

THE PRAISE OF FERTILITY.

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God.—HEB. VI. 7.

THAT difference which the philosophers put between learning and metals we may truly find between human writings and God's Scriptures conferred. They that dig in the one find *parvum in magno*, a little gold in a great deal of ore; they that dig in this rich field—which the wise merchant sold all he had to purchase—find *magnum in parvo*, much treasure in a few words.

III. We have heard how the good earth is beholden to God for his holy rain; the next circumstance objects to our meditation this earth's thankful fertility: 'It bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed.' Every word transcends the other; and as it excludes some vicious defect, so demonstrates it also some gradual virtue.

1. 'It brings forth.' It is not barren, like a dead ground that yields neither herbs nor weeds. This is no idle heart, that doth neither good nor harm; that, like a mere spectator of the world, sits by with a silent contemplation; for whom was made that epitaph:—

'Here lies he, was born and cried,
Lived threescore years, fell sick, and died;'

doing neither profit nor prejudice to the country he lived in. Here is no such stupid neutrality, nor infructuous deadness: 'It brings forth.'

2. They are not weeds it produceth, but 'herbs.' A man had as good do nothing as do naughty things. It is less evil to sit still than to run swiftly in the pursuit of wickedness. They that forbear idleness and fall to lewdness, mend the matter, as the devil, in the tale, mended his dame's leg: when he should have put it in joint, he broke it quite in pieces. It is not enough that this ground bring forth, but that it yield herbs. Of the two, the barren earth is not so evil as the wicked earth; that men pity, this they curse. 'It brings forth herbs.'

3. Neither is it a paucity of herbs this ground afforded, but an abundance: not one herb, but herbs; a plural and plentiful number. There is neither barrenness nor bareness in this ground; not no fruits, not few fruits, but many herbs.

4. Lastly, they are such herbs as are 'meet for the dresser:' such as God

expects of the garden, who planted it; such as he will accept, not in strict justice for their own worth, but in great mercy for Jesus Christ. 'Meet for them by whom it is dressed.

We have now opened the mine, let us dig for the treasure. Four demonstrations commend this good ground:—

1. It is fruitful.
2. It is fruitful in good.
3. It is fruitful in much good.
4. It is fruitful in such good as the dresser looks for.

1. Fertility: 'It brings forth.' Barrenness hath ever been held a curse, a shame, reproach. So the mother of John Baptist insinuated: 'Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men,' Luke i. 25. When God will bring the gospel, and with it salvation to the Gentiles, he is said to take away their barrenness. So was it prophesied, Isa. liv. 1; so was it accomplished, Gal. iv. 27: 'Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry' with joy, 'thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she that hath a husband.' The primordial praise of this good ground is, that it is not barren. This fertility in the Christian heart doth—(1.) conclude thankfulness; (2.) exclude idleness.

(1.) For the former. God hath given him rain for this purpose, that he should bring forth fruit; if he should take the rain, and not answer the sender's hopes, he were unthankful. The good man considers the end why he received any blessing, and examines what God meant in conferring on him such a benefit. Hath God given him wisdom? Solomon hath taught him to 'let his fountains be dispersed abroad, and his rivers of waters in the streets,' Prov. v. 16. Whether thy knowledge be great in divine things, *tanquam luminare majus*, or in human, *tanquam luminare minus*, remember our Saviour's lesson, Matt. v., 'Put not your light under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Let your light shine before men, &c. They that are God's lights, must waste themselves to give light to others. *Non licet habere privatam, ne privemur ea*,'—To keep it private is the way to be deprived of it. So the old verse—

'Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter,'—

As we must not be wise in ourselves, so nor only wise to ourselves. He that conceals his knowledge, cancels it, and shall at last turn fool. Do not enclose that for several which God hath meant common. The not employing will be the impairing of God's gifts.

