

4thly. Our Father that is in heaven ever liveth to act the part of a kind and good, wise and benevolent Father, to all His children. Earthly parents are not permitted to continue to live, by reason of death; and how many children are left behind helpless orphans. But the children of God only can say, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up;" "He will never leave nor forsake me;" "He is a buckler to all them that put their trust in Him." Earthly parents, in general, feel a very warm and tender attachment to their offspring; but it is not to be compared with that of our Father that is in heaven, which is endurable and immutable.

5th, and lastly. We observe that the love of God towards His family is very great. He says to them, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." The love of a father is great; and it is said that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." But the love of a mother is stronger still; and it is said, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand; thy walls are continually before me." "If, therefore, parents, being evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" We cannot tell how much more; as much more as the knowledge of God is superior to the ignorance of man, and as the power of God surpasses the impotence of man, and as the love of God exceeds the selfishness of man. Let us, then, be encouraged to go always to Him, as children to their father, in the prompt and daily exercise of filial confidence and reverence, humility and submission. "He is a sun and shield; He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." But as God's goodness and mercy afford all needful encouragement to prayer, so they hold out an excellent example for our meditation.

Our blessed Lord, therefore, proceeds to say (verse 12th): "*Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.*"

These words in this verse contain what is commonly called "The Golden Rule"—a rule, be it observed, worthy to be written in "letters of gold and in pictures of silver." Nay, we should rather say, written with more precious materials—written by the finger of God on "the fleshly tables of the heart." It is a rule divinely simple, easily understood, and admitting of an application to every case that can occur. All that it requires is that we should put ourselves in the place of others, and imagine ourselves to be in exactly similar circumstances, and then act towards them in the same way that we should desire and expect them to act towards ourselves in the

circumstances supposed to exist. The excellency of the rule consists in making our selfishness the measure of our benevolence; but this makes it a rule of very difficult observance. It requires us to rise superior to all the principles which exert the most powerful influence over our depraved nature, and which may well be comprehended under the general name of self-love. It is a most reasonable rule. What we should expect others to do to us, we cannot, in common justice, refuse to them. By acting otherwise—by doing less for them than we should consider themselves bound to do for us, we condemn ourselves, and commit an act of positive injustice; we violate the great fundamental law which requires us to "love our neighbor as ourselves." This is, moreover, a most comprehensive law. It embraces the whole system of relative duties which we owe to our fellow-men and our fellow-Christians, whether they refer to the practice of justice or the exercise of benevolence. The same rule applies alike to both, and to all the varieties of cases and of circumstances which can arise under either the one or the other. The rule, in fine, is most beneficial in its tendency. Were mankind in general to act in accordance with its wholesome and wise directions—were all men to do to others whatsoever they would that others in similar circumstances should do to them,—what an altered, what an improved aspect would the whole of society present! It is because this divine precept is not sufficiently regarded, that injustice and oppression, violence and discord, wretchedness and misery, prevail to such a fearful extent in all classes of humanity. And yet this rule is enjoined with divine authority, obligatory on all, and peremptory in its nature. It is so, "for this is the law and the prophets."

We, however, do not find exactly the same words either in the law or the prophets. But nevertheless it is in conformity with the testimony of God, which is contained both in the law and the prophets. It was the design of the law and the prophets to recommend the very same line of conduct which our blessed Lord has here enjoined. Many precepts of the Old Testament scriptures might be quoted in conformity with the one now under our consideration. Yet it is a precept of the most difficult observance; and its whole character is entirely contrary to the strongest feelings of our depraved and fallen nature. It is a precept which nothing but the influence of divine grace can enable us to reduce to practice. In connection with this divine and sublime precept, our blessed Lord and Saviour proceeds to instruct and exhort His disciples, in

Verse 13th. "*Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat.*"

It may truly be said that there are only