

GOD'S BOUNTY;

OR,

THE BLESSINGS OF BOTH HIS HANDS.

(THE FIRST SERMON.)

Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand riches and honour.—Prov. III. 16.

By Wisdom here we understand the Son of God, the Saviour of man. In the first to the Corinthians, chap. i. 24, he is called the 'wisdom of God.' Col. ii. 3, 'In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

Wisdom is formerly commended for her beauty, here for her bounty : 'Length of days is in her right hand ; in her left, riches and honour.' Conceive her a glorious queen sitting on a throne of majesty, and calling her children about her, to the participation of those riches which from everlasting she had decreed them.

Not to travel far for distribution, the parts of this text are as easily distinguished as the right hand from the left. Here be two hands, and they contain two sorts of treasures. The *right* hand hath in it 'length of days ;' the *left*, 'riches and honour.'

The right hand is, upon good reason, preferred, both for its own worth whereby it excels, and for the worth of the treasure which it contains. It hath ever had the dignity, as the dexterity.

Length of days is the treasure it holds. This cannot be properly understood of this mortal life, though the sense may also stand good with such an interpretation. 'For by me,' saith Wisdom, 'thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased,' Prov. ix. 11. Wisdom is the mother of abstinence, and abstinence the nurse of health ; whereas voluptuousness and intemperance, as the French proverb hath it, digs its own grave with the teeth.

But all a man's wisdom cannot keep him still alive. Eccles. ii. 16, 'The wise man dieth as the fool,' saith Solomon. And the father of Solomon excludes it from having power to keep a man : Ps. xlix. 9, 'That he should live still for ever, and not see corruption.' Methusalem lived nine hundred sixty and nine years ; yet he was the son of Enoch, who was the son of

Jared, who was the son of Mahalaleel, who was the son of Cainan, who was the son of Enos, who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of dust. The best constitutions, that communicate in the sanguine of the rose and snow of the lily, have this parentage; they are the sons and daughters of dust.

This 'length,' then, is not subject to the poles, nor are these 'days' measured by the sun in his zodiac; all is pitched above the wheel of changeable mortality. It is eternity that fills the right hand of Wisdom.

Length of days.—*Days* for the clarity; *length* for the eternity.

DAYS.—Man's life in this world is called a day—a short day, a sharp day. Short; for *instat vesper*, it is not sooner morning, but it is presently night. The sun of life quickly sets, after it is once risen. Sharp; for misery is born with life, brought up with life, and to the good dies with life; to the wicked remains in death. Like Hippocrates's twins, inseparable in their beginning, process, end. So that aged patriarch to Pharaoh, Gen. xlvii. 9, 'My days have been few and evil.' So Job, chap. xiv. 1, 'Man is of few days, and many troubles.' *Animal cœvi brevissimi, solitudinis infinitæ.** And Paul calls it 'the evil day,' Eph. vi. 13. It is somewhat to comfort, that though it be sharp, evil, yet it is but short—a day. Eph. v. 16, 'Redeem the time, for the days are evil.' But howsoever *semper mali dies in seculo*, yet *semper boni dies in Domino*, as Augustine sweetly, (in Ps. xxxiii.),—Though the world hath always evil days, yet God hath always good days.

And this day shall have no night. *Nox non erit illic*,—Rev. xxi. 25 'There shall be no night.' The sun that enlightens it cannot be eclipsed. Ver. 23, 'That city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light of it.' No clouds shall draw a veil of obscurity over it. Here, the light of the sun darkens the moon, and the moon obscures the lustre of the stars; sometimes† half the earth is in light, and the rest in darkness. But in these days, albeit 'there is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars, and one star differeth from another star in glory,' 1 Cor. xv. 41; yet the light of one increaseth the light of another, and the glory of one is the glory of all. *Dispar est gloria singulorum, sed communis lætitia omnium.*‡ So, in sum, here we live but a short day: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' But in that world we shall have days, and those good days, and great days; days of eternal length, for they shall have no night.