This is the fruit which the good ground must send forth, for all the seeds of grace sown in it. Neither doth this instruction bound itself with our spiritual, but extends also to our temporal gifts. Hast thou riches? When God scattered those blessings upon thee, in the seed-time of his bounty, he intended thou shouldst return him a good crop at the harvest. Be thankful then, in doing that with them for which God gave them. *Custos es tuarum, non dominus, facultatum*,—Thou art a deputed steward, not an independent lord, of thy wealth. God meant them to promote and help forward thy journey to heaven; let them not retard thy course, or put thee quite out of the way. Thou art a thankful ground, if thou suffer thy riches to bring forth those fruits which the hand of God looks to gather from them. Be merciful, be charitable, be helpful. *Stips pauperum, thesaurus divitum*,—The rich man's treasure is the poor man's stock. The distressed

* Aug. Conf., lib. xii., cap. 25.

soul asks but his own. Christ may say to thee in the beggar's person, 'Pay, not give, me a penny thou owest me.' *Da mihi ex eo quod tibi dedi: de meo quero, non de tuo: da et redde,**—Give me of that which I gave thee: I demand some of my own, not of thine: it is more properly a restoring than a gift. *Petimusque damusque vicissim.* Thou askest the Lord, and he giveth thee; but on this condition, that thou give him some of it back again. Thou art more truly the beggar, and God but a demander of a just and easy retribution. This is not all.

God did also mean that thyself should take comfort in these things. It is a part of that blessedness which the Psalmist promiseth to him that feareth the Lord: 'Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee,' Ps. cxxviii. 2. For God gave wine for this purpose, 'to make glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen his heart,' Ps. civ. 15. How doth man divert God's goodness, when he turns his blessing into a curse, and puts his good creatures from their intended uses! 'The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of thy field,' saith the wise man, Prov. xxvii. 25. Thou must wear the wool, and drink the milk of thy own flock. Neither be so sparing as to starve thyself in the midst of thine own plenty; as the covetous wretch that dares not eat an egg lest he should lose a chicken. Nor so profuse to thy own lusts, that thou shouldst give all, *vel veneri, vel ventri.* Not that surfeits or wine should sluice out thy estate into thy belly. Not that with unnecessary quarrels of law, thou shouldst afflict and weary thy neighbours. O madness! that to put out both thy brother's eyes, thou shouldst put out one of thine own; nay, both thine own for one of his. Ungrateful men for God's great mercy: that what they get by peace with foreign, vainly spend it in civil wars; where the lawyers set them together, as men clap on unwilling mastiffs! Most commonly they fight at the long weapon; a tedious, wearying, weather-beaten suit. Sometimes they fight close: poniard and pistol, killing quarrels; laying trains for one another, till both be blown up. Can the back of charity bear no load? Are the sinews of love grown so feeble? Alas, fools! you get both nothing but the blows; the lawyer goes away with the victory. He fills his purse, and you come home both well beaten.

Well, the good ground knows no such end for God's blessings. He sees with the eye of faith another intentional meaning for such bounty. He doth not say of his riches, as the atheists of their tongues, 'They are our own,' Ps. xii. 4. What hath magistrate on the bench, or preacher in the pulpit, or friend in private, to do with it? I waste none of theirs; let me do with my own as I list. But saith the Apostle, 'Fool, what hast thou that thou hast not received?' And wherefore hast thou received them? To satiate thy own lusts? or to 'bring forth fruit meet for them by whom thou art dressed?' There is nothing that a man can properly and in district terms call his own but his sins. His impieties, weaknesses, ignorances, vices, lusts; these are his own. All good things are God's gifts, James i. 17. Be thankful then, and after the rain of mercy, bring forth the herbs of obedience. You see what this fertility concludes—thankfulness. Hear now what it excludes:—

(2.) Idleness. This good ground lies not dead and barren, nor returns all heaven's rain with a naked and neutral acceptance: it brings forth. You read, Luke xix., of a servant, to whom, when his lord had entrusted a talent, he hid it in the ground, as a hoarder his money, to keep it safe.

* Chrys.

