

friends to help you, that charity may enable you to pay the debt.'

Direct. VII. 'But if you have no means at all of satisfying, confess the injury and crave forgiveness, and cast yourself on the mercy of him whom you have injured.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Cases and Directions about our Obtaining Pardon from God.

Tit. 1. Cases of Conscience about Obtaining Pardon of Sin from God.

Quest. 1. 'Is there pardon to be had for all sin without exception, or not?'

Answ. 1. There is no pardon procured or offered, for the final non-performance of the conditions of pardon; that is, for final impenitency, unbelief and ungodliness. 2. There is no pardon for any sin, without the conditions of pardon, that is, without true faith and repentance, which is our conversion from sin to God. 3. And if there be any sin which certainly excludeth true repentance to the last, it excludeth pardon also; which is commonly taken to be the case of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; of which I have written at large in my "Treatise against Infidelity."

But, 1. All sin, except the final non-performance of the conditions of pardon, is already conditionally pardoned in the Gospel; that is, if the sinner will repent and believe. No sin is excepted from pardon to penitent believers.

2. And all sin is actually pardoned to a true penitent believer.

Quest. 11. 'What if a man do frequently commit the same heinous sin; may he be pardoned?'

Answ. Whilst he frequently committeth it (being a mortal sin), he doth not truly repent of it; and whilst he is impenitent he is unpardoned: but if he be truly penitent, his heart being habitually and actually turned from the sin, it will be forgiven him; but not till he thus forsake it.

Quest. 111. 'Is the day of grace and pardon ever past in this life?'

Ans. The day of grace and pardon to the penitent, is never past in this life^a: there is no day or hour in which a true penitent person is not pardoned; or in which the impenitent is not conditionally pardoned, that is, if he will truly repent and believe in Christ: and as for the day of true penitence, it is not past to the impenitent; for it never yet came, that is, they never truly repented. But there is a time, with some provoking, forsaken sinners, when God who was wont to call them to repentance by outward preaching and inward motions, will call and move them so no more, but leave them more quietly in the blindness and hardness of their hearts.

Quest. IV. 'May we be certain of pardon of sin in this life?'

Ans. Yes: every man that understandeth the covenant of grace, may be certain of pardon, so far as he is certain of the sincerity of his faith and repentance, and no farther: and if a man could not be sure of that, the consolatory promises of pardon would be in a sort in vain; and we could not tell how to believe and repent, if we cannot tell when we truly do it.

Quest. V. 'Can any man pardon sins against God; and how far?'

Ans. Pardon is the remitting of a punishment. So far as man is to punish sinners against God, so far they may pardon, that is, remit that punishment; (whether they do well in so doing, is another question.) Magistrates are to execute corporal penalties upon subjects for many sins against God, and they may pardon accordingly. The pastors of the church, who are its guides as to public church-communion, may remove offenders from the said communion, and they may absolve them when they are penitent, and they may (rightfully or wrongfully) remit the penalty which they may inflict. 2. The pastors of the church may as God's officers, declare the conditional general pardon, which is contained in the covenant of grace; and that with particular application to the sinner, for the comforting of his mind: q. d. 'Having examined your repentance, I declare to you as the minister of Christ, that if it be as you

^a Some speak too ignorantly and dangerously about the day of grace being past in this life.

express it, without dissembling or mistake, your repentance is sincere, and your sin is pardoned.' 3. On the same terms a pastor may as the minister or messenger of Christ, deliver this same conditional pardon contained in the covenant of grace, as sealed by the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper; which is an act of investiture; q. d. 'I do as the minister of Christ, hereby seal and deliver to you in his name, the pardon of all your sins through his blood; supposing that your professed faith and repentance be sincere; otherwise it is void and of no such effect.' But this is, 1. But a conditional pardon, though with particular application. 2. And it is but a ministerial act of delivery or investiture, and not the act of the donor by himself; nor the gift of the first title: so that it is no whit proper to say, that the minister pardoneth you; but that the minister bringeth and delivereth you the pardon and sealeth it in his master's name; or that Christ doth pardon you, and send it you by his minister. As it is utterly improper to say, that the king's messenger pardoneth a traitor, because he bringeth him a pardon from the king. And though (if we agree of this sense) the controversy remaining will be but 'de nomine,' yet is it not of small moment, when abused words do tend to abuse the people's understandings; he that saith, 'I forgive your sins,' doth teach the people to take him for a God, whatever he meaneth in himself; and blasphemous words will not be sufficiently excused, by saying that you have not a blaspheming sense. So that a pastor may, 1. Declare Christ's pardon. 2. And seal and deliver it conditionally in Christ's name. But he cannot pardon the internal punishments in this life, nor the eternal punishments of the next. 3. But the punishments of excommunication he may pardon, who must execute them.

