

A DISCOURSE OF THE UNWORTHY RECEIVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.—1 Cor. XI. 27, 29.

AFTER the apostle had laid down the platform of the institution, he makes his inferences suited to the case and miscarriage of the Corinthians. Since this ordinance was appointed by Christ as a memorial of him, and in the celebration of it 'we shew the Lord's death;' an unbecoming frame and carriage in so great a mystery, is a reflection upon the authority of it, contrary to the ends of it, and a contracting the guilt of the body and blood of Christ. As if he should have said,* While you Corinthians come together in a rude manner to this ordinance, as if it were a common and profane feast, the abuse and contempt redounds upon the body and blood of Christ represented by those elements. Calvin thinks the apostle makes a digression from the particular Corinthian case to an universal one, not only comprehending under unworthy receiving the abuses crept into that church, but all other miscarriages which might in the future rise up in that or any other church whatsoever; and indeed it is as a general case to be considered in our days, since the particular case of the Corinthians hath not its parallel.

He considers

1. The sin, (1.) in its nature, eating and drinking unworthily.
- (2.) In its aggravation, a guilt of the body and blood of Christ.
2. The danger, ver. 29, eating and drinking damnation to himself.
3. The cause of all, not discerning the Lord's body.

Whosoever eats and drinks unworthily. Whosoever approacheth without a consideration of the dignity of that which is represented by those elements,† and the ends of their appointment, regarding it as a common thing of no great value, and brings not those dispositions of faith and repentance, doth not reflect upon the elements themselves, but vilifies that which they represent; and offends not so much against the exterior signs, as violates the reverence due to the body and blood of Christ; and is so far from gathering the blessed fruit of this ordinance, that he returns with the mark of the murderer of Christ upon him; for he contemns the condition of the covenant, and consequently the blood of the covenant. The argument whereby he urgeth it, is the relation it hath to Christ. It is the bread and cup of the

* Musculus.

† Amyraut, Daillé in loc.

Lord. Though it be bread and wine, yet it is a sacred thing; it is the bread and wine of the Lord, instituted by him for his glory and our salvation. He doth not say, Whosoever eats the body of the Lord, or drinks the blood of the Lord unworthily, but *this bread, this cup*. The apostle was not so witless as to have termed them bread and cup, had the doctrine of transubstantiation been known in his days. His argument had run stronger: it is but bread and wine in appearance, it is changed into the real body and blood of Christ; and therefore your unworthy carriage is immediately and not relatively a violation of his person. But the apostle acknowledgeth it to be bread and wine;* but to distinguish it from bread of an ordinary use, calls it, 'the bread of the Lord.'

Unworthily. A worthy carriage respects either persons or things; persons, when our demeanour is suitable to the dignity of the person we converse with; or things, when we manage a business we undertake with a decorum and becomingness, according to the nature of it; as we say a man did this or that very handsomely. He that doth not observe a decorum and decency in a converse with a person or management of a business, doth it unworthily, awkwardly, rustically, or slovenly. So the word *worthy* is used: Luke iii. 8, 'Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance,' *i. e.* suitable to the repentance you profess. And Eph. iv. 1, 'Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called,' *i. e.* let your conversation answer your calling, and be suitable to the dignity of it. It is not any precedent act meritorious of the vocation, but a worthy carriage after it, suitable to the dignity of the calling. The apostle doth not say, Whatsoever unworthy person eats and drinks of this cup, &c., for then he had excluded every man, himself too. For who is worthy enough for these things? as the apostle speaks in another case, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' The apostle requires not here a meritoriousness. Merit belongs to Christ dying, worthiness to the believer receiving. He speaks not of the worthiness of the person, but a worthiness of the action. A man may want a worthiness of person to be employed in a prince's service, yet not want a worthiness of parts which fit him, being engaged in it, to manage his employ for his own and his prince's honour. Or if a poor man be called to a prince's table,* he is, because of his poverty and distance, unworthy to sit with him; yet being invited he may come; but if he behaves himself uncivilly and indecently, he makes himself guilty of a contempt of the royal majesty, in whose presence he is. Unworthily here notes the want of an evangelical frame and disposition of heart.

Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. He offers wrong to Christ. The Jews were guilty of his blood, when they crucified him; apostates are guilty of his blood, when they deny him, Heb. x. 29. An unworthy receiver doth such an injury to Christ, that God will account him in the rank of the Jews that crucified him, and charge him with no less a crime than the guilt of the blood of his Son.

He eats and drinks damnation. Κρίμα, judgment, which differs from κατάκριμα.† He eats judgment or punishment, which is double, either eternal or temporary. Final unbelievers eat it to their eternal condemnation; those that have faith, and are negligent in due preparations, eat it to their temporary correction. It is the effect for the cause. An unbeliever doth not properly eat his condemnation; for condemnation is not naturally or sacramentally in the bread and wine, but he eats that which will be the cause of his condemnation,‡ because not considering the glorious

* Musculus. † Rom. v. 16, κρίμα εἰς κατάκριμα, 'judgment unto condemnation.'

‡ Estius in loc.

use these elements are destined to, he doth not consider how great and glorious a thing the body of the Lord is, which they represent; and so violates, in those signs, the honour due to his majesty. Not but that this is of itself, and in regard of the institution, wholesome and quickening, but by the evil disposition of the receiver, and the abuse of the ordinance, that which was ordained to life brings death; as the foulness of the stomach makes wholesome food turn to venom in the body. Therefore the apostle adds, 'He eats damnation to himself.' There is no such thing in the institution. The fault is wholly in himself, not in the ordinance. He abuseth that which would be useful to him, if he brought worthy dispositions with him. As our first parents ate their death in eating the forbidden fruit, when the fruit itself was not of a venomous nature, but by transgressing the command of God, they rendered themselves obnoxious to the death God had threatened. So we say of a man, that he hath swallowed his death, when he hath eaten something which makes way for the entrance of death; not only when it is poisonous in its own nature, but when it is unsuitable to the temper and state of the patient. So he that eats unworthily, makes himself obnoxious to the judgment of God, either to be tormented by his scorpions hereafter, or awakened by his scourges here.

Not discerning the Lord's body, Διακρίνων. To discern a thing or person is to separate it from other things or persons,* and give it its due rank and order, which is either, (1.) in effect, when a man is endowed with qualities which elevate him above others. As the apostle saith, God makes us to differ, *Τίς γάρ σε διακρίνει*; 1 Cor. iv. 7, *i. e.* he puts a difference between us and others, giving us graces more advantageous than unto them. (2.) In opinion and esteem, when we value one thing more than another; so, Acts xv. 9, God is said to 'put no difference between the Jews and Gentiles,' *οὐδεν διέκρινε*, *i. e.* he hath treated them indifferently. So not to discern the Lord's body is not to esteem and honour it as he ought, not to give it its due rank; to entertain it not as a singular and divine, but a common and ordinary thing. When men disesteem Christ, they count his blood as common blood, Heb. x. 20. What is there translated *unholy*, is in the Greek, *κοινόν*; so after the apostle had discoursed of the two elements, as representing the two parts of the sacrifice offered upon the cross, his body broken, his blood poured out for a propitiation for sin, not to discern it, is to have no higher opinion of the body of the Son of God, the wonder of God's wisdom and goodness, than of a common thing, and a matter of no value.

Or not discerning the Lord's body, is when our sense sticks upon the outward elements, and our spirits rise not up to view the merits and propitiation of Christ through the veil of the bread and wine, as if the elements were the things only we were to feast upon. It is a spiritual feast, and therefore we discern not the Lord's body when we have not spiritual meditations of the dignity of Christ, the atonement he made, God's wisdom, justice, and mercy in the design of his death. As Christ doth not put us off with empty signs, so he would not have us rest upon empty signs, but acknowledge his body and blood represented in them, for those ends for which the one was broken, and the other shed. The papists, to prop up their doctrine of transubstantiation, draw an argument for it from this place. The body of Christ is in the sacrament in its proper substance, otherwise a man could not be guilty of his body and blood.† For no man could justly be condemned for not discerning the Lord's body from other meat, if that which he receives were not truly the body of the Lord, but another meat; and the unworthy receiving of the naked sign cannot make a

* Amyraut, Daillé, Musculus.