And at his Lord's return, *Domine ecce tuum*; he answered his account with, 'Lord, behold thine own.' I knew that thou wert *severus magister*, 'a hard master;' therefore I thought it my securest course to make good thine own again. But the lord replied, *Ex ore tuo*,—'O evil servant, out of thy own mouth I condemn thee.' Thou shouldst then have answered my austerity with thy laborious care of my advantage. Therefore hear his doom: 'Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,' Matt. xxv. 30. He did not evil with his talent; no, it was enough to condemn him, he did nothing. There is abundance of this dead ground in the world, which brings forth nothing. Idle wretches, that sleep out time and admonition; but their 'damnation sleepeth not,' 2 Pet. ii. 3. It was never said, 'Samson hath lost his strength,' till he slept in the lap of Delilah. Idleness doth neither get nor save; there is nothing more empty of good fruits, nor more abundantly pregnant with evil. That man doth ill that doth nothing, and he loseth whiles he gains not. Many beholding, with cowardly and carnal eyes, what a long and troublesome journey it is to heaven, sit them down and fall fast asleep. O barren ground! will ye bring forth nothing? Is difficulty made your hindrance, that should be a spur to your more eager contention? Know you not that the violent shall get the kingdom of heaven? Some can follow their dogs all day in the field; others hunt Mammon dry-foot in their shops year after year, and never complain of weariness. Only an hour or two in the church puts an ache into our bones; as if nothing wearied us so soon as well-doing. Is it fear of too much labour that keeps you from God? Why doth not the same reason deter you from serving the devil? His laws are true burdens, and his service drudgery; but 'Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light,' Matt. xi. 30.

I may boldly affirm it: your covetous man takes more pains to go to hell, than the godly ordinarily to get to heaven. He riseth early, and resteth late, and eats the coarse bread of sorrow; and after tedious and odious misery, goes to the devil for his labour. Shall we refuse easier pains for a far better recompense? It is but Satan's subtlety that makes men believe the passage to life so extremely difficult, that it is impossible. Herein the devil doth like the inhospitable savages of some countries, that make strange fires and a show of dismal terrors upon the shores, to keep passengers from landing. The sluggard, says Solomon, doth but feign bears and lions (as the superstitious doth bugs*) in the way, as apologies for idleness, that he may sit still and be at ease. The slothful person is the devil's shop, wherein he worketh engines of destruction. He is most busy in the lazy. 'But whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest,' Eccles. ix. 10. If thy soul be watered with the dew of heaven, thou must needs bring forth. What?

2. 'Herbs.' There is fertility in goodness. The eldest daughter of idleness is to do nothing; the next-born, to do something to no purpose. But the good man is not only doing, but well-doing: 'Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing,' Matt. xxiv. 46. This so consists in doing *bonum* and *bene*; as the former verse may seem to intimate. He 'gives them meat,' there he doth *good*; 'in due season,' there he doth it *well*. The forbearance of wickedness is not enough to acquit the soul, but the performance of righteousness. The rich glutton is tormented in hell, not because he did hurt, but because he did not help, Lazarus. *Non*

* That is, 'bugbears.'—ED.

quod abstulerit aliena, sed quod non donarit sua, saith St Chrysostom,—Not for taking away another man's, but for not giving his own. He would not give the poor the crumbs that fell from his board, and so *facere damna lucrum*, make a gain of his losses; for they were lost that fell from his libertine table, and yet would have refreshed the hungry and famished soul. But Dives would not give a crumb to get a crown. He wore fine linen, but it was his own; he was clothed in rich purple, but it was his own; he fared sumptuously every day, but he did eat his own meat: he took none of all this from Lazarus. Yet he went to hell. God condemned him because he did not give some of this to Lazarus. Thus it is not only the commission of lewdness that sinks men to hell, but even also the omission of goodness. Dost thou hear, O earth? unless thou bring forth herbs, thou shalt be condemned. The fig-tree had no bad fruit on it; yet was it cursed, because it had none at all. The axe that is laid to the root, Matt. iii. 10, shall hew down even 'that tree which brings not forth good fruit,' though it bring forth no evil. Fire shall take the barren, as well as the weedy ground.

