

SERMON VII.

A VINDICATION OF ORDINANCES.

PREACHED AT STEPNEY, JULY 15, 1649.

PREFACE.

GOOD READER.—The Jews say, that there is not the least letter of the word, upon which huge mountains do not hang. Luther saith, That one tittle of the word is greater than heaven and earth. But our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ saith, “That heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” Shall we then stand still, behold and see the ordinances of Christ wrested from us, and not bear witness against it? Upon this account, though the entreaties of divers friends have been very pressing, I am not unwilling that this Sermon concerning ordinances be brought into public view.

You may read in the Scripture, that in the times next before Christ and his glorious coming, professors shall not keep their garments which they were used to wear with honour. Therefore saith our Saviour, “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame,” Rev. xvi. 15. When shall this be? In the time of the pouring out of the sixth vial, which is immediately before the coming of Christ: for he saith, then, “Behold I come as a thief, blessed is he that watcheth,” &c. In Matt. xxiv. it is said, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall appear the sign of the Son of Man,” ver. 29, 30. What days are those? Even the days when men shall say of Christ, “Behold he is in the desert, behold he is in the secret chamber,” ver. 26. Gone from the public ordinances, only to be enjoyed in private. Who shall those be that shall say thus? Such as would fain be reputed prophets, such as have had a hand in the great works of God in those times, and such as have been great and high professors; for saith our Saviour, “There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch as, if it be possible, they shall deceive the very elect,” ver. 24. But when shall these things be? Immediately before Christ’s coming, ver. 29, for saith he, “Verily this generation,” that is, the generation on which he spake of, not which he spake to, “shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” So that immediately before the glorious coming of Christ, men shall depart from, and cast away the precious ordinances of Jesus Christ: which is as well grief as comfort to us: grief, that there should be such declinings; comfort, that our Lord is at hand. This declining is an ill sin, but a good sign: as an ill sin, it is grief; as a good sign of Christ’s coming, so it is comfort. And if our Lord and Saviour be at hand, even at the door, who would not watch and keep his garments? Shall we not watch with him one hour? The scope and drift of this Sermon is, to call upon your’s and mine own soul to watch. Wherein is proved, both in the general, that ordinances, and in particular, that such and such ordinances ought to be still continued, and that new testament believers are still to live under the same; not that they should not live beyond them, in the use of them; for in the way of nature we are to use our daily bread, though we

do live beyond it. Living under an ordinance as Christ's appointment, and living beyond it in regard of divine enjoyment, are not repugnant : but that believers should so live beyond the ordinances, as that they are not bound to the use thereof, is the thing which this Sermon lies against.

I have not spoken of the Lord's day herein. There are divers treatises abroad which do prove *that* an ordinance of Christ to be still continued ; and the clearing and proving thereof, requires more time than an hour or two in preaching would admit. Neither have I spoken much unto that objection, namely, That all the ordinances of Christ do hang upon the ministry, and there can be no ministry now, because those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost are wanting : for the question before me was not, Whether the ordinances may or can possibly continue ? but, Whether they ought to continue ? Yet as to that objection, I add, if you look into 1 Tim. i. 3, where the apostle Paul doth set down the qualifications of one who is fit to be a minister of the gospel ; ye shall not find one word declaring that those extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, are any part of the essential qualification of an elder or bishop. The apostle shews how a man should be qualified that is made a deacon, ver. 8—12 ; how a widow should be qualified who is to be taken into that number, chap. v. 9, 10 ; and how a bishop or elder should be qualified, chap. iii. : but though he set down many particulars of the qualifications of a man fit for that office, yet not one word of these extraordinary gifts, plainly speaking this truth, that those gifts are not of the essence of a minister of the gospel ; yea, where do we find that those ordinary elders chosen in the apostles' time, Acts xiii. ; Titus i., were endued with such gifts ? Apostles and evangelists, who were extraordinary officers, and not to continue, had those gifts ; we read they had them, but where do we read that the ordinary elders, who were to continue, had these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost constantly ? We find that baptism was administered to those persons who had none of these gifts. Acts viii. 15, 16, 17 ; that the Lord's Supper was administered to Christ's disciples, before the Holy Ghost in those gifts fell upon them, Matt. xxvi. ; and that the church's censure requires no such gifts, Matt. xviii. Now therefore if the ordinances may be received without them, and they are not of the essence of the ministry ; why should any man think that the ordinances of Jesus Christ do so hang upon these, that if these be wanting, the ordinances cannot be used or administered ?

And as for the Lord's day, which is called the Lord's day, as the Lord's Supper is, because of the Lord's appointment and institution ; who doth not see how the power of godliness hath grown and thriven under the droppings thereof ? What nation or kingdom is there under all the heavens, where the power of godliness hath flourished more than in England ? Why ? Not excluding other reasons of God's grace and free love to us, but because the Lord's day hath lived more institution-wise in England, than in any other part of the world. And what gracious man is there in all this nation, who may not rise up and say to this day, Blessed art thou amongst the days of the week : my soul doth, yea, and all generations shall call thee blessed.

The other Sermon (the eighth in this volume) is about Grace and Gifts ; the excellency of grace and love above gifts ; whereunto we shall do well that we take heed, for if our gifts do wax wanton, they will despise ordinances, and kick against grace itself, which they have the more cause to nourish, because they live plentifully under the roof of grace. Happy is the man whose gifts do cherish his graces, and whose graces do produce gifts : and as diversities of gifts should not make us disagree or envy one another, but rather bind us in love to one another ; so extraordinary enjoyments should not draw us from ordinary means,

but quicken up our hearts thereunto. As if God do marvellously bless us without prayer, and we be driven the more unto prayer by it, then it is of God and his love; but if it cause us to leave or neglect prayer, then it is perilous. Now these are perilous times, for they are the last times; wherefore, good reader, let us rather desire to have plain grace than fine gifts, for this is the more excellent way.

I have not had so much time to peruse these two Sermons as I would, for the notes stayed a very little while in my hands; but I find they are agreeable to what I delivered in preaching, whereunto I have made some little addition. The title, &c. I left to my friends who desired the printing; the mending of some press-faults I must leave to the pen of the reader. Now the good Lord himself, who hath often refreshed our souls with the sense of his love in Christ Jesus, keep all our feet in his ways, and grant that we may hold fast what we have, lest another take our crown.

Your's in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WILLIAM BRIDGE.

“Unto Him shall ye hearken.”—DEUT. xviii. 15.

THESE words are spoken concerning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is our great prophet; whose work and office it is, to reveal and make known the mind and will of God the Father unto us. Our duty therefore is, to hearken unto him. And this is that inference which the Lord himself makes here, *“Unto him shall ye hearken.”* Only ye may observe, that when the apostle Peter in Acts iii. doth cite this scripture, he gives you a double exposition: for whereas it is said in verse 19 of this chapter, *“It shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him;”* Peter in Acts iii. 23 renders it thus, *“And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear the prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”* And whereas it is said here in the text, *“Unto him shall ye hearken;”* Peter in Acts iii. 23, renders it thus, *“Him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you.”* So that this is the great inference and use that the Lord himself doth make of this prophetic office of Christ, *“Unto him shall ye hearken.”*

It will be therefore worth our time to consider, what it is for to hearken to him, this great Prophet. Know therefore, that when he saith, *“Unto him shall ye hearken;”* the meaning is, unto him alone, and to none else; as, *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,”* our Saviour translates, *“And him only shalt thou serve.”* So here, *“Unto him shall ye*

hearken;" that is, to him only, to him alone, and to none else.

