

## THE FATAL BANQUET.

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### THE BREAKING-UP OF THE FEAST.

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*Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.*—PROV. IX. 17.

THE custom of sin hath so benumbed the sense of it, and the delighted affections brought the conscience so fast asleep in it, that he 'troubles Israel,' 1 Kings xviii. 17, who would waken Israel; and his speech is harsh barbarism that speaks against the devil's Diana, Acts xix. 34, the idol of vice, which many worship. Our understandings think well of heaven; but our affections think better of earth. Alexander, after his great conquests, wrote to the Grecian senate, *ut se deum facerent*,—that they would accept him into the number of their gods. With a resolute consent, they denied it. At last a right politician stood up, and told them, that *videndum est, ne, dum cælum nimis custodirent, terram amitterent*,—they should look well to it, lest, whiles they were so religious for heaven, they lost their part of earth.\* Hence they made, though but a perfunctory and fashionable decree, *Quoniam Alexander deus esse vult, deus esto*,—Since Alexander will be a god, let him be one. God commends to us his heavenly graces; Satan, 'his lying vanities,' Jonah ii. 8. Our judgments must needs give assent to God; but because his precepts go against the grain of our affections, and the devil tells us that curiosity for the uncertain joys of heaven will lose us the certain pleasures of earth, we settle upon the Grecian resolution, though more seriously, not to be so troubled for our souls as to lose a moment of our carnal delights. This is the devil's assertion, in calling stolen waters sweet; the truth whereof I am bold, though a little I disquiet your lusts, to examine. You have heard the prescription, *waters*; the description, *stolen*.

(3.) The ascription of the quality, in itself, or effect to others, of these waters, if we may believe temptation, is *sweet*: 'Stolen waters are sweet.' It is the speech of the 'father of lies,' and therefore to carry little credit with us. Sweet! to none but those that are lust-sick; like them that are troubled with the green sickness, that think chalk, and salt, and rubbish, savoury. It is a strangely-affected soul that can find sweetness in sin. Sin is the depravation of goodness. The same that rottenness is in the apple,

\* Ælian. Var. Hist., lib. ii., cap. 19.

sourness in the wine, putrefaction in the flesh, is sin in the conscience. Can that be sweet which is the depraving and depriving of all sweetness? Let any subtlety of the devil declare this riddle. The pre-existent privations were deformity, confusion, darkness. The position of their opposite perfections was the expulsion of those foul contraries. Sin comes like bleak and squalid winter, and drives out these fair beauties; turns the sunshine to blackness, calmness to tempests, ripeness to corruption, health to sickness, sweetness to bitterness.

They desperately thrust themselves on the pikes of that threatened woe, Isa. v., that dare say of 'bitter, It is sweet;' and consent to the devil in the pleasantness of his cheer, when the impartial conscience knows it is 'gall and wormwood,' Jer. ix. 15. Yet such is the strong enchantment whereby Satan hath wrought on their affections, that bloodiness, lust, perjury, oppression, malice, pride, carry with these guests an opinion of sweetness. If frothy and reeling drunkenness, lean and raking covetousness, meagre and blood-wasted envy, keen and rankling slander, nasty and ill-shapen idleness, smooth and fair-spoken flattery, be comely, what is deformed? If these be sweet, there is no bitterness. But though the devil be not 'an angel of light,' yet he would be like one, 2 Cor. xi. 14. Though he never speaks truth, yet he would often speak the colour of truth, Matt. iv. 6. Therefore, let us observe what fallacies and deceitful arguments he can produce to make good this attribute, and put the probability of sweetness into his stolen waters. For the devil would not be thought a dunce; too weak to hold a position, though it be never so absurd. Stolen waters, iniquities, are sweet to the wicked in three respects:—[1.] Because they are stolen; [2.] Because they are cheap; [3.] Because they give delight and persuaded content to the flesh.

[1.] Stolen or forbidden. Even in this consists the approbation of their sweetness, that they come by stealth, and are compassed by dangerous and forbidden pains. *Furta placent, etiam quod furta*,—Theft delights, even in that it is theft. The fruits of a wicked man's own orchard are not so pleasant-tasted as his neighbours'; neither do they reserve their due sweetness if they be freely granted. But as the proverb hath it, *Dulcia sunt poma, cum abest custos*,—Apples are sweet when they are plucked in the gardener's absence. Eve liked no apple in the garden so well as the forbidden, Gen. iii. 6. Antiochus scorns venison as base meat if it be not lured. It is a humour as genuine to our affections as moisture is inseparable to our bloods, that *niti-mur in vetitum semper*,—we run mad after restrained objects. We tread those flowers under our disdainful feet, which, mured from us, we would break through stone walls to gather. The liberty of things brings them into contempt; neglect and dust-heaps lie on the accessible stairs. Difficulty is a spur to contention; and there is nothing so base as that which is easy and cheap. *Sol spectatorem, nisi cum deficit, non habet: nemo observat lunam nisi laborantem*,—The two great lights of heaven, that rule in their courses the day and night, are beholden to no eyes for beholding them so much as when they are eclipsed. We admire things less wonderful, because more rare. If the sun should rise but once in our age, we would turn Persians, and worship it.

Wines would be less set by, if our own lands were full of vineyards. Those things that nature hath hedged from us we long and languish for; when manna itself, because it lies at our doors, is loathed, *Virtutem presentem fere in nostris odimus; sublatam ex oculis procul quærimus invidi*. The more spreading good things are, the more thought vile; and, though against that old and true rule, the community shall detract from the commodity. It

is the perverseness of our natures, till sanctification hath put a new nature into us, that God's yoke, Matt. xi. 30, is too heavy for our shoulders. We cannot draw in the gears of obedience. We can travel a whole day after our dogs; but if authority should charge us to measure so many miles, how often would we complain of weariness! The bird can sit out the day-measuring sun, see his rise and fall without irksomeness, whiles she is hatching her eggs; if her nest were a cage, with what impatience would she lament so long a bondage! So the usurer, though he began his first bag with the first hour, and pulls not off his hands or his eyes till the eye of heaven is ashamed of it, and denies further light, he is not weary; let him sit at church two hours, the seat is uneasy, his bones ache, either a cushion to fall asleep with or he will be gone: that Christ may justly and fitly continue that his reproof upon such, Matt. xxvi. 40, 'Can ye not watch with me one hour?'

Thus the command makes things burdensome, and prohibition desirable. The wicked would not so eagerly catch at vanities if God had not said, *Nolite tangere*,—Touch them not. Rapine, lust, ebriety, sacrilege, would sit idle for want of customers, if God's interdiction had not set a *ne ingrediaris* on their doors: 'Enter not,' Prov. iv. 14. Rome, I know not how truly, brags—and let her boast her sin, Phil. iii. 19—that she hath the fewer adulterers because she sets up the stewes. It is reported that Italy did never more abound with students than when Julian had shut up the school-doors, and turned learning into exile. He had fellows in that empire of so contrary dispositions, that some restrained all things, some forbade nothing, and so made their times either tyrannous or licentious; insomuch that it was a busy question in those times, whether of those emperors were worse—one that would let every man do as he list, and the other that would suffer no man to do as he would.