LENGTH.—As the glory is clear for the countenance, so it is long for the continuance. *Nullus erit defectus, nullus terminus.* There shall be *æterna charitas, chara æternitas.* God's eternal decree to choose us in Christ had no beginning, but it shall have an end—when the elect are taken up to glory. The possession of this decreed inheritance shall have a beginning, but no end: 1 Thess. iv. 17, 'We shall ever be with the Lord.' God's mercy in both hath neither beginning nor end, for it is from everlasting to everlasting.

Here then is both the countenance—it is a clear day; and the continuance—it is of length; the very same length that everlastingness itself. Hezekiah's day was a long day, when, 2 Kings xx. 11, 'the shadow of the sun went ten degrees backward in the dial of Ahaz.' Joshua had a long day when the sun stood still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon: Josh. x. 14, 'And there was no day like that before it or after it.' But both these days had their nights; and the long-forbearing sun at last did set. Here the days are so long that it shall never be night. You see the clearness and the length; both are expressed, Dan. xii. 3, 'They that be wise shall

* Petrarch.

† Always.—Ed.

‡ Aug. Medit., cap. 25.

shine as the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, there is the clarity ; and that ' for ever and ever,' there is the eternity.

There is nothing made perfectly happy but by eternity ; as nothing but eternity can make perfect misery. Were thy life a continued scene of pleasures, on whose stage grief durst never set his unwelcome foot ; were the spoil of Noah's ark the cates of thy table ; hadst thou King Solomon's wardrobe and treasury ; did the West Indies send thee all her gold, and the East her spices ; and all these lying by thee whiles a late succession of years without cares snows white upon thy head ; thou wert ever indulgent to thyself, and health to thee ;—yet suddenly there comes an impartial pursuivant, Death, and he hath a charge to take thee away *medio de fonte leporum*, bathing thyself in thy delights. Alas ! what is all thy glory but a short play, full of mirth till the last act, and that goes off in a tragedy ? Couldst thou not have made Death more welcome if he had found thee lying on a pad of straw, feeding on crusts and water-gruel ? Is not thy pain the more troublesome because thou wast well ? Doth not the end of these temporary joys afflict thee more than if they had never been ? Only then eternity can give perfection to pleasure ; which because this world cannot afford, let us reckon of it as it is, a mere thoroughfare, and desire our home, where we shall be happy for ever.

In her left hand, riches and honour.—The gift of the *right hand* is large and eternal ; of the *left*, short and temporal. Yet you see I am short in the long part ; give me leave to be long in the short part. Herein we have many things considerable :—

I. That riches and honour are God's gifts.

II. That all are not so, but some ; and therefore it is necessary for us to learn whether God gave unto us that riches and honour which we have.

III. That wealth and worship are for the most part companions ; for both those gifts lie in one and the same hand.

IV. That albeit they are his gifts, yet but the gifts of his left hand.

I. Riches and honour are God's gifts, therefore in themselves not evil : *Sunt Dei dona, ergo in se bona*. Saith Augustine,* *Ne putentur mala, dantur et bonis ; ne putentur summa bona, dantur et malis*.—That they may not be thought evil, they are given to good men ; that they may not be thought the best good, they are given also to evil men. A rich man may be a good man, and a poor man may be wicked. Christ sanctified riches as well as poverty ; and that in his birth, his life, and his death.

1. In his birth. He sanctified poverty, when his chamber of presence was a stable, his cradle a manger, his royal robes coarse rags. He sanctified riches, when he received of the wise men precious gifts, Matt. ii. 11, ' Gold, frankincense, and myrrh,'—*quæ si fuissent ipsissima mala, dedignatus esset ;* which, if they had been simply evil, he would not have accepted.

2. In his life. He sanctified poverty, when he was maintained eleemosynarily, having no garment to put on ; and the good women kept him by their contributions. He was glad to borrow an ass-colt when he was to ride ; and to angle for money in the sea when he paid tribute ; and, as if he wanted a bed, to complain, Matt. viii. 20, ' The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to rest his head.' He sanctified riches, when he called Zaccheus, a wealthy usurer, Luke xix. 2, and raised Lazarus, a wealthy citizen, John xi. ; had his steward, which gave alms to the distressed, and bore his purse, John xii. 6 ; and, like a prince, feasted thousands at one banquet.