† Daillé *Melange des Sermons.*

man guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But this is no argument.* Christ is wronged in that which hath a relation to him, as well as immediately in his own person. The rejecting the apostles, the messengers of Christ, is a rejecting Christ who sent them: Luke x. 16, 'He that despiseth you, despiseth me;' and he that despiseth the commands of God delivered by man, 'despiseth not man, but God,' 1 Thes. iv. 8. Was our Saviour therefore substantially present in the persons of the apostles? Were they not separated from his body, when he sent them to other parts, and gave them this as an encouragement? How could he be with them, and absent from them in his body? When he chargeth Saul with persecuting *him*, because he 'breathed out slaughter against his disciples,' Acts ix. 4, was the body of Christ therefore substantially in his disciples? He that hath received the knowledge of the truth, and apostatiseth from it, 'treads under foot the Son of God.' Is the person of Christ under the feet of these contemners! To tumble a king's robe in the dirt, to counterfeit his seal, tread upon his crown, daub his picture, break down his arms in despite, offer violence to his ambassador, is reckoned as a violation of the person and authority of a prince; yet neither the person nor nature of the person is really present in any of those things. They are indeed the marks of his dignity, and he that violates wilfully any of them is supposed to be willing to do as much against the person of the prince, if it were in his power, as against anything which bears his character. The substance of the body and blood of Christ, is not in the bread and wine of the sacrament; his exalted body is no more to be broken and sliced in pieces; nor doth it consist with his state of glory, to have his substantial body shrouded under such mean elements. But the bread and wine are memorials and pledges of his body and blood, instituted by him as signs to signify him; therefore he that receives them without a due respect to Christ, and handles them unworthily, despising those things which are signified by them, is a contemner of the Son of God, since he hath no value for that which is a mark of his authority and his love.

Doct. Unworthy receivers of the supper contract great guilt, and incur great danger. In the handling which doctrine I shall shew,

I. What unworthy receiving is.

II. The sinfulness of it.

III. The danger of it.

IV. The use.

I. What unworthy receiving is.

1. Something negatively.

(1.) Unworthy receiving is not proper only to a man in a natural state. The apostle chargeth here unworthy receiving, not only upon the professing, but the regenerate Corinthians, upon such as fell under the chastening hand of God for this cause, that they might 'not be condemned with the world' to an eternal punishment, 1 Cor. xi. 32. He sent temporal punishments upon them that they might not undergo an eternal damnation; they were redeemed from eternal punishment, renewed in their souls, yet some of them were guilty of unworthy receiving. The apostle also puts the unworthiness upon the want of a self-examination, which a good man may, by some supineness and negligence, be deficient in, and, as the sleepy church, Cant. v. 2, may contract some rust in his graces, yea, and fall into some bemiring sin, as a neat man may into a dirty puddle, rendering himself at present unfit for the entertainment of, and converse with some worthy friend. Sins of a higher magnitude, which a good man may fall into, make him at the present

* Dailié Melange des Sermons.

unfit for heaven, and therefore for an heavenly ordinance. David was no worthy attender upon the institutions of God while he lay in his impenitency, till his tears had washed away his iniquity. Nor was Peter restored to the sweetness of converse with his Master, till he had wept bitterly; while a great sin remains unpurged, or the soul through negligence untrimmed, it is no fit guest for God.

(2.) Unworthy receiving is not to be measured by our sensible joy or comfort after receiving. Two men that have perfect health have not equal stomachs, nor equal appetites, and consequently not the same joy in their meals, yet both in health. We should more consider how graces are acted, than how comforts are dispensed; the former is our duty, and necessary to a right participation; the latter is an act of sovereignty, and not our duty. God's dispensations are not equal to all; some have only tastes, others full draughts; some may have more joy than strength, others more strength than joy. Mary had a strength of love to Christ, before she had a joy of pardon from him, Luke vii. 47. Paul's grace was not weaker fourteen years after his rapture, though we read not of a second discovery of the third heavens to him. God was most pleased with our Saviour upon the cross, acting his faith in, and love and obedience to God, when he denied him sensible comforts from heaven, and was bruising his soul for sin. The life and exercise of grace is the root of joy, though the fruit itself be not always visible; we may seem to have a rebuke from God, when we are in the strongest exercise of grace. The woman of Canaan had no sense of Christ's kindness, while she was acting a faith stronger than others who had met with swifter rewards. Jacob had the honour to be termed a prince prevailing with God, in that wrestling wherein he received such a touch from God as made him halt all his life after, Gen. xxxii. 25, 28. If our souls can ascend, like Manoah's angel, in the smoke of thanksgiving and elevations of spirit, and be melted and softened by a flame of love, there is a worthy receiving, though there be not a sensible comfort.