Now a man is said to hearken unto Christ, this great Prophet, either when he doth acknowledge, receive, and submit unto his appointments; or else when he doth obey his voice with the obedience of faith. I say, first, a man is said to hearken unto Christ, this great Prophet, when he doth receive, acknowledge, and submit unto his appointments. And therefore if you compare Matt. x. with Luke x, ye shall find that hearing and receiving is the same thing. In Matt. x. 40, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." In Luke x. 16, "He that heareth you, heareth me." What is hearing in one, is receiving in the other: so that I say, first, a man is said to hear Christ, this great Prophet, when he doth receive, acknowledge, and submit unto his appointments: this is our duty. When it is said, "Unto him shall ye hearken," this is here commanded.

For the opening therefore, and pressing of this truth, I shall labour,

First, To shew you, what those appointments of Christ, this great Prophet of our's, are, which we are to receive, acknowledge, and submit unto, and thereby to hearken unto him.

Secondly, That these appointments and institutions of his, do still continue and bind us, and that we are still to hearken to him therein: still he lives and speaks in those appointments.

Thirdly, I shall answer to some objections, questions, and cases of conscience concerning ordinances, and the institutions of Christ.

Fourthly, Shew you what a dangerous thing it is for a man to turn his back upon, and ears from, the voice of this great Prophet, speaking in his appointments and institutions.

Fifthly, How and in what manner this hearing work should be rightly performed?

First, If you ask me what these appointments are which we are to receive, acknowledge and submit unto, and so to hearken unto this great Prophet in?

I answer, That if you look into the whole new testament, you shall find the precepts of Christ are either moral, as the ten commandments, or positive. As for the moral precepts of

the ten commandments, though our Lord and Saviour Christ hath added no new thing unto them more than what was before, yet, as I may so speak, he hath put them into another dress than what was formerly put upon them; for saith he in the vth of Matthew, "It hath been said by them of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her," &c. In this vth of Matthew there are six cases that our Lord and Saviour Christ speaks unto; in three of them he makes mention of the very words of the moral law; as at verse 21, "Ye have heard it was said of old, Thou shalt not kill." At the 27th verse, "Ye have heard that it was said of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery." So again, verse 33. But, now, when he speaks of the other laws that were not of the ten commandments, ye may observe that he alters his manner of speaking: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye." He doth not say, Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time. When, I say, he speaks of any of the ten commandments, that clause is added; when he speaks of the other three cases, that clause is not added.

Again, You may observe this, that those words, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time;" should be rather translated, as it is in some of your books, "Ye have heard that it was said *by* them of old time;" which appears by the antithesis, or opposition, "But I say."

Again, You may observe, that when he saith, at the 17th verse, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil;" those words, according to the original, may be read thus; "I am not come to destroy but to fill up;" for though Christ added nothing unto the ten commandments, or moral law, yet, notwithstanding, he did more fully reveal and make known what was and is therein commanded; for our Lord and Saviour Christ did not barely speak against the false glosses and interpretations of the Jews and Jewish rabbins, for he instanceth in the words of Moses, and of the law itself. "It hath been said by them, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say, Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust," &c. What, then, were not unclean thoughts forbidden by the law, and in Moses's time? Yes: but when Christ came, he doth more fully and clearly reveal what was before commanded and forbidden

in the law; and so though he hath made no new addition to the law, yet in this respect he hath, as it were, made some advance upon the very moral law, the ten commandments; and herein we are to hearken to him, this great Prophet, by acknowledging, receiving and submitting unto these commands thus opened and interpreted by him.

But now if you look upon the positive precepts or commandments of Christ, you shall find that Jesus Christ hath given forth many that were not given forth in the times of Moses, or of the old testament: for in the times of the old testament circumcision was, now baptism is; then the pass-over, now the Lord's supper; then their ministers were priests and Levites, now pastors and teachers; then the whole nation of the Jews a church, now as men do believe they are added to the church; then if any man did sin presumptuously he was to be cut off by the sword from among the people, now to be cut off by the censures of the church. So that, I say, if you look upon the positive precepts, there are many that are now given forth by Christ which were not given forth before in the times of Moses and of the old testament; and these, all these we are to receive, to acknowledge, and to submit unto, and herein to hearken to this great Prophet.

But it will be granted on all hands, that there are many appointments, institutions and ordinances which were given forth by this great Prophet in the times of the new testament; but the question is, whether these are to continue still or no? We grant, indeed, that there were such appointments in Christ's own time, and in the apostle's time; for the people of those times, and of that generation: but the question is, whether these still are to continue, and whether still we are to submit, to receive, and to acknowledge these appointments; and so whether still we are to hearken unto Christ herein?

For answer hereunto, observe, I pray, the laying of Christ's appointments, institutions and ordinances. If they be laid and pressed upon universal and perpetual grounds, then they are still to continue. Now you shall find that these appointments, institutions and ordinance of Christ—baptism, the Lord's supper, particular churches, the ministry, church censures, singing of psalms, and the like—are laid upon such

universal and perpetual grounds, as to continue until Christ's coming again.

I shall touch a little upon these particulars, and prove the thing first by way of enumeration.

As for that of particular churches. You find in the book of Revelation, that Christ speaks of things to come after John's time, who lived the longest of all the apostles, at chap. i. 1, thus: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." And chap. iv. 1, at the latter end of the verse, saith the Lord Christ to John, "I will shew thee things which must be hereafter." Now in the 1st chapter he gives him a vision of the Son of Man walking between the seven golden candlesticks; and he tells us, at the last verse, that those seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches; shewing that thus Christ would appear unto his people in the way of churches after John's time, in the times that were to come. And so in the close of the book of the Revelation, after he had spoken of all things that should come to pass, saith he, at the 16th verse, "I have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." Not in the church in general, but in the churches. And if ye look into the first epistle of Timothy, ye shall find, that the apostle Paul having given directions and several precepts concerning bishops, elders, deacons, widows, and about the ordering of the house of God, which, saith he, is the church of God; he concludes all with a solemn charge, chap. vi. 13, "I give thee charge, in the sight of God, and before Jesus Christ, that thou keep the commandment," not this, but the commandment, according to the old translation, and the original greek, "without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Which appearing doth synchronize with the judging of the quick and dead. 2 Tim. iv. 1. But Timothy himself doth not live so long, and therefore this charge lies upon every minister, and others respectively, for so indeed the charge is directed to the man of God, chap. vi. 11, who by the same apostle is interpreted to be every minister. 2 Tim. iii. 17. So that the ordering of God's house by bishops, or elders, deacons and widows is still to continue, and therefore particular churches and congregations for public worship are still to continue.

As for the ministry, you know what the apostle saith in Eph. iv. 11., speaking of Christ, "He gave some, apostles: some, prophets: some, evangelists: and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Well, but how long are these to continue? read verse 13., "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And I pray are we yet come unto this condition? It may be some particular man will dare to say it, that he himself is come unto this condition, this stature of the fulness of Christ; but mark what the apostle saith, till we all come in the unity of faith. What a world of differences in faith are there now amongst us? but saith the apostle, these offices of the ministry are to continue till we *all* come; not till one man comes, or two men come, but till we *all* come unto the unity of the faith; that is not yet come to pass, and therefore the ministry is still to continue; neither can it be said, that this unity of faith is to be understood of the doctrine of faith; for that were to say, that the ministry were to continue till the doctrines and rules for the ministry were given out, and then to cease: and if ye look into Psalm lxviii., from whence these words are cited; ye shall find at verse 18, that Christ hath given these gifts, "That the Lord God might dwell amongst men." As if there were no abode or dwelling for God amongst men, without these gifts; and have we not need still that God should dwell amongst us? yea, and doth not God still dwell amongst us?