It is observed of the Jews, that whiles the oracles of heaven were open, and religion leaned on the shoulders of peace, they fell frequently to idolatry; but with the Babylonian bridle in their mouths, they eagerly pursue it: their persecution for it increased their prosecution of it. So the blood of martyrs feeds the church; as if from their dead ashes sprung, phoenix-like, many professors.

If trodden virtue grow so fast, like camomile, how then doth restrained vice thrive! Sure this hydra rather multiplies his heads by the blows of reproof. True it is, that *ex malis moribus oriuntur plurimæ leges*,—if men were not prone to infinite sins, a more sparing number of laws would serve our turns. And the more dangerous the law hath made the passage of injustice, the more frequently, fervently they love to sail after it. What they quake to suffer, they tickle to do; as if their itch could not be cured till the law scratch them: so perverse is their disposition, that only coaction must force them to good, only correction bind them from evil. Now, as it is shame that necessity should draw us to that whereunto our own good should lead us, so it is past shame to war for that which God hath charged us to ware of. *Malum est agere quod prohibetur, sed agere quia prohibetur pessimum*,—He that doth that which is forbidden is evil; he that doth it because it is forbidden is a devil. But as the honest man, that hath somewhat to take to, is in most care to come out of debt; so he that hath neither honesty nor lands takes care only to come into debt and to be trusted.

Thus we all long for restrained things, and dote on difficulties; but look with an overly scorn and winking neglect on granted faculties. Pharaoh is sick of God's plague; the peaceable dismission of Israel will cure him: he sees his medicine; no, he will be sicker yet, Israel shall not go, Exod. viii. Oh that these who wrestle with God would think that the more fiercely and

fierily they assault him, they are sure of the sorer fall ! The harder the earthen vessel rusheth upon the brazen, the more it is shivered in pieces. But nothing doth give the ungodly such content as that they dangerously pull out of the jaws of difficulty. No flowers have so good a smell as the stolen ; no repast so savoury as the cates of theft.

‘Quæ venit ex tuto, minus est accepta voluptas ;’—

Facility and liberty only takes off the edge of lust ; and what God doth restrain, man pursues. The adulterer cares not for the chaste society of a fair and loving wife, but the lusts of uncleanness, which he steals with hazard from another's bed, are sweet in his opinion. Ahab's whole kingdom is despised in his thoughts, whiles he is sick of Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kings xxi. 4. Hear Esau, Gen. xxv. 32, ‘What is my birthright to me, when I cannot taste of those red pottage ?’ Oh the crossness of our refractory dispositions, that are therefore the more earnestly set upon the *pro* because God hath more clearly charged them with the *contra* ! as if our natural course was crab-like, to go backward ; and our delight was to be a second cross to Christ, whereby though we cannot crucify his flesh, yet we oppose and oppugn his Spirit ; as if cynically we affect snarling, or, like the giants, would try our strengths with God.

Thus we have examined the devil's reason, and find the natures of the wicked actually disputing for the truth of his assertion ; and so, *interdicta placent*, the waters of sin seem sweet, and are more greedily swallowed, because they are stolen. The ‘prince of the air so rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience,’ Eph. ii. 2, that their appetites only covet prohibited meats, and their affections languish after discharged objects. But ‘your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay,’ Isa. xxix. 16. And, ‘those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me,’ Luke xix. 27. God hath a hook for Sennacherib, a curb for Saul, a bridle for these horses and mules, Pa. xxxii. 9 : the highest mover overrules the swift motion of these inferior spheres, that they cannot fire the world ; but as they delight to make other men's possessions theirs by stealth, so they shall one day be glad if they could put off that is theirs upon other men, and shift away the torments that shall for ever stick on their flesh and spirits.

[2.] The second argument of their sweetness is their cheapness. The sins of stealth please the wicked because they are cheap ; what a man gets by robbery comes without cost. The ungodly would spare their purse, though they lay out of their conscience. *Parcatur sumptui*. They will favour the temporal estates, though their eternal pay for it. Judas had rather lose his soul than his purse ; and for thirty silverlings he sells his Master to the Pharisees, and himself to the devil. Yet when all is done, he might put his gains in his eye. It is but their conceit of the cheapness ; they pay dear for it in the upshot. The devil is no such frank chapman, to sell his wares for nothing. He would not proffer Christ the kingdoms without a price ; he must be worshipped for them, Matt. iv. The guests carry not a draught from his table, but they must make courtesy to him for it. His worship must be thanked at least ; nay, thanks will not serve,—affected, obeyed, honoured. He is proud still, and stands upon it, beyond measure, to be worshipped. He will part with an ounce of vanity for a dram of worship ; but the worshipper had better part with a talent of gold.

The devil indeed keeps open house ; *noctes atque dies*, &c. He makes the world believe that he sells Robin Hood's pennyworths ; that he hath *manum*

*expansam*, a prodigal hand, and gives all *gratis*: but *vis et modis*, he is paid for it; and such a price that the whole world comes short of the value. Only he is content to give day, and to forbear till death; but then he claps up his debtors into everlasting imprisonment, and lays a heavy execution on them, that even the Spanish Inquisition comes short of it. Thus as the king of Sodom said to Abraham, Gen. xiv. 21, *Da mihi animas*, 'Give me the souls,' take the rest to thyself; the prince of darkness is content that thou shouldst have riches and pleasures cheap enough; only give him thy soul, and he is satisfied. The devil would have changed his arithmetic with Job, and rather have given addition of wealth than subtraction, if he could have so wrought him to blaspheme God.

Satan seems marvellous frank and kind at first: *munera magna quidem præbet, sed præbet in hamo*. They are *beneficia viscata*,—ensnaring mercies; as the tree is the bird's refuge when she flies from the snare, and lo, there she finds birdlime, that tears off her flesh and feathers. *Convivia, quæ putas, insidiæ sunt*,—They are baits which thou takest for banquets. The poor man is going to prison for a small debt: the usurer lends him money, and rescues him; two or three winters after, his fit comes again, and by how much a usurer is sharper than a mere creditor, he is shaken with the worse ague. That kindness plungeth him into a deeper bondage; the first was but a thredden snare, which he might break, but this is an infrangible chain of iron. Men are in want, and necessity is *durum telum*, a heavy burden; the devil promiseth supply. Behold, the drunkard shall have wine, the thief opportunity, the malicious revenge; if they be hungry, he hath a banquet ready: but, as I have seen empirics give sudden ease to a desperate and inveterate grief, yet either with danger of life, or more violent revocation of the sickness; so their misery ere long is doubled, and that which was but a stitch in the side is now a shrewd pain at the heart. The stag and the horse, saith the fiction, were at variance: the horse, being too weak, desires man to help him; man gets on the horse's back, and chaseth the stag *usque ad fugam, usque ad mortem*,—to flight, to death. Thus the horse gets the victory, but is at once *victor et victus*, captain and captive; for after that he could never free his mouth from the bit, his back from the saddle: *Non equitem dorso, non frænum depulit ore*. Man is beset with exigents; he wails his weakness; the devil steps in with promises of succour. Judas is made rich, Gehazi gets change of suits, Nero is crowned emperor; but withal he gets possession of their affections, whence all the power of man cannot untenant him. Thus 'the last slavery is worse than the first,' Matt. xii. 45, and the cheer is not so cheap at sitting down as it is dear at rising up.