But, 2. Positively; that is an unworthy receiving,—

(1.) When evil dispositions and beloved sins are not laid aside and forsaken. As there must be faith respecting the Christian doctrine, so there must be repentance respecting the conversation. He eats unworthily that hath different ends from what Christ had in the institution; and wants the qualifications which Christ requires, who hath neither faith nor repentance, no sense of sin, nor love to Christ, to hold up to God. Common infirmities render us not unworthy, but voluntary defilements: neither the poverty, blindness, or halting of one or other of those invited, Luke xiv. 21, Mat. xxii. 10, was charged upon them, but only the filthy rags that one of them came in; such sordidness as he might have mended, not the lameness which he could not cure. Common infirmities are inseparable in this life; but the great breaches and violations of the covenant are to be discharged. Every sin doth make some separation between God and us (as the smallest body hath its shadow); but they are the darling sins that are a thick cloud between him and us. Those then are unquestionably unworthy receivers, that approach with a love to their lusts; as Judas, who came with his covetous disposition and treacherous purposes. Such as lay aside their sins at present in the act, but not in the habit and affection, that shake hands with them for a time, to fondle them afterwards.

(2.) When, though beloved sins are discarded, yet there is not a due preparation suitable to the quality of the institution. The apostle implies it in the precept he enjoins immediately after the declaration of the sin: ver. 28, 'Let a man examine himself.' He that doth not trim up the graces he hath,

that doth not search them out, and marshal them in order to entertain the master of the feast, as well as he who wants those qualifications necessary. An actual as well as an habitual sanctification was required of Jesse's sons before the sacrifice: 1 Sam. xvi. 5, 'Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.' Christ did sanctify himself before he made himself a sacrifice, John xvii. 19, so should we before we commemorate it. If the lamps be not trimmed, they will burn but dimly. If that he counts the wedding-garment be not brushed, it will be a slighting the Lord not to appear in our best garb. The Corinthians were chastised, not for want of grace in habit, but for want of grace in act. It is a disrespect to Christ not to put on a wedding-garment which we have in possession, when graces and affections are not set on work which the ordinance requires. A natural man is unworthy for want of possessing those graces; a renewed man unworthy for want of acting them. The party that so offended was not sent out to clothe himself, but punished for his neglect: 'Friend, how camest thou in hither?' Christ's worthy care in the institution must be answered with a worthy carriage in the preparation. He washed his disciples' feet before the institution, John xiii. We should prepare our souls before the participation. When a good man's graces lie dead at the ordinances, he receives unworthily. What difference is there between a dead man and one that doth not exercise the acts of life? When Christ reacheth out himself, and our hands are not ready to take, our hearts not ready to embrace, it is an unsuitable carriage. We have no great esteem of the gales that blow, if we will not prepare and hoist our sails to be filled with them, and stand not ready to suck Christ's breast in his ordinance.

(3.) It is an unworthy receiving when we rest only in the ordinance, expecting from the work done, what we should expect only from Christ in it. When we content ourselves with Elijah's mantle, without asking for the God of Elijah. Thus the Jews deluded themselves with their privileges, and displeased God with their neglect of him; like Joab securing himself by laying hold of the horns of the altar without repentance for his murders. This is to derive from the sacrament the cause of our righteousness and justification, and ascribe that to the naked elements and signs which is only to be expected and desired at the hands of God. This is a wrong to God, when we prefer the shadow before the substance, the shell before the kernel, satisfy our appetite and take no notice of the Master. Doth not he slight both the physician and the physic, that expects a cure from a medicine in his pocket, which he was to take into his body? The like it is to Christ, to think that a corporal feeding, without a spiritual relish, can nourish our souls; a chewing the elements with the teeth, without feeding upon Christ with the heart. This is evident, when we answer not sacramental engagements, as well as when we come without sacramental preparations; in that we slight the end of the ordinance, as in the other we slight the greatness of the institution.