'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,' Matt. v. 20. Wherein, methinks, our Saviour implieth a threefold gradation to heaven:—First, there must be *justitia*, righteousness; a habitual practice of godliness; an uncorrupt life, which shall only be entertained to God's hill, Ps. xv. 2. But the ground must be made good before it can produce good herbs; for the person must be accepted before the work. And this work must be good, both *quoad fontem* and *quoad finem*; we must derive it from an honest heart, and drive it to a right end. In the next place, this righteousness must be a man's own. *Nisi justitia vestra*. Here that ground which 'brings forth herbs receiveth blessing;' not that borrows them of another. For so, as stony and barren a heart as Cheapside may be a far richer garden than some of those where those herbs, brought thither, naturally grew. The Pope hath a huge garden of these herbs, wherewith he can store as many as will pay for them. John Baptist fasted more than he was commanded; and Mary lived more strictly than God required. Now the church of Rome keeps an herbal of these superabundant works; and money may have store of them. But heaven and Rome stand a great way asunder. And as God never gave the Pope authority to make such bargains, so he never means to stand to them. It is not only spoken, but commanded to be written of the dying saints, that 'their works follow them,' Rev. xiv. 13: their own works, not the works of others. No righteousness of friend living, or of saint dead, shall do thee good; but the herbs of thy own garden shall be accepted of God. Lastly, this righteousness must excel, *nisi abundaverit*. If it come short of those that come short of heaven, what hope have you? It must exceed innocence, and come to real goodness.

We have not sufficiently discharged our duties in being painful unless we be profitable. Some will take no pains unless the devil set them on work. They must be their own carvers in their employment, or they will sit idle. But so a man may work and have no thanks for his labour. It is not then simply and only bringing forth commends a ground, but bringing forth herbs.

The fruit of Peter's repentance is not to deny his Master no more, but to stand to him to the death. We think, if we forbear our wonted notorious sins, we are on the sudden excellent Christians. As if God were beholden to us for not wounding his name with oaths, for not playing out Sabbaths, for not railing on his gospel, for not oppressing his poor members; when we

neither relieve the poor, nor obey the gospel, nor hallow his Sabbaths, nor honour his name. Perhaps a usurer, when he hath gotten enough, will cease that damned trade; now he is sure of heaven in a trice. Alas! how repents Zaccheus if he restores not? Shall I go a step higher? If he give not liberally, and shew compassion to the afflicted saints? Perhaps an old adulterer, when his sap is grown to cinders, breaks off his uncleanness. When the envious loseth his object, he may suspend his malice. But where are the returned fruits of penitence, manifest and visible obedience? Say the weeds are gone, where be the herbs? To root up the weeds is but the first step to heaven; and some are forty, threescore years taking this step. How long will it be ere their garden be set with good growing herbs? But 'curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord,'—and that it might fully appear that this curse came not on them for taking part with God's enemies and fighting against him, but only for denial of succour, the song doubles it, —'to the help of the Lord against the mighty,' Judges v. 23. The offended Lord delivered that servant to the tormentors, that did not extort from his fellow that he had no right to, nor wrest away another's goods, but did only say, 'Pay me that thou owest;' and in a harsh manner, or unmerciful measure, required his own due, Matt. xviii. 34. It is the form of the last doom, 'I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat,' Matt. xxv. 42; though you took not away mine, yet for not giving your own, 'Go, ye cursed.'

But if that ground be near unto cursing that brings not forth herbs, what shall we say to that which brings forth weeds? What hell, and how many torments are provided for oppressing Dives, when Dives that but denied his own shall be tormented in endless flames! If he were bound to an everlasting prison that rigorously prosecuted his own right, challenged his own debt, whither shall they be cast that unjustly vex their neighbours, quarrel for that which is none of theirs, and lay title to another man's property? If he that gives not his coat to the naked shall lie naked to the vengeance of God, then he that takes away the poor man's coat shall be clad with burning confusion. If he that gives not wring his hands, he that takes away shall rend his heart. The old world did but eat and drink, build and plant, marry and be merry, and were swept away with the besom of a universal deluge; which things were in themselves lawful: what shall become of liars, swearers, adulterers, idolaters, malicious, monstrous, scandalous sinners, whose works are in themselves simply unlawful? There are three sorts of ground mentioned, Mark iv., and the very worst of them receives the seed, yet all damned: whither shall the tempest of God's wrath drive them that would never give the gospel a religious ear? O beloved, weigh it!