As for baptism; you know what our Lord and Saviour Christ said to his disciples, Matt. xxviii. 19. "Go teach all nations, baptizing them." I do not insist upon those words, "Lo, I am with you until the end of the world," though that will carry it; but I pray you mark those words, "Go teach all nations, baptizing them." So that all nations are to be taught and baptized; baptism therefore, is not to end till all nations be taught and baptized; and is that done? read what is said in Matt. xxiv. 14. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." But the end is not yet come. When the gospel is preached unto all na-

tions, then shall the end come ; but the end is not yet come, therefore the gospel still is to be preached unto the nations, and they to be baptized, and so this ordinance of baptism is to continue still.

As for that of the Lord's supper ; ye know what the apostle saith, " As oft as ye eat, &c., ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come." That cannot be understood of the coming of the Spirit ; for so he was come in the apostle's time. But if ye look into 1 Cor. xi., ye shall see what a reason the apostle gives, why he gave out the Lord's supper unto the Corinthians, and they were to receive it ; even such a reason as reacheth unto us as well as to the Corinthians, saith he, verse 23., " For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread," &c. He makes this the reason why he gave forth the Lord's supper unto the Corinthians, and why they were to receive it, even because that the Lord Christ did give it to his disciples in the night when he was betrayed, and because he had thus received of the Lord, &c. Now I appeal unto any man, Is not this reason as good a reason upon us, as upon the Corinthians ? If indeed the apostle had made this the reason, I have received a message from Christ, that you Corinthians should receive the Lord's supper, then this reason had not bound us as well as them, but the reason that he gives of this dispensation, reacheth to us as well as them, and therefore to continue amongst us as it was used amongst them.

As for the censures of the church, in case that any do offend and continue scandalously and obstinately in their sin ; ye know what our Saviour saith in Matt. xviii., " Tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican." Now if you look upon the verses before and after this text, ye shall find that they do all bind us. Verse 10., " Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones : " that still continues, So after this text. " Peter came unto Christ and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him ? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven times," verse 21., yea, look upon the whole chapter, and the other verses thereof, and ye find that they do still bind us and continue upon us,

why therefore not this also, which you have at verse 17. And if we mind 1 Cor. v., we may see that the apostle Paul doth argue this censure of the church, from universal, perpetual, and moral grounds; cast out therefore the old leaven, why? because "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

As for singing of psalms; you know what is said concerning our Saviour Christ and his disciples when they had received the supper Matt. xvi. 30., "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out." It was a usual practice among the Jews after the passover to sing a hymn: our Saviour Christ did receive the passover then, but he did not sing a psalm or a hymn between the passover and the Lord's supper, but he takes the hymn and removes it from following the passover, and hangs it upon the Lord's supper, to shew that it should be a new testament ordinance.

And they *all* sang: for those that went out did sing, and when they had sung a hymn they all went out.

And they *all* sang together: for if one of them only did sing, then either our Lord and Saviour Christ alone did sing, or some one of his disciples did sing alone: our Lord and Saviour Christ did not sing alone, for the evangelist would have told us so: John tells us, That our Saviour prayed then, and he sets down his prayer in John xvii., and saith he, he prayed, "and he said, Father, glorify thy Son," &c. So if Christ had sung alone, John or some other evangelist would have said that he sung, and would have given us his psalm which he sung, as well as his prayer which he prayed: neither can it be said, that they all sung because they did all consent unto what he did: for they consented unto his preaching, to the miracles which he wrought, and to his prayer which he made; yet it is not said, they wrought this or that miracle when he wrought it; or that they preached, when he preached; or that they prayed, when he prayed alone: yea, where do we find in all the New Testament, that they are said to do any thing that Christ did alone: surely therefore he did not sing here alone, for it is said, "And when they had sung," &c. Nor did one of his disciples sing alone; for to that kind of singing two gifts are required, the gift of prophesy, whereby a man is able to speak in the congregation to the benefit of the whole body; and the melodious gift of singing. Now those gifts were not yet given, for Christ was not yet dead and ascended and therefore one

of the disciples did not sing alone, and if Christ did not sing alone, nor one of his disciples alone, then they all sang together.

Aye, but if they did all sing together, how could it be to edification? For we read in Col. iii., that the apostle says thus, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." How can we teach and admonish one another if we sing altogether? If a disciple do sing alone, he may teach and admonish the rest.

For answer to that, I shall but acquaint you with the misreading of the words; look upon the words in verse 16., and the very right reading will take off this and other scruples. The words are to be read thus, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another: (there is a stop) In psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The words do not run thus, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, stopping there, but in the Greek and original, the words run thus, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another: (there is the stop) In psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." And thus there is a better sense of the words too, and a greater dependence of things together. So that I say, our Lord and Saviour Christ and his disciples did all sing together, and if they all sung together at the supper, why should not his practice be a rule to us as well as his receiving the supper a rule to us; as it is pressed by the apostle in 1 Cor. xi., if Christ could sing thus with his disciples without stinting the Spirit, in whom the Spirit was without measure, then also we may sing together, and yet not stint the Spirit; but Christ and his disciples did all sing together, and that for our example. Thus whether you look upon one or another of these ordinances, ye find that they are still to continue, and that we are to receive, acknowledge and submit unto these appointments, and to hear Christ herein.

But besides these particulars, take three or four general reasons for the continuance of them.

If that the word of the New Testament, as commanding to believe, and promising to give the Spirit; I say,

if this word do continue, then the ordinances of Christ are still to continue. If the appointments, institutions, and ordinances of Christ be not still to continue, then the word of the New Testament, as the commandments of believing, and the promise of giving the Spirit, do not continue neither. There is the same reason: for, when we say that the Lord Jesus Christ hath appointed baptism, the Lord's supper, and other ordinances, what do men say? True, these were appointed indeed for those times, when Christ and the apostles lived. But now I pray, may not the same be said concerning the commandment of believing, and concerning the promise of giving the Spirit? You say that you are bound to believe; how prove you that? Say you, because Christ hath commanded me. But I answer you with your own answer, He commanded the men of those times only. You say, that you shall have the Spirit; how prove you that? Christ hath promised it. But how prove you, that the promise of the Spirit reacheth beyond those times? Look what you answer for the ordinances, that may be answered to the commandment of faith, and the promise of giving the Spirit, and so for the whole New Testament. And so both Old and New Testament will fall to the ground, and then we return to heathenism.

If the doctrine of the ordinances be of the foundation of our religion, then certainly the ordinances are still to continue, for without a foundation there is no building. Now if you look into Heb. vi., you shall find, that the doctrine of ordinances is of the foundation of religion, ver. 1, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." What this baptism is, I will not dispute; what this laying on of hands is, I will not now reason; but certainly they must be ordinances. Now look, saith the apostle, as the doctrine of the resurrection, and eternal judgment, and repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, are fundamental doctrines; so the doctrine of baptisms, and laying on of hands, are of the foundation. Now I say, if these are of the foundation, then the ordinances must still continue. Neither can it be said,

that these doctrines of baptisms, and of the laying on of hands, are to be laid aside, because the apostle saith, "Leaving these principles, let us go on to perfection;" for thereby he meaneth only in regard of his pressing, urging, and inculcating thereof upon them; as appears by the words of the former chapter in the last verses: otherwise he should wish them to lay aside the doctrine of the resurrection, eternal judgment, and faith towards God, which he presseth unto in the after part of this very epistle.