* Epist. lxx. ad Bonif.

3. In his death. He sanctified poverty, when he had not a grave of his own, but was buried in another man's sepulchre, Luke xxiii. 53; nay, not a sheet to wrap him in, but was beholden to another for his linen; and even dying, converted a poor malefactor on the cross by him. He sanctified riches, when he accepted the kindness of Joseph (whom Matthew calls a rich man, chap. xxvii. 57; Mark, an honourable, chap. xv. 43) for his sepulchre; and Nicodemus's costly unction, John xix. 39, even a hundred pound weight, mixed with myrrh and aloes.

Though riches be to some pernicious, a fuming wine which turns their brains; yet to others they are a vessel, wherein they may with more speed sail to heaven, though no compass, star, or cause to bring them thither. Others are called by David *virī divitiarum*, men of riches, because they possess not their riches, but their riches have subjugated them. We have a kind of presage, though we conceive it not, in saying of such a one, He is a *man of wealth*. The speech signifies him a slave to his riches: the wealth is not the man's, but the man the wealth's.

But otherwise a rich man may be a good man; for wickedness is not bound to wealthiness, as heat is to fire; and arrogancy or lewdness may be incident to poverty and baseness. *Pauper superbus*, a poor man proud, was one of Cyprian's twelve abuses. A rotten log will yield as much sawdust as a piece of good timber; and a peasant ill-nurtured is also ill-natured. A great gentleman will shew more humble courtesy than a thrashing hind or a toiling ploughman. Hagar was but a gipsy, a bondwoman; yet was her excellent mistress, Sarah, 'despised in her eyes,' Gen. xvi. 4. As Jerome reprov'd the monks, *Quid facit sub tunica pœnitentis regius animus?*—so not seldom a russet coat shrouds as high a heart as a silken garment. You shall have a paltry cottage send up more black smoke than a goodly manor. It is not wealth therefore, but vice, that excludes men out of heaven.

The friars and Jesuits have very strongly and strangely backbited riches; but all their railing on it is but behind the back: secretly and in their hearts they love it. When they are out of the reach of eyes, then gold is their sun by day, and silver their moon by night. Some of them for enforced want, like the fox, dispraise the grapes they cannot reach. Or, as Eusebius notes of Licinius the emperor, that he used to rail at learning, and to say nothing worse became a prince, because himself was illiterate; so they commend nothing more than poverty, because they are, and must be, poor against their wills.

Others of them find fault with riches, whereof they have great store, but would that none should covet it beside themselves. So the cozening epicure made all his fellow-guests believe that the banquet was poisoned, that all they refusing, he might glut himself alone. These often cheat themselves, and work their own bane: whiles they so beat off others from the world, and wrap themselves up in it to their confusion. The fox in the fable, with divers other beasts, found a rich booty of costly robes and jewels. He persuades the lion that he needs not trouble himself with them, because he is king, and may command all at his pleasure. He tells the stag, that if he should put them on, they would so molest him that he could not escape the huntsmen. For the boar, he says they would evil-favouredly become him; and the wolf he shuffles off with the false news of a fold of lambs hard by, which would do him more good. So all gone, he begins to put on the robes himself, and to rejoice in his lucky fraud. But instantly came the owners, and surprised him, who had so puzzled himself in these habiliments, that he could not by flight escape; so they took him, and hanged him up.

The subtle foxes, Jesuits and friars, dissuade kings from coveting wealth, because of their power to command all ; and great men, because it will make them envied and hunted after for their trappings ; countrymen it will not become, they say ; and all the rest, that it will hinder their journey to heaven. So in conclusion they drive all away, and get the whole world for their master Pope and themselves. But at last these foxes are caught in their own noose ; for the devil finds them so wrapped and hampered in these ornaments, and their hearts so besotted on money and riches, that he carries them with as much ease to hell as the chariot drew Pharaoh into the Red Sea.

