

Heart-Humiliation

Or, Miscellany Sermons, Preached Upon Some Choice Texts, At
Several Solemn Occasions.

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To The Reader.

Christian Reader, This holy preacher of the gospel had so many convictions upon his spirit of the necessity of the duties of humiliation and mourning, and of people's securing the eternal interest of their souls for the life to come, by flying into Jesus Christ for remission of sins in his blood, that he made these the very scope of his sermons in many public humiliations, as if it had been the one thing which he conceived the Lord was calling for in his days; a clear evidence whereof thou shalt find manifested in these following sermons upon choice texts, wherein the author endeavoureth, not only to lay before thee the necessity of these duties of soul humiliation, but also showeth thee the gospel manner of performing them, the many soul advantages flowing from the serious exercise of them, and the many soul-destroying prejudices following upon the neglect of them, but above all, thou shalt find him so fully setting forth the sinfulness of sin, and the utter emptiness of self, as may convince the most pharisaically elated spirits, and make them cry out with Ezra, chap. ix. 6, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God, for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Here thou mayest read such pregnant demonstrations of the righteousness and equity of the Lord's dealing, even in his severest punishments inflicted upon the children of men, as may silence every whisperer against providence, and make them say, as Lam. iii. 22, "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, even because his compassions fail not." And lastly, thou shalt perceive the inconceivable fitness and fulness of Christ as a Saviour, and his never enough to be admired tenderness and condescending willingness to accept of humble, heart broken, and heart-panting sinners after him, with such plainness of speech demonstrated, as may enable the most bruised reed to quench all the fiery darts of the devil, whereby he laboureth to affright them from making application to Jesus

for salvation. Now that the Lord would make those and such-like labours of his faithful servants useful and advantageous to thy soul, Christian reader, is the prayer of thy servant in the gospel of our dearest Lord and Saviour.

Sermon I.

At A Public Fast In July, First Sabbath, 1650.²⁵⁷

Deut. xxxii. 4-7.—“He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment,” &c.

There are two things which may comprehend all religion,—the knowledge of God and of ourselves. These are the principles of religion, and are so nearly conjoined together, that the one cannot be truly without the other, much less savingly. It is no wonder that Moses craved attention, and that, to the end he may attain it from an hard hearted deaf people, he turns to the heavens and to the earth,—as it were to make them the more inexcusable. The matter of his song is both divine and necessary. Throughout it all, he insists upon these two,—to discover what they were in themselves, and what God was to them. He parallels their way

²⁵⁷ [The Records of the Presbytery of Glasgow show, that this Fast was appointed by the commission of the General Assembly. “The commissioun of the Generall Assemblie, upone the 25 day of June 1650 did emit ane seasonable warning concerning the present dangeris and dewties unto all the memberis of the kirk. To draw neir to God, to murne for thair ayin iniquiteis, and for all the synnes, prophanitie, and bakslydinges of the land, to studie to mak peace with God in Cryst Jesus, to searche and try our wayis and to return speedilie to the Lord, and to lift up our hartis with our handis to God in the heavines, that he may spair and save his pepill, that thai be not a prey to the enymie,” &c. (Nicol's Diary of Public Transactions in Scotland, p. 17. Printed by Bannatyne Club, Edin. 1836). On the 28th of June, a copy of this warning was presented to the Scottish parliament, who thanked the commission of the General Assembly for it, and requested them to delay the printing of it for a few days, that it might be accompanied with a Declaration from them suited to the existing crisis (Sir James Balfour's Annals of Scotland, vol. iv. p. 63.). When the Presbytery of Glasgow met on the 31st of July, 1650, “the brethrene that wer present declaired that yei had keepit the fast, that yei had read the warning” (Presb. Rec). See also Lamont's Diary, 7th July 1650. The appointment of Fasts to be observed on the Lord's day, was at a subsequent period disapproved of by the Church of Scotland. “Albeit by the treatise of fasting emitted by the Assembly 25 December, 1565, the Sundays were appointed for some fasts as

with his way, that they, finding the infinite distance, might have other thoughts of themselves and of him both. It is a song, it is true, but a sad song. The people of God's mourning should be of this nature,—mixed, not pure sorrow. It is hard to determine whether there be more matter of consolation or lamentation, when such a comparison is made to the life, when God's goodness and our evils are set before our eyes, which may most work the heart to such affections. Nay, I think it possible they may both contribute to both these. Is there any more abasing and humbling principle than love? How shall the sinner loathe himself in his glorious presence? Will not so much kindness and mercy, so often repeated, as oft as it is mentioned, wound the heart in which there is any tenderness? And, again, when a soul beholds its own ingratitude and evil requital of the Lord's kindness, how vile and how perverse it is, how must it loathe itself in dust and ashes! Yet is not all ground of hope removed. Such a sad sight may make mixed affections. If we be so perverse and evil, then he is infinitely good, and his mercy and goodness are above our evils; if we have dealt so with him, yet is he the Rock that changes not, he is a God of truth, and will not fail in his promise. Nay, though it be sad to be so evil, void of all goodness, yet may the soul bless him for evermore, that he hath chosen this way to glorify his name, to build up his praise upon our ruin. May not a soul thus glory in sad infirmities, because his strength is perfected in them, and made manifest? May not a soul choose emptiness in

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being for the greater ease of the people, and since by the last act of Assembly 1646, a fast is appointed on the Sabbath next except one preceding the then following General Assembly, yet seeing the work to be performed on the first day of the week is, by divine institution, already determined, we ought to set about it exactly, which we all acknowledge to be a thanksgiving and not a fast. Extraordinary duties are not to interfere with the ordinary, nor is one duty to shuffle out another. If either should be allowed, it would look somewhat like the reverse of redeeming the time, for thereby diligence is rather diminished than doubled in the service of God.”—Overtures of the General Assembly, 1705.—*Ed.*]

itself, that it may be beholden to his fulness? How refreshing a view might the saddest look on our misery and emptiness be, if we did behold his purpose of manifesting his glory in it! You see here a comparison instituted between two very unequal parties, God and man; there is no likeness, let be equality in it, yet there is almost an equality in unlikeness. The one is infinitely good and perfect; well, what shall we compare to him? Who is like thee, O God, among the gods? Angels' goodness, their perfection and innocency, hath not such a name and appearance in his sight. So then, there can be no comparison made this way. Let no flesh glory in his sight in anything, but, "let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord," for in the sight of the glorious Lord, all things do disappear and evanish. But surely nothing, though most perfect, can once come within terms of reckoning beside him for any worth. Moses sees nothing to set beside God, that will appear in its own greatness and native colours, but the creatures' evil and sin; and if this be not infinite absolutely, or equal to his goodness, yet it comes nearest the borders of infiniteness. So then, is God most perfect? Is he infinite in goodness, in truth, in righteousness, &c.—and so infinite, that before him nothing appears good?—"There is none good save one, that is God." Yet we may find another infinite, and it is in evil sinful man; and these two contraries set beside other, do much illustrate each other. It is true that his grace superabounds, and his goodness is more than the creatures' sinfulness; yet, I say, you shall not find anything that cometh nearer the infiniteness and degrees of his goodness, than the sinfulness of men. How much the more glorious he appears, so much the more vile and base doth it appear.

If ye did indeed ponder and weigh these two verses in the balance of the sanctuary, would not your heart secretly ask this question within you, Do I thus requite the Lord? O foolish and unwise! Yea, would you not account yourselves mad, to forsake the fountain of living waters, and dig broken cisterns

to yourselves? O of how great moment were this to humble yourselves to-day! This day ye are called to mourning and afflicting your souls. Now, I know not a more suitable exercise for a day of humiliation, or a principle that may more humble and abase your souls, than the serious and deep consideration of these two,—what God is, and hath been to us, and what we are, and have proved to him; what hath made so many formal humiliations that have provoked him to anger? Certainly we do not either seriously think on any of these, or if one of them, yet not on both. The most part of you know no more in such a day, but a name and ceremony of a little abstinence. Is this to sanctify a day to the Lord,—when ye do not so much as the people who bowed down their head for a day, and spread sackcloth under them? I wonder how ye think to pacify his wrath, and are not rather afraid of adding fuel and oil to the flame of his indignation. Ye come here and sit as in former times, and what do ye more either here or at home? There is no soul-affliction, no, not for a day. The most part of you are no more affected with your sins and his judgments, than if none of these things were. Now, I pray you, what shall the Lord say to us, when he speaks to the Jews in such terms, Isa. lviii. 5,—“Is it such a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul?” And do ye so much as afflict it for a day, or at all? Is this then the fast that he will choose, to abstain from your breakfast in the morning, and at night to compensate the want of it, and no more?²⁵⁸ Is this an acceptable

²⁵⁸ [“The abstinence is commanded to be from Saturday at eight of the clock at night, till Sunday eftir the exercise at eftir noone, that is, after five of the clock. And then onlie bread and drink to be used, and that with great sobrietie, that the bodie craving necessarie food, the soul may be provoked earnestly to crave of God, that which it most neideth, that is mercie for our former unthankfulnes, and the assistance of his holie spirit in tyme to cum.” (*The Ourdoure and Doctrine of the General Fast, set down by John Knox, and John Craig, at the Appoyntment of the Assemblie in the year 1565, Apud. Dunlop’s Confessions*, vol. ii. p. 686.) This Order was afterwards observed in all the fasts appointed by the General Assembly. (Id. p. 699.)—*Ed.*]

day to the Lord? The Lord upbraids the Jews, “Wilt thou call this a fast?” And what reason have we to ask you, is it possible ye think ye do indeed fast to the Lord? I cannot think that the most part of you dare say, that ever ye fasted or afflicted your souls. [363]

Always here is the way, if we consider it. To spend a day acceptably to the Lord, enter into a serious consideration of his Majesty, and yourselves. Study on these two till ye find your hearts bear the stamp of them, enlarge your hearts in the thoughts of them. Both are infinite,—his goodness and power and mercy, and your sin and misery,—no end of them. Whatever ye find good in God, write up answerably to it, so much evil and sin in yourselves and the land; and what evil ye find in yourselves and the land, write up so much goodness and mercy in his account. All the names of his praise would be so many grounds of your confusion in yourselves, and would imprint so many notes of reproach and disgrace upon the creature found so contrary to him. This is even the exercise God calls us to this day,—to consider his ways to us, and our ways to him; how he hath walked, and how we have walked. Because ye lose the sight of these two, he sends affliction,—because in our prosperity and peace we forget God, and so ourselves; as ye find this people did, “when they waxed fat they kicked against him, and forgot that he was their Rock.” We are so much taken up with our own ease and peace, that we do not observe him in his dealings; therefore doth the Lord trouble our peace, remove those things we are taken up with, make a public proclamation of affliction, and blessed be his name whose end is gracious. He means this,—it is the proclamation of all his judgments,—turn your eyes off your present ease here, consider what I am, and what yourselves are. No nation so soon buries the memory of his mercies, O how soon are they drowned in oblivion! And we forget our own provocations as suddenly. Therefore must he write our iniquities upon a rod, that we may read them in great letters; and he writes

his former goodness in the change of his dispensations, when his way to us changes, that we may know what is past. This is the great design that God hath in the world,—to declare himself and his own name, that it may be wondered and admired at by men, and this cannot be but by our ruin, abasing us in the dust. He therefore uses to stain the pride of all glory, that his alone may appear without spot. This is then the great controversy of God with men and nations in all generations. They will not see him alone exalted, and will not bow before him, and see their own vileness. Why doth he overturn kingdoms and thrones? Why doth he shake nations so often? Here it is; God's controversy will never cease, till all men acknowledge him in his highness and holiness, as the sole fountain of all life, and find themselves vile, less than nothing, nay, worse than nothing, and emptiness. If ye would then have God at peace with the land and yourselves, here is the compendious way,—set him up a throne of eminency in your hearts, and put yourselves in the dust, take with your own guiltiness and naughtiness, and impossibility to help yourselves in yourselves. Hold these two still in your eyes, that he may be alone exalted.

Look how unequal a match, ver. 4, 5, “He is the Rock,” a rock indeed! If we speak of strength, lo! he is strong; if of stability, he is the Lord, and changes not, “the Ancient of days.” Hast not thou heard and considered this, that the Almighty faints not, and wearies not? He holds forth himself in such a name to his people, a ready, all-sufficient, perpetual, and enduring refuge to all that trust in him, and fly unto him as a rock higher than they. And this is the foundation that the church is builded on, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. God's omnipotency is for defence, his eternity, faithfulness, and unchangeableness to make that sure. His mercy and goodness makes a hole in that rock to enter in, a ready access for poor shipwrecked and broken men, who have no other refuge. This is our rock, on which the church is builded, Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. x. 4.; Matt. xvi. 18. Were God

inaccessible in himself, an impregnable rock, how would sinners overcome him, and enter in to him to be saved from wrath? Nay but Jesus Christ hath made a plain way and path, out of the waves of sin and misery, into this rock higher than we; and so the poor soul that is lost in its own eyes, and sees no refuge, is forced to quit the broken ship of created confidence, for fear of perishing. Here doth it find a door in this rock to enter. And there is water to drink of, “a fountain of living waters” comes out of it, and that is Christ. [364]

Now, all these names of his praise rub so many marks of shame on his people. O how sad is the secret reproof and expostulation contained in this commendation of God! He hath been a rock to us, our refuge that we fled unto, and found sure; for as, in our straits, we mounted upon his power and were supported, when “the floods lifted up their waves,” yet have we left our rock, gone out from our strength. He offers himself a rock unto us, his fulness and all-sufficiency for us, and yet we leave the fountain of living waters, and dig broken cisterns, had rather choose our own broken ships in which to toss up and down. He abides for ever the same; though we change, he changes not. How may it reprove our backslidings, that we depart from our rock! And where shall we find a refuge in the day of indignation? Is there any created mountain, but some floods of the time will cover? Therefore it is folly and madness to forsake this rock that is still above the floods; “he is mightier than the noise of many waters.” It may reprove our unbelief,—we change our faith according to his dispensation, our faith ebbs and flows as the tide of his providence, and thus we are as sticks floating in the water, tossed up and down. But would ye be established as mount Sion? Would ye be unmoveable in the midst of great waters, that they shall not come near unto you? Then, by all means get upon this rock, that abides unmoved in the midst of the waves. Though they should beat upon it, and the wind blow, yet it is proof of all tempests. All things might be driven up and down about you

with the Lord's dispensation, but ye should abide the same, and might look round about you on the troubled sea of men's minds, of lands and estates. If you come here, ye may make shipwreck, but ye shall not drown; though ye lose the creature's comfort and defence, yet ye are on your rock, which is established before the rocks and mountains. You may be sure of salvation. He that made the rocks and winds and seas, is your rock.

“His work is perfect.” As he doth not trouble himself when all is troubled about him, so he keeps him also in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on him; so also what he doth among men, though it cannot pass without man's censure, yet it is in itself perfect, complete, without spot or defect. What is the subject of all men's questions, doubts, complaints, censures, expostulations, and such like, of which the world is full? It is some one work of God or other; there is no work of his providence, but some man finds a fault in it, and would be at the mending of it. *Neque Deus cum pluit, omnibus placet:*²⁵⁹ if he give rain, he displeases many; if he withhold it again, we are as little pleased. The reason of all this misconstruction is, we look on his work by parcels,²⁶⁰ and take it not whole and entire. [Viewed] so, it is perfect, and cannot be made better. “His works are perfect,” in relation to the beginning and original of them, his own everlasting purpose. Men often bring forth works by guess, by their purpose, so no wonder it answer not their desire. But “known to him are all his works from the beginning,” and so he doth nothing in time, but what was his everlasting pleasure. Often we purpose well, and resolve perfectly, but our practice is a cripple, execution of it is maimed and imperfect. But all his works are carved out, and done just as he designed them, without the least alteration; and, if it had not been well, would he have thought on it so, and resolved it beforehand? His works are perfect, in relation to the end to which he appointed them. It may be it is not perfect in itself: a

²⁵⁹ [That is, “Nor does God please all, when he sends rain.”—*Ed.*]

²⁶⁰ [That is, parts.—*Ed.*]

blind eye is not so perfect as a seeing eye; nay, but in relation to the glory of his name, who hath a purpose to declare his power by restoring that sight, it is as perfect. And in this sense, all the imperfection of the creatures and creation, all of them are perfect works, for they accomplish the end wherefore they were sent; and so the night declares his name, and utters a speech as well as the day, the winter as the summer, the wilderness as the fruitful field. For what is the perfection of the creature, but in as far as it accomplishes his purpose and end, as the maker of it serves himself with it? And therefore all his work is perfect, for it is all framed in wisdom to his own ends, in number, measure, and weight; it is so exactly agreeing to that, that you could not imagine it better. Again, his work is perfect, if we take it altogether, and do not cut it in parcels, and look on it so. Is there any workmanship beautiful, if ye look upon it in the doing? While the timber lies in one part, and the stones in another, is that a perfect building? When ye see one arm here, another there, and a leg scattered beside them, hath that image any comeliness? Certainly no; but look upon these united, and then they are perfect. Letters and syllables make no sense, till ye conjoin them in words, and words in sentences. Even so is it here; if ye look on the day alone, the light of it being perpetual would weary us, the night alone would be more so; but the interchange of them is pleasant,—day and night together make a distinct language of God's praise. So God hath set prosperity and adversity the one over against the other. One of them, it may be, seems imperfect; nay, but it is a perfect work that is made up of both. Spots in the face commend the beauty of the rest of it. [365]

If ye would then look upon God's work aright, look on it in the sanctuary's light, and ye shall say, "He hath done all well." Join the end with the beginning, and behold they agree very well. Many things among us seem out of order, many things uncomplete, The reformation of England, how great obstruction was in the way of it? Is that now a perfect work? Yes, certainly;

for if we knew his end and purpose, it is very well, and could not be bettered by the art of all men; “his thoughts are far above our thoughts.” The prosperous and uninterrupted success of that party in England, is it a perfect work? Yes, certainly; for if ye could behold their end, ye would say so; “they are set in slippery places, their foot shall slide in due time.”²⁶¹

Entertain this thought in your heart, that he hath done all well. Let not your secret thoughts so much as call them in question. If once ye question, ye will quickly censure them. Hold this persuasion, that nothing can be better than what he doth, nothing can be added, and nothing diminished from them, he doth all in number, weight, and measure. It is so exactly correspondent to his purpose and design, as if it were weighed out, and measured out for that end.

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Let this secretly reprove your hearts. The perfection of his works stains our works. O how imperfect are they! And which is worse, how impudent and bold are we to censure his, and absolve
 be humbled, that the Lord may be appeased, and that he may returne to the thousands of his people, and *comfort us according to the days wee have beene afflicted, and the yeares that wee have seene.* You are going, you sat, upon the deuities, for returne of the afflicted land, (you do well to do soe,) and to try the instrumentall causes and occasions of the disaster and surprisal. Looke not too much upon second causes, the pryme and originall, and only cause, is God's just displeasure: for the causes of defeats in armys, they are harder to be found out than in any other of the actions of men, a word, a sound, the mooving or remooving of any body or squadron, may be, and have beane, the causes of the losse of battles, and how often have pannicke feares seized upon them, that never any ground or resone could be given for? Lay not the fault upon this or that, coming doune, or not staing upon a ground of advantage, or upon this person or the other. That is the worst way of all, for nothing devided nor discord can stand or prosper, but leaste of all ane army; any thing of that kinde is the sodaine ruine of it. Upon any other constitution it will not worke so soone. Therefore wee intreete and charge you, as ye feare God, love his cause in your hands, have affection to your countrie, or respect to us, that you will remember, you are brethren in a covenant, and that you now stand up and joyne together as one man for religion, your countrie, your wives, children, liberties, and us, as your predecessors have done in their difficulties in their generations. Wee shall as willingly as any of them be ready to hazarde our

our own? If he have a hand in our work, these imperfect works are perfect in regard of him. As we have a hand in his perfect works, his perfect works are imperfect in regard of us.

lyfe (nay to lay it down) with you for God, the covenant, and the honor and freedom of this hitherto unconquered kyngdome, with any handful you have together, or when it shall be thought convenient.” (Thurloe’s State Papers, vol. i. p. 163.) The gross hypocrisy of Charles, in putting his name to a letter containing sentiments like these, and thus exciting false expectations in the minds of his credulous subjects, must be apparent to all who are acquainted with his subsequent history.—*Ed.*]

²⁶¹ [The army of the Commonwealth was now on its march towards Scotland, under the command of Cromwell, who had been appointed by the English parliament captain general of their forces. But the hopes of the people of Scotland had been revived by the arrival of Charles II. from Breda, about a fortnight before this, who, at the mouth of the river Spey, before he landed, had signed the national covenant, and also the solemn league and covenant, though the commission appointed to receive his subscription appear, on too good grounds, to have suspected his sincerity (Sir Edward Walker’s Hist. Disc., p. 158. Life of Rev. J. Livingston, written by himself, p. 51. Glasg. 1754.) A letter, addressed by Charles to the Committee of Estates, immediately after the battle of Dunbar, and dated Perth, 12 September, 1650, contains the following passage: “Wee cannot but acknowledge that the stroke and tryall is very harde to be borne, and would be impossible for us and you, in humane strength, but in the Lord’s wee are bold and confident, whoe hath always defended this

ancient kingdome, and transmitted the government of it upon us from so many worthy predecessors, whoe in the lyke difficulties have not fainted, and they had only the honor and civill liberties of the land to defend, but wee have with your religion, the gospel, and the covenant, *against which Hell shall not prevaile*, much lesse a number of sectains stirred up by it. Wee acknowledge, that what hath befallen is just from God for our sinns, and those of our house, and the whole land, and all the families in it, have lykewise helped to pull downe the judgement, and to kindle this fierce wrath. Wee shall strive to

Sermon II.

Deut. xxxii. 4, 5.—“He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children,” &c.

There are none can behold their own vileness as it is, but in the sight of God's glorious holiness. Sin is darkness, and neither sees itself, nor any thing else, therefore must his light shine to discover this darkness. If we abide within ourselves, and men like ourselves, we cannot wisely judge ourselves, our dim sparkle will not make all the imperfections and spots appear. But, if men would come forth into the presence of his Majesty, who turns darkness into light, and before whom hell is naked,—O how base and vile would they appear in their own eyes! Is it any wonder that the multitude of you see not yourselves, when holy Isaiah and Job had this lesson to learn? Isaiah gets a discovery of his own uncleanness in the sight of God's glorious holiness, (chap. vi. 5,) which I think made all his former light darkness. He cries out “unclean,” as if he had never known it before, and so Job, “Since I saw thee I abhorred myself in dust and ashes.” Ye hear much of him, and it doth not abase you, but if ye saw him, ye would not abide yourselves; ye would prefer the dust you tread on to yourselves. Ye who know most, there is a mystery of iniquity in your hearts, that is not yet discerned, ye are but yet on the coast of that bottomless sea of abomination and vileness. Among all the aggravations of sin, nothing doth so demonstrate the folly, yea, the madness of it, as the perfection, goodness, and absolute unspottedness of God. It is this that takes away all pretence of excuse, and leaves the same nothing—no place in which to hide its confusion and nakedness and shame. And therefore it is that Moses, when he would convince this people of their ways, and make them inexcusable, draws the parallel of God's ways

and their ways, declares what God is, how absolutely perfect in himself, and in his works, who had given no cause of provocation to them to depart from him, and then, how odious must their departing be! When both are painted on a board before their eyes it makes sin become exceedingly sinful. When the Lord would pierce the hearts of his people, and engrave a challenge with the point of a diamond, he useth this as his pen,—“Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Why say my people, We are lords, we will come no more to thee?” Jer. ii. 31. “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity?” Jer. ii. 5.

There are two things in sin that exceedingly abuse the creature,—the iniquity of it, and the folly and madness of it. It is contrary to all equity and reason to depart from him that hath made us, and given us a law, to whom we are by so many obligations tied, but what is the folly and madness of it, to depart from the fountain of living waters, and dig broken cisterns that can hold none? verse 13. This is a thing that the heavens may be astonished at, and, if the earth had sense to understand such a thing, the whole fabric of it would tremble for horror at such madness and folly of reasonable souls and this evil hath two evils in it,—we forsake life and love death, go from him and choose vanity. It is great iniquity to depart without an offence on his part. He may appeal to all our consciences, and let them sit down and examine his way most narrowly,—“What iniquity have ye found in me? What cause have ye to leave me!” But when withal he is a living fountain, he is our glory, he is a fruitful land, a land of light, our ornament and attire, in a word, our life and our consolation, our happiness and our beauty; what word shall be found to express the extreme madness of men to depart from such an one, and change their glory into that which doth not profit? If either he were not a fountain of living waters, or if there were any fountain beside, that could yield water to satisfy the insatiable desires of men, it were more excusable,

but what shadow shall be found to cover such an iniquity that is both infinite sin, and incomparable loss? It is the scripture's style given to natural men, "fools and simple." All sin hath folly in it, but the people of God's departing from him hath extremity of folly in it, beside iniquity, because they do embrace a dunghill instead of a throne, they make the maddest exchange that can be imagined, glory for shame, life for death,—at least, consolation and peace, for vanity and vexation and anguish of spirit.

If ye would be duly affected with the sight of your own evils, look upon them in this consideration, and, in the view of God, your large portion, ye will be forced to confess yourselves beasts in his sight, Psal. lxxiii. 22. Oh! that men would consider how good and blessed the Lord is, how he is alone, and nothing beside him in heaven and earth,—all broken cisterns, all dung and unprofitable, all vanity and vexation,—he only self-sufficient, all others insufficient, and therefore a proportioned good for our necessity and desires, and I am sure ye would be constrained to cry out with David, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, or in the earth beside thee? It is good for me to draw near to God." Ye would look on drawing near, and walking with him, and before him, not only as the most reasonable thing, but the best thing, most beautiful for you, most profitable for you, and all other ways would be looked on as the ways of death.

"His work is perfect." The Lord looked, and behold all was good that was made. So it was at first. The fabric of this world was an exquisite and perfect work, a suitable demonstration of his infinite wisdom, wonderful in all the parts of it, and in the unity and harmony of the whole. But so also his work of providence is perfect. Divine wisdom hath framed and contrived all, and it cannot be better. If anything seem imperfect in itself, yet it is perfect in relation to his glorious ends he directs it unto. And so would we look on all the works among us. If anything seemed a spot and disgrace of the creation, certainly the sin of men and angels,—nay, but even that is so ordered by his holy sovereignty,

that in relation to his majesty, it may be called a perfect work. If ye do but consider what a glorious high throne he hath erected to himself for justice and judgment to be the habitation of it, and mercy and truth to go before it upon the ruins of defaced man, what a theatre of justice he hath erected upon the angels fall, ye would call it as perfect a work as is in the world. His work is one in the world, subordinate to one great design of manifesting his own glorious justice and mercy, omnipotency and wisdom. Now what do ye see of it but parcels? Though ye comprehend all your time in one thought, yet certainly ye cannot judge it aright, for it is but one work that all the several buildings and castings down, all the several dispensations of his providence, from the beginning to the end, make up, and when we think upon these disjointed, limit our consideration within the bounds of our own time, can we rightly apprehend it? Nay, which is worse, we use to have no more within the compass of our thought, but some present thing, and how much more do we err then? What beauty, what perfection can such a small part have? But it is present to him, who beholds with a glance all these parts. Though succeeding in many generations, he sees it altogether, joins the end with the beginning, sees the first mould, the first foundation stone, and the last completing, all flowing from himself, and returning thither, and ending in himself. He hath made an interchange in nature, which might teach us—the night alone hath no beauty. Nay, but it beautifies the day. Your darkest hours and tempests, public and personal, are they perfect works? Yes, certainly, if ye compound them with your sunshines and calms. Several colours make pictures beautiful,—the one is as needful as the other, and if ye did consider your profit more than your honour and pleasure, ye would say so. He doth not model his works according to our fancy to please us, but our good to profit us, and he is wiser than we, and so then it is the most perfect work in itself, that possibly displeaseth us most. Therefore ye would judge of his dealing by another rule

than your own satisfaction, for please you and perish you. If he spared the rod, he should hate us indeed, fond love is real hatred. Christians, if ye would judge his works by his word, and not by your sense,—by your well, and not by your will, certainly we would say, as the men did of Christ, “He hath done all well.” The world would discover to you a perfection, even in imperfection, a perfection in infirmities, that ye should not only rejoice in them, but glory in them. “Most gladly therefore will I glory,” &c. saith Paul. Are infirmities a perfect work? Or is the suffering of Paul, to be buffeted and tempted, a perfect work? What comfort is in it? Yes, much. Infirmities alone are infirmities indeed, nay but infirmities in me, and strength in Jesus, weakness in me, and strength dwelling in me,—these make up one perfect work that could as little want the infirmities as the strength. The glory of God, and our well and consolation, require the one, as well as the other, they could not be complete without any of them. What do ye think of the times now? Are England's apostacy, and Ireland's desolation,²⁶² perfect works? That great work of reformation, that seemed to be above our shoulders, is now razed to the ground, and the very foundations removed? Is deformation a perfect work? Certainly, if we look on these things in the scripture's light, and consider them in relation to him who is the chief builder, and doth in heaven and earth what he pleaseth, that deformation is a perfect work, though not a perfect reformation. Though we could not inform you of the perfection of it, yet the general might silence us; all this shall be no miss, no mar in the end. His work, at the end of accounts, shall appear so complete,

²⁶² [The narrative of Hume presents an affecting posture of the cruelties perpetrated at the time of the Irish insurrection and massacre. (Hist. of Eng. vol. iv. pp. 361-366, Lond. 1825). It is said that “200,000 Protestants in two months space, were murdered, and many by exquisite torments, and many more were despoiled of all their worldly fortunes.” (May's Brevary, p. 33. First printed in the year 1655. Reprinted London 1813). For several years after this period, Ireland was laid waste by contending armies and by the wild rage of the native inhabitants.—*Ed.*]

as if it had never had interruption. He is wise, and knows what he doth, if this were not for his glory and his people's good, certainly it should not be. Was not the people wandering in the wilderness forty years a most strange work—a longer interruption of the expected and begun voyage out of Egypt? What human reason would have stiled this work with perfection? Did they not often murmur against it? Yet Moses calls this a perfect work also. What if the Lord be digging the ground deeper in England, that the foundation may be the surer? What if he be on a work of judgment, filling the cup of many deluded blasphemers, that he may have another cup of wrath prepared? What if this be his great purpose, to execute vengeance upon a profane generation, that will not abide the very name and form of godliness, by those who pretend to the name of it as their honour? What if the Lord hath defaced all that this kingdom was instrumental in building up in England, that he alone may have the glory in a second temple more glorious?²⁶³ Many things there may be in his mind, and “he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth, and this may be enough to satisfy us, he sees and knows all his works from the beginning.”

And without all controversy he hath provided it so, that the reproach of his name shall be made up with²⁶⁴ the more shining of his glory, and the afflictions of his people shall be compensated with songs of deliverance. May ye not give him so much credit, as ye would give to a skilful man in his own trade? Ye know it is his name, “excellent in counsel, and wonderful in working.” Then take his work, expound it according to his word, and not your apprehension. It may be his work appears not excellent, nay, but if ye knew his counsel, ye would think it so. His wonderful counsel makes all his works excellent, and therefore do not take upon you to judge his works unless ye could wade the depth

²⁶³ [A reference to this passage may be seen in the Life of the Author prefixed to the Work.—*Ed.*]

²⁶⁴ [That is, compensated.—*Ed.*]

of his counsels, else ye declare yourselves to be both ignorant and presumptuous. “There is a time to build, and a time to cast down, a time for every thing,” saith the wise man. Now, I say, he knows the time and season, he does every thing in his time. If ye come by a workman that is casting down a house that in your appearance seems good, would ye condemn him presently? No, [369] but stay till ye see what he will do next, wait till the due time, and when ye see a better piece of workmanship on that ground, ye shall absolve him. Though God often change his work, do not think he changes his counsel and purposes as men do, no, “he is in one mind, and who can turn him?” Therefore he had that change in his mind when he made the work, when he erected such a throne, he had this in his mind to cast it down within such a space, and so his change—his throwing down—is as perfect in his mind, as his building up. Ye have large and big apprehensions of temporal kingdoms and crowns of government, and such like, as if they were great, yea, only things, but they are not so to him. All this world and its standing, all the kingdoms and their affairs are not his great work and business. He hath a great work, the bringing of many sons to glory, and the completing of Jesus Christ; building of that glorious mystical building, the holy temple made up of living stones, of which Christ is the foundation, and chief corner-stone both, and it is this that he attends to most. Other works among men, though they have more noise, they are less concerned. All these are but in the by, and subservient to his great design, and like the scaffolds of a building, that are, it may be, sometimes very needful. Nay, but when the building is completed, he shall remove all these, he hath no more use of them: kings shall be thy nurse fathers, kings shall bow to thee. He is not much concerned in government nor in governors, but for his little flock's sake, and if these were gathered, all these shall have an end, and the flock alone abide for ever.

“And all his ways are judgment.” This is to the same purpose,—his ways and his works are one. And this is the perfection

of his work, that it is all right and equal; whether they be in justice or mercy, they are all righteous and holy, no iniquity in them, his ways are straight and equal, exact as if they were measured by an exact even rule, but because we make application of a crooked rule to them, we do imagine that they are crooked, as the blind man judges no light to be, because he sees it not. How may the Lord contend and plead with us, as with that people, Ezek. xviii. 25. Is it possible that any can challenge him and clear themselves, who will be justified of all when he is judged, and before whom no flesh can be justified? And yet, behold the iniquity of men's hearts. There is a secret reflection of our spirits upon his Majesty, as if his ways were not equal, whenever we repine against them, and when we do not take with our iniquity, and stop our mouths with dust. Behold, the Lord will assert his own ways, and plead with all flesh this controversy, that all his proceedings are full of equity. He walks according to a rule, though he be not tied to a rule. He walks according to the rules of wisdom, justice, and mercy, though his illimited sovereignty might be a sufficient ground of clearing of all his proceedings. But we walk not according to a rule, though we be bound to a rule, and a rule full of equity.

Here is the equity and justice of his ways, the gospel holds it forth in a twofold consideration. *First*, If any man turn from his iniquity, and flee unto my Son as the city of refuge, he shall live, he hath eternal life, iniquity shall not be his ruin, although he hath done iniquity. O "who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity!" Is not this complete mercy? Whatever iniquity hath been, aggravate it as ye can, though it could have ruined a world yet it could not have ruined thee that turnest in to Jesus Christ from iniquity. What exception can all the world have against this, or his walking according to it? And *on the other hand*, whosoever continueth in sin, though he appear to himself and others never so righteous, if he entertain and love any known sin, and will not part with it for Jesus Christ, shall not he die in his

iniquity? Is there any iniquity in this, that he receive the wages of his works—his reward that he eat of the fruit of his own ways, and drink of his own devices? But how many hearts censure this way as a rigid and strict severe dealing! The multitude think it cruelty to condemn any christened soul—to put so many in hell. The civil man will think it is too hard measure that he should be ranked in hell with the profane. But certainly, all mouths shall be stopped one day, and he shall be justified when he judges. Ye that will not justify him in his sayings, and set to your seal to the truth of the word, you shall be constrained to justify him, when he executes that sentence. Ye shall precipitate your own sentence, and rather wonder at his clemency in suffering you so long.

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This way of the Lord is equal and right in itself, but it is not so to every one. The just man shall walk in it and not stumble; as in an even way, nothing shall offend him, Hosea xiv. last verse. Yet for as equal and straight as it is, many other transgressors shall fall therein; they stumble even in the noon-day and highway, where no offence is. It is true, often his own people stumble in it, as David, Psal. lxxiii, and xciv. David's foot was slipping, yet a secret hold was by mercy. It often requires a wise and prudent man to understand it, because his footsteps are in the deep waters; Psal. lxxxvii. 19. His way is in the depths of the sea, his paths in great waters, so that men must wait till the Lord expound his own ways, till he come out of the waters, and make them a dry plain. And this is our advantage; the word says, "He is near thee, in thy mouth, and neither above, nor beneath in the depths, that thou needest neither descend nor ascend to know it," Deut. xxx. 11-14. But his way is in the depths, and his footsteps are not known, so that we ought to hold us by the word till he expound his work. His word will teach us our duty, and we may commit unto him his own way; the word is a commentary to expound his ways. David lost the sight of God's footsteps and was like to wander, till he came to the sanctuary, and this shined as a candle

in a dark place; he learned there to know the unknown footsteps and to follow them. By all means embrace the word, and be satisfied with it, when ye do not comprehend his work; it teaches as much in general, as may put us to quietness; all his ways are judgment, just and true in all his ways is the King of saints. If I do not comprehend how it is,—no wonder, for he makes darkness his covering, he spreads over his most curious engines and pieces of workmanship a vail of darkness for a season; and “who can behold him when he hides himself?” says Job; and though he withdraw the covering, yet what am I? “Who can by searching find out God?” If I shall examine his way, what rule shall I take to try it by? If I measure by my shallow capacity, or by my crooked way, shall I have any just account of it? Will my arm measure the heavens as his doth? If I examine it, or try it by himself, he is high as heaven and unsearchable. Therefore it becomes us to hearken to his word, and believe its sentence of his work, when reason cannot comprehend it.

One thing, if it were deeply engraven on our hearts, would be a principle, of settling our spirits, in all the mysteries and riddles of providence,—the knowledge and faith of his sovereignty, of his highness, and of his wisdom. Should he give account of his matters to us? He is wise and knows his works; but is he bound to make us know them? His ways are above our thoughts and ways, as heaven is above the earth, Isa. lv. And therefore, O grasshopper in the earth, that dwelleth in tabernacles of clay, do not presume to model his ways according to thy conceptions. One thing is certain,—this is enough for faith, “all his ways are mercy and truth to those that keep his covenant and his testimonies,” Psal. xxv. 10. And there is no way or path of God so far above our reach, and unsearchable, as his mercy in pardoning sin; and this is only the satisfying answer to all your objections and scruples. In these ye do but vent your own thoughts: but says the Lord, my thoughts are above your thoughts, as heaven above earth. Ye but speak of your own ways, but my ways are far above yours, they

are not measured by your iniquity; and therefore, David subjoins, Psal. xxv. ver. 11, "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great."

Sermon III.

Deut. xxxii. 4, 5.—“He is the rock, his work is perfect. For all his ways are judgment. A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children. They are a perverse and crooked generation.”

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“All his ways are judgment,” both the ways of his commandments and the ways of his providence, both his word which he hath given as a lantern to men's paths, and his works among men. And this were the blessedness of men, to be found walking in his ways, and waiting on him in his ways, having respect to all his commandments, and respect to himself in all his works. We all know in general that he doth all well, and that all his commandments are holy and just. Nay, but our practice and affections belie our knowledge; and for the most part, we stand cross in our humours, and affections, and conversation, both to his word and providence, and this is our misery. “Great peace have they that love thy law.” What peace then can keep that heart and mind that is daily at variance with his statutes and judgments, when the heart would wish such a command were not, when it is an eyesore to look upon it? “Blessed are the meek.” “It is good for a man, both quietly to wait, and hope, and keep silence.” How then must that spirit be miserable, that stands cross unto God's dispensations, and would limit the Holy One! Do not our hearts often say, “I do well to be angry, why is it thus with me?” But, “who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?” His counsel must stand; and you may vex yourself, and disquiet your soul in the mean time, by impatience, but you cannot by your thought add one cubit to your stature. You may make your case worse than providence hath made it, but you cannot make it better by so doing, so that at length you must bow to him or be broken. Oh then that this were engraven on our hearts with the

point of a diamond! "All his ways are judgment;" that ye might be overcome with the equity of his command and dispensation, and your heart and tongue might not move against them. It was enough of old with the saints, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems good in his eyes." God's sovereignty alone pondered, may stop our mouth; but, if ye withal consider, it is perfect equity that rules all, it is divine wisdom that is the square of his works; then how ought we to stoop cheerfully unto them! One thing, ye would remember, his ways and paths are judgment, and if you judge aright of him, ye must judge his way and not his single footsteps. Ye will not discern equity and judgment in one step or two; but consider his way, join adversity with prosperity, humbling with exalting; take along the thread of his providence, and one part shall help you to understand another. There is reason in all, but the reason is not visible to us in so small parts of his way and work.

"A God of truth." Strange it is that his majesty is pleased to clothe himself with so many titles and names for us. He considers what our necessity is, and accordingly expresses his own name. I think nothing doth more hold forth the unbelief of men, and atheism of our hearts, than the many several titles that God takes in scripture. There is a necessity of a multitude of them, to make us take up God; because we staying upon a general notion of God, rather frame in our imaginations an idol than the true God. As there is nothing doth more lively represent the unbelief of our hearts, than the multitude of promises; men that consider such frequent repetitions of one thing in scripture, so many divers expressions of one God, may retire into their own hearts, and find the cause of it, even the necessity of it. But while we look so slightly on these, we must judge it superfluous and vain. Needed there any more to be said, but, "I am your God, I am God," if our spirits were not so far degenerated unto atheism and unbelief? Certainly that word *Jehovah* holds forth more to angels than all the inculcated names and titles of God to

us, because we are dull and slow of heart. Therefore wonder at these two when ye read the scriptures, God's condescendency to us, and our atheism and unbelief of him: they are both mysteries, and exceeding broad. There is not a name of God, but it gives us a name, and that of reproach and dishonour, so that for every one, some evil may be written down. And it is to this purpose Moses draws them out in length, that in the glass of his glorious name, the people might behold their own ugly face. This name is clear, "he is a God of truth," not only a true God, but truth itself: to note his excellency and eminency in it. It is Christ's name, "I am the truth," the substantial truth, in whom all the promises are truth, "are yea and amen." His truth is his faithfulness in performing his promises, and doing what his mouth hath spoken: and this is established "in the very heavens," Psal. lxxxix. 2. His everlasting purpose is in heaven where he dwells; and if any man can ascend up to heaven, if any creature can break through the clouds, then may his truth be shaken. His word comes down among men; nay, but the foundation of it is in heaven, and there is his purpose established; and therefore, there is nothing done in time can impair or hinder it. Ye think this world very sure, the earth hangs unmoveable, though it hang upon nothing. All the tumults, confusions, and reels which have been in the world have never moved it to the one side. Heaven goeth about in one tenour perpetually, keeping still the same distance. Nay, but his truth is more established than so. Heaven and earth depend but upon a word of command, he hath said, "Let it be so," and so it is. Nay, but his word is more established. Of it saith Christ, one jot or tittle of it cannot fail, though heaven and earth should fail. He may change his commands as he pleases, but he may not change his promise, this puts an obligation on him, as he is faithful and true, to perform it, and when an oath is superadded, O how immutable are these two!—when he promises in his truth and swears in his holiness. Is there any power in heaven and earth can break that double cord? Matth. v. 18, Heb. vi. 18. There is

no name of God but it is comfortable to some, and as terrible to others. What comfort is it to a godly man that trusts in his word, he is a God of truth! An honest man's word is much, his oath is more. What shall his word be who is a God of truth? Though all men should be liars, yet God is true. Ye who have ventured your souls on his word, ye have an unspeakable advantage, his truth endures for ever, and it is established in the heavens, the ground of it is without beginning, the end of it without end. Ye are more sure than the frame of heaven and earth, for all these shall wax old as a garment. We speak of a naked word of truth, indeed it is no naked word that is God's word. His works of providence, and his dispensation to you, is a naked and bare foundation, nay, a sandy foundation, and ye who lean so much to them, is it any wonder ye so often shake and waver? All other grounds beside the word are uncertain, unstable, this only endures for ever. The creature's goodness and perfection is but as the grass, and the flower of the field. Venture not much on your dispositions and frames, thou knowest not what a day may bring forth, but his truth is to all generations, and it is well tried as gold seven times,—all generations have tried it and found it better than pure gold. His dispensations are arbitrary—no rule to you. He loveth to declare his sovereignty here and to expatiate in the creature's sight beyond its conceiving, but he hath limited himself in his word and come down to us, and laid bonds on himself. Will he then untie them for us? Give him liberty where he loves it, take him bound where he binds himself. How may God expostulate with this generation, as those of little faith? “How long shall I be with you?” saith Christ. How long will Christians tempt the Lord in seeking signs, and will not rest upon his only word and promises? “O adulterous generation, how long shall I be with you and ye will not believe?” Is it not righteousness in him, either to give you no sign at all, or to give you a sign darker than the thing itself, as he did to the Pharisees? Ye will give credit to a man's word, and will ye not believe God's? An honest man will

get more trust of us, than the true and living God! Shall he not be offended with this? We declare it unto you, that he is truth itself, and will not fail in his promise, let that be your castle and refuge to enter into. Mercy and truth are two sweet companions to go along with you in your pilgrimage. David prayed for them Psal. lxi. 7. "O prepare thy mercy and truth to preserve me." Who will not be safe within these everlasting arms? What power can break through them? And this he promised to himself, (Psal. lvii. 3.) God shall send them out. Mercy made so many precious promises, and truth keeps them. Mercy is the fountain and source of all our consolation, and truth and faithfulness convey it to us, and keep it for us. It is these two that go before his face when he sits on a throne of majesty, and makes himself accessible to sinners (Psalm lxxxix. 14,) and so they are the pathway he walks in towards those who seek him, Psalm xxv. 10.

But this sweet and precious name, that is as ointment poured forth to those who love him, how doth it smell of death to those who walk contrary to him? "He is a God of truth" to execute his threatenings on those who despise his commands, and though ye flatter yourselves in your own eyes, and cry, "Peace, peace," even though ye walk in the imagination of your own heart, yet certainly "he is a God of truth." I pray you read that sad and weighty word, that will be like a millstone about many men's necks to sink them in hell, Deut. xxix. 20, 21, ye who "add drunkenness to thirst," whose rule of walking is your own lust, and whatsoever pleaseth you, without respect of his commands, and yet flatter yourselves with a dream of peace, know this for a truth, "the Lord will not spare thee, he that made thee will not have mercy on thee. His jealousy will smoke against thee, and all the curses written in this book shall be upon thee, and thy name shall be blotted out from under heaven." It was unbelief of God's threatening that first ruined man, it is this still that keeps so many from the remedy, and makes their misery irrecoverable. The serpent brought them to this question, "Hath God said ye

shall die.” And then presently the question entertained becometh a conclusion, Ye shall not surely die. Thus ye see how the liar, from the beginning, was contrary to the God of truth, and he murdered us by lying of that God of truth, and it is the same that shuts out all hope of remedy. Ye do not as yet believe and consider that curse that was pronounced against Adam, but is now also inflicted upon us, therefore, there is no solid belief can be of the promises of the gospel, and ye who think ye believe the gospel, do but indeed fancy it, except ye have considered the true curse of God on all flesh. But if any man have set to his seal that God is true in his threatening, and subscribed unto the law, then, I beseech you, add not the unbelief of the gospel unto your former disobedience. He is “a God of truth,” in promises and threatenings. It is strange how untoward and froward we are,—a perverse generation. We do not believe his threatenings, but fancy we receive his promises, or else, believing his threatenings we question his promises. But know this for a truth, his last word is more weighty, and the unbelief of it is most dangerous. Ye have not kept his commands, and so the curse is come upon you? Do ye believe that? If ye do, then the gospel speaks unto you, the God of truth hath one word more, “He that believes shall be saved,” notwithstanding of all his breaking of the law. If ye do not set your seal to this also, then ye say he is not a God of truth, ye say he is a liar. And as for you who have committed your souls to him, as to a faithful keeper, and acquiesced unto his word of promise for salvation, think how unsuitable it is for you to distrust him in other lesser things. Ye have the promise of this life, whoever hath the promises of the life to come. Therefore do not make him a liar in these. He is “a God of truth,” and will let you want no good thing. “Say to the righteous, it shall be well with him, whatever be.” Let heaven and earth mix through other, yet ye may be as mount Sion unmoved in the midst of many floods, because of the promises.

“Without iniquity.” Who doubts of that, say ye? What needs

this be added? Who charges him with iniquity or sin? Nay, but stay and consider, and you shall find great weight in this. It is true, none dare charge him openly, or speak in express terms against his holiness, yet, if we judge of our own and other's practices and dispositions, as the Lord useth to construct of them, if we resolve our murmurings, impatience, self absolutions, and excuses to hold off convictions, into plain language, if we would translate them into a scripture style, certainly it will be found that the most part of men, if not all, use to impute iniquity to God, and accuse him rather than take with accusations laid against themselves. And therefore the Lord useth to go to law with his people. He who is the judge of the world, that cannot do unrighteousness, he who is the potter, and we all the clay, yet he so far condescends to us for convincing us, as sometimes to refer the controversy between him and his people to other creatures, as Micah vi. 2. He calls the mountains and the foundations of the earth to judge between him and his people, and sometimes he appeals unto their own consciences and is content, though judge, to stand and be judged by those who were guilty, as ver. 3 and Jer. ii. ver. 5, and 31. All this supposes, that when the Lord would endeavour to convince them of iniquity, they did rather recriminate, and took not with their own faults. This is a truth generally acknowledged by all, "He who is the judge of the world doth no iniquity," but O! that ye considered it, till the meditation of it were engraven on your spirits, the seal of God's holiness, that ye might fear before him, and never call him to account for his matters. Who can say, I have purged my heart from iniquity? Among men the holiest are defiled with it, and so are all their actions. But here is one that ye may give him an implicit faith so to speak, he is "a God of truth," and can speak no lie, he does no iniquity, and cannot do wrong to any man. Would there be so much impatience amongst you, and fretting against his dispensations, if ye believed this solidly? Would ye repine against his holy and just ways, were it not to charge God with

iniquity? Your murmuring and grudging at his dispensations is with child of blasphemies, and he who can search the reins sees it, and constructs so of it. You say by interpretation, that if ye had the government of your own matters, or of kingdoms, ye would order them better than he doth. How difficult a thing is it to persuade men to take with their own iniquity! O how many excuses and pretences, how many extenuations are used that this conviction may not pierce deeply! But all this speaks so much blasphemy,—that iniquity is in God. Ye cannot take with your own iniquities, but ye charge his Majesty with iniquity.