This is the devil's cheapness; no, 'every good and perfect gift is from above,' James i. 17. The devil gives nothing, but 'God gives to all *πλουσίως*, richly,' or abundantly, 1 Tim. vi. 17, so that when he gives, he takes nothing back; for 'the gifts of the Spirit are *ἀμεταμέλητα*, without repentance,' Rom. xi. 29. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters of life, and he that hath no money,' &c., Isa. lv. 1. God hath waters, no stolen waters, but waters of freedom; and other blessings, if ye love liquid things, of answerable nature, greater virtue; and those whereof he is a true proprietary: wine and milk—milk to nourish, wine to cherish the heart of man: 'buy them without money,' let not your poverty keep you back; here is cheapness, if you have a saving desire; come freely and take your fills. 'The gospel is preached to the poor,' Matt. xi. 5. Think not 'to buy the graces of God with money,' lest 'you and your money perish,' Acts viii. 20. Only take your time, and come whiles God is a-giving; for there is a time when

the door of bounty is shut. Though he stretch forth his hand of mercy all the day, Rom. x. 21, yet the night comes when he draws it back again. They that answer him, proffering graces, as Daniel to Belshazzar, chap. v. 17, 'Keep thy rewards to thyself, and give thy gifts to another,' may knock at his gates, and be turned away empty. Now, spare to speak, and spare to speed. Then, though you cry unto me, I will not hear; 'To-day, then, harden not your hearts,' Heb. iii. 7. Pray unto him, and 'he will give good things to them that ask him,' Matt. vii. 11. He doth not sell, but give; not the shadows, but the substances of goodness. The conclusion then is clear: blessings and graces are truly cheap, Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'And no good thing will God withhold from them that walk uprightly;' 'All things shall work to their good' that are good, Rom. viii. 28. The devil gives nothing, but sells all for price; neither are they good things he selleth, but *figuras boni*, the mere forms and counterfeits of goodness.

But if the cheapness of sin so affect men, what mean they to run to Rome for it? Where I do not say only, that sin and damnation hath a shrewd price set upon them, but even bliss and comfort; and no pilgrim can get the least salve-plaster to heal his wounded conscience, but at an unreasonable reckoning. But soft! It is objected, that Rome is still baited in our sermons; and when we seek up and down for matter, as Saul for his asses, we light upon the Pope still. I answer, that I can often pass by his door and not call in; but if he meets me full in the face and affronts me, for good manners' sake, *non prætereo insalutatum*,—I must change a word with him.

The Pope is a great seller of these stolen waters; yet his chapmen think them cheap. He thrusts his spear into the mountains, and sluiceth out whole floods; as it is fabled of Æolus. He usurps that of God, that he can 'span the waters in his fist;' that he hath all the graces of God in his own power, and no water can pass besides his mill: as if he could 'call for the waters of the sea, and pour them out upon the face of the earth,' Amos v. 8; or as Job speaketh of behemoth, chap. xl. 23, 'Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not; and trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.' As if all the graces of God were packed up in a bundle, or shut into a box, and the Pope only was put in trust to keep the key, and had authority to give and deny them. So Æolus, the god of winds, saith the poet, gave Ulysses a mail, wherein all the winds were bound and wrapped up together, except the western wind, which he must needs occupy to carry himself home. The Pope brags that all waters are banked up into his fountain, and none can drink but by his leave; except the supremacy, and perfect sanctity; which is the wind and the water he must use himself, thereby to sail to heaven,—a haven that few Popes arrive at,—but otherwise there is no grace to be had but from the mother-church of Rome, whose uncontrollable head is the Pope. A miserable engrosser, that would shut up all goodness into his own warehouse. Yet when he lists, he will undertake to 'pour floods on the solid ground,' Isa. xlv. 3, and 'make rivers run in dry places,' Ps. cv. 41.

He hath a huge pond of purgatory, whereout whole millions drink, and are pleased. But as Darius, pursued, drank puddle-water, and said it was the best drink that ever he tasted; so it is the menaced terror, and the false alarms that the Jesuits ring in ignorance's ear, that make men drink so greedily at the Pope's puddle-wharf. He is a great landlord of these stolen waters: 'He sits upon many waters,' Rev. xvii. 1. Some he steals from the Jews, some from the Turks, some from the Pagans, much from idolatry, all from heresy. That, as John de Rupe Scissa in a popular sermon, if every

bird should fetch her own feathers, you should have a naked Pope. Let every river challenge her own waters, you will have a dry Rome. But now—

‘*Expatiatu ruunt per apertos flumina campos ;*’—

His waters spread over the face of the earth ; neither are they cheap, believe but a bird of their own cage : —

‘Temples and priests are merchandised for pelf,  
Altars, prayers, crowns, nay, heaven and God himself.’

‘Vendit Alexander cruces, altaria, Christum :  
Vendere jure potest ; emerat ille prius.’

‘Rome’s sea is sold, to quench the Pope’s mad thirst :  
Well might he sell it ; for he bought it first !’

But is the shop never opened but to the mart of so good commodities ? Yes, if their penance-parlour was opened, you might find a rate for stolen waters : pardon for offences committed, nay, indulgences for future sins, which but for an impregnable toleration might not be done. And let the traffickers speak from their own feeling how cheap they are. They have a pecuniary patronage, and are warranted from the Pope’s exchequer rather than his chancery. Even that corrupt justice gives such sins no connivance but when the dusts of bribery have shut his eyelids. It is their carefulness, *quod hujusmodi dispensationes non concedantur pauperibus*,—that such dispensations be not granted to the poor.

