SERMONS,

OR

HOMILIES,

APPOINTED TO BE READ IN CHURCHES

IN THE TIME OF

QUEEN ELIZABETH,

OF FAMOUS MEMORY.

IN TWO PARTS.

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1815.
CONSIDERING how necessary it is, that the Word of God, which is the only food of the soul, and that most excellent light that we must walk by, in this our most dangerous pilgrimage, should at all convenient times be preached unto the people, that thereby they may both learn their duty towards God, their Prince, and their neighbours, according to the mind of the Holy Ghost, expressed in the Scriptures, and also to avoid the manifold enormities which heretofore by false doctrine have crept into the Church of God; and how that all they which are appointed Ministers have not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people, which is committed unto them, whereof great inconveniences might rise, and ignorance still be maintained, if some honest remedy be not speedily found and provided: the Queen’s most excellent Majesty, tendering the souls health of her loving subjects, and the quieting of their conscience in the chief and principal points of Christian religion, and willing also by the true setting forth and pure declaring of God’s Word, which is the principal guide and leader unto all godliness and virtue, to expel and drive away as well corrupt, vicious, and ungodly living, as also erroneous and poisoned doctrines, tending to superstition and idolatry, hath by the advice of her honourable Counsellors, for her discharge in this behalf, caused a book of Homilies, which heretofore was set forth by her most loving Brother, a Prince of most worthy memory, Edward the Sixth, to be printed anew, wherein are contained certain wholesome and godly exhortations, to move the people to honour and worship Almighty God, and diligently to serve him, every one according to their degree, state, and vocation. All which Homilies her Majesty commandeth and straightly chargeth all Parsons, Vicars, Curates, and all others having spiritual cure, every Sunday and Holy-day in the year, at the ministering of the holy Communion, or if there be no Communion ministered that day, yet after the Gospel and Creed, in such order and place as is appointed in the Book of Common Prayers, to read and declare to their parishioners plainly and distinctly one of the said Homilies, in such order as they stand in the book, except there be a Sermon, according as it is enjoined in the book of her Highness’ Injunctions; and then for that cause only, and for none other, the reading of the said Homily to be deferred unto the next Sunday or Holy-day following. And when the foresaid Book of Homilies is
read over, her Majesty’s pleasure is, that the same be repeated and read again, in such like sort as was before prescribed. Furthermore, her Highness commandeth, that, notwithstanding this order, the said ecclesiastical persons shall read her Majesty’s Injunctions at such times, and in such order, as in the book thereof appointed: and that the Lord’s Prayer, the Articles of the Faith, and the Ten Commandments, be openly read unto the people, as in the said Injunctions is specified, that all her people, of what degree or condition soever they be, may learn how to invocate and call upon the name of God, and know what duty they owe both to God and man: so that they may pray, believe, and work according to knowledge, while they shall live here, and after this life be with him that with his blood hath bought us all. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory for ever. Amen
THE Holy Ghost, in writing the holy Scripture, is in nothing more
diligent than to pull down man’s vain glory and pride, which of all
vices is most universally grafted in all mankind, even from the first
infection of our first father Adam. And therefore we read in many places of
Scripture many notable lessons against this old rooted vice, to teach us the
most commendable virtue of humility, how to know ourselves, and to
remember what we be of ourselves. In the book of Genesis, Almighty God
giveth us all a title and name in our great grandfather Adam, which ought to
warn as all to consider what we be, whereof we be, from whence we came,
and whither we shall, saying thus, In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy
bread, till thou be turned again into the ground: for out of it wast thou
taken; in as much as thou art dust? into dust shalt thou be turned again.
Here (as it were in a glass) we may learn to know ourselves to be but
ground, earth, and ashes, and that to earth and ashes we shall return,