“Just and right is he.” Is this any new thing? Was it not said already, that he is “without unquity, and his ways judgment?” But, alas! how ignorant are we of God, and slow of heart to conceive of him as he is, therefore is there “line upon line, and precept upon precept,” and name upon name, if it be possible, that at length we may apprehend God as he is. Alas! our knowledge is but ignorance, our light darkness, while it is shut up in the corner of our mind, and shines not into the heart, and hath no influence on our practice. And the truth is, the belief of divine truths is almost no more but a not contradicting them, we do not seriously think of them as either to consent to them, or deny them. Is there any consideration amongst us now of God's justice and righteousness, though it be frequently spoken of? And what advantage shall we have if ye do not consider them? O how hard is it to persuade men's hearts of this, that God is just, and will by no means acquit the guilty? There are so many delusions drunk in in men's hearts, contrary to his truth. “Let no man deceive you,” “be not deceived” with vain words, “know ye not,” saith our apostle. These are strange prefaces. Would ye not think the point of truth subtile that there needed so much prefacing unto it? and yet what is it? Even that which all men grant,—God's wrath comes on the children of disobedience, but, alas! few men consider, but deceive themselves with dreams of escaping it. Though men know it, yet they know it not, for they

walk as if they knew no such thing.

Always however this is of little moment to affect our spirits now, yet in the day that God shall set your iniquities before your face, and set his justice also before your eyes. O how sad and serious a thing will it be then! If these two verses were engraven on our hearts,—God's justice and holiness, our corruption and vileness,—I think there would be other thoughts among us than there are.

Sermon IV.

Deut. xxxii. 5.—“They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation.”

We doubt this people would take well with such a description of themselves as Moses gives. It might seem strange to us, that God should have chosen such a people out of all the nations of the earth, and they to be so rebellious and perverse, if our own experience did not teach us how free his choice is, and how long-suffering he is, and constant in his choice. His people are called to a conformity with himself, “Be ye holy, for I am holy,” (Lev. chap. xix. and xx.) and to a deformity and separation from the rest of the world in their conversation, from whom God had separated them in profession and privileges, Lev. xviii. 24. But behold what unlikeness there is between God and his people. If ye were to paint out to the life a heathen people, you needed no other image or pattern to copy at but this same description of this people. It is this that makes Moses in the preface turn to the heavens and earth, and call them to hear his song, and Isaiah begins his preaching thus, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, &c.” A strange thing it must be, that senseless creatures are called to wonder at. It must surpass all the wonders and prodigies of nature and art. And what is that? “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me,” &c. If we consider what this people seemed once to be, and thought themselves to be, we may easily know how they corrupted themselves. If ye look on them at one time, (Exod. xix. 8, Deut. v. 27,) ye would call them children. There was never a fairer undertaking of obedience than this, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do,” so that the Lord commends them for speaking well, verse 28, “They have well said all that they have spoken,” verse 29, “O that there were such an heart in

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them!” But compare all this people's practice with this profession, and you shall find it exceeding contrary; they indeed corrupted themselves, though they got warning to take heed of it. “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, lest ye corrupt yourselves,” Deut. iv. 15, 16. But alas, it was within them that destroyed them; there was not such a heart in them as to hear and obey, but they undertake, being ignorant of their own deceitful hearts, which were desperately wicked. And therefore, behold what corruption ensued and followed upon such a professed resolution. They never sooner promised obedience, but they disobeyed; they did abominable works, and did no good, and this is to corrupt their way, Psalm xiv. 1, &c. We need not instance this longer in this people, we ourselves are a sufficient proof of it. We may make this song our own, “we have corrupted ourselves.” Once we had a fair show of zeal for God, of love and desire of reformation of life, many solemn undertakings were that we should amend our ways and doings, but what is the fruit of all? Alas, we have

as a counter association to the Holy League, which had been formed by the most powerful popish princes in Europe with a view to extirpate the reformed religion. When the national covenant was renewed in 1638, and once more subscribed by all classes of the community, the Bond which accompanied it was altered to suit the circumstances of the times. It expressed a solemn determination on the part of those who subscribed it to aim at “a personal reformation,” as well as a resolution to withhold their sanction from the late innovations in religion, “till they be tried and allowed in free Assemblies, and in Parliaments.” These are the words—“And because we cannot look for a blessing from God upon our proceedings, except with our profession and subscription we join such a life and conversation as besemeth Christians who have renewed their covenant with God. We therefore faithfully promise for ourselves, our followers, and all others under us, both in public, and in our particular families and personal carriage, to endeavour to keep ourselves within the bounds of Christian liberty, and to be good examples to others of all godliness, soberness, and righteousness, and of every duty we owe to God and man” (Dunlop's Confessions vol. II., p. 136.). The following corresponding clause is contained in the Solemn League and Covenant, which was ratified by the parliaments both of England and Scotland, and subscribed generally by the people of both kingdoms in 1643, and renewed in Scotland in 1648.—“And because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against God,

corrupted ourselves more than they. Israel promised, but we vowed and swore to the Most High, reformation and amendment of life in our conversations and callings. Lay this rule to our practices, and are we not a perverse and crooked generation? Oh! that we were more affected with our corruptions, and were more sensible of them, then we could not choose but mourn for our own and the land's departing from God. Did not every man vow and swear to the most high God to endeavour reformation of his life, even a personal reformation?²⁶⁵ But alas, where is it? "He that is filthy" is "filthy still." Nay, which is worse, the evil man waxeth worse and worse. There is a great noise of a public reformation of ordinances and worship, but alas, the deformation of life and practice outcries all that noise. Nay, certainly all that is done in the public, must come to no account before God since our practices outcry it. Public reformation is abomination, where personal corruptions do not cease. This made the Jews' solemn

and his Son Jesus Christ, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruits thereof, we profess and declare before God and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of these kingdoms, especially that we have not, as we ought, valued the inestimable benefit of the gospel; that we have not laboured for the purity and power thereof, and that we have not endeavoured to receive Christ in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives, which are the causes of other sins and transgressions so much abounding among us, and our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves, and all others under our power and charge, both in public and in private, in all duties we owe to God and to man, to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation, that the Lord may turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these churches and kingdoms in truth and peace."—*Ed.*]

²⁶⁵ [When the national covenant was first subscribed by King James and his household, and by persons of all ranks, in the year 1581, a number of Jesuits and popish priests had unexpectedly made their appearance in the country. Various dispensations from the Pope likewise had been intercepted, whereby the Catholics were permitted to *promise, swear, subscribe, and do what else should be required of them, so as in mind they continued firm, and did use their diligence to advance in secret the Roman faith.* These dispensations, says Archbishop Spotswood, "being showed to the king, he caused his minister,

days hateful, their hands were “full of blood.” Isa. i. 15. All that ye have spent on the public will never be reckoned, since ye will not consecrate your lives to God, will not give your lusts up to him. Ye are his enemies in the mean time, though you account yourselves religion's friends. I beseech you consider your ways. Would any of us have thought to have seen such profanity, mocking of godliness, and ignorance in Scotland in so short a time? Nay, it is to be feared that the day is not far off, when ye will corrupt yourselves, and do abominable things, yea, defile yourselves as ill as the nations that know not God.

Every man useth to impute his faults to something beside himself. Ere men take with their own iniquity, they will charge God that gave no more grace, but if men knew themselves, they would deduce their corruption and destruction both from one fountain, that is, from themselves. Ignorance of ourselves maketh us oft undertake fair, and promise so well on our own head. What was the fountain of this people's corruption, and apostatizing from their professions? The Lord hints at it, Deut. v. 29, &c. “Oh that they had such a heart.” Alas, poor people, ye know not yourselves, that speak so well. I know thee better than thou dost thyself, I will declare unto thee thy own thought, thou hast not such a heart as to do what thou sayest; there is a desperate wicked heart within thee, that will destroy thee by

Mr John Craig, form a short confession of faith, wherein all the corruptions of Rome, as well in doctrine as outward rites, were particularly abjured and a clause inserted (because of these dispensations) by which the subscribers did call God to witness that in their minds and hearts they did fully agree to the said confession, and did not feign or dissemble in any sort. This confession [or covenant] the king, for an example to others, did publicly swear and subscribe; the like was done by the whole council and court.” (Hist. of Ch. of Scotland, pp. 308, 309). By an ordinance of council and at the desire of the General Assembly, the national covenant, along with a Bond for the maintenance of the true religion, and the safety of the king's person and government, was again subscribed by persons of all ranks in the year 1590. This Bond had been previously entered into and signed by his majesty, and various men of rank and station in the kingdom, in anticipation of the threatened Spanish invasion, and

lying unto thee. If thou knewest this fountain of original corruption, thou wouldest despair of doing, and say, I cannot serve the Lord. Now here is the fountain of the land's corruption this day. Why is our way corrupted? Because our hearts within were not cleansed, and because they were not known. If we had dried up the fountain, the streams had ceased, but we did only dam it up, and cut off some streams for a season; we set up our resolutions and purposes as an hedge to hold it in, but the sea of the heart's iniquity, that is above all things, hath overflowed it, and defiled our way more than in former times. Ye thought upon no other thing, but that presently ye would be all changed people, and would reform without more ado,—and thus it is with you in all your public repentances. But alas! you know not yourselves, it is still within you which will yet corrupt you, and it was within us that hath undone us, we were too confident of ourselves, and it is no wonder that the Lord suffers us to prove ourselves, that we may know what is in our heart. Now, therefore, since ye have so often tried it, I beseech you follow not such a way again. Ye are called to deny yourselves, and to follow Christ and this is a great part of it, that ye may never expect for any good within yourselves, or the helping of any evil. “In me is thy help found.” Look to the fountain of life, Jesus Christ, and despair of your own hearts, for they are desperately wicked, so wicked, that if ye knew them, ye would despair of them, and give them over to another hand, who can create a new heart within you. Ye use to impute your backslidings to the times, to temptations, to company, and such like. This is the way that men shift the challenges of sin: the drunkard puts it on his companion, the servant on his master that led him wrong, the people put rulers in the fault, and absolve themselves, and rulers put one another in the wrong, and absolve themselves. But, alas! all of us are ignorant of ourselves; it is not times nor temptations that corrupt us, but ourselves. No man is tempted, saith James, of God, “but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust

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and enticed,” James i. 14. Temptation were no temptation, if our hearts were not wicked hearts. Nay, many of us are ready to tempt temptations, to provoke the devil to temptations; we cast ourselves open to temptations. Temptations find lust within, and lust within is the mother to conceive sin, if temptation be the father. Times do not bring evils along with them, they do but discover what was hid before. All the evils and corruptions you now see among us, where were they in the day of our first love, when we were as a loving and beloved child? Have all these risen up of late? No certainly, all that you have seen and found were before, though they did not appear; before they were in the root, now you see the fruit. All the apostacy and profanity that hath been vented in these days, was all shut up within the corners of men's hearts at the beginning. Time and temptation hath but uncovered the heart, and made the inside out, hath but opened a sluice to let out this sea of corruption. It is not bred since, but seen since.

Now so it is with us, we have corrupted ourselves, and so we corrupt ourselves still more. Backsliding cometh on as gray hairs, here and there and is not perceived by beholders. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus.*²⁶⁶ No man becometh worst at first. There are many steps between that and good. Corruption comes on men's ways as in fruits, some one part beginneth to alter, and then it groweth worse, and putrifieth and corrupteth the rest of the parts. An apple rots not all at once, so it is with us. Men begin at leisure, but they run post before all be done. In some one step of our way we take liberty and think to keep the rest clean, but when that part is corrupted, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” and all followeth: and then he that corrupted himself, is ready to corrupt others. “Children that are corrupters,” Isa. i. 4. Every one by his example corrupts another, and by corrupting others they again corrupt themselves more. Oh! how infectious

²⁶⁶ [Nemo repente fuit turpissimus—Juv. Sat. II. v. 83.]

an evil is sin, of a pestilentious nature, and truly our hearts are more ready to receive such impressions, than either a world or a devil is to make them.

“Their spot is not.” Why doth the Lord take pleasure to reckon their sins, to describe so abominable a people? Is not this Jacob in whom he saw no iniquity?²⁶⁷ Is not this Israel, whose transgressions are not known?²⁶⁸ Certainly if this people would have charged themselves so, he would not have done it. He loves to forget, when we remember our sins, but he must remember them when we forget them. What is the Lord's great controversy with men? Here it is,—How can ye say or think that ye are not polluted? Or if ye take with such a general, yet, why is not the conviction of your sin and misery so deeply engraven, as to pursue you out of all hope of remedy in yourselves, (Jer. ii. 22, 23)? “And therefore is thine iniquity marked before me, saith the Lord.” God hath determined not to wrong his justice. If men should go away unpunished and unjudged both, where were his righteousness? If there were no record of men's transgressions, were he a righteous judge? Therefore, those who do not judge themselves must leave judgment to him, for once the mouth of all flesh must be stopped, and all become guilty before God. Why pleads the Lord with man? Because man says, “I am innocent, I have not sinned, his anger will turn away,” Jer. ii. 35. Will any speak so in terms? No indeed, but the Lord constructs so of the most part, because they do more consider the wrongs done to them, than their own wrongs done to God. All men confess the general, that they are sinners, but who searches and tries his way to find out particulars? And in as far as ye do not charge yourselves with particular guiltiness, until ye be afraid of his anger, as long as the consideration of your sins is so superficial and shallow, that ye apprehend no danger of wrath, or immunity from it, certainly God will plead with you. Justice must so far be

²⁶⁷ [Num. xxiii. 21.—*Ed.*]

²⁶⁸ [Jer. i. 20.—*Ed.*]

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glorified, as once to conclude you under the sentence of death; if ye do it not now, then ye leave God to be your judge and party. But if any man shall take with his guiltiness, till his mouth be stopped, and condemn himself in God's sight, I say, mercy and grace in God must not be wronged, he that judges himself shall not be judged of the Lord. What a fair offer is this to you all the Lord offers to you! If ye will in time be your own judges, I will resign my judgment to you. If you will in earnest pass the sentence, I will neither pass it nor execute it. If ye come to the Mediator, Christ Jesus, to escape from the wrath of a judge, you shall meet with a reconciled Father, and with such love in him as shall hide a multitude of offences. O the depth, and height, and breadth of that love! Well then, it shall be a sea to cast your offences into, that shall drown them. Had not his people many spots? Is there any man can say, I have cleansed my heart from iniquity? No, not one. Yet behold, he sees no spots in his people. He doth not make them his people because spotless, but he seeth them spotless, because he makes them his people. There is no covering that can hide men's uncleanness from his piercing eye, but one even Jesus Christ his righteousness, and "Blessed is he whose sins are covered." If this covering were spread over the mouth of all hell, then hell should have a covering from his eyes. If ye therefore strip yourselves naked of your own pretences and leaves, and think not yourselves secure under any created shelter. If ye hide not your iniquity, then it shall be hid indeed, here is a covering that shall hide it from his eyes. There is no spot so heinous, none so ingrained, but the blood of Jesus can wash it as perfectly out, as if it had never been, Isa. i. 16, 17. Though your spots were such as are not incident to his children, yet this blood cleanses from one and all, it is of an infinite nature. But though it be so, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, that there is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, for sin and separation, for such heinous offences as may separate people even from the congregation of the Lord's

people, yet there are some sins, some spots, that ordinarily his people are not defiled with, and in this respect they may be called holy and undefiled in the way. There are some marks and characters of unregenerated men so legible and express, that we may even read from men's conversation, that they are not the children of God. Though the blood of Christ wash from all, yet the child of God ordinarily is kept from some kind of spots, so that if a man shall be spotted with them it is no marvel he question if he be a child or not. There are two, which I think so gross and unclean spots that I cannot conceive how a soul washen by Jesus Christ can be defiled with them. One is, a course of profanity. The common walk of the multitude is so gross and profane, so void of God and godliness, that it witnesseth to their face that they are not the sons of God. "He that is born of God sinneth not; he maketh not sin his way and trade to walk into, and please himself into." What are the most part of you, I pray you? Is your spot like the spot of his children? Do not ye declare your sin as Sodom, ye drunkards, who wallow in it daily, and though ye profess repentance, yet never amend? Ye who have a custom of swearing and blaspheming his holy name, do not ye carry in your forehead a spot that is not like his children? The child of God may fall in many particulars, but it is not the spot of a child to continue in them to add drunkenness to thirst, and yet to dream of escaping wrath. I pray you, consider it, for it is of great moment. Do ye carry such a black mark,—the devils mark? O do not think yourselves safe. May not this persuade you? Do but compare yourselves in your converse and walk with an heathen without the church. Set aside your public profession of coming to the church, and hearing the word, and church privileges, and is the difference visible between you and them? Many of you pray no more in secret or in your families than they. Ye curse and swear as they, ye are covetous and worldly as they. If ye can, do but draw a line of difference, and if ye cannot, then I ask, what are ye? Is not this the spot of bastards? Another spot is,

hatred of godliness and the godly. This is indeed the most lively image of the devil: who hates his brother is of the devil. He that hates the Son, can he love the Father? he that hates him that is begotten, hates also him that begat him and he that loves him that begat, loves him that is begotten. Now, how can he be begotten of God, who hates that nature he is said to partake of—who hates him that is begotten? I wonder that many of your consciences are not touched with this? How can ye imagine ye are children of God, when there are none of your neighbours that your heart riseth more against, that ye can less abide, than those who seek God most diligently, whose conversation is different from the worlds? Do not flatter yourselves, as if it were hypocrisy ye hated. No, no ye can agree with profanity, and how can ye hate hypocrisy? Ye can agree with a profane hypocrite—with a profane man, that feigns and dissembles repentance but if once he were so thoroughly changed, as to hate his former way, and forsake it, then your antipathy beginneth. What a ridiculous thing is it for profanity to take upon it to censure hypocrisy! Certainly if profanity cast out with hypocrisy, it must be because it hath a form of godliness, which it so much detesteth. It is a strange hatred at godliness that a profane man hath, that he cannot abide the very shadow of it. I beseech you who love not holiness in your own persons, who hate to be reformed yourselves, do not add this height of sin to it, as to hate it in others also. If ye be not godly yourselves, do not add this declared manifest character of a child of the devil to it, to hate godliness in others. There were some hope of you, if ye held it in reverence and estimation where ye saw it. There are many other spots not incident to his children, as this, that men will not take with their sin and the curse. It is a great difficulty to convince the most part of men how miserable they are, how void of God. All the world will not put them out of a good opinion of themselves, and I think this hath been the spot of this people, they would not take with their guiltiness—a stubborn hearted people, wholehearted.

There needs no more to declare a number of you not to be God's children, but this,—ye have lived all your time in the opinion and belief that ye were God's children, that ye believed in him, ye never saw yourselves lost and miserable. This was the spot of this people that they esteemed themselves children, though they had many spots that testified to their face that they were no children. They waxed worse and worse, neither mercies nor judgments amended them. “When he slew them,” it may be, “they sought him, and flattered him with their mouth, but their hearts were not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant,” Psal. lxxviii. 34. Ye would have thought them a godly people, while under the rod for a season, but all that was but extorted and pressed out by violence of affliction, as the groans of a beast under a burden. But a little time declared that it was but flattery, though they thought themselves ingenuous, and therefore they returned to their old provocations, as a sow to the puddle, or a dog to his vomit. And is not this our spot, even the spot of great and small? If any would look upon us in our engagements and vows under trouble, we appear like his people, a praying, repenting, and believing people,²⁶⁹ but how quickly doth all this prove flattery? Do we not still return to our old ways that we have been exemplarily punished for, and which we so solemnly engaged against? The heat of the furnace dieth out,

²⁶⁹ [“About the time of the first renewing of the covenant, there was a sensible change to the better in men's carriage and conversation, most of all those who joined in opposing the defection not only reforming themselves from common and gross sins such as drunkenness, uncleanness, swearing, profaning the Lord's day, slighting of the ordinances, self seeking, covetousness, oppression, &c., but giving themselves to the duties of religion and righteousness, such as sobriety, edifying discourse, chaste behaviour, hallowing of the Lord's day, diligent seeking of the Lord in secret and in their families, attending on the preaching of the word as often as opportunity is offered, liberality, love, charity one toward another, a public spirit and zeal for God. But all these things are now decayed in many and they are again grown as ill if not worse than before.” Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland. pp. 48, 49. Printed in the year 1653.—*Ed.*]

and they wax colder and harder, a little time wears away all their tenderness. Every man seeks his own things, and no man seeks the things of Jesus Christ. This was this people's sin and spot. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." When their heads were lifted up to government, when they were raised out of the waters of affliction and poverty, then they forgot God, they oppressed the poor and needy, eat up his people as bread, and could not abide to have their faults told them, they said to the seers, "See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things," &c. Isa. xxx. 10. I think likewise, that oppression is not the spot of his children, whoever uses it. And covetousness presses men to it, when power is in their hand to compass it. This is a vile spot, unworthy of any ruler, let be²⁷⁰ a Christian. It was abhorred among Pagans. O but it cries to heaven, saith the Scripture, it hath a double cry when other sins cry once! The heinousness of it crieth once, and the poor people cry again, and both these come up to the ears of the Lord of hosts, nay, it hath the cry of murder, and another beside. He that is greedy of gain, is said to take away the life of the owners thereof, Prov. i, 19. So he is a murderer before God, and the poor man's blood crieth for vengeance, and then himself seconds it either by prayer, or crying out for misery, Job xxxv. 9. All men's prayers and professions will not outcry these two. The people's many prayers could not be heard, (Isa. i. 15), because their hands were "full of blood," which had a louder cry than their prayers. The poor also oppressing the poor, is like a sweeping rain that leaves nothing behind it.

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It is read in the margin, "that they are not his children,—that is their blot." And indeed it is so. It is a great blot and stain in the face of any man whoever he be, that he is not born of God—that he can reckon kindred to none but Adam. But what indignity is it and disgrace, for a people professing his name, yet to have

²⁷⁰ [Much less.—*Ed.*]

no other generation, to reckon no higher than the earth and the earthly. What is now the great blot of our visible church? Here it is, the most part are not God's children, but called so; and it is the greater blot that they are called so, and are not.²⁷¹ O poor saints, esteem your honour and high privilege; ye have received this, to be the sons of God! It is no blot to you that you are poor and despised in the world; but it is and shall be an eternal blot to the great and rich, and wise in the world, that they are not the children of God. Christianity is no blot, though it be in reproach among men, but it is really the glory and excellency of a man; but the want of it, alas! how doth it abase many high and noble, impoverish many rich, and infatuate many wise! Ye think all of you are the children of God, because ye are in the church, and partake of the ordinances and sacraments; and so did this people. But Moses did not flatter these Jews, but told both princes and people in their face, that they were not children of God, because

²⁷¹ [An inference unfavourable to the religious character of the countrymen of Binning, has been too hastily drawn from this and some other passages in his works. (Orme's Mem. of Dr. Owen, p. 129). The late Dr M'Crie observed, that this was like "the attempts of popish writers to prove the *Reformation* a *Deformation*, by culling quotations from the sermons of such Protestant preachers as inveighed most freely against prevailing vices." (Christ. Inst. vol. xx. p. 624). In the "Representation, Propositions, and Protestations," however, "of divers Ministers, Elders, and Professors," printed in the year 1652, and probably about the time this sermon was preached, it is affirmed, that the religious aspect of the country had undergone an unhappy change, in the course of the two preceding years. "If we look back," it is said, p. 3 "to that which we have already attained of the work of Reformation, (notwithstanding our short-coming in the power and practice of godliness,) what purity was there of worship, what soundness of doctrine, unity of faithful pastors, order and authority of assemblies, what endeavours for promoting the power of godliness, for purging of the ministry, judicatories and armies, and for employing such in places of power and trust as were of constant integrity and good affection to the cause, and of blameless conversation? And again, if we consider how in place of these, within these two years, have succeeded, for unity, division, for order, confusion, for purity of worship, outward contempt; for the power of godliness, atheism and profaneness; for purging of the ministry, judicatories

only Israel in the letter, they had not children's manners. O that it might not be said of the most part of you, that ye are not children of God, and that that is your blot and shame! It is the shame of rulers not to be the children of God. They are wise, they are active, they are noble, but one spot disgraceth all, one fly maketh their ointment to stink, they are not gracious, many of them, but sons of men at the farthest reckoning, are not begotten again to a lively hope. "Not many wise, not many noble, not many rich." The scantiness of gracious men is the spot of judicatories,²⁷² that there are many children of the world, but few children of light in them. O how beautiful and glorious would judicatories be, if all the members were children of light! What glory would there be, if all of them did shine and enlightened one another! But what beauty or comeliness, what majesty can be in rulers or judicatures, when the image of God is not in them! This is also the spot of assemblies, synods, presbyteries, that there are few godly ministers. Alas, that this complaint should be, even among

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ut supra, pp. 11, 12). The protesters, moreover, are found complaining at this period, "how gracious and well qualified elders are removed and kept out from church judicatories, and ignorant and profane persons brought in, and more endeavoured to be brought in in their room, how gifted and gracious young men are debarred from entering into the ministry, and a door is opened to others, whereof some are loose and profane, and many are ignorant and strangers to the work of the Lord upon their own hearts."—Letter from Protesters, subscribed in the name of many ministers, &c. met at Edinburgh, 17th of March 1653, by Mr. Andrew Cant, p. 6. See what is said in reply to this, in "The Asserter's Answer," printed in the same year, p. 18.—*Ed.*]

and armies, sinful mixtures; for zeal, lukewarmness and toleration,—it is too palpable that we are far gone on in the way of declining, having lost much of that which we had attained, and that which remains being ready to die."—*Ed.*]

²⁷² [The author and the other protesters disapproved not only of the proceedings of the civil and ecclesiastical judicatures, but of the composition of these courts, after the act of classes had been rescinded on the 30th of May, 1651. In consequence of the repeal of this act, they who, on account of what was in the language of the times called malignancy, had formerly been excluded from their places in the Scottish parliament, were allowed to take possession of their seats, by signing a bond, the terms of which the parliament prescribed. This the protesters considered to be wrong as a matter both of policy and principle. They

those whose office it is to beget many children to God! How few of them are begotten, or have the image of their Father! And thus church assemblies have no beauty, such as the courts of Jesus Christ should have. O that we were in love with Christianity and grace; that it were our grand question, how shall I be put among the children? The Lord seems to wonder at it, and make a question of it, How can such as we be put among the children? Jer. iii. 19. But he answers it himself, “Thou shalt call me, My Father, and shall not turn away from me.” There is no more to do, but to take with²⁷³ your wanderings and wrongs done to God, embrace him in Jesus Christ, and he becomes your Father; and if ye be children, sure ye will resolve to abide in your Father's house, and turn no more to a present world, or your former lusts.

They are a “perverse and crooked generation.” What pleasure hath the Lord in speaking thus, when he upbraids none? Certainly, in a manner it is drawn out of him. Would he object our faults, if we did not defend them by obstinacy? Perverseness and crookedness is obstinacy and incorrigibleness against mercies and judgments,—“that that which is crooked cannot be made straight,” saith Solomon. Then doth the Lord take notice of sins, when men refuse to return, and so maintain their sins. It is this which heightens provocations, and makes out the controversy,—perverseness in sin. It is not ordinary common infirmities that the Lord punisheth, either in a land or person; but when

likewise declared the assembly, which in July, 1651, met at St. Andrews, and afterwards adjourned to Dundee, and also that which was held in Edinburgh, in July, 1652, to be “unlawful and corrupt,” adding, that “although with the renewing of the national covenant, and with the casting out of prelates, and the corruptions introduced by them, the Lord was graciously pleased to give repentance to not a few who were involved in that defection; yet, since that time, there hath always remained a corrupt party of insufficient, scandalous, and ill-affected ministers in the kirk, enemies to the power of godliness, and obstructors to the work of reformation, ... that party perceiving that they were not able to endure trial in a time of reformation and purging, began the last year to lift up their heads, and speak a language of their own,” &c. (Representation,

²⁷³ [Acknowledge.—*Ed.*]

infirmities are discovered by the light of the word, when the Lord useth means to reclaim men in his providence, and yet no means prevail, then are they reckoned perverse. Now, perverseness is not the spot of his children: the child of God daily bows and folds to him, receives challenges from him, takes with iniquity and yields unto God. O that this title might not be written above the head of this generation deservedly—“This is a perverse and crooked generation!”

Sermon V.

Psal. lxxiii. 28.—“But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.”

After man's first transgression, he was shut out from the tree of life, and cast out of the garden, by which was signified his seclusion and sequestration from the presence of God, and communion with him: and this was in a manner the extermination of all mankind in one, when Adam was driven out of paradise. Now, this had been an eternal separation for any thing that we could do, (for we can do nothing but depart by a perpetual backsliding, and make the distance every day wider,) except it had pleased the Lord, of his infinite grace, to condescend to draw near to us in gracious promises and offers of a Redeemer. If he had not made the first journey from heaven to earth, by sending his only Son, we should have given over the hope of returning from earth to heaven. But he hath taken away the greatest part of that distance, in drawing near to our nature; yea, in assuming our flesh into the fellowship of his glorious divinity. He hath stooped so low to meet with us, and offered himself the trysting place²⁷⁴ between God and us, a fit meeting-place, where there is a conjunction of the interests of both parties, and now, there is no more to do, but to draw near to God in Jesus Christ, since he hath made the great journey to come down to us. We have not that infinite gulf of satisfaction to justice to pass over, we have not the height of divine Majesty, as he is infinitely above us, and offended with us, to climb up unto. Certainly we could not but fall into the lake that is below us, if we were to aim so high. But the Lord hath been pleased to descend to us, in our mean capacity in the flesh, and fill up the immeasurable gulf

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²⁷⁴ [See note, page 126.—*Ed.*]

of justice by the infinite merits and sufferings of his Son in our flesh. And now he invites us, he requests us, to come to him in his Son and have life. We are not come to mount Sinai, that might not be touched, that burnt with fire and tempest, where there were terrible sights and intolerable noises. I say, such a God we might have had to do with a consuming fire, instead of an instructing light,—a devouring fire, instead of a healing Sun of righteousness, considering that there is nothing in us which is not fit and prepared fuel for everlasting burnings. But we are come—and that is the eternal wonder of angels—unto mount Sion to be citizens in the city of God and fellow citizens with blessed angels and glorified spirits, to peace and reconciliation with him who was our judge. And if you ask how this may be? I answer, because we have one Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, to come to, whose blood crieth louder for pardon of sinners than all men's transgressions can cry for punishment of sinners, Heb. xii. 18-20, &c.

Let us then consider the first step and degree of union with God,—it consists in faith in Jesus Christ. This is the first motion of the soul in drawing near to God, for, as there is no remission without blood, so no access to God without a mediator. For if you consider what is in Jesus Christ, you will find that which will engage the desire of the heart, as also that which will give boldness and confidence to act that desire. Eternal life is promised and proposed in him,—he offers rest to weary souls, and hath it to give. That which we ignorantly and vainly seek elsewhere, here it is to be found. For personal excellencies, he is the chief infinitely beyond comparison, and for suitableness to us and our necessities, all the gospel is an expression of it, so that he is presented in the most attractive drawing manner that can be imagined. And then, when the desires are inflamed, yet if there be no oil of hope to feed it, it will soon cool again. Therefore, take a view again, and you may have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. There was some kind of distance

kept in the Old Testament,—none but the high priest might enter into the holiest place, but the entry of our High Priest into it, that is, into heaven, hath made it patent to all that come to him and apply his blood. There is a new and living way by the holy flesh of Christ, consecrated and made, of infinite value and use, by the divinity of his person, and, therefore, having such a one of our kindred so great with God, we may draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, having our consciences sprinkled, &c, Heb. x. 18-20, &c. Now, since the way is made plain to you, and the entry is opened up in the gospel, do you not find your hearts stir within you to draw near to him? Do you not find a necessity of making peace by such a Mediator? O that ye knew the great distance between God and your natures, and what the hazard is, “Lo! they that are far from thee shall perish,” then certainly you would take hold of this invitation, and be easily drawn unto Jesus Christ. But unto you who have adventured to draw near for pardon of sin in Christ, I would recommend unto you that you would draw yet nearer to God. After that the partition wall of wrath and condemnation is removed, yet there is much darkness in your minds and corruption in your natures, that separates from him, I mean, intercepts and disturbs that blessed communion you are called unto. Therefore, I would exhort you, as James, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you,” chap. iv. 8, and that, wherein this most consists, is in studying that purification of our natures, that cleansing of our hearts from guile, and our hands from offences, by which our souls may draw towards a resemblance of God. This access and drawing near to God in assimilation and conformity of nature is the great design of the gospel. “Be ye holy, for I am holy. Now, ye are agreed, walk with him,” (Amos iii. 3), as Enoch “walked with God,” Gen. v. 24, that is, labour in all your conversation to set him before your eyes, and to study to be well pleased with him in all things and to please him in all, to conform yourselves to his pleasure in every thing. And this communion in walking especially consists in that

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communication of the spirit with God in prayer, this is the nearest and sweetest approach when the soul is lifted up to God, and is almost out of itself in him, and this being the ordinary exercise and motion of the soul, it exceedingly advances in the first point of nearness, that is, in conformity with God. Drawing often near in communion with him in prayer, makes the soul draw towards his likeness, even as much converse of men together will make them like one another.

Now, for the commendation of this, "It is good." What greater evil can be imagined than separation from the greatest good? And what greater good, than accession to the greatest good? Every thing is in so far happy and well, as it is joined with, and enjoyeth, that which is convenient for it. Light is the perfection of the earth, remove it, and what a disconsolate and unpleasant thing is it! Now, truly there is nothing suitable to the immortal spirit of man but God, and, therefore, all its happiness or misery must be measured by the access or recess, nearness or distance, of that infinite goodness. Therefore, is it any wonder, that all they that go a whoring from him perish, as every man's heart doth? For we are infinitely bound by creation, by many other bonds stronger than wedlock, to consecrate and devote ourselves wholly to God, but this is treacherously broken. Every man turns aside to vanity and lies, and is guilty of heart whoredom from God, and spiritual idolatry, because the affection that should be preserved chaste for him is prostitute to every base object. So then, this divorcement of the soul from God cannot but follow thereupon, even an eternal eclipse of true and real life and comfort. And whoever draws back from the fountain of life and salvation, cannot but find elsewhere perdition and destruction, Heb. x. ult. My beloved, let us set thus aside all other things which are the pursuits and endeavours of the most part of men. Men's natural desires are carried towards health, food, raiment, life and liberty, peace, and such like, but the more rational sort of men seek after some shadow of wisdom and virtue. Yet the

generality of men, both high and low, have extravagant illimited desires towards riches, pleasure, preferment, and all that we have spoken is enclosed within the narrow compass of men's abode here, which is but for a moment. So that, if it were possible that all these forementioned desires and delights of men could attend any man for the space of an hundred years, though he had the concurrence of the streams of the creatures to bring him in satisfaction, though all the world should bow to him and be subject to the beck of his authority without stroke of sword, though all the creatures should spend their strength and wit upon his satisfaction, yet do but consider what that shall be within some few years, when he shall be spoiled of all that attendance, denuded of all external comforts, when the fatal period must close his life, peace, health, and all, and his poor soul also, that was drowned in that gulf of pleasure, shall then find itself robbed of its precious treasure, that is, God's favour, and so remain in everlasting banishment from his presence. Do ye think, I say that man were happy? Nay! O happy Lazarus, who is now blessed in Abraham's bosom, who enjoys an eternity of happiness for a moment's misery! But, my beloved, you know that it is not possible even to attain to that imagined happiness here. All the gain that is found is not able to quit the cost and expense of grief, vexation, care, toiling and sweating that is about them.

But if ye would be persuaded, there is that to be found easily, which you trouble yourselves seeking elsewhere, and believe me, though the general apprehension of men be,—that peace, plenty, preferment, and satisfaction in this life, to compensate their pains, are more easily attainable than fellowship and communion with God, yet I am persuaded that there is nothing more practicable than the life of religion. God hath condemned the world under vanity and a curse, and that which is crooked can by no art or strength be made straight, but he hath made this attainable by his gracious promises, even a blessed life, in approaching near to himself, the fountain of all life. And this is a certain good, an

universal good, and an eternal good. It will not disappoint you as other things do, of which you have no assurance for all your toilings. This is made more infallible to a soul that truly seeks it in God. It is as certain that they cannot be ashamed through frustration, as that he is faithful. And then it is an universal good, one comprehensive of all, one eminently and virtually all things created, to be joined to the infinite all fulness of God. This advanceth the soul to a participation of all that is in him. This is health, Psalm xlii. 11. Prov. iii. 8. This is light, John viii. 12. It is life, (John xi. 25,) liberty, (John viii. 36,) food and raiment, (Isa. lxi. 10, and John iv. 14,) and what not? It is profit, pleasure, preferment in the superlative degree, and not scattered in so many various streams which divide and distract the heart, but all combined in one. It is the true good of both soul and body, and so the only good of man. And lastly, it is eternal, to be coetaneous with thy soul. Of all other things it may be said, "I have seen an end of them," they were and are not. But this will survive time, and all the changes of it, and then it will begin to be perfect, when all perfection is at an end. Now, from all this, I would exhort you in Jesus Christ to ponder those things in your hearts, and consider them in reference to your own souls, that ye may say with David, "It is good for me to draw near to God."

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That which all men seek after, is happiness and well being. Men pursue nothing but under the notion of good, and to complete that which may be called good, there is required some excellency in the thing itself, and then a conveniency and suitableness to us, and these jointly draw the heart of man. But the great misery is, that there is so much ignorance and misapprehension of that which is truly good, and then, when any thing of it is known, there is so little serious consideration and application of it to ourselves, and this makes the most part of men wander up and down in the pursuit of divers things, which are not that true good of the soul, and set their hearts on that which is not, until they find their hearts fall down as wanting a foundation and then they turn about

again to some other vanity. And so the wanderings and strayings of men are infinite, because the by ways are innumerable, though the true way be but one. Yea, the turnings and toilings of one man are various and manifold because he quickly loses the scent of happiness in every way he falls into and therefore must turn to another. And thus men are never at any solid setting about this great business, never resolute wherein this happiness consists, nor peremptory to follow it, but they fluctuate upon uncertain apprehensions, and diverse affections, until the time and date of salvation expire, and then they must know certainly and surely the inevitable danger and irrecoverable loss they have brought themselves, to, who would not take notice of the sure way, both of escaping wrath and attaining happiness while it was to be found.

Well, then, this is the great business we have here to do, yea, to make the circle the larger, it is that great business we have to do in this world, to know wherein the true well being and eternal welfare of our souls consist and by any means to apply unto that, as the only thing necessary, in regard of which, all other things are ceremonies, circumstances, and indifferent things. And to guide us in this examination and application, here is one man, who, having almost made shipwreck upon the rocks which men commonly dash upon, and being by the Lord led safely by, and almost arrived at the coast of true felicity, he sets out a beacon, and lights a candle to all who shall follow him, to direct them which way they shall steer their course. Examples teach more effectually than rules. It is easy for every man to speak well upon this point in general, and readily all will acknowledge that here it is, and nowhere else. But yet all this is outcried by the contrary noise of every man's practice. These general grants of truth are recalled in the conversations of men, therefore they cannot have much influence upon any man. But when we hear one speak, and see him walk so too, when we have the example of a most wise man, who wanted not these worldly expectations which other

men have, so that he not only propones it to us, but after much serious advisement, after mature consideration of all that can be said of the wicked's best estate, and the godly's worst, setting down resolute conclusions for himself—"It is good for me to draw near to God," yea, so determinate in it, that if none of the world should be of that mind, he would not change it,—though all should walk in other ways, he would choose to be rather alone in this, than in the greatest crowd of company in any other. Now, I say, when we have such a copy cast us, a man of excellent parts in sobriety and sadness, choosing that way, which all in words confess to be the best, should not this awake us out of our dreams and raise us up to some more attention and consideration of what we are doing? The words, you see, are the holy resolution of a holy heart, concerning that which is the chiefest good. You see the way to happiness, and you find the particular application of that to David's soul, or of his soul to it. We shall speak a word of the thing itself, then of the commendation of it, then of the application of it.

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For the thing itself,—drawing near to God,—it gives us some ground to take a view of the posture in which men are found by nature, far off from God. Our condition by nature I cannot so fitly express, as in the apostle's words, (Eph. ii. 12,)—"Without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." A deplorable estate indeed, hopeless and helpless! No hope in it, that is the extremity of misery, the refuse of all conditions. "Without Christ, and without God." Oh! these are words of infinite weight: without those, without whom it is simply impossible to be happy, and without whom it is not possible but to be miserable,—without the fountain of light, life, and consolation, without which there is nothing but pure darkness, without any beam of light; nothing but death, without the least breathing of life, nothing but vexation, without the least drop of consolation. In a word, without these, and wanting these, whom,

if you want, it were good to be spoiled of all being, to be nothing, if that could be, or never to have been any thing. Men will seek death, and cannot find it. O what a loss and deprivation is the loss of God, which makes death more desirable than life, and not to be at all, infinitely preferable to any being! Now, it is true, that the bringing in of multitudes within the pale of the visible church, is some degree of access and nearness to God, for then they become citizens as to external right, in the commonwealth of the church, and have the offers of the promises made to them, in respect of which visible standing, the apostle speaks of the whole church of Ephesus, “but now ye are made near who were far off,” (ver. 13,) notwithstanding, that many of them were found afterwards to have left their first love, Rev. ii. But yet, beloved, to speak more inwardly, and as your souls stand in the sight of God, the generality of those who are near hand in outward ordinances are yet far off from God in reality,—“without God and without Christ,” as really, as touching any soul-feeling, as those who are altogether without. The bond of union and peace was broken in paradise, sin dissolved it, and broke off that nearness and friendship with God, and from that day to this day, there hath been an infinite distance and separation betwixt man and God. The steps and degrees of it are many. There is darkness and blindness in men's minds. Such ignorance naturally possesseth the multitude, that it wholly alienates them from the life of God, Eph. iv. 18. For what fellowship can light, that pure light, have with such gross darkness as is among us? This certainly is the removal of that Sun of Righteousness from our souls, or the imposition of the clouds of transgression, that makes it so dark a night in the souls of men. And then there is nothing but enmity and desperate wickedness in the heart of man, and this keeps the stronghold of the affections, Rom. viii., Jer. xvii. There cannot be a further elongation or separation of the soul from God, than to turn so opposite, in all inclinations and dispositions, to his holy will, for the distance between God and us is not local in

the point of place, for whither shall we go from him who is everywhere? And thus he is near hand every one of us, but it is also real in the deformity and repugnancy of our natures to his holy will. But add unto this, that being thus separated in affection, and disjoined, as it were, in natural dispositions, we cannot draw near to God in any ordinance,—as the word, prayer, &c. Though we may, as that people, draw near with our lips, and ask of him our duty, and seem to delight to know him, yet there is this natural incapacity and crookedness in the heart of man, that it cannot truly approach unto the Father of spirits with any soul-desire and delight. But their hearts are removed far from me, Isa. xxix. 13, Matt. xv. 8. I think men might observe that their souls act not in religious business as they should, but that they remove their souls many miles distant from their bodies,—and they cannot keep any constancy in this approach of prayer to God, cannot walk with him in their conversation, or carry him along in their meditation. But there is one point of estrangement and separation superadded to all, that there is no man can come near to God without an oblation and offering of peace, that there is no approaching to him, but as to a continuing fire, except we can bring a sacrifice to appease, and a present to please Him for our infinite offences. There the difference stands,—we cannot draw near to walk together, till we be agreed. And, truly, this unto man is impossible, for we have nothing so precious as the redemption of our souls,—nothing can compensate infinite wrongs, or satisfy infinite justice. Now, this seems to make our nearness again desperate, and to put men furthest off from hope.

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Notwithstanding, this is the very purpose of the gospel, preached from the beginning of the world, to remove that distance, and to take impediments of meeting out of the way; for that great obstruction, the want of a sacrifice and ransom, the Lord hath supplied it, he himself hath furnished it; and it was the great design carried on from the beginning of the world. But as the sun, the nearer he is, the more the earth is enlightened: so here,

first some dawning of light appears, as a messenger of hope, to tell that the Redeemer shall come,—that the true sacrifice shall be slain; then still the nearer his own appearing, the clearer are the manifestations of him, and the great design is more opened up, till at length he breaks out in glory from under a cloud, and shows himself to the world, to be that Lamb of God that should take away the sins of the world. And now, as the apostle to the Hebrews speaks, chap. vii. 19, “The law hath made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh to God.” All the sacrifices and shadows that were under the law did but point at this perfect ransom; and the way of access to God through a Mediator was not so clear; but now the matter is made as hopeful as is possible,—the partition-wall of the law's curses,—the hand-writing against us is removed on the cross,—the enmity slain,—the distance removed by the blood of the cross, being partly filled up by his descent into our nature, partly by his lower descent in our nature to suffer death. And this is the savoury oblation that we have to present to God, and may have boldness to come nigh because of it. And when once our access is made by the blood of Jesus Christ, then we are called and allowed to come still nigher, to cleave and adhere to him as our Father, to pray unto him, to walk with him. Then we should converse as friends and familiars together; then draw nigh to his light for illumination, and to him as the fountain of life for quickening, to place our delight and desire in him,—to forsake all other things, even our wills and pleasures, and to lose them, that they may be found in his; to converse much in his company, and be often in communication with him, and meditation upon him. This is the very design and substance of the gospel. It holds forth the way of making up the breach between man and God, of bringing you nigh who are yet afar off, and nearer who are near hand. O let us hearken to it!

Sermon VI.

Prov. xxvii. 1.—“Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

There are some peculiar gifts that God hath given to man in his first creation, and endued his nature with, beyond other living creatures, which being rightly ordered and improved towards the right objects, do advance the soul of man to a wonderful height of happiness, that no other sublunary creature is capable of. But by reason of man's fall into sin, these are quite disordered and turned out of the right channel; and, therefore, as the right improvement of them would make man happy, so the wrong employment of them loadens him with more real misery than any other creature. I mean, God hath given to man two notable capacities beyond other things;—one is, to know and reflect upon himself, and to consider what conveniency is in any thing towards himself,—what goodness or advantage redounds to himself from them, and in that reflection and comparison to enjoy what he hath; another is to look forward beyond the present time, and, as it were, to anticipate and prevent the slow motions of time, by a kind of foresight and providence. In a word, he is a creature framed unto more understanding than others, and so capable of more joy in present things, and more foresight of the time to come. He is made mortal, yet with an immortal spirit of an immortal capacity, that hath its eye upon the morrow,—upon eternity. Now, herein consists either man's happiness or misery, how he reflects upon himself, and what he chooseth for the matter of his joy and gloriation, and what providence he hath for the time to come. If those be rightly ordered, all is well; but if not, then woe unto him, there is more hope of a beast than of him.

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Man's nature inclines to boasting—to glorying in something, and this ariseth from some apprehended excellency or advantage, and so is originated in the understanding power of man, which

is far above beasts. Beasts find the things themselves, but they do not, they cannot reflect upon their own enjoyment of them, and therefore they are not capable of such pleasure; for the more distinct knowledge of things in relation to ourselves, the more delight ensueth upon it. Many creatures have singular qualities and virtues, but they are nothing the happier; for they know them not, and have no use of them, but are wholly destined to the use of man, who therefore is only said to enjoy them, because he only is capable of joy from them. And this, I suppose, may give us a hint at the absolute incomprehensible blessedness, self-complacency, and delight of God. It cannot but be immeasurably great, seeing the knowledge of himself and all creatures is infinite; he comprehends all his own power, and virtue, and goodness, and therefore his delight and rejoicing is answerable. There is a glorying and boasting then that is good, which man is naturally framed unto; and this is that which David expresses, Psal. xxxiv. 2, "My soul shall make her boast in God;" and Psal. xlv. 8, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." When the soul apprehends that all-sufficiency, and self-sufficient fulness of God; what infinite treasures of goodness, and wisdom, and power are in him, and so how suitable and convenient he is to the condition of the soul; what a sweet correspondence there is between his fulness and our emptiness—his mercy and our misery—his infiniteness and our unsuitableness; that there is in him to fill and overflow the soul: the apprehension of this cannot but in a manner perfume the soul with the delight. You find how the senses are refreshed, when they meet with their suitable object; how a pleasant smell refresheth the scent; how lively and beautiful colours are delightful to the eye. But much more here, God is the proportioned object of the immortal spirit; he corresponds to all its capacities, and fills it with unconceivable sweetness. But, my beloved, boasting and glorying in him, ariseth not only from the proportionableness and conveniency of him to our spirits; but this must be superadded,—propriety in him. Things are loved,

because excellent in themselves, or because they are our own; but we boast in nothing, we glory in nothing, but because it is both excellent in itself, and ours besides. It is the apprehended interest in any thing makes the soul rise and lift up itself after this manner,—to have such a one to be ours,—such a Lord to be our God,—one so high and sublime,—one so universally full, to be made over to thee; here is the immediate rise of the soul's gloriation. And truly, as there is nothing can be so suitable a portion, so there is nothing that can be so truly made ours as God. Of all things a believer hath, there is nothing so much his own as God,—nothing so indissolubly tied unto him,—nothing so inseparably joined. See Paul's triumph upon that account, Rom. viii. Nothing can truly be said to be the soul's own, but that which is not only coetaneous with it, that survives mortality, and the changes of the body, but likewise is inseparable from it. What a poor empty sound is all that can be spoken of him, till your souls be once possessed of him! it cannot make your hearts leap within you, but it cannot but excite and stir up a believer's heart.