Our 'idle words' must come to judgment; what shall be our answer for unlawful deeds? If omission of good works be whipped with rods, commission of impieties shall be scourged with scorpions. If they that stand in a lukewarm neutrality shall be spewed up, sure the palpable and notorious offender shall be trodden under foot of provoked justice. Indifferency shall not scape; and shall extreme presumption be spared, that, like dogs, sup up the dregs they have vomited? I have read of a Popish saint, Henry the Dane, that in a mad and harebrained devotion, when worms crawled out of a corrupt ulcer in his knee, did put them in again. There are such frantic wretches, that when the word hath squeezed some poison out of their consciences, and driven forth lusts, like crawling worms, they in a voluntary madness put them in again. As the serpent casts out her poison when she goes to the water to drink; when she hath drunk, sups it up again. Adam

lost himself, and all his posterity, by one transgression; and do we think, can we hope, that our infinite sins shall scape judgment? Or do we extenuate our iniquities with such self-flattering mitigation, that if they be not innumerable, they are pardonable; and that a few shall bring no man to judgment? And what call we this paucity? As the gloss deals with a piece of Gratian's *Decretum*: the text says, *Meretrix est, quæ multorum libidini patet*.—She is a whore who serves many men's turns. Now the gloss brings this indefinite number to a certain; and gives *multorum* a reasonable latitude, saying, The name of whore should not be given her till she hath lain with three-and-twenty thousand men! So till we have doubled, iterated, and multiplied our lies, oaths, oppressions, lusts, unto thousands and thousands, we do not think that we merit the names of liars, swearers, oppressors, or luxurious persons. Beloved, these things must be reckoned for; and if nescience be beaten with stripes, wilful impiety shall be burned with fire. Blessed ground, then, that 'brings forth herbs;' and that not in scarcity, but in—

3. Plenty: many herbs. The good ground is plentiful in fruits. It bears fruit, good fruit, much good fruit. Multiplicity of grace is requisite, though not perfection. What garden is only planted with one singular kind of herb? The Christian hath need of many graces, because he is to meet with many defects, to answer many temptations, to fight with many enemies. Therefore, 2 Pet. i. 5, 'Join with your faith virtue, and with virtue knowledge, and with knowledge temperance,' &c. One jewel will not serve; Christ's spouse must have divers to adorn her, Cant. iv. One piece of armour will not secure us; we know not which way the blow will come, nor where it will light. Therefore, 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against all the wiles of the devil,' Eph. vi. 11. The loins, the breast, the head, the feet; all parts must be armed. The 'fruit of the Spirit'—those happy fruits which the Spirit of God worketh in us and bringeth out of us—is manifold: 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,' &c., Gal. v. 22. The Apostle chargeth us to be 'rich in good works,' 1 Tim. vi. 18; and 'for this cause bows his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, according to the riches of his glory, we might be filled with all the fulness of God,' Eph. iii. 14, 16. The reason is given by Christ: 'To whom much is given, of them shall much be required.' And it was his commendation of Mary Magdalene, that because 'she had much forgiven her, therefore she loved much.'

Happy then is that ground which abounds with good herbs; the fruits of faith, patience, content, charity! Not our riches, but our 'works shall follow us.' Goodness shall only give *pulchrum sepulchrum*; and as we use to stick dead bodies with herbs, so these herbs, our fruitful good works, shall adorn and beautify our memorials, when 'the name of the wicked shall rot.' I know England, inveigh the Papists till their galls burst, is full of pious and charitable works. It is a garden full of good herbs. 'Not to us, but to God be the praise,' who hath moved such instruments to works of his glory. Yet *quæ non fecimus ipsi, vix ea nostra voco*.—let every man quiet his own conscience with the good herbs his own garden produceth.