If this be a great difference between the ministration of Moses in the time of the Old Testament, and the ministration of Christ, and of the gospel; that the ministration of Moses and the Old Testament was not to continue, and the ministration of the gospel is to continue: then surely the ordinances of Christ are still to abide. Now look into 2 Cor. iii., and there plainly you shall see this difference: "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, (at ver. 7,) how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" Ver. 11, "For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." He makes this difference between the ministration of the gospel and that of Moses, that one is to be done away, and the other remains. Now if the ordinances were not to continue and remain, what difference would there be, as concerning this matter, between the ministration of Moses and the ministration of the gospel? But the apostle here plainly speaks that this is the difference, the ministration of the one to be done away, the ministration of the other doth still continue; therefore the ordinances and the appointments of Christ do still remain.

If there shall be ordinances in the most glorious times that are to come, when there shall be a full pouring out of the Spirit of God upon the children of men, then certainly they are to remain now. And if you look either upon the last of Isaiah, the iird of Jeremiah, the xivth of Zechariah, or upon other scriptures where mention is made of the most glorious times that are yet to come; ye shall find that there is mention made also of ordinances in those times. Only let us look into the xith chapter of the Revelation, and ye shall find there, at the 15th verse, "The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms

of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Here are plainly the glorious times spoken of that are yet to come. Well, shall there be any ordinances then? Yes; for at the 19th verse, "And the temple of the Lord was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." What is this but ordinances? The ark, the visible sign of the presence of God in way of ordinances; and the temple open, though it was shut before. But it is said in the latter end of the book of the Revelation, there shall be no temple. True, no Jewish temple, for there he speaks in that chapter of the conversion of the Jews, and the bringing in of the Jews; but a christian temple shall then be opened again, though shut before in antichristian times, in those glorious times the temple shall be fully opened again. Now, I say, if that in those more glorious times, when the Spirit shall be fully poured out upon the children of men, there shall be ordinances, then certainly they are now to continue; but so it is: surely, therefore, the appointments, institutions and ordinances of Christ are still to continue; we are to acknowledge, receive and submit unto these appointments, and to hearken unto Christ our great Prophet herein.

But what need of ordinances, for I enjoy God most in private; when I go unto God alone, when I am all alone in prayer I enjoy God more than I do under the public ordinances, and therefore what need of them?

Do you enjoy more of God in private; what, more than ever you did in public? Where wert thou then converted? Wert thou not converted under the public ministry? Ordinarily men are converted by the public ministry; and now you have some good affections in private, doth that good affection that you have in private arise to a higher enjoyment of God than your first conversion to God? Do you think that a little affection or drawing out of the heart in private, doth arise to a higher enjoyment of God than your first turning to him? This cannot be. Is it not an easy thing for a man to think that God is most enjoyed when his heart is most affected? It is possible a man's heart may be more affected when God is less enjoyed; such is the deceit of our hearts. God is most enjoyed where God is most served. But, now, suppose God were more enjoyed in private than under public

ordinances, I do but suppose it, yet were this no reason why a man should lay by the public ordinances: for you are sometimes in your closet at prayer, and there you enjoy God; sometimes you are below at dinner and supper, and you have some enjoyments of God there. But, I pray, tell me, whether do you enjoy God more at your ordinary dinner and supper or in your closet in prayer? Surely I enjoy God more in my closet in prayer. And is this a reason why you should never dine and sup again? Yet, notwithstanding, how do people reason thus: I enjoy God more in private, therefore I must lay by the public.

But yet I have not only mine own experience, but I have the experience of divers other precious souls: I know some men and women that have left the ordinances, the public ordinances, and they profess that they never enjoyed more of God than since they have left the ordinances; I have not, therefore, mine own experience only, but I have the experience of divers other gracious people.

Poor soul! Wilt thou hang thy salvation upon another man's experience? Hath not our Lord and Saviour Christ said, that many shall say, "Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many wonderful things in thy name; and Christ will say unto them, Depart, I know you not:" Hath not our Saviour said, "Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father." What is the will of the Father? The will of the Father is, That ye hear his Son, "A voice was heard from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." How can ye hear him, and turn your backs upon Christ's appointments; is this the will of the Father?

But now suppose it be so, that others give in their experiences, some that you look upon as godly and precious; and they say, I never enjoyed more of God than since I have left the ordinances. Are there not also divers godly that have said and say, I never enjoyed more of God than in the ordinances? Yea, and are there not a hundred of those to one of the other? Yea, and are there not some, if you go to experience, are there not some that have laid by the ordinances, and by this time are come home, as you say, by *weeping cross*? some that were in the last defeat at Burford, who formerly had laid by the ordinances and said they lived

upon God, and in God immediately, stout-hearted champions; yet being condemned to die, they cried out, and said, Oh that I might live but two days longer: Oh, that I might live but one day longer: Oh, that I might live but one hour longer: I am unprepared for death, I know not how to die. And yet these men said before, that the ordinances were nothing, and they lived in God, and upon God immediately; see what it came to, how their experience shrunk. And wilt thou hang the salvation of thy soul upon the experience of such people as these?

But I do not go the way of experience, neither mine own nor others' experience, but I have scripture, at least I think so, and there are three scriptures especially that do persuade me; and the one is that in the Hebrews: "You shall no longer teach your neighbour, but every man shall be taught of God." Another scripture is that in John: "Ye need not that any man should teach you, for ye are taught of God, and have received the unction of the Holy One, and need not that man should teach you." Another scripture is that of Peter: "We have a more sure word of prophesy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." But now the day-star hath arisen in my heart, and therefore why should I attend upon these ordinances any longer?

For answer, Let us I pray consider whether these scriptures do speak any such thing or no.

As for that of the Hebrews, chap. viii., the words run thus: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, (verse 10) I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their heart;" verse 11, "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother; saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know me." Mark the words, they do not run as they are ordinarily cited by people, viz., They shall not teach every man his neighbour, for all shall know the Lord; but thus, "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, nor every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord." That is, they shall not teach them as if they were to teach heathens, that knew not the Lord, but in gospel times they shall teach a knowing people. If it were only said thus, They

shall not teach every man his neighbour, but they shall be all taught of God, then it were another case; but the words run thus, They shall not teach every man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord. There is that clause too. That is, they shall not teach an heathenish, unknowing people, but in the times of the gospel, they shall be taught by God, and his ministers shall teach a knowing people.

As for the place in John, ye have it in the 1st Epis. ii. 27: "But the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things." Now if you look into verse 18, you will find that these words are spoken in opposition to antichrist, to the false unction. Χριστος signifieth, *anointed*. Antichrist is the false anointed. Little children, saith he, at verse 18, "It is the last time, and as ye have heard that antichrist (the false anointed) shall come, even so there are false anointed, but (verse 20, says he) we have an unction from the Holy One." So that plainly, he speaks here of this unction as opposite to the false unction of antichrist. "But (saith he, at verse 27) the anointing which we have received of him, abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you." Ye need not be taught by false anointings, and antichristian anointings. That this is the meaning, and that he speaks in opposition to antichristian anointing, appears plainly by the words that go before, at verse 26, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." So the meaning is, ye need not be taught by man, or by those that are falsely anointed, as antichrist is; nor any otherwise need ye be taught by man, but as the same anointing, Christ, teacheth, and Christ teacheth by the public ministry of the word.