Now there may be a lawful kind of gloriation, rejoicing in the works of God, consequent to the first, which is a little stream from that greater river which runs out from it, and flows into it again. A soul that truly apprehends God will take delight to view the works of God, which make such an expression of him, and are a part of the magnificence of our heavenly Father. But this is all in reference to him and not to ourselves; for then it degenerates and loseth its sweetness, when once it turns the channel towards the adorning of the creature. True boasting in God hath necessarily conjoined with it an humble and low esteem of a man's self, Psal. xxxiv. 2, "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." As humility and self-emptiness made David go out of himself, to seek satisfaction in God, and having found it, he boasts and triumphs, so there were none capable of understanding his triumph, or partaking with him in his delights, but the humble souls. Now

you may perceive how far this boasting here spoken of is degenerated from that, and so how far man's nature is spoiled,—“Boast not thyself,” &c. The true boasting we were created unto, hath a sufficient foundation, even such as will bear the weight of triumph, but that which men's spirits are now naturally set upon, cannot carry, cannot sound such gloriation, and therefore this boasting makes men ridiculous. If you saw a man glorying in rags, setting forth himself to be admired in them, or boasting in some vain, despicable, and base thing, you would pity him, or laugh at him as one distempered. The truth is, the natural man is mad, hath lost his judgment, and is under the greatest distraction imaginable since the fall. That fall hath troubled his brains, and they are never settled, till the new creation come to put all right again, and compose the heart of man. I say, all other distractions are but particular, in respect to particular things, but there is a general distraction over all mankind, in reference to things of most general and most eternal concernment. Now, fools and mad persons, they retain the same affections and passions that are in men, as anger, love, hatred, grief, joy, &c., but it is so much the worse, since the judgment, which is the only directive and guide of them, is troubled. Now they are set on wrong objects, they run at random, and are under no kind of rule, and so they hurry the poor man and put him in a pitiful case. Now indeed so it is with us,—since sin entered, the soul is wholly turned off God, the only true object of delight, in which only there can be solid gloriation. The mind of man is blinded, and his passions are strong, and so they are now spent upon empty vanities, and carried headlong without judgment. Oftentimes he glories in that which is his shame, and boasts in that which is his sin, and which will cause nothing but shame, the more weight be laid upon it. There is in man an oblivion and forgetfulness of God, and in this darkness of the ignorance of God, everything is apprehended or misapprehended as present sense suggests, and as it fancies a conveniency or excellency. Thither the soul is carried, as if it

were something, and then it is but the east-wind. There is nothing beside God that is a fit matter of boasting, because it lacks one of the essential ingredients—either it is not suitable to the soul, or it is not truly our own. There wants either proportion to the vast capacity and void of our desires, and so cannot fill up that really, but only in a deluding dream or imagination, and therefore will certainly make the issue rather vexation than gloriation, or there wants property and interest in them, for they are changeable and perishing in their own nature, and by divine appointment, that they cannot be conceived to be the proper good of the immortal soul. They cannot be truly our own, because they will shortly cease to be, and before they cease to be, they may in a moment cease to be ours. That tie of interest is a draw knot, whatsoever catcheth hold of the end of it looseth it.

The object of degenerate and vicious boasting is here held out: “Boast not thyself,” or “of thyself.” Whatsoever be the immediate matter of it, this is always the ultimate and principal object. Since man fell from God, self is the centre of all his affections and motions. This is the great idol, the Diana, that the heart worships, and all the contention, labour, clamour, and care that is among men, is about her silver shrines, so to speak, something relating to the adorning or setting forth this idol. It is true, since the heart is turned from that direct subordination to God, the affections are scattered and parted into infinite channels, and run towards innumerable objects, for the want of that original unity, which comprehends in its bosom universal plenty, must needs breed infinite variety, to supply the insatiable appetite of the soul. And this might be enough to convince you, that your souls are quite out of course, and altogether wandered from the way of happiness because they are poured out on such a multiplicity of insufficient, unsatisfying things, every one of which is narrow, limited and empty, and the combination and concurrence of all being a thing either impossible or improbable to be attained. But we may conceive that men's affections put themselves into three

great heads of created things, one of which runs towards the goods or perfections of the mind, another towards the goods or advantages of the body, and a third towards those things that are without us, *bona fortunæ*, riches and honour, &c. Now each of these sends out many streams and rivulets as so many branches from it, but all of them, though they seem to have a direct course towards other things, yet wind about and make a circular progress to the great ocean of self-estimation, whence they issued at first. [389]

You may find all of these, (Jer. ix. 23,) falling under a divine interdiction and curse, as being opposite to glorying in God. While men reflect within themselves, and behold some endowments and abilities in their minds beyond other men, of which wisdom is the principal, and here stands for all inward advantages or qualifications of the soul in that secret reflection and comparison, there is a tacit gloriation, which yet is a loud blasphemy in God's ears. It is impossible almost for a man to recognise²⁷⁵ and review his own parts such as ingine,²⁷⁶ memory, understanding, sharpness of wit, readiness of expression, goodness and gentleness of nature, but that in such a review, the soul must be puffed up, apprehending some excellency beyond other men, and taking complacency in it, which are the two acts of robbery that are in gloriation and boasting. Commonly this arises from unequal comparisons. We please ourselves that we are *deterioribus meliores*, "better than the worst," and build self-estimation upon the ruins of other men's disadvantages, as if it were any point of praise in us that they are worse, like men that stand upon a height, and measure their own altitude, not from their just intrinsic quantity, but taking the advantage of the

²⁷⁵ [Recognise.—*Ed.*]

²⁷⁶ [That is, genius or ingenuity (from *ingenium*, Lat.) "But gif corporall doth be commoun to all. Why will ye jeopardde to lois eternall life to eschap that which neither ryche nor pure, neither wise nor ignorant, proud of stomoke nor febill of corage, and finally, no earthlie creature by no craft or engine of man, did ever avoid?" Letter of John Knox from Dieppe.—*Ed.*]

bottom, whereby we deceive our own selves. I remember a word of Solomon's, that imports how dangerous a thing it is for a man to reflect upon, or search into his own glory, Prov. xxv. 27. "It is not good to eat much honey, so for men to search their own glory is not glory."

To surfeit in the excess of honey or sweet things drives to vomit, and cloyes the stomach, ver. 16. Though it be sweet, there is great need, yea, the more need of caution and moderation about it, so for a man either to search into his own breast, and reflect upon his own excellencies, to find matter of gloriation or studiously to affect it among others, and inquire into other men's account and esteem of him, it is no glory—it is a dangerous and shameful folly. Now this is not only incident to natural spirits, upon their consideration of their own advantages, but even to the most gracious, upon the review of spiritual endowments and prerogatives. It is such a subtle and insinuating poison that it spreads universally, and infects the most precious ointments of the soul, and, as it were, poisons the very antidote and counterpoison. So forcible is this that was first dropped into man's nature by Satan's envy, that it diffuses itself even into humility, and humiliation itself, and makes a man proud because of humility. The apostle found need to caveat this, Rom. xi. 18-20, "Boast not," "be not high minded, but fear,"—"thou standest by faith," and chap. xii. 16, "Mind not high things," "be not wise in your own conceits," and 1 Cor. viii. 2, "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing as he ought to know." All which gives us a plain demonstration of this, that self gloriation and complacency, in reflection upon ourselves, is both the greatest ignorance and the worst sacrilege. It is an argument of greater ignorance for a man to think he knows than not to know indeed. It is the worst and most dangerous ignorance, to have such an opinion of our knowledge, gifts, and graces, for that puffs up, swells with empty wind, and makes a vain tumour and then it is great sacrilege, a robbing of the honour that is due to God. For what hast thou

that thou hast not received? That appropriating of these things to ourselves as ours, is an impropriating of them from their right owner, that is, God, 1 Cor. iv. 7. For if thou didst apprehend that thou received it, where then is glorying? I would desire then, that whenever you happen to reflect upon yourselves, and observe any advantage, either natural or spiritual, in yourselves, that you may think this word sounds from heaven, "Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord." Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and so not the learned man in his learning, nor the eloquent man in his speaking nor the ingenious man in his quickness nor the good man in his goodness. All these things though sweet, yet will surfeit, gloriation in them is neither glory nor gain, neither honourable nor profitable.

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Then the stream of gloriation flows in the channel of bodily gifts as might, strength of body, beauty and comeliness of parts, and other such endowments which, besides that it is as irrational as the former, is a sacrilegious impropriation of the most free and arbitrary gifts of God to ourselves, it is withal absurd, in that it is not so truly of ourselves. These bodily ornaments and endowments do not perfect or better a man as a man, they are but the alterable qualities of the vessel or tabernacle of a man, in which other baser creatures may far excel him. How many comely and beautiful souls are lodged within obscure and ugly cottages or bodies of clay, which will be taken down! And the great advantage is, that the soul of a man, which is a man, cannot be defiled from without, that is, from the body, though never so loathsome or deformed, the vilest body cannot mar the soul's beauty. But then, on the other hand, the most beautiful body is defiled and deformed by the filthiness of sin in the soul, and O how many deformed and ugly souls dwell in beautiful and comely bodies, which truly is no other thing than a devil in an image well carved and painted. Christians, you had need to correct this within you, even a self complacency, joined with despising of others in the consideration of those external gifts

God hath given you. What an abominable thing is it to cast up in reproach, or in your hearts to despise any other for natural imperfections, such as blindness, lameness, deformity or such like? Let that word sound always in your ears, Who made thee to differ from another? “Boast not thyself, &c.” But there is as strong a stream runs in the third channel as in any, gloriation arising from those outward and extrinsic differences that the providence of God makes among men, such as riches, honour, gain, &c. You find such men, Psalm xlix. 6, Prov. xviii. 11, and x. 15. That which a godly man makes the name of the Lord,—that is, the ground and foundation of his confidence for present and future times,—that the most part of men make their riches, that is, their strong city, and their high wall, their hope and expectation is reposed within it. This is the tower or wall of defence against the injuries and calamities of the times, which most part of men are building, and if it go up quickly, if they can get these several stones or pieces of gain scraped together into a heap they straightway imagine themselves safe, as under a high wall. But there is no truth in it, it is all but in their imagination, and therefore it comes often down about their ears, and offends them, instead of being a defence. Let a man creep, as it were, from off the ground where the poor lie, and get some advantage of ground above them, or be exalted to some dignity or office, and so set by the shoulders higher than the rest of the people, or yet grow in some more abundance of the things at this life, and strange it is, what a vanity or tumour of mind instantly follows! He presently thinks himself somebody, and forgetting either who is above him, to whom all are worms creeping and crawling on the footstool, or what a sandy foundation he stands upon himself, he begins to take some secret complacency in himself, and to look down upon others below him. He applauds, as it were, unto himself, and takes it in evil part to want the approbation and *plaudite* of others. Then he cannot so well endure affronts and injuries as before, he is not so meek and condescending to his

equals or interiors. While he was poor he used entreaties, but now he answers roughly, (Prov. xviii. 23,) as Solomon gives the character of him. How many vain and empty gloriations are there about the point of birth and place, and what foolish contentions about these, as if it were children struggling among themselves about their order and rank! There is no worth in these things, but what fancy and custom impose upon them and yet poor creatures boast in these empty things. The gentlemen despise citizens, the citizens contemn the poor countrymen, and yet their bloods in a basin have no different colours, for all this hot contention about blood and birth. “Boast not of thyself.” Nay, to speak properly, this is not thyself,—*Qui genus laudat suum, aliena jactat.*²⁷⁷ Such parents, and such a house are nothing of thy own; these are mere extrinsic things, which are neither an honour to unworthy men, nor a disgrace to one who is worthy.

You see, beloved in the Lord, what is now the natural posture or inclination of our souls in this degenerate and fallen estate. As the rivers of paradise have changed their channels and course since the fall, so hath man's affections, and so hath his gloriation, so that it may be truly said, that our glory is our shame and not our glory. Many glory in iniquity and sin, (Psal. x. 3, and xciv. 4), but that shall undoubtedly be their shame and confusion before men and angels. How many godless persons will glory in swearing heinous and deep oaths, and some have contended about the victory in it! You account it a point of gallantry, but this triumph is like the devils in hell upon the devouring of souls. Some boast of drinking, and being able to drink others under the table, but we should be humbled and mourn for such abominations. Certain I am, that many boast of wicked designs, and malicious projects against their neighbours, if they can accomplish them. They account their glory not to take a wrong without giving a greater, nor to suffer an evil word without twenty worse in recompense. [391]

²⁷⁷ [That is, “He who cries up his descent boasts of that which is another's.”—*Ed.*]

Alas! this boasting will one day be turned into gnashing of teeth, and this gloriating into that gnawing and ever-tormenting worm of conscience. And what will ye do in the day of that visitation? And where shall be your glory? But the most part glory and boast in things that profit not, and will become their shame, because they glory in them, that is, those gifts of God, outward or inward, temporal or spiritual, wherein there is any advancement above others; unto whom I would seriously commend this sentence to be pondered duly, "Boast not" of thyself. Whatsoever thou art, or whatsoever thou hast, boast not of thyself for it, think not much of thyself because of it. Though there be a difference in God's donation, yet let there be none in thy self estimation. Hast thou more wisdom and pregnancy of wit, or more learning than another? Think not more of thyself for that, than thou thinkest of the ignorant and unlearned who want it. Have that same reflection upon thine own unworthiness, that thou would think reasonable another that wants these endowments should have. Is there a greater measure of grace in thee? Boast not, reckon of thyself as abstracted and denuded of that, and let it not add to thy value or account of thyself, put not in that to make it down weight, and to make thee prefer thyself secretly to another. Whether it be some larger fortune in the world, or some higher place and station among men, or some abilities and perfections of body or mind, which may entice thee secretly to kiss thy hand, and bow down to thyself, yet remember that thou boast not, glory not in any thing but in the Lord. Let nothing of that kind conciliate more affection to thyself, or more contempt toward others. Let not any thing of that kind be the rule of thy self judging, but rather entertain the view of the other side of thyself, that is the worst, and keep that most in thy eye, that thou may only glory in God. If thou be a gentleman, labour to be as humble in heart as thou thinkest a countryman or poor tenant should be, if thou be a scholar, be as low in thy own sight as the unlearned should be, if rich, count not thyself any whit better than the poor, yea, the

higher God sets thee in place, or parts, the lower thou oughtest to set thyself. “Boast not” of thyself, nor any thing in thyself, or belonging to thyself, for the property of all good is taken from us since the fall, and is fallen into God's hand since we forfeited it, and there is nothing now properly ours but evil,—that is our self.

Sermon VII.

Prov. xxvii. 1.—“Boast not thyself of to morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

[392] As man is naturally given to boasting and gloriation in something (for the heart cannot want some object to rest upon and take complacency in, it is framed with such a capacity of employing other things), so there is a strong inclination in man towards the time to come, he hath an immortal appetite, and an appetite of immortality; and therefore his desires usually stretch farther than the present hour, and the more knowledge he hath above other creatures, the more providence he hath and foresight of the time to come. And so he often anticipates future things by present joy and rejoicing in them, as he accelerates in a manner by his earnest desires and endeavours after them. Now, if the soul of man were in the primitive integrity, and had as clear and piercing an eye of understanding as once it had, this providence of the soul would reach to the furthest period in time, that is, to eternity, which is the only just measure of the endurance of any immortal spirit. But since the eye of man's understanding is darkness, and his soul disordered, he cannot see afar off, nor so clearly by far. He is now, as you say, sand blind,—can see nothing at such a distance as beyond the bounds of time, can see nothing but at hand.

“To-morrow!” This is the narrow sphere of poor man's comprehension, all he can attain unto is to be provident for the present time. I call it ill present, even that which is to come of our time, because, in regard of eternity, it hath no parts, it hath no flux or succession, it is so soon cut off as a moment, as the twinkling of an eye, and so, though a man could see the end of it, it is but a short and dim sight, it is as if a man could only behold that which is almost contiguous with his eye. These, then, are the two great ruins and decays of the nature of man, he is

degenerated from God to created things, and seeks his joy and rest in them, in which there is nothing but the contrary, that is, vexation. And then he is fallen from apprehension of eternity, and the poor soul is confined within the narrow bounds of time, so that now all his providence is to lay up some perishing things for some few revolutions of the sun, for some few morrows, after which, though an endless morrow ensue, yet he perceives it not, and provides not for it, and all his glorying and boasting is only upon some presumptuous confidence and ungrounded assurance of the stability of these things for the time to come, which the wise man finding much folly in, he leaves us this counsel, “Boast not thyself of to-morrow,”—with a most pungent reason, taken partly from the instability and inconstancy of all these outward things in which men fancy an eternity of joy, and partly from the ignorance we have of the future events,—“for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

This boasting is an evil so predominant among men, that I know not any more universal in its dominion, or more hurtful to us, or displeasing to God. If it could be so embowelled unto you, as that you might truly discern the many monstrous conceptions of atheism and irreligion that are in it, it were worth the while, but I shall not digress upon the general head, I had rather keep within the limits of the text. Self boasting, you see, is that which is here condemned, and the very name is almost enough to condemn the nature of it. But there is another particular added to restrict that, “of to-morrow.” Of all boastings the most irrational and groundless is that which arises from presumption of future things, which are so uncertain both in themselves and to us.

It is worth the observation, that whatever be the immediate and particular matter and occasion of men's gloriation, yet self is the great and ultimate object of it; it is self that men glory in, whatsoever created thing be the reason or occasion of it. “Boast not thyself of to morrow.” Here we might stand and take a look of the crookedness and perverseness of man's spirit since his

departure from God. Self love and pride were the first poison that the malice of Satan dropped into man's nature, and this is so strong and pestilent, that it has spread through the whole of mankind, and the whole in every man. Every one is infected, and all in every one. What are all the disordered affections in men but so many streams from this fountain? And from these do men's affections flow next, so that there is nothing left uncorrupted, and free of this abominable and vile ingredient, all flowing from self and returning to it again, which is both sacrilegious and unnatural. There is heinous sacrilege in it,—the spoiling of the glorious divine Majesty of his indubitable prerogative and incommunicable right of all the glory, and honour of his creature. There is no usurpation like this for the worm that crawls on the footstool to creep up to the throne, and, as it were, to king it there, to deify and adore itself, and gather in all the tribute of praise and glory and love, that is only due to the Lord God Almighty; and invert and appropriate these to ourselves, which is, as if the axe should boast itself, as if it were no iron, or the staff, as if it were no timber. Hence it is, that of all evils in man's nature, God hath the most perfect antipathy and direct opposition against pride and self love, because it is sacrilege and idolatry in the highest manner. It strikes at the sovereignty and honour of God's name, which is dear to him as himself, it sets up a vile idol in the choicest temple of God, that is, in the heart, and this is the abomination of desolation. Other evils strike against his holy will, but this peculiarly points at the very nature and being of the most high God, and so it is with child of blasphemy,—atheism is the very heart and life of it. And then it is most unnatural, and so monstrous and deformed. For, consider all the creation, though every one of them have particular inclinations towards their own proper ends, and so a happiness suitable to their own nature; yet how diverse, how contrary soever they be, there is no selfishness in them, they all concur and conspire to the good of the whole, and the mutual help of each other. If once that poison should

infect the material world, which hath spoiled the spiritual; let once such a selfish disposition or inclination possess any part of the world, and presently the order, harmony, beauty, pleasure, and profit of the whole world should be interrupted, defaced, and destroyed. Let the sun be supposed to boast itself of its light and influence, and so disdain to impart it to the lower world, and all would run into confusion. Again, I desire you but to take a view of this humour in another's person, (for we are more ready to see others evils than our own,) and how deformed is it? So vile is self-seeking and self boasting, that all men loathe it in others, and hide it from others. It disgraces all actions, how beautiful soever, it is the very bane of human society, that which looses all the links of it, and makes them cross and thwart one another.

But, alas! how much more easy is it, to point out such an evil in a deformed visage, than to discern it in ourselves, and how many will hate it in the picture, who love and entertain it in their own persons! Such deceitfulness is intermingled with most desperate wickedness. I verily believe that it is the predominant of every man, good and bad, except in so far as it is mortified by grace. O the turnings and windings of the heart upon itself, in all the most apparently direct motions towards God and the good of men! What serpentine and crooked circumgirations and reflections are there in the soul of man when the outward action and expression seems most regular and directed towards God's glory, and others edification! Whoever of you have any acquaintance with your own spirits cannot but know this, and be ashamed and confounded at the very thought of it. Self boasting, self complacency, self seeking, all those being of kin one to another, are insinuated into your best notions, and infect them with more atheism before God, than the strongest pious affection can instil of goodness into them. How often will men's actions and expressions be outwardly clothed with a habit of condescendency and self-denial! And many may declaim with such zeal and vehemency against this evil, and yet, *latet anquis*,

the serpent is in the bosom and his venom may be diffused into the heart, and the poison of self-seeking and self-boasting may run through the veins of humble-like carriage and passionate discourses for self denial. O that we could above all things establish that fundamental principle of Christianity in our hearts, even as we would be his disciples, truly and sincerely, and not in outward resemblance,—to deny ourselves, to renounce ourselves and our lusts, to make a whole resignation of our love, will, glory, and all to him, in whom to be lost it is only truly to find ourselves.

But, though man have this strange self idolizing humour, and a self glorying disposition, yet he is so poor and beggarly a creature, that he hath not sufficient matter within himself to give complacency to his heart, therefore he must borrow from all external things, and when there is any kind of propriety in, or title to them, then he glories in himself for them, as if they were truly in himself. We are creatures by nature most indigent, yet most proud, which is unnatural. No man is satisfied within himself (except the good man, Prov. xiv. 14), but he goes abroad to seek it at the door of every creature, and when there are some plumes or feathers borrowed from other birds, like that foolish bird in the fable, we begin to raise our crests, and boast ourselves, as if we had all these of our own, and were beholden to none, but as things that are truly our own will not be sufficient to feed this flame of gloriation, without the accession of outward things; so present things, and the present time, will not afford aliment enough, or fuel for this humour, without the addition of the morrow.

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“Boast not thyself of to-morrow.” No man's present possession satisfies him, without the addition of hope and expectation for the future, and herein the poverty of man's spirit appears, and the emptiness of all things we enjoy here, that our present revenue, as it were, will not content the heart. The present possession fills not up the vacuities of the heart, without the supply of our imaginations, by taking so much in upon the head of the morrow,

to speak so. As one prodigal and riotous waster, who cannot be served with his yearly income, but takes so much on upon his estate, upon the next year's income, before it come, begins to spend upon it, before it come itself, and then, when it comes, it cannot suffice itself, so the insatiable and indigent heart of man cannot subsist and feed its joy in complacency upon the whole world, if it were presently in its possession, without some accession of hopes and expectations for the time to come. Therefore the soul, as it were, anticipates and forestalls the morrow, and borrows so much present joy and boasting upon the head of it, which when it comes itself, perhaps it will not fill the hand of the reaper, let be²⁷⁸ pay for that debt of gloriation that was taken on upon its name, or compensate the expectation which was in it, see Job xi. 18, 20, viii. 13. Hope is like a man's house to him, but to many it is no better than a spider's web. We have then a clear demonstration of the madness and folly of men, who hang so much upon things without, and suffer themselves to be moulded and modelled in their affections, according to the variety of external accidents. First of all, consider the independence of all things upon us and our choice; there is nothing more unreasonable than to stir our passions upon that which falls not under our deliberation, as the most part of things to come are. What shall be to-morrow, what shall come of my estate, of my places; what event my projects and designs shall have,—this is not in my hand, these depend upon other men's wills, purposes, and actions, which are not in my power, and therefore, either to boast of glory upon that which depends upon the concurrence of so many causes unsubordinate to me, or to be vexed and disquieted upon the fore-apprehension of that which is not in my hand to prevent, is not only irreligious, as contrary to our Saviour's command, Matt. vi. 25, but unreasonable also, as that which even nature condemns. "Take not thought for to-morrow," and

²⁷⁸ [Much less.—*Ed.*]

so by consequent, “Boast not thyself of to-morrow,” and there is one argument from the vanity of such affections. “Thou canst not make one hair black, nor add one cubit to thy stature,” &c. To what purpose, then, are either those vexations or gloriations, which cannot prevent evil, nor procure good? Why should our affections depend upon others motions? This makes a man the greatest slave and captive, so that he hath not the dominion and power of himself. But the vanity of such affections is the more increased, if we consider that supreme eternal will, by which all these things are determined, and therefore, it is in vain for creatures to make themselves more miserable, or put themselves in a fool's paradise, which will produce more misery afterwards, and that, for those things which are bound up in that fatal chain of his eternal purpose. Then, in the next place, the folly of men appears from the inconstancy of these things. There is such an infinite variety of the accidents of providence, that it is folly for a man to presume to boast of any thing, or take complacency in it, because many things fall between the cup and the lip,²⁷⁹ the chalice and the chin, as the proverb is. There is nothing certain, but that all things are uncertain,—that all things are subject to perpetual motion, revolution, and change,—to-day a city, to-morrow a heap. And there is nothing between a great city and a heap but one day, nothing between a man and no man but one hour. Our life is subject to infinite casualties, it may receive the fatal stroke from the meanest thing, and most unexpected, it is a bubble floating upon the water, for this world is a watery element, in continual motion with storm; and in these, so many poor dying creatures rise up, and swim and float awhile, and are tossed up and down by the wind and wave; and the least puff of wind or drop of rain sends it back to its own element. We are a vapour appearing for a very little time—a creature of

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²⁷⁹ [This is a literal translation of a Greek proverb which is quoted by Aulus Gellius (Noct. Att. lib. xiii. cap. 17) and which has been rendered into Latin thus:—*Multa cadunt inter calicem labrumque supremum.*—Ed.]

no solidity—a dream—a shadow and appearance of something; and this dream or apparition is but for a little time, and then it vanisheth, not so much into nothing, for it was little distant from nothing before, but it disappears rather. All human affairs are like the spokes of a wheel, in such a continual circumgiration, as a captive king, who was drawing Sesostris's chariot, said, when he was looking often behind him. The king of Egypt, Sesostris, demanded for what end did he look so often about him? Says he, “I am looking to the wheel, musing upon the vicissitudes and permutations of it, how the highest parts are instantly the lowest.” And this word repressed the king's vain glory.²⁸⁰ Now, in this constant wheeling of outward things, which is the soul that enjoys true quiet and peace? Even that soul that is fixed, as it were, in the centre upon God, that hath its abode in him; though the parts without be in a continual violent motion, yet the centre of the wheel is at much peace, is not violently turned, but gently complies to the changes of the other. And then consider the madness of this,—“Thou knowest not, &c.” There are two reasons in the things themselves,—inconstancy, and independency on us; but this is as pressing as any,—our ignorance of them; they are wholly in the dark to us, as it were in the lower parts of the earth. As there is no more in our power but the present hour,—for to yesterday we are dead already, for it is past and cannot return, it

²⁸⁰ [Diod. Sic. Bibl. lib. i. p. 68.]

Venit ad occasum, mun lique extrema Sesostris,
Et Pharios currus regum cervicibus egit.
Lucan lib. x. ver. 276.

The farthest west our great Sesostris saw,
Whilst captive kings did his proud chariot draw.
May's Translation.

Sesostris was so much affected and humbled, by the delicate appeal of the enslaved monarch, that he immediately commanded him, and the other unhappy kings who were harnessed to his car, to be removed from it.—Theophylact Hist. Maurit. lib. vi. chap. ii. Joan Tzetz. Hist. Chibad. iii. 69.—*Ed.*]

is as it were buried in the grave of oblivion, and to to-morrow we are not yet born, for it is not come to the light, and we know not if ever it will come,—so there is no more in our knowledge but the present hour. The time past, though we remember it, yet it is without our practical knowledge, it admits of no reformation by it; and the time to come is not born to us, and it is all one as if we were not born to it. And indeed, in the Lord's disposing of all affairs under the sun, after this method, there is infinite wisdom and goodness both, though at the first view men would think it better that all things went on after an uniform manner, and that men knew what were to befall them. Yet, I say, God hath herein provided for his own glory and the good of men,—his own glory, while he hath reserved to himself the absolute dominion and perfect knowledge of his works, and exercises them in so great variety, that they may be seen to proceed from him; and for our good,—for what place were there for the exercise of many Christian virtues and graces, if it were not so? What place for patience, if there were no cross dispensations? What place for moderation, if there were no prosperity? If there were not such variety and vicissitude, how should the evenness and constancy of the spirit be known? Where should contentment and tranquillity of mind have place? For it is a calm in a storm properly, not a calm in a calm,—that is no virtue. If the several accidents of providence were foreseen by us, what a marvellous perturbation and disorder would it make in our duty! Who would do his duty out of conscience to God's command, to commit events to him? Now, there is the trial of obedience, to make us go by a way we know not, and resign ourselves to the all seeing providence, whose eyes run to and fro throughout the earth. Therefore that no grace may want matter and occasion of exercise; that no virtue may die out for want of fuel, or rust for lack of exercise, God hath thus ordered and disposed the world. There is no condition, no posture of affairs, in which he hath not left a fair opportunity for the exercising of some grace. Hath he shut up and precluded

the acting of one or many through affliction, then surely he hath opened a wide door, and given large matter for self denial, humility, patience, moderation, and these are as precious as any that look fairest. In a word, I think the very frame and method of the disposing of this material world speaks aloud to this purpose. You see, when you look below, there is nothing seen but the outside of the earth, the very surface of it only appears, and there your sight is terminated, but look above, and there is no termination, no bounding of the sight,—there are infinite spaces, all are transparent and clear without and within. Now, what may this present unto us? One says, it shows us that our affections should be set upon things above and not on things below, seeing below there is nothing but an outward appearance and surface of things,—the glory and beauty of the earth is but skin deep, but heavenly things are alike throughout, all transparent, nothing to set bounds to the affections; they are infinite, and you may enlarge infinitely towards them. I add this other consideration, that God hath made all things in time dark and opaque, like the earth. Look to them, you see only the outside of them, the present hour, and what is beyond it you know no more, than you see the bowels of the earth, but eternity is both transparent and conspicuous throughout, and infinite too. Therefore God hath made us blind to the one, that we should not set our heart, nor terminate our eyes upon any thing here, but he hath opened and spread eternity before us in the scriptures, so that you may read and understand your fortune,—your everlasting estate in it. He hath shut up temporal things and sealed them, and wills us to live implicitly, and give him the trust of them without anxious foresight, but eternity he hath unveiled and opened unto us. Certain it is, that no man, till he be fully possessed of God, who is an all sufficient good (Psal. iv.) can find any satisfaction in any present enjoyment, without the addition of some hope for the future. Great things without it will not content. For what is it all to a man if he have no assurance for the time to come?

And mean things with it will content. Great things with little hope and expectation, fill with more vexation instead of joy, and the greater they be, this is the more increased. Again, mean and low things, with great hopes and large expectations, will give more satisfaction, therefore, all mankind have a look towards the morrow, and labour to supply their present defects and wants, with hope or confidence of that. I would exhort you who would indeed have solid matter of gloriation, and would not be befooled into a golden dream of vain expectations of vain things, that ye would labour to fill up the vacuities of present things with that great hope, the hope of salvation, which will be as an helmet to keep your head safe in all difficulties, 1 Pet. i. 3, Heb. vi. 18, 19, Rom. v. 5. It is true, other men's expectations of gain and credit, and such things, do in some measure abate the torment and pain of present wants and indigencies, but certain it is, that such hope is not so sovereign a cordial to the heart, as to expel all grief, but leaves much vexation within. But then also, the frequent disappointment of such projects and designs of gain, honour, and pleasure, and the extreme unanswerableness of these to the desires and hopes of the soul, even when attained, must needs breed infinitely more anxiety and vexation in the spirit, than the hope of them could give of satisfaction, yea the more the expectation was, it cannot choose but the greater shame and confusion must be. Therefore, if you would have your souls truly established, and not hanging upon the morrow uncertainly, as the most part of men are get a look beyond the morrow, unto that everlasting day of eternity, that hath no morrow²⁸¹ after it, and see what foundation you can lay up for that time to come, as Paul bids Timothy counsel the rich men in the world, who thought their riches and revenues, their offices and dignities, a foundation and well spring of contentment to them and their children, and are ready to say with that man in the parable, "Soul take thy rest,

²⁸¹ [See note page 98.—*Ed.*]

thou hast enough laid up for many years.” “Charge them, says he,” &c. 1 Tim. vi. 16-19. O a charge worthy to be engraven on the tables of our hearts, worthy to be written on the ports of all cities, and the gates of all palaces. You would all have a foundation of lasting joy, says he, but why seek you lasting joy in fading things, and certain joy in uncertain riches, and solid contentment in empty things, and not rather in the living God, who is the unexhausted spring of all good things? Therefore, if you would truly boast of to-morrow, or sing a solid *requiem* to your own hearts, there is another treasure to be laid up in store against the time to come,—the time only worthy to be called time, that is eternity, and that is study to do good, and be rich in good works, in works of piety, of mercy, of equity, of sobriety. This is a better foundation for the time to come, or, rather receive and embrace the promise of eternal life made to such,—that free and gracious promise of life in the gospel, and so you may supply all the wants and indigencies of your present enjoyments, with the precious hope of eternal life which cannot make ashamed. But what is the way that the most part of men take to mitigate and sweeten their present hardships? Even like that of the fool in the parable Luke xii. They either have something laid up for many years, or else their projects and designs reach to many years. The truth is, they have more pleasure in the expectation of such things, than in the real possession, but that pleasure is but imaginary also. How many thoughts and designs are continually turning in the heart of man,—how to be rich, how to get greater gain, or more credit? Men build castles in the air, and fancy to themselves, as it were, new worlds of mere possible things, and in such an employment of the heart, there is some poor deceiving of present sorrows, but at length they recur with greater violence. Every man makes romances for himself, pretty fancies of his own fortune, as if he had the disposing of it himself. He sits down, as it were, and writes an almanack and prognostication in his own secret thoughts, and designs his own prosperity, gain, and

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advantage, and pleasures or joys, and when we have thus ranked our hopes and expectation, then we begin to take complacency in them, and boast ourselves in the confidence of them, as if there were not a supreme Lord who gives a law to our affairs, as immediately as to the winds and rains.

Now, that you may know the folly of this, consider the reason which is subjoined,—“For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” There is a concurrence of inconstancy in all things, and ignorance in us, which might be sufficient to check our folly of confident and presumptuous expectation from them, and gloriation in them, so that, whether we look about us to the things themselves, or within us to ourselves, all things proclaim the folly and madness of that which the heart of man is set upon. And this double consideration the apostle James opposes to the vain hopes and confident undertakings of men, chap. iv. 13, &c., which place is a perfect commentary upon this text, he brings in an instance of the resolutions and purposes of rich men, for the compassing of gain by merchandise, whereby you may understand all the several designs and plots of men, that are contrived and ordered, and laid down in the hearts of men, either for more gain, or more glory, or more pleasure and ease. Now, the grand evil that is here reprov'd, is not simply men's care and diligence in using lawful means for their accommodation in this life, or yet their wise and prudent foresight in ordering of their affairs for attaining that end, for both these are frequently recommended and commended by the wise man Prov. vi. 6, and xxiv. 27. But here is the great iniquity,—that men in all these contrivings and actings, carry themselves as if they were absolute independents, without consideration of the sovereign universal dominion of God. No man almost reflects upon that glorious Being, which alone hath the negative and definitive sentence in all the motions and affairs of the sons of men, or considers, that it is not in man that walks to direct his paths; that when all our thoughts and designs are marshalled and ordered, and the completest preparation

made for reaching our intended ends, that yet the way of man is not in himself, that all these things are under a higher and more absolute dominion of the most high God. Whose heart doth that often sound unto,—“A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps,” and so is not bound by any rule to conform his executions to our intentions? For he works all according to the counsel of his own will, and not ours, and therefore, no wonder that the product of our actions does not answer our intentions and devices, because the supreme rule and measure of them is above our power, and without our knowledge. And therefore, though there were never so many devices in the heart of man, never so wisely or lawfully contrived and ordered, though the mine be never so well prepared, and all ready for the firing of it, yet the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, Prov. xix. 21, and xvi. 9. That higher determination may blow up our best consultations or drown them, for man's goings are of the Lord, how then can a man understand his paths? Prov. xx. 24. And yet the most part of men, in all these things, lose the remembrance of this fatal and invincible subordination to God, and propose their own affairs and actions, as if themselves were to dispose of them, and when their own resolutions and projects seem probable, they begin to please themselves in them, in the forethought of what they will do, or what they may have or enjoy to morrow afterward; there is a present secret complacency and gloriation, without any serious reminding the absolute dependence of all things upon the will of God, and their independence upon our counsels without forecasting and often ruminating upon the perpetual fluctuation and inconstancy of human affairs, but, as if we were the supreme moderators in heaven and earth, so we act and transact our own business in a deep forgetfulness of him who sits in heaven, and laughs at all our projects and practices and therefore, the Holy Ghost would have this secret but serious thought to season all our other purposes and consultations,—“If the Lord will,” &c. Whereas though we ought to say and think this, it is scarce

minded, and then we know not what shall be to morrow for our life itself is a vapour. Herein is a strong argument,—you lay your designs for to morrow, for a year, for many years, and yet ye know not if ye shall be to morrow. How many men's projects are cast beyond that time that is measured out on God's counsel! And what a ridiculous thing must that be to him, if it be not done with submissive and humble dependence on him! In a word time is with child of innumerable things, conceived by the eternal counsel of God. Infinite and inconceivably various are those conceptions which the womb of time shall at length bring forth to light. Every day, every hour, every minute is travailing in pain, as it were, and is delivered of some one birth or another, and no creature can open its womb sooner, or shut it longer, than the appointed and prefixed season. There is no miscarrying as to him whose decrees do properly conceive them though to us they seem often abortive. Now, join unto this, to make the allusion full, as long as they are carried in the womb of time, they are hid from all the world. The womb is a dark lodging and no understanding nor eye can pierce into it, to tell what is in it, till it break forth, and therefore, children born are said to come to the light, for till then, they are to us in a cloud of darkness, that we cannot tell what they are. So then, every day, every hour, every moment is about to bring forth that which all the world is ignorant of, till they see it, and oh! that then they understood it. We know not whether the morrow's or next hour's birth may be a proportioned child, or a monster, whether it will answer the figure and mould that is in our mind, or be misshapen and deformed to our sense. Men's desires and designs may be said to conceive, for they form an inward image and idea within themselves, to which they labour to make the product and birth of time conformable, and when it answers our preconceived form, then we rejoice as for a man child. But for the most part it is a monster as to our conception, it is an aberration from our rule, it is either mutilated and defective of what we desire, or superfluous or deformed, which turns our

expectation into vexation, and our boasting into lamentation. But the truth is, time brings forth no monsters as to the Lord's decrees, which are the only just measures of all things. It may be said of every thing under the sun, as David speaks of himself in the womb, "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously formed in the lowest parts of the earth," &c. Psal. cxxxix. 15. His eyes see all their substance, yet being unperfect, and in his everlasting book all their members are written, the portraiture of every thing is drawn there to the life, and these in continuance are fashioned just as they were written and drawn, and so they exactly correspond to his preconception of them, whatever deformity they may have as to us, yet they are perfect works, and beautiful to him.

Sermon VIII.

Isaiah i. 10, 11, &c.—“Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah,” &c.

It is strange to think what mercy is mixed with the most wrath like strokes and threatenings. There is no prophet whose office and commission is only for judgment, nay, to speak the truth, it is mercy that premises threatenings. The entering of the law, both in the commands and curses, is to make sin abound, that grace may superabound, so that both rods and threatenings are the messengers of Jesus Christ, to bring sinners to him for salvation. Every thing should be measured and named by its end, so, call threatenings promises, call rods and judgments mercies, name all good, and good to you, if so be you understand the purpose of God in these. The shortest preaching in the Bible useth to express itself what it means, though it be never so terrible. This is a sad and lamentable beginning of a prophet's ministry, the first word is, to the heavens and to the earth²⁸² a weighty and horrible regrave²⁸³ of this people, as if none of them were to hear, as if the earth could be more easily affected than they. The creatures are taken witnesses by God of their ingratitude, and then who shall speak for them? If heaven and earth be against them, who shall speak good of them? Will their own conscience? No certainly, it will, in the day of witnessing and judging, precipitate its sentence, and spare the judge the labour of probation, “a man's enemy shall be within his own house,” though now your consciences agree with you. Nay, why doth the Lord speak to them? Because the people consider not, because consciences have given over speaking to them, therefore the Lord

²⁸² [Hear, O heavens and give ear, O earth. ver. 2.—*Ed.*]

²⁸³ [Regret, or accusation.—*Ed.*]

directs his word to the dumb earth. Yet how gracious is he, as to direct a second word even to the people, though a sad word? It is a complaint of iniquity and backsliding, and such as cannot be uttered, yet it is mercy to challenge them, yea, to chasten them. If the Lord would threaten a man with pure and unmixed judgments, if he would frame a threatening of a rod of pure justice, I think it should be this, "I will no more reprove thee, nor chasten thee," and he is not far from it, when he says, "Why shall ye be stricken any more?" &c. ver. 5. As if he would say, It is in vain now to send a rod, ye receive no correction. I sent the rod, that it might open your hearts and ears to the word, and seal your instruction,—but to what purpose is it?—Ye grow worse and worse. Well, the prophet compares here sin and judgment, and the one far surmounts the other. Ye would think a desolate country, burnt cities, desolation made by strangers, a sufficient recompense of their corruption and misorders, of their forsaking and backsliding. Ye would think now, if your present condition and the land's pressed you to utter Jeremiah's lamentation, a sadder than which is not almost imaginable, ye would think, I say, that you had received double for all your sins. And yet, alas! how are your iniquities of infinite more desert? All that were mercy, which is behind infinite and eternal punishment. That there is room left for complaint, is mercy, that there is a remnant left, is mercy.

Now, to proclaim unto this people, and convince them that their judgment was not severe, he gives them one word from God. And, indeed, it is strange, that when the rod is sent, because of the despising of the word, that after the despising of both word and rod, another word should come. Always this word is a convincing word, a directing word, and a comforting word. These use to be conjoined, and if they be not always expressed, we may lawfully understand them. We may join a consolation to a conviction, and close a threatening with a promise, if we take with a threatening. Jonah's preaching expressed no more

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but a threatening and denunciation of judgment, but the people understood it according to God's meaning and made it a rule of direction, and so a ground of consolation. How inexcusable are we, who have all these expressed unto us, and often inculcated, "line upon line, and precept upon precept," and yet so often divide the word of truth, or neglect it altogether. Most part fancy a belief of the promises and neither consider threatenings nor commands. Some believing the threatenings, are not so wise for their own salvation as to consider what God says more, but take it for his last word. Shall not Nineveh rise up in judgment against this generation? They repented at one preaching, and that a short one, and in appearance very defective, and yet we have many preachings of the Son of God and his apostles in this Bible,—both law and gospel holden forth distinctly, and these spoken daily in our audience, and yet we repent not.

This is a strange preface going before this preaching, and more strange in that it is before the first preaching of a young prophet. He speaks both to rulers and people, but he gives them a name such as certainly they would not take to themselves, but seeing he is to speak the word of the Lord, he must not flatter them, as they did themselves. Is not this the Lord's people, his portion and inheritance which he chose out of the nations? Are not these rulers the princes of Judah, and the Lord's anointed? Were they not both in covenant with God, and separated from the nations both in privileges and profession? How then are they "rulers of Sodom" and "people of Gomorrah" likened to the worst of the nations, and not likened to them but spoken of as if they were indeed all one. When ye hear the preface ye would think that the prophet was about to direct his speech to Sodom and Gomorrah, but when you look upon the preaching ye find he means Judah and Jerusalem, and these are the rulers and people he speaks of. Certainly, according as men walk, so shall they be named and ranked. External privileges and profession may give a name before men, and separate men from men before the world, but

they give no name, make no difference, before God, if all other things be not suitable to these. "He is not a Jew, saith Paul, who is one outwardly," but he who hath that circumcision in the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter. Outward profession and signs may have praise of men, but it is this that hath praise of God, Rom. ii. 28, 29. Circumcision and uncircumcision, baptism or unbaptism, availeth nothing, but a new creature. A baptized Christian and an unbaptized Turk are alike before God, if their hearts and ways be one, Gal. vi. 15. All Christians profess faith, and glory in baptism, but it avails nothing except it work by love, Gal. v. 6.

Now, what name shall we give you? How shall our rulers be called? How shall ye, the people, be called? If we shall speak the truth, we fear it will instruct you not, but irritate you, yet the truth we must speak, whether ye choose or whether ye refuse. You would all be called Christians, the people of God, but we may not call you so, except we would flatter you, and deceive you by flattering, and murder you by deceiving. We would gladly name you Christians in the spirit, saints chosen and precious. O that we might speak so to rulers and people! but, alas, we may not call you so except ye were so indeed, we may not call you Christians lest ye believe yourselves to be so. And yet, alas, ye will think yourselves such, speak what we can. Would you know your name then? I perceive you listen to hear what it is. But understand, that it is your name before God, which bears his account of you. What matter of a name among men? It is often a shadow without substance, a name without the thing. If God name you otherwise, you shall have little either honour or comfort in it, when men bless you and praise you, if the Lord reckon you among the beasts that perish, are ye honoured indeed? Well, then, hear your name before God. What account hath he of you? Ye rulers are rulers of Sodom, and ye people are people of Gomorrah. And if ye think this a hard saying, I desire you will notice the way that the prophet Isaiah takes to prove

his challenge against them, and the same may be alleged against rulers and people now. We need no proof but one of both, see ver. 23,—“Thy princes are rebellious, because, though they hear much against their sins, yet they never amend them, they pull away their shoulder, if they hear, yet they harden their heart.” Is there any of them hath set to pray in their families, though earnestly pressed? Well, what follows? “Every one loves gifts.” Covetousness, then, and oppression proves rulers to be rulers of Sodom. Shall then houses stand, “shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar?” Jer. xxii. 15. No certainly, men shall one day take up a proverb against them. “Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his, and ladeth himself with thick clay, they shall be for booties to the Lord's spoilers,” Hab. ii. 6. Woe to them, for they have consulted shame to their houses, and sinned against their own soul. Their design is to establish their house, and make it eminent, but they take a compendious way to shame and ruin it. Alas, it is too public, that rulers seek their own things, for themselves and their friends, and for Jesus and his interests they are not concerned. But are ye, the people, any whit better? O that it were so! But alas, when ye are involved in the same guiltiness, I fear ye partake of their plagues! What are ye then? “People of Gomorrah.” Is not the name of God blasphemed daily because of you? Are not the abominations of the Gentiles the common disease of the multitude, and the very reproach of Christianity? Set apart your public services and professions, and is there any thing behind in your conversation, but drunkenness, lying, swearing, contention, envy, deceit, wrath, covetousness, and such like? Have not the multitude of them been as civil, and carried themselves as blamelessly, and without offence, as the throng of our visible church? What have ye more than they? It is true, ye are called Christians, and ye boast in it. Ye know his will, and can speak of points of religion, can teach and instruct others, and so have, as it were, in your minds a form and method of knowledge,—the best of you are but such. But I ask, as Paul

did the Jews in such a case, “Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that makest a boast of the law, through breaking of it, dishonourest thou God?” Rom. ii. 17-23. Why then, certainly all thy profession and baptism avail nothing, and will never extract thee from the pagans, with whom thou art one in conversation. Thy profession is so far from helping thee in such a case, that it shall be the most bitter ingredient in thy cup of judgment, for it is the greatest aggravation of thy sin, for through it God's name is blasphemed. If they had not known, they had not had sin. Pagan's sin is no sin in respect of Christians. If ye consider Christ's sermon, Matt. xi., ye will say Isaiah is a meek and moderate man in regard of him. Isaiah calls them people of Gomorrah, but Christ will have them worse, and their judgment more intolerable than theirs. And that not only the profane of them, but the civil and religious like who believe not in him. Well, then, here is the advantage ye get of your name of Christianity, of your privilege of hearing his word daily, ye who never ponder it, to tremble at it, or to rejoice in it, who cannot be moved either to joy or grief for spiritual things, neither law nor gospel moves the most part of you. I say, here is all your gain,—ye shall receive a reward with Gentiles and pagans, yea, ye shall be in a worse case than they in the day of the Lord. The civil Christian shall be worse than the profane Turk, and ye shall not then boast that ye were Christians, but shall desire that ye had dwelt in the place where the gospel had never been preached. It is a character of the nations, that they call not on God, and of heathen families, that they pray not to him, (Jer. x. 25,) and wrath must be poured on them. What, then, are the most part of you? Ye neither bow a knee in secret nor in your families, to God. Your time is otherwise employed, ye have no leisure to pray twice or thrice a day alone, except when ye put on your clothes ye utter some ordinary babblings. Ye cannot be driven to family worship. Shall not God rank you in judgment with those heathen families? Or shall it not be more tolerable

for them than for you? And are not the most part of you every one given to covetousness, your heart and eye after it, seeking gain and advantage more than the kingdom of heaven? Doth not every one of you, as you have power in your hand, oppress one another, and wrong one another? Now, our end in speaking thus to you, is not to drive you to desperation. No, indeed, but as there was a word of the Lord sent to such by Isaiah, so we bring a word unto you. That which ruins you, is your carnal confidence. Ye are presumptuous as this people, and cry, “The temple of the Lord, the work of the Lord,” &c. as if these would save you. Know, therefore, that all these will never cover you in the day of wrath. Know there is a necessity to make peace with God, and your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of a profession, and external privileges and duties, or else ye shall be as far from the kingdom of heaven as Sodom and Gomorrah. We speak of rulers' sins, that ye may mourn for them, lest ye be judged with them. If ye do not mourn for them in secret, know that they are your sins, ye are companions with them. Many fret, grudge, and cry out against oppression, but who weeps in secret? Who prays and deprecates God's wrath, lest it come upon them? And while it is so, the oppression of rulers becomes the sin of the oppressed themselves.