The rich man grows easily richer; so the good man easily better. It is the custom of most men to be pleased with a very little religion. For the world, we are enraged and transported with such a hunger that the grave is sooner satisfied; but a very little godliness contents us. But if we would not be 'barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,' we must, saith the Apostle, 'abound with these herbs,' 2 Pet. i. 8. And

then, for a proportionate reward, 'an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Saviour Christ,' ver. 11. Blessed is he that brings forth herbs, many herbs; and, lastly, such as are—

4. 'Meet for them by whom he is dressed.' The word *by whom* may as well be translated *for whom*, *δι' οὗς γεωργήσῃται*. Two instructions are here necessarily offered us:—(1.) By whom this goodness comes; (2.) For whom it must be intended.

(1.) By whom it is dressed. God is the husbandman that dresseth this ground, and causeth in it fertility. It was the Pelagian error, *A Deo habemus quod homines sumus, à nobis ipsis autem quod justii sumus*.*—We are beholden to God that we are men, to ourselves that we are good men. But the contrary is here evident. God doth not only make the ground, but he makes the ground fruitful: he rains upon it, he dresseth it, he blesseth it. Christ said not, *Sine me parum potestis facere, sed sine me nihil*. 'Without me can ye do nothing,' saith our Saviour, John xv. 5, and to the best men, even the apostles; not a little, but nothing. If God had only made thee a man, and thou made thyself a good man, then is thy work greater than God's work. For, *melius est justum esse, quam hominem esse*,†—our mere being is not so happy as our better being. No; this text convinceth that lie. For, according to that distinction of grace, here is *gratia operans*, God begins the work; he makes the ground good, sanctifies the person. Here is *gratia co-operans*, God that begins, performs the work; he raineth upon, he dresseth the heart, and so causeth it to produce herbs. Here is *gratia salvans*, whereby he crowneth our will and work in the day of our Lord Jesus. 'It receiveth blessing from God.' So—

'Qui viret in foliis, venit à radicibus humor.'

The sap of grace which appears green and flourishing in the branches and fruit, comes from the root. Now in all this *Deus non necessitat, sed facilitat*,—God induceth the good to good by alacrity, not enforceth against their wills. *Quoniam probitate coacta, gloria nulla venit*;‡ for God doth not work upon us as upon blocks and stones, in all and every respect passive; but converts our wills to will our own conversion. *Qui fecit te sine te, non justificabit te sine te. Fecit nescientem, justificat volentem*,§—He that made thee without thyself, will not justify thee without thyself; without thy merit indeed, not without thine act. He created thee when thou knewest it not, he doth justify thee with the consent of thy own will. Let this consideration lay us all prostrate before the footstool of God, kissing the feet of his mercy, who is the 'beginner and finisher of our faith,' Heb. v. 23; who hath made the ground good, and increased the number of herbs with his holy dews from heaven, dressed it with his graces, and promised to reward it with his blessings.

(2.) Thus *by whom*; now *for whom*.

Meet for them who dressed it. And is it possible that man should produce herbs meet for the acceptance of God? Hath he not pure eyes, which see uncleanness and imperfection in all our works? Is there any man so happy as to be justified in his sight? No; but it pleaseth him to look upon our works in the crystal glass, Christ; and because they are the effects of a true faith in him, to esteem them meet. St Peter saith, 'This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully,' 1 Pet. ii. 19. Do even our sufferings then merit? *Τούτο γὰρ χάρις*, even this is grace. 'To you it is given, not only to believe in him, but even to suffer

* Aug. Tract. 81 in Joh.

† Aug.

‡ Prud.