If this doctrine were true, it was time to rase Christ’s speech out of the Scriptures, Matt. xix. 23, ‘It is hard for a rich man to enter into heaven ;’ for it is easy for the rich, that can open the gate with a golden key, and the poor are only in danger of exclusion ; and, that which would be most strange, hell should be peopled with none but beggars. Not a usurer, not an epicure, not a cormorant, not a vicious potentate, should grace the court of Satan ; for the Pope will for money seal them a passport for heaven. Nay, how doth this disgrace purgatory, when none but beggarly wretches shall be in danger of drowning in that whirlpool, whence all their friends, being equally poor, have not money enough for their redemption ! These are the rotten posts whereon the fabric of Rome stands. Think not these stolen waters cheap : your purses must pay for them. Yet happy were you, if no higher price was set on them. All is not discharged with your ready money ; there is another reckoning : your souls must pay for them. The devil ties his customers in the bond of debts, and woe to them that are too far in his books ; for if Christ cancel not ‘his handwriting against them,’ Col. ii. 14, he will sue them to an eternal outlawry, and make them pay their souls for that they boasted they had so good cheap.

[3.] The third argument of these waters’ sweetness is derived from our corrupt affections. Sin pleaseth the flesh. *Omne simile nutrit simile*. Corruption inherent is nourished by the accession of corrupt actions. Judas’s covetousness is sweetened with unjust gain. Joab is heartened and hardened with blood, 1 Kings ii. 5. Theft is fitted to and fattened in the thievish heart with obvious booties. Pride is fed with the officious compliments of observant grooms. Extortion battens in the usurer’s affections by the troling in of his moneys. Sacrilege thrives in the church-robber by the pleasing distinctions of those sycophant priests, and helped with their not laborious profit. Nature is led, is fed with sense. And when the citadel of the heart is once won, the turret of the understanding will not long hold out. As the suffumigations of the oppressed stomach surge up and cause the headache ; or

as the thick spumy mists, which vapour up from the dank and foggy earth, do often suffocate the brighter air, and to us more than eclipse the sun; the black and corrupt affections, which ascend out of the nether part of the soul, do no less darken and choke the understanding. Neither can the fire of grace be kept alive at God's altar, (man's heart,) when the clouds of lust shall rain down such showers of impiety on it. *Perit omne judicium, cum res transit ad affectum*,—Farewell the perspicuity of judgment, when the matter is put to the partiality of affection.

Let, then, the taste be judge at this feast, and not the stomach; lust, and not conscience; and the cates have unquestionable sweetness. He is easily credited that speaks what we would have him. 1 Kings xxii. 12, 'Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper,' was pleasing music in Ahab's ears. Gen. iii. 4, 'Ye shall not die,' though you eat, delighted Eve. The Sirens' song is more esteemed than the oracle of Pallas, because it is sung to lustful, not wise auditors. The strange distinctions which they give in these days, that claw the devil, flatter a usurer for gain, are believed, before the sermons of the sons of the prophets, of the Son of God. Let a factious novelist maintain the justness of impropriations at the church-wronger's table for a meal, his talk is held arguments, when the Scripture arguments are held but talk. As Micah, chap. ii. 11, speaks of the prophets, that would preach for drunkenness; so these sell their conscience for countenance, and feed men's humours whiles they have a humour to feed them. *Quod nimis miseri volunt, hoc facile credunt*,\*—Though they be prophets for profits, yet they are readily believed. So easily the brain drinks poison which the affection ministers. It is not then strange if these cates be sweet, when concupiscence tastes them. *Pascitur libido convivis, nutritur deliciis, vino accenditur, ebrietate flammatur*,†—Lust is fed with banquets, nourished with delights, kindled with wine, set on fire and flame with drunkenness.

What could make the religion of Rome so sweet and welcome to many but the congruence and pleasingness of it to corrupt nature? Whiles nature finds ascribed to herself freedom of will, validity of merits, the latitude of an ignorant and cursory faith, she runs mad of conceit. That indulgences for all sins may be derived from that open exchequer; that if a man wants not money, he needs not lose heaven; that the bare act of the sacraments confers grace without faith; and the mere transient sign of the cross, whoever makes it, can keep off the devil. O religion sweet to nature! Nay, to speak nearer to our district instance, lust not only affectual, but actual, is dispensed with. Priests are licensed their concubines, though inhibited wives. Adultery is reckoned among their petty sins. I have read it quoted out of Pope Innocentius the Third of their priests, *Mane Filium virginis offerunt in choro; nocte filium veneris agitant in thoro*. The priests do not engross all the market of ventry to themselves, yet they do prettily well for their allowance. One benefice with one wife is unlawful, but two benefices and three whores are tolerable. But the stews, like the common bath, is afforded to the laity, and, if their states will maintain it, a private supply besides. *Urbs est jam tota lupanar*,—The whole city is become a mere stews. As the prophet Isaiah said once of Jerusalem, chap. i. 21, so we may say of Rome, 'The holy city is become a harlot.' Full of harlots, they will not stick to yield, and so full of adulterers, Jer. v. 7. Nay, the city itself is a harlot, and 'hath left her first love,' Rev. ii. 4. She commits idolatry, which is the vilest adultery, with stocks and stones.

Thus nature drinks pleasant waters, but they are stolen. Lust encroacheth

\* Sen.

† Ambr. de Pœnit.



upon the law, and concupiscence's gain is God's loss. Some of them, saith Bishop Jewell, have written in defence of filthiness. What black vice shall want some patronage? But *causa patrocinio non bona, pejor erit*. Powerful arguments, no doubt, yet powerful enough to overcome the yielding spirit. Strong affection gives credit to weak reasons. A small temptation serves to his perversion that tempts himself, and would be glad of a cloak to hide his leprosy, though he steal it. How can it then be denied that sins are sweet, whiles lust doth take, taste, censure them?

The devil's banquet is not yet done; there is more cheer a-coming. The water-service is ended. Now begin cates of another nature; or, if you will, of another form, but the nature is all one: the same method of service, the same manner of junkets. It may be distinguished, as the former, into, (1.) A prescription, *de quo, bread*. (2.) A description, *de quanto, bread of secrecies*. (3.) An ascription, *de quali, bread of pleasure*.

(1.) *Bread* hath a large extent in the Scriptures. *Vult sufficientiam vitæ et præsentis et futuræ*. Under it is contained a sufficiency of food and nourishment—[1.] For the body; [2.] For the soul. Therefore some would derive the Latin word, *panem*, from the Greek word, *πᾶν*, and so make it a general and comprehensive word, to signify *omne quod nobis necessarium*,—all things needful, whether to corporal or animal sustenance.

[1.] Corporal: the fourth petition in that absolute prayer, lessoned to us by our Master, implies so much: 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Where, saith St Augustine, *Omnem necessariam corporis exhibitionem petimus*,—We beg all necessary sustentation to our temporal life. So, Gen. iii. 19, *in sudore vultus vesceris pane tuo*,—all thy repast shall be derived from thy travail. 'Set bread before them,' saith Elisha to the king of Israel, 2 Kings vi. 22; and 'he made great provision for them,' ver. 23. Job's kindred 'did eat bread,' Job xlii. 11; that is, feasted with him. 'He that ate of my bread,' saith David, Ps. xli. 9, or did feed on the delicacies of my palace.