For us, beloved, we teach you not to cast away the bag, but covetousness. *Non facultatem, sed cupiditatem reprehendimus.* We bid you 'use the world,' but enjoy the Lord. And if you have wealth, 'make you friends with your riches, that they'—so made friends by your charity—'may receive,' and make way for, 'you into everlasting habitations,' Luke xvi. 9. It is not your riches of this world, but your riches of grace, that shall do your souls good. 'Not my wealth, nor my blood, but my Christianity makes me noble,' quoth that noble martyr Romanus. And though the philosopher merrily, when he was asked whether were better, wisdom or riches, answered, Riches ; for I have often, said he, seen poor wise men at rich fools' doors, but never rich fools at poor wise men's doors : yet wealth may be joined with wisdom, goodness with greatness. Mary and Martha may be sisters : righteousness and riches may dwell together.

Chrysostom, on that aphorism of Christ, Matt. vi. 24, 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon,' observes that he doth not say, Ye cannot *have* God and Mammon ; but, Ye cannot *serve* God and Mammon : for he that is the servant of God must be the master of his wealth. The Lord Jesus is able to sanctify and save the rich man's soul as well as the poor's, and to send poor Lazarus into the bosom of rich Abraham : where consider not only *qui sublatus*, but *quo sublatus*.* Poor but good Lazarus is carried into rich but good Abraham's bosom ; to signify that neither poverty deserves heaven, nor riches hell. *Divitiæ non iniquæ, sed iniquis*,—Riches are not unrighteous, but to the unrighteous. *Nec culpabile est habere ista ; sed hæerere istis*,—It is not a sin to have them, but to trust them.

As much might be said for honour. It is the Lord that advanceth : 1 Sam. ii. 30, 'Those that honour me I will honour,' saith God. 'It is God,' saith Job, 'that putteth on the king's girdle,' chap. xii. 18, that fasteneth his honour about him. 'Promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor from north nor south,' Ps. lxxv. 6, but only from the Lord. Hence it follows that great men may be good men : yea, hence it should follow that great men ought to be good men.

They *may* be good. Christ had his faithful followers even in Cæsar's family. Bernard indeed complained† that the court is wont to receive good men, but to make them bad men. *Bonos facilius recipere, quam facere* : and, *Plures illic defecisse bonos, quam profecisse malos*,—The court doth sooner take good men than make good men : there more good are perverted to evil than evil converted to good. Yet in the court of Pharaoh was a good Joseph ; in the court of Darius, a good Daniel ; in the court of Ahasuerus, a good Mordecai. Neither is it ever true that *quo quis corruptior moribus, et corruptentior muneribus*,—the more a man is corrupt with vices, and corrupting with bribes, so much the more set by. The Pharisees' objection, John vii. 48, is sometimes false : 'Have any of the rulers believed on him ?' They may be good ; yea—

* Aug. in Ps. li.

† De Consid., lib. iv.

They *must* be good. For they are unprinted statutes, whereout every man reads his duty. They are *legis factores*, and therefore should not be *legis fractores*. Aristotle calls them *loquentes leges*, speaking laws. Inferiors often set their eyes to supply the place of their ears, and rather look to see their duties than to hear them. All should live by precept, but most will live by precedent. A superior therefore should teach men to take the measure of his greatness by his goodness. These two should be of an even length, of an equal pace. If honour outruns honesty, it will hardly be overtaken. Let such a one appear to the people as he would have them be; and be himself such a one as he appears. A great person is like a great hill, which gives a fair prospect, but is subject to the lightning and thunder of censures.

II. But it may here be objected, that if riches and honour be God's gifts, then is he the giver of Judas's wealth and Haman's honour. Perhaps you would here learn whether your riches and honours come from God or no: your demand is requisite, and I will strive to give you satisfaction.

First, for riches; if they come from God, they are honestly gotten, justly disposed, and patiently lost.