As for that place in 2 Peter i. 19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." Until; this *until*, doth not always denote an end of time, the end of that time to be then, which this *until* doth relate unto; for example, David saith, "I will wait upon the Lord till he shews mercy unto me." Would David wait upon the Lord no longer; when he had the mercy, would he not wait upon

the Lord then? Is that the meaning: I will wait upon the Lord *till* he shews mercy; that is, only till I have it: was he to make an end of his waiting upon the Lord when he had received the mercy? No, that is not the meaning; but saith he, I will wait on the Lord *till* he shews mercy; because the times in the interim are full of temptation and trouble; "I will wait upon the Lord till he shews mercy unto me." So the Lord saith to Christ, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." Till! what no longer; is not Christ to sit for ever at the right hand of the Father? Yes, yet saith the Father, sit thou on my right hand *till*; not that then when the enemies of Christ are brought under, he shall sit no longer at his Father's right hand, for he shall sit there for ever. So here, Ye shall do well that ye take heed, "till the day-star arise in your hearts." Not that they should leave taking heed unto the word then, but because of the temptations, trials, and dark condition that they should be in before; he saith, Ye do well to take heed *until* the day-star arise in your hearts. So that thus now you see, there is nothing in these scriptures that do hold forth any such thing as this, any such sense and meaning as this objected.

But the apostle Paul saith, that the ordinances are only to continue till Christ come: for saith he, 1 Cor. ii. 26, "As often as ye eat of this bread, and drink this cup, ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Now he is come already by his Spirit to my soul, therefore this ordinance of the supper is to continue no longer to me, and so no other.

And do you think that in this sense Christ was not come in those times when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, was Christ come to none of the Corinthians by his Spirit? Read the 1st Epis. xii. "Unless I go, (saith Christ) the Comforter will not come." When Christ ascended, the Comforter came; in that sense therefore Christ was come in the apostles' time, yet they were under ordinances then.

But he was not come in such a degree of the Spirit as now he is.

No: either, then, you have a greater degree of the Spirit in regard of gifts or in regard of grace; if you have a greater degree of the Spirit in regard of gifts, why do you not speak with tongues, and work miracles, healing, &c., as they did?

and a greater degree of the Spirit in regard of grace you have not, for are you filled with all goodness? so were they too, Rom. xv. 14, yet they were under ordinances: or is the gospel come unto you in power, so that you are an example to those that believe? so were they too, 1 Thess. i. 7, 8, yet they were under ordinances: or do you live in God, and is your life hid with Christ in God? so it was with them too, Col. iii. 3, yet they were under ordinances. And will you venture the salvation of your soul upon this point, that you have a greater degree of the Spirit than they had in those times; which you must do if you cast up the ordinances upon that ground. But I suppose it will be granted that Christ's coming and appearing is all one: and if ye look into 2 Tim. iv. 1, his appearing and judging of the quick and dead go together. And is that time come? The angel saith, Acts i., that as the disciples saw him go away, so he should come again; and they saw him go away personally, therefore his coming is personally: but he is not yet come again personally, and therefore, according to the Scripture, the Lord's supper, and so ordinances which hold forth his death and first coming, are still to continue: why should it, therefore, enter into any of our hearts, that we are to lay aside the precious ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ our great Prophet?

But we do not deny the ordinances; we grant that the ordinances are still to continue; but they are lower dispensations, for the weak only, not for those that are strong.

No! not for those that are strong! why? were there none strong among the Romans, among the Thessalonians, among the Corinthians? Saith the apostle, "You that are strong, bear with those that are weak." And yet they were under ordinances. Aye, but they were not *so* strong, and had not *so* much of the Spirit, and were not *filled* with the Spirit. Stay then a little. First, We have it granted that the ordinances are to continue upon those that are weak. Secondly, That they are to continue upon those that are strong; but, it is said, that if a man be *so* strong, then not. Now, then, let any man shew that the ordinances are to continue upon those that are weak and upon those that are strong, but if a man come unto such a degree of strength, then they are not to continue upon him. Where is that degree mentioned in Scripture? Let any man shew that degree. The Scripture

doth speak the contrary; for it is said that Stephen was filled with the Holy Ghost, and yet he was made a deacon of the church, and was under ordinances. Filled with the Holy Ghost: here is a high degree, and yet under ordinances. And if that the Spirit of the Lord be therefore poured out in the fulness of it, that men may be enabled for to walk with God under his ordinances, then the fulness of the Spirit is no reason why ordinances should be laid aside. Now I pray look into the xxxvith chapter of Ezekiel, and you shall find that the Lord speaking concerning the new covenant, promiseth thus, "I will put my Spirit within you (at the 27th verse) and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk, &c. The word in the Hebrew signifies, to prepare, as we prepare and dress our meat, or as sacrifices were dressed for the offerings: so saith the Lord, I will put my Spirit within you, and will prepare you, or adapt and fit you for to walk in my statutes; the Spirit is therefore put into us, that we may be prepared and fitted to walk in God's statutes. And saith he, "Ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." I will not only give you my Spirit to keep my commandments and do the things I command you, but ye shall keep my judgments, and my statutes, and therefore I will give you my Spirit that ye may be fitted and thus adapted to walk in my statutes and keep my judgments. Yea, more plainly yet, in the xith of Ezekiel, where the Lord opening the new covenant, saith, at verse 19, "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take away the stoney heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances," verse 20. Now I say, if the Spirit of the Lord be therefore given, that a man may be more fitted to walk with God under ordinances, then the fulness of the Spirit cannot be a reason why you should lay aside ordinances; but thus it is, the Spirit of the Lord is therefore given that we may walk with God in his statutes, and in his judgments, and keep them and hold them; yea, and if we look into the xth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall find that baptism with water is therefore administered, because men had received the Holy Ghost and the gifts thereof: verse 44, "Whilst Peter spake, the Holy

Ghost fell on them all which heard the word: (verse 45) on them was poured the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then said Peter (verse 47), Can any forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized." Now if this be reason why they were to have the ordinance pass upon them, because they had received the Holy Ghost in the gifts and pourings out of it, then our being filled with the Spirit is no reason why we should lay by the ordinances; but as we see plainly this is made a reason why they were to come under the ordinance, surely, therefore, the ordinances are still to continue, though we have the Spirit, and be filled therewith. Why, therefore, should we be so bold as to call them low, and poor, and weak, or fleshly dispensations, seeing that the Holy Ghost by Paul, 2 Cor. iii., calls the whole ministration of the gospel and dispensation thereof, Spirit, and glorious; upon this very account, because the ministration and dispensation of the gospel, as then used in Paul's time, were to abide and to continue, the ministration of Moses only to be done away?

But suppose these ordinances and appointments of Christ, this great Prophet, do still continue, and that we do and should use the same; yet we are not to use them because of any appointment or commandment without us, but because of the law within us.

This destroys all obedience on this side heaven; for what is obedience, but doing the will of God because it is commanded? The apostle Paul saith to the Thessalonians, 1st Epist. iv. 9, touching brotherly love, "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Yet he presseth them thereunto from the commandment without them: verse 2, "For ye know what commandment we gave you," by the Lord Jesus, for this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication, verse 3, and "that no man go beyond and defraud his brother," verse 6. Had not our Lord and Saviour Christ a law written within him? yet he obeyed, not only because of that law within, but also because of the commandment without him. Heb. x. 7, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." Why? "For in the volume of the book it is written of me." And yet he saith, withal, Thy law is within my heart; I delight to do thy will.

And doth not the apostle James press obedience upon those believers whom he wrote unto, from the authority of God, and commandment without them? "For he that said, Do not commit adultery; said also, Do not kill," chap. ii. 11.

Had not the godly, believing Jews the law of grace written within them? yet how frequently doth the Lord press them, through the whole book of Deuteronomy, to obedience, because it was commanded, and from the commandment without them?