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“Hear the word of the Lord.” It were a suitable preparation for any word that is spoken, to make it take impression, if it were looked on “as the word of the Lord,” and “law of our God.” And truly no man can hear aright unless he hear it so. Why doth not this word of the Lord return with more fruit? Why do not men tremble or rejoice at it? Certainly, because it is not received as God's word. There is a practical heresy in our hearts, which rather may be called atheism—we do not believe the Scriptures. I do not say men call it in question, but I say, ye believe them not. It is one thing to believe with the heart, another thing not to doubt of it. Ye doubt not of it, not because ye do indeed believe it, but because ye do not at all consider it. It is one thing to

confess with the mouth, and another thing to believe with the heart, for ye confess the Scriptures to be God's word, not because ye believe them, but because ye have received such a tradition from your fathers, have heard it from the womb unquestioned. O that this were engraven on your heart—that these commands, these curses, these promises are divine truths, the words and the oath of the Holy One! If every word of truth came stamped with his authority, and were received in the name of God himself, what influence would it have on the spirits and the practices of men? This would be a great reformer, would reform more in a month, than church and state hath done these many years. Why are rulers and people not converted and healed for all that is spoken? Here it is, “Who believes our report?” Who believes that our report is thy own testimony, O Lord? When ministers threaten you in God's name,—if his authority were stamped on the threatening, if men did seriously apprehend it were God's own voice, would they not tremble? When the gospel and the joyful sound comes forth, if he apprehended that same authority upon it, which ye who are convinced believe to be in the law, would ye not be comforted? Finally, I may say, it is this point of atheism, of inconsideration and brutishness, that destroys the multitude, makes all means ineffectual to them, and retards the progress of Christians. Men do not consider, that this word is the word of the eternal, and true, and faithful God, and that not one jot of it will fail. Here is a point of reformation I would put you to, if ye mind indeed to reform, let this enter into your hearts and sink down, that the law and gospel is the word of God, and resolve to come and hear preachings so, as the voice “of Jesus Christ, the true and faithful witness.” If ye do not take it so now, yet God will judge you so at the end. “He that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that hears not you, hears not me.” If ye thought ye had to do with God every Sabbath, would ye come so carelessly, and be so stupid and inconsiderate before the Judge of all the earth? But ye will find in the end, that it was God whom

ye knew not.

Sermon IX.

Isaiah i. 11.—“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord,” &c.

This is the word he calls them to hear and a strange word. Isaiah asks, What mean your sacrifices? God will not have them. I think the people would say in their own hearts, What means the prophet? What would the Lord be at? Do we anything but what he commanded us? Is he angry at us for obeying him? What means this word? Is he not repealing the statute and ordinance he had made in Israel? If he had reprov'd us for breach of commands, for omission and neglect of sacrifices, we would have taken with it, but what means this reproof for well doing? The Lord is a hard master. If we neglect sacrifices, and offer up the worst of the flock, he is angry, if we have a care of them, and offer them punctually, and keep appointed days precisely, he is angry. What shall we do to please him? I think many of you are put to as great a non plus, when your prayers and repentance and fasting are quarrell'd, do ye not say in your hearts, we know not what to do? Ministers are angry at us if we pray not, and our praying they cry out against, they command us to repent and fast, and yet say that God will abhor both these. This is a mystery, and we shall endeavour to unfold it to you from the word. It concerns us to know how God is pleas'd with our public services and fastings for the most part of people have no more religion. Ye all, I know, desire to know what true religion is. Consult the Scriptures, and search them, for there ye shall find eternal life. We frame to ourselves a wrong pattern and copy of it, and so we judge ourselves wrong. Our narrow spirits do not take in the latitude of the Scripture's religion, but taking in one part we exclude another, and think God rigid if it be not taken off our hand so. But, I pray, consider these three things, which seem

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to make up the good old way, the religion of the Old and New Testaments—

First, Religion takes in all the commands,—it is universal, hath respect to all the commandments, Psal. cxix. 6. It carries the two tables in both hands, the first table in the right hand, and the second in the left. These are so entirely conjoined, that if you receive not both, you cannot receive any truly.

Secondly, It takes in all the man, his soul and spirit as well as his body, nay, it principally includes that which is principal in the man, his soul and spirit, his mind and affections. If ye divide these, ye have not a man present but a body, and what fellowship can bodies have with him who is a Spirit? If ye divide these among themselves, ye have not a spirit indeed present if the mind be not present, surely the heart cannot, but if the mind be, and the heart away, religion is not religion, but some empty speculation. The mind cannot serve but by the heart, where the heart is, there a man is reckoned to be.

Thirdly, It takes in Jesus Christ as all, and excludes altogether a man's self. He worships God in the spirit, but he rejoices not in himself, and in his spirit, but in Jesus Christ, and hath no confidence in himself, or the flesh, Phil. iii. 3, 8. It includes the soul and spirit, and all the commands, but it denies them all, and embraces Jesus Christ by faith, as the only object of glorying in and trusting in. All a man's self becomes dross in this consideration. Now, the first of these is drawn from the last, therefore it appears first—I say, an endeavour in walking in every thing commanded, of conforming our way to the present rule and pattern, is a stream flowing from the pure heart within. A man's soul and affections must once be purified, before it sends out such streams in conversation. And from whence doth that pure heart come? Is it the fountain and original? No certainly. The heart is desperately wicked above all things, and how will it cleanse itself? But this purity proceeds from another fountain,—from faith in Jesus Christ, and it is this that lies nearest

the uncreated fountain Christ himself, it is the most immediate conduit the mouth of the fountain or the bucket to draw out of the deep wells of salvation. All these are conjoined in this order, 1 Tim. i. 5—"The end of the commandment is love." Ye know love is said elsewhere to be the fulfilling of the law, and when we say love, we mean all duties to God and man, which love ought immediately to principle. Now this love proceeds from a pure heart, cleansed and sanctified, which pure heart proceeds from faith unfeigned. So then, we must go up in our searching from external obedience all alongst, till we arrive at the inward fountain of Christ dwelling in us by faith, and then have ye found true religion indeed. Now, ye may think possibly, we have used too much circumlocution: what is all this to the present purpose? Yes, very much. Ye shall find the Lord rejecting this people's public worship and solemn ordinances upon these three grounds,—either they did not join with them the observation of weightier commands, or they did not worship him in them with their spirits, had not souls present, or they knew not the end and use for which God had appointed these sacrifices and ceremonies, they did not see to the end of all, which was Jesus Christ.

First, then, I say the people were much in external sacrifices and ceremonies, commanded of God, but they were ignorant of the end of his commands, and of the use of them. Ye know in themselves they had no goodness, but only in relation to such an end as he pleased they should lead to, but they stayed upon the ceremony and shadow, and were not led to use it as a means for such an end; and so, though they fancied that they obeyed, and pleased God, yet really they wholly perverted his meaning and intention in the command; therefore doth the Lord plead with them in this place for their sacrificing, as if it had been murder. They used to object his commands. What, says the Lord, did I command these things? Who required them? Meaning certainly, who required them for such an end, to take away your sin?

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Who required them but as a shadow of the substance to come? Who required them but as signs of that Lamb and sacrifice to be offered up in the fulness of time? And forasmuch as ye pass over all these, and think to please me with the external ceremony, was that ever my intent or meaning? Certainly ye have fancied a new law of your own, I never gave such a law; therefore it is said, Psal. 1. 13.—God pleads just after this manner, “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?” &c.; and Micah vi. 7, “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” He who hath no pleasure in sinful men, what pleasure can he have in beasts? Therefore, it was to signify to them (who thought God would be pleased with them for their offering) that he could not endure them; it was worse to him to offer him such a recompense, than if they had done none at all. He is only well pleased in his well-beloved Son; and when they separate a lamb or a bullock from the well-beloved, what was it to him more than “a dog's neck” or “swine's flesh?” It was his creature, as these are, and no more, Isa. lxvi. 3. Now that they looked never beyond the ceremonies, is evident, because they boasted in them; they used to find out these as a remedy of their sins, and a mean to pacify God's wrath, Micah vi. 6. Paul bears witness of it, 2 Cor. iii. 13-15. Moses had a vail of ceremonies over his face, and the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that mystery, Christ Jesus, but their minds were blinded, and are so to this day in the reading of the scriptures; and this vail of hardness of heart shall be done away when Christ returns to them again. Now, I say, it is just so with us. There was never a people liker other than we are like the Jews. We have many external ordinances, preaching, hearing, baptism, communion, reading, singing, praying in public, extraordinary solemnities of fasting and thanksgiving, works of discipline and government, public reproof to sinners, confessions and absolutions. What would ye think if we should change the terms of sacrifices and new moons, and speak all this to you? To

what purpose is the multitude of your fasts and feasts, of your preachings and communions, of your praying in secret, and in your families, of conference and prayer with others, of running to and fro to hear preaching, to partake of the Lord's table? I am full of them, I delight not in them. When ye come here on the Sabbath, who required at your hand to tread my courts? Come no more to hear the word, run no more after communions, seek no more baptism to your children, call no more solemn assemblies, it is all iniquity. O, say ye, that is a strange preaching indeed! Must we pray no more, hear no more, sing no more? Did not God command these? Why do ye discharge them? We do not mean so, that these should not be, but they should be in another way: all these want the soul and life of them, which is Jesus Christ in them. Do ye not think yourselves religious, because ye frequent these? The multitude of the people think that these please God, and pacify his wrath: ye have no other thing in your mind but these. If ye can attain any sorrow or grief for sin, or any tears to signify it, presently you absolve yourselves for your repentance. The scandalous who appear in public, think the paying of a penalty to the judge, and bowing the knee before the congregation,²⁸⁴ satisfies God. Ye miss nothing when ye have

²⁸⁴ [Agreeably to the course of discipline in former ages, (Hooker's *Eccl. Pol.* vol. iii. p. 15,) they who had been convicted of any gross crime were required by the First Book of Discipline, (chap. ix.) and by subsequent enactments of the Church of Scotland, to confess their sin in the hearing of the whole congregation. The same thing was required of delinquents by the canons of the Church of England. Dr. Grey, in his *Impartial Examination of Neale's History of the Puritans*, (App. pp. 62-68,) has, from original documents which were in his own possession, furnished us with various forms, according to which, towards the end of the sixteenth century, offenders were appointed to make their confession, in different parts of England, in their respective parish-churches. The dues which, in cases of scandal, were exacted by the ecclesiastical courts of Scotland, were imposed and defined by acts of parliament. Power to levy these was given to justices of the peace, who were frequently members of the kirk session, or parochial consistory of their district. In the year 1648, the General Assembly "recommended to every congregation, to make use of the

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these. I speak to the professors of religion also, who pretend to more knowledge than others, when ye have gone about so many duties, ye are well satisfied if ye get liberty in them. If ye can satisfy yourselves, ye doubt not of God's satisfaction; and if ye do not satisfy yourselves in your duties, ye cannot believe his satisfaction. Ye get the ordinance, and miss nothing. Now, I say, in all this ye do not reach to the end of this ministry, Jesus Christ; ye do not steadfastly behold him, to empty yourselves in his bosom, to turn over all the unrighteousness of your holy things upon him who bears it. That which pleaseth you, is not "he in whom the Father is well-pleased," but the measure of your own duty. O, the establishing of our own righteousness is the ruin of the visible Church! This is the grand idol, and all sacrifice to it. Know, therefore, that the most part of your performances are abomination and iniquity, because ye have so much confidence in them, and put them not upon Christ as filthy rags, or do not cover them with his righteousness, as well as your wickedness. I know ye will say, that ye are not satisfied with them, and that is still the matter of your exercise. Well, I affirm, in the Lord's name, from that ground, that ye have confidence in them, for if your diffidence and inquietness arise from it, your confidence and peace must come from it also. Is there any almost that maintain faith, except when their own conditions please them well? And that faith I may call no faith, at least not pure and

9th act of the parliament 1645, at Perth, for having magistrates and justices in every congregation." (Rec. of Kirk of Scot. p. 511, Edn. 1839.) It was in this way, it would seem, or from elders acting both in a civil and in an ecclesiastical capacity, that the practice of exacting fines by kirk sessions arose and was continued. "You object that our church sessions did exact fines. But if you consider, that these fines, which you mention, are particularly imposed and determined by statute, and thereby appointed to be applied to pious uses, and therefore the demanding and uplifting thereof only, as well for the more summary and effectual restraint of sin, as for the end whereto they are destined, is in use to be exercised by kirk sessions, or rather by their officers and beadles in deficiency of the magistrate, this your scruple must quickly cease." "The True Non-Conformist," p. 55, printed abroad in the year 1671.—*Ed.*]

cleanly entire faith. As for the multitude of you, you must know this, that God is not pleased with your prayers, and fasting, and hearing, &c. because ye have such an esteem of them, because ye can settle yourselves against all threatenings, and never once remember of Jesus Christ, or consider the end of his coming into the world; because ye find no necessity of pardon for your prayers and righteousness, but stretch the garment of these over the uncleanness of your practices. What delight hath the Lord in them, when they are put in his Son's place? Will he not be jealous that his Son's glory be not given to another?

In the *second* place, the Lord rejects their performances, because there was nothing but a mere shadow of service, and no worshipping of God in the Spirit. Ye know what Christ saith, "God is a Spirit, and he that worships him must do it in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24. It is the heart and soul that God delights in, "My son, give me thy heart," for if thou give not thy heart, I care for nothing else. The heart is the whole man. What a man's affection is, that he is. Light is not so,—it brings not the man alongst with it. Christ Jesus hath given himself for us, and he requires that we offer ourselves to him. If we offer a body to frequent his house, our feet to tread in his courts, our ears to hear his word, what cares he for it, as long as the soul doth not offer itself up in prayer or hearing? And this was the sin of this people, Isaiah xxix. 13. "They draw near with the lips, and their heart is far from the Lord." Now are we not their children, and have succeeded to this? Is there any thing almost in our public services, but what is public? Is there any thing but what is seen of men? Ye come to hear, ye sit and hear, and is there any more? The most part have their minds wandering, no thoughts present; for your thoughts are removed about your barns and corns, or some business in your head; and if any have their thoughts present, yet where are affections, which are the soul and spirit of religion, without which it is no true fire but wild fire, if it be not both burning and shining? Are ye serious in these ordinances?

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Or rather, are ye not more serious in any thing beside? And now, especially, when God's providence calls you to earnest thoughts, when it cries to all men to enter into consideration of their own ways, I pray you, is there any soul-affliction in your fasts even for a day? Is there any real grief or token of it? Not a fast in Scripture without weeping! We have kept many, and have never advanced so far. Shall the Lord then be pacified? Will not his soul abhor them? How shall they appease him for your other provocations, when they are as oil to the flame, to increase his indignation? The most part of Christians are guilty here; we come to the ordinances, as it were, to discharge a custom, and perform a ceremony, that we may have it to say to our conscience that it is done, and there is no more intent and purpose. We do not seek to have soul-communion with God. We come to sermon to hear some new thing, or new truth, or new fashion of it; to learn a notional experience of cases. But alas, this is not the great purpose and use of these things. It is to have some new sense of those things we know. We know already, but we should come to get the truth more received in our love, to serve God in our spirits, and to return to him ourselves in a sacrifice acceptable. This is the greater half, if not the whole of religion,—love to Jesus Christ who loved us, and living to him, because he died for us, and living to him because we love him. Now, all our ordinances and duties should be channels to carry our love to him, and occasions of venting our affections.

Thirdly, The Lord rejected this people's services, because they were exact and punctual in them, and neglected other parts of his commandments; and this is clearly expressed here, "I will not hear" your prayers, though there be many of them. Why? "Your hands are full of blood." Ye come to worship me, and pray to me, and yet there are many abominations in your conversation, which you continue in, and do not challenge in yourselves. Ye have unclean hands; and shall your prayers be accepted, which should come up with pure hands? They took his covenant in their

mouth, and offered many sacrifices, but what have ye to do with these things, saith the Lord, since ye hate to be reformed, since ye hate personal reformation of your lives, and in your families? What have ye to do to profess to be my people? Psal. l. 16, 17. The Lord requires an universality, if ye would prove sincerity: if ye have respect to any of his commands, as his commands, then will ye respect all. If ye be partial, and choose one duty that is easy, and refuse another harder,—will come to the church and hear, but will not pray at home,—will fast in public, but not in private,—then, says the Lord, ye do not at all obey me, but your own humour; ye do not at all fast unto me, but unto yourselves. As much as your interest lies in a duty, so much are ye carried to it. And I take this to be the reason why many are so eager in pursuing public ordinances, following communions, and conferences with God's people, ready to pray in public rather than alone. If ye would follow them into their secret chamber, how much indifferency is there! How great infrequency, how little fervency! Well, says the Lord, did ye pray to me when ye prayed among others? No, ye prayed either to yourselves, or the company, or both. Did ye seek me in a communion? No, saith the Lord, ye sought not me, but yourselves: if ye sought me indeed with others, you would be as earnest, if not more, to seek me alone, Zech. vii. 6. And again, the Lord especially requires the weightier matters of the law to be considered. As it was among the Jews, their ceremonies were commanded, and so good; but they were not so much good in themselves as because they were means appointed for another end and use. But the moral law was binding in itself, and good in itself, without relation to another thing; and therefore Christ lays this heavy charge to the Pharisees, “Ye tithe mint and anise,” Matt. xxiii. 23. “Woe unto you, for ye neglect the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ye ought to have done, and not left the other undone.” Are there not many who would think it a great fault to stay away from the church on the Sabbath or week day, and yet will not

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stick to swear,—to drink often? “Woe unto you, for ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel;” therefore are the prophets full of these expostulations. The people seemed to make conscience of ceremonies and external ordinances, but they did not order their conversation aright; they did not execute judgment, and relieve the oppressed, did not walk soberly, did not mortify sinful lusts, &c. Alas, we deceive ourselves with the noise of a covenant,²⁸⁵ and a cause of God; we cry it up as an antidote against all evils, use it as a charm, even as the Jews did their temple; and, in the mean time, we do not care how we walk before God, or with our neighbours: well, thus saith the Lord, “Trust ye not in lying words,” &c. Jer. vii. 4, 5, 6. If drunkenness reign among you, if filthiness, swearing, oppression, cruelty reign among you, your covenant is but a lie, all your professions are but lying words, and shall never keep you in your inheritances and dwellings. The Lord tells you what he requires of you. Is it not to do justly, and walk humbly with God? Mic. vi. 7. This is that which the grace of God teaches, to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, towards your God, your neighbour, and yourself,” Tit. ii. 11, 12; and this he prefers to your public ordinances, your fasting, covenanting, preaching, and such like.²⁸⁶ “Is not this to know me?” saith the Lord, Jer. xxii. 15, 16. You think you know God when you can discourse well of religion, and entertain conferences of practical cases. You think it is knowledge to understand preachings and scripture; but thus saith the Lord, to do justly to all men, to walk humbly towards God, to walk soberly in yourselves, is more real knowledge of God, than all the volumes of doctors contain, or the heads of professors. Is this knowledge of God to have a long flourishing discourse containing much religion in it? Alas, no! to do justly, to oppress none, to pray more in secret, to walk humbly and soberly, this is to know the Lord. Practice is real

²⁸⁵ [See Note, page 375.—*Ed.*]

²⁸⁶ [This passage is quoted in the Life of the Author.—*Ed.*]

knowledge indeed: it argues, that what a man knows, he receives in love, that the truth hath a deep impression on the heart, that the light shines into the heart to inflame it. What is knowledge before God? As much as principles, affection, and action, as much as hath influence on your conversations; if you do not, and love not what you know, is that to know the Lord? Shall not your knowledge be a testimony against your practice, and no more?

Sermon X.

Isaiah i. 16.—“Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil,” &c.

If we would have a sum of pure and undefiled religion, here it is set down in opposition to this people's shadow of religion, that consisted in external ordinances and rites. We think that God should be as well-pleased with our service as we ourselves, therefore we choose his commands which our humour hath no particular antipathy against and refuse others. But the Lord will not be so served: as he will not share with the world, and divide the soul and service of man with creatures, so as mammon should get part, and he his part. No, if we choose the one, we must refuse the other; for so will he not suffer his word and commands to be divided: there must be some universality in respect of the gospel and the law, and a conjunction of these two, or we cannot please him.

If religion do not include the gospel, we are yet upon the old covenant of works, according to which none can be justified. If it do not include the law in the hands of a mediator, then we turn the grace of God unto wantonness. If it shut out Jesus Christ and have no use of him, how can either we or our performances stand or be accepted before his holy eyes? If it exclude the law that Christ came to establish, how can he be pleased with our religion? both of these offer an indignity to the Son of God. The sum, then, of Christian religion is believing and sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience. That is the root and fountain, this is the fruit and stream; justification of our persons, and sanctification of our lives and hearts. This is pure religion and undefiled. And therefore Isaiah says, “Wash you, make you clean,”—cleanse in the only true fountain of Christ's blood. It is not your purifications of the law, your many washings with water and hyssop; it is not the blood of bulls and of goats can purge your consciences from

dead works: they do but purify your flesh, but cannot wash your souls worse defiled. This blood of Jesus Christ is that clean water that he must sprinkle on you, if you would be clean. If you take any other water, any other righteousness but his, and wash thyself therewith, suppose it be snow water that washeth cleanest—thy most exact conversation, yet, he will plunge thee in the mire, till thine own clothes abhor thee, Job ix. 30, 31. Now, when you have washed your persons (ye need not, save to wash your feet, says Christ,)—your daily conversation, reform it in the virtue of that blood, for we are not called “to uncleanness, but unto holiness,” and therefore, “put away the evil of your doings,” &c. God hath put away the guilt of your doings by justification, now put ye away the evil of your doings by sanctification, &c. And if ye would know what sanctification is, “cease to do evil,” do not return to the old puddle to wallow in it. Ye that are cleansed by this blood, O think how unbeseeming it is to you to defile yourselves again with those things ye are cleansed from! but now, “learn to do well.” Ye are given up to Christ, ye must be his disciples, and he will teach you. “Learn of me,” saith Christ, (ye need no other law almost but his example, he is a visible and speaking law), yet “seek judgment.” As ye ought to look on my example, so especially ponder that word and rule of practice and behaviour that I have left behind me, and given out as the lawgiver of the redeemed. Have I redeemed you, and should not I be the redeemed and ransomed one's king? Is there any society in the world wants a law, order, and government? Neither must ye who are delivered from bondage, enfranchised and made free indeed. Now, ye should of all men most live by a law. And when ye know that rule, then apply it to your several vocations and callings. Let the magistrate act according to it, and every man according to it. Religion consists not in a general notion, but condescends to our particular practice, to reform it. You see then what we would press upon your consciences. It is true religion that we would have you persuaded unto. All men have [408]

some kind of religion, even heathens who worship idols, but the true religion respects the true and living God. Now, what is it to worship the true and living God? What is the service of him that may be called religion indeed? Should we be the prescribers of it?²⁸⁷ No certainly, he must carve solely in that, or else it cannot please him, therefore “to the law and to the testimony,” if ye speak not according to this, and worship not according to this word of God, “it is because there is no light in you.” Ye may have a religion before men pure and undefiled, but if it be not so before God and the Father, I pray you to what purpose is it? I am sure it is all lost labour, nay, it is labour with loss, instead of gain. O that ye were persuaded to look and search the scriptures. Think ye to have eternal life out of them?—and think ye to have eternal life by them, who do not labour to know the way of it set down there? Every one of you hath a different model of religion, according to your fancies and breedings, according as your lusts will suffer you. The rule that the most part walk by is the course and example of the world. Is not this darkness, and gross darkness? Others model their duties according to their ability. They will do all they can do with ease, and without troubling themselves, and they think God may be well pleased with that. I pray you consider and hear the word of the Lord, and law of your God. Hath he set down here the rule and perfect pattern of true religion, and will ye never so much own it, as to examine yours according to it? The scriptures are the touchstone, if you would not have a counterfeit religion deceiving you in the end, when ye have trusted to it, I pray you try it by the word of God. Oh! that this principle were once sunk into your hearts,—I may not walk at random, if I please myself, and satisfy my own will, if that be not also God's will, I shall have neither gain nor comfort of it. His will is manifested in his word,—I will search and find what God hath required of me, for if I be not certain of his will, I may

²⁸⁷ [That is, the persons who prescribe or appoint it.—*Ed.*]

be doing all my days, and sweating out my life, and yet lose my pains and toil. I say, this word of the Lord that Isaiah calls to the people to hear, ver. 10, will at length judge you. Your religion will be tried in the day of accounts according to it, not according to your rules and methods ye have prescribed unto yourselves. [409] Now, if ye in the meantime shall judge yourselves, according to another rule, and absolve yourselves, and in the end God shall judge you according to this word, and condemn you, were ye not fools in neglecting this word?

The whole will of God concerning your duty may be summed up in two, John hath one of them, 1 John iii. 23, “And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment,” and Paul hath another to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess iv. 3, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” And these two make up this text, so that it unites both gospel and law. The commandment of the law comes forth, and it is found that we have broken and are guilty, that we cannot answer for one of a thousand. The law entering makes sin abound. Our inability, yea, impossibility of obedience is more discovered. Well, then, the gospel proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ for the Saviour of sinners, and commands us, under pain of damnation, to believe in him,—to cast our souls on him, as one able to save, as one who hath obeyed the law for us, so that this command of believing in Christ is answerable to all the breaches of the law, and tends to make them up in Christ. When he proclaimed the law on mount Sinai, with terror, that which ye hear expressed is not his first commandment, which ye are in the first instance to obey, for all these we have broken, but it hath a gospel command in its bosom, it leads to Jesus Christ, and if ye could read the mind of God in it, ye would resolve all these commands which condemn you and curse you, into one command of believing in the Son, that ye may be saved from that condemnation. And if ye obey this command, which is his last command, and most preeminent,

then are the breaches of all the rest made up, the intent of all the rest is fulfilled, though not in your obedience, yet in Christ's, which is better than ours. Believing in Christ presents God with a perfect righteousness, with an obedience even to the death of the cross. When a sinner hears the holy and spiritual sense of the law, and sees it in the light of God's holiness, O how vile must he appear to himself, and how must he abhor himself! What original pollution, what actual pollution, what a fountain within, what uncleanness in streams without, will discover itself! Now, when the most part of men get any sight of this, presently they fall a washing and cleansing themselves, or hiding their filthiness. And what water take they? Their own tears and sorrows, their own resolutions, their own reformatiions. But alas, we are still more plunged in our own filthiness; that is still marked before him, because all that is as foul as that we would have washen away. What garment do men take to hide themselves ordinarily? Is it not their own righteousness? Is it not a skirt of some duty that is spread over transgressions? Do not men think their sins hid, if they can mourn and pray for a time? Their consciences are eased by reflection upon this. But alas, thine iniquity is still marked! Shall filthiness hide filthiness? Thy righteousness is as a vile garment, as a menstruous cloth, (Isa. lxiv. 6.) as well as thine unrighteousness, how then shall it cover thine nakedness? Seeing it is so then, what is the Lord's mind concerning our cleansing? Seeing stretched out hands and many prayers will not do it, what shall I do? The Lord hath showed thee what thou shalt do, and that is, that thou do nothing in relation to that end, that thou shouldst undertake to wash away the least spot by all thy repentance. Yet must thou wash and make clean, and the water is brought new unto you, even the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Wash in this blood, and ye shall be clean. And what is it to wash in this blood? It is to believe in Christ Jesus, to lay hold on the all sufficient virtue of it, to trust our souls to it, as a sufficient ransom for all our sins, to spread

the covering of Christ's righteousness over all our righteousness and unrighteousness, as having both alike need to be hid from his holy eyes. Jesus Christ "came by water and by blood," (1 John v. 6), by water to sanctify, and by blood to justify, by the power and cleansing virtue of the Holy Ghost, to take away sin in the being of it, and by the virtue of his blood, to take away sin in the guilt and condemnation of it.

Now, I conceive he presses a twofold exercise upon them in this washing, and both have relation to the blood of Jesus Christ, to wit repentance and faith. If they be not all one, yet they are in this point inseparably conjoined. Repentance waters and saps the roots of believing, which otherwise would dry up; therefore, instead of outward forms and ceremonies of religion, he presses them to inward sorrow and contrition of heart for sin, that they might present an acceptable sacrifice to God, "a contrite heart." This is more pleasing than many specious duties of men without, Psal. l. 7, &c. But when I press upon you repentance, do not conceive that we would have it preparatory to faith, that ye should sit down and mourn for your sins for a time, till your hearts be so far humbled, and then ye might come as prepared and fitted to Jesus Christ. This is the mistake of many Christians, which keeps them from solid settling. We find it ordinary, souls making scruples and objections against coming to Jesus Christ, because of want of such preparations, of measures of humiliation and contrition, which they prescribe to themselves, or do behold in others. And so they sit down and apply themselves to such a work, apply their consciences to the law and curse; and they find, instead of softening, hardness, instead of contrition of spirit, more dulness and security; at least they cannot get satisfaction to themselves in that they seek, and thus they hang their head over their impenitent hearts, and lament, not so much that repentance is not, as that they cannot find it in themselves. Alas! there are many diseases in this one malady. If it were embowelled unto you, ye would not believe that such a way were so contradictory

to the gospel. For, first, ye who are so, have this principle in your hearts, which is the foundation of it: I cannot come to Christ so unclean, I must be a little washen ere I come, the most gross uncleanness and hardness of my heart must be taken away, and so I shall be accepted. Alas, what derogation is this to the blessed Saviour! What absurdity is it! I am too unclean to come to the fountain, I must be a little purged before I come to this fountain that cleanseth from all sin. I pray you, why was the fountain opened? Was it not for sin and uncleanness? And this thou sayest by interpretation, if I were so and so humbled, then I might come, and be worthy to come; when the want of such a measure debars thee as unworthy, doth not the having of it in thy estimation make thee worthy? And so ye come with a present in your hand to Jesus Christ, with a price and reward to him who gives freely. Again, thou deniest Christ to be the only fountain of all grace, and so it is most dishonourable to him. If thou would have repentance before thou come to him, where shalt thou have it? Wilt thou find it in thy heart, which is desperately wicked? Wilt thou seek it of God, and not seek it in the mediator Jesus Christ? God out of a mediator will not hear thee. In a word, there is both extreme sin and extreme folly in this way: great sin, because it contradicts the tenor of the gospel, it dishonours the Lord Jesus, the exalted Prince, as if he were not the fountain of all grace; it is contrary both to the freedom of his grace, and to the fulness of it also. It is great folly, for thou leavest the living fountain, and goest seeking water in a wilderness; thou leavest the garden where all herbs grow, and wanderest abroad to the wild mountains; and because thou canst not find what thou seekest, thou sittest down and weepst beside it. Repentance is in Christ, and no repentance so pleasing to God as the mournings and relentings of a pardoned sinner; but thou seekest it far from him, yea, refuseth him for want of that which thou mayest have by choosing him. Therefore we declare this unto you, that whatever ye be, whatever ye want, if ye think ye

stand in need of Jesus Christ, embrace him. If ye be exceeding vile in your own eyes, and cannot get repentance as ye would to cleanse yourselves, here is the fountain opened, and ready to wash in. Yet this we must tell you, that no sinner can believe but he that repents,²⁸⁸ not because repentance is required as a preparation to give a man a warrant and right to believe,—I know [411] no ground of faith but our necessity, and the Lord's promise and command unto us,—but because no soul can truly fly into Jesus Christ to escape sin's guilt, but he that desires to be delivered from sin itself; and therefore the most part of you fancy a faith which you have not, because there is no possibility that men will come out of themselves, till they be pressed out by discovered sin and misery within. Your woulds and wishes after Christ and salvation, that many of you have, are not the real exercises of your soul's flying unto him for salvation. If ye did indeed turn into Jesus Christ, your hearts would turn the back upon sin, and

Baillie gives this account of Blair, “Truly, I bear that man record that in all his English voyages, in many passages of the Assembly, private and public, he contributed as much to the pacifying of our differences as any, and much more than many.” *Journals and Letters*, vol. i. p. 306.—*Ed.*]

²⁸⁸ [“The longer I live in the world the less fond am I of that divinity that stand upon quirks and subtilties. What should drive us upon determining whether faith or repentance goes first? What valuable ends or purposes in religion can it serve to promote? What edification can it give to an audience to dispute learnedly about a point of this nature?... I cannot but heartily approve what Mr Robert Blair, an eminent light of this church now in glory, said upon the question in hand. He told his people from the pulpit, that it was a very needless one. 'Tis just (said he,) as if you should ask me, when we are to walk, which foot should we lift first. If we should walk to purpose we must make use of both limbs; and so despatched the thorny question. I wish we may all imitate the wisdom of that great and good man. Is it not sufficient for us to declare that both are necessary, without determining the nice point of priority and posteriority?” (*Essay on Gospel and Legal Preaching*, by a Minister of the Church of Scotland, pp. 22, 23. Edin. 1723.) “Mr. Robert Blair, born in Irvine, was first a Regent in the College of Glasgow, at which time he was licensed to preach the gospel, and was from the beginning zealous for truth and piety.” (*Livingston's Memorable Characteristics*, p. 73) Mr. Blair died in 1666 in the

these sins ye seek remission of. Now, all the desire that many men have of Christ, is this,—I would fain have his salvation, if I might keep my sin; I would gladly be delivered from the guilt of sin, if he would let me keep still the sin. But will Christ make any such bargain?

If this blood only wash from sin, O how many lie in their sins, and wallow in their filthiness! “There is a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness,” Prov. xxx. 12. O that ye believed this! If ye be not now washed, eternity shall find you unclean, and woe to the soul that enters eternity with all the pollution of its sins: can such a soul enter into the high and holy place, the clean city? No, certainly; it must be without among the dogs and swine, it must be kept in darkness for ever. It is, then, of great importance that ye be washen from your filthiness. Now, I ask you, is it so or not? Are ye made clean and washen from the guilt of your sins? Every one of you almost will say so and think so; and yet says the scripture, “There is a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed.” Is there a generation such? Is there any such? Oh! then, think it is possible you may be mistaken in the opinion of your own cleanness. Do any conceive themselves pardoned, and yet are not so? Think it is possible you may have deceived yourselves, especially since ye have never examined it. But are there so many so, a whole generation,—the most part of men? Then, as you love your souls, try, for it is certain that the most part of you must be deceived. Is there a generation in the visible church not washen, and yet every one thinks himself clean? Then certainly the most part are in a great delusion. Will ye then once examine whether or not ye be deluded with them? It shall be your peace

73d year of his age. (See *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, the first part written by himself, p. 128, Edin. 1754.) Mr. James Durham, Minister of the High Church of Glasgow, a short time before his death, intrusted to him the publication of his “*Dying Man's Testament to the Church of Scotland, or a Treatise concerning Scandal*,” to which Mr. Blair wrote a preface. Principal

to know it, while it may be amended. But how comes it to pass, that so many hearing of the gospel, and lying near this fountain, are not cleansed? I think certainly, because they will not have a thorough cleansing, they get none at all. All men would love Christ's blood well to pardon sin, but who will accept of the water to sanctify them from sin? But Christ came with both. Shall this blood be spent upon numbers of you, who have no respect to it, but would still wallow in your filthiness? Would ye have God pardoning these sins ye never throughly resolved to quit? But how is it that so many men are clean in their own eyes, and yet not washed? I think indeed, the reason of it is, they make a kind of washing, which they apprehend sufficient, and yet know not the true fountain. We find men taking much soap and nitre, when convinced of sin, or charged with it, and thereupon soon absolving themselves. If ye ask their grounds, they will tell you, they repent and are sorry for it; they purpose to make amends, and they think amendment a good compensation for the past wrong. They will, it may be, vow to drink no more for a year after they have been drunk; they will confess their sin in public, and all this they do without having any thought of Jesus Christ, or the end of his coming, and can absolve themselves from such grounds, though in the mean time Christ come not so much as in their mind; and therefore are they not really washed. All thy righteousness is unclean before God, and thy repentances defile thee: and yet because of some such duties, though deceivest thyself, and are clean in thine own eyes. These have some beauty in thy eyes, and thou puttest them between thy filthiness and thy eye, and so conceivest that thou art clean. I think a reason also, why many men are clean in their own eyes, and conceive that God hath pardoned their sin, is because they have forgotten it. It is not recent in their memory, and makes no present wound in their conscience: and therefore, they apprehend God such as themselves,—they think he hath forgotten about it also. But oh! how terrible shall it be, when God brings to remembrance, and

sets our sins in order before us! Ye think God cares not for your sins, that he forgives them before thee, and thou shalt know they are still marked before him.

Ye who have washen in this blood, ye may rejoice, for it shall make you clean every whit. Your iniquities that so defiled you, shall not be found. O the precious virtue of that blood that can purge away a soul's spots! All the art of men and angels could not reach this. This redemption and cleansing was precious, and would have ceased for ever; but this blood is the ransom, this blood cleanseth, and so perfectly, that it shall not appear, not only to men's eyes, but also God's piercing eye. Sinners, quit your own righteousness,—why defile ye yourselves more? When your eyes are opened, ye will find it so. Here is washing; apply yourselves to this fountain; and if ye do indeed so; if ye expect cleansing from Jesus Christ, I pray you return not to the puddle. Ye are not washen from sin, to sin more, and defile yourselves more; if ye think ye have liberty to do so, ye have no part in this blood.

Sermon XI.

Isaiah i. 16.—“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil,” &c.

There are two evils in sin,—one is the nature of it, another the fruit and sad effect of it. In itself it is filthiness, and contrary to God's holiness; an abasing of the immortal soul; a spot in the face of the Lord of the creatures, that hath far debased him under them all. Though it be so unnatural to us, yet it is now in our fallen estate become, as it were, natural, so that men agree with it, as if it were sunk and drunk into the very soul of man. The other is guilt and desert of punishment and obligation to it. All men hate this, but they cannot hold it off. They eat the tree and fruit of death, they must eat death also: they must have the wages of sin, who have wrought for it. Now, the gospel hath found a remedy for lost man in Jesus Christ; he comes in the gospel with a twofold blessing, a twofold virtue, a pardoning virtue and a sanctifying virtue, “water and blood,” 1 John v. 6. He comes to forgive sin, and to subdue sin; to remove the guilt of it, and then the self²⁸⁹ of it. God's appointment had inseparably joined them; and Christ came not to dissolve the law, but to establish it. If he had taken away the punishment, and left the sin in its being, he had weakened the law and the prophets. That conjunction of sin and wrath, which is both by divine appointment, and suitable also unto their own natures, must stand, that divine justice may be entire; and therefore, he that comes to redeem us from the curse of the law, hath also this commission to redeem from sin and all transgressions of the law, Rom. xi. 26, and Gal. iii. 13. He that turns away the wrath of God from men, turns also ungodliness from them which provoked his wrath; and so he is a complete redeemer, and a complete redeemer he had not been

²⁸⁹ [Or, sin itself.—*Ed.*]

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otherwise. If he had removed wrath only, and left us under the bondage of sin, it had not been half redemption; “he that commits sin, is the servant of sin.” But this is perfect freedom and liberty, to be made free from sin, for it was sin that subjected us to wrath, and so was the first tyrant and the greatest. The gospel then comes with a joyful sound unto you, but many of you mistake it, and apprehend it to be a doctrine of liberty and peace, and that unto sin; but if it were so, it were no joyful sound. If there were proclaimed a liberty to all men to do as they list, no punishment, no wrath to be feared, I would think that doctrine no glad news, it were but the perpetuating of the bondage of a reasonable soul. But this is glad news,—a delivery and freedom proclaimed in the gospel. From what? Not unto sin, but from sin; and this is to be free indeed. We owe more to Jesus Christ for this, than for redemption from wrath, because sin is a greater evil than wrath; yea, wrath were not so, if sin were not. Therefore he exhorts to wash, and wash so that they may make clean. Take Jesus Christ for justification and sanctification,—employ both the water and the blood that he hath come with. But because all men pretend a willingness to have Christ their Saviour, and their sins pardoned through his blood, who, notwithstanding, hate to be reformed, and would seek no more of Christ: therefore, he branches out that part of the exhortation in several particulars. All men have a general liking of remission of sins, but renouncing of it is to many a hard doctrine. They would be glad that God put their evils out of his sight, by passing them by, and forgetting them; but they will not be at the pains of putting away their evils from his sight; and therefore, the gospel which comprehends these two united, is not really received by many, who pretend to be followers of it. This is his command, that ye believe. Some pretend to obey this, and yet have no regard of that other part of his will, even their sanctification; and therefore their faith is dead, it is a fancy. If ye did indeed believe and receive Christ for pardon of sin, it were not possible but your souls would be engaged and constrained

to endeavour to walk in all well-pleasing. But it is an evident token of one that is not washed from his sin, and believes not in Christ, if he conceive within his heart a greater latitude and liberty to walk after the flesh, and be emboldened to continue in sin, because of his grace and mercy; and yet such are the most part of you. Upon what ground do you delay repentance? Upon what presumption do ye continue in your sins, and put over the serious study of holiness, till a more fit time? Is it not from an apprehension of the grace and mercy of God, that ye think ye may return any time and be accepted, and so ye may in the meantime take as much pleasure in sin as you can, seeing ye may get leave also for God's mercy? I pray you consider, that you have never apprehended God's mercy aright, ye are yet in your sins, and certainly as yet are not washed from them.

“Put away the evil,” &c. When the Spirit convinces a soul, he convinces a man not only of evil doings but of the evil of his doings; not only of sin, but of the sinfulness of sin; and not only of those actions which are in themselves sinful, but also of the iniquity of holy things. I think no man will come to wash in Christ's blood, till this be discovered. If he see much wickedness, many evil doings, yet he will labour to wash away these by his own tears, and repentance, and well-doing. As long as he hath any good actions, as prayers, fasting, and such like, he will cover his evil doings by them; he will spread the skirts of such righteousness over his uncleanness; and when he hath hid it from his own eyes, he apprehends that he hath hid it from God's also. He will wash his bloody hands with many prayers, and thinks they may be clean enough. We see blasphemers of God's name use to join a prayer for forgiveness with their oath and curse, and they never trouble themselves more. O what mocking of God is this! Now, as long as it is thus, there is no employment for the Son of God's blood; they can do their own turn. Men will not come to Christ, because it is the best way, if they see any else beside. None will come till they see it is the

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only way; none can wash in Christ, except they wash all. If ye have any thing that needs not washing, his blood is not for you; his righteousness is not known, when ye establish all, or a part of your own. I fear the most part of you have no employment for Christ; ye have extreme need of him, but ye know it not, for there are many things which ye will not number among your sins,—your prayers, your hearing, reading, singing, public and private worship, giving alms, &c. How many of you were never convinced of any sin in these! Do ye not conceive God is well-pleased with you for them? Your conscience hath convinced you, it may be, of gross sins, as drunkenness, filthiness, swearing, &c. But ye are not convinced for your well doing, ye find not a necessity of a Mediator for these. I think many of you never confessed any such thing, except in a general notion. Alas, how ignorant are men of themselves! We are unclean, how can any thing we do cleanse us? Are not we unclean, and do not our hands touch our own works? Shall not then our own uncleanness defile our good actions, more than they can cleanse us? Hag. ii. 13. The ignorance of this makes men go about to build up their old ruined righteousness, and still seek something in themselves, to make up wants in themselves. Always, when the light of God hath discovered you to yourselves, so that ye can turn your eye nowhere, but uncleanness fills it, though your conversation be blameless in the world, so as men can challenge nothing yet ye have found within and without nothing, but matter of mourning, I say, this is an evidence that the Spirit hath sinned and enlightened thy darkness. Now, when thou hast fled unto Jesus Christ for a covering to thy righteousness, as well as unrighteousness, it remains that thou now put away the evil of thy doings,—put not away thy doings, but the evil of them. We challenge your prayers, services, and public duties, even as the prophet did we declare unto you that God is as ill pleased with them, as your drunkenness, whoring, intemperance, &c. The most part of you are no more acceptable when ye come to the church, than when

ye go to the tavern,—your praying and cursing is almost all one. What shall we do then, say ye? Shalt we pray no more, and hear no more? No, say I, put not away your prayers and ordinances, but put away the evil of them from before his sight. Rather multiply your doings, but destroy the evil and iniquity of your doings. And there is one evil or two above all, that makes them hateful to him: ye trust too much in them. Here is the iniquity, the idol of jealousy set up: ye make your doings your righteousness, and in that notion they are abomination. There is nothing makes your worship of God so hateful as this, ye think so much of it, and justify yourself by it, and then God knows what it is that ye so magnify, and make the ground of your claim to salvation. It is even an empty ceremony, a shadow without substance, a body without a soul. You speak and look and hear, you exercise some outward senses but no inward affection, and what should that be to him, who is a Spirit?

They did not observe the iniquity of their holy things, and therefore are they marked by him—they are in his sight. They did not see so many faults in their prayers and services, they wondered why God did chide them so much, but God marks what we miss, he remembers when we forget. We cover ourselves with a wall of external duties, and think to hide all the rottenness of our hearts, but it will not be hid from him, before whom hell hath no covering. All hearts are open and naked before him. Your secret sins are in the light of his countenance. Men hear you pray, see you present at worship, they know no more, at least they see no more, nay, but the formality of thy worship, the wanderings of thy mind are in his sight. And, O how excellent a rule of walking were this, to do all in his sight and presence! O that ye were persuaded in your hearts of his all seeing, all searching eye, and all knowing mind! Would ye not be more solicitous and anxious anent the frame of your hearts, than the liberty of your speech or external gesture? O how would men retire within themselves, to fashion their spirits before this all searching and

all knowing Spirit! If ye do not observe the evils of your hearts and ways, they are in his sight, and this will spoil all acceptance of the good of them. If ye observe the evils of your well doing, and bring these also to the fountain to wash them, and be about this earnest endeavour of perfecting holiness, of perfecting well doings in the power and fear of God, then certainly he will not set your sins in the light of his countenance, the good of your way shall come before him, and the evil of it Christ shall take away.

“Cease to do evil,” &c. These are the two legs a Christian walks on, if he want any of them, he is lame and cannot go equally,—ceasing from evil, and doing good, nay, they are so united, that the one cannot subsist without the other. If a man do not cease from evil and his former lusts, he cannot do well, or perfect holiness. There are many different dispositions and conditions of men, there are generally one of two. Some have a kind of abstinence from many gross sins and are called civil honest men,—they can abide an inquest and censure of all their neighbours, they can say no ill of them. But alas, there is as little good to be said; he drinks not, swears not, whores not, steals not. Nay, but what doth he well? Alas, the world cannot tell what he doth, for he prays not in secret, nor in his family,—he is void of some offences towards men, but there are many duties called to, towards both God and men, he is a stranger to. He oppresses not the poor, nay, but he is not charitable either to give to them, he defrauds no man, but whom helps he by his means? Again, there are others, they will boast of some things done, they pray, they keep the church well, they do many good turns, and yet for all that, they do not cease to do evil. They were drunkards, so they are, they can swear for all their prayers, are given to contention, to lying, to filthiness, &c. Now, I say, neither of these religions is pure and undefiled. Religion is a thorough and entire change, it is like a new creation, that must destroy the first subject, to get place for that which is to come. It is a putting off old garments,

to put on new, the putting off an old form and engraven image, to make place for a new engraving. Men do not put a seal above a seal, but deface the old, and so put on the new, men do not put new clothes upon the old, but put the old off, and so they have place for the new. Religion must have a naked man. Godliness is a new suit, that will not go on upon so many lusts, no, no, it is more meet and more conformed unto the inwards of the soul than so. The cold must go out as the heat comes in. Many men do not change their garments, but mend them, put some new pieces unto them. They retain their old lusts, their heart idols, and they will add unto these a patch of some external obedience, but alas, is this godliness? Hypocrisy will be content of a mixture,—sin is the harlot, whose heart could endure to see the child parted. It can give God a part, to get leave to brook the most part; sin will give God liberty to take some of the outward man, if it keep the heart and soul. But God will not reckon on these terms, he will have all the man or nothing, for he is the righteous owner. True godliness cannot mix so, but false and counterfeit may do it well. Other men, again, possibly uncliothe themselves of some practices, but they put on new clothing, they reform some passages for fear of censure, or shame, or such like. They are found, it may be, blameless, either because so educated, or their disposition is against particular gross sins, but they are not clothed upon with holiness and well doing, and so they are but naked and bare in God's sight, not beautiful. They have swept their house, and some devil put out or kept out, but because the good Spirit enters not, ordinarily seven worse enter again into such men.

There is a great moment²⁹⁰ of persuasion in this order of the exhortation, “Wash you,” and then, “put away the evil of your doings,” and “cease to do evil.” Do not continue in your former customs. It is strange, how contrary our hearts are to God, we

²⁹⁰ [That is, *power* of persuasion.—*Ed.*]

use to turn grace unto wantonness, we use to take more liberty to sin, when we conceive we are pardoned. But I do not know any more strong and constraining persuasion to forsake sin, than the consideration of the forgiving of it might yield. O what an inducement and grand argument to renouncing of evils, is the consideration of the remission of them! This is even that ye are now called unto, who have fled to Jesus to escape wrath what should ye be taken up with, in all the world but this,—to live to him henceforth, who died for us,—to forsake our own old way, and that from the constraining principle of love to him, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. O that ye would enforce your own hearts with such a thought, when there are any solicitations to sin, to former lusts! Should I, that am dead to sin, live any longer therein? Rom. vi. 2. Should I who am washed from such pollutions, return again to the pollutions of the world? Should I again defile myself, who am cleansed by so precious blood, and forget him that washed me? Should I return with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow to the puddle? God forbid I pray you consider. If you be Christians indeed, give a proof of it. What hath Jesus Christ done for you? He hath given himself, his own precious blood, a ransom for us, will ye not give up yourselves to him? Will not ye give him your sins and lusts, which are not yourself, but enemies to yourself? Will not ye put away these ills, that he came into this world to destroy? Art thou a Christian, and are there yet so many sins, and works of the devil reigning in thee, and set up in God's sight?