1. They are well gotten: for God is not the patron of unjust gains. He can bless a man well enough without the help of the devil. There are many that will have wealth, though they go a-fishing for it, either with Habakkuk's net, chap. i. 15, or Hophni's hooks, 1 Sam. ii. 13. They do not only trouble the waters for it, but they bloody the waters, fetch it out of the bowels and life-blood of the poor. This is not from God, nor will he bless it. But 'as it was gathered of the hire of a harlot, so it shall return to the hire of a harlot,' Mic. i. 7.

It is easy for that man to be rich that will make his conscience poor. He that will defraud, forswear, bribe, oppress, serve the time, use, abuse all men, all things, swallow any wickedness, cannot escape riches. Whereas he whose conscience will not admit of advancing or advantaging himself by indirect means, sits down with contented poverty. But *bonus non cito evasit dives*,—a good man seldom becomes rich on the sudden. Wealth comes not easily, not quickly, to the honest door. Neither let us envy the gravel that sticks in the throat of injustice. For he that will swallow the bait which hangs on the line of another man's estate, shall be choked with it. Of riches let us never desire more than an honest man may well bear away. *Mallet me miserum sanctum quam prosperum peccatorem*,—I had rather be a miserable saint than a prosperous sinner. When the raising of thy roof is the rasing of another's foundation, 'the stones shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it,' Hab. ii. 11. Thus *non accipimus data, sed arripimus prohibita*,—we take not things with a beggar's hand, but with a tyrant's; they are not God's gifts, but our felonies.

For this cause riches are called *bona fortune*, the goods of fortune: not that they come by chance, but that it is a chance if ever they be good. *Væ accumulanti non sua*, Hab. ii. 6; and, ver. 9, 'Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house!' We think the oppressor's avarice evil only to the houses of the oppressed; but God saith it is most evil to his own. Whether fraud or force bring in unjust gain, it is as a coal of fire put in the thatch of his house.

And to shew that God is not the giver of this, he pours a curse upon it; that often they who thus desire most wealth shall not have it: the world being to them like a froward woman, the more wooed, the further off. Isa. xxxiii. 1, 'Woe to thee that spoilest, and wast not spoiled! when thou shalt

cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled.' And, Hab. ii. 8, 'Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them.' Many a great fish in the sea of this world devours another, and instantly comes a greater and devours him; as that emperor suffered his officers to be like sponges, sucking up the goods of the commonalty, and being once full, he squeezed them into his own coffers.* Pharaoh's lean kine, that devoured the fat, were yet themselves never the fatter, Gen. xli. 21.

Philip was wont to say, that an ass laden with gold would enter the gates of any city; but the golden load of bribes and extortions shall bar a man out of the city of God. All that is so gotten is like quicksilver, it will be running. If the father leave all to his son, yet the son will leave nothing for his son, perhaps nothing for himself; never resting till

'Quodcumque profundo
Traxit avaritia, luxu pejore refundat,'—†

until he hath thrown abroad all with a fork which his father got together with a rake. Nah. ii. 12, 'The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. But I will be against thee, saith the Lord: and the sword shall devour thy young lions.' The father plays the lion for his whelps, oppresseth and consumeth the poor; but his young lions, which he so provides for, shall be destroyed.

'Non habet eventus sordida præda bonos.' ‡

We have seen huge hills of wealth, like mountains of ice, thus suddenly thawed as wax, with the heat of luxury. But *Parvum justo*, Ps. xxxvii. 16, 'A little that the righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken:' the strength of their state shall be confounded. Their wealth is not God's, therefore he takes no charge of it. But the riches of the good is the riches of God, and he will prosper it.

2. These riches are well disposed or used. Piety, not lust, rules them. He whom God's blessing hath made rich, gives God his part, man his part, and keeps the thirds to himself. He returns part—

(1.) To God. It is reason that he who gives all should have part of all. And because thou shouldst not grudge it, he challengeth but a little part, but the tenth part. Wretched men, that will not give him one that gave them ten! As Pilate's wife sent her husband word, Matt. xxvii. 19, 'Have thou nothing to do with that just man;' meddle not with God's portion, lest a voice come to thee, as to Abimelech, Gen. xx. 3, 'Thou art but a dead man.' This was good Jacob's resolution, Gen. xxviii. 22, 'Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.' Go to now, ye that say the gospel hath no law for tithes, and that they were merely ceremonial. Jacob paid them under nature; they are therefore unnatural men that deny them. You can find no law commanding your payment, but you shall find a law condemning your non-payment.