But all this doth not reach my scruple. I grant that the ordinances are still to continue, and should continue; yea, and that I am to submit to them because they are appointed and commanded: but then they must continue as they are appointed and commanded, according to the institution of the Lawgiver, and this great Prophet; but we read that antichrist shall lay waste, and trample upon the churches, ministry and ordinances of Christ. Now these are antichristian times; and therefore now the churches, ministry, and ordinances are all levelled, laid waste, and utterly spoiled; and therefore though they should, yet they do not continue, and so there are none for me to submit unto, wherein I should hearken to this great Prophet: when the apostle comes again, all shall be then restored; but for the present, through antichristian defilement, there are no public ordinances to submit unto.

Not so: we read indeed in Rev. xi., that the outward court of the temple shall be given to the Gentiles, the antichristian party; but the inward court, and the altar, and those that worship therein, shall be measured, ver. 1; and if the woman, which is the church, shall be nourished in the wilderness, and the two witnesses shall prophesy in sackcloth the whole time of antichrist; then the woman and the witnesses shall continue with ordinances, even in antichristian times. Now the whole time of the whore of Babylon and the beast, is forty-two months, Rev. xiii.; and all that time shall the woman be nourished, chap. xii., and the witnesses continue prophesying, chap. xi. And do we not read, that at the same time whilst the vassals of antichrist do receive his mark in their forehead and hand, Rev. xiii., that there are an hundred, forty and four thousand, who stand upon Mount Zion with their harps in their hand, having the mark of God and the Lamb in their

foreheads. Rev. xiv. In chap. xvi. the vial of the wrath of God is poured out upon the beast and the throne of the beast; but those angels who do pour out those vials mentioned in chap. xvi., come out of the temple, chap. xv.; indeed it is said, chap. xv. 8, that the temple shall be filled with smoke, and that none shall be able to enter into it; but it is with the smoke of God's glory, the sign of his presence in the temple: and though through the wickedness of the times no man shall be able to enter, that is, no considerable company shall be added to the churches of Christ then; yet this proves that there shall be a temple, for can the temple be filled with the smoke of God's glory, and yet no temple; or doth this argue that you have no house, because it is said, that no man could get in? this proves rather that you have an house; so here. And if antichrist, the man of sin, shall sit in the house of God, or rather upon the house of God, as Austin translates it, in regard of his tyranny; then there shall be a temple, and public worship, even under the most tyrannical oppressions of antichrist. Why therefore should any poor soul be deceived and say, There are no ordinances now? Surely the ordinances and appointments of Christ, this great Prophet, are and do still continue, wherein we are to hearken to him.

But in all this discourse you proceed in a way of reason, and these things are not to be beaten out or attained to by reason; no not by Scripture reason, but as God shall reveal them to us by his Spirit. If God do shine upon my soul, and reveal the necessity of ordinances to me, then I shall use them, else not. Sometimes, therefore, I do attend upon ordinances, sometimes I do not; I can use them, and I can forbear, or not use them; even as the Spirit doth reveal things, so do I.

But if any thing seem to be revealed which is contrary to the Scripture, there is no revelation of the Spirit, for saith our Saviour, "The Spirit shall take of mine, and shall shew it to you," John xvi. 14; and ver. 13, "He shall lead you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself," &c. And saith the Lord, "I will put my Spirit into you, that ye may keep my statutes and ordinances," Ezek. xi. Whatever therefore is revealed contrary to the word, is not of the Spirit. Now it is contrary to the word, as hath been proved, that we

should cast off or neglect ordinances; and therefore there can be no revelation of the Spirit for this: a delusion there may be, but no true revelation. Besides, our Lord and Saviour Christ hath so ordered things in the gospel, that if a man err, or be a heretic, he may be convinced. "A bishop, (or elder,) must be unreprouable," 1 Tit. vii. 9. "Holding fast that faithful word according to doctrine, that he also may be able to exhort with wholesome doctrine, and convince them that say against it." But how can any man be convinced but in a way of Scripture reason, the Spirit of the Lord joining therewith? If this were the way of Christ, that a man should say, I have a revelation for what I hold, the Spirit hath revealed it to me, and there is no more Scripture reasoning to be admitted about it; how should a man be convinced any more? But I say, Christ hath so ordered, that men should be convinced in case they err, and be out of the way; and therefore flying from Scripture reasonings to a way of mere revelation, cannot be right. And whereas you say, that you can use the ordinances, and you can forbear or not use them; this doth not heal the wound, but makes it greater: for if you can forbear the ordinances, or not use them, then you think there is no commandment upon you to use them, and so, as to yourself, you have cast them off; and if yet you do use them, when you think there is no commandment for the use of them, then are you superstitious, for what is superstition, but to worship God without a commandment? *Superstitio quasi super statutum*: superstition is that worship which is without God's commandment.

But suppose all this be true, what is the danger of renouncing or forsaking the ordinances then? We grant now after all this, that the ordinances of Christ are still to continue; we have seen it proved, and objections are answered: but is there any danger in renouncing and forsaking of them?

Yes, and much danger too: let me lay before you the mind of God herein; only first I distinguish, there is a difference between those that forsake the ordinances, as being under a temptation, and those that are not under a temptation. Possibly a good man may be tempted to it, and may lie under this temptation; for there is no sin that I know of, but a godly man may be tempted to it: possibly therefore, I say, a godly and a good man may be tempted to this, and may for

a time lie under this temptation. But now if a man not under a temptation shall forsake ordinances, when he hath tasted of the sweetness of them, and turn his back upon this great Prophet, the Lord Jesus, not submitting unto his appointments, see what the Scripture saith of him in this chapter: saith the Lord, "I will require it at his hand." And in Exod. xxiii. 20, 21, "Behold, I send an angel before you, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared; (this is Christ) beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him." And you know what the apostle saith, "If any man sin wilfully after he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin," Heb. x. 26. Which speech, which dreadful speech, relates unto those that cast off the ordinances of Christ, after they have tasted of the sweetness of them; for the word is brought in with a *for*, "For if we sin wilfully." What doth he then speak in relation to? Read the words before: "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is: *for* if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth," &c. It comes in as relating to this matter; so that if men not under a temptation, shall wilfully throw up the ordinances of Christ, after they have tasted the sweetness of them, and of the ways of God by them, the Lord pronounceth this doom upon them. And if ye look into Heb. vi., ye shall find, that the apostle speaking concerning those that had left their principles, saith, that "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Ye read at verse 6, "If they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance." But in the Greek and original, the word *if* is not, but it runs as the other words before do, thus: "For it is impossible (verse 4) for men having once been enlightened, and having tasted of the heavenly gift, and having been made partaker of the Holy Ghost, and having tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and having fallen away," not with an *if*; and having "fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." Who are these that he speaks of? Pray mark ver. 1, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and

of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment: for it is impossible." This same word *for*, shews that it relates unto those that he speaks of before, that had lost these principles. "For," saith he, it comes in as a reason, "For it is impossible to renew them again to repentance." If once they come to this pass, that they shall lose their principles, and deny the doctrines that are fundamental; the doctrines of the resurrection, and of eternal judgment, and the fundamental doctrine of ordinances; if they shall fall from these, and let go their principles, and not under a temptation, it is impossible, or very unlikely, utterly unlikely in a way of reason, that ever those souls should be renewed again; yet if we look into Matt. xxiv., ye shall find that such as these there shall be in the latter times, the times immediately before the coming of Christ: for saith our Saviour, "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch as if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." How shall we know them, how are they characterized? why, they shall say of Christ, ver. 26, "Behold he is in the desert, behold he is in the secret chamber;" gone from the public ordinances, they are low and flesh; but, saith our Saviour, "Believe them not;" yet, Lord, how many do believe them.