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What an inconsistency is this! If thou be his follower, thou must put these away. Give them a bill of divorcement, never to turn again. Many a man parts with his sin, because it leaves him, he puts it not away, temptation goes, and occasion goes away, but the root of it abides within him. Many men have particular jars with their corruptions, but they reconcile again, as differences between married persons. They do not arise²⁹¹ to hate their sin

²⁹¹ [This is the word in the first Edition. It would seem to have been substituted

in its sinful nature. But if thou hate it, then put it away. And who would not hate that which Christ so hated, that he came to destroy it? 1 John iii. 5. What a great indignity must it be to the gospel, to make that the ground of living in sin, which is pressed, in it, as the grand persuasion to forsake it? Seeing we are washed from the guilt of it, O let us not love to keep the stain and filth of it! Why are we washen? Was it not Christ's great intendment and purpose, to purify to himself a holy people? We are washen from the guilt of our sins, and is it to defile again? Is it not rather to keep ourselves henceforth clean, that we may be presented holy and unblameable in his sight,—that we may seek to be as like heaven as may be. But who ceases to do these evils, that he says are pardoned? Who puts away the evil of these doings, the guilt whereof he thinks God hath put away? Could ye find in your hearts to entertain those evils so familiarly, to pour out your souls unto them, if that peace of God were indeed spoken unto you? Would not the reflex of his love prove more constraining on your hearts? Were it possible, that if ye did indeed consider, that your lusts cost Christ a dear price to shed his blood, that your pleasures made his soul heavy to death, and that he hath laid down his life to ransom you from hell, were it possible, I say, that ye would live still in these lusts, and choose these pleasures of sin, which were so bitter to our Lord Jesus? I beseech you be not deceived,—if ye love the puddle still, that ye cannot live out of it, do not say that ye are washed. Ye may have washen yourselves with soap and nitre, but the blood of Christ hath not cleansed; for, if that blood sprinkled your conscience once, to give you an answer to all challenges, it could not but send forth streams to purify the heart, and so the whole man. The blood and water might be joined, the justifying Saviour, and the sanctifying Spirit, for both these are in this gospel washing, 1 Cor vi. 11, 1 John v. 6. “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood.” Not by water

only, but by blood also, and I say, not by blood only, but by water also. The very purpose of forgiveness is not to lay a foundation for more sin, but that men may sin no more, but break off their sins. It is indeed impossible for a man to amend his ways, till he be pardoned, for his sin stands betwixt him and God. God is a consuming fire—the guilt of it hinders all meeting of the soul with God, at least all influence from him. But when an open door is made in Christ, that men may come and treat with God, notwithstanding of rebellions, and have the curse relaxed, O how may he go about his duty comfortably! Am I escaped from hell, why should I any more walk in the way to it? And now he hath the Spirit given for the asking. There are some cessations from sin, that are not real forsakings of it, and ceasings from it. You know men will abstain from eating for a season, that they may be made ripe for it at another time. Some do not cease from sin, but delay it only, they put it not away, but put it off only for another time, till a fitter occasion and opportunity. And this is so far from ceasing from it, that it is rather a deliberate choice of it, and election of conveniency for it. There may be some pure and simple ceasings from sin, mere abstinence, or rather mere absence of sin for a season, that is not ceasing from doing evil. The Christian's ceasing hath much action in it. It is such a ceasing from doing evil, that it is a putting away of evil, it hath a soul and spirit joined in that cessation. Sin requires violence to put it out where it hath haunted,—it is an intruding guest, and a usurping guest. It comes in first as a supplicant and beggar, prays for a little lodging for a night, and promises to be gone. The temptation speaks but for a little time, even the present time, for a little one,—it seeks but little at first, lest it be denied, but if once it be received into the soul, it presently becomes master, and can command its own time, and its abode. Then ye will not so easily put it out as ye could hold it out, for it is now joined with that wicked, desperate party within you, the heart, and these united forces are too strong for you. According as a lust is

one with a man's heart, or hath nearer connection with his heart and soul, it is the worse to put away: for, will ye drive a man from himself? It is the cutting off a right hand, or plucking out of a right eye. To make a man cease from such evils, requires that a stronger power be within him than is in the world. Men may cease for a time, for want of occasions or temptations to sin, when there is no active principle in them, restraining or keeping their souls from such sins as appear after, when no sooner is occasion offered, but they run as the horse to his course, or the stone falleth downward,—they receive fire as easily as dry stubble. That is not Christian ceasing, which is that which the soul argues itself into, from grounds of the gospel. Should I, who am dead to sin, live any longer therein? This is a principle of cessation, and this is true liberty,—when the soul can abstain from present temptations upon such grounds and persuasions of the gospel, then it is really above itself and above the world, then hath it that true victory. Many men cease only from sin, because sin ceases from them, they have not left it, but it hath left them. The old man thinks himself a changed man, because he wallows not in the lusts of the flesh, as in his youth. But, alas! no thanks to him for that, he hath not ceased from his lusts. But temptations to him, or power and ability in him to follow them hath ceased,—there is no change in his spirit within, for he can talk of his former sins with pleasure, he continues in other evils as bad, but more suitable to his age. In a word, he is so inwardly, that if he were in his body, and occasions offering as before, he would be just the same. Some, again, cease from some evils, from some principles, but, alas! they are no Christian principles. What restrains the multitude of civilians from gross scandals? Is it any thing but affectation of a good name and report in the world? Is it not fear of reproach or censure? Is it not because possibly they have no particular inclination to such evils? And yet there are many other evils of the heart as evil though more subtile, that they please themselves in, as pride, covetousness,

malice, envy, ambition, &c. What shall all your abstinence be accounted of, when it is not love to Jesus Christ, or hatred of sin, that principles it? It is not the outward abstinence that will commend you such it is, as the principles of it are. And these only are the true Christian principles of mortification,—love of Jesus Christ, which constrains men to live no more to themselves, but to be new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; and hatred of sin in its nature as sin a Christian should have a mortal hatred of it, as his mortal enemy. It is not Christianity to abstain from some fleshly lusts, if ye consider them not as your soul's enemies, 1 Peter ii. 11. “Ye that love the Lord hate evil,” Psal. xcvi. 10. These are chained together. David's hatred was a soul-hatred, an abhorrency, Psal. cxix. 163, “I hate and abhor lying.” It is like the natural antipathies that are among creatures, the soul hates not only the person of it, but the nature of it also. Men often hate sin, only as it is circumstantiated, but Christian hatred is a hatred of the nature, like the deadly feuds, which are enmities against the kind and name. “I will put enmity between thy seed,” &c. It is a “perfect hatred,” Psal. cxxxix. 22. And so it cannot endure any sin, because all is contrary to God's holiness and offensive to his Spirit. I would think it easier to forsake all evil, and cease from doing any evil, I mean, presumptuously, with a willing mind and endeavour, than indeed to forsake one, for as long as ye entertain so many lusts like it, they shall make way for it. It were easier to keep the whole commandments in an evangelical sense, than indeed to keep any one, for all of them help another, and subsist they cannot one without another, so that ye take a foolish course, who go about particular reformations. Ye scandalous sinners profess that ye will amend the particular fault ye are guilty of, and, in the mean time, you take no heed to your souls and lives, therefore it shall be either in vain, or not acceptable. How pleasant a life would Christians have, if they would indeed be persuaded to be altogether Christians! The halving of it neither pleaseth God nor delights you, it keeps

you but in continual torment between God and Baal. Your own lusts usurp over you, and that of Christ in you challenges the supremacy, so ye are as men under two masters, each striving for the place, and were it not better to be under one settled government? If there be any tenderness of God in your hearts, or light in your consciences, they cannot but testify against your lusts, these strange lords. Your lusts, again, they drive you on against your conscience; thus ye are divided and tormented betwixt two,—your own conscience and affections. You have thus the pain of religion, and know not the true pleasure of it. You are marred in the pleasures of sin, conscience and the love of God is a worm to eat that gourd. It is gall and vinegar mixed in with them. Were it not more wisdom to be either one thing or another? If ye will have the pleasures of sin for a season, take them wholly, and renounce God, and see if your heart can endure that. If your heart cannot condescend to that, I pray you renounce them wholly, and ye shall find more exquisite and sure pleasures in godliness, at his right hand. O what a noble entertainment hath the soul in God; the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost is a kingdom indeed! [418]

Sermon XII.

Isaiah xxvi. 3.—“Thou shall keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

All men love to have privileges above others. Every one is upon the design and search after some well-being, since Adam lost that which was true happiness. We all agree upon the general notion of it, but presently men divide in the following of particulars. Here all men are united in seeking after some good; something to satisfy their souls, and satiate their desires. Nay, but they scatter presently in the prosecution of it, because, according to every man's fancy and corrupt humour, they attribute that good unto diverse things; and when they meet with disappointment, they change their opinion of that, but are made no wiser, for they turn from one to another of that same kind, in which their imagination hath supposed blessedness to be; and therefore they will return to that which they first loathed and rejected. Is there, then, no such thing in the world as blessedness? Is it not to be found among men? Are all men's insatiable desires in vain? Is a creature made up and composed of desires, to keep it in continual torment and vexation of spirit? No certainly, it is, and it is found by some. All the world strives about it, but the man only who trusts and believes in God, he it is, who carries it away from them,—who hath this privilege beyond the world. And why do so many miss it? Because they do not see or suspect that it is blessedness indeed which he enjoys; but, on the contrary, their corrupted imaginations represent godliness, and a godly man's self-indigency and dependence on God, as the greatest misery and shame. The godly man hides not his blessedness from the world; no, he proclaims it when he hath found it,—he would that all enjoyed it with him. And if there were no more to declare that it doth not consist in worldly things, this might suffice—they are

not communicable to many, without the prejudice and loss of every one. But none will believe his report of his own estate.

If ye would consider, here is that which men toil for,—compass sea and land for; here it is; “near thee in thy mouth.” It is not in heaven, that thou shouldst say, How shall I ascend to it? It is not in hell below, that thou shouldst say, Who shall descend? It is not in the ends of the earth. No. It is “near thee, in thy mouth.” It is not beyond the sea, but it is “near thee in thy mouth, even the word of faith,” which Christ preached, Rom. x. 6-8. And what says that word? Believe with thy heart, and thou shall be saved; trust in God, and depend on him, and ye shall have peace, and that perfect peace; and this peace shall be kept by God himself. “Blessed, then, is the man that trusts in the Lord,” Psal. xl. 4. Ye make a long journey in vain; ye spend your labour and money in vain; all the pains might be saved: it is not where ye seek it. Ye travel about many creatures; ye go to many doors, and inquire for happiness and peace, but ye go too far off; ye need not search so many coasts, it is nearer hand, in this word of the gospel—the joyful sound; it is this that proclaims peace. Peace is a comprehensive word, especially in scripture. It was the Jews' salutation, “Peace be to you;” meaning happiness and all good things; it is Christ's salutation, “Grace and peace.” Grace is holiness, peace is happiness, and these are either one, or inseparably conjoined as one. This was the angels' song, “Glory to God, peace on earth,” Luke ii. 14. Blessedness was restored, or brought near to be restored, to miserable man, by Jesus Christ; and upon the apprehension of this, angels sing. It was this Christ came into the world with; and when he went away, he left this legacy to his children, “My peace I leave you,” John xiv. 27. We lost happiness, and all men are on a vain pursuit of it since, but it is found, and found by one of our kin. Our Lord Jesus, our elder brother, he hath found it, or made it, and brought it near us in the gospel for the receiving; and whoso receives him by faith, and trusts in him, receives that privilege, that peace. He endured

much trouble to gain our peace; he behoved to undergo misery to purchase our blessedness, and so it is his own, and whoso receives him receives it also.

The news of such a peace might be seasonable in the time of war and trouble, if we apprehended our need of it. It is not a peace from war and trouble, but a peace in war and trouble. "My peace I leave with you," and "in the world ye shall have trouble," John xiv. 27, and xvi. at the end. What a blessed message is it, that there is a peace, and a perfect peace attainable in the midst of wars, confusions, and calamities of the times, public and personal; a perfect peace, a complete peace, even complete without the accession of outward and worldly peace, that needs it not; nay, appears most perfect and entire in itself, when it is stripped naked of them all. Behold what a privilege the gospel offers unto you! ye need not be made miserable, but²⁹² if you please. This is more than all the world can afford you. There is no man can promise to himself immunity from public or personal dangers, from many griefs and disappointments; but the gospel bids you reckon up all your troubles and miseries that you can meet with in the world; and yet in such a case, if ye hearken to wisdom, there is a peace that will make you forget that trouble. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17. I will undertake to make thee blessed, says wisdom, the Father's wisdom. When all the world hath given thee over for miserable; when thou hast spent thy substance on the physicians, and in vain, come to me, I can heal that desperate disease by a word. "I create peace," when natural causes have given it over; I create it of nothing; I will keep you "in perfect peace."

You have then here, three things of special concernment in these times; and all times, a blessedness, a perfect peace attainable, the way of it, and the fountain of it. The fountain of it, the preserver of it, is God himself; the way to attain it, is "trusting

²⁹² [That is, unless you please.—*Ed.*]

in God, and staying on him.” This sweetness of peace is in God the tree of life. Faith puts to its hand, and plucks the fruit of the tree; hope and dependence on God is a kind of tasting of that fruit and eating of it; and then followeth this perfect peace, as the delightful relish and sweetness that the soul finds in God, upon tasting how gracious he is. God himself is the life of our souls, the fountain of living-waters, the life and light of men. Faith and trusting in God, draws out of this fountain,—out of this deep well of salvation; and staying on God, drinks of it, till the soul be refreshed with peace and tranquillity, such as passeth natural understanding. Christ Jesus is the tree of life, that grows in the garden of God; trusting in him by faith implants a soul in him,—roots a soul in him, by virtue of which union, it springs up and grows into a living branch; by staying and depending upon him, we live by him, and hence springs this blessed and sweet fruit of peace of soul and conscience, which grows upon the confidence of the soul placed in God, as the stalk by which it is united to the tree. Trusting and staying upon God is the soul's casting its anchor upon him in the midst of the waves and storms of sin, wrath, and trouble. The poor beaten sinner casts an anchor within the vail, on that sure ground of immutable promises in Jesus Christ; and then it rests and quiets itself at that anchor, enjoys peace in the midst of the storm,—there is a great calm, it is not moved, or not greatly moved, as if it were a fair day. David flieth unto God as his refuge, anchors upon the name of the Lord, Psal. lxxii. 1, 2; and so he enjoys a perfect calm and tranquillity. “I shall not be moved,” because he is united to the rock, he is tied to the firm foundation, Jesus Christ, and no storm can dissolve this union, not because of the strength of that rope of faith, it is but a weak cord, if omnipotency did not compass it about also, and so we “are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.” The poor wearied traveller, the pilgrim, sits down under the shadow of a rock, and this peace is his rest under it. Faith lays him down, and peace is his rest and sleep. Faith in

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Jesus Christ is a motion towards him, as the soul's proper place and centre, and therefore it is called a coming to him,—flying to him as the city of refuge. It is the soul's flight out of itself, and misery and sin within, to apprehend mercy and grace, and happiness in Christ. Now, hope is the conjunction or union of the soul with him,—the soul then staying and resting on him, as in its proper place, and so it enjoys perfect peace and rest in its place, so that if ye remove it thence, then ye offer violence to it.

These two things are of greatest importance to you to know, what this perfect peace is, and what is the way to attain it. The one is the privilege and dignity, the other is the duty of a Christian, and these two make him up what he is.

I would think that man perfectly blessed, who is at peace with two things,—God and himself. If a man be at peace with creatures without him, and be at peace with himself, but have war within his own mind, that man's peace is no peace, let be perfect peace. A man's greatest enemy is within his own house. And within indeed, when it is in his bosom and soul, when a man's conscience is against him, it is worse than a world beside. *Conscientia mille testes*,²⁹³ so I say, it is *mille hostes*. It is “a thousand witnesses,” and “a thousand enemies.” It were better to endure condemnation of any judge, of many judges in the world, than to sustain the conviction of a man's own conscience, when it accuseth, who shall excuse? John viii. 9, Rom. ii. 15. “A merry spirit,” saith Solomon, “is a continual feast,” Prov. xv. 15. And what must a heart be, which hath such a gnawing worm within it, as an accusing conscience, to eat it out? This is the worm of hell that dies not out, which makes hell hell indeed. This indeed will be a painful consumption, “A broken spirit drieth up the bones,” it will eat up the marrow of the spirit and body, Prov. xvii. 22. What infirmity is there which a man cannot bear?

²⁹³ [A proverb, which signifies that conscience does not deceive, and that its testimony is as overwhelming as that of a thousand witnesses—*Quintil Inst Orator* lib. v. chap. xi.—*Ed.*]

Poverty, famine, war, pestilence, sickness, name what you will, but a wounded spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. 14. And there is reason for it, for there is none to bear it, a sound and whole spirit can sustain infirmities, but when that is wounded, which should bear all the rest, what is behind to bear it? It is a burden to itself. If a man have trouble and war in this world, yet there is often escaping from it, a man may fly from his enemy, but when thy enemy is within thee, whither shalt thou fly? Thou canst not go from thyself, thou carriest about thee thy enemy, thy tormentor.

But suppose a man were at peace within himself, and cried peace, peace, to himself, yet if he be not at peace with God, shall his peace be called peace? Shall it not rather be named supine security? If a man be at variance with himself, and his soul disquieted within, there is more fear than danger if he be at peace with God. It is but a false alarm, that shall end well, but if he have peace in his own bosom, and yet no agreement with God, then destructions are certainly coming, his dream of peace will have a terrible waking. A man may sleep soundly, and his enemies round about him, because he knoweth not of it, but he is in a worse estate than he that is in great fear, and his enemies either none, or far distant. The one hath present danger, and no fear, the other present fear, and no danger, and which of these think ye best? Sudden destruction awakes the one from sleep, Ezek. vii. 25. Their fear and destruction come both at once, when it is now in vain to fear, because it is past hope, Prov. i. 27. Therefore the Lord swears, that “there is no peace to the wicked,” Isa. xlvi. 22. What! Do not they often cry peace to themselves, and put the evil day far off? No men are so without bands in life and death as they, they have made agreement with hell and death, and their own consciences, yet for all that, “thus saith the Lord, there is no peace to the wicked.” If God be against us, what is the matter who be with us, for he can make a man's friends his enemies, and he can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him: He makes peace and creates trouble, Isa. xlv. 7. Men can but destroy the

body, but he can destroy both body and soul for ever. O what a potent and everlasting enemy is he! There is no escaping from his all-seeing eye and powerful hand, Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8. A man may fly from men, but whither shall he fly from His presence? To heaven?—He is there. To hell?—He is there. The darkness of the night hath been a covering under which many have escaped, and been saved in armies, but darkness is no covering to him, it is all one with light. He is near hand every one of us. The conscience is within us, but he is within the conscience, and how much God is above the creature, so great and dreadful a party is he above any enemy imaginable. Therefore I conclude, that that man only hath perfect peace, who is at peace with God, and with his own conscience. If a man be at peace with God, and not with himself, he wants but a moment's time of perfect peace, for, ere it be long, the God of it will speak peace unto him. But if he be at peace with God and himself, I know not what he wants of the perfect peace, of the "peace, peace," for it is a man's mind that makes peace or war, it is not outward things, but in the midst of peace he may be in trouble, and in the midst of trouble in peace, according as he hath satisfaction and contentment in his own breast, for what is all the grace of a Christian? It is godliness with contentment, it is not godliness and riches, godliness and honour, or pleasure, godliness and outward peace. No, no, contentment compenseth all these, and hath in it eminently all the gain and advantage of these. A man in honour, a rich man, having no contentment in it, is really as poor, as ignominious, as the poor and despised man. If contentment then be without these things, certainly they cannot be missed, for where contentment is not with them, it only is missed, and they not considered. Contentment is all the gain that men seek in riches, and honour, and pleasure, if a godly man have that same without them, he then hath all the gain and advantage, and wants nothing, but some trouble that ordinarily attends them. Outward peace cannot add to inward peace, and so the want of it cannot diminish.

We must begin at the original, if we would know rightly this peace that passeth knowledge. The fountain-head is peace with God, a stream of this is peace of conscience, and peace with the creatures. There is a peace of friendship, when persons were never enemies, and there is a peace of reconciliation, when parties at variance are made one. Innocent Adam had peace once with God as a friend,—angels continue so to this day, but now there is no such peace between men and God, for all are become enemies to God, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, that peace was broken by rebellion against God his maker, and all the posterity are born with the same enmity against God. On our part are hearts desperately wicked, whose imagination is only evil continually. On God's part is holy and spotless justice, that is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and therefore must destroy it or the sinner. On our part are so many rebellions,—Adam's actual transgression, and all our own sins and breaches of the holy law, as so many breaches of peace. On God's part are so many curses answerable to the breaches of the law: “cursed is every one that abideth not in every thing,” &c. This curse is even the proclamation of men to be traitors, and an intimation of the righteous judgment which will come upon them. Adam was in a covenant of peace with God,—“Do, and thou shalt live, if not, thou shalt die.” Adam brake this covenant, so the peace is dissolved, and God is no more obliged to give life, but to execute the pain contained in the covenant, and in sign and token of this, look how Adam fled from God's presence, to hide himself when he heard his voice, it was a poor shift, for whither should he go from his presence? But, alas! seeking more wisdom, he lost that he had, seeking divine wisdom, he lost human. Now, there is no more making up this peace on such terms again, we have no capacity to treat with God any more, but blessed be his Majesty, who hath found out the way of agreement and reconciliation. O that ye were once persuaded of your enmity against God! ye are not born friends, though ye be born within the visible church.

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How dreadful a thing is it, to have the Most High and terrible God against you, to do to you according to your deservings! Ye all know this, we are enemies to God by nature, I pray you, is it but a name? Is it not worthy deep consideration? But who considereth this matter? If ye lose a friend, ye will be troubled, and the more behoveful your friend was, the more troubled you will be. If a great and potent nation proclaimed war against us, we cannot but be sensible of it, but alas! who considereth the great breach that is between God and all men, occasioned by the first man's transgression and rebellion! It is one of the degrees of health, to know the disease, and I may call it a degree of peace, a kind of preparation to peace, to know the enmity, and not generally to know it, but to ponder it till the heart be affected with it, to call a council of all the faculties and affections of the soul to consider the great imminent danger of man's commonwealth. What is it, I pray you, that is the greatest obstruction of men's making peace with God, that makes the breach irreparable, and the wound incurable? It is this, certainly, no man apprehendeth it aright, we entertain good thoughts of our friendship with God, or that it is easy to be reconciled. Who seeth such a wide breach between God and man, that all the merits of angels and men could not make it up? Who seeth the price of redemption so precious, as it must cease for ever, for all that men and angels can do? Is not every man offering God satisfaction, either his tears, or sorrow, or amendment in time coming, or all of them? Do not men undertake to pacify God with external ordinances, and think it may suffice for their sins? Certainly ye are ignorant of the infinite separation between God and man, who imagine a treaty with him yourselves, or that ever ye can come unto speaking terms, and therefore is this war and enmity perpetual; therefore there is no peace, when ye cry, Peace, peace! When ye have peace within you, and say that ye have peace with God, yet certainly, the Lord thy God is against thee, and will not spare thee, Deut. xxix. 19. Many of you bless yourselves in your own

hearts, when ye hear the curse and threatening of the law, ye say, God forbid that all that were true. Well, thus saith the Lord, All these curses that are written in this book shall be upon thee, and the Lord shall separate thee unto evil, because ye take not with your enmity, there can be no treaty, a mediator can have no employment from you.

How shall the breach of peace be made up? Since the first covenant cannot be made up again, where shall the remedy be found? God is just and righteous, men are rebellious and sinful, can these meet, and the one not be consumed? Will not God be a consuming fire, and men as stubble before the Lord's presence? Therefore, there must be a Mediator between them, a peace-maker, to make of two one, to take up the difference. And this Mediator must be like both, and yet neither wholly the one nor the other. He must therefore be God and man, that he may be a fit day's man betwixt God and man, and this is our Lord Jesus Christ. In his divinity he comes near to God, in his humanity he comes near to man, in his person he is between both, and he is fit to make peace, and therefore he is "a Prince of peace," Isa. ix. 6. And that he may be a Prince of peace, he must be both, "an everlasting Father" like God, and a young child like unto man. God to prevail with God, and a man to engage for man, and therefore he is called "our Peace," Eph. ii. 14. Our Lord Jesus Christ enters into a covenant with the Father, wherein he undertakes to bear our curse, and the chastisement of our peace. He is content to be dealt with as the rebel, "Upon me, upon me be the iniquity," and so there comes an interruption, as it were, of that blessed peace he had with the Father. He is content that there should be a covering of wrath spread over the Father's love, that he should handle the Son as an enemy, and therefore it is, that sinners are admitted as friends,—his obedience takes away our rebellion. The cloud of the Lord's displeasure pours down upon him, that it might be fair weather to us, the armies of curses that were against us, encounter him, and he, by being overcome,

overcometh, by being slain by justice, Satan and sin, overcometh all those, and killeth the enmity on the cross, making peace by his blood, Col. ii. 14, 15, Eph. ii. 15. And it is this sacrifice that hath pacified heaven,—the sweet smell of it hath gone above, and made peace in the high places.

Here, then, is the privilege of a believer,—to be at peace with God, to be one with him, and this indeed is life eternal, to be united unto the fountain of life, in whose favour is life and whose loving kindness is better than life. Is not this a blessed estate? Whatever a man hath done against God is all forgiven and forgotten, it shall never come into remembrance. Are not angels blessed who are friends with God? Such is the soul whose sins are pardoned through Christ,—its sins are as if they never had been. The soul is not only escaped that terrible wrath of God, but being at peace with God, all the goodness that is communicable to creatures, it shall partake of, “that they may be one, as we are one, that they may be perfect in one,” John xvii. This Christ prayed for, and this was the end of his death,—to make of two one. So, then, the glory that Christ is partaker of with the Father, we must be partakers of with him, and all this by virtue of that peace with God by him. O if ye knew what enmity with God is! how would it endear and make precious peace with him! The one engageth all that is in God to be against a man; the other engageth all that is in him to be for a man. And is not he then a great one, whether he be a friend or an enemy, is he not the best friend and worst enemy, who hath most power, yea, all power, to employ for whom he will, and against whom he will? What a blessed change is it, to have God, of a consuming fire, made a sun, with healing and consolation! that the righteous, holy, and just God, before whom no flesh can stand, should accept so rebellious sinners, and dwell among them! He had not only power to destroy, but law against us also. What a perfect peace is it, then, that the Judge becometh a merciful Father, and the law of ordinances is cancelled, and that power employed to keep

salvation to us, and us to salvation! Ye who have made peace and atonement through Christ's blood, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, there wants nothing to make you completely blessed, but the clear and perfect sight and knowledge of your estate before God.

Now, when this peace, which is made up in heaven, is intimated unto the conscience, then all the tempests and clouds of it evanish, and this is the peace of believing, which is the soul's resting and quieting itself upon the believing favour of God. There may be a great calm above, good-will in God towards men, and yet great tempests in this lower region, no peace on earth. There is a peace of conscience which is a disease of conscience, a benumbedness of conscience, or a sleep of conscience, when men walk in the imagination of their own hearts, and flatter themselves in their own eyes, will not trouble themselves with the apprehension of the wrath of God. When souls will not suffer their sin, or the curse to enter in, this is that "no peace" which the Lord speaks often of, it is but a dream, and when a man awaketh, alas! what a dreadful sight meets he with first,—“sudden destruction!” Sin enters into the conscience, and the law, the strength of sin, and so that peace endeth in an eternal disquietness. But what is the reason, that notwithstanding of God's justice and men's sins, so many are not afraid of him, so many pass the time without fear of wrath and hell? Is it not because they have taken hold of his strength, and made peace with him? No, indeed, but because they know not the power of his anger, to fear him according to his wrath. Who will spend one hour in the examination of his own ways, in searching out sins, in counting his debt, till he find it past payment? No, men entertain the thoughts of sin, and hell and wrath, as if it were coals in their bosom, they shake them out, they like and love any diversion from them. Oh! ignorance maketh much peace, I would say security, which is so much worse than fear, because it is so far from the remedy, that it knoweth not the evil and

danger. It is not the rising of the Sun of righteousness, shining into the soul, that hath cleared them, but their perpetual darkness that blindeth them. I say, then, in the name of Jesus Christ, that ye never knew the peace of God, who knew not war with God, ye know not love, who have not known anger, but this is the soul's true peace and tranquillity, when it is once awakened to see its misery and danger—how many clouds overspread it, what tempests blow; what waves of displeasure go over its head! But when that peace, which is made in the high places, breaketh through the cloud with a voice, “Son, be of good comfort, thy sins be forgiven thee!” when that voice of the Spirit is uttered, presently at its command the wind and waves obey, the soul is calmed, as the sea after a storm, it is not only untroubled, but it is peaceable upon solid grounds, because of the word which speaks peace in Christ. The peace of the most of you is such as ye were born and educated withal. Is it not a created peace, a spoken peace,—the fruit of the lips, and so no true peace? Ye had not your peace from the word, but ye brought it to the word, ye have no peace after trouble, and so it is not the Lord's peace.

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The Christian may have peace, in regard of his own salvation and eternal things, and in regard of all things that befalleth in time; the first is, when the conscience is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, and getteth a good answer to all the challenges and accusations of conscience, and of the law and justice, 1 Pet. iii. 21; when the Spirit of God shines into the soul, with a new light to discover these things that are freely given, 1 Cor. ii. 12. And this is the sealing of the Spirit after believing, Eph. i. 13. When a soul hath put to its seal by believing God's word, and hath acknowledged God's truth and faithfulness in his word, the Spirit sealeth mutually the believer's faith, both by more holiness and the knowledge of it; and how great peace is this, when a soul can look upon all its iniquities when they compass about a man, and outward trouble sharpeneth and setteth on edge inward challenges, and yet the soul will not fear,—it hath answers to

them all in Christ's blood, Psalm xlix. 5. This is a greater word than all the world can say. Many men's fearlessness proceedeth from ignorance of sin, their iniquities were never set in order before them; but if once they compassed them about, and wrath, like a fiery wall, compass them about also, so that there were no escaping, O it would be more terrible than all the armies of the world! Ye would account little of a kingdom, ye would exchange it for such a word as David hath upon good grounds.

Now, I say again, the soul that hath thus committed itself to him as a faithful keeper, may have peace in all estates and conditions; and this peace floweth from that other peace. There is a peace which guards the heart and mind, Phil. iv. 6, 7, opposed to carefulness and anxiety; and this Paul is exemplary for, "I have learned in every estate, therewith to be content, to want and abound," &c. ver. 11. The soul of a believer may be in an equal even tenor and disposition in all conditions; it may possess itself in patience. Impatience and anxiety make a man not his own man; he is not himself, he enjoys not himself; he is a burden to himself, and is his own tormentor; but if souls were stayed upon God, certainly they would possess themselves, dwell securely within their own breasts. We may find that the most part of men are exposed to all the floods and waves of the times. They move inwardly, as things are troubled outwardly; every thing addeth moment to their grief or joy; any dispensation casteth the balance, and either weighs them down with discouragement, or lifteth them up with vanity and lightness of mind; but the believer's privilege is to be unmoved in the midst of all the tossings and confusions of the times, Psal. cxxviii. 1, 2. Ye would be as mount Zion if ye trusted in God; no dispensation would enter into the soul to cast the balance upon you; ye might stand upon your rock Jesus Christ, and look about the estates, persons, affairs, and minds of men, as a troubled sea, fleeting, tossed up and down, and ye stand and not be moved, or not greatly moved, Psal. lxii. 2. And this is to be wise indeed.

If I would describe a wise man, I would say, he “is one man,” beside him no man is one with himself, but various, inconstant, changeable. He is unwise who is unlike himself, who changeth persons according to dispensations: wisdom is the stability of thy times, and faith is wisdom. It establisheth as mount Zion, so as a man cometh out still one,—in prosperity not exalted, in adversity not cast down, in every estate content; and this is the man who is blessed indeed. This were wisdom,—to will the same thing, and nill²⁹⁴ the same thing. *Semper idem velle, atque idem nolle.*²⁹⁵ I need not, says Seneca, add that exception, that it be right which you desire, for no one thing can universally and always please, if it be not good and right; so I say, he were both wise and happy, who had but one grief and one joy. Should not a believer's mind be calm and serene, seeing the true light hath shined; it should be as the upper world, where no blasts, no storms or clouds are to eclipse the sun, or cloud it. While our peace and tranquillity is borrowed from outward things, certainly it must change; but a believer's peace and tranquillity of mind, having its rise from above, from the unchangeable word of the Lord, it needeth not to change according to the vicissitudes of providence. He needeth not to care beforehand, because there is one who careth for him; and what needeth both to care? He needeth not be disquieted or troubled after, because it shall turn about to his good; all things shall do so, Rom. viii. 28. He needeth not be anxious about future events, because he hath all his burden cast upon another by prayer and supplication. What needeth he then take a needless burden? Prayer will do that which care pretends and cannot do, and that without trouble. He needeth not be troubled when things are present, for he cannot by his thought either add or diminish, take away or prevent. There is one good and necessary thing

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²⁹⁴ [That is, not to will.—*Ed.*]

²⁹⁵ [See Note, page 96. *Si vis cadem semper vella, vera oportet velis.*—“If you are desirous to have always similar wishes, it is necessary that you should wish for things that are proper.” *Senec. Epist. xcv.*—*Ed.*]

that his heart is upon, and that cannot be taken from him; and therefore all things else are indifferent, and of small concernment to him.

Now what wanteth such a man of perfect peace, who is reconciled to God, and at peace within himself? When peace guardeth the heart and mind within, compasseth it as a castle or garrison, to hold out all the vain alarms of external things, may not all the world be troubled about him? What though the floods lift up their voice, if they come not into the soul? If he be one and the same in peace and trouble, prosperity and adversity, do not lament him in the one more than the other. It is the mind that maketh your condition good or bad; but yet, I say, the believer hath likewise peace with all the creatures, which the world hath not, and even in this he is a privileged man. He is in league with the stones of the field, and in peace in his tabernacle, Job v. 23. All things are his, because he is Christ's, and all are Christ's, who is the possessor of heaven and earth, at least the righteous heir of both, 1 Cor iii. 21. The unbeliever hath no right to the creature; though there be a cessation for a time between them and him, yet that is no peace, for they will at length be armed against him. They are witnesses already against him, and groan to God for the corruption that man's sin hath subjected them unto. His table is, it may be, full, yet it is a snare unto him; he getteth ease and quietness outwardly: nay, but it slayeth the fool and destroyeth him. But the godly man is at peace, through Christ's blood, with all crosses and comforts; the sting and enmity of all evils is taken away by Christ. Poverty is made a friend, because Christ was poor; hunger and thirst is become a friend, because Christ was hungry and thirsty; reproach and contempt is at peace with him, because Christ was despised; afflictions and sorrows are reconciled to him, because Christ was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; in a word, death itself is become a friend, since Christ subdued it by lasting of it. I may say, the worst things to a natural man are become best friends to the believer;

the grave keepeth his body and dust in hope. Death is a better friend than life, for it ministers an entry into glory: it is the door of eternal life: it taketh down the tabernacle of mortality, that we may be clothed upon with immortality. In sum, whatever it be, Christ hath stamped a new quality on it; it cometh through his hand, and so, if it be not good in itself, yet it is good in the use, and in his appointment, Rom. viii. 21. If it be not good, yet it worketh together for our good; it contributeth to our good, because it is in his skilful hand, who can bring good out of evil, peace out of trouble. O that ye were persuaded to be Christians indeed, to love his law, and trust in him. Great peace have all such. This were more to you than peace in the world; your peace should be as a river, for abundance and perpetuity; no drought could dry it up; it should run in time as a large river, and when time is done, it would embosom itself in eternity, in that ocean of eternal peace and joy which the saints are drowned in above; other men's peace is but like a brook that dries up in summer.

Sermon XIII.

Isaiah xxvi. 3.—“Thou shall keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

Christ hath left us his peace, as the great and comprehensive legacy, “My peace I leave you,” John xiv. 27. And this was not peace in the world that he enjoyed; you know what his life was, a continual warfare; but a peace above the world, that passeth understanding. “In the world you shall have trouble, but in me you shall have peace,” saith Christ,—a peace that shall make trouble no trouble. You must lay your accounts to have such a life as the forerunner had; but withal, as he hath left us his trouble, so hath he left us his peace; the trouble will have an end, but the joy can no man take from you. We have this sure promise to rest upon, in behalf of the church, peace shall be in Israel; a peace that the world knoweth not, and so cannot assault it, or take it away. O that ye would hearken to this word, that ye would trust in the Lord, and stay upon your God, then should your peace be as a river, Isa. xlvi. 18. There is nothing more desired in time of trouble than peace; but all peace is not better than war: some necessary war is better than evil-grounded peace. The kingdoms have been long in pain, labouring to bring forth a safe and well-grounded peace. But, alas! we have been in pain and brought forth wind; when we looked for peace, no good came, and for healing, behold trouble. But how shall we arrive at our desired haven? Certainly, if peace be well-grounded, it must have truth for its foundation, and righteousness for its companion; truth must spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven. This were the compendious way for public peace, if every man would make his own peace with God. There are controversies with God, between king, nobles, and people; and therefore God fomenteth the wars in the kingdoms. If you would have these ended, make peace with God in Christ,

by flying in unto him, and resting on him; more trusting in God would despatch our wars; trusting in the arm of flesh continueth them. Always whatever be, peace or war, here is the business that more concerns you,—your eternal peace and safety; and, if ye were more careful of this, to save your own souls, you would help the public more. If you could be once persuaded to be Christians indeed, we needed not press many duties in reference to the public; and until you be once persuaded to save yourselves, by flying from the wrath to come, it is in vain to speak of public duties to you. We do therefore declare unto you the way of obtaining perfect peace,—peace as a river; if you will quit all self-confidences, flee from yourselves as your greatest enemies, and trust your souls unto the promise in Jesus Christ, and lean all your weight on him, we assure you, your peace shall run abundantly and perpetually. Whoever trusteth in creatures, in uncertain riches, in worldly peace, in whatsoever thing besides the only living and glorious Lord, we persuade him, that his peace shall fail as a brook. All things in this world shall deal deceitfully with you, as a brook which is blackish, by reason of ice; what time it waxeth warm, it shall evanish. You that looked and waited for water in it shall be confounded, because you hoped, and are ashamed because of your expectation. Job vi. 15, &c. The summer shall dry up your peace, and what will ye do? But if you pour out your souls on him, and trust in the fountain of living waters, you shall not be ashamed, for your peace shall be as a river. The elephant is said to trust that he can drink out a river; but he is deceived, for he may drink again,—it runs, and shall run for ever. If any thing would essay to take your peace from you, it is a vain attempt, for it runs like a river; it may be shallower and deeper, but it cannot run dry, because of the living fountain it proceedeth from. There is no other thing can be made sure; all besides this is uncertain, and this only is worthy to be made sure; nothing besides this can give you satisfaction.

Are your hearts asking within you, how shall this peace be

attained? If you desire to know it, consider these words, “Whose heart is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.” It concerneth you much to know well, what this is that your eternal peace depends on. [427]

Trusting in God, is the leaning of the soul's weight on God. The soul hath a burden above it, heavy and unsupportable, and this the truster casteth upon God; and so he is a loadened and weary man, whom Christ exhorteth to come to him, and he shall find ease for his soul, Matt. xi. 28; Prov. iii. 5. Leaning to ourselves, and trusting in God are opposed. Psal. xxii. 10, trusting is expounded²⁹⁶ to be “a casting upon God.” Psal. xxv. 1, it is called, “a lifting up the soul to him.” This one thing is included in the bosom of trusting and believing, that a man hath many burdens too heavy for him, which would sink him down: the believer is such a one as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, “O Lord, we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do.” O Lord, I have an army of iniquities against me, a great company compasseth me about; an army of curses as numerous as mine iniquities; both are innumerable as the sand of the sea; I have no might against them, neither know I what to do: nay, the Lord is against me, his wrath is like the roaring of a lion; what can I do against him? The first beginning of trusting in God is distrusting ourselves; and until a man see his duty and burden beyond his strength, his burden greater than he can bear, you will never persuade him to come to Jesus Christ, and lean on him. We will not preach any such doctrine, as to discharge any to come to Christ, till they be wearied and loaden; for, when a man conceiveth that he wanteth that weariedness, whither shall he go to find it? Is there any fountain, but one, Jesus Christ, both of grace and preparations to it, if any such be? But this we preach unto you, that until you be wearied and loaden, you will not cast your burden on Jesus. We need not discharge you to come till

²⁹⁶ [That is, laid open or explained.—*Ed.*]

you be such, for certainly you will not come. This is the desperate wickedness of our hearts, that we will never forsake ourselves till we can do no better. Until men be as David, "I looked on the right hand, and there was none would know me; refuge failed me," certainly they will not cry to God. Men will look round about them, before they will look up above them; they will cast the burden of their souls upon any thing, upon their own sorrow and contrition, upon their resolution to amend, upon external duties and privileges, upon civil honesty, until all these succumb under the weight of their salvation; and then, it may be, they will ask after him who bare our griefs. I would not willingly speak of preparations to faith, because it putteth men upon searching for something in themselves, upon fashioning their own hearts, and trimming them to come to Christ; whereas there is nothing can be acceptable to him but what cometh from him. But I think all that men intend, who speak of preparations, may be gained this way by holding out unto men the impossibility of coming to Christ, till they be emptied of themselves. Not that the one is a thing going before, to be done by us, but because they are all one; it is one motion of the soul to come out of itself, and into Jesus; it is one thing really to distrust ourselves, and to trust in him; and by this means, when the true nature of faith itself is holden out, men might examine themselves rather by it, whether they have it, than by the preparations of it.

But to come to our purpose, when the soul is pressed under burdens of sin and misery, of duty and insufficiency, and inability to do it, then the gospel discovereth unto the wearied soul a place of reposing and rest. The Lord hath established Christ Jesus, an "ensign to the people;" those who seek unto him shall find his rest glorious, Isa. xi. 10. When there is discovered in us all emptiness and inability, yea impossibility to save ourselves, or perform any duty, then are we led to Jesus Christ, as one who is come with grace and truth, in whom it hath pleased the Father all fulness should dwell; and the turning of the soul over upon him

is trusting in him. You would not mistake this; trusting in the Lord in its first and most native acting, is not always persuasion of his good-will and love in particular. No, the soul meets first with a general promise, holding out his good-will in general; and the soul closeth with this, as a thing both good and true,—as faithful in itself, and worthy of all acceptation. This is it that we must first meet with,—an all-sufficient Saviour, able to save to the utmost all that come to him; and the soul's accepting of that blessed Saviour on the terms he is offered, this is believing in him, and trusting to him, as a complete Saviour. [428]

Now when the soul hath disburdened itself upon God, and set its seal to the truth of the promises in the gospel for salvation; if the light of the Spirit shine to discover this unto it, that it hath laid hold on his strength who is able to save to the utmost, then it becometh persuaded of his love in particular; and this is rather the sealing after believing, than believing itself.

When once men have hazarded their souls upon his word, and trusted in him, then they may trust in him for all particulars: he that hath given his Son for us, will he not with him give all things? This, therefore, is the continual recourse of a believer,—from discovered emptiness and insufficiency in himself, to travel unto the fulness and strength of Jesus Christ, that his strength may be perfected in weakness. Yea, when all things seem contrary, and his dispensation writes bitter things against us, yet ought we to trust in him, Job xiii. 15. There is a peace of wilfulness and violence in faith, that will look always towards his word, whatever be threatened to the contrary.

Now, from this faith in God, floweth a constant dependence and stayedness on him, they are stayed on him, because they trusted in him; for faith discovereth in God such grounds, that it may lean its weight upon him without wavering and changing. It considereth his power, his good will, and his faithfulness; he is able to perform, he is willing to do it, and he is faithful, because he hath promised. His greatness and power is a high rock, higher

than we, that faith leadeth us unto. His love and good-will in Jesus Christ, maketh an open entry and ready access to that rock; and faithfulness engageth both to give a shelter and refuge to the poor sinner. Would a soul be any more tossed, would there be any place for wavering and doubting, if souls considered his excellent loving-kindness, and great goodness laid up and treasured with him for those that trust in him? Psalm xxxvi. 7. Who would not put their trust under the shadow of his wings, and think themselves safe? Again, if his eternal power were pondered, how he is able to effectuate whatever he pleaseth; what everlasting arms he hath that by a word supports the frame of the world; what he can do, if he stretch out his arm; and then, if these two immutable things, (Heb. vi. 18.) his promise and his oath, were looked upon;—how he hath engaged himself in his truth, and sworn in his holiness; would not a soul lie safely between these three? What strong consolation would such a threefold consideration yield? Would any wind or tempest blow within these walls mounted up to heaven?

Stayedness on God is nothing else but the fixedness of believing and trusting, Ps. cxii. 7, 8, “his heart is fixed, trusting in God; his heart is established.” It is even the mature and ripe age of faith. Faith, while it is yet in infancy, in its tender years, neither can endure storms, nor can it confirm us in them; but when it hath sprung up and grown in that root of Jesse, when it is rooted and established in Jesus Christ, then it establisheth the soul. Faith abiding in him and taking root, groweth, confirmed as a tree that cannot easily be moved; and if you establish faith, you shall be established.

There are two particulars which I conceive the trusting soul is stayed on. First, in the meditation of God. Secondly, in expectation from him of all good things. When I say the meditation of God, I take in both contemplation and affection. The most part of men have but few thoughts of God at all; even those who trust in him do not consider sufficiently what a one he is in

whom they believe. If faith were vigorous and lively, it would put men to often thinking on him, seeking to know him in his glorious names; the mind would be stayed upon this glorious object, as the most mysterious and wonderful one. How strong are men's minds with their vanities? When they awake, they are not still with God. The meditation of him is a burden to them; any other thing getteth more time and thoughts. But meditation addeth affection to contemplation; men may think long upon the heavens and their course, but their affections are not ravished with them. But thus is the soul stayed on God;—when the soul's desires are towards the remembrance of his name, then affection stayeth the mind upon what it pitcheth on; and certainly the mind giveth but passing looks, constrained thoughts, where the heart is not. Here is David's meditation, Ps. i. "My delight is in the law of the Lord." The soul of a believer should be constant and fixed in the consideration of God, till he be wholly engaged to admiration and wondering. "O Lord, how excellent is thy name," Psal. viii. 1: "and who is like unto thee?" You all say that you believe in God, and know his power,—you know he is good, he is merciful, just, long-suffering, faithful, &c. But what is all this knowledge but ignorance, and your light darkness, when it doth not press you to put your trust in his name? You know; nay, but you consider not what you know. This is trusting, when the mind is stayed on what it knoweth, when all the scattered thoughts and affections are called home, and united in one, to be exercised about this comprehensive object, "the Lord our God." It is not want of knowledge destroyeth you, but want of consideration of what you know, and this is brutishness. Men's hearts do not carry the seal and stamp of their knowledge, because thoughts of God and his word are but as passengers that go through a land, as lightning going through the mind, but warms it not; and so their practice carrieth no impression of it either. How base is it for those who have God for their God, to be so ignorant of him! Would not any man willingly travel about his own possessions?

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Have you such a large portion, believers, and should ye be taken up with other vanities? Should your hearts and minds be stayed on them, more than the living God? There is a great vanity and levity in men's minds; "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity." There is an unsettledness of spirit,—we cannot pitch on that upon which we may be stayed; and so all the spirits of men are in a continual motion from one thing to another, for nothing giveth complete satisfaction, and therefore it must go and try one after another, to see if it can find in it what it found not in the former. And such is the inconstancy of the spirit, that it licketh up its vomit; and what thing it refused, it eateth it up as its meat. The time is spent in choosing and refusing, rejecting one thing and taking another, and again returning to what you have rejected. Thus are men tossed up and down, and unstable in all their ways, as a ship without ballasting. Now, faith and trusting in God is the ballast and weight of this inconstant ship: it is the anchor to stay it from being driven to and fro. If once men would pitch upon this one Lord, who hath in himself eminently all the scattered perfections of creatures, and infinitely more,—if you would consider him, and meditate on him, till your souls loved him, would you not be ravished with him? Would you not build your house beside him, and dwell in the meditation of his name? This would fix and establish you in duties—"when I awake, I am still with thee." A little searching and experience discovereth emptiness in all beside; and therefore is it, that the soul removeth sooner from such a particular creature than it expected. But here is One that is "past finding out." The more I search and find, I find him the more above what I can search and find. The creatures are but painted and fair in men's apprehension, and at a distance; but the near enjoyment of them discovereth the delusion, and sendeth a man away ashamed, because he trusted. But the Lord God is, and there is no other. He is not as waters that fail, no liar,—he is an everlasting fountain,—the more you dig and draw, it runs the faster; he will never send any away ashamed that trust

in him, because they shall find more than they expected.