What can then be urged for our accused impropriations? Did the heavenly Wisdom ever give you those riches? Shew us your patent, and we will believe you. If ever God did convey his own portion to you, shew his hand and seal for it. Where did ever Jesus pass away his royal prerogative, or acknowledge any fine before a judge, that you say, *Hæc nostra sunt*,—These are ours? What money did you ever pay him for them? Where is

* Sueton. in vita Vespas.

† Claudian.

‡ Ovid. Amor.

your acquittance? Shew your discharge. Oh, but you plead prescription! If you were not past shame, you would never dare to prescribe against the eternal God. *Nullum tempus occurrit regi*,—The king of heaven had these from the beginning, and will you now plead prescription? You may thus undo the poor minister in these terrene courts, but your plea shall be damned in the courts of God. We can produce his act and deed whereby he separated tenths to himself; have you nothing to shew, and will you take away his inheritance? Go to, you have a law, and by your own law this proceeding is intolerable. You say you hold them by your law, by your law you shall be condemned.

Perhaps you think to make amends for all, for you will increase the stipend of the vicar. When the father hath gotten thousands by the sacrilegious appropriation, the son perhaps may give him a cow's grass, or a matter of forty shillings *per annum*; or bestow a little whitening on the church, and a wainscot seat for his own worship. Yea, more; he may chance to found a little alms-house, and give twelve pence a-piece a-week to six poor people. Oh, this oppressor must needs go to heaven! what shall hinder him? But it will be, as the byword is, in a wheelbarrow: the fiends, and not the angels, will take hold on him.

For is it not a great piece of charity to get five hundred pounds a-year from God, and to bestow twenty marks a-year on the poor? When David, providing for the temple's building, saw how bountifully the princes and people offered, he gives solemn thanks to God, acknowledging that they had all received this first from him. 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 'For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.' The original is, 'of thine hand.' What here the left hand of God gave to them, their right hand returns to God. They did not, as our church-sackers and ransackers do, rob God with the right hand, and give him a little back with the left; take from him a pound, and restore him a penny. Well, you would know whether God hath given you your wealth; and he says, whatsoever you have gotten by tenths was none of his giving; and, besides everlasting malediction, it shall make your posterity beggars.

(2.) The second rule of using our riches well is, when God hath his own, in the next place, *tribuere cuique suum*, to render every man his due. If they be God's gifts, they must be disposed with justice. This is double—commutative and distributive justice. The one arithmetical, the other geometrical. Arithmetical is to give every one alike; geometrical is to give every one according to his deserts. First, *Cum res adæquatur rei*; secondly, *Cum res adæquatur personæ*. There are two rules for him that would be just: a negative and an affirmative rule. First, the negative: Tobit iv. 15, 'Do that to no man which thou wouldest not have done to thyself;—*Quod tibi non vis, alteri ne facias*. Secondly, the affirmative: Matt. vii. 12, 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' Not what every man, out of his own disordered passions, would have another do to him; but what in his composed and deliberate judgment he approves done to himself, let him do that to others. Wouldest thou be relieved? Relieve. Wouldest thou borrow? Lend.

If I should follow this point of just distribution, as a mark to discern if your riches whether they are God's goods or not, how distasting would my speech be! How few of your houses are filled with those treasures only which the heavenly Wisdom here dispenseth! How little of them is found to come in God's name! It may be some of your wealth was given you of God; but your evil usage alters the nature of it, and it can no more properly

be ascribed to him. It is hard to draw this circumstance into a square ; it is so confused in your actions, that I cannot tell how to find a method for it in my discourse. You may make your riches none of God's blessings by using them ill in respect of others, especially three ways : either *detinendo debita*, by detaining things due to others ; or *extrudendo vilia*, by putting forth base things for good ; or *corrumpendo utilia*, by corrupting with good things others.

[1.] By detaining those things that are due to others ; and these are either debts or promises.