Quest. vi. 'Doth God forgive sin before it be committed (or justify the sinner from it)?'

Ans. No: for it is a contradiction, to forgive that which is not, or to remit a penalty which is not due. But he will indeed justify the person, not by Christ's righteousness, but by his own innocency 'in tantum,' so far as he is no sinner. He that hath not committed a sin, needeth no pardon of it, nor any righteousness but his innocency, to

justify him against the false accusation of doing that which he never did. God doth prepare the sacrifice and remedy before upon the foresight of the sin : and he hath made an universal act of pardon beforehand, which shall become an actual pardon to him who penitently accepteth it ; and he is purposed in himself to pardon all whom he will pardon ; so that he hath the decretive ' nolle punire ' before. But none of this is proper pardon or the justification of a sinner, in the Gospel sense, as shall be further shewed.

Quest. VII. ' Is an elect person pardoned and justified, before faith and repentance ? '

Ans. (Laying aside the case of infants, which dependeth upon the faith of others) the former answer will serve for this question.

Quest. VIII. ' Is pardon or justification perfect before death ? '

Ans. 1. ' De re : ' 1. The pardon which you have this year, extendeth not to the sins which you commit the next year or hour ; but there must be a renewed act of pardon for renewed sins ; though not a new Gospel, or covenant, or act of oblivion to do it : but the same Gospel-covenant, doth morally perform a new act of pardon, according to the Redeemer's mind and will. 2. The pardon which we have now, is but constitutive and ' in jure, ' and but virtual as to sentential justification : but the sentence of the judge is a more perfective act : or if any think that God doth now sentence us just before the angels, in any celestial court, yet, that at judgment will be a more full perfective act. 3. The executive pardon which we have now, which is opposite to actual punishing, is not perfect till the day of judgment ; because all the punishment is not removed, till the last enemy, death, be overcome, and the body be raised from the earth. 2. And now the controversy ' de nomine, ' whether it be proper to call our present justification or pardon perfect, is easily decided from what is said ' de re. '

Quest. IX. ' Is our pardon perfect as to all the sins that are past ? '

Ans. 1. As to the number of sins pardoned, it is ; for all are pardoned. 2. As to the species of the act, and the plenary effect, it is not. For, 1. All the punishment is not removed. 2. The final absolving sentence is to come. 3.

The pardon which we have is as to its continuance, but conditional; and the tenor of the covenant would cease the pardon even of all sins past, if the sinner's faith and repentance should cease: I speak not 'de eventu,' whether ever any do fall away, but of the tenor of the covenant, which may prevent falling away. Now a pardon which hath yet much to be done, as the condition of its continuance, is not so perfect, as it will be when all those things are performed.

Quest. x. 'May pardon or justification be reversed or lost?'

Answ. Whether God will eventually permit his true servants, so far to fall as to be unjustified, is a controversy which I have written of in a fitter place. 2. But 'quoad robur peccatoris,' it is alas, too easy to fall away, and be unjustified. 3. And as to the tenor of the covenant, it continueth the promise and threatening conditionally, and supposing the sinner defectible, doth threaten damnation to them that are now justified, if they should not persevere, but apostatize ^b.

Quest. xi. 'Is the pardon of my own sins to be believed 'fide divina?'' And is it the meaning of that article of the creed, 'I believe the pardon of my sins?''

Answ. 1. I am to believe 'fide divina,' that Christ hath purchased and enacted a conditional pardon, which is universal, and therefore extendeth to my sins as well as to other men's; and that he commandeth his ministers to offer me this, and therein to offer me the actual pardon of all my sins, to be mine if I truly repent and believe: and that if I do so, my sins are actually pardoned. And I am obliged accordingly to believe in Christ, and take him for my Saviour, for the pardon of my sins. But this is all the meaning of the creed, and Scripture, and all that is of Divine belief. 2. But that I am actually pardoned, is not of Divine faith, but only on supposition that I first believe; which Scripture telleth not, whether I do or not. In strict sense, I must first believe in Christ for pardon: and next, in a larger sense, I must believe that I am pardoned; that is, I must so conclude by an act of reason, one of the premises being 'de fide,' and the other of internal self-knowledge.

^b Col. i. 33. Rom. xi. 22. John xv. 9.

Quest. XII. 'May a man trust in his own faith or repentance for his pardon and justification, in any kind?'

Answ. Words must be used with respect to the understanding of the hearers; and perilous expressions must be avoided lest they deceive men. But 'de re,' 1. You must not trust to your faith or repentance, to do that which is proper to God, or to Christ, or to the Gospel, or for any more than their own part, which Christ hath assigned them. 2. You must trust to your faith and repentance for that which is truly their own part. And should you not trust them at all, you must needs despair, or trust presumptuously to you know not what: for Christ will not be instead of faith or repentance to you.