[2.] For the soul: 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever,' John vi. 51. It is not straitened of this sense. Matt. xv. 26, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to throw it to dogs.' Christ and all his benefits are shadowed forth by bread. The loss of the word is called by the prophet Amos, chap. viii. 11, a 'famine,' or loss of bread.

Bread, then, implies *multitudinem salutis, magnitudinem solaminum, plenitudinem omnium bonorum*,—much health, great comforts, fulness of all requisite good things. And what? Will Satan brag that he can give all these, and that his bread, *intensive*, is so virtual in its own nature; and *extensive*, that it shall afford so much strength of comfort, validity of nutriment, and never fail the collation of health to his guests? This is in him a hyperbolic, and almost a hyperdiabolical impudence, to make the bread of sin equal with the 'bread of life,' and to ascribe unto it *potentiam virtutis* and *virtutem dulcedinis*,—that it is bread, and sweet bread, nourishing and well-tasted. As Ceres must be taken and worshipped for the goddess of corn, and Bacchus for the god of wine, when they were, at the utmost, but the first inventors of grinding the one and pressing the other,—for God is the God of both fields and vineyards,—so the devil would seem owner of bread and water, when God only is Lord of sea and land, that made and blesseth the corn and the rivers. His power containeth all, and his providence continueth all that is good unto us.

Observe how the devil is God's ape, and strives to match and parallel him,

both in his words and wonders. He follows him, but, not *passibus æquis*, with unequal steps. If Christ have his 'waters of life' at the Lamb's wedding-feast, the devil will have his waters too at lust's banquet. If 'the Highest give his thunder, hailstones, and coals of fire,' Ps. xviii. 13, (as to Elias's sacrifice,) the red dragon doth the like: Rev. xiii. 13, 'He maketh fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men.' If Moses turn his rod to a serpent, the sorcerers do the like; but yet they fall short, for Moses's rod devoured all theirs, Exod. vii. 12. Must Abraham sacrifice his son to the God of heaven? Gen. xxii. 2. Agamemnon must sacrifice his daughter to the prince of darkness. A ram redeems Isaac, a hind Iphigenia. For Jehovah's temple at Jerusalem, there is great Diana's at Ephesus, Acts xix. 27. It is said of the Son of God, that he shall 'give sight to the blind,' Isa. xlii. 7, and heal the sicknesses of the people. The son of Jupiter, Æsculapius, shall have the like report. Ovid and Hesiod have their chaos, in imitation of sacred Moses. Noah's deluge shall be quitted with Deucalion's. For our Noah, they have Janus; for our Samson, a Hercules; for our Babel-builders, they that lay Pelion upon Ossa, giants. If Lot's wife be turned to a pillar, lo, Niobe is metamorphosed to a stone. Let God historify his Jonah, Herodotus will say more of Arion. Of which St Augustine well: We may suspect the Greek tale of the one means the Hebrew truth of the other.\* Thus, if Christ at his table offer to his saints his own body for bread, blood for wine, in a mystical sort; the devil will proffer some such thing to his guests, bread and waters, waters of stealth, bread of secrecy. He is loath to give God the better; he would not do it in heaven, and therefore was turned out; and do you think he will yet yield it? No, in spite of God's water of crystal, Rev. xxii., peace and glory, he will have his waters of Acheron, guilt and vanity. But, by Satan's leave, there is a bread that nourisheth not: Isa. lv. 2, 'Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' It seems, but is not, bread; and, if it be, yet it satisfies not. Say it could, yet, Matt. iv. 4, 'man lives not by bread only, but by the word' and blessing of God. τὰ ὀψώνια, all the delicacies that sin can afford us, are but ἀβυσσὸς ψυχῆς, the bane of the soul: *Pabula peccati, pocula lethi*. Ὁλον properly signifies πᾶν τὸ πύρι κατασκευασμένον ἐς ἰδωθῆναι,—all meat prepared with fire.† There is no cheer at this banquet dressed without fire; either present of lust, or future of torment.

Now, since the devil will put the form of bread upon his tempting wickedness, let us examine what kind of bread it is:—

[1.] The seed is corruption: 'an unclean seed,' Lev. xi. 38. No other than the tares which the enemy sowed, Matt. xiii. 28. God sowed good corn, but 'whence are the tares?' The seed whereof this bread is made is not wheat or good corn, but cockle, darnel, tares—dissension, rebellion, lies, vanities. The devil is herein a seedsman, but he sows corrupt seed, that infects and poisons the heart which receives it.

[2.] The heat of the sun, influence of the air, sap and moisture of the ground, that ripens this seed, are temptations. The seed once sown in the apt ground of our carnal affections, is by the heat of Satan's motion soon wrought to ripeness. So that it is matured *suggerendo, imprimendo, tentando*,—suggestion, impression, tentation hasten the seed to grass, to a blade, to spindling, to a perfect ear, to growth in the heart; and all suddenly, for an ill weed grows apace. Rather than it shall dwindle and be stunted, he

\* De Civit. Dei, lib. i.

† Erasmus says that τὰ ὀψώνια signifies that victual whereby soldiers were allured to fight. The captain of the black guard gives his soldiers this diet.

will crush the clouds of hell, and rain the showers of his malediction upon it. Before he sows, here he waters.

[3.] The seed thus ripened is soon cut down by the sickle of his subtlety ; whose policy to preserve his state Florentine is beyond Machiavel's. His speed is no less, else he could not so soon put a girdle about the loins of the earth. But what policy can there be in shortening the growth of sin ? This trick rather enervates his power, weakens his kingdom. The devil doth not ever practise this cunning, but then alone when he is put to his shifts.\* For some are so vile that the devil himself would scarce wish them worse. Such are atheists, rob-altars, usurers, traitors, &c. But some living in the circumference of the gospel are by man's awe and law restrained from professed abominations. What would you have him now do ? Sure Satan is full of the politics : *Dæmonas grammatici dictos volunt, quasi δαίμονας, id est, peritos ac rerum scios.*† He is a devil for his craft. I call therefore the reaping his subtlety ; for he might seem therein to dissolve his kingdom, and spoil the height of sin by cutting it down. But the sequel and success proves he doth it rather to corroborate the power thereof, by making it fitter for application. Thus 'he transforms himself to an angel of light,' 2 Cor. xi. 14, and is content to top the proud risings of palpable and outward impieties, that he may more strongly possess the soul by hypocrisy. Thus there may be an expulsion of Satan from the house of the heart *quoad veterem eruptionem*, when his repossession is made stronger *quoad novam corruptionem*. Common grace throws him out, but 'he finds the house empty, swept, and garnished,' Matt. xii. 44,—that is, trimmed by hypocrisy,—and therefore enters and fortifies with 'seven other spirits more wicked than the first.' What he cannot do by notorious rebellion, he performs by dissimulation. So that, as sorcerers and witches converse with evil spirits in plausible and familiar forms, which in ugly shapes they would abhor ; so many would not endure him, *ut rudis cacodæmon*, as a rough and gross devil, in manifest outrageous enormities, who yet, as a smooth, sleek, fine, and transformed devil, give him entertainment. This, then, is his harvest.