First, Debts Rom. xiii. 8, 'Owe no man anything, but to love one another.' Indeed there must be some owing, as there must be some lending ; without this mutual commerce we are worse than savages. But we must pay again : Ps. xxxvii. 21, 'The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.' Debt is not deadly sin when a man hath no means, but when he hath no meaning to pay. There must be votal restitution, if there cannot be actual. Restore *quoad affectum*, though you cannot *quoad effectum*. 2 Cor. viii. 12, 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not to that he hath not.' God reckons that as done which a man *vere voluit, tametsi non valuit adimplere*,*—faithfully would, though not fully could accomplish.

There are that will restore some, but not all ; to this they have *posse*, but no *velle* ; let the creditors be content with one of four. But this little detiny is great iniquity. For a mite is debt, as well as a million : *tam*, though not *tantum*,—so good a debt, though not so great a debt. And, 'He that is faithful in a little shall be made ruler over much,' Matt. xxv. 23.

What shall we then say of their goods that break, and defraud others ? Come they from God's hand or from the devil's ? Surely Satan's right hand gave them, not God's left. *Hæc mea sunt*, saith the devil ; *meæ divitiæ, mei divites*,—These are mine, my riches, and my rich men. Oh that men would see this damnable sin ! Methinks their terrified conscience should fear that the bread they eat should choke them ; for it is stolen, and stolen bread fills the belly with gravel. They should fear the drink they swallow should poison them ; being the very blood of good householders, mixed with the tears of widows and orphans. The poor creditor is often undone, and glad of bread and water ; whiles they, like hogs lurking in their sties, fat and lard their ribs with the fruit of others' labours. They rob the husband of his inheritance, the wife of her dowry, the children of their portions ; the curse of whole families is against them.

And if this sin lie upon a great man's soul, he shall find it the heavier, to sink him lower into perdition. They are the lords of great lands, yet live upon other men's moneys ; they must riot and revel, let the poor commoners pay for it. They have protections ; their bodies shall not be molested, and their lands are exempted. What then ? Shall they escape ? No, their souls shall pay for it. When the poor creditor comes to demand his own, they rail at him, they send him laden away, but with ill words, not good money. In the country they set labourers on work, but they give them no hire. Tut, they are tenants, vassals. Must they therefore have no pay ? Yet those very landlords will bate them nothing of their rents. But the riches so had are not of God's giving, but of the devil's lending, and he will make them repay it a thousand-fold in hell.

Secondly, Promises are due debts, and must not be detained. If the good man promise, though 'to his own hurt, he changeth not,' Ps. xv. 4. Indeed,

* Bern.

now *promissis dives quilibet esse potest*,—men are rich in promises, but they are poor in performance. More respect is had to commodity than to honesty. Men have their evasions to disannul their promises; either they equivocate or reserve; or, being urged, plead forgetfulness. But the truth is, they have sufficient memory, but not sufficient honesty. It is said that a good name is the best riches; *qua semel amissa, postea nullus eris*. But what care they for a name, so long as they save their money? *Quid enim salvis infamia nummis?* *

A Pilate could say, John xix. 22, *Quod scripsi, scripsi*,—‘What I have written, I have written;’ and shall not a Christian say, *Quod dixi faciam*,—‘What I have promised I will perform?’ Hence it comes that there is so little faith in the world; that scribes have so much work; that the proverb runs in everybody’s mouth, Fast bind, fast find; that there is no hope of good deeds, but sealed and delivered; that there is more trust to men’s seals than to their souls. For the law of God holds us not so fast as the laws of men. There is more awe of judgment in the Common Pleas, than of a sentence of condemnation in the court of heaven. The sheriff is altogether feared, not God; there is no dread of any execution but his. Is the wealth thus detained, in your own consciences, God’s blessing? Deceive not your own souls. God requires us to be in our words as righteous as in all our ways. A Christian’s word should be as current as his coin. Thus you see this first circumstance of injustice taxed. Therefore ‘Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it,’ Prov. iii. 27.