Therefore the soul that is stayed on meditation of God, and knoweth him certainly, will be fixed in expectation from him. Our expectation from the creatures changeth, because it is often frustrated. Disappointment meets it. It is above what is in the creature, and so it must meet with disappointment; but as he is above our meditation, so is he far above our expectation; and if a man's experience answer his hope, he hath no reason to change his hope. The Lord hath often done things we looked not for, but we never looked for any thing, according to the grounds of the word, but it was done, or a better than it. He doth not always answer our limitations; but if he give gold, when we sought silver, are we not answered? Are we disappointed? There are three things that use most to disquiet and toss men's spirits,—sin and wrath, future events, and present calamities. Faith establisheth the soul on God in all these, and suffereth it not to be driven to and fro with these winds; it finds a harbour and refuge in God from all these. If he be pursued by the avenger of blood, God's wrath and justice, here is an open city of refuge that he may run to and be safe. [430] If iniquities compass me about, yet I will not fear, but oppose unto that great company the many sufferings and obedience of Jesus Christ. My conscience challengeth and writeth bitter things against me, yet I have an answer in that blood that speaketh better things than Abel's. If sins prevail, he will purge them away. His mercy is above all my sin, and his virtue and power is above my sin. He hath promised, and will he not do it? Oft times men's souls are perplexed and tossed about future events, careful for to morrow. This is a great torment of spirit, it cutteth and divideth it,—putteth a man to his own providence, as if there were no God, but he that trusteth in God is established in this, “His heart is fixed trusting in the Lord.” He hath committed his soul to him, and why may he not his body? He hath nothing but his promise for eternal salvation, and may not that same suffice for temporal? He careth for me, saith faith, why then should we both care about

one thing? He hath given his Son for me, the most precious gift which the world cannot match, and will he not with him give all these lesser things? And thus the believer encloseth himself within the Father's love and providence, and is fixed, not fearing evil tidings, for what tidings can be evil, seeing our Father hath the sovereign disposing of all affairs, and knoweth what is best for us? Present dispensations often shake men, and drive them to and fro, their feet slip, and are not established, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." But if you trusted in God, and considered what is in him to oppose to all difficulties and calamities, you would say, "I shall not be moved, though the floods lift up their voice." If you believed his love, would not this sweeten all his dealing? He maketh all work together for good. Sovereignty, righteousness, and mercy, are sure and firm ground to stand upon in all storms. You may cast anchor at any of those, and lie secure. "It is the Lord, let him do what he pleaseth." This was enough to quiet the saints in old times. Should he give account of his matters to us? Shall the clay say to the potter, why is it thus? His absolute right by creation maketh him, beyond all exception, do what he pleases, but beside this, he is pleased and condescendeth to reason with us, and give account of his matters, to testify to our conscience that he is righteous in all his ways. It was the ground of Jeremiah's settling, Lam iii. "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed." It should have allayed and stayed Job. Know this, thou art punished less than thy iniquities deserve. Who will set a time to plead with him? Shall any be found righteous before him? And this might stop all men's mouths, and put them in the dust to keep silence, seeing he hath law to do infinitely more than he doth, why should not we rather proclaim his clemency, than argue him so very hard? If to both those you shall add the consideration of his mercy, that all his paths are mercy and truth unto you, even when he correcteth most severely, so that you may bless him as well for rods as for meat and clothing, and count yourself blessed when

you are taught by the rod and the word, the one speaking to the other, and the other sealing its instruction,—if you believed that it were a fruit of his love, that “he chasteneth every son whom he loveth,” because he will not let you depart from him, will not let you settle upon a present world, and forget your country above, therefore he compasseth you about with hedges of thorns to keep in your way, and therefore he maketh this world bitter and unpleasant, that you may have no continuing city,—if all this were believed would not the soul triumph with Paul, “What can separate me from the love of God?”—not past things, for all my sins are blotted out, and shall be remembered no more, not present things, for they work to good, and are a fruit of his love, not things to come, for that is to come which shall more declare his love than what is past, would not a soul sleep securely within the compass of this power, this love, and faithfulness of God, without fear of dashing or sinking?

Now, judge whether a perfect peace may not flow from all this. May it not be a perfect calm, when the mountains that environ go up to heaven? Not only doth the soul trust in God, but God keepeth the trusting soul in peace. He is the Creator of peace, and the preserver of it,—“I create peace, I keep him in peace.” The same power and virtue is required to the preserving of a thing, and the first being of it. Our faith and hope in God is too weak an anchor to abide all storms. Our cords would break, our hands faint and weary, but he is the everlasting God, who faileth not, and wearieth not. He holdeth an invisible gripe of us. We are kept by his power unto salvation, and we are kept by his power in peace. “Thy right hand holdeth me,” saith David, and this helpeth me to pursue thee. What maketh believers inexpugnable, impregnable? Is it their strength? No indeed. But “salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” Almighty power is a strong wall, though invisible,—this power worketh in us and about us. [431]

Now, believers, pity the world about you, that knoweth not this peace. When they lie secure, and cry Peace, peace, alas!

they are a city open without walls as the plain field,—there is no keeper there, nothing to hold off destruction. Entertain your own peace, do not grieve the Spirit who hath sealed it. If you return to folly after he hath spoken peace to you, I persuade you, you shall not maintain this peace. There may be peace with God, but no peace in thy conscience, as long as the whoredoms of thy heart are to the fore, thou mayest be secure, but security is worse than fear. Know this, that continuing in a course of sin, entertaining any known sin, shall trouble thy peace. If God hath spoken peace to thee, thou shalt not lodge that enemy in peace. “Great peace have they that love thy law.” Obedience and delight in it doth not make peace, but it is the way of peace, and much meditation on the blessed word of God is the most excellent mean to preserve this peace, if it be secured with much correspondence with heaven by prayer, Phil. iv. 6, 7. If you would disburden your hearts daily at the throne of grace, peace should guard and keep your heart, and then your peace would be perfect indeed. But because your faith is here imperfect, your requests few and infervent, your follies and iniquities many, therefore is this promised perfection a stranger to the most part of Christians. Always what we want here, we must expect to have made up shortly. Heaven is a land of peace, and all things are there in full age, here all are in minority, it is but yet night, but when the day shall break up, and the shadows fly away, and the Prince of peace shall appear and be revealed, he shall bring peace and grace both with him, and both perfect. To Him be praise and glory.

Sermon XIV.

Isaiah lix. 20.—“And the Redeemer shall come unto Zion, and unto them that turn,” &c.

Doctrines, as things, have their seasons and times. Every thing is beautiful in its season. So there is no word of truth, but it hath a season and time in which it is beautiful. And indeed that is a great part of wisdom, to bring forth everything in its season, to discern when and where, and to whom it is pertinent and edifying, to speak such and such truths. But there is one doctrine that is never out of season, and therefore it may be preached in season and out of season, as the apostle commandeth. Indeed to many hearts it is always out of season, and especially in times of trouble and anguish, when it should be most seasonable, when the opportunity may commend the beauty of it, but in itself, and to as many as have ever found the power of it on their hearts, it is always the most seasonable and pertinent doctrine,—I mean the very subject-matter of this text, the news of a Redeemer to captive sinners. It is in itself such glad tidings, and shines with so much beauty and splendour to troubled sinners, that it casteth abroad a lustre and beauty on the feet of the messengers that carry it, Isa. xl. It is a cordial in affliction, whether outward or inward, and it is withal the only true comfort of prosperity. It allayeth the bitterness of things that cross us, and filleth up the emptiness of things that pretend to please us, it giveth sweetness to the one, and true sweetness to the other. Reason then—that should always be welcome to us, which we stand always in need of, that it should always be new and fresh in our affection, which is always recent and new in its operation and efficacy toward us. Other news how great or good soever, suppose they were able to fill the hearts of all in a nation with joy, yet they grow stale, they lose their virtue within few days. What footsteps or remainder is of all the triumphs and trophies of nations, of all

their solemnities for their victorious success at home and abroad? These great news, which once were the subject of the discourse of and delight of many thousands,—who report them now with delight? So those things that may cause joy and triumph to some at this time, as they cannot choose but make more hearts sad than glad; so they will quickly lose even that efficacy they have, and become tasteless as the white of an egg, to them that are most ravished with them. But, my beloved, here is glad tidings of a Redeemer come to Zion to save sinners, which have no occasion of sadness in them to any, but to those who are not so happy as to consider them, or believe them, and they are this day, after many hundred, I may say thousand, years since they were first published, as green and recent, as refreshing to wearied souls, as ever they were. Yea, such is the nature of them, and such an everlasting spring of consolation is in them, that the oftener they be told, and the more they be considered, the sweeter they are. They grow green in old age, and bring forth fruit, and are fat and flourishing; and indeed it is the never-dying virtue and everlasting sap of this word of life, that maketh the righteous so, Psal. xcii. 14. This word of a Redeemer at the first publishing, and for a long time, was but like waters issuing out from under the threshold, and then they came to the ankles, when it was published to a whole nation; but still the longer it swells the higher above knees, and loins, till it be a great inexhausted river, and thus it runs at this day through the world, and hath a healing virtue and a quickening virtue, Ezek. xlvi., and a sanctifying virtue, ver. 9-12. Now this is our errand to you, to invite you to come to these waters. If ye thirst, come to be quenched; if ye thirst not, ye have so much the more need to come, because your thirst after things that will not profit you, will destroy you, and your unsensibleness of your need of this is your greatest misery.

That the words may be more lively unto us, we may call to mind, the greatest and deepest design that hath been carried on in the world, by the Maker and Ruler of the world, is the marriage

of Christ his Son with the Church. This was primarily intended, when he made the world, as a palace to celebrate it in; this was especially aimed at, when he joined Adam and Eve, in the beginning of time, together in paradise, that the second Adam should be more solemnly joined to the church, at the end of time, in the paradise of heaven; and this the apostle draws out as the sampler and arch-copy of all marriages and conjunctions in the creatures, Eph. v. Now this being the great design of God, of which all other things done in time are but the footsteps and low representations, the great question is, how this shall be brought about, because of the great distance and huge disproportion of the parties, He “being the brightness of the Father's glory,” and we being wholly eclipsed and darkened since our fall;—He higher than the heaven of heavens, and we fallen as low as hell into a dungeon of darkness and misery, led away by sin and Satan, lying in that abominable posture represented in Ezek. xvi.; not only unsuitable to engage his love, but fit to procure even the loathing of all that pass by.

Now it being thus, the words do furnish us with the noble resolution of the Son, about the taking away of the distance, and the royal offer of the Father, to make the match hold the better, both flowing from infinite love, in the most free and absolute manner that can be imagined. The Son's resolution, which is withal the Father's promise, is to come into the world first to redeem his spouse, and so to marry her; “and the Redeemer shall come unto Zion,” &c. The Father's offer, that he might not be wanting to help it forward, is to dispone,²⁹⁷ by an irrevocable covenant, having the force of an absolute donation, his word and Spirit to Christ and his seed, to the church, even to the end of the world, (ver. 21). “As for me, this is my covenant.” The Son hath done his part, and is to express his infinite love, infinite condescendency, and stooping below his majesty. Now, as for

²⁹⁷ [Dispone is a Scots law expression. It signifies to convey a right or property to another.—*Ed.*]

me, I will show my good-will to it in my infinite bounty and riches of grace to the church; he hath given himself for her,—I will give my Spirit; and thus it cannot but hold.

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We shall speak a word then of these three: first, what estate and condition Christ findeth his church in, out of which she must be taken to be his spouse; then, what way and course is laid down by the council of heaven, to fill up the infinite distance between Christ and sinners; and, to close all, we shall show you the suitableness of these promises, and the wonderful fitness of this doctrine to the church, at this time Isaiah preached it, and at all times.

The first is supposed in the words. Redemption supposeth captivity or slavery; redemption of persons importeth captivity and slavery of these persons, and redemption of other things that belong to persons, importeth sale or alienation of our right to them. Of both, personal redemption is the greatest and most difficult; yet both we have need of, for our estate and fortune, so to speak, is lost, “for all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” Rom. iii. 23. That inheritance of eternal life, we have mortgaged it, and given away our right to it. The favour of God and the blessedness of communion with him, was Adam's birthright, and by a free donation was made his proper inheritance and possession, to be transmitted to his posterity. But O! for how small a thing did he give it away,—for a little taste of an apple he sold his estate; and both he and we may lament over it, as the king that was constrained to render himself and all his army for want of water. When he tasted it, “For how small a thing,” saith he, “have I lost my kingdom!” Then our persons are in a state of bondage, in captivity and slavery; captives under the wrath of God, and slaves or servants to sin. There needed no greater difference and deformity between Christ and us, than this,—our servitude and bondage to sin, which truly is the basest and most abominable vassalage in the world. The abasement of the highest prince, to the vilest servitude under the basest creatures in his

dominion, is but a shadow of that loathsome and ugly posture of our souls. This servitude doth in a manner unman us, and transform us into beasts. Certainly it is that which, in the holy eyes of God, is more loathsome than any thing beside. He seeth not that deformity in poverty, nakedness, sickness, slavery. Let a man be as miserable as Job on his dunghill, it is not so much that, as the unseen and undiscerned posture and habit of their souls, that he abominateth. Now what a match is this, for the highest and holiest prince, the Son of the greatest King, and heir of all things! But if you add to this slavery, that captivity under the curse and wrath of God,—that all men are shut up, and enclosed in the prison of God's faithful and irrevocable sentence of condemnation, and given over by the righteous judgment of God, to be kept by Satan in everlasting chains of darkness,—he keepeth men now, by the invisible cords of their own sins, but these chains of darkness are reserved for both him and men,—now indeed, this superaddeth a great difficulty to the business. The other may be a difficulty to his mind and affection, because there is nothing to procure love, but all that may enforce hatred and loathing. But suppose his infinite love could come over this stay, could leap over this mountain by the freedom of it, yet there is a greater impediment in the way, that may seem difficult to his power, and it is the justice and power of God, enclosing sinners and shutting them up for eternal wrath, till a due satisfaction be had from or for them. You see then, how infinite the distance is betwixt him and us, and how great the difficulty is to bring about this intended union. Angels were sent with flaming swords to encompass the tree of life and keep it from man, but man is environed by the curse of the Almighty God. The justice, the faithfulness, and the power of God do guard or set a watch about him, that there is no access to him to save him, but by undergoing the greatest danger, and undertaking the greatest party that ever was dealt withal, and the strictest and severest too.

This being the case then, the distance being so vast, and

the difficulty so great, the distance being twofold, between his nature and ours, and between our quality and his: an infinite distance between his divine nature and our flesh, and besides an extreme contrariety between the holiness of his nature, and the sinfulness of ours,—[there is here] such a repugnancy, as there is no reconciliation of them. You know what Paul speaketh of the marriage of Christians with idolaters: how much more will it hold here? What communion can be between light and darkness, between God and Belial? Is it possible these can be reduced to amity, and brought to so near an union? Yet for all this, it is possible; but love and wisdom must find out the way. Infinite love and infinite wisdom consulting together, what distance can they not swallow up? What difficulty can they not overcome?

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And here you have it, the distance undertaken to be removed, both by the Father and the Son,—(for all this while we can do nothing to help it forward; while the blessed plot is going on, we are posting the faster to our own destruction). And this is the way condescended upon; *first*, To fill up that wide gap between his divine spiritual nature, and our mortal fleshly nature, it is agreed upon, that the Son shall come in our flesh, and be made partaker of flesh and blood with the children; and this is meant by this promise, “the Redeemer shall come to Sion;” which is plainly expressed by his own mouth, John xvi. 28, “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world.” There being such a distance between his majesty and our baseness, love maketh him stoop down and humble himself to the very state of a servant, Phil. ii. 7, 8. And thus the humiliation of Christ filleth up the first distance; for “love and majesty cannot long dwell together,” *nec in una sede morantur majestas et amor;*²⁹⁸ but love will

²⁹⁸ See:

Non bene conveniunt, nec in una sede morantur,
Majestus et amor.

Ovid. Met. lib. ii. v. 846.—Ed.]

draw majesty down below itself, to meet with the object of it. This was the great journey Christ took to meet with us, and it is downward below himself; but his love hath chosen it, to be like us, though he should be unlike himself. How divinely doth the divine apostle speak of it, "And the Word was made flesh, and he dwelt among us," John i. 14. And therefore the children of Adam may in verity say of him, what the holy Trinity, in a holy irony spake of man, "Lo, he is become as one of us." It was a singular and eminent privilege conferred upon man in his first creation, that the Trinity in a manner consulted about him, "Let us make man after our image;" but now when man hath lost that image, to have such a result of the council of the Trinity about it, "let one of us be made man, to make up the distance between man and us,"—O! what soul can rightly conceive it without ravishment and wonder, without an ecstasy of admiration and affection!—that the Lord should become a servant!—the Heir of all things be stripped naked of all!—the brightness of the Father's glory, be thus eclipsed and darkened!—and in a word, that which comprehendeth all wonders in the creation,—who made all things,—be himself made of a woman! and God become a man, and all this out of his infinite love, to give a demonstration of love to the world; so high a person abased, to exalt so base and low as we are! There is a mystery in this, a great mystery, a mystery of wisdom, to swallow up the understanding with wonder; and a mystery of love, to ravish the hearts of men with affection,—depths of both, in the emptiness of the Son of God. The prophet doubted what was commanded, to seek a sign, whether in heaven above, or in the depth beneath; but what he would not ask, God gave in his great mercy, "Behold a virgin shall conceive a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel;" a sign indeed from heaven, and the height of heaven, because he is God; and a sign from the depth beneath too, because he is man; "God with us," and so composed to unite heaven and earth together; "God with us," that he might at length bring us to be with God. He

became *Immanuel*, that he might make us *Immelanu*.²⁹⁹ If that was given as tidings of great joy, and as the highest and deepest sign of love and favour, at that time to uphold the fainting church; O! how much more may it now comfort us, when it is not a virgin shall conceive, but a virgin hath conceived! May not the joy be increased, that the Redeemer is not to come, but come already, and hath made up that wide separation which was between us and him, by his low condescendency to his union with our nature! This is one step of advancement towards that happy marriage, that the whole creation seems to groan and travail for, Rom. viii. 22. But yet there is a great difficulty in the way. We are in a state of captivity; we are prisoners of justice, have sold ourselves and our happiness; and now our natural inheritance lies in the lake of fire and brimstone,—heirs of wrath, concluded under the curse of God; and indeed, this was insuperable to all flesh; neither men nor angels could ransom us from this. The redemption of the soul of man is so precious, and the redemption of the inheritance of man, that is, heaven, is so precious too, that none in heaven or earth can be found, that can pay the price of them, so that it would have ceased for ever. And here the great design of Christ's union with sinners would have been marred and miscarried, if himself had not undertaken to overcome this too; and indeed, as there could none be found to open the seals of the book of God's decrees concerning his church,—none worthy in heaven or earth but the Lamb, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, he prevailed to open it, and loose the seals thereof, Rev. v. 3-5. So there could none be found in heaven or earth, neither under the earth, worthy to undertake or accomplish this work, or able to open the seals of the book of God's curses, or to blot out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, or to open the prison of death in which man was shut up; none, I say, hath been found worthy or

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²⁹⁹ [The name Immanuel [redacted] signifies, *God with us*. Immelanu [redacted] signifies, *we with God*.—Ed.]

prevailed, but the Lamb of God and Lion of the tribe of Judah; and therefore the four and twenty elders that sit round about the throne, and the four beasts, with the innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, fell down before the Lamb, every one of them with harps, and they sung a new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." And every creature says Amen to this, and consents to this, to do him homage; to him who alone was worthy, and as willing to do it as worthy for it. I think the 16th verse of this chapter gives us a sensible representation of this. The preceding discourse from the beginning, holding out the sinful and deplorable condition of that people, and in them, as a type of the desperate wickedness of all mankind, and withal their desperate misery, for Paul, (Rom. iii.) maketh the application for us; and from this, concludeth all under sin, and so all under wrath, all guilty, that every mouth may be stopped; men waiting for light, and behold obscurity; for brightness, but walking in darkness; groping for the wall, like the blind, stumbling at noon-day as in the night, and in desolate places as dead men; all roaring like beasts, and mourning like doves, whenever the apprehension of the terror of God entereth. Now it is subjoined, verse 16, "And he saw that there was no man," &c.; as if he had waited and looked through all the world, if any would appear, either to speak or do for man, if any would offer themselves, and interpose themselves for his salvation. "Therefore his own arm brought salvation, and his righteousness, it sustained him." Therefore the Son of God steps in and offers himself, as if God had first essayed all others, and when heaven is full of wonder and silence, he breaks out in this, "Lo, I come to do thy will," Psal. xl. Since I have gotten a body to be like sinners, I will also come in their place, and I will give my life a ransom for them; and therefore it is subjoined, "the Redeemer shall come to Zion;" he shall come clothed with vengeance and

indignation as a garment, against the enemies of his church, sin and Satan, in zeal and burning love to his designed spouse. He shall strengthen himself, and stir up his might and fury against all that detain her captive.

Now, indeed, he is the only fittest person for this business in heaven or earth; for he hath both right to do it, and he only hath might and power to accomplish it. He hath right to the redemption of sinners, because he is our kinsman, nearest of blood to us.

Now, you know the right of redemption belonged to the kinsman, Lev. xxv. 25. And therefore when the nearest kinsman could not redeem Naomi and Ruth's parcel of land, Boaz did it, as being next. And suitable to this, our Lord Jesus, when others as near could not, and were not able, he hath done it, and taken men and angels to witness, that he hath first redeemed us, that he might marry us, as Eph. v.; that he hath purchased us to be his wife. And indeed the very word imports this; *Goel*,³⁰⁰ a redeemer and kinsman, passing under one word: so Job, "I know that my Redeemer," or my kinsman, "liveth:" and because our kinsman, therefore most interested in our redemption; for, for this end he became partaker of flesh and blood with the children, that he might destroy our greatest enemy, Satan, and redeem us, Heb. ii. 14. And besides, he hath right to redemption, as the Church's husband, because he must mediate between her and all others; none can reach her, except he please, or prosecute a plea against her, as in the case of the wife's making a vow, if her husband consented not, it was void, (Numb. xxx.) but if he heard of it and held his peace, it was confirmed. Now the Lord Jesus hath known this deplorable estate in which we are captives, and he hath testified his utter dislike of our binding

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³⁰⁰ [The *Goel* (██████), or nearest kinsman, was, by the Mosaic law, entitled not only to redeem a forfeited inheritance, but to avenge the blood of any of the family, by slaying the murderer, if he found him out of a city of refuge. He was therefore called the redeemer, or "avenger of blood," Josh. xx. 3.—*Ed.*]

over ourselves to death, and resigning ourselves to Satan; and therefore this bondage in which we are detained, is not confirmed and ratified, but he hath right remaining to redeem us from the hand of all our enemies. But then, he alone hath might and power to do it, for God hath laid help on him, and made him able and mighty to save us to the uttermost. It was not gold or silver, or corruptible things. Suppose the whole earth were turned into gold or precious stones; he must give person for person, and one person equivalent to all—his own life, his own blood for us; and the value of this was infinitely raised by the stamp of his divinity put upon it. The king for the servant,—one that knew no sin for sinners,—yea, God for man. This superadds infinite worth, and makes it an over-ransom, and over purchase, a ransom to buy our persons from hell, a purchase to redeem us to our inheritance, heaven, that we had lost, and these two styles it gets, λυτρον, αντιλυτρον.³⁰¹

Now, you see the great difficulty is overcome and taken out of the way: Christ, being made a curse, hath purchased a redemption from the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 13. But yet, there is another point of vast distance, I may say contrariety and enmity, between us and him. He is holy and undefiled, all fair, and no spot in him; we are wholly defiled and depraved by sin, our souls are become the habitation of devils, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird; in a word, he hath not only our enemies to overcome, but our own hearts to conquer, and our enmity to take away. This makes the widest separation from him. Now,

³⁰¹ [The word λυτρον denotes the price of redemption, or that which is given to purchase the freedom of those who are in a state of captivity. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered to but to minister, and to give his life a ransom (λυτρον) for many" (Matt. xx. 28, Mark x. 45). αντιλυτρον is but once used in the New Testament. Its gratification is a counter-price, or the ransom that is paid when the life or person of one is given for that of another. "For there is but one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom (αντιλυτρον) for all," 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. Vide Leigh's *Critica Sacra*.—*Ed.*]

he filled up much of the distance, with his taking our flesh, and he removed the great difficulty, by dying in our flesh his humiliation to be a man, brought him nearer us, and his further humiliation to be a dying, crucified, and buried man, brought him yet a step nearer us. But nearer he cannot come, for lower he cannot be, except he were a sinner, which would mar the whole design, and take away all the comfort of his likeness to us. Therefore, since he hath come so low down to us, it is suitable we be raised up one step to meet him, and so the exaltation of sinners shall make up all the distance, and bring the two parties to that long since designed, and long desired meeting. Now, for this end and purpose, the Son undertakes the redemption of his church from sin and ungodliness as well as wrath, and therefore you have that which is expressed as the character of the redeemed in this verse. It is expounded as the great point or part of the redemption itself by the apostle, Rom. xi. "The Redeemer shall come to Sion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." And so his end was not only to be a partaker of our nature, but to make us partakers of the divine nature, and therefore the Father, out of his love to this business, promised to send his Spirit to dwell in our hearts, to make the word sound in our mouths and ears, and the Spirit to work in our hearts, and this exaltation of sinners to the participation of the Holy Spirit, together with Christ's humiliation to partake of our flesh, makes up the full distance, and bringeth Christ and his church to that holy patient impatience, and longing for the day when it shall be solemnized in heaven. The Spirit within us says, Come, and the bride says, Come. Even so come, Lord Jesus. And he waits for nothing, but the completing and adorning of all the rest, that there may be one jubilee for all and for ever. Now I wish we could understand the absolute and free tenor of God's covenant. There is much controversy speculative about the condition of the covenant, about the promises, whether absolute or conditional; and there is too much practical debate in perplexed consciences

about this, how to find something in themselves to fit and fashion them for the redemption. But truly, if we would not disjoin and dismember the truth of God, but take it all entirely as one great design of love and mercy revealed to sinners, and so conjoin the promises of the covenant into one bundle, we would certainly find that it hath the voice of Jacob, though it seem to have the hand of Esau; we find an absolute, most free and unconditioned sense, when there is a conditional strain and shadow of words in some places. The truth is, the turning of souls from ungodliness is not properly a condition exacted from us, as a promise to be performed in us, and the chiefest part of Christ's redemption; and though some abuse the grace of God, and turn it into wantonness and liberty, yet certainly, this doctrine, that makes the greatest part of the glad news of the gospel to be redemption from sin, and the pouring out of the Spirit, is the greatest persuasive to a godly conversation, and the most deadly enemy to all ungodliness. [437]

I thought to have spoken more of that third thing I proponed,³⁰² but take it in a word. This was always proponed to the church as the strongest cordial, it was given here as the greatest consolation in all their long captivity, that this Redeemer was afterwards to come, whose virtue was then living, and present to the quickening and comforting of souls. It was thought enough to uphold in a most desperate strait, "To us a child is born," Isa. ix. 6. I wish we could take it so. Certainly it was the character of a believer before Christ's coming, that he was one that was looking and waiting for the salvation of Israel, by this Redeemer. But now we are surrounded with consolation before and behind,—Christ already come, so that we may in joy say, Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him! others waited and longed, and we see him,—and Christ shortly to come again without sin, to our salvation. And what could be able to take our joy from us, if we had one eye always back to his first coming, and another always forward to

³⁰² [That is, proposed.—*Ed.*]

his coming again?

Sermon XV.

Isaiah lxiv 6, 7.—“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” &c.

This people's condition agreeth well with ours, though the Lord's dealing be very different. The confessory part of this prayer belongeth to us now; and strange it is, that there is such odds of the Lord's dispensations, when there is no difference in our conditions; always we know not how soon the complaint may be ours also. This prayer was prayed long before the judgment and captivity came on, so that it had a prophecy in the bosom of it. Nay, it was the most kindly and affectionate way of warning the people could get, for Isaiah to pour forth such a prayer, as if he beheld with his eyes the calamity, as already come. And indeed it becometh us so to look on the word, as if it gave a present being to things as certain and sensible as if they were really. What strange stupidity must be in us, when present things, inflicted judgments, committed sins, do not so much affect us, as the foresight of them did. Love Isaiah! Always,³⁰³ as this was registrate for the people's use, to cause them to still look on judgments threatened, as performed and present, and anticipate the day of affliction by repentance; and also to be a pattern to them, how to deal with God, and plead with him from such grounds of mercy and covenant-interest: so it may be to us a warning, especially when sin is come to the maturity, and our secure backsliding condition is with child of sad judgments, when the harvest seemeth ripe to put the sickle into it.

There is in these two verses, a confession of their own sinfulness, from which grounds they justify God's proceeding with them, they take the cause upon themselves, and justify him in his judging, whether temporal or spiritual plagues were inflicted.

³⁰³ [That is, however.—*Ed.*]

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In this verse,³⁰⁴ they take a general survey of their sinful estate, concluding themselves unclean, and all their performances and commanded duties, which they counted once their righteousness: and from this ground, they clear God's dealing with them, and put their mouths in the dust; and so from the Lord's judgment they are forced to enter into a search of the cause of so much sin; and from discovered sin, they pronounce God righteous in his judgment. Perceiving a great difference in the Lord's manner of dealing with them, and their fathers, they do not refund³⁰⁵ it upon God, who is righteous in all his ways, but retort it upon themselves, and find a vast discrepance between themselves and their fathers, verse 5. And so it was no wonder that God's dispensation changed upon them. God was wont to meet others, to show himself gracious, even to prevent strokes, but now he was wroth with them. Nay, but there is good cause for it. They rejoice and wrought righteousness, but we have sinned. And this may be said in the general,—never one needeth to quarrel God for severe dealing. If he deal worse with one than with another, let every man look into his own bosom, and see reason sufficient; yea, more provocation in themselves than others. Always in this verse, they come to a more distinct view of their loathsome condition. Anybody may wrap up their repentance in a general notion of sin, but they declare themselves to be more touched with it, and condescend on particulars, yet such particulars as comprehend many others. And in this confession, you may look on the Spirit's work, having some characters of the Spirit in it.

I. They take a general view of their uncleanness and loathsome estate by sin; not only do they see sin, but sin in the sinfulness of it and uncleanness of it.

II. They not only conclude so of the natural estate they were born in, and the loathsomeness of their many foul scandals among them; but they go a further length, to pass as severe a

³⁰⁴ [Verse 6.—*Ed.*]

³⁰⁵ [That is, place it upon God or charge him with it.—*Ed.*]

sentence on their duties and ordinances as God hath done, Isa. i. and lxvi. The Spirit convinceth according to scripture's light, and not according to the dark spark of nature's light; and so that which nature would have busked³⁰⁶ itself with as its ornament, that which they had covered themselves with as their garment, the duties they had spread, as robes of righteousness, over their sins to hide them; all this now goeth under the name of filthiness and sin. They see themselves wrapt up in as vile rags as they covered and hid: commanded duties and manifest breaches come in one category. And not only is it some of them which their own conscience could challenge in the time, but all of them and all kinds of them, moral and ceremonial, duties that were most sincere, had most affection in them, all of them are filthy rags now, which but of late were their righteousness.

III. There is an universality, not only of the actions, but of persons; not only all the peoples or multitudes' performances are abomination; but all of them, Isaiah, and one and other, the holiest of them, come in in this category and rank—"we are all unclean," &c. Though the people, it may be, could not join holy Isaiah with themselves, yet humble Isaiah will join himself with the people, and come in, in one prayer. And no doubt, he was as sensible of sin now, as when he began to prophesy; and growing in holiness, he must grow also in sense of sinfulness. Seeing at the first sight of God's holiness and glory, he cried "unclean," &c. Isa. vi. 5, certainly he doth so now, from such a principle of access to God's holiness, which maketh him abhor himself in dust and ashes.

IV. They are not content with such a general, but condescend to two special things, two spiritual sins, viz. omission, or shifting of spiritual duties, which contained the substance of worship. "None calleth on thee," few or none, none to count upon, calleth on thee; that is, careth for immediate access and approaching

³⁰⁶ [That is, adorned itself.—*Ed.*]

unto God in prayer and meditation, &c. Albeit external and temple-duties be frequent, yet who prayeth in secret? or if any pray, that cannot come in count, the Lord knoweth them not, because they want the Spirit's stamp on them. This must be some other thing than the general conviction of sin which the world hath, who think they pray all their days; here people, who though they make many prayers, Isa. i., yet they see them no prayers, and no calling on God's name now.

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V. To make the challenge the more, and the confession more spiritual and complete, there is discovered to them this ground of their slackness and negligence in all spiritual duties, "None stirreth up himself to take hold on thee." Here is the want of the exercise of faith: faith is the soul's hand and grip, John i. 12; Heb. vi. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 12; Isa. xxvii. 5. Nobody awaketh themselves out of their deadness and security, to lay hold on thee. Lord, thou art going away, and taking good-night of the land, and nobody is like to hold thee by the garment; no Jacobs here, who will not let thee go, till thou bless them; none to prevail with thy Majesty,—every one is like to give Christ a free passport and testimonial to go abroad, and are almost Gadarenes, to pray him to depart out of their coasts. There is a strange looseness and indifferency in men's spirits concerning the one thing necessary. Men lie by and dream over their days, and never put the soul's estate out of question; none will give so much pains, as to clear their interest in thee, to lay hold on thee, so as they may make peace with thee. Now, can there be a more ample and lively description of our estate, both of the land and of particular persons of it? Since this must not be limited to the nation of the Jews, though the prophet spake of the generality of them, yet, no doubt, all mankind is included in the first six verses; and any secure people may be included in the seventh verse, for Paul applieth even such like speeches (Rom. xi. 13.) that were spoken, as you would think, of David's enemies only. Yet the Spirit of God knowing the mind of the Spirit, maketh a

more general use of their condition, to hold out the natural estate of all men out of Christ Jesus.

But there are in these two verses other two things beside the acknowledgment of sin:

I. The acknowledgment of God's righteousness in punishing them, for now they need not quarrel God, they find the cause of their fading in their own bosom. They now join sin and punishment together, whereas in the time of their prosperity they separated punishment from sin; and in the time of their security in adversity they separated sin from punishment: at one time making bare confession of sin, without fear of God's justice, at another time fretting and murmuring at his judgments, without the sense of their sin. But now they join both these, and the sight and sense of God's displeasure maketh sin more bitter, and to abound more, and to appear in the loathsome and provoking nature of it, so that their acknowledgment hath an edge upon it. And again, the sight and sense of sin maketh the judgment appear most righteous, and stoppeth their mouth from murmuring. In the time of their impenitency under the rod, their language was very indifferent, Ezek. xviii. 2. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" they have sinned and we suffer; they have done the wrong and we pay for it. But it is not so now, ver. 5. The fathers have done righteousness in respect of us, and thou wast good unto them; but we are all unclean, and have sinned, and so we are punished.

II. They find some cause and ground in God of their general defection; not that he is the cause of their sin, but in a righteous way he punished sin with sin. God hid his face, denied special grace and influence; and so they lie still in their security, and their sin became a spiritual plague. Or this may be so read,—*None calleth on thy name, when thou didst hide thy face from us, and when thou didst consume us because of our iniquities*; and so it serveth to aggravate their deep security, that, though the Lord was departing from them, yet none would keep him and hold

him. Though he did strike, yet they prayed not; affliction did not awake them out of security, and so the last words, "Thou hast consumed us," &c., are differently expounded and read. Some make it thus, as it is in the translation, "Thou hast hid thy face," and left us in a spiritual deadness, that so there might be no impediment to bring on deserved judgment. If we had called on thee, and laid hold on thee, it might have been prevented, we might have prevailed with God, but now our defence is removed, and thou hast given us up to a spirit of slumber, and so we have no shield to hold off the stroke,—thou hast now good leave to consume us for our sins. Another sense may be—*Thou hast suffered us to consume in our iniquity, thou hast given us up to the hand of our sins.* And this is also a consequent of his hiding his face. Because thou didst hide thy face, thou lettest us perish in our sins; there needeth no more for our consumption, but only help us not out of them, for we can soon destroy ourselves.

First, Sin is in its own nature loathsome, and maketh one unclean before God. Sin's nature is filthiness, vileness, so doth Isaiah speak of himself, chap. vi. 5, when he saw God's holiness; so doth Job abhor himself, which is the affection which turneth a man's face off a loathsome object, when he saw God, Job xl. 4, and xlii. 6. Look how loathsome our natural condition is holden out by God himself, Ezek. xvi. You cannot imagine any deformity in the creature, any filthiness, but it is there. The filthiness and vileness of sin shall appear, if we consider *first* that sin is a transgression of the holy and spiritual command, and so a vile thing, the commandment is holy and good, Rom. vii. And sin violateth and goeth flat contrary to the command, 1 John iii. 4. When so just and so equitable a law is given, God might have exacted other rigorous duties from us, but when it is so framed that the conscience must cry out, All is equity, all is righteous and more than righteous, thou mightest command more, and reward none. It is justice to command, but it is mercy to promise life to obedience, which I owe,—what then must the offence be, against

such a just command, and so holy? If holiness be the beauty of the creation, sin must be the deformity of it, the only spot in its face.

Secondly, Look upon sin in the sight of God's holiness and infinite majesty, and O how heinous will it appear! and therefore no man hath seen sin in the vileness of it, but in the light of God's countenance, as Isa. vi. 5, Job. xl. and xlii. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, he cannot look on it, Hab. i. 13. All other things beside sin, God looketh on them as bearing some mark of his own image, all was very good, and God saw it, Gen. i. and ii. Even the basest creatures God looketh on them, and seeth himself in them, but sin is only God's eyesore, that his holiness cannot away with it, it is most contrary unto him, and as to his sovereignty, it is a high contempt and rebellion done to God's Majesty. It putteth God off the throne, will take no law from him, will not acknowledge his law, but, as it were, spitteth in his face, and establisheth another god. There is no punishment so evil, that God will not own as his work, and declare himself to be the author of it, but only sin, his soul abhorreth it, his holy will is against it, he will have no fellowship with it, it is so contrary to him: contradicteth his will, debaseth his authority, despiseth his sovereignty, upendeth his truth. There is a kind of infiniteness in it, nothing can express it but itself no name worse than itself to set it out, the apostle can get no other epithet to it, Rom. vii. 13, than "sinful" sin, so that it cometh in most direct opposition unto God. All that is in God, is God himself, and there is no name can express him sufficiently. If you say God, you say more than can be expressed by many thousand other words. So it is here—sin is purely sin, God is purely good and holy, without mixture, holiness itself, sin is simply evil, without mixture, unholiness itself. Whatever is in it, is sin, is uncleanness. Sin is an infinite wrong, and an infinite and boundless filthiness, because of the infinite person wronged. It is an offence of infinite Majesty and the person wronged aggravateth the offence, if it be simply

contrary to infinite holiness, it must be, in that respect, infinite unholiness and uncleanness.

Thirdly, Look upon the sad effects and consequences of sin,—how miserable, how ruinous it hath made man, and all the creation, and how vile must it be!

I. Look on man's native beauty and excellency, how beautiful a creature! But sin hath cast him down from the top of his excellency, sin made Adam of a friend an enemy, of a courtier with God an open rebel. Was not man's soul of more price than all the world, so that nothing can exchange it? Yet hath sin debased it, and prostituted it to all vile filthy pleasures, hath made the immortal spirit to dwell on the dunghill, feed on ashes, catch vanities, lying vanities, pour out itself to them, serve all the creatures—whereas it should have made them servants, yea, a slave to his own greatest enemy, to the ground he treadeth upon. O what a degenerate plant! It was a noble vine once in paradise, but sin hath made it a wild one, to bring forth sour grapes. What is there in all the world could defile a man? Matt. xv. 20. Nothing that goeth out or cometh in, but sin that proceedeth out of the heart. Man was all light, his judgment sinned into his affections, and through all the man, but sin hath made all darkness, closed up the poor captive understanding, hath built up a thick wall of gross corrupted affections about it, so that light can neither get in nor out. The soul was like a clear running fountain, which yielded fresh clear streams of holy inclinations, desires, affections, actions and emptied itself in the sea of immense Majesty from which these streams first flowed, but now it is a standing putrified puddle, that casteth a vile stink round about, and hath no issue towards God. Man was a glorious creature, fit to be lord over the work of God's own hands, and therefore had God's image in a special manner, holiness and righteousness, God's nature. A piece of divinity was stamped on man, which outshined all created perfections. The sun might blush when it looked on him, for what was material glory to the glory of holiness and beauty

of God's image! But sin hath robbed poor man of this glorious image, hath defaced man, marred all his glory, put on an hellish likeness on him. Holiness only putteth the difference between angels in heaven and devils in hell, and sin only hath made the difference between Adam in paradise, and sinners on the cursed ground, Rom. iii. 23.

II. Sin hath so redounded through man unto all the creation, that it hath defiled it, and made it corruptible and subject to vanity, (Rom. viii. 20, &c.,) so that this is a spot in all the creature's face,—that man hath sinned, and used all as weapons of unrighteousness, so that now the creature groaneth to be delivered.

III. It hath brought on all the misery that is come on man, or that is to come, it hath brought on death and damnation as its wages, and the curse of the eternal God, Gal. iii. 13, Rom. vi. 23. How odious then an evil must it be, that hath so much evil in it yea, all evil in the bosom of it! Hell is not evil in respect of sin, for sin deserveth hell, it hath ruined man, and made all the beautiful order of the creation to change.

IV. It separateth man from God, which is worst of all, and this is included in the text, “We are all as an unclean thing,” or man is as a leprous man set apart, because of pollution, that may not come to the temple, or worship God, so hath iniquity separated between God and us, Isa. lix. 2. And O how sad a divorcement is this! it maketh men without God in the world, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, in whose favour is life, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. Now poor man is made miserable, deprived of his felicity, which only consisted in enjoyment of God. Sin as a thick partition wall, is come in between, enmity also is come in, and divideth old friends, Eph. ii. 14-17, and now no heavenly or comfortable influence can break through the night of darkness is begun which must prove everlasting. Except the partition-wall be removed, all must wither and decay as without the sun.

V. Look on the price paid for sin, on the cleansing that washeth it away, and you may see unspeakable deformity and vileness in it. The redemption of the soul is precious silver and gold and precious stones will not do it,—that would be utterly contemned. “What!” saith God, “presumptuous sinner, wilt thou give me a farthing in payment of a sum which all the world, sold at the dearest, would not discharge?” Psal. xlix. 7, 8, 1 Pet. i. 18. It is no corruptible thing, but the blood of the Son of God. O what must the debt be, when the price is so infinite! the Son of God must die, nay, it is not sacrifice or offering—“Lo, I come to do thy will,” it is Christ himself that is the ransom, Psal. xl. 6, 7. And it is not much soap or nitre, it is not much repentance and tears that will wash away this filthiness, no, it is of a deeper dye, it is crimson ingrained filthiness, Jer. ii. 22 and Isa. i. 16. Blood of bulls and goats cannot do it, but only the blood of the immaculate Lamb offered up by himself, (Heb. x. 4, 5,) the blood of Him, “who by the eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot unto God,” Heb. ix. 14. What must sin be, that must have such a fountain opened for it? It must be strange uncleanness when the blood of Christ only can cleanse it, Zech. xiii. 1.

“We all,” &c. Mark, *first*, Sin hath gone over us all, and made all mankind unclean, Rom. iii. 10, 22. Every one of Adam's posterity is born unclean, “For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” Job. xiv. 4. Consider: How sin defaced innocent Adam, how one sin made him so vile, and spoiled him of the divine nature, and so the root was made unclean, and the branches must follow the root, and so are we all born and conceived in sin, Psalm li. 5. We carry in us original corruption, flowing from the first actual sin of Adam, and this maketh poor children, before they do good or evil, to be abominably vile in God's sight, even as the child is set out, Ezek. xvi. Every one cometh of evil parents, all come of Adam the rebel, what a loathsome sight would a child be to us so described, “Cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day it is born,” and what must it all be before

God, who is of purer eyes than to behold sin? *Secondly*, Unto all this we have added innumerable actual transgressions as so many filthy streams flowing out at the members, from the inward puddle of original corruption; and so how much more vile are we all nor infants can be, or Adam was in the day he was cast out of paradise! And thus, Rom. iii. from verse 10, are the branches set down in word, thought, and deed; so that all the inclinations and motions and actions of the man are only evil continually. Every man shall find his count past counting; one day's faults would weary you, but what will your whole life do? Known sins are innumerable, what must unknown be? Every man's heart is like the troubled sea, that casteth up mire and dirt daily, and cannot be at rest. The heart is daily flowing and ebbing in this corruption, it cometh out daily to the borders of all the members; and there are some high spring-tides, when sin aboundeth more. When in one member of the tongue a world of evil is, what can be in all the members? And what in the soul, that is more capable than all the world? Well, then, every man hath sinned in Adam, and hath sinned also in his own person, and sealed Adam's first rebellion by so many thousand actions like it. Every man hath approved the sin that first ruined man, and made himself much more loathsome nor Adam was; therefore all mankind may say, "We all are as an unclean thing." Now from all this, we would gladly discover unto you what your condition is by sin; if the Lord would shine, how vile would you be! Always we must declare this unto you in the Lord's name, you are all unclean, not only born in sin and iniquity, not only have you a body of death within you, that hath all the members; but all these members have one time or other acted and brought forth fruit unto death. How vile, then, must you be in God's sight! It is a strange love that you have to yourselves, that you cannot apprehend how God can hate you! But if he find sin in you, wonder rather how he can look upon you; we would then have you to know this, that there can be no fellowship between God and you in your natural estate.

As men cannot inhabit a vile person's house, no more can God enter into your souls. There is an absolute necessity of washing, before you can be his house and temple. Hath that one sin of Adam made that glorious person so deformed, that he could not look on himself, but cover himself? And hath it been of so defiling a nature, that it hath redounded in all the posterity; and, as unclean things under the law defiled all they touched, so hath that sin subjected all the creatures to corruption? O then imagine what an unspeakable defilement must be on us all, who are not only guilty of Adam's sin, but of many thousands beside! If one sin have so much loathsomeness in it, what must so many out of number, united in one person, even as in us all? No unclean thing can enter into heaven above: know this for a truth, you cannot see God's face in the case you are born into. You know nothing of sin, who wonder that any should go to hell. No, if you knew anything of sin, you would wonder that ever God should look on such cast out in the open field in their blood.

Next, You must know the insufficiency of all things imaginable, to wash away sin's filthiness, except the blood of Christ. Since you are unclean, do you not ask, how shall we be washed? Indeed many have an easy answer, and pass it lightly. The multitude know no way to cleanse in, but the tears of repentance and mourning; and so, many think themselves clean, when they run and pour out a tear as Esau did for the blessing. But what saith the Lord? "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked." Can such an ingrained uncleanness, can such an infinite spot in the immortal soul, be so lightly dashed out? Many think baptism cleanseth them, but was not this people circumcised, as ye are baptized? And Peter tells us, it is not the washing of water, &c. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Sacrifice and offering will not do it. This people thought, sure they had satisfied God, when they brought a lamb, &c., but all this is abomination. Would not many of you think yourselves cleansed from sin, if you offered all your substance, and the fruit of your

body for the sin of your soul? Nay, but you must see an absolute necessity of the opened fountain of Christ's blood, that cleanseth from all sin.

Then we would have you abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, and see nothing in all the creation so vile as you; look on sin in the sight of God's face, and how unholy will it appear! There are many sins, little ones, that in our practice pass for venal and uncontrolled; but look on the filthy loathsome nature of all sin, and hate the least offence, for it hath a kind of infiniteness in it, and blotteth the soul, defileth the person. How great a necessity is there of continual application to the fountain, of dwelling beside it, that you may wash daily! David's so often repeated and inculcated prayer, "Wash me, cleanse me," &c. Psalm li., declareth that he hath apprehended much uncleanness in sin, that it needeth so many applications of the precious blood. And you who have come to Jesus, and are clean, O how much owe you to free grace, that passed by you in your blood, and said, "Live, it is a time of love!" How strange is it, that glorious Majesty cometh to own deformity, and cometh to clothe it with his own garments! Praise the virtue of that blood, that is more precious than the blood of bulls and goats, that can so thoroughly purge, as you shall have no more conscience of sin. [443]

Unclean sinners, wash you, make you clean,—there is a fountain opened; though sin were as scarlet, it can perfectly change the colour of it. If you wash not while the fountain is open, it will quickly be sealed on you, and then it shall be said, when the angel sweareth by him that liveth forever and ever, that time shall be no more, then shall it be said, "let him that is unclean be unclean still." Now, cleansing is offered in the gospel,—if you will love your loathsomeness so well, as not to dip yourselves in this fountain, then let the unclean be so still. Your repentance will never change your colour, though you should melt in sorrow: and therefore you who have found a way to be saved otherwise

nor³⁰⁷ by Jesus Christ, you shall be deceived. Your tears and mourning that you might have had, though Christ had never come into the world, is all you use to speak of, and build your hope on; and if you speak of Christ, it is in such terms as to buy him by such repentance; so that the truth is, you use but Christ's name as a shadow, you make no use of him; he needed not to have come into the world, for many of you could have done as well without him. But as many of you as cannot find cleansing, who see filth increase by washing, come to Christ Jesus, and say, "If you wilt, thou canst make me clean," Matt viii. 2. Nothing beside Jesus can do it—believe his sufficiency. Nothing beside him will do—believe his willingness; for, for this cause he is an open fountain, that all may come and draw.

³⁰⁷ [*Scottice for than.—Ed.*]

Sermon XVI.