[4.] Being thus reaped and housed, he soon thresheth it out with the flail of his strength. He is called 'the strong man,' Luke xi. 22. Where he takes possession, he pleads prescription ; he will not out. His power in the captived conscience scorns limitation. He is not content to have the seed lie idle in the heart ; he must thresh it out, cause thee to produce some cursed effects. He doth not, to speak for your capacity in the country, hoard up his grain ; but with all his might, and the help of all his infernal flails, he thresheth it out, and makes it ready for the market. If any Cain or Judas be so hasty that he will not stay till it be made bread,—tarry for temptation,—but tempt himself, the devil is glad that they save him a labour : howsoever, he will have his grain ready ; his suggestion shall not be to seek when he should use it. He would be loath that the lustful eye should want a harlot, the corrupt officer a bribe, the Papist an image, the usurer a mortgage, the thief a booty. He knows not what guests will come, he will thresh it ready.

[5.] Being threshed out, it must, you know, be ground. Satan hath a water-mill of his own ; though founded on *mare mortuum*, a dead sea, (for all sins are 'dead works,' Heb. ix. 14,) yet the current and stream that drives it runs with swifter violence than the Straits of Gibraltar. The flood of concupiscence drives it. The mill consists of two stones, *deliciæ et divitiæ*,—

\* 'Sæpe facit opus, quod non est suum, ut ita faciat opus quod est suum.'—*Cyprian*.

† Lactant. Instit., lib. ii., cap. 15.

pleasure and profit. There is no seed of sin which these two cannot grind to powder, and make fit for bread, when concupiscence turns the mill. Rapine, sacrilege, murder, treason, have been prepared to a wicked man's use by these instruments. *Quid non mortalia pectora cogunt?* Covetousness and carnal delight bid any sin welcome. Only pleasure is the nether stone. Idleness would lie still, but covetousness is content to trudge about, glad when any sack comes to the mill. These two grind all the devil's grist, and supply him with temptations for all the world. All the ugly births of sins, that have shewed their monstrous and stigmatic forms to the light, have been derived from these parents, carnal pleasure and covetousness. You see how the devils grind.

[6.] It is ground you hear; it wants leavening. The leaven is the colourable and fallacious arguments that persuade the sweetness of this bread. This is either the 'leaven of the Pharisees,' Luke xii. 1, or the leaven of the Sadducees, or the leaven of the Herodians. The leaven Pharisaical is described by Christ himself to be hypocrisy; a tradition to 'make clean the outside of the cup,' Matt. xxiii. 25, but no devotion to keep the inside pure from extortion and excess. The 'leaven of the Sadducees' is the 'doctrine of the Sadducees:' as the mistaken apostles (about bread) corrected their own errors, Matt. xvi. 12. This doctrine was a denial of resurrection, of angel, of spirit, Acts xxiii. 8. The Herodian leaven, Mark viii. 15, was dissolute profaneness, derived from the observation of fox-like Herod. These pleadings for sin, by the devil's mercenary advocates, put, like leaven, a better taste into his bread. Thus it is leavened.

[7.] It lacks now nothing but baking. Sure, the oven that bakes this corrupt bread is our own evil affections, which the devil heats by his temptations, and with supply of fuel to their humours. Thus by sin he makes way for sin, and prepares one iniquity out of another. He strikes fire at the covetous heart of Judas, and so bakes both treason and murder. He hath made Absalom's affections so hot by ambition, that incest and parricide is easily baked in them. The prophet Hosea speaks the sins of Israel in this allegory, chap. vii. 4: 'They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened;' ver. 6, 'They have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. They are all hot as an oven,' &c.; yea, ver. 8, Ephraim itself is a 'cake half-baked.' Thus, when our affections are made a fiery oven, through the greediness of sin, there is soon drawn out a batch of wickedness.

Thus the devil runs through many occupations before his bread be baked, his banquet prepared for his guests. He is a seedsman, a waterer, a reaper, a thresher, a miller, a moulder, a baker. A baker here for his bread, as before a brewer for his waters. And to conclude, a host, that makes the wake, invites the guests, and banquets them with their own damnation.

(2.) You have heard how this service may be called bread; and therein the subtlety of the devil's prescription. Let us as justly poise the next in the balance, and see how it holds weight—secret bread, or the bread of secrecy, nay, of secrecies; for sin is not like the rail that sits alone, but like the partridges, which fly by coveys. *Secret:* this will be found a fraudulent dimension; for 'there is nothing so secret that shall not be made manifest,' Mark iv. 22; Luke xii. 2. The speeches of whispering, the acts of the closet, shall not scape publishing. The allegory of uncleanness is prosecuted: forbidden lusts, stolen by snatches, and enjoyed in secret, are sweet and plea-

sant. It is instanced in this particular, but hath a general extent to all the parallels, every sister of that cursed stock. I will hold with it thus far, that sin loves secrecy; and I will testify against it a degree further, that no sin is so secret as the tempter here affirms it, or the committers imagine it. And from these two roots I will produce you a double fruit of instruction.

*First*, Unjust things love privacy. The adulterer, saith Job, 'loves the dark.' Thais draws Paphnutius into the secret and more removed chambers. The two wicked elders thus tempt the emblem of chastity: *Ostia pomeri clausa sunt*.—The gates of the orchard are shut, and nobody sees us.\* Hence the generation of sins are called 'the works of darkness,' Rom. xiii. 12; and reformation of life is compared to our 'decent walking in the day,' ver. 13. Though the light of grace shines, saith the Sun of brightness, yet 'men love darkness better, because their deeds are evil,' John iii. 19. Ignorance and the night have a fit similitude:—

[1.] Both seasons are still and hushed: no noise to waken the Sybarites, unless the cocks, the ministers,—*nuncii Dei et dei*,—and their noise is not held worth the hearing. Few will believe Christ's cock, though he crows to them that the day is broken.

[2.] Both seasons procure stumbling. The way of our pilgrimage is not so even but that we need both light to shew the rubs, and eyes to discern them. The gospel is the day, Christ is the light; faith is the eye that apprehends it. Light without eyes, eyes without light, are defective to our good. If either be wanting, the stumbling feet endanger the body. In the spiritual privation of either gospel or faith, the affections are not able to keep upright the conscience.

[3.] Both are uncomfortable seasons. *Nox et erroris et terroris plenissima*,—The night is full of wondering, of wandering. Imagine the Egyptians' case in that gross and palpable darkness, Exod. x. 23, the longest natural night that the book of God specifies. A silent, solitary, melancholy, inextinguishable season: in which *ἀκούει οὐδείς οὐδὲν ὁμιλεῖ*; no murmur disquiets the air; no man hears his name; no birds sing, except the owl and the night-raven, which croak only dismal things.