Also, the holy patriarch Abraham did well remember this name and title,
dust, earth, and ashes, appointed and assigned by God to all mankind: and
therefore he calleth himself by that name, when he maketh his earnest
prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah. And we read that Judith, Esther, Job,
Jeremiah, with other holy men and women in the Old Testament, did use
sackcloth, and to cast dust and ashes upon their heads, when they bewailed
their sinful living. They called and cried to God for help and mercy, with
such a ceremony of sackcloth, dust, and ashes, that thereby they might
declare to the whole world, what an humble and lowly estimation they had
of themselves, and how well they remembered their name and title
aforesaid, their vile, corrupt, frail nature, dust, earth, and ashes. The book
of Wisdom also, willing to pull down our proud stomachs, moveth us
diligently to remember our mortal and earthly generation, which we have
all of him that was first made: and that all men, as well kings as subjects,
come into this world, and go out of the same, in like sort: that is as of
ourselves, full miserable, as we may daily see. And Almighty God com-
manded his prophet Isaiah to make a proclamation, and cry to the whole
world: and Isaiah asking, What shall I cry? the Lord answered, Cry, that all
flesh is grass, and that all the glory thereof is but as the flower of the field? when the grass is withered, the flower falleth away, when the wind of the Lord bloweth upon it. The people surely is grass, the which drieth up, and the flower fadeth away. And the holy man Job, having in himself great experience of the miserable and sinful estate of man, doth open the same to the world in these words: Man, saith he, that is born of a woman, living but a short time, is full of manifold miseries: he springeth up like a flower, and fadeth again; vanisheth away as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one state. And dost thou judge it meet, O Lord, to open thine eyes upon such a one, and to bring him to judgment with thee? Who can make him clean, that is conceived of an unclean seed? and all men of their evilness, and natural proneness, be so universally given to sin, that, as the Scripture saith, God repented that ever he made man. And by sin his indignation was so much provoked against the world, that he drowned all the world with Noah’s flood (except Noah himself, and his little household.)

It is not without great cause, that the Scripture of God doth so many times call all men here in this world by this word, earth: O thou earth, earth, earth, saith Jeremiah, hear the word of the Lord. This our right name, calling, and title, earth, earth, earth, pronounced by the Prophet, showeth what we be indeed, by whatsoever other style, title, or dignity, men do call us. Thus he plainly named us, who knoweth best, both what we be, and what we ought of right to be called. And thus he setteth us forth, speaking by his faithful Apostle St. Paul: All men, Jews and Gentiles, are under sin: there is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of the way, they are all unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one: Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used craft and deceit, the poison of serpents is under their lips, their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and wretchedness are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. And in another place, St. Paul writeth thus, God hath wrapped all nations in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all. The Scripture shutteth up all under sin, that the promise by the faith of Jesus Christ should be given unto them that believe. St. Paul in many places painteth us out in our colours, calling us the children of the wrath of God, when we be born: saying also, that we cannot think a good thought of ourselves, much less can we say well, or do well of ourselves. And the wise man saith in the Book of Proverbs, The just man falleth seven times a day.

The most tried and approved man Job feared all his works. St. John the Baptist being sanctified in his mother’s womb, and praised before he was
born, being called an angel, and great before the Lord, filled even from his birth with the Holy Ghost, the preparer of the way for our Saviour Christ, and commended of our Saviour Christ to be more than a prophet, and the greatest that ever was born of a woman: yet he plainly granteth, that he had need to be washed of Christ: he worthily extolleth and glorifieth his Lord and Master Christ, and humbleth himself as unworthy to unbuckle his shoes, and giveth all honour and glory to God. So doth St. Paul both oft and evidently confess himself, what he was of himself, ever giving (as a most faithful servant) all praise to his Master and Saviour. So doth blessed St. John the Evangelist, in the name of himself, and of all other holy men (be they never so just) make this open confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: if we acknowledge our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. Wherefore the Wise Man, in the book called Ecclesiastes, maketh this true and general confession, There is not one just man upon the earth, that doth good, and sinneth not. And David is ashamed of his sin, but not to confess his sin. How oft, how earnestly, and lamentably doth he desire God’s great mercy for his great offences, and that God should not enter into judgment with him? And again, How well weigheth this holy man his sins, which he confesseth, that they be so many in number, and so hid, and hard to understand, that it is in a manner impossible to know, utter, or number them? Wherefore, he having a true, earnest, and deep contemplation and consideration of his sins, and yet not coming to the bottom of them, he maketh supplication to God to forgive him his privy, secret, hid sins: the knowledge of which he cannot attain unto. He weigheth rightly his sins from the original root and spring-head, perceiving inclinations, provocations, stirrings, stingings, buds, branches, dregs, infections, tastes, feelings, and scents of them to continue in him still. Wherefore he saith, Mark, and behold, I was conceived in sins: he saith not sin, but in the plural number, sins, forasmuch as out of one, as a fountain, spring all the rest.