(4.) When there is a garishness and looseness of spirit in the time of our attendance. Not discerning the Lord's body, say some; not minding the Lord's body, but letting the thoughts run at rovers, which should be fixed upon Christ's dying; not making a difference between this holy bread and common refreshments in the behaviour of our souls. Our spirits should be low in regard of contrition, not in regard of a sordid demeanour towards God. To have base ends and starts in his worship;* to regard our own things in this act, and not the things of God; to have unsettled and roving thoughts, crosses the end of this ordinance. It is unworthy not to remember Christ,

* Grotius.

not to shew forth his death; how can this be done without minding him? The Master of the feast is not remembered unless we look through the bread and wine to the broken body and the shed blood of Christ. We esteem not him that we do not mind, we value not him that we do not, with the weight of our souls, intently lean upon. Not that any man is free from roving while the flesh cleaves to him. (The involuntary startings of the flesh, the involuntary injections of the devil, do not make us unworthy receivers. God regards the willingness of the spirit to affect us, and the weakness of the flesh to pity us. 'He knows our frame, that we are but dust,' and dust is apt to be removed with a blast of wind.) But when the reins are let loose to the headstrong flesh, when we pull it not in, but follow rather than resist the motions; it is then that we make light of the dignity of this ordinance, and the great and glorious body of our Lord represented thereby. Neither can we understand every actual consent to such motions at the time of our attendance to be the unworthy receiving, which makes us guilty of the body and blood of Christ, though it be an unworthy carriage, unless we should count all the apostles to be unworthy receivers, who, if not in the time, yet presently after the first partaking of it, contended among themselves about earthly greatness in the kingdom of the Messiah, as it is probable from Luke xxii. 24. But when it is habitual, voluntary, and without a purpose of soul, and a 'setting the heart to seek the Lord,' 1 Chron. xxii. 19, such an one is not free from this character of an unworthy receiver.

II. The sinfulness of this. It is a contracting the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord. This unworthy carriage derives its original from that disposition which incited the Jews to a crucifying of him. Though there be not a blow struck at his person, there is the spring of as many blows as ever the Jews gave him. *Diversa peccata, par contumelia.* What hath been said lately about the sinfulness of unbelief might be applied to this case. I shall therefore say the less of it. Though there be a difference in the circumstances of the several sins, there is little or none in the contempt and indignity. He that doth despite to the image or arms of a prince, would do the same to his person, were it as much in his power.

1. It is an implicit approbation of the Jews' act in crucifying Christ. If we are not affected with that state of Christ, we consent to, and approve of, that act of his crucifiers; not positively, but privatively; not having that temper and affection of spirit which such an action doth call for from us. This is one way, among many others, of being accessory to another's sin, by not having a regret at it. He that makes light at the death of an innocent person,* confesseth him a malefactor, and that he deserves to be slain, since being slain, he deserves so little regard, or at least he makes him a malefactor, and gives just occasion of suspicion that he would have been ready enough to have imbrued his hands in that man's blood. The committing a sin is an approbation of all of the same kind that went before. Had it not been so, the guilt of the blood of all the prophets could not have fallen upon the heads of that generation which murdered Christ, Luke. xi. 47. Whosoever hath slight thoughts of the death of Christ, and neglects those duties so great a condescension calls for, partly consents to the savage usage Christ met with from the Jews. They were the authors of the first crime, and an unworthy receiver the abettor.

2. It exceeds the sin of the Jews in some circumstances, as well as that exceeded this in others. That was against his person, this against his propitiation; they did it against one they accounted a blasphemer, we do it

* Pemble, p. 507.

against one we account not only innocent, but a Redeemer. The Jews tore his body, and an unworthy receiver, saith Chrysostom, defiles it, by putting the body of Christ into an unclean vessel. The sin is greater, by how much impurity and defilement is more against his nature than death and torment.