Isaiah lxiv. 6, 7.—“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Not only are the direct breaches of the command uncleanness, and men originally and actually unclean, but even our holy actions, our commanded duties. Take a man's civility, religion, and all his universal inherent righteousness,—all are filthy rags. And here the church confesseth nothing but what God accuseth her of, Isa. lxvi. 8, and chap. i. ver. 11, 12, 13, &c. This people was much in ceremonial and external duties; and therefore they cried, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of Lord!” as if this would have outcried all their other sins; therefore were they proud, and lords in their own estimation, and innocent, Jer. ii. 31, 35. They thought the many good services they did to God might compensate all their wrongs, Mic. vi. 6, 7. They gave a price to justice for their sins, even a confession of it, by offering a lamb, &c. and a purpose to amend. But, lo! what sense the prophet hath of all this, “Lord, all our righteousnesses” are filthy likewise. Albeit we have paid the debt of sins with duties, yet now we see all these are sins themselves, and must have another sacrifice; so that all matter of boasting is now removed, and we are stript naked of all righteousness. We covered our filthiness before with duties, now both the one and the other is filthy. We would look upon two sorts of righteousnesses, the natural man's, and the converted man's, upon the one's civility and fair profession, and upon the other's real or true grace in discharge of duties, and we shall find good reason to conclude both the one and the other under filthiness, so that there is no ground of boasting, no inherent righteousness can make us accepted before God. [444]

First, then, Whatever men can do from natural principles, all the flower and perfection of men's actions, both civil and

religious, is but abominable before God, as long as their persons are unjustified. Every performance is defiled by the uncleanness of the person; and therefore God heareth not sinners, (John viii.,) that is, unjustified sinners; though they pray much, yet God heareth them not. And this is lively expressed by Hag. ii. 12, 13, 14. As the priest's holy garments and flesh could not make bread or pottage holy, but the unclean body could make these unclean; so this nation's and people's performances and holy duties, could not make them holy, and their persons clean, but their unclean persons and actions made all their performances unclean. The solemn meeting and sacrifice, &c. could not make them accepted, but their unclean persons made their solemn meetings and religious duties vile and abominable in God's sight: and thus to the unclean all things are unclean, even their mind and conscience, Tit. i. 15. The unbelieving man, who is born unclean, and defiled with so much original corruption, and so many actual transgressions, defileth all things he toucheth. As a dead body, or a leprous garment, under the law, made all unclean it touched, and nothing could make it holy by touching of it; so all your civility, all your profession, will never contribute to the cleansing of your person; and your persons shall defile all your most clean actions. God loveth not that stock of Adam, and all that groweth on it must be hateful; he is only well-pleased in Jesus Christ, and with those who are transplanted out of rotten Adam into the true vine Jesus. It is such fruit only that can be acceptable; therefore, until you be sprinkled with clean water, and made clean according to the new covenant-way, you cannot please God. Believe this,—your sins and your duties are one, your oaths and your prayers are in the same account with God. What have you then to build upon, when all this is removed? You must once be stript naked of all coverings; and will not your nakedness then be great? The Pharisee went away unjustified, and the poor repenting sinner justified. What was the reason? There are not many of you have such a fair venture for heaven as

he had,—so many prayers, fastings, alms, to ground your hope on. Nay, but all this would never justify his person, because once he was unclean, come of Adam, and had contracted more uncleanness, and all that is like the leprous garment, defiling all that cometh near it; so that whatever hath any dependence on a son of Adam, must contract filthiness. Now, I ask your consciences, have you so many specious coverings to adorn yourself with? Is not your outside spotted, and not so clean as the young civil man and the religious Pharisee? Certainly no; and yet you have no other ground to plead the acceptation of your persons upon, but only this, your prayers and tears, or some such duty performed by you. Well, all is uncleanness, since your persons were once unclean,—no soap nor nitre can wash it, no holy flesh make it holy, no good wishes nor duties can make it acceptable. Did not this people think of their duties as much as you do? and had more reason so to do; for our congregations have not so much form of godliness as they had, and yet God solemnly protested to them that all their works were defiled, even those which they took to wash themselves with. So your repentance and tears must be as filthy as the sin you would wash by it.

Secondly, The uncleanness of men's practice maketh unclean performances. Unclean hands maketh unclean prayers, Isa. i. 15. When men go on in sin, and use their members as instruments of unrighteousness against God, and guiltiness is above their head unrepented of and unpardoned, then whatever the members act for God in religious duties, it must be also abominable; for will God take prayers from such a mouth, that cursing cometh out of? Isa. iii. 10, 11, 12. Shall sweet water come out of one fountain with bitter? Or can a fig-tree bear both thistles and grapes? Certainly, profane conversation must make unclean profession; and therefore your coming to the church and ordinances, your praying in your families, or such like, must of necessity be defiled, since out of the same mouth cometh cursing, railing, lying, filthy speeches. Your tongues are so often employed in God's

[445]

dishonour, to blaspheme his name, to slander your neighbours, to reproach the saints, that all your prayers must be of the same stamp, and as bitter as the other stream of your actions. When you stretch forth your hands to make many prayers, to take the bread and wine, shall not God hide his face from such hands as are unclean with many abominations, some murdering, some abusing their neighbours, some sabbath breaking, some filthiness? How oft have your hands and feet served you to evil turns? And therefore, your good turns will never come in remembrance. Nay, believe it, you cannot be heard of God, while you cover any offence. And this I may say in general, even to the saints; any known sin given way to, and entertained without controlment, without wrestling against it, hindereth the acceptation of your solemn approaches. If your heart regard iniquity, shall God hear? Psal. lxvi. 18. No, believe it, the least sin that you may judge at first venial, and then give it toleration and indulgence, shall separate between God's face and you. Your prayers are abomination, because of such an idol perked up in the heart beside God, that getteth the honour and worship due to him, and God must answer you according to it, Ezek. xix. 1, 3, 4. God will not be inquired of such as give allowance to sin, Ezek. xiv. 2-4. And, on the other hand, no sin, how great and heinous soever, can hinder God's gracious acceptation, when souls fly unto Jesus and turn their back upon sin, or giveth it no heart allowance. And to the multitude I say, all that you do or touch in a duty must be defiled, because your whole way is unclean, Hag. ii. 12-14. Think you to sin all the week through, and worship God on the Sabbath? Will you lie, swear, commit adultery, rail and curse, and come and stand before me, saith the Lord? No, certainly, you cannot be accepted. And will you hate reformation in your lives, and yet take his covenant in your mouth, and call yourselves by his name, "Christians?" And shall not God challenge you for that, as much as for your swearing, and cursing, and lying, &c.? Indeed the Lord putteth all in one roll, and you need not please

yourselves in such things, Psal. i. 16; Jer. vii. 9, 10; for it is all one to you to go to tavern to drink, and come to the sermon,—to blaspheme God's name, and call on it; because the profanity of the one defileth the other, and the holiness of the other cannot make you holy.

Thirdly, The natural man's performances want the uprightness, reality, and sincerity that is required. It is but a painted tomb, full of rottenness within; it is but a shadow without substance, for he wanteth the spiritual part of worship, which God careth for, who will be worshipped “in spirit and in truth,” John iv. 24. Now, what is it that the most part of you can speak of, but an outside of some few duties, soon numbered? You hear the preaching, and your hearts wander about your business. You hear, and are not so much affected as you would be to hear some old story or fable told you. A stage play acted before this generation would move them more than the gospel doth; so that Christ may take up this lamentation, “We have piped to you, and you have not danced; lamented to you, and you have not mourned.” You use to tell over some words in your prayers, and are not so serious in any approach to God, as in twenty other things of the world. Whatever you plead of your heart's rightness, and have recourse to it, when your conversation cannot defend you, yet your hearts are the worst of all, and have no uprightness towards God; for you know that what duties you go about, it is not from an inward principle, but from education, or custom, or constraint. Are you upright, when you are forced, for fear of censure, to come here, or to pray at home? Is that sincerity and spiritual worship? And for the more polished and refined professors, you have this moth in your performances, and this fly to make your ointment to stink, that you do much to be seen of men. Therefore, what little fervour of spirit is in secret duties, there you may measure your attitude and your life. And O! how wearisome, how lifeless are secret approaches! You would not have many errands to God, if you thought no body looked upon you. And for spirituality, it is

a mystery in all men's practice. Who directeth his duty to God's glory? If you get some flash of liberty, you have your desire; but who misseth God's presence in duties, which a world will approve? Who go mourning as without the sun, even when you have the sunshine of ordinances, and walk in the light of them?

And, *Fourthly*, Though your performances had uprightness of heart going along, and much affection in them, yet all are filthy, because of want of faith in Jesus Christ. When you make your duties a covering of your sins, and think to satisfy God's justice for the rest of your faults, by doing some point of your duty, then it cannot choose but be polluted in his sight. And this very thing was the cause of God's rejecting the Jews' righteousness, even because they did not look to the end of the mystery, Christ Jesus: did not pull by the vail of ceremonies, to see the immaculate Lamb of God slain for sin; and therefore doth the Lord so quarrel with them, as if he had never commanded them to do such things, Isa. i. 12, 13, "Who hath required these things at your hands? Bring no more vain oblations;" all is abomination. Even as God should say to you, when you come to the church, Who required you to come? Who commanded you to come to hear the preaching? What have you to do to pray? What warrant have you to communicate? All your praying, hearing, communicating, is abomination; who commanded you to do these things? Would you not think it a foolish question? You would soon answer, that God himself commanded you, and will he not let us do his bidding? Indeed this people, no doubt, have said so in their heart, and wondered what it meant. Nay, but here is the mystery,—you go about these commanded duties not in a commanded way, and so the obedience is but rebellion. You bring offerings and incense, and think that I am pacified when you bring alms,—you judge you have given me a recompence; whereas, all that is mine, and what pleasure have I in these things? I never appointed you sacrifices for this end, but to lead you into the knowledge of my Son, which is to be slain in the fulness of time, and by

one offering to perfect all. I commanded you to look on Jesus Christ slain, in the slain Lamb, and so to expect remission and salvation in him; but you never looked to more nor the ceremony, and made that your saviour and mediator; and therefore it is all abomination. When you slay a lamb, and offer incense, it is all one thing as to cut off a dog's neck, or kill a man. So may the Lord say to this generation, I command you to pray, to repent and mourn for sin, to come and hear the word; but withal you must deny all these, and count yourselves unprofitable servants; you must singly cast your soul's burden on Christ Jesus. But now, saith the Lord, who commanded your repentance? For when you sit down to pray, or come in public to confess sin before the congregation, you think you are washen. When you have said, you have sinned, and if you come to the length of tears and sorrow, O then, sure you are pardoned, though in the meantime you have no thought of Jesus Christ, and know no use of him! Therefore, saith the Lord, who commanded you to do these things? You think you have satisfied for your sin, when you pay a penalty; but who requireth this? I will reckon with you for these, as well as the sins you pray and mourn for, because you do not singly look to Christ Jesus. Now, if he had never come to the world, your ground of confidence would not fail you; for you might have prayed as much, mourned and confessed, and promised amendment; and so you pass by the Son of God, in whom only the Father is well-pleased. Think, then, upon this,—whatever you make your righteousness, there needeth no other thing to make it filthy, but to make it your righteousness. Your confidence in your good heart to God, prayer day and night, and such like, is the most loathsome thing in God's eyes. Except you come to this, to count your prayers, as God doth, among your oaths; to count your solemn duties among profane scandalous actions, as the Lord doth, Isa. i. and lxvi. 3, then certainly, you do adorn yourselves with them, and cover your nakedness of other faults with such leaves as Adam did, but you shall be

more discovered. Your garment is as filthy as that it hideth, even because you make that use of it to hide your sin and cover it.

Next, The Lord's children have no ground of boasting either, from their own righteousness; the holiest saint on earth must abhor himself in dust and ashes, and holy Isaiah joineth himself in with a profane people. When he cometh to God to be justified, he cometh among the ungodly,—he bringeth no righteousness with him, he cometh in among them that work not. Now, you shall find good ground why it must be so:

I. There are ordinarily many blemishes in our holiest actions, spots upon our cleanest garments; often formality eateth up the life of duties, and representeth a body without a soul in it. You sit down to pray out of custom, morning and evening; and if there were no more to prove it, this may suffice. When pray you but at such times? You have an ordinary, and go not by it. No advantage is taken of providence, no necessity constraineth when occasion offereth; and so it is like the world's appointed hours. How great deadness and indisposition creepeth in! so that this is the ordinary complaint; yea, all prayers are filled with it,—scarcely any room for other petitions, because of the want of frame for prayer itself. The word is heard as a discourse, and on whom hath it operation to stir up affections, either of joy or of trembling? Christians, you come not to hear God speak, and so you meet with empty ordinances—God is not in them. How often do crooked and sinister ends creep in, and bias the spirit! Men ask, to spend on their lusts, and to satisfy their own ambition. Some would have more grace to be more eminent, or to have a more pleasant life; and this is but the seeking to spend on your lusts. If affection run in the channel of a duty, it is often muddy, and runneth through our corruptions: liberty in duties is principled with carnal affection and self-love. Will not often the wind of applause in company fill the sails, and make your course swifter and freer nor when you are alone? And often

much love to a particular³⁰⁸ maketh more in seeking it. And that which is a moth to eat up and consume all our duties is conceit and self-confidence in going about them, and attributing to ourselves after them. It is but very rare that any man both acted from Jesus Christ as the principle, and also putteth over his work on Christ singly as the end. Alas! too often do men draw out of Christ's fulness, and raise up their own glory upon it, and adorn themselves with the spoils of his honour; for we use to pray from a habit of it, and go to it as men acquainted with it, and when we get any satisfaction to our own minds, O how doth the soul return on itself, and goeth not forward as it goeth! It is so well pleased with itself, when it getteth liberty to approach, that it doth not put all over on Jesus, and take shame to itself. As long as there is a body of death within, holiness cannot be pure and unmixed; our duties run through a dirty channel, and cannot choose but contract filth. While sin lodgeth under one roof so near grace, grace must be in its exercise marred; and therefore the holy apostle must cry, Rom. vii. 19. "The good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do," and verse 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

II. Though there were not such blemishes and spots in the face of our righteousness, yet it is here in a state of imperfection, and but in its minority, and so must be filthy in the Lord's sight. It was perfect holiness, according to the perfect rule of God's law, that Adam was to be justified by, according to the covenant of works; exact obedience, not one wanting,—or else all that can be done, came short of righteousness: one breach bringeth the curse on. All obedience, if there be a failing in a little, will not bring the blessing on: he that doth all, liveth; and he that doth not all, is cursed. And therefore, Christians, all you do cannot commend

³⁰⁸ [There is some obscurity in this sentence. The sentiment that is expressed, however, seems to be this:—*Much love to a particular object makes the act of seeking or praying for it to be loved more.*—Ed.]

your persons to God, for if he examine you by the rule of the law, O how short will the holiest come! Paul and Isaiah dare not come into such a reckoning; neither is all obeyed, nor any in the measure and manner commanded. And therefore, you might cry down all your performances, when you could challenge them with no particular blot, with this—all is short of the command, and infinitely short. I have been aiming at holiness so long, I have stretched out my strength, and what have I attained? It may be, I have outstripped equals, and there seemeth to be some distance between me and others; nay, but the command is unspeakably more before me nor I am before others. I have reached but a span of that boundless perfection of holiness; it is but a grain weight of the eternal weight of grace, and I must forget it, and stand before God, as if I had lost mind of duties, appear in his presence as if I had attained nothing; for the length that is before my hand drowneth up all attainments.

III. Nay, but put the case were man perfect, yet should he not know his soul, but despise his life: the Lord putteth no trust in his servants, and his angels he chargeth with folly, and the heavens are not clean in his sight; how then must man be abominable, that hath his foundation in the dust, and drinketh in iniquity like water? How should God magnify him? or he be righteous that is born of a woman? Job xxv. 4, 6; xv. 14, 15; and iv. 18, 19. Job was a great length in the sight of his own vileness and God's holiness, when he saw this, "Though I were perfect, yet I would not know it, but despise it; I would not answer him, though I were righteous," chap. ix. 14, 15, 21. So unspeakably pure and clean is his holiness, that all created holiness hath a spot in it before his, and evanisheth, as the stars disappear when the sun riseth, which seem something in the darkness. The angels' holiness, the heaven's glory, is nothing to him, before whom the nations are as nothing; so that it is all the wonder of the world, that ever God stooped so far below himself, even to righteous Adam, as to make such a covenant with him, to account him

righteous in obedience. “What is man that thou shouldst magnify him? When I look to the heavens, and the sun, the work of thine hands, Lord, what is man?” What is innocent man in his integrity, that thou shouldst magnify him, to give him a place to stand before thee, magnify him to be a party-contractor with thy glorious Majesty? Psalm viii. 4-6. But now, when this covenant is broken, it is become impossible to a son of Adam ever to stand before God in his perfection, for, how should man be righteous that is born of a woman? Job xv. 14. Since we once sinned, how should our righteousness ever come in remembrance? Therefore hath God chosen another way to cover man's wickedness and righteousness both, with his own righteousness, his Son's divine human righteousness, which is so suited in his infinite wisdom for us. It is a man's righteousness, that it may agree with men, and be a fit garment to cover them; it is God's righteousness, that it may be beautiful in God's eyes, for he seeth his own image in it. And it is not the created inherent righteousness of saints glorified, that shall be their upper garment, that shall be their heaven and glory-suit, so to speak. They will not glory in this, but only in the Lamb's righteousness for evermore. Saint-holiness must have a covering above, for it cannot cover our nakedness; and all the songs of those that follow the Lamb make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. The Lamb is the light and sun of the city, the Lamb is the temple of it; in a word, he is all that is beautiful and glorious. Every saint hath put on the Lord Jesus, and is perfect through his comeliness. At least, if the holiness of spirits of just men made perfect be the glorious habit above; yet all the beauty and glory of it is from Christ Jesus, whose image it is, and the Spirit whose work it is. It shall be still true, all—all our righteousness, as ours, is filthy; and all holiness, as it hath a relation to us, cannot please God. It must be spotted before his pure eyes; but only it is accepted and clean, as it is Christ's and the Spirit's, as it is his own garment put upon us, and his own comeliness making us perfect. It is not so much the inherent

cleanness of the Saints' robes that maketh them beautiful in his eyes, as this, that they are washed in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii. 14.

Now, from all this we would speak a word to two sorts of you. *First*, There is one great point of religion that is the principal and foundation of all other, even free justification by faith in Jesus, without our own righteousness; and the most part stumble here in the entry. It is the greatest obstruction of souls coming to Christ Jesus, even the ignorant and blind conceit and fancy that almost every man hath of himself and his own performances; the world will not make many believe the half of the evil of themselves that is spoken in the word. If you have a general conviction of sinfulness and misery, yet you think to help it. If you sin, you use to make amends, run to your prayers and repentance to give God a recompence, and satisfy your own consciences. Speak now, is not this the way you think to be saved? I shall do what I can, pray and mourn for sin; and what I am not able to do, God must forgive; you will do all you are able or can, and God's mercy must come in to supply the want of your righteousness. But this is to put a new piece of cloth in an old garment, to make the rent worse. Many of you have no other ground of confidence in the world, nothing to answer the challenge of conscience or satisfy justice, but this,—I repent, I am sorry, I mourn, I shall amend, I resolve never to do the like again. Now, then, from this ground we would declare unto you, in the Lord's name, you are yet unclean, both in persons and actions unjustified, because you have no other covering but your own duties and performances: and let these be examined, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and they will be found light. All your righteousness, saith the Lord, is filthiness; you are unclean, you cannot deny, both by birth and education,—you have often defiled yourselves with sins, you must confess. Now, I ask you, How will you cover that uncleanness and nakedness? How will you hide it from God's eyes and your own consciences? You know no way but this,—I

will pray, I will repent and amend. So then you cover yourself with prayer, with sorrow and tears, and a resolution of amending. This, then, is all your covering and ornament,—something done [449] by you, as many will make the wings of two good works stretch themselves out so far as to cover and hide a multitude of offences between them. Therefore I declare, in the Lord Jesus his name, unto you, whose conscience must go along in the acknowledgment and owning of your case, that you have covered yourselves with your own righteousness, that you have taken as filthy rags to cover your nakedness and sin with, as your sins are, and so you have made an addition to your uncleanness, you are more unclean by your prayers and repentance than before; and so God is of more pure eyes than to look graciously on such as you are. You have gone about to establish your own righteousness, and have not known the righteousness of God, and so you have come short of it; you are yet persons in a state of enmity,—God is your judge, you are rebels. It concerns you much to heed this well, to judge of your own actions and persons as God judgeth of them; for if God shall judge one way, and you judge another way, you may be far mistaken in the end. If you have so good an opinion of yourselves and your duties, that you can plead interest in God for them, and absolve yourselves from such grounds; and if God have not the same judgment, but rather think as evil of your prayers as of your cursing, and abhor the thing that satisfieth you, will it not be dreadful in the end? For his judgment shall stand, and you will succumb in judgment, since you crossed God's mind. Therefore we would have you solidly drink in this principle of religion;—that man is so unclean, and God so abhorreth him, that whatever he doth or can do, it cannot make him righteous; that no good action can make him acceptable, and take away the uncleanness of the evil actions; and that any sinful action taketh away all the cleanness of the good actions. Once believe this,—if I should sweat out my life in serving God, and never rise off my knees, if I should give my body to the fire for

the truth, if I should melt away in tears for sin, all this is but filthy rags, and I can never be accepted of God for all that, but the matter of my condemnation groweth,—if I justify myself my own mouth proves me perverse: God needeth no more but my good deeds to condemn me for, in all justice: and therefore it is a thing impossible,—I will never put forth a hand, or open a mouth upon that account any more. I will serve God, because it is my duty, but life I will not expect by my service; when I have done all, it is wholly mercy that I am accepted, my good works shall never come in remembrance; I resolve to be found, not having my own righteousness. I will appear among the ungodly sinners, as one that hath no righteousness, that I may be justified only by faith in Jesus Christ. I say, drink in this truth, and let it settle in your hearts, and then we would hear numbers cry, “O what shall I do to be saved?”

Now, *Secondly*, As for you who have fled unto Christ's righteousness only, and have cast away your own as dung and dross, as filthy rags; as you have done right in the point of justification, judge so likewise after it. We would exhort you to judge so of your best actions that are the fruits of the Spirit, judge so of them as you have a hand in them.

“All our righteousness.” Mark, Isaiah, a holy prophet, joineth himself in with the multitude. And the truth is, the more holiness, the more humility and self-abasing; for what is holiness, I pray you, but self-denial, the abasing of the creature, and exalting of Christ Jesus? This is the cross that the saints must all bear, “Deny yourself, and follow me.” Grace doth not swell men above others; it is gifts, such as knowledge, that puffeth up; charity or love puffeth not up. Men are naturally high-minded, for pride was the first sin of Adam, and grace cometh to level men, to make the high mountains valleys for Christ's chariot; it maketh men stoop low to enter the door of the kingdom. Therefore, if you have attained any measure beyond others, if you would prove it real grace and holiness, do not exalt yourselves above others, be not

high-minded, come down and sit among the ungodly, among the unclean, and let not grace given diminish the low estimation of yourself in yourself. There is a growing that is but a fancy, and men's conceit; when men grow above ordinances, above other Christians, and can see none or few Christians but themselves, such a growth is not real. It is but fancy, it is but swelling and wind, and must be pricked to let it out. A holy prophet came in among an unclean people; he did not say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou." Such a man as can find no Christian about him, even though to the judgment of all others, they seek God more than he, such a man hath not real solid grace,—his holiness is profane holiness, and proud holiness; for true holiness is humble holiness, and in honour preferreth others. [450]

There is a great fault among those who have fled to Christ's righteousness in justification, that they use to come full from duties, as a stomach from a honeycomb. Ofttimes we make our liberty and access to God the ground of our acceptation; and according to the ebbings and flowings of our inherent righteousness, so doth the faith and confidence of justification ebb and flow. Christians, this ought not to be; in so doing, you make your own righteousness your righteousness before God; for when the unsatisfaction in the point of duty maketh you question your interest so often, is not the satisfaction of your minds in duties made the ground of your pleading interest? Give you liberty and access, you can believe anything; remove it, and you can believe nothing. Certainly this is a sandy foundation,—you ought to build nothing on performances, you should be as vile in your own eyes, and think your nakedness as open, when you come nearest God, when you have most liveliness, as when he hideth his face, and duty withereth. Will filthy rags be your ornament? No, Christians. Be more acquainted with the unspotted righteousness of the immaculate Lamb of God, and find as great necessity of covering your cleanest duties with it, as your foulest faults, and thus shall you be kept still humble and vile in your own eyes, and

have continual employment for Christ Jesus. Your best estate should not puff you up, and your worst estate should not cast you down; therefore be much in the search of the filthiness of your holy actions. This were a spiritual study, a noble discovery to unbowel your duties, to divide them, and to give unto God what is God's, and take unto yourselves what is your own. The discovery of filthiness in them needeth not hinder his praise; and the discovery of grace in them needeth not mar your shame. God hath most glory when we have most shame; these two grow in just proportion,—so much is taken from God as is given to the creature.

Thirdly, We would also press you from this ground to long much to be clothed upon with immortality, to put off the filthy rags of time and earth-righteousness, and to be clothed upon with the white robes of the righteousness of the saints. As you would dwell near the fountain here, and be still washing your garments, and offering all your sacrifices in him who sanctifieth all, so would you pant and thirst for this spotless garment of glory. Glory is nothing but perfect holiness, holiness washen and made clean in the Lamb's blood. Your rags are for the prison and for sojourning; when you come to your Father's house, your raiment shall be changed. Therefore, Christians, every one of you aspire higher. Sit not down in attainments; forget what is behind, and press forward. Let perfect holiness be in your eye and purpose, sit not behind it. All our time-duties have much filthiness,—long for the pure stream that waters the city above. Grace is not in its native place, it is corrupted and mixed here: heaven is the own element of it, and there is grace without mixture. Undervalue all your performances, till you be above, where that which is in part shall be done away, where no unclean thing entereth.

Fourthly, This likewise holdeth out to you a continual necessity of washing. You must take up house beside the fountain opened in the house of David; and never look on any piece of inherent righteousness, but see a necessity of dipping it in the

Lamb's blood. And therefore should you pray always in Christ's name, that the prayer which, of itself, would be cast as dung on our face, may have a sweet savour from him. Cover your holiness with Christ's righteousness, and make mention of it only.

Sermon XVII.

Isaiah lxiv. 6.—“And we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

Here they join the punishment with the deserving cause, their uncleanness and their iniquities, and so take it upon them, and subscribe to the righteousness of God's dealing.

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We would say this much in general—*First*, Nobody needeth to quarrel God for his dealing. He will always be justified when he is judged. If the Lord deal more sharply with you than with others, you may judge there is a difference between your condition and theirs, as well as in the Lord's dispensation, even as this people do, ver. 5, 6. It is a strange saying, Lam. iii. 33. The Lord “doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.” That is, as we conceive, the Lord hath not such pleasure in trampling on men, as he might do on the dust of his feet. Though he be absolute sovereign Lord of the creature, and men be but as the dust of his feet, and he may do with his own what he pleaseth, and none ask, what dost thou? yet the Lord useth not to walk according to his own absoluteness,—he hath another ordinary rule whereby he worketh, a rule of justice and equity. Especially in the punishing of men, he useth not to afflict men for his pleasure, as tyrants use to destroy their people. The Lord exerciseth his sovereignty another way, and if he be absolute and unlimited in any thing, it is in showing mercy on men. But in judgment, there may be still some reason gotten for it in the creature beside the will of God; so that, to speak with reverence of his majesty, strokes are often drawn out of his hands. He getteth so much provocation ere he strike, and holdeth off so long,—threateneth, and giveth warning thus before strokes, as if it were against his will to lay on, as if his heart were broken with us.

Secondly, If men knew themselves and their own sinfulness, they would not challenge God with unrighteousness, but put their mouth in the dust, and keep silence. And it is from this ground, that this people do not charge God. Sin is of such infinite desert and demerit, because against infinite majesty, that God cannot go beyond it in punishment; and therefore Jeremiah, when he is wading out of the deep waters of sore temptation and sad discouragement, pitcheth and casteth anchor at this solid ground, "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed," Lam. iii. 22. What! do I mean thus to charge God, as if he dealt rigorously? No, no: It is his mercy that a remnant is left,—our strokes are not pure justice, our cup is mixed, mercy is the greatest part. Whatever is behind utter destruction, whatever is below the desert of sin, which is hell and damnation, all this must be reckoned up to mercy. That I am yet alive, and so may have hope, this is mercy, "For why should a living man complain?" ver. 39. That a rod is come to awake us out of security, this is mercy, for we might have slept to death. And this wholesome counsel got Job of his friends,—to stay his murmuring and grudging at God's dispensations, Job. xi. 6. Why dost thou complain, Job? Know but thy sins, and there shall be no room for complaint. Look but unto God's secrets of wisdom, and his law, and see it is double to what you have known,—your obligation is infinitely more than you thought upon, and then how great and numberless must iniquities be? "Know, therefore," saith Zophar, "God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquities deserve." God exacteth not according to law, he craveth not according to the obligation, but bids write down fifty in his bill of affliction, when an hundred are written in our bill of deserving. So then, complain not,—it is mercy that life is saved. Are you men, and living men? Wonder at this, and wonder not that you are not wealthy, are not honourable, seeing you are sinners: all that came on Jerusalem maketh not Ezra think God out of bounds, chap. ix. 13. As we are less than the least of God's mercies, and all our goodness deserveth none of them,

so is the least sin greater than the greatest of all his judgments, and deserveth still more. Nay, if there were no more but original corruption common to men, and the filthiness that accompanieth men's good actions, yet is God righteous in punishing severely, and this people acknowledge it so. You use to inquire what sin hath such a man done, when so terrible judgments come on? Nay, inquire no more;—he is a sinner, and it is mercy there is not more, and it is strange mercy that it is not so with you also. You use to speak foolishly when God's hand is upon you: I hope I have my punishment here, I hope to suffer here for my sins. Poor souls, if God make you suffer for sins, it will be another matter. Though now your punishment be above your strength and patience, yet it is below your sin. As sin hath all evil in it, so must hell have all punishment in it. The torment of the gravel, racking with the stone, and such like, are but play to hell,—these are but drops of that ocean that you must drink out, and you shall go out of one hell into a worse; eternity is the measure of its continuance, and the degrees of itself are answerable to its duration. There is much impatience even among God's children under the rod, you vex and torment yourselves, and do well to be angry. Any piece of thwarting dispensation, that goes cross to your humour and inclination, imbitters your spirit against God and maketh you go cross to his providence; how often do your hearts say, Why am I thus? What aileth the Lord at me? But, Christians, learn to study your own deservings, and stop your mouth with that, that you may not speak against heaven. If you knew sin well, you would not wonder at judgments, you would rather wonder that you are out of hell. Know what right God hath over you, and how little use he maketh of it against you. When you repine at a little, shall it not be righteousness with God to exact more, and let you know your deserving better? He that thinketh it rigour in God to exact fifty, it is justice that God crave an hundred. If the law require forty stripes, and he give but one, will you not rather commend and proclaim his clemency, than

speaking of his cruelty? Wonder that God hath spared us so long. Sin is come to great maturity. As pride is said to blossom and bud into a rod, so all sins are blossomed and budded into the very harvest, that the sickle may be put in. If we should have cities desolate, and our land consumed, if we should take up Jeremiah's lamentation, and our case be made parallel to theirs, we have then been punished less than our iniquities deserved.

There are some godless people so black mouthed as to speak against heaven when God correcteth them, they follow the counsel of Job's wife, curse God and die. If God but touch them a little in that which is dearest unto them, they kick against the pricks, and run hard heads with God. As we have known some foolish women, when their only child hath been removed, blaspheme, saying, What can God do more to me?—let him do what he can. O madness and wickedness of men! Cannot God do more when he casteth them into hell? Thou shalt acknowledge that it is more. Some have left off to seek God and turned profane, because of the Lord's correction but you should know that all that is here is but arles.³⁰⁹ If God had done his worst, you might think yourselves out of his common, nay, but he hath yet more to do, the full sum is to be paid. It were therefore wisdom yet to make supplication to thy judge.

But, *Thirdly*, Sins and iniquities have a great influence in the decay of nations and persons, and change of their outward condition, when it is joined with the wind of God's displeasure. The calamity of this people is set down in excellent terms, alluding to a tree in the fall of the leaf. We, saith he, were once in our land as a green tree busked round about with leaves and fruit; our church and state was in a flourishing condition, at least nothing was wanting to make outward splendour and glory. We were immovable in our own land, as David said in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved," so did we dream of eternity in earthly

³⁰⁹ [That is, an earnest (*arrha* Lat.).—Ed.]

Canaan. But now Lord, we are like a tree in the fall of the leaf, sin hath obstructed the influence of heaven, hath drawn away the sap of thy presence from among us, so that we did fade as a leaf before its fall, we were prepared so by our sins for judgment,—visible draughts and prognostics of it were to be read upon the condition and frame of all spirits and people, and then did our iniquities raise the storm of thy indignation, and that, like a whirlwind, hath blown the withering leaves off the tree, hath driven us out of our own land, and scattered us among strangers. Sin and uncleanness and the filthiness of our righteousness prepared us for the storm, made us light matter that could resist no judgment, made us matter combustible, and then iniquities, and sin rising up to iniquities, coming to such a degree, hath accomplished the judgment, put fire among us, made us as the birk in Yule even.³¹⁰

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First, It is familiar in the Scripture that people in a prosperous condition are compared unto a green tree flourishing, Psal.

³¹⁰ [Yule is a name that is still applied to Christmas, in the Northern parts of England as well as in Scotland. “This name was originally given to the great annual feast celebrated among the northern nations, at the time of the winter solstice in honour of the sun. Hence Odin was denominated Julvatter, or the *Father of Yule*.” (Jamieson’s Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish language.) “He praised God that he was born in such a time, as in the time of the light of the gospel—to such a place as to be king of such a kirk, the sincerest kirk of the world. The kirk of Geneva keep Pasch and *Yule*; what have they for them? They have no institution. As for our neighbour kirk in England their service is an evil sad mass in English, they want nothing of the mass but the liftings.” (Speech of King James VI, to the Central Assembly of the Church of Scotland, at Edinburgh, August 1590. Calderwood’s Hist. of the Ch. of Scot. p. 206.) What is called the birch or “birk in Yule even” was probably the *Yule clog*. On Christmas eve at no very remote period, the *Yule clog*, which was a large shapeless piece of wood, selected for the purpose, was dragged by a number of persons bearing in their hand large candles, and placed by them on the fire where it was to be burned in compliance with an ancient superstitious custom. Our author may refer to this practice or perhaps he had simply in view the old proverb, “He’s as bare as the birk at Yule.”—Henderson’s Scottish Proverbs, p. 47. Edin. 1832.—*Ed.*]

xxxvii. 35. The wicked's prospering is like a green bay tree spreading himself in power, spreading out his arms, as it were, over more lands to conquer them, over more people, to subject them. And this is often the temptation of the godly, and so doth the Lord himself witness of this people, Jer. xi. 16, "I have called thy name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit." This was once their name, though it be now changed. Now they are called a fading withering tree without both leaves and fruit. Now their place doth not so much as know them, they are removed as in a moment, Psal. xxxvii. 36. And this comparison giveth us to understand something of the nature of human glory and pomp. The fairest and most beautiful excellency in the world, the prosperity of nations and people, is but like the glory of a tree in the spring or summer. Yea, the Scripture useth to undervalue it more than so and the voice commandeth to cry, (Isa. xl. 6, 7, 8,) "All flesh is grass and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field: the one withereth, and the other fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." A tree hath some stability in it, but the flower of the field is but of a month or a week's standing, nay, of one day's standing, for in the morning the grass is green, and the sun scorseth it ere night, so that one sun's course shall see it both growing green and fading. So is the goodness, the very perfection, the quintessence, so to speak, and the abstract of creatures' perfections. Outward accommodation in a world is as fading a thing as the flower is, as smoke is, it is so vanishing that it bides but a puff of his breath to blow it to nothing. Job hath a strange expression, "Thou lookest upon me, and I am not," Job vii. 8. The Lord needeth no more but stare on the most durable creature, and look it not only out of countenance, but also look it into its first nothing—look it out of glory, out of being; and therefore you should not trust in those uncertain things, that can take wings and leave you. When you have accommodation outwardly to your mind do not build your nest in it; these leaves of prosperity will not cover you always, there is a time when they

will fall. Nations have their winter and their summer, persons have them likewise, as these must change in nature, so must they do in their lot. Heaven only is one day, one spring perpetually blossoming and bringing forth fruit. There is the tree of life that bringeth forth fruit every month, that hath both spring and harvest all the year over. Christians, sit not down under the green tree of worldly prosperity, if you do, the leaves will come down about you, the gourd you trust in may be eaten up in a night, your winter will come on so as you shall forget the former days as if they had never been. We desire you to be armed for changes; are not matters in the kingdom still going about? All things are subject to revolution and change, and every year hath its own summer and winter, so hath it pleased the Lord to set the one over against the other, that man might find nothing after him, Eccl. vii. 14. Therefore we would have you cast your accounts so as the former days of darkness may return, and the land be covered with mourning clothes.

But would you know what is the original of the creatures' vanity, what is the moth that eats up the glory and goodness of creatures' enjoyments? Here it is—sin and iniquities. It was sin that first subjected the creation to vanity, Rom. viii. 19, 20. This inferior world was to have been a durable house for an immortal soul, but sin made man mortal, and the world corruptible, and from this proceed all the tempests and disorders that seem to be in the creation. It is this still—it is sin that raiseth the storm of the Lord's wrath, which bloweth away the withered leaves of men's enjoyments. Sin drieth up all the sap and sweetness of the creature comforts,—it maketh the leaves of the tree wither, drives the sap away to the root, hindereth the influence of God's blessing to come through the veins of worldly prosperity. For what is the virtue and sap of creatures? It is even God's blessing, and therefore the bread nourisheth not, but the word and command of God, Matt. iv. 4. That is a right unto the creatures by Jesus Christ, when possession of them is entered

into by prayer and thanksgiving, for all right is sanctified by these, and it is the iniquities of men that separate between God and them, Isa. lix. 2. And when God is separated and divided from enjoyments, they must needs be empty shells and husks, no kernel in them, for God "filleth all in all," is all in all, and remove him, and you have nothing—your meat and drink is no blessing, your table is a snare, your pleasures and laughter have sadness in them. At least they are like the vanishing blaze of thorns under a pot, and therefore, when God is angry for sin, men's beauty consumeth as before the moth, Psalm xxxix. 11. When God beginneth to show himself terrible, because of sin, poor man, though of late spreading his boughs out, yet all falleth, and like ice melteth as before the sun, which just now seemed as solid as stone. O but David was sensible of this and could speak from much experience, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4. The anger of the Lord did eat him up, and dried his moisture. It might be read in his countenance,—all the world could not content him, all the showers of creatures' dropping fatness could not keep sap in him. God's displeasure scorseth so, nay, is within him, that no hiding-place is to be found in the world, no shadow of a rock among all the creatures in such a weary land. Moses and the people knew this well, Psal. xc. 5-9. The Lord's displeasure carried them away, as a flood coming down carrieth all headlong with it, it scorched them and made them wither as grass. When God setteth iniquities before him, and that which is the soul's secret, beginneth to imprint it in visible characters on the rod, and writeth his sin on his punishment, then no wonder that days be spent in vanity and grief, since they are passed over in his wrath, Job xiii. 25. Then doth a soul loathe its dainty meat, and then doth the ox low over his fodder. Meat is laid before him, and he cannot touch it, because of the terrors of the Almighty, and that which before he would not once touch, would not enter into terms of communing with, as the Lord's threatenings, he must now sit down and eat them up as his meat, how sorrowful

soever, Job vi. 4-7.

But, *secondly*, when sin hath prepared a man for judgment, then, if iniquity be added to sin, this raiseth the storm, and kindleth the fire to consume the combustible matter. When sin hath given many blows, by preparatory corrections at the root of a man's pleasure and credit, it will at length bring on a fatal stroke that shall drive the tree to the ground. There are some preparatory judgments, and some consummatory, some wither the leaf, and some blow it quite off, some make men like the harvest, ripe to put the sickle of judgment into it. The corruption of a land, the universality of it, and formality in worshipping of God, ripeneth a land for the harvest of judgment,—exposeth it to any storm,—leaveth it open to the Lord's wrath, so that there is nothing to hold his hand and keep off the stroke, but when the wind ariseth, and iniquities have made it tempestuous, then who may stand? It will sweep away nations and people as a flood, and make their place not to know them, so that there shall be neither leaf nor branch left. There is often a great calm with great provocations, and iniquities cry, "Peace, peace!" But when once the cry of it is gone up to heaven, and hath engaged God's anger against a people or person, then it raiseth a whirlwind that taketh all away. Now, all this belongeth to you,—we told you the acknowledgment of sin was yours already, and a wonder it is, that the complaint is not ours also. Always this ought to be an admonition and example to us, on whom the ends of the world are fallen. Therefore we would declare this unto you, that sin and iniquities have judgment in the tail. Now you sit at peace, every one in his own dwelling, and spread forth your branches, but is there not much uncleanness among you? We would have you trouble your carnal peace and security, trouble your ease with thoughts of this. And we have ground to give this warning, because, if there were no more but the iniquity of our holy things—the formality of our service—the commonness of spirit in worship, this might be enough to raise the storm. You

know not for what reasons to be afraid of judgment. Look but on original corruption, look on the defilement of your religious actions, and then find ground sufficient of fading away. Though now you sit still, and seem to be so settled, as you would never be moved, you dream of an eternity here—you cleave in your hearts to your houses and lands—you stick as fast to the world, and will not part with it, as a leaf to a tree, yet behold the wind of the Lord may arise, that shall drive you away; take your soul from these things, and then whose shall they be? If you will not fear temporal judgments, yet I pray you fear eternal—fear hell. May not the Lord shake you off this tree of time, and take you out of the land of the living, to receive your portion? There is not only an universal deadness of spirit on the land, but a profane spirit,—iniquities, abominable sins, abound. Every congregation is overgrown with scandals,³¹¹ and for you, none may more justly complain. We are all unclean, sin is not in

³¹¹ [The records of the kirk session of the parish of Govan, during the incumbency of the author, after having been lost for many years, were fortunately recovered not long ago. These show the great strictness of the ecclesiastical discipline of those days. There were not fewer than twenty-two elders in the kirk session. Each of these had a ward or district assigned to him, of which it was his duty to take a particular superintendence. It was hardly possible, therefore, that any irregularity of which a parishioner was guilty could be concealed, and consequently, what is recorded in the register is to be regarded, not as a specimen, but as the gross amount of the immorality of the parish. Some may affect to ridicule the severe notice that was taken of particular instances of misconduct. But the cognizance that was taken of such things is a proof of the high tone of moral and religious feeling that prevailed at that time among the office bearers of the church. Individuals, we find, were brought before the kirk session, on account of family and domestic feuds, for quarrelling with their neighbours, for solitary instances of drunkenness, and of the use of profane language, for carrying water on the Lord's day, for sleeping in church, for resorting to taverns on the Sabbath, for calumny, and for neglecting the education of their children, &c. They who were convicted of such offences, were sometimes rebuked in private by an elder, and at other times by the minister in the presence of the eldership. It was only in the case of graver offences, the number of which was comparatively small, that a reproof

corners but men declare their sin as Sodom, sin is come to the maturity—defection and apostacy³¹² is the temper of all spirits, and, above all, the general contempt and slighting of this glorious gospel, is the iniquity of Scotland,³¹³ so that we wonder that the withered leaves yet stick to, that the storm is not yet raised, and we blown away. Now, you are like stones—your hearts as adamant, and cannot be moved with his threatening, the voice of the Lord's word doth not once move you. You sin and are not afraid, nay, but when God's anger shall join with iniquity, and the voice of his rod and displeasure roar, this shall make the mountains to tremble, the rocks to move, and how much more shall it drive away a leaf? You seem now mountains, but when God shall plead, you shall be like the chaff driven to and fro. O how easy a matter shall it be to God to blow a man out of his dwelling place! Sin hath prepared you for it, he needeth no more but blow by his Spirit, or look upon you, and you will not be. You who are now lofty and proud, and maintain yourselves against

was administered in the presence of the congregation.—*Ed.*]

³¹² [In the “Causes of the Lord's Wrath against Scotland, agreed upon by the Commission of the General Assembly,” 1650, “Backsliding and defection from the covenants and our solemn vows and engagements,” is specified (p. 46) to be “one of the greatest and most comprehensive and provoking sins in the land.” *Printed in the year 1653.*—*Ed.*]

³¹³ [This is the language of a man who did not use “at any time flattering words,” or utter to his people “smooth things.” From what he says here, however, and in some other sermons, and from corresponding evidence which might be adduced, we are forced to conclude that the well-known description which Kirkton has given of the state of religion in Scotland in those days, (*Hist. of Ch. of Scot.* pp. 48, 54, 64) must be too highly coloured. The presence of a large military force and a state of civil warfare could not but be prejudicial, in various ways, to the religion and morality of a country. I am perfectly aware that the authority of Lord Clarendon, Bishop Burnet, Milton, and others, may be brought forward to prove that the parliamentary soldiers were kept under the strictest discipline, and were remarkable for their grave deportment. But I know likewise that the characters of not a few of those soldiers are seriously affected by the offensive details of the ecclesiastical records of the parish with which Binning was connected.—*Ed.*]

the word, when you come to reckon with God, and he entereth into judgment, you shall not stand—you will consume as before the moth; your hearts will fail you—“who may abide the day of his coming?” It will be so terrible, and so much the more terrible, that you never dreamed of it. If the example of this people will not move you, do but cast your eyes on Ireland,³¹⁴ who all do fade as a leaf, and their iniquities have taken them away out of their own land. Shall not the seeing of the eye, nor the hearing of the ear teach you? What security do you promise to yourselves? Have not we sinned as much as they? Were not they his people as well as we? Certainly, since God waiteth longer on you, the stroke must be the greater: provoked patience must turn fury. If you would then prevent this people's complaint, go about such a serious acknowledgment of your sins. “Search your ways, and turn again to the Lord.” And let not every man sit down in a general notion of sin, but unbowel it until you see uncleanness, go up to the fountain head, original corruption, go down to all the streams, even the iniquity of holy things. Let every man be particular in the search of his own provocations personal, and every one be public in the general sins of the land, that you may confess out of knowledge and sense, “We are all unclean,” &c.

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³¹⁴ [See Note, p. 368.—*Ed.*]

Sermon XVIII.

Isaiah lxiv. 7.—“And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee,” &c.

They go on in the confession of their sins. Many a man hath soon done with that a general notion of sin is the highest advancement in repentance that many attain to. You may see here sin and judgment mixed in thorough other³¹⁵ in their complaint. They do not so fix their eyes upon their desolate estate of captivity, as to forget their provocations. Many a man would spend more affection, and be more pathetic in the expression of his misery, when it is pungent, nor he can do when he speaketh of his sins. We would observe, from the nature of this confession, something to be a pattern of your repentance. And it is this. When the Spirit convinceth, and men are serious in repentance, then the soul is more searching, more universal, more particular in acknowledgment of sins. These are characters of the Spirit's work.

First, The Spirit discovereth unto men, not only sin, but the loathsomeness of sin, its heinous nature, how offensive it is to God's holy eye. Many of you know abundance of evil deeds, and call them sins, but you have never taken up sin's ugly face, never seen it in the glass of the holy law, uncleanness itself, because you do not abhor yourselves. Poor and low thoughts of God make mean and shallow thoughts of sin. You should be as Job, vile, chap. xl. 4, and abhor yourselves in dust and ashes, chap. xlii. 6. As God's holiness grew great in your eyes, sins uncleanness would grow proportionably, Isa. vi. 3, 5. And here your repentance halteth in the very entry.

But, *secondly*, The Spirit discovereth not only the uncleanness of men's natures, and leadeth them up to original corruption,

³¹⁵ [Or together.—*Ed.*]

but the Spirit also leadeth men along all the streams, not only those that break out, but those which go under ground, and have a more secret and subtile conveyance. It concludeth not only open breaches of the command under filthiness, but also all a man's own righteousness, though never so refined, it concludeth it also a defiled garment, so that the soul can look no where but see sin and uncleanness in its ornaments and duties. And thus it appeareth before God without such a covering, openeth up its soul, hideth not sin with the covering of duties, but seeth a necessity of another covering for all. Now, therefore, let the most part of you conclude, that you have never yet gotten your eyes open to see sin or confess it, because when you sit down to count your sins, there are many things that you call not sin,—you use not to reckon your praying and repentance among sins. Nay, because you have so much confidence in your repentance and confession, you have never repented. You must see a necessity of a covering of Christ's righteousness above all, faith in Jesus must cover repentance and itself both, with the glorious object of it. But, alas! how soon are many at an end of confession! some particular gross actions may come in remembrance, but no more. Sum up all your confessions, they have never yet pitched on the thousandth part of your guiltiness, no, not in kinds, let be in number.

But, *thirdly*, The spirit convinceth spiritually and particularly both, it convinceth of spiritual sins, as we last said, of the iniquity of holy things, and especially of the most substantial duties, faith and prayer, John xvi. 8, 9. There are not many of you have come this length, to see your want of prayer. No, your own words do witness against you, for you use to say, I pray day and night, I believe in God with all my heart. Now therefore, out of your own mouth shall you be condemned. When the Spirit convinceth you of sin, you will see no faith, no prayer at the first opening of the eyes. But I add, there is no true confession but it is particular: the Spirit useth not to bewilder men's spirits in a general notion only, [457]

and a wide field of unknown sins. And such are many of your convictions. You mourn for sin, as you say, and yet you cannot condescend on a particular that burdeneth your conscience; you grant you have many sins, but sit down to count them, and there is a short count of them. Now, do you not reflect back upon former humiliations in public, and former acknowledgments of sins in private? Do you not yet return upon your own hearts to lay home this sad challenge, I have never repented, I do not yet repent? Must not all your solemn approaches be iniquity and abomination, while your souls are not afflicted for sin, while you can see so few sins? The fasting days of Scotland will be numbered in the roll of the greatest provocations, because there is no real and spiritual conviction of sin among us, custom hath now taken away the solemnity, and there remaineth nothing but the very name. Is this the fast that the Lord chooseth? No, believe it, this shall add to your provocation, and rather hasten lingering judgment than keep it off. We would beseech you this day, pray for pardon of former abused fasts. If you had no more to mourn for, this might spend the day and our spirits both, and exhaust all our present supplications—even the wall of partition that stands between God and Scotland, which all our former solemn humiliations hath built up, a great deal higher than other sins could reach.