[4.] Both are fit seasons for foul spirits to range in. It hath been fabled of night-walking spirits. Let it be false, yet this is true: the devil is the 'prince of darkness,' Eph. vi. 12; his kingdom is a 'kingdom of darkness;' and his walks are the walks of darkness. In the caliginous night of superstition and ignorance, he plays *Rex*, and captivates many a soul to his obedience. His children, as it is fit, have the same disposition with their father. They are tenebrious, and love *nocturnos conventus*,—meetings in the dark; as the powder-traitors met in the vault. But the eyes of Jehovah see not only things done on the tops of the mountains, but could spy the treason of the vault.

*Secondly*, And this is the consequent instruction which I would the devil's blinded guests should know: *God sees*.

Παντ' ἰδοῦσθ, παντ' ἀκούει, καὶ πάντα βραβεύει.†

There is nothing secret to his eye. He sees out sins in the book of eternity, before our own hearts conceived them. He sees them in our hearts when our inventions have given them form, and our intentions birth. He sees their action on the theatre of this earth, quite through the scene of our lives. He sees them when his wrathful eye takes notice of them, and his hand is lift up to punish them. There is nothing so secret and abstracted from the

\* Referring to the Apocryphal story of Susanna and the Elders.—Ed. † Orph.

senses of men, *ut Creatoris aut lateat cogitationem, aut effugiat potestatem*,\*—that it may either lurk from the eye, or escape from the hand of God. No master of a family is so well acquainted with every corner of his house, or can so readily fetch any casket or box he pleaseth, as the Master of 'the whole family in heaven and earth,' Eph. iii. 15, knows all the angles and vaults of the world.

'Jupiter est, quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris,'—

Acts xvii. 28, 'In him we live, move, and have our being.' The villany of the cloisters were not unseen to his revenging eye. Perhaps they took a recluse life that they might so preclude all suspicion; promising to the world contemplation, to their own thoughts close wickedness. They thought themselves secure, shadowed from the eye of notice, and fenced from the hand of justice. So they were in opinion out of the world; but in proof the world was in them: they were not more *politi*, strict in profession, than *polluti*, loose in conversation. But as dark as their vaults were, the all-seeing God descried their whoredoms and destroyed their habitations, or at least emptied them of so filthy tenants. The obscurity of their cells and dorters, thickness of walls, closeness of windows, with the cloak of a strict profession thrown over all the rest, could not make their sins dark to the eye of heaven.

Our impieties are not without witness. *Te videt angelus malus, videt te bonus, videt et malis major angelis, Deus*,†—The good angel, and the bad, and he that is better than the angels, 'far above all principalities and powers,' Heb. i. 4, sees thee. The just man sets forth his actions to be justified. *Lucem et æthera petit, et teste sole vivit*,‡—He loves the light, and walks with the witness of the sun. It is recorded of Jacob, Gen. xxv. 27, 'He was a plain man, dwelling in tents.' Nathanael, by the testimony of the best witness, was 'an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile,' John i. 47. It was the Rabbin's counsel to his scholar: Remember, there is a seeing eye, a hearing ear, a book written. *Sic vive cum hominibus quasi Deus videat: sic loquere Deo quasi homines audiant*,§—So converse with men as if God saw thee, so speak to God as if men heard thee. For, *non discessit Deus, quando recessit*,—God is not absent, though thou dost not feel him present. Corporeal substances are in one place locally and circumscriptively; incorporeal created substances, neither locally nor circumscriptively, but definitively. God, the creating substance, is every whit in every place; not circumscriptively as the bodies, nor definitively as angels, but repletively, (*Jovis omnia plena*,) filling every place by his essence. He is hypostatically in Christ, graciously in his saints, gloriously in heaven, powerfully in hell. You see then the falsehood of the devil's assertion; sins would be secret, but they are not.

(3.) The bread of secrecy being described, I should come, in the third and last place, to the ascription, 'It is pleasant.' But because the former adjunct of sweetness doth but little diversify from this of pleasure, and I shall have just occasion to convince the promised delicacy from the proved misery, and for conclusive application, give me the leave of your patience to examine the truth of the (former) secrecy.

APPLICATION.—It is the devil's policy, though he cannot blind His eyes that made the light in heaven and the sight in man, yet he would darken our sins with the veil of secrecies from the view of the world. And are they so? No; the suffering eye sees them, and can point them out; nay, sensible

\* August. Civitat., xxii. cap. 10.

† Sen.

† Bern. de Convers. ad Cler., cap. 16.

§ Sen. Epist. xi.

demonstration speaks them to the ears, and objects them to the sight of man. The iniquities of these days are not ashamed to shew their faces, but walk the streets without fear of a serjeant. The sins of the city are as pert and apert as the sons of the city. I would iniquity was not bolder than honesty; or that innocence might speed no worse than nocence. *Absit ut sic, sed utinam ut vel sic*, saith St Augustine, in the like case; God forbid it should be so bad; yet I would it were no worse. For the times are so wheeled about to their old bias, that *vix licet esse bonum*, it is scarce safe to be an honest man. Suspicion makes the good evil, and flattery makes the evil good; the first in the opinion of others, the last in the opinion of themselves. Our faith is small, and led with reason; our life evil, and led without reason. *Corruptio morum tollit scientiam ethicam*,\*—Our evil manners shut up philosophy, and divinity too, into the cave of ignorance.

This forest of man and beast, the world, grows from evil to worse; like Nebuchadnezzar's dreamed image, Dan. ii. 32, whose 'head was golden, silver arms, brazen thighs, but his feet were of iron and clay.' What Ovid did but poetize, experience doth moralise, our manners actually perform. This last stage is (as it must be) the worst. Our covetise saith, It is *terrea ætas*, an earthen age; our oppression, *ferrea ætas*, an iron age; our impudence, *athenea ætas*, a brazen age. Neither *aurea* nor *argentea*, saith necessity. For the poor may say as the priest, 'Silver and gold have I none,' Acts iii. 6. Let me say, our sins have made it worthy to be called *inferna ætas*, a hellish age.