§ Aug.

for his sake.' This was none of yours, but given you. And when you have suffered, yet you must truly, with Paul, reckon that 'the afflictions of this present world are not worthy of that high inestimable weight of glory,' Rom. viii. 18. There are no works acceptable, *quæ præcedunt justificandum, sed quæ sequuntur justificatum*,—which go before justification, but these that follow it. All of us, as Luther was wont to say, have naturally a Pope bred in our bellies; a mountebank opinion of our own worth. Narcissus-like, we dote upon our own forms, and think our works acceptable enough to God. If we have prayed, relieved, believed the history of the gospel, or attentively heard the word, these are works meet for God. The monk had but one hole in his cell, and though it was in the top, upward to heaven, yet the devil made a shift to creep in there. The serpent thrusts in his head often in some crack of our good works. Luther paradoxically: *Omnium injustiarum fere sola causa justitia*,—Almost the only cause of all unrighteousness is a too well-conceited righteousness. We are easily induced to think ourselves, every one, as Simon Magus, 'some great man,' Acts viii. 9. There must be a dejection of this thought, an annihilation of our own worth, that we can do nothing meet for God, or worthy his just acceptance. For *sordet in distinctione judicis, quod fulget in opinione operantis*,—That is often foul in the sentence of the judge which shines in the imagination of him that doth it.

But as physicians say, no man dies of an ague, or without it; so seldom any soul dies of pride, or without pride: not mere of pride, for though that sickness were enough to kill it, yet it is ever accompanied with some other disease and vicious wickedness; nor without it, for it is so inherent unto man's nature, that pride, if it doth not provoke, yet at least holds the door while any iniquity is doing. Hence flow so many errors, and factions, and singularities.

For as in the body, a raw stomach makes a rheumatic head, and a rheumatic head a raw stomach: so in the soul, an indigested conceit of some good thing in us makes the head run of some rheumatic opinion or mad factious singularity; and this petulant rheum in the brain keeps the conscience raw still, that the physic of repentance, or good diet of peaceable obedience, cannot help it. Let us correct these exorbitant and superfluous conceits, which are like proud flesh upon us, and know we are able to do nothing of ourselves, but God is fain to put even good thoughts in us. And if we do good from him, how good soever it be as from him, yet running through us, it gets some pollution.

Neither let us run into the contrary error, as if in a stupid wilfulness, what good soever we did, we could not hope that God in Jesus Christ would accept it. There is a threshold of despair below to stumble at, as well as a post of high presumption to break our heads at. There is a base dejection, a sordid humility. Barcena the Jesuit told another of his order, that when the devil appeared to him one night, out of his profound humility he rose up to meet him, and prayed him to sit down in his chair, for he was more worthy to sit there than he. This did appear a strange kind of dejectedness. Surely, I think, a man should by God's word and warrant take comfort in his well-doing, and be cheered in the testimony which a good conscience, on good cause, beareth to him. So David heartened himself against all the malicious slanders of his enemies: 'O Lord, thou knowest my innocence.' Good works are the necessary and inseparable effects of a true faith. We are by nature all dead in sin, and by sin concluded under death. Our Saviour bore for us this death, and by his passion freed us from eternal damnation. It was not

enough to scape hell, how shall we get to heaven? Lo, we are clothed with the garment of his righteousness, hung with the jewels of his merits. So not only hell is escaped by his sufferings, but heaven got by his doings. Why should we then work? What need our gardens stand so full of herbs? Good reason. Shall God do so much for us, and shall we do nothing for him, for ourselves? If the lord of a forest gives me a tree, it is fit I should be at the cost to cut it down and bring it home, if I will have it. I cannot say that I deserved the tree, it was another's gift; but my labours must lead me to enjoy that which was freely given me. Neither can the conscience have assurance of eternal life, so frankly bestowed in Christ, without a good conversation. Faith doth justify, and works do testify that we are justified. In a clock, the finger of the dial makes not the clock to go, but the clock it; yet the finger without shews how the clock goes within. Our external obedience is caused by our inward faith; but that doth manifest how truly the clock of our faith goes. As a man's corporal actions of sleeping, eating, digesting, walking, declare his recovery from sickness, and present health; so his life witnesseth by infallible symptoms that the disease and death of sin is mortified in him, and that he hath taken certain hold of eternal life. It is meet, then, that we should do good works; but all our works are made meet and worthy in him that bought us. I will conclude, then, with that anthem, made by a sweet singer in our Israel: *Pendemus à te, credimus in te, tendimus ad te, non nisi per te, optime Christe.* Amen.