“There is none that calleth upon thy name.” Did not this people make many prayers (Isa. i. 15), before the captivity? And did they not cry, which noteth some fervency in it, and fast, a little before it in Jeremiah's time, (chap. xi. 11, and xiv. 12,) and in the time of it, Ezek. vii. 18, Mic. iii. 4, Zech. vii. 3? How, then, is it that the prophet, now on the watch tower, looking round about him to take up the people's condition, and being led by the Spirit so far as to the case of the captives in Babel, can find no prayer, no calling? And was not Daniel so too? Dan. ix. 13. Lo, then, here is the construction that the Spirit of God putteth on many prayers and fastings in a land, “There is none calleth

on thy name," there is none that prayeth faithfully and fervently, few to count upon that prayeth any. It may be there are many public prayers, but who prayeth in secret, and mourneth to God alone? There are many prayers, but the inscription is, "To the unknown God," to a nameless God; your praying is not a calling on his name, as a known God and revealed in the word.

This, then, we would say unto you, that there may be many prayers in your account, and none in God's. There are many prayers of men that God counteth no more of than the howling of a dog.

First, The cry of men's practices is often louder than their prayers, and goeth up to heaven, that the cry of prayer cannot be heard. When men's conversation is flat contrary to their supplications, supplication is no calling on his name, but charming rather. Sodom's abominations had a cry up to God, Gen. xviii. 21. So Abel's blood had a cry for vengeance, which Cain's prayers could not outcry. Thus the Lord would not hear many prayers, Isa. i. 15, because hands and practices were polluted. You that know no worship of God, but in such a solemn duty, your religion is summed up and confined within the limits of temple worship, family exercise, and prayer, certainly the rest of your conversation must speak more. God will not hear but such as worship him and do his will, John iv. 23. Your prayer is a dark parable, if your conversation expone³¹⁶ it not. This I speak for this end, to put many of you out of your false ground of confidence. You have nothing but your prayers to trust unto, and for your conversation, you never go about it effectually to reform it, but go on in that which you pray against. We declare unto you the truth, your prayers are abomination, Prov. xxviii. 9. The wicked may have prayers, and therefore think not to please God and flatter him with your mouths, when your conversation is rebellion. Since you hear not him in his commands, God will

³¹⁶ [That is, explain.—*Ed.*]

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not hear you in your petitions, Prov. i. 24, 28. You stopped your ear at his reproof, God will stop his ear at your request. If you will go to heaven by your own righteousness, I pray you follow more after it, make the garment more to cover your nakedness: the skirt of a duty is not sufficient.

Secondly, When iniquity is regarded in the heart, and idols set up in God's place, God will not own such a worship, but sendeth a man to the idols he serveth, Psal. lxvi. 18; Ezek. xiv. 9, 4. Do you not often pray to God against a corruption, when your heart cleaveth unto it, and what your mouth saith, your heart contradicteth? Light and conscience often extort a confession of beloved sins, while the temper of the heart hath this language, Lord, grant not my request. And therefore, if there be a prayer for pardon of guilt, yet there is no thorough resolution to quit the sin; and as long as a soul is not resolved to quit the sin, there can be no ingenuous confession of it, and no prayer for removing the guilt can be heard. You cannot employ Christ in his office of mediatorship as a Priest to intercede and offer sacrifice for sin, unless you as sincerely employ him as a Sanctifier and Redeemer; and therefore prayer that separateth Christ's offices, and calleth not on whole Christ, calleth not on his name, for his name is Lord Jesus Christ. How can the Lord be inquired of by such a one who cometh to mock him, putteth up an idol in the heart, and yet prayeth against it, or some other sin, while he is not resolved to quit it? Shall God be resolute to help, when we are not earnest in seeking it? No wonder God answer you according to the idol; no wonder you be given up to serve idols, and your sin grow upon you as a plague for your hypocrisy. When you engage your heart too much to any creature, and come to pray and inquire of the Lord in your necessity, shall it not be righteousness with him, to send you to your god? "When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee," Isa. lvii. 13. O man, cry unto thy bosom-idol, and let it help thee, since thou trustest to it, and spendest thy heart upon it! Deut. xxxii. 37, 38, "Where

is the God that drank the wine of your offerings, and did eat the fat of your sacrifices?" Where is the creature that you have made your heart an altar to, to send up the flames of your choicest thoughts and affections to it? Let this rise up, and help you now, saith the Lord. Therefore we exhort you, if you would have your prayers a delight, be upright in the thing you seek, and see that you entertain no known sin, give it no heart-allowance.

Thirdly, There are many prayers not heard, not known, because the mouth out-crieth the heart. It is the sacrifice of the contrite heart that God despiseth not. The prayers of this people were such, (Isa. xxix. 13,)—they drew near with the mouth, but the heart was far away. It is worship in spirit and truth that God loveth, John iv. 23. Since prayer is a communion of God with the creature, a meeting of one with God, and speaking face to face, God, who is a Spirit and immortal, must have a spirit to meet with, a soul to speak to him. Now, do you not find your hearts gadding abroad even in duty? Is it not most about your corns and lands in the time of solemn worship? Therefore God getteth no more but a carcase to keep communion with: he may have as much fellowship with the stones of the wall, and timber of the house, as he can have with your ears and mouths, while you remove your hearts to attend other things. And I would say more,—if your mind be present, yet your heart is gone; sometimes, yea often, both are gone abroad. Sometimes the mind and thought stayeth, but the affection and heart is not with it, and so the mind's residence is not constant. Your thought may come in as a wayfaring man, but tarrieth not all night, dwelleth not. Now speak to it, even Christians, may not your prayers often have a contrary interpretation to what they pretend? You pray so coldrifely³¹⁷ and formally, as God will interpret, you have no mind to it: we ask as we seemed indifferent whether our petition be granted or not. Should the Lord be affected with your

³¹⁷ [Coldly or indifferently.—*Ed.*]

petitions, when you yourselves are not affected much? Should his bowels of zeal sound within him, when yours are silent? It is fervent prayer availeth much, James v. 16. A heart sent out with the petition, and gone up to heaven, cannot but bring back an answer. If prayer carry not the seal of the heart and soul in it, God cannot own it, or send it back with his seal of acceptation.

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Fourthly, Many prayers are not calling on God's name; and no wonder that when people pray, yet the Spirit says, "None calleth on thy name;" for prayer is made, as to an unknown God, and God is not taken up according to his "name," which are his glorious attributes, whereby he manifesteth himself in his word. To call on God's name, is so to pray to God as to take him up as he hath revealed himself. And what is the Lord's name? Hear himself speak to Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 19, and xxxiv. 6, 7, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands: forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Now, to call on this name is for the soul, in prayer, to have a suitable stamp on it: every attribute of God taking deep impression in the heart, and so God's name to be written on the very petitions; and shortly, we may say, the spirit should have the impression of God's greatness and majesty, of his goodness and mercy, of his terribleness and justice. This is the order in which God proclaimeth his name. In the entry, the supplicant should behold the glorious sovereignty and infinite distance between God and the creature, that he may have the stamp of reverence and abasement upon his spirit, and may speak out of the dust, as it becometh the dust of the balance and footstool to do to him who sitteth on the circle of the heaven as his throne. And this I must say, there is little religion and godliness among us, because every man is ignorant of God. Even God's children do more study themselves, and their condition, than God's greatness and absoluteness. Who searches God's infiniteness in his word and works till he behold a wonder, and be drowned in a mystery?

O but the saints of old did take up God at a greater distance from the creatures; they waded far into this boundless ocean of God's Majesty, till they were over head and ears, and were forced to cry out, "Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" All these are but parts of him, his back-parts. There is more real divinity and knowledge of God in one of Job's friends' discourses, one of David's prayers, than now in twenty sermons of gracious men, or many prayers or conferences of saints. But withal you must study his goodness and mercy, and this maketh up the most part of his name. The definition of God hath most of this, so that it may be said truly, that mercy is his delight. Mercy, as it were, swelleth over the rest: God were not accessible, unless mercy did temper it. Behold then greatness to humble, and goodness to make bold, that you may have access. As greatness should leave the stamp of reverence on your petitions, so should mercy and goodness imprint them with faith and confidence; and that the rather, because as Christ is said to be the Father's face, and the image of his person, (2 Cor. iv. 6. and Heb. i. 3,) so may he be called the Father's name, and so doth God himself call him, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, The angel that went before them in the wilderness, whose voice they ought to obey, his "name is in him;" and this angel is Christ Jesus, Acts vii. 37, 38. So then Christ Jesus is God's name. God, as he revealeth himself in the word, is "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. And therefore, Christians, you ought to pray always in Christ's name, and this is to call on his name. Not only encourage yourselves to come to God, because of a mediator, because he is God in Christ, but also offer up all your prayers in the name of Jesus, that his name called on them may sanctify them, otherwise your affectionate prayers cannot be acceptable to God, for he loveth nothing but what cometh through the Son. Prayer must have an evil savour, when it is not put in the golden censer that this angel hath to offer up incense with the prayers of the saints. And likewise you would know God's justice and wrath, that you may

serve in fear and trembling: and when trembling is joined with the rejoicing of faith, this is acceptable service. You ought to fear to offend his holiness, while you are before him. Let God's terribleness have a deep impression on your spirit, both to make sin bitter, and to make mercy more sweet. Thus should prayer ascend with the seal of God's attributes, and then it is a calling on his name. Now, is there any calling on his name among us? Who maketh it his study to take up God in his glorious names? Therefore you call not on a known God, and cannot name him. Now, all of you take this rule to judge your prayers by. Think you not that you make many prayers? You both think it and say it, as you use to say, I pray both day and night. Nay, but count after this rule, and there will be found few prayers in Scotland, albeit you reckon up both private and public. Once scrape out of the count the prayers of the profane and scandalous, whose practice defileth their prayers; and again, blot out the prayers of men's tongues and mouths when hearts are absent, and again, set aside the formal, *dwyning*,³¹⁸ *coldrife*, indifferent supplications of saints, and the prayers that carry no seal of God's name and attributes on them, prayers made to an unknown God, and will you find many behind? No, certainly,—any of you may take up the complaint in behalf of the land, “There is none that calleth on thy name,” or few to count upon. You may say so of yourselves, if you judge thus,—I have almost never prayed, God hath never heard my voice; and you may say so of the land. This would be a well-spent day, if this were but our exercise, to find out the sins of our duties in former humiliations; if the Spirit did so convince you as to blot out of the roll of fasts all the former. If you come this length, as to be convinced solidly that you have never yet prayed and mourned for sin,—I have lived thus long, and been babbling all this while, I have never once spoken to God, but worshipped I know not what, fancied a God like myself,

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³¹⁸ [Languishing.—*Ed.*]

that would be as soon pleased with me as I was with myself,—if the Lord wrought thus on your hearts, to put you off your own righteousness, you should have more advantage in this, than in all your sabbaths and fasts hitherto.

Although the Lord's hand be upon them, and they “fade as a leaf,” and are driven into another land, yet none calleth on his name. This maketh the complaint more lamentable, and no doubt is looked upon as a dreadful sign and token of God's displeasure, and of sorer strokes. Daniel, an eye witness, confirmeth this foretold truth, chap. ix. 13, “All this is come upon us, yet have we not made our prayers to the Lord our God.” Well may the Lord make a supposition and doubt of it, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. After so many plagues are come on, seven added to seven, and again seven times more, and yet they will not be humbled, and when it is even at the door next to utter destruction and consumption, he addeth, “If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they take with the punishment of sin,” &c. We need ask no reason of this, for “bray a fool in a mortar, his folly will not depart from him,” Prov. xxvii. 22. Poor foolish man is a foolish man, folly is born with him, folly is his name, and so is he. He hath not so much wisdom as to “hear the voice of the rod, and him that appointeth it.” Poor Ephraim is an undaunted heifer. Nature is a “bullock unaccustomed with the yoke,” and so it is chastised more and more, Jer. xxxi. 18. Man is like an untamed beast, as the horse, or as the mule. Threatenings will not do it, “God speaketh once, yea twice, and man perceiveth it not,” Job xxxiii. 14. God instructeth by the word, and men receive no instruction; all the warnings to flee from the wrath to come are as so many tales to make children afraid. He saith in his heart, “I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart.” Since, therefore, he will not incline his ear to the word, God sendeth his rod to seal the word, and yet men are so wild that they fight with God's rods, and will not submit to him; a yoke must be put on Ephraim, a bridle in men's mouth, Psal. xxxii. 9. They

will put God to more pains than speaking, and it shall cost them more pain; for he that will not be drawn with the cords of a man, love and entreaties, must be drawn with the cords of a beast, and yoked in a heavy yoke. Yet men are unruly, and the yoke groweth the heavier and sorer that they strive to shake it off. An uncircumcised heart cannot be humbled,—“How can the leopard change his spots? no more can my people return to me,” Jer. xiii. 23. It is strange that a people so afflicted will not take with the punishment of their iniquity, but will say in their heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? But here it is, how can an uncircumcised heart be humbled? God may beat on men with rods as on a dog, but he will run away from him still the more, Isa. ix. 13. Nay, it may be there will be more stirring after God, and more awaking by the first stroke of affliction, than when they are continued and multiplied. The uncouthness of rods may affect people something, but when his hand lieth on but a little, custom breedeth hardness, and more and more alienateth spirits from him.

Now we need no more to seal this truth, but our own experience. I think never people might speak more sensibly of it. It hath been the manner of the Lord's dealing with us, to use fair means to gain us, to threaten before he laid on, to give a proclamation before his stroke, and yet it hath been our manner from our youth up to harden ourselves against him, and go on in our own way. Therefore hath the Lord, after long patience, laid on sad strokes, and smitten us, yet have we not turned to him. It may be, when the chastisement was fresh and green, some poured out a prayer, and in trouble visited God, (Isa. xxvi. 16,) but the body of the land hath not known him that smote them, and never ran into their hiding place, but the temptation of the time, like a flood, hath carried them away with it. And for the Lord's children, how soon doth the custom of a rod eat out the sense of it, and prayer doth not grow proportionably to the Lord's rods. The Lord hath expected that some might stand in the gap and intercede, yet few

or none called on his name. General corrections of the land hath made general apostacy from God, not a turning in to God; so that we may say, we never entered a furnace, but we have come out with more dross, contracted dross in the fire. Men's zeal and tenderness hath been burnt up, reprobate silver may God call us. We have had so much experience of the unprofitableness of former afflictions, that we know not what the Lord shall do with us. We think it may be the Lord's complaint of Scotland, "Why should you be afflicted any more? you will revolt more and more," Isa. i. 5. What needeth another rod? You are now all secure, it is true, because you are not stricken; nay, but what needeth a rod? For it cannot awake you,—all the fruit of it would be, not to purge away sin, but to increase it. General judgments will prove general temptations, and will alienate you more from me, and make you curse God and the covenant. And indeed, the truth is, we know not what outward dispensation can fall on that can affect this generation, we know not what the Lord can have behind that can work on us. Judgment hath had as much terror, mercies as much sweetness, and as much of God in the one and the other, as readily hath been since the beginning of the world. Only this we know, all things are possible to him which are impossible to us, and if the Spirit work to sanctify the rod, a more gentle rod shall work more effectually; his word shall do as much as his rod.

The case we are now into is just this—"None calleth on thee." It is a terrible one, whether our condition be good or bad outwardly. Our peace hath put us asleep, and the word cannot put men to prayers. Now, the Lord hath begun to threaten, as you have been still in fear of new troubles, and a revolution of affairs again, yet I challenge your own consciences, and appeal to them,—whom hath the word prevailed with to put to prayer? Whom hath the rumour of approaching trouble put to their prayers? Whose spirit hath been affected with God's frowning on the land? And this yet more aggravateth your laziness, in the time that God doth

show terrible things to his people in Ireland, giveth them a cup of wormwood, and to drink the wine of astonishment, are not you yet at ease? When your brethren and fellow-saints are scattered amongst you as strangers,³¹⁹ yet your hearts bleed not.

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Well, behold the end of it,—your case is a sad prognostic of the Lord's hiding his face and consuming us; nay, it is a sure token that his face is hid already. When Job's friends would aggravate his misery, they sum it up in this, “thou restrainest prayer from God.” It is more wrath to be kept from much praying, not to be scattered, from your own houses. Therefore, if you would have the cloud of God's anger, that covereth the land with blackness, go over you, and pour out itself on others; if you would prevent the rod, hearken to the word, and stir up yourselves to much prayer, that you may be called his remembrancers. O how long shall prayer be banished this kingdom! The Lord's controversy must be great with us, for since the days of our first love there

staid in the country, though they could not exercise their ministry orderly as formerly, and though their stipends were sequestered, yet they, changing their apparel to the habit of countrymen, travelled in their own parishes frequently, and sometimes in other places, taking what opportunities they could to preach in the fields, or in barns and glens, and were seldom in their own houses. They persuaded the people to constancy in the received doctrines, in opposition to the wild heresies which were then spreading, and reminding them of their duty to their lawful magistrates, the king and parliament, in opposition to the usurpation of the times, and in their public prayers always mentioning the lawful magistrate. This continued throughout the summer of 1651, at which time there was diligent search made anew for them. Some were again taken, others fled, and those who were taken were imprisoned first, for a time, in Carrickfergus, in lodgings where they quartered; and thereafter, Colonel Venables not gaining any ground upon them, they were sent to Scotland.” Adair's MS. apud Dr. Reid's Hist. vol. ii. p. 246-248. See also a narrative of the sufferings of the Irish Presbyterians, for their religion and loyalty, in the “Sample of Jet-Black Calumny,” p. 214.—*Ed.*

³¹⁹ [“Upon Sunday, the 27th of February [1642], a declaration was read out of the old town pulpit [Aberdeen] by our minister, Mr William Strahan, showing the state of the Protestants in Ireland, and how their wives and bairns were miserably banished, and forced to flee into the west parts of Scotland for

has been great decay of the spirit of prayer. The children of God should be so much in it, as they might be one with it. David was so much in prayer, as he in a manner defined himself by it, Psal. cix. 4, "I give myself unto prayer." In the original, there is no more but "I prayer." I was all prayer. It was my work, my element, my affection, my action. Nay, to speak the truth, it is the decay of prayer that hath made all this defection in the land. Would you know the original of many a public man's apostacy and backsliding in the cause of God, what maketh them so soon forget their solemn engagements, and grow particular, seeking their own things, untender in seeking the things of God?—would you trace back the desertion up to the fountain-head? Then come and see. Look upon such a man's walking with God in private, such a man's praying, and you shall find matters have been first wrong there. Alienation and estrangement from God himself, in immediate duties and secret approaches, hath made men's affections cool to his interest in public duties. And believe it, the reason why so few great men or none are so cordial, constant, and thorough in God's matters is this,—they pray not in secret; they

refuge, and the land not able to sustain them. It was found expedient that ilk parish within the kingdom should receive a collection of ilk man's charity for their help and support, whereupon was collected of this poor parish fourscore pounds." (Spalding's "History of the Troubles in Scotland," vol. i. p. 34. Aberdeen, 1792.) "As a body, the presbyterians [in Ireland] suffered less by the ravages of the rebellion than any other class. The more influential of their ministers, and the principal part of their gentry, had previously retired to Scotland to escape the tyranny of Strafford and the severities of the bishops and were thus providentially preserved." (Dr. Reid's "History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland," vol. i, p. 339.) After the execution of Charles I, an oath called the *Engagement*, was framed by the English parliament, requiring all persons to be "faithful to the commonwealth of England as now established, without a king or house of lords." The Irish ministers refused to take this oath. The republicans were irritated by this refusal, and by the loyalty of the ministers, who publicly preached against them. They therefore imprisoned some of the ministers, while others fled to the woods, and some to Scotland. At length, at a council of war held at Carrickfergus in March, 1651, a formal act of banishment from the kingdom was passed against them. "Those that

come to parliament or council where public matters concerning the honour of God are to be debated, as any statesmen of Venice would come to the senate. They have no dependence on God to be guided in these matters; they are much in public duties, but little in secret with God. Believe it, any man's private walking with God shall be read upon his public carriage, whether he be minister or ruler.

There is yet another thing we would have you consider, to endear this duty unto you, and bind upon your consciences an absolute necessity of being much in it, and it is this. Prayer and calling on his name is often put for all immediate worship of God, especially the more substantial and moral part of service. This people was much in ceremonials, and they made these their righteousness; nay, but there was little secret conversing with God, walking humbly with him, loving him, believing in him. Well, then, prayer is, as it were, a compend and sum of all duties; it contains in it, faith, love, repentance; all these should breathe out in prayer. In a word, if we say to you, be much in prayer, we have said all, and it is more than all the rest, because it is a more near and immediate approach to God, having more solid religion in it. If you be lively in this, you are thriving Christians; and if you wither here, all must decay, for prayer sappeth and watereth all other duties with the influence of heaven.

“That stirreth up himself to take hold on thee.” This expreseth more of their condition under the rod, and while God was threatening to depart and leave them. None took so much notice of it, as to awake out of his dream, to take a fast hold of God. It was but like the grip a man taketh in his slumbering, that he soon quitteth in his sleep; none awaketh himself, as a bird stirreth up itself with its wings to flight; none do so spread out their sails to meet the wind. This importeth a great security and negligence, a careless stupidity. To take hold, to grip strongly and violently, importeth both faith acted on God, and communion with God; so that the sense is, nobody careth whither thou go,—there is none

that stirreth up himself to take violent hold of thee. Men lying loose in their interest, and indifferent in the one thing necessary, do not strongly grip to it. Nobody keepeth thee by prayer and intercession; so that there is no diligence added to diligence, there is no stirring up of ourselves in security. [463]

First, When the Lord seemeth to withdraw, and when he is angry, it is our duty to take hold the more on him; and not only to act faith, and call on him by prayer, but to add to ordinary diligence,—it should be extraordinary.

I. Then, I say, when the Lord is withdrawing and seemeth angry, we ought not to withdraw from him by unbelief, but to draw near, and take hold on him. And the Lord giveth a reason of this himself, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, “because fury is not in me.” It is but a moment's anger, it is not hatred of your persons but sins, it is not fury that hath no discretion in it, no difference between a friend and an enemy; it is but at least a father's anger, that is not for destruction but correction. The Lord is not implacable. Come to him and win him,—“Let him take hold of me, and let him make peace with me, if he will make peace.” He is a God whose compassions fail not; and so he is never so angry, but there is room left for manifestation of mercy on those that come to him. God's anger is not an humour and passion as ours is, he can take the poor child in his arms, admit it into his bosom, when outward dispensations frown. Men's anger is like the sons of Belial, briars and thorns, that none may come near to, lest they be hurt; but God angry, is accessible, because his anger is still tempered and mixed with clemency and mercy; and that mixture of mercy is so great and so predominant in all his dispensations here, that they being rightly understood, might rather invite to come, than scare from it. There is more mercy to welcome, than anger to drive away. Look upon the very end and purpose of God's hiding himself, and withdrawing,—it is this; that we may come and seek him early, Hosea v. 15. When God is angry, mercy and compassion principleth it, for anger is sent out to

bring in wanderers. His anger is not humour, but resolute and deliberate, walketh upon good grounds, because David in his prosperity missed not God. When all things went according to his mind, then he let God of where he will; therefore, the Lord in mercy must hide his own heart with a frowning countenance, and cover himself with a cloud, that David may be troubled, and so take hold on God, Psalm xxx. 7, 8. Since, then, this is God's purpose, that you may come nearer to him, and since he goeth away that you may pursue; certainly he will never so run away as you may not find him out, nor will he run farther nor he strengtheneth thee to pursue him; thus, Psalm lxiii. 8, God was flying and David pursuing; nay, but the flyer giveth legs to the pursuer, he upholdeth him, as it were against himself: so did the angel strengthen Jacob to overcome himself. Now, shall it not be pleasant to God, that you lay hold on him as your own, even when he seemeth to be clothed with vengeance, seeing he changeth his outward countenance for this very end? He seemeth to go, that you may hold; because when you think he stayeth, you hold not; as the child, while the nurse is near, will look about it, and take hold of any thing; but when she withdraweth, the child cleaveth the faster to her.

But, II. We ought to stir up ourselves more now than any other time: times of God's withdrawing calleth for extraordinary and doubled approaches. So Hos. v. 15, "They will seek me early." And therefore the Lord's children in Scripture have made great advantage of such dispensations. The truth is, as long as we are well dealt with, security creepeth on, and religion is but in a decaying condition. Duties are done through our sleep; we are not as men awaking and knowing what we do, and whither we go. But when the Lord beginneth to trouble us, and hides his face, then it is time to awake out of sleep, before all be gone: and there ought to be, 1. More diligence in duties and approaching to God, because your case furnisheth more matter of supplication; and as matter of supplication groweth, prayer should grow. If necessity

grow, and the cry be not according to necessity, it is ominous. And therefore David useth to make his cry go up according to his trouble. In a prosperous condition, though every thing might call a tender-hearted loving Christian to some nearness to God; yet ordinarily, if necessity press not, prayer languisheth and groweth formal. Sense of need putteth an edge on supplication, whereas prosperity blunteth it. The heart missing nothing, cannot go above sublunary things; but let it not have its will here, and the need of heaven will be the greater. Now I say, if you sit so many calls, both from a command, and from your own necessities, you do so much the more sin. Affliction will make even a hypocrite seek him, and pour out a prayer and visit him, Psalm lxxviii. and Isa. xxvi. And if you do not take advantage of all these pressures, you must be so much the more guilty; and therefore God, as it were, wondereth at their obstinacy, "They return not to him that smiteth them!" All this is come upon us, yet have we not prayed. And, 2. It is sent for that end, that you may be more serious; and therefore you ought so much the more to awake, to lay hold on him. This is the way the Lord useth with his secure and wandering children, Psalm cxix. 67. For the Lord findeth us often gripping too strongly to a present world, and taking it in our arms, as if we were never to part with it. Men's souls cleave to outward accommodations; therefore the Lord useth to part us and our idol, that we may take hold of him the faster. It is union with himself that is our felicity, and it is that which God most endeavoureth. When he removeth beloved jewels, it is because they were a stumbling-block, and divorced the soul from God: when he seemeth to withdraw himself his going proclaimeth so much, oh! follow, or perish.

III. It is a very dangerous thing when he withdraweth and you follow not, when he is angry and you care not, do not fly in to make peace with him. Certainly his anger must wax hotter, and desertion will become a spiritual plague; rods must be tempered with much bitterness. What mixture of mercy can be in such a

dispensation, where the fruit of it is to harden? But if the Lord's hardest dealing wrought you to more nearness and communion with himself; then certainly you have a fair advantage against the present trouble, and you have your cup mixed. You shall at length bless God for such dispensations; they may be reckoned for good to you.

Next, there ought to be more exercise of faith, and laying hold of the grounds of consolation in God in such a time. 1. For as difficulties grow, faith should fortify itself against them so much the more. The greater the storm be, it should fly the more into the chambers. Faith in the time of a calm day getteth no trial; faith bulketh much³²⁰ because it hath not much to do. But except there be some fresh and new supplies, it cannot hold out in a temptation. But it is a singular proof of a noble and divine faith,—that it can lay hold on him and keep him when he would go,—that can challenge kindness on a miskenning Jesus,³²¹ —that can stand on the ground of the promises when there is not a foot-breadth of a dispensation to build on. While all things go with you ye have no difficulty to maintain your faith; nay, but when the Lord seemeth to look angry, then awake and gather strength, and take hold on his strength. Look what is in your condition or his dispensation, what is good or ominous, then take hold on the other hand on him, and look what is in him to answer it, and swallow it up. Ye ought to be well acquainted with the grounds of consolation that are in God, in the worst case, and then ye might lay hold on him though he seemed a consuming fire. It is then a time that calleth most for securing your interest in him, a time when there is no external advantage to beguile you, a time when the only happiness is to be one with God. Therefore the man who, in such calamities and judgments, is not awakened to put his eternal estate out of question, he is in a dangerous case. For, do

³²⁰ [What is perhaps meant is, it *swelleth* much.—*Ed.*]

³²¹ [That is, *that can lay claim to the favour of his Saviour even when his Saviour turns away his face from him.*—*Ed.*]

not most part drive over their days, and have no assurance of salvation, they dare not say either *pro* or *contra*. It may be, and it may not be. And this is the length that the most part come,—a negative peace; no positive confidence; no clear concluding, on sure grounds, an interest. Always ye are most called to this, when God afflicteth the land or you: if ye do not then make peace it is most dangerous. 2. The Lord loveth faith in a difficulty best,—it is the singlest and the cleanliest, it is that which most honoureth him, and glorifieth his truth and faithfulness, and sufficiency and mercy; for then it is most purely elevated above creatures, and pitcheth most on God; and therefore bringeth men to this, “No help for my soul, but thou art my portion.” And this commendeth God most when he is set alone. Prosperity bringeth him down among creatures, and secure faith maketh little distinction; but awakening faith grippeth strongly and singly, putteth God alone.

Secondly, Oftentimes, when God is departing, none stirreth up himself to lay hold on him. Although there may be praying and doing of many duties, yet there is nothing beyond ordinary. [465] The varieties and accessions of new grounds of supplications doth neither make greater frequency nor more fervency. This our experience may clear unto us both in duties and faith.

I. There is very little diligence in seeking of God in the way and means appointed, even when God seemeth to bid farewell to the land, and go away. Nobody cometh in as an intercessor. Men keep on their old way of praying, and never add to it, come what like. Who is it that riseth above his ordinary, as the tide of God's dispensation is? There ought to be such an impression made by the changes of God's countenance as might be read on the duties of his people. There should be such a distance between your ordinary and such times as between a sleeping man and a waking man, that whatever your attainment of access to God be, ye might stir up and go beyond it according as matters call. Will God count your public fasts a performance of this duty? Alas, we fast sleeping, and none stirreth up himself to these things!

Is there any difference betwixt your solemn humiliation and another Sabbath? And is there any difference between a Sabbath and a week-day, save the external duty? Is not this palpably our case? Is there any wakening among us? No, security is both the universal disease and complaint; and it is become an incurable disease since it became a complaint. Doth any of you pray more in private than he used? Or what edge is on your prayers? Alas! the Lord will get good leave to go from us; it feareth me that we would give Christ a testimonial to go over seas. Hold him, hold him! Nay, the multitude would be gladly quit of him,—they cannot abide his yoke, his work is a burden, his word is a torment, his discipline is bands and cords; and what heart can ye then have to keep Christ? What violence can ye offer to him to hold him still? All your entreaties may be fair compliments, but they would never rend his garment.

II. There is no up-stirring to faith among us, and laying hold on Jesus Christ, albeit all his dispensations warn us that it is now high time. There are not many who are about this point, effectually to stir up their faith or to secure their interest. Think ye that conjectures will carry you through difficulties? The multitude think they believe much, but any temptation proveth their mistake. The most part of Scotland would deny God and his Son Jesus Christ, if they were put to it. Always it is a time ye would not lie out from your stronghold,—faith only uniteth you to Christ, and if ye would be kept in any trial, stir up faith.

Thirdly, Prayer and faith, diligence and laying hold on God, must go together and help one another. Not calling on his name, and not laying hold on him go together, and have influence one upon another.

I. Faith hath influence on prayer. Laying hold on God in Christ will make right calling on his name, it learneth men how to call God, to call him Abba, Father. Faith useth to vent itself in prayer. I say, much consideration of God, and claiming into him, and to the grounds of confidence in him, must both make

prayer acceptable, and carry the stamp and impression of God's name, or Christ's name, on it, and also make much prayer: for when a soul hath pitched on God as its only felicity, and thus made choice of him, it findeth in him all sufficiency, all things for all things. There is no necessity, but it findeth a supply in his fulness for it; and therefore it applieth a man to the fountain, to draw out of the wells of salvation. There is nothing can be so sweet and refreshing as for such a soul to pour out itself every day in him, to talk with him face to face. Faith engageth the heart to come to God with all things; whereas many difficulties would have been, and the secure or unsettled heart would have gone as many different ways to help them. Faith layeth hold on God, knoweth but one, and bringeth all here; and therefore access to God is a fruit of it, access unto the grace wherein we stand by faith. And again, how can prayer be acceptable as long as faith doth not principle it? It is but like a beast's groaning under a burden. Laying hold on God himself makes a man's duties acceptable, because he speaks and asks; believing that he shall receive, he trusteth God and doth not tempt him. Where lively faith is not entertained there cannot be much affection which is the oil of the wheels. There may be in some bitterness of spirit much vehemency; but that is not a pure flame of divine love that burneth upward to him; and it is soon extinguished, and lasteth no longer nor present sense, and then the soul groweth harder, as iron that had been in the fire.

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II. When there is not much prayer and calling, faith cannot lie strong and violent; for prayer is even the exercise of faith, if you wear out of that, faith rusteth. There may be much quietness with little prayer, but there cannot be much, and strong and lively faith, for where it getteth not continual employment it fags. And indeed prayer is a special point of holding God fast, and keeping him, therefore join these, if ye would thrive in any one of them. Your unbelieving complaints are not prayers and calling on his name, because they are not mixed with faith. As the apostle said

of the word, so may it be said of prayer,—your prayers are not profitable, are not heard, because not mixed with faith. Ye use to doubt, that ye may be fervent, to question your interest, that ye may stir up your spirits to prayer. But alas! what a simple gross mistake is that? Poor soul, though thou get more liberty, shall it be counted access to God? Though you have more grief, and your bitterness doth indite more eloquence, shall God be moved with it? Know ye not that you should ask without wavering, and lift up pure hands without wrath and doubting? And yet both are there.

Fourthly, The duty we are called to in such a time when God is angry, is to lay hold on him. We would speak a word more of it. We ought to hold a departing Lord, by wrestling with him in supplication, not to let him depart till he bless, Hos. xii. 3, 4. The application of Jacob's victory over the angel is thus, “Turn ye to the Lord, and wait on him,” &c. How had Jacob power over the angel? By supplication and weeping, so that prayer is a victory over God, even the Lord God of hosts. We ought, as it were, to strive against outward dispensation, when it saith, He is gone, when our condition saith, He is gone, or going, we ought to wrestle with it. No submission to such a departing, I mean, no submission that sitteth down with it, and is not careful how it be. Now this time calleth you to such an exercise. The Lord seemeth to be angry with us. There is a strong cloud over the land, and like to pour down upon us—the Lord is drawing a sword again, and beginning now to lay on. Many threatenings would not put us to supplication. Now, what will the laying on of the rod do? If the former days be returning wherein ye saw much sorrow, is it not then high time for the Lord's remembrancers, and for the Lord's children to wrestle with God? As Esau was coming on Jacob, so hath God armed men, and such desperate men, as he hath made a rod to us before. If we be twice beaten with it, it is very just, for before we did not seek in to him who smote us.³²²

³²² [What is here said would seem to fix the date of this sermon. It appears to

You would know this, that the Lord is but seeking employment, and if ye would deal with him, ye may make advantage of the present and future calamities. And look to this laying hold on him, this is the chief thing ye should now heed. It is God himself that should be your principal object. Praying should be a laying hold on God, it should meet with himself. For the most part in the time of prosperity, we cannot meet with God singly, we have so much to do with creatures, we keep trysts so punctually with them, so that we cannot keep with God. We have so many things in our affections and thoughts, that God cannot get place, he cannot get us at leisure for the throng of our business, we lose God by catching at shadows. Well then, we are called in such a time of difficulty to come in to God himself, to draw by the vail of ordinances, that we may have communion with God himself. And this is right praying, when the soul getteth such immediate access to God, as it were, to handle him, and see him, and taste him, to exercise its senses on him. Ordinances have been of a long time a covering of his face, and he useth not now to unvail himself in the sanctuary, and let us see his glory God is departed from preaching and praying, and the solemn meeting, so that we meet not with God,—we lay hold on a shadow of an outward ordinance, but not on God himself. Therefore, Christians, make advantage of this time. You may be brought to want ordinances, then lay hold on himself who is the substance and marrow of them. You may be denuded of outward comforts and accommodation here, then lay hold on himself in much prayer. If affliction would blow away the cloud on his face, or would scatter our idols from us, and make us single alone with God, as Jacob was, it were well sent.

II. Your exercise should be to take hold on God by faith.

1. Ye would make peace with God, be much in direct acts of apprehending God himself in Jesus Christ. And this is according [467] as ye take up yourselves with your own misery and necessity. Do

have been preached before the battle of Dunbar.—*Ed.*]

but travel continually between your own misery and something answerable in God.

The first thing we would have you do, now when God frowns upon us, is to find out your own lost condition, and how great strangers you have been to him, even when ye have approached in many ordinances, and find a necessity of making peace with God and atonement. Now from this day hold on Christ, as the hope set before you. Look upon that in him which will answer all your necessities, and be suitable to them. It is not matters of outward lot that should go nearest your heart. Let the world go where it will, that which concerneth you most in such a time, is the securing of your soul, for if you lose it, what gain you? what keep you? Your houses, and lands, and lives may be in hazard, nay, but one thing is more worth than all these, and in more hazard. Begin at spiritual things, and ask how matters stand between God and thee.

2. Not only would ye be much in immediate application unto Jesus Christ, but ye would so take hold of him, as ye may be sure ye have him. Make peace, and know that ye have made it, and then shall ye be kept in perfect peace. You would never rest until you can on solid grounds answer the question. And this duty is called for from you at such a time, for “the just shall live by faith,” in a troublesome time, Hab. ii. 4. And as ye ought to keep and hold fast confidence and not cast it away in such a time, so should ye all seek after it. Do not only rest in this,—I know not but I may belong to Christ, I dare not say against it. O no, Christians, you should have positive clear grounds of assurance “I am his, and he is mine,” “I know that my Redeemer liveth,” “God is my portion.” And if ye conclude this solidly, I defy all the world to shake and trouble your peace this is perfect peace, “peace, peace,” double peace. How can ye choose but be shaken at every blast of temptation, when you are not thus solidly grounded, when you hold not at your anchor?

And, 3. Having thus laid hold on Christ as your own, lay hold

on all in him as yours, and for your use. Whatever difficulty the present time or your own condition afford, search but as much in God as may counterbalance it. Answer all objections, from his mercy, goodness, power, wisdom, unchangeableness, and this shall be more nor the trouble. God himself laid hold upon, and made ours, is more nor removing a temporal calamity. It is an eternal weight, to weigh down all crosses and disappointments. For what can present things be? Is there not in the favour of his countenance that which may drown them in oblivion? Are ye like to sink here? Is not God a sure anchor to hold by? And if ye do not this, your trouble is nothing in respect of the danger of your soul. Secure and loose lying out of God, not putting this matter to a full point, is worse nor all your outward fading. Therefore, we exhort you in the Lord's name, to fly into this name of the Lord, as a strong tower to run to and be safe. When the Lord seemeth now to be angry with us, run not away from him, though he should yet clothe himself with vengeance as a garment.

But, *first*, O ye poor people, who have never asked this question, whether have I any interest in Jesus? ask it now, and resolve it in time. If trouble come on, if scattering and desolation come on, and our land fade as a leaf, certainly the Lord's anger will drive you away, What will ye do in the time of his indignation? All of you, put this to the trial,—how matters stand between God and you.

And, *secondly*, If ye find all wrong, do not sink in discouragement, all may be amended, while it is seen wrong in time. Nay, God taketh away outward accommodation, to make you more serious in this. And it is the very voice of rods,—every one fly into your hold, every one make peace with me. You may take hold, and do it feckfully.³²³

Thirdly, You who have fled to Jesus, take more hold of him, you are called also to renew your faith, and begin again. Make

³²³ [That is, strongly.—*Ed.*]

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peace with God, let your confidence be kept fast, and thus shall ye be immoveable, because he changeth not. God will not go from you if ye believe—hold him by faith. Christ could not do great things in Galilee because of their unbelief, and so he departed from them. As unbelief maketh an evil heart to depart from the God of all life and consolation, so doth it make God depart from us. But faith casteth a knot upon him (to speak with reverence), it fasteneth him by his own word and promise, and he cannot go by it. It is a violent hand laid on God. “I will not let thee go till thou bless me.”

Fourthly, Faith and prayer, or holding of God, by believing in him, and much employing him needeth much stirring up unto, and awaking. “That stirreth up himself to take hold on thee.” Security is the moth of both these, and eateth out the life of faith and supplication; it maketh prayer so coldrife that it cannot prevail, and faith so weak that it cannot use violence.

I. Security apprehendeth no evil, no need. A secure condition is a dream that one is eating and yet his soul is empty. Look how the people of Laish were quiet and secure, apprehending no evil; destruction cometh then on as an armed man. Always it is much necessity that administers fuel to a man's faith and supplication. David says, (Psal. xxx. 7,) “I said in my prosperity, I shall not be moved.” Nay, but many say in adversity, and cry Peace, peace, where no peace is. Security pleadeth innocency, and then believeth immunity. “I am innocent, therefore shall his anger turn away,” Jer. ii. 31. Security applieth not sin, and so refuseth the curse of sin and wages of it. And thus is a man in his own eyes a lord, and then he will come no more to God, Jer. ii. 31. It is almost impossible to awake men, by general judgments, to apprehend personal danger, and men never stir out of their nest till it be on fire. We can behold, or hear of our neighbours, spoiling and violence done to them, but till the voice of a cry be heard in our own streets and fields, nobody will take the judgment to themselves. It is well said, that which is spoken

to all, is spoken to none, so what is done to all in general, is done to none. The voice of a general rod speaketh not particularly, and maketh not men apprehensive of sad things, and thus men are not pressed unto prayer—are not put out of themselves, it is only necessity that saps the roots of it, and makes it green.

II. Security is lazy and not active, putteth not forth its hand to work, and so dieth a beggar, for only the hand of the diligent maketh rich. Laying hold on God is a duty that requireth much spirit in it; men do not grip things well in their slumbering. There is no duty that needeth so spiritual and lively principles. If a man do not put on such a piece of resolution and edge upon him, he cannot come to the wrestling of prayer and violence of faith. Although the exercise and acting of grace dependeth more upon the Spirit of God's present influence, than upon the soul of man, yet this is the way the Lord communicateth his influence, by stirring up and exciting the creature to its duty, as if it could do it alone. Grace is one thing, and the stirring up of it is another thing. For when we lie by and sleep over our time, and go not about the matter so seriously as it were life and death, it is but a weak hold we can take of God. According to the measure of a man's apprehending necessity, and according to the measure of his seriousness in these things, so will the hand of faith grip, and lay hold with more or less violence. As a man drowning will be put from sleeping, and when one is in extreme hazard all his strength will unite together in one to do that which at any ordinary time it could not do, so ought it to be here. A Christian assaulted with many temptations should unite his strength, and try the yondmost.³²⁴ O but your whole spirits would run together, to the saving of yourselves, if ye were very apprehensive of necessity! The exercise of faith is a dead grip, that cannot part with what it grippeth. Therefore, 1. We must say to you, it is not so easy a thing as you believe, to lay hold on God,—there must be stirring

³²⁴ [That is, his utmost.—*Ed.*]

up to it. And when the Lord speaketh of our stirring ourselves, certainly he meaneth this likewise, that he must stir us, ere we stir ourselves. 2. Above all, be afraid of a secure condition: it is the enemy of communion with God and spiritual life. Therefore, look about you, and apprehend more your necessity, and then give no rest and quietness to yourself, till you have employed and engaged him, be as men flying to lay hold on the refuge set before you. 3. It must be a time of little access to God, and little faith, when we are all secure, and nobody goeth about religion as their work and business. We allow ourselves in it, therefore, we do exhort you, *first*, To purpose this as your end to aim at, and purpose by God's grace to take more hold of God. There is little minding of duty, and that maketh little doing of it. Once engage your hearts to a love and desire of more of this, come to a point of resolution, I must know him more, and trust more in him, be more acquaint with him. And, *secondly*, Put yourselves in the way of duty. It is God that only can stir you up, or apply your hearts to the using of violence to God, but ye would be found in the outward means much, and in these ways God will meet with you, if you wait on him in them.

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“For thou hast hid thy face from us.” Here is the greatest plague, a spiritual plague. The last verse was but the beginning of sorrows, “We all do fade,” &c. But lo, here the accomplishment of misery, God hiding his face, and consuming them in the hand of their sins.

First, The Lord's hiding of his face, and giving up a people to melt away in their sins, punishing with judicial blindness and security, is the worst judgment, it filleth the cup full. This complaint goeth on still worse, and certainly it is worse nor their fading as a leaf and exile out of their land. It is not without reason, that great troubles and afflictions are so expressed, “Thou didst hide thy face,” as David said, “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,” importing as much, as it is not trouble that doth trouble, but God's hiding of his face that maketh trouble.

It is in so far trouble, as it is a sign of his displeasure, and as the frowns of his countenance are upon it, therefore, the saints, aggravating their affliction, say, "Thou hidest thy face." You know the face is the place wherein either kindness or unkindness appeareth. The Lord's countenance, on face, is a refreshful sweet manifestation of himself to a soul, it is the Lord using familiarity with a spirit, and this made David more glad than corn and wine. Now, the hiding of the face, the withdrawing of his countenance, is, when the Lord in his dispensation and dealing doth withhold the manifestation of himself, either in life or consolation, when he covereth himself with clouds round about, that neither can a soul see into the backside of it—into his own warm heart, nor can the sun beams shine through to quicken and refresh the soul. The Lord draweth over his face a veil of a crossing dispensation, or such like.

There is a desertion of the soul in the point of life and spiritual action, and there is a desertion in regard of consolation. The varieties of the Lord's desertions run upon these two. As a Christian's life is action or consolation, and the Lord's influence is either quickening or comforting, so his withdrawing is either a prejudice to the one or the other. Sometimes he goeth "mourning all the day," nay, but he is "sick of love," sometimes he is a bottle dried in the smoke, and his moisture dried up. The Christian's consolation may be subtracted, and his life abide, but he cannot have spiritual consolation, if he be not lively. This life is more substantial,—comfort is more refreshful,—life is more solid,—comfort sweet, that is true growing solid meat, this but sauce to eat it with.

The hiding here meant is certainly a spiritual punishment. The Lord denying unto this people grace to understand the voice of the rod,—he appearing as a party against them,—leaving them to their own carnal and lazy temper, and thus they lay still under God's displeasure. Now, there is nothing like this.

I. Because it is a spiritual punishment, and estates are not to

be valued and laid in the balance with the soul. Albeit men are become so brutish as to abase their souls, and prostitute them to any thing, yet all a man hath is not considerable to it.

II. It is a more excellent thing that is removed by it,—“In his favour is life,”—all felicity and happiness is in God's countenance. If a man have not this, what hath he else? Losses are according as the thing is. Nay, but here is more,—“My Lord is taken from me, my God hath forgotten me.” And indeed, if man's true happiness be in communion with God, certainly, any interruption coming in must be sad, and make a man more miserable than the world knoweth. There is a greater emphasis in that word, “Thou hast hid thy face,” than if he had said, all the world hideth their face and maketh a scorn of us.

Therefore, *first*, Know what is the worst thing of the times. Many of you think sword and pestilence, and the burdens of the time, the worst things, and if you were now to complain, the saddest complaint would be,—affliction is laid on our loins. But know this, if your cities were desolate, if your land were made a wilderness, and we captives in another land, there is yet a worse thing than all these, and think you not this strange? Nay, I say, there is something worse already in us, that we know not of, and it is this—“Make the hearts of this people hard.” A spirit of slumber and deadness from the Lord upon the land, there are multitudes he will never show his face unto, it is still veiled from them, and they know him not. Ye that think all were well if ye had peace and prosperity, and know no hiding of God's countenance—no anger but when he striketh; certainly you know not what his countenance is by all these things men neither know love nor hatred. 2. Whatever calamity come upon you outwardly, deprecate most spiritual plagues and God's deserting. If you have God's countenance, it may make you glad in much sadness. You would be most careful lest any partition-wall came in lest his countenance change on you, if you grieve his Spirit and break his heart. Seek to have his face to shine, and this shall be a sun with

healing under his wings. O but Christ's countenance is comely, when it is seen without clouds! but often it is overclouded with much provocation.

Secondly, The Lord's hiding of his face hath influence on the temper of spirits and disposition in duties. The truth is in general, "In him we live, and move, and have our being," and more especially, in many things that are spiritual, we are of our selves able to do nothing. The creature's holiness, and especially our life, is but as the rays that the Sun of righteousness sendeth forth round about him, and if any thing come between it evanisheth. As the marygold that openeth its leaves when the sun riseth, and closeth when it goeth down again, so exactly doth our spiritual constitution follow the motions of his countenance, and depend wholly on them. "Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled," Psal. xxx 7. The Lord needeth no more but discountenance us, and we are gone.

Always, I. Be more dependent creatures. We use to act as from habits within, without any subordination to the Lord's grace without us, but we find that our sufficiency is not of ourself. How often doth your spiritual condition change on you in an hour? You cannot command one thought of God, or act from any habit of grace, even then when you can bring forth other gifts in exercise. Ye find that grace findeth more difficulties, more interruptions,—therefore learn to attend the changes and motions of his countenance.

II. When you find your heart dead, and you concluded under an impossibility of taking hold of God in a lively manner, then, I pray you, look unto the Lord's suspending of his influence, and let your whole endeavours be at the throne of grace to help it. It will not be your own provoking of yourself to your duty, but you must put yourself upon God, that he may cause his face to shine.

III. Though the Lord's hiding his face be often a cause of our deadness, and his desertion maketh all to wither, yet we have often a culpable hand in it, and he hides his face being provoked

so to do. One thing we may mention, grieving of the Holy Ghost whereby we are sealed, quenching the motions of the Spirit, maketh the Spirit cover his face with a vail and hide it. There is here ordinarily a reciprocal or mutual influence. Our grieving him makes him withdraw his countenance, and his withdrawing his countenance maketh us to wither and grow barren.

IV. The most sure and infallible token of the Lord's hiding his face, is security, and a spirit of deadness and laziness, when folk go about duties dreaming, and do all as it were through their sleep. Therefore we may conclude sad things on this land, that the Lord hideth his face from us. And therefore arise, and do not settle and quiet yourself in such a condition. The Lord is angry, needeth any more be said? No more needeth to kind children, but the rod must follow this to make anger sensible.