Quest. XIII. 'What are the several causes and conditions of pardon?'

Answ. 1. God the Father is the principal efficient, giving us Christ, and pardon with and through him. 2. Christ's person by his sacrifice and merits is the meritorious cause. 3. The Gospel-covenant or promise is the instrumental cause, or God's pardoning act or grant. 4. Repentance is the condition 'sine qua non,' directly 'gratia finis,' in respect to God, to whom we must turn. 5. Faith in Christ is the condition 'sine qua non,' directly 'gratia medii principalis,' in respect to the Mediator, who is thereby received. 6. The Holy Ghost worketh us to these conditions.

Tit. 2. Directions for Obtaining Pardon from God.

Direct. I. 'Understand well the office of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, and what it is that he hath done for sinners, and what he undertaketh further to do.' For if you know not Christ's office and undertaking, you will either be ignorant of your true remedy, or will deceive yourselves by a presumptuous trust, that he will do that which is contrary to his office and will.

Direct. II. 'Understand well the tenor of the covenant of grace;' for there it is that you must know, what Christ will give, and to whom, and on what terms.

Direct. III. 'Understand well the nature of true faith

and repentance : ' or else you can neither tell how to obtain pardon, nor to judge of it.

Direct. iv. ' Absolutely give up yourselves to Christ, in all the offices of a Mediator, Priest, Prophet and King.' And think not to be justified by one act or part of Christianity, by alone believing in Christ as a sacrifice for sin. To be a true believer, and to be a true Christian is all one : and is the faith in Christ which is the condition of justification and salvation. Study the baptismal covenant ; for the believing in God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost there meant, is the true faith, which is the condition of our pardon.

Direct. v. ' Be sure that your repentance contain in it a desire to be perfectly holy and free from all sin, and a resolution against all known and wilful sinning, and particularly that you would not commit the same sins, if you had again the same temptations,' (supposing that we speak not of such infirmities as good men live in ; which yet you must heartily desire to forsake).

Direct. vi. ' Pray earnestly and believingly for pardon through Christ : ' even for the continuance of your former pardon, and for renewed pardon for renewed sins ; for prayer is God's appointed means, and included in faith and repentance, which are the summary conditions.

Direct. vii. ' Set all right between you and your neighbours,' by forgiving others, and being reconciled to them, and confessing your injuries against them, and making them restitution and satisfaction ; for this also is included in your repentance, and expressly made the condition of your pardon.

Direct. viii. ' Despise not the sacramental delivery of pardon, by the ministers of Christ ; ' for this belongeth to the full investiture and possession of the benefit : nor yet the spiritual consolation of a skilful, faithful pastor, nor public absolution upon public repentance, if you should fall under the need of such a remedy.

Direct. ix. ' Sin no more.' I mean, resolvedly break off all that wilful sin of which you do repent : for repentings, and purposes, and promises of a new and holy life, which are ineffectual, will never prove the pardon of your sins ; but shew your repentance to be deceitful.

Direct. x. 'Set yourselves faithfully to the use of all those holy means, which God hath appointed for the overcoming of your sins; and to that life of holiness, righteousness, love and sobriety, which is contrary to them.' Otherwise your repentance is fraudulent and insufficient: these means and no less than all these, must be used by him, that will make sure of the pardon of his sins from God: and he that thinketh all this too much, must look for pardon some other way, than from the mercy of God, or the grace of Christ: for God's pardon is not to be had upon any other terms, than those of God's appointment. He that will make new conditions of his own, must pardon himself if he can, on those conditions: for God will not be tied to the laws of sinners.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Cases and Directions about Self-judging.

Tit. 1. Cases of Conscience about Self-judging.

BECAUSE I have said so much of this subject in the third part of my "Saints' Rest," and in a "Treatise of Self-acquaintance," and in my "Directions for Peace of Conscience," and before in this book, I shall be here the briefer in it.

Quest. 1. 'What are the uses and reasons of self-judging, which should move us to it?'

Answ. In the three foresaid Treatises I have opened them at large. In a word, without it, we shall be strangers to ourselves; we can have no well-grounded comfort, no true repentance and humiliation, no just estimation of Christ and grace, no just observance of the motions of God's Spirit, no true application of the promises or threatenings of the Scripture, yea, we shall pervert them all to our own destruction; no true understanding of the providence of God, in prosperity or adversity; no just acquaintance with our duty: a man that knoweth not himself, can know neither God, or any thing aright, nor do any thing aright;