Our Saviour Christ saith, There is none good but God: and that we can do nothing that is good without him, nor can any man come to the Father but by him. He commandeth us also to say, that we be unprofitable servants, when we have done all that we can do. He preferreth the penitent Publican, before the proud, holy, and glorious Pharisee. He calleth himself a Physician, but not to them that be whole, but to them that be sick, and have need of his salve for their sore. He teacheth us in our prayers to acknowledge ourselves sinners, and to ask righteousness, and deliverance from all evils, at our heavenly Father’s hand. He declareth that the sins of
our own hearts do defile our own selves. He teacheth that an evil word or thought deserveth condemnation, affirming, that *we shall give account for every idle word*. He saith, *He came not to save, but the sheep that were utterly lost and cast away*. Therefore few of the proud, just, learned, wise, perfect, and holy Pharisees were saved by him, because they justified themselves by their counterfeit holiness before men. Wherefore, good people, let us beware of such hypocrisy, vain glory, and justifying of ourselves.
The second Part of the Sermon of the Misery of Man.

Forasmuch as the true knowledge of ourselves is very necessary to come to the right knowledge of God; ye have heard in the last reading, how humbly all good men always have thought of themselves; and so to think and judge of themselves, are taught of God their Creator, by his holy word. For of ourselves we be crab-trees, that can bring forth no apples. We be of ourselves of such earth, as can but bring forth weeds, nettles, brambles, briers, cockle, and darnel. Our fruits be declared in the fifth chapter to the Galatians. We have neither faith, charity, hope, patience, chastity, nor any thing else that good is, but of God; and therefore these virtues be called there the fruits of the Holy Ghost, and not the fruits of man. Let us therefore acknowledge ourselves before God (as we be indeed) miserable and wretched sinners. And let us earnestly repent, and humble ourselves heartily, and cry to God for mercy. Let us all confess with mouth and heart, that we be full of imperfections: let us know our own works, of what imperfection they be, and then we shall not stand foolishly and arrogantly in our own conceits, nor challenge any part of justification by our own merits or works. For truly there be imperfections in our best works: we do not love God so much as we are bound to do, with all our heart, mind, and power: we do not fear God so much as we ought to do: we do not pray to God, but with great and many imperfections: we give, forgive, believe, live, and hope imperfectly: we speak, think, and do imperfectly: we fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh imperfectly: let us therefore not be ashamed to confess plainly our state of imperfection: yea, let us not be ashamed to confess imperfection, even in all our best works. Let none of us be ashamed to say with the holy Saint Peter, I am a sinful man. Let us say with the holy Prophet David, We have sinned with our fathers; we have done amiss, and dealt wickedly. Let us all make open confession with the prodigal son, to our Father, and say with him, We have sinned against heaven, and before thee, O Father: we are not worthy to be called thy sons. Let us all say with holy Baruch, O Lord our God, to us is worthily ascribed shame and confusion, and to thee righteousness: we have sinned, we have been naughty, we have offended, we have behaved ourselves ungodly in all thy righteousness. Let us all say with the holy Prophet Daniel. O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee, unto us belongeth confusion. We have sinned, we have been naughty, we have offended, we have fled from thee, we have gone back from all thy precepts and judgments. So we learn of all good men in holy Scriptures, to humble ourselves, and to exalt, extol, praise, magnify, and glorify God.