3. In regard of the relation the ordinance hath to Christ. There is an analogy between the bread and the wine, and the body and blood of Christ. The nearer relation anything hath to God, the more heinous is the offence. To kill a debauched man unjustly, innocent of any crime to deserve death, is an affronting God in his image, Gen. ix. 6. To neglect uncharitably a member of Christ is greater, because it is a despising of Christ in his mystical body, Mat. xxv. 45. This is greater, because it is an affront to his body and blood in the picture and representation of him. To fling the picture of a prince into the kennel, and stamp upon it with contempt, is treasonable in some places. A man of quality is not injured so much by breaking his earthen vessels, as by defacing and defiling his arms, the marks of his honour. It disparageth the whole covenant of grace in unworthy usage of the seals of it. How base a disposition is it to sit down at the table of a man with an hostile mind against him! to stab the master of the feast at his own table, while he is treating and entertaining us with dainties!

4. It is a great sin, as it is against the greatest testimony of his love. That hand which was afterwards pierced and nailed upon the cross for us, did first break this sacrament to us. He appointed it when he was to go out of the world, when he knew all things were given into his hands, John xiii. 3; when he knew he was to leave the world, and sit down at the right hand of his Father; he would then do a work worthy of himself, to declare his own liberality to us. It was the first fruit of the power granted to him. It is a violation of that marriage knot whereby Christ would have us be joined to him, and become his spouse. He only was the author of this. His crucifixion could not be without other hands, and the wickedness of many persons in bringing him to his sufferings. But this acknowledgeth him only the author. The motive of his sufferings was the satisfaction of his Father's justice, as well as his love to us; this hath purely his own love for the spring of it. His suffering was a part of his obedience; but the only motive of this institution was his kindness. And the apostle preface this institution (as it may seem) with a manifestation of his love, 'having loved his own, he loved them to the end,' John xiii. 1, as if he could not leave a higher pledge of his love than this; since he could not leave himself, he would leave his picture.

III. The danger of this sin, he 'eats and drinks damnation to himself.' As the sin is set forth in the greatest blackness, so is the punishment in the greatest dreadfulness. The sin subjects us to the same punishment that was reserved for the crucifiers of Christ. God inflicteth upon his own temporal corrections, upon final unbelievers eternal; he useth his rods on some, his axes on others. It is but reason the severity upon the offender should be proportionable to the communications to the worthy receiver. Where his liberality is unworthily used, his severity shall be justly felt.

He eats and drinks damnation to himself. Damnation is not the end of the ordinance, no more than it is the end of the gospel, or of Christ's coming into the world. The supper was appointed for holy and beneficial ends, but the unworthiness of the receiver turns that into a sword which was intended for food. Worms grew from that manna which was intended for a blessing, when they used it not according to the command of God, Exod. xvi. 20. Rain is to make the earth fruitful; and where it meets with a good soil, it opens the womb of the earth to bring forth wholesome plants; but where it lights upon a bad soil, it brings forth briars and thorns. It is not the fault

of the rain, but the disposition of the ground, which produceth hurtful and venomous plants which are 'nigh unto cursing,' Heb. vi. 7. So the ordinance is bread to strengthen, wine to refresh; but where the wickedness of a man is mixed with it, there is poison in it, a piercing hook under a delightful bait. The word is a savour of life and a savour of death, 2 Cor. ii. 16; a savour of life when mixed with faith, a savour of death when mixed with unbelief. Where the blood of Christ doth not cure, it inflames a wound; where it doth not save, it condemns; that which is not melted by the sun grows into a greater hardness. Christ, as a sacrifice on the cross, was pleasing to God, as the murdered innocent a burden of guilt on the Jews; so as he is grateful food in the sacrament to a worthy receiver, he is the bane of an unworthy communicant by reason of his unholiness. It was a sad cut to David to be guilty of the blood of Uriah, whose blood, though not shed by his hand, was designed by him to be spilt in the service of his country; yet how was his soul galled for it, and his son afterwards in the head of an army against him for his punishment? What a crime is it to kill a child in the womb, who never yet saw the light? What is it then to murder the Son of God in the signs of his body, the Saviour of the world, the king of glory, whose blood is unconceivably more precious than the blood of all men, the life of all angels; doth not this deserve a severe correction?