Sin is called by Paul, Eph. iv., 'the old man;' but he is stronger now than he was in his infancy, *diebus Adami*,—in the days of Adam. Most men's repentance is in the knee or tongue, but their wickedness in the heart and hand. Money mars all; for this, and the pleasures this may procure, Esau sells his birthright, Heb. xii. 16; Judas sells his Master, Matt. xxvi. 15; Ahab sells himself to work wickedness, 1 Kings xxi. 25. Sin was wont to love privacy, as if she walked in fear. The tippler kept his private ale-bench, not the market-place; the adulterer his chamber, not (with Absalom, 2 Sam. xvi. 22) the house-top; the thief was for the night, or sequestrate ways; the corrupt lawyer took bribes in his study, not in the open hall; but now *peccata nullas petitura tenebras*—our sins scorn the dark. Men are so far from being ashamed of their fruitless lives, Rom. vi. 21, that *mala committunt, commissa jactant, jactata defendunt*,—they commit evil, boast that they committed, and defend that they boasted. 'Pride is worn as a chain, and cruelty as a garment,' Ps. lxxiii. 6; *conspectu omnium*—as proud of the fashion. They talk of a conscience that seeks covers, like Adam's fig-leaves; but these 'glory in their shame, whose end is damnation,' saith St Paul, Phil. iii. 19. The very harlot comes short of them; she wipes her lips, and saith she hath not sinned. Better fare those that yet would be accounted honest.

We may justly parallel these times and our complaints to the prophet Isaiah's, chap. iii. 9, 'The show of their countenance doth witness against them; they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. But woe be to their souls! for they have rewarded evil to themselves.' So the Jews answered God, pleading hard to them: 'There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go,' Jer. ii. 25. Nay, resolutely they discharged God of further pains: ver. 31, 'We are lords, we will no more come unto thee.' Therefore Ezekiel denounceth their destruction, chap. xxi. 24, 'For this cause ye shall be taken with the hand' of judgment, 'because your sins are discovered; and in all your doings your transgressions do ap-

\* Arist.

pear.' So the same people to the Son, as they had erst to the servants : 'We will not come unto thee.' 'How often would I have gathered you, but you would not!' 'Ye will not come at me, that you might have life,' John v. 40. The way is easy ; you shall have life for coming ; it is worth your labour ; you can have it nowhere else ; then 'come to me.' No ; you will not come at me : as Daniel answered Belshazzar, 'Keep thy rewards to thyself, and give thy gifts to another,' Dan. v. 17.

These are sins with lifting up the hand and heel against God : the hand in opposition, the heel in contempt. There are two ladders whereby men climb into heaven—the godly by their prayers, the wicked by their sins. By this latter ladder did Sodom and Nineveh climb. God grant our sins be not such climbers, that press into the presence-chamber of heaven, and will be acquainted with God, though to our confusion. Are our wickednesses done in this region and sphere of sin, the earth ; and must they come to heaven first ? Must the news be in the court of what is done in the country, before the country itself know of it ? Our consciences take no notice of our own iniquities ; but they complain in the audience-court of heaven, and sue out an outlawry against us. So impudent and unblushing is our wickedness, that with the prophet we may complain, 'Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination ? nay, they were not at all ashamed ; neither could they blush,' Jer. vi. 15, viii. 12, (both places in the same words.) Our sins keep not low water, the tide of them is ever swelling ; they are objects to the general eye, and proud that they may be observed. And let me tell you, many of the sins I have taxed, as secret and silent as you take them, and as hoarsely as they are thought to speak, are no less than thunder to heaven, and lightning to men. They do vocally ascend, that would actually, if they could.

The labourer's hire cries in the gripolous landlord's hand, James v. 4. The furrows of the encloser cry, complain, nay, weep against him ; for so is the Hebrew word, Job xxxi. 38. The vain-glorious builder hath 'the stone crying out of the wall against him, and the beam out of the timber answering it,' Hab. ii. 11. The blasphemer's 'tumult cries, and is come up into the ears of God,' 2 Kings xix. 28. The oppressor's rage and violence reacheth up to heaven, and 'is continually before me, saith the Lord,' Jer. vi. 7. These are crying sins, and have shrill voices in heaven ; neither are they submiss and whispering on the earth.

To be short : most men are either publicans or Pharisees,—either they will do no good, or lose that they do by ostentation. Many act the part of a religious man, and play devotion on the world's theatre, that are nothing beside the stage ; all for sight ; angels in the highway, devils in the byway ; so monstrous out of the church that they shame religion. It was proverbied on Nero, 'It must needs be good that Nero persecutes : their wicked lives give occasion to the world to invert it on them, 'It must needs be evil that such wretches profess.' Others are like publicans. Only they were christened when they were babes, and could not help it ; but, as angry at that indignity, they oppose Christ all their lives.

Take heed, beloved ! hell was not made for nothing. The devil scorns to have his court empty : you will not bend, you shall break ; you will not serve God, God will serve himself of you. How many stand here guilty of some of these sins ! How many may say with Æneas, *Et quorum pars magna fui*, whereof I have a great share ! Many cry out, 'The days are evil,' whiles they help to make them worse. All censure, none amend. If every one would pluck a brand from this fire, the flame would go out of itself.



But whiles we cast in our iniquities as fuel, and blow it with the bellows of disobedience, we make it strong enough to consume us; yea, and all we have. For God will not spare ever; he is just, and must strike.

Shall we loosen our hands to impiety, and tie God from vengeance? I have often read and seen that 'mercy and truth meet together,' that 'righteousness and peace kiss one another,' Ps. lxxxv. 10. But mercy and sinfulness keep not the same house; peace and wickedness are mere strangers. To reconcile these is harder than to make the wolf and lamb live together in quiet, Isa. lvii. 21. Think not that God cannot strike. *Mars ultor galeam quoque perdidit, et res non potuit servare suas.\** The heathen gods could not avenge their own quarrels; but our God can punish a thousand ways—fire, plague, war, famine, &c. *Mille nocendi artes.* Our sins may thrive a while, and batten, because they live in a friendly air and apt soil; but in the end they will overthrow both themselves and us. *Civitatis eversio est morum, non murorum, casus,†*—A city's overthrow is sooner wrought by lewd lives than weak walls. Were the walls of our cities as strong-turreted and inexpugnable as the wall that Phocas built about his palace, yet it may be really performed on them, as the voice in the night told him. Did they reach the clouds, they may be scaled: the sin within will mar all. *Graviores sunt inimici mores pravi, quam hostes infesti.‡* Our worst enemies are our sins. And though these punishments fall not suddenly, yet certainly, if repentance step not between. Adam did not die presently on his sin; yet God's word was true upon him: for he became instantly mortal, sure to die, and fell, as it were, into a consumption that never left him, till it brought him to the grave. God hath leaden feet, but iron hands. Take heed, ye feasting robbers: when God struck that secret thief Judas, he struck home; he took away the world from him, or rather him from the world, and sent him 'to his own place,' Acts i. 25. Feast, revel, riot, covet, engross, extort, hoard, whiles you will. Earth is not your house, but your bridge; you must pass over it, either to Canaan or Egypt, heaven or hell; every man to his own place.

Grant, O dear Father, that we may so run our short pilgrimage on earth, that our dwelling-place may be with thy majesty in heaven, through the merits and mercies of our Saviour Jesus Christ! Amen.

\* Juven. Sat. iv.

† August.

‡ Ambr.