Thus we have heard how evil we be of ourselves, how of ourselves, and
by ourselves, we have no goodness, help or salvation, but contrariwise, sin, damnation, and death everlasting: which if we deeply weigh, and consider, we shall the better understand the great mercy of God, and how our salvation cometh only by Christ. For in ourselves (as of ourselves) we find nothing, whereby we may be delivered from this miserable captivity, into the which we are cast, through the envy of the devil, by breaking of God’s commandment in our first parent Adam. We are all become unclean: but we all are not able to cleanse ourselves, nor make one another of us clean. We are by nature the children of God’s wrath: but we are not able to make ourselves the children and inheritors of God’s glory. We are sheep that run astray: but we cannot of our own power come again to the sheepfold, so great is our imperfection and weakness. In ourselves therefore may we not glory, which, of ourselves, are nothing but sinful: neither may we rejoice in any works that we do, all which be so imperfect and impure, that they are not able to stand before the righteous judgment-seat of God, as the holy Prophet David saith, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: for no man that liveth shall be found righteous in thy sight.*

To God therefore must we flee, or else shall we never find peace, rest, and quietness of conscience in our hearts. For he is the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation. He is the Lord, with whom is plenteous redemption: he is the God, which of his own mercy saveth us, and setteth out his charity and exceeding love towards us, in that of his own voluntary goodness, when we were perishing, be saved us, and provided an everlasting kingdom for us. And all these heavenly treasures are given us, not for our own deserts, merits, or good deeds, (which of ourselves we have none) but of his mere mercy freely. And for whose sake? Truly for Jesus Christ’s sake, that pure and undefiled Lamb of God. He is that dearly beloved Son, for whose sake God is fully pacified, satisfied, and set at one with man. He is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world: of whom only it may be truly spoken, that he did all things well, and in his month was found no craft nor subtlety. None but he alone may say, *The prince of the world came, and in me he hath nothing.* And he alone may also say, *Which of you shall reprove me of any fault?* He is the high and everlasting Priest, which hath offered himself once for all upon the altar of the cross, and with that one oblation hath made perfect for evermore them that are sanctified. He is the alone Mediator between God and man, which paid our ransom to God with his own blood, and with that hath he cleansed us all from sin. He is the Physician, which healeth all our diseases. He is that Saviour, which saveth his people from all their sins: to be short, he is that flowing and most plenteous fountain, of whose fulness all we have received. For in him alone are all the treasures of the wisdom and
knowledge of God hidden. And in him, and by him, have we from God the Father all good things, pertaining either to the body or to the soul. O how much are we bound to this our heavenly Father for his great mercies, which he hath so plenteously declared unto us in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour! What thanks worthy and sufficient can we give to him? Let us all with one accord burst out with joyful voice, ever praising and magnifying this Lord of mercy, for his tender kindness showed unto us in his dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hitherto we have heard what we are of ourselves; very sinful, wretched, and damnable. Again, we have heard how that of ourselves, and by ourselves, we are not able either to think a good thought, or work a good deed, so that we can find in ourselves no hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruction. Again, we have heard the tender kindness and great mercy of God the Father towards us, and how beneficial he is to us for Christ’s sake, without our merits or deserts, even of his own mere mercy and tender goodness. Now, how these exceeding great mercies of God, set abroad in Christ Jesus for us, be obtained, and how we be delivered from the captivity of sin, death, and hell, shall more at large (with God’s help) be declared in the next sermon. In the mean season, yea, and at all times, let us learn to know ourselves, our frailty and weakness, without any cracking or boasting of our own good deeds and merits. Let us also acknowledge the exceeding mercy of God towards us, and confess, that as of ourselves cometh all evil and damnation; so likewise of him cometh all goodness and salvation, as God himself saith by the Prophet Hosea, O Israel, thy destruction cometh of thyself: but in me only is thy help and comfort. If we thus humbly submit ourselves in the sight of God, we maybe sure that in the time of his visitation, he will lift us up unto the kingdom of his dearly beloved Son Christ Jesus our Lord; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever. Amen.