But oh, what a sad condition are these poor creatures in; they may pretend living upon God immediately, but oh, what a sad condition are these poor souls in! I hope better things of you, and every of you, though I thus speak; yet I must here exhort you to keep close unto your principles, and to the appointments of the Lord Jesus this great Prophet. And I do exhort you, by the sweat of all your ministers, dead and living: by the love you bear to the precious name of God: by the love you bear to your own precious souls; hold and keep close to ordinances in these declining times; see where they are in purity and power, keep close to them. I am persuaded, that there is never a one of you, but would be a friend to Christ; says Christ, "Then are ye my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you." And can my heart tell me, that I am a friend to Christ if I cast off all his appointments, and all his ordinances? I am persuaded there is none of you, but desire to be the children

of God, "Wisdom is justified of her children;" Christ is the Wisdom of the Father; and if you be the children of Wisdom, you will justify Christ in all his appointments, but if Christ the Wisdom of the Father, shall give you such institutions and ordinances, and you cast them off, and say, They are low and fleshly, and the like: oh, how will you justify Christ the Wisdom of the Father? Wherefore I say, you that are professors, hold your hold in these declining times; and if you know any of your friends that are departed from the good ordinances of God, oh, stand and mourn, and lament over them and say, Alas, alas, my friend, how is his crown fallen from his head? If you have a neighbour that hath a monster born instead of a child, you will lament over your neighbour and say, My neighbour instead of a sweet child hath an ugly monster, with the head of a hog, and the ears of an ass; ah, my poor neighbour hath a monster born in his family. Why, this non-ordinance is England's monster; and as people carry monsters up and down to shew them; so in other countries they go up and down, and say, Come and behold the English monster; a thing never seen before, that professors should deny ordinances. And yet, good Lord, how many families in this kingdom hath this monster born there. Ah, will you not pray, weep, and lament over the families of your friends? Christian, hold thy hold, in these sad and declining times, hold thy hold.

But what shall we do then? These are deceiving and declining times, and there is nothing so dangerous, but by steps we may be drawn into it; what shall we do, that in these times we may be kept close to ordinances; that we may never turn our backs upon this great Prophet the Lord Jesus Christ, but receive, acknowledge, submit unto his appointments, and therein hearken unto him?

Ye know that there is a concatenation, a linking together of ordinances, and dispensations: as of sins and of graces, so of ordinances and dispensations; take away one link, and the whole chain is broken; open but one gap in the hedge, and a way is made unto all the beasts. Austin writing upon John, tells us a story of a certain man, that was of an opinion, that the devil did make the fly, that God did not make a fly, but the devil did make a fly; saith one to him then,

If the devil did make the flies, then the devil did make the worms, and God did not make the worms neither, for the flies are living creatures as well as the worms: True, said he, I grant it, the devil did make the worms too. But, said the other, if the devil did make the worms, and not God; then the devil did make the birds, for the worms are living creatures as well as the birds: True, said he, I grant it, the devil did make the birds, and God did not make the birds. Then, saith the other, if God did not make the birds, but the devil made the birds, then the devil made the beasts; for the birds are living creatures as well as the beasts: True, I grant it, said he, the devil did make the beasts too. Then, said the other again, if the devil did make the beasts, the devil made man, for the beast is a living creature as well as man: True, said he, I grant it, the devil made man. Thus saith Austin, by denying God in the fly, he came to deny God in man, and to deny the whole creation; by letting a little hold go, to deny the whole workmanship of God in the creation. So I say here, if you let go but a little in this spiritual creation, you may lose all. Whensoever therefore, you have a question upon your own soul concerning any one of the ordinances, then know, you are upon your trial, upon your good behaviour; and therefore then go to the Lord, and say, Lord keep me now, for if I let go one, I am in danger to lose all.

If you would be kept close to ordinances, and hearken to Christ this great Prophet, in acknowledging, receiving, submitting unto his appointments; then take heed that you be not dead, dull and formal under them; but improve them, grow and increase under them; otherwise you will say, Alas, I get but little good under these; were these the ordinances, appointments, and institutions of Jesus Christ, I should profit by them, but I get little or no good at all under them, therefore it is a vain thing for me to wait any longer, I will attend no longer upon these. If a rich man put out a child to nurse, and he send clothes for the child, or give money unto the nurse for his child, and she takes the money and lays it out upon her own, or takes those clothes and puts them upon the back of her own child, the father will surely fetch away his child quickly from that nurse. The Lord hath given us ordinances, and given us good affections, and if we lay out

those affections upon the world, upon our own brats, then will the Lord say, I will take away my child, my ordinances from that soul, or I will take away that soul from my ordinance. Labour, therefore, to profit, grow and increase under them.

If you would keep close unto these appointments, and not stop your ears unto the voice of this great Prophet, then have a very watchful eye upon those principles that walk abroad in the world, which though they have a truth and goodness at the bottom, yet, notwithstanding, being not well digested or understood, are dangerous guides in these dark times. For instance, it is an ordinary principle that now walks abroad, that a godly man doth not sin, a believer sins not: the thing is true, for the apostle saith, "He that is born of God sins not," that is, irrecoverably, "for the seed of God abides in him." But it is not true in regard of the act of sin; for the same apostle says, "If any man saith he sins not, he is a liar." Again, It is a common principle that now walks abroad, that the Spirit of God in me is not to be tried by any thing without me. It hath a good sense, for the testimony of the Spirit hath a sufficiency in itself as to the matter of testimony; yet, notwithstanding, it is not true in regard of the Scripture, for the Spirit of God in me is to be tried by the Scripture without me. Again, It is a common principle that walks now abroad, that the coming in of a particular word upon one's heart, the impression of the word upon one's heart is to be the rule of action: a word came, and therefore I must do such a thing. The thing is true in a sense; for if a man be in a strait between two lawful things, and a word come and be set upon the heart, that impression is enough for to cast the business: but it is not true in all respects, for it is not the bare coming in of the word, but the Lord's command that is to be the rule of my action. Again, It is a common principle that walks now abroad, that the ordinances are for the enjoyment of God. This is true, they are for the enjoyment of God; when do we enjoy God more, when doth God let out himself more than under ordinances? but though it be true, yet it is not all the truth, for the ordinances are not given only for the enjoyment of God, but for us to give a visible testimony, and to bear witness before the world of our obedience to God. Now many such principles as these there

are abroad in the world : but if you take them up and do not understand them, I dare boldly say, you will be carried from all ordinances presently. As, now, suppose I be of an opinion that I, who am a believer, cannot sin ; then, it follows, if I go to ordinances, well ; if I do not go to ordinances I do not sin : here is ordinances gone upon this principle.

So, again, if I be of this opinion, that the coming in of a particular word upon one's heart is to be the rule of my action ; I am in a doubt, now, and a strait, whether I should attend upon ordinances or no ; then comes a word, it may be Satan throws it in, or mine own memory reacheth it in, and the word tells me I am to attend upon ordinances no longer ; then farewell ordinances. Again, Suppose I be of this opinion, that the Spirit of God within me is not to be tried by any thing without me ; then I think the Spirit and word within me saith, Wait upon God no longer in these lower dispensations, do not attend upon ordinances any longer ; and that is to be tried by nothing without me, not by the Scripture, and thus ordinances are gone too. Again, If I be of this judgment, that ordinances are given us only for the enjoyment of God, then, think I, I can enjoy God in private, and ordinances are only for the enjoyment of God, what need I, therefore, attend upon ordinances any longer ? Thus, I say, follow these principles to the head, and you will certainly forsake ordinances. Wherefore, you that are godly, look to your principles ; do not take a principle, and not understand it, but look well into it, thus shall you be kept.

