been called Philippi, because of the fortification and enlargement thereof by Philip king of Macedon; and now to be called Gricopolis, as if ye would call it Chrysopolis, a city of gold, because of the great abundance of gold that is there,—so great that Philip is said to have received thence yearly about one thousand talents of gold, which is as much as six hundred thousand French crowns. This city is notably known, as for the great overthrow of Brutus and Cassius there by Octavius and Antony, so especially for the preaching of the gospel there by Paul and Silas and Timotheus, for the embracing of the truth there by their ministry, and for many other accidents there during the apostle his abode there; for Paul being warned by the Spirit to go into Macedonia, he went thither, and first came to Philippi, and there preached, and by his preaching converted Lydia, so that she and her household were baptized. Afterwards he cast out of a maid a spirit of divination. Whereupon he was brought before the magistrates, sore beaten with rods, cast into the inner prison, and his feet thrust into the stocks. Being there in prison, the foundation of the prison was shaken by an earthquake, the doors were opened, the prisoner's bands were loosed, the jailor was converted, he and his house baptized, and the apostle delivered. For these things this city is well known, and it was the church generally in this city that the apostle saluted.

The persons more particularly saluted are the bishops and deacons there; where by bishops he meaneth the pastors and teachers which laboured in the word and doctrine. For both the word so signifieth throughout the whole New Testament, and here it must needs so signify, because he speaketh of many in one church. By deacons also he meaneth those that by their office were to receive and distribute the common liberality of the church, according to the necessities of all the poor members thereof, such as we read to have been ordained in the church, Acts vi. 5, and such as are described by our apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 8, &c. Unto whom, together with the bishops, the apostle is thought here to write, as to magnify their office, so because theirs had been the care chiefly, in respect of their office, to send the church's liberality to him by their minister Epaphroditus.

The salutation followeth, wherein he wisheth them all good, from him which is the author of all goodness. Where is set down—1. The thing which he wisheth unto them, which is 'grace and peace,' understanding

by *grace* the free favour of God, wherewith he loveth his children, and whence, as from the fountain, all other goodness doth flow; and by *peace* every blessing, corporal and spiritual, for this life and that that is to come, flowing from that fountain of grace; 2. is set down unto whom he wisheth this grace and peace, namely, unto 'all the saints at Philippi, together with the bishops,' &c.; 3. is set down the author from whom and by whom he wisheth this grace and peace unto them, which is from 'God our Father,' as the fountain and first original from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, and 'from the Lord Jesus Christ,' as the means by whom every grace of the Spirit is conveyed and derived unto us. Thus much for the purpose of the apostle in these words, and the meaning of them. Now let us see what notes we may gather hence for our farther use and instruction.

Paul and Timotheus. First, then, for the very name of Paul, it should not pass us reading or hearing of it, but therein we should observe the great mercy of our gracious God towards sinful creatures. For what was Paul, that now wrote unto the churches here and there to stablish them in the faith? Surely he was sometimes a bloody Saul, a cruel persecutor of God's church, Acts xxvi. 10, 11, one that, having received authority of the high priests, shut up many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death gave his sentence and punished them throughout all the synagogues, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being more mad upon them, persecuted them even unto strange cities; one that was a blasphemer, 1 Tim. i. 13, an oppressor, that spared neither men nor women, Acts xxii. 4, but beat them, and bound them, and delivered them unto death; one that persecuted the church of God extremely, and wasted it, Gal. i. 13. All which things himself testifieth of himself. Could there well have been a more forlorn man, a more desperate and godless creature? Yet this man was received unto mercy, yea, unto such mercy that the Lord called him to be an apostle, and chose him to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. And that this was a work of the Lord his own mercy, our apostle himself witnesseth, where he thus saith, 'I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and an oppressor, but I was received to mercy,' 1 Tim. i. 13. And why was he received to mercy? Himself tells us, saying, 'For this cause was I received to mercy, that Jesus Christ should first shew on me all long-suffering, to the ensample of them that shall in time to come believe in him unto eternal life.' ver. 16. It was then the Lord his great mercy towards him, that of a cruel persecutor he became an holy apostle of Christ Jesus, and this mercy was shewed on him, that in him might be an example of God's mercy towards miserable sinners. I might instance in the like mercy of the Lord towards Matthew, first a publican, afterwards an evangelist; towards Zaccheus, first a sinful man, afterwards a notable convert; towards the