[2.] By putting forth base things for good. The prophet Amos, chap. viii. 6, speaks of some that ‘sell the refuse of their wheat,’ the basest wares; neither do they sell them for base, but for good. If half a score lies, backed with as many oaths, will put off their vile commodities, they shall not lie upon their hands. Not upon their hands. I say; though upon their consciences.

‘Plenius æquo

Laudat venales, qui vult extrudere merces.’ †

Their rule for themselves is *vincat utilitas*; for others, *caveat emptor*. Either they will shew you one thing, and sell you another; and this cozenage hath longer arms than all other tricks, and overreaches them: or they will conceal the insufficiency of the wares; and for this cause they darken their shops, lest the light should reveal their works of darkness: John iii. 19, ‘They love darkness more than light.’ Let them take heed lest it be unto them according to their desires; lest, as they have brought hell into their shops, so their shops send them into hell.

Or if the commodity be discerned bad, you must have that or none. If your necessity forceth you to buy, it shall force you to buy such base stuff. This is a grievous sin in all professions, especially amongst apothecaries, because with their injustice may be also mixed a spice of murder. But you will say, We compel none to buy our commodities; we but shew them, and make the price. But it is craft *tendere plagas, etsi agiturus non sis*,—to lay snares, though you drive not men into them. Or be it what it will, yet rather than refuse your money, they will protest to give you the buying. Yea, rather than fail, they will sell it you cheaper than before they swore it cost them.

‘Quis metus aut pudor est propterantis avari?’—‡

* Juven. Satyr.

† Hor., l. viii. ep.

‡ Juv. Sat. 14.

What! sell cheaper than they buy? How should they then live? The answer is easy, they live by their lying.

Now doth this wealth come in God's name? Is this the blessing of heaven? Which of your consciences dare think so? St Augustine* speaks of a certain jester that undertook to tell the people what they all did most desire. Multitudes came to hear this, to whose expectation he thus answered, *Vili vultis emere et chare vendere*,—You would buy cheap and sell dear. And this is every man's desire, that desires to be rich more than to be just.

[3.] By making others bad with his goods. And here we may fitly proceed to the condemnation of bribery. Deut. xvi. 19, 'A gift blindeth the eyes of the wise.' They that see furthest into the law, and most clearly discern the causes of justice, if they suffer the dusts of bribes to be thrown into their sight, their eyes will water and twinkle, and fall at last to blind connivance. It is a wretched thing when justice is made a hackney that may be backed for money, and put on with golden spurs, even to the desired journey's end of injury and iniquity.

If the party be innocent, let his cause be sentenced for his innocence's sake; if guilty, let not gold buy out his punishment. If the cause be doubtful, the judge shall see it worse when he hath blinded his eyes with bribes. But the will of the giver doth transfer right of the gift to the receiver. No, for it is not a voluntary will. But as a man is willing to give his purse to the thief rather than venture his life or limb, so the poor man gives his bribes rather than hazard his cause. Thou sayest, The thief has no right to the purse so given; God saith, Nor thou to the bribe.

And this is sinful in a justicer though he pass true judgment on the cause; but much more accursed when for this he will condemn the cause he should allow, or allow the cause he should condemn. 'To justify the wicked and condemn the innocent' are alike abomination to the Lord. Far be from our souls this wickedness, that the ear which should be open to complaints is thus stopped with the ear-wax of partiality. Alas, poor Truth, that she must now be put to the charges of a golden ear-pick, or she cannot be heard!

But to shew that these riches are not of God's giving, his anger is hot against them: Job xv. 34, 'Fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.' The houses, or tabernacles, the chambers, halls, offices, studies, benches, a fire shall consume them. They may stand for a while, but the indignation of the Lord is kindled; and if it once begin to burn, all the waters in the south are not able to quench it. These riches, then, come not of God's blessing; but I pray that God's blessing may be yours, though you want those riches. Time, that severe moderator, chargeth me silence, and I rather choose abruptly to break off my discourse than immodestly to abuse your tried patience. The Lord send us the gifts of his left hand at his own good pleasure, but never deny us the blessings of his right, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

* De Trin., lib. xiii., cap. 3.