But suppose that I be kept to ordinances, institutions and appointments of Christ, this great Prophet, and I do hear him, that is, I do receive, acknowledge and submit unto his appointments ; possibly a man may do this and miscarry to all eternity : what shall I do that I may so receive, acknowledge and submit unto Christ's appointments, that I may hear him effectually, hear him savingly ?

You know that Christ our great Prophet, doth especially look at the inward man ; for he is God, and a Spirit, and minds the Spirit. Though he will have every letter of his commandment to be observed, yet he lays the great stress and the emphasis upon the spiritual part of the commandment. As now, " It hath been said (saith he), Thou shalt not commit adultery ;" but, mark where he lays the empha-

sis, "But I say unto you, Thou shalt not look upon a woman to lust after her." Here this great Prophet lays the emphasis and stress upon the spiritual part. So saith he, "It hath been said to you of old, Thou shalt not kill;" but mark where he lays the emphasis, "But I say unto you, ye shall not be angry." Would you therefore so hearken to this great Prophet, as ye may hear him effectually and savingly; observe where he lays the emphasis in the giving of the commandment, and there do you lay the emphasis in your obedience. Doth the Lord say, "It hath been said of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say:" is the Lord Christ's "I say" written upon the spiritual part of the commandment? then through the grace of God shall my "I say" for obedience be pitched upon the spiritual part also.

The law you know was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Christ. The law and the ten commandments was given by Moses, but no grace to keep them. But Christ our great Prophet, doth not only give forth his appointments, but he gives grace to keep them; do I, therefore, or do any of you stand poring upon the letter of the commandment, and not look upon the grace, the assisting grace for to keep the commandment? Herein I hearken to Moses. But do I so look upon the commandment and appointments of Christ, as that withal I have an eye to grace, assisting grace, and say, I shall have grace too to keep this commandment? Then do I hearken unto Christ Jesus, this great Prophet. Look therefore, I say, as well to grace as to the letter of the commandment.

The more you have the exercise of faith in the observance of Christ's institutions, appointments, and ordinances; the more effectually and savingly you hear him. Faith is a saving hearing of this great Prophet. There is a great difference between an instituted and a natural means. Physicians and physic are natural means of health; but the beholding of the brazen serpent was an instituted means for recovery, not a natural means. Now if we go to the use of natural means, we are to use our faith; much more when we go to the use of instituted means: and the appointments of the Lord Jesus Christ are instituted means; therefore when we come to them, we must come with our hearts full of faith, exercising much faith when we come to them. You find the

apostle, writing unto the Thessalonians, makes this sign of election, 1 Thess. i. 4: "Knowing, brethren, your election of God;" how so? "for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power." Why *our* gospel; why doth he call it their gospel, and not the gospel? For "our gospel," because he speaks of the gospel as it was preached by them in the ministry, in the dispensation thereof. "For our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power:" it came in power, and not in word; therefore saith he, hereby it appears that ye are elected. Would you know whether you are elected or no? hereby it appears, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power." But how may it appear that it came in power? At ver. 6, "And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord; having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." Here is faith, faith exercised here. So I say, it shall be an argument to you, that ye are chosen and precious, when as you mingle the appointments of Christ with your faith. Come unto Christ's appointments, but oh, come believing, come believing. It may be some poor soul will say, Oh, but I cannot believe; I can keep close to ordinances, but I cannot believe, I cannot receive them so.

Why, but if thou dost leave off thy parley with Satan in the time of temptation merely upon Christ's command, thou dost hear him, and hear him effectually. For suppose now that a man's son be treating, in a way of marriage, with another man's daughter, and the father doth not like the match; the father comes unto the son, and saith, I would not have thee, son, to marry there, but I have a match for you in such a place, such a woman that is fit for you every way; son, I would not have you go on where you do. Then saith the son, Father, I am willing with all my heart to hearken to you, but my affections are not in mine own hand, I cannot love where I list; as for the person you point at, and the motion you make, my affections do not yet come unto it, but this I will do, sir, I will presently knock off where I am, and I will strive to love where you would have me. Doth not this child hear his father now, in that he knocks off, and will go no more to the person that he was in parley with, although for the present he cannot love the person his father would have him love? So here, the Lord would

have us believe, and cast our souls upon Jesus Christ, and love him; but, saith the soul, I cannot believe in Christ, I cannot love him; yet this I will do, Lord, I am in parley with Satan upon such and such terms, I will knock off with him: this being done is a hearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, this great Prophet, and it is an effectual hearing too. Thus we are to hear this great Prophet, and thus you have heard that ye are to hear him, and how ye are to hearken to him. What now remains, but that you up and be doing. Whosoever you are that hear the word of the Lord this day, either you are godly or you are ungodly. If you be ungodly, "hear, and your souls shall live." Hear this great Prophet, and your souls shall live. If you be godly hear this Prophet, for saith he, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." It was the speech of that holy, eminent person Mr. Brightman, If Christ be not your Prophet, he shall never be your Priest: if Christ may not be your Prophet to teach you, guide you, and direct you, he shall never be your Priest to satisfy God's wrath for you. Now, therefore, as you desire that the Lord Jesus should be your Priest, to satisfy the wrath of God for you; oh, let him be your Prophet; hearken to this Prophet, to his institutions, appointments, and keep close to them.

And, to end all, take but one scriptural encouragement, it is at Isa. xlviii. 17: "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel (this is Christ), I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Christ is our teacher. Aye, but we have many teachers; oh, that I could meet with that teacher once that could teach me to profit by all that I have heard. So Christ teacheth: "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Well, but what is my duty then? Your duty is to hear him; at verse 18, "Oh that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments." But what good shall I get thereby? "Then had thy peace been as a river;" not as a drop of water in a glass that is soon dried up: in a river there is much water, and in a river, you know, there is fresh water: now saith the Lord, Do but hearken unto this teacher, this great Prophet, and the peace of thy conscience shall be like a river, full of peace shall thy conscience be; and as the

water of the river is always fresh, so shall thy peace of conscience be; whereas now thou art troubled in conscience, and hast no peace within, do but hearken unto this great Prophet as distinct from Moses, and thou shalt have peace within as a river, full and fresh. But what matter for peace unless I have grace withal? If I do hearken unto him shall I have grace too? See what follows: "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Thy righteousness and thy holiness shall be as a sea, thy peace as a river, but thy grace shall be more, as the sea that knows no bottom so shall thy righteousness be. Who doth not desire these two, peace and grace? If there be ever a poor soul in all the congregation that is troubled in conscience, and labours under conscience burdens, hearken, then, and hear the Lord Jesus; go, I say, to him, and stand waiting on him as the great Prophet, as distinct from Moses. I do not say hearken to Moses, that speaks conditionally, but hearken to Christ, that speaks grace absolutely; "I will write my law in thy heart;" that is upon no condition. Soul, go and hearken to this great Prophet and thou shalt certainly have peace; yea, the peace shall be as a river, and thou shalt have fulness of peace, and freshness of peace: that whereas now thy soul is mudded, and thy conscience troubled, and thou goest under many temptations, thou shalt then have thy conscience clear, and thy soul cleansed: and whereas now thou labourest under much corruption, then shall the righteousness be as the waves of the sea, thou shalt have grace and abundance of grace; wherefore what I say to one I say to all, Hear, hear, hear and your souls shall live.