IV. The use.

1. The manner of duties must be regarded as well as the matter. The matter of this ordinance is participated by both the worthy and the unworthy receiver. The manner makes the difference. The same matter of prayer may be put up by two several persons, the one accepted, the other rejected; one offers it with a wicked, the other with a sincere mind, Prov. xxi. 27. The eating the passover 'otherwise than it was written,' was dangerous, and needed Hezekiah's prayer to God for a pardon of them, 2 Chron. xxx. 18. He that came 'without a wedding garment' could have relished the sweetness of the meat, but, intruding in an unbecoming garb, was turned out as unfit for the king's table. As God hath the love of a friend, so he hath the greatness of a sovereign. He will not be treated with as an ordinary friend, but 'sanctified in all that draw near to him,' Lev. x. 3. His gracious indulgence must not diminish our awful thoughts of his majesty. Though it is a crucified Christ we remember, one clothed with infirmities, yet it is one that hath dropped his mantle, and is exalted at the right of the majesty on high. Since he is God in heaven, we must not be hasty to present ourselves in an unbecoming garb before him: Eccles. v. 2, 'Let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God, for God is in heaven.' Circumstances in worship are more than ciphers; but if they were no more, take away all the ciphers joined with an unit, how is the sum curtailed to nothing?* The voluntary omission of a circumstance necessary to an action doth not excuse but aggravate.

2. The holiness of an ordinance will not excuse a miscarriage in it. Some are nourished by this ordinance, others pollute themselves. The fruit is not according to the holiness of the ordinance, but the disposition of the receiver. Before the destruction of the temple, Ezek. x. 2, God saith, 'Fill thy hand with coals, and scatter them over the city.' The fire in the temple, which they thought was to serve for the expiation of their sin, should serve for the destruction of the city. The temple hath thunders and lightnings in it as well as music, Rev. iv. 5. The most wholesome food sinks† under the power of corrupt humours in the stomach. Nadab and Abihu were the true priests of God; they intended to offer incense to the true God.

* Durand.

† Qu. 'stinks'?—Ed.

The incense was according to the mind of God, and the censers were of the consecrated vessels. They erred only in taking strange fire, which God had not commanded, and this cost them their lives, Lev. x. 1, 2. We may have right ordinances, direct our addresses to the true God; but the holiness of those will not excuse the want of heavenly fire, the grace of the Spirit, and the want of a due value of the mediation of Christ.

3. The sins of those that draw nearest to God are the blackest. Never was anything termed a guilt of the body and blood of Christ but the Jews' wickedness in crucifying, men's apostasy in denying him after knowledge, and the abuse of this ordinance, and that not only in the unregenerate Corinthians, but in the best that were guilty of those miscarriages; he taxeth whosoever eats and drinks unworthily. An universal particle.

4. The ground of our mischief is always in ourselves. It is not from the emptiness of the ordinance, that is a full cistern; nor from the shortness of God's grace, he is an overflowing fountain; but from want of those graces, or of exercising those graces, which are the bucket to draw and the mouth to drink. The plantain is not poisonous in its nature, but the venomous nature of the toad turns it into poison. Misery ariseth not from the insufficiency of the sacrament, but the unworthiness of the receiver. That judgment is conveyed to one, when grace is conveyed to another, is our own fault. The door is open, but unbelief pulls to the door and locks it. The miseries rained down upon us are but the ascended vapours of our own sin. Christ hath an hand to reach the benefit to us upon our worthiness, and a hand to inflict the punishment on us upon our abuse; he makes himself a feast for the believer's faith, but the unbeliever makes himself a feast for the Redeemer's wrath.

5. We see here the base nature of sin. It changeth the brightest ordinances, makes the waters of the sanctuary bitter, turns food into poison, and a cup of salvation into one of damnation. We frustrate God's expectations when he looks for fruit; then it is just he should frustrate ours when we look for food.

6. If an unworthy receiver be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, a worthy receiver hath a special interest in the body and blood of Christ. He hath as much advantage thereby as the other hath guilt. The apostle speaks this to put a bar to the Corinthians' sin, to make them sensible of their unreasonable miscarriage, not to scare them from the ordinance, but to excite them to come to it in a becoming manner, so as to honour God and benefit themselves; that they might sheathe God's sword, and not draw it against themselves. Though the Red Sea swallowed up the Egyptians that would venture into it, yet it was a wall to preserve and deliver the Israelites from the hands of their enemies. He that receives worthily, eats and drinks salvation to himself, by the rule of contraries. The ordinance comes upon him like rain, fitting him to bring forth herbs meet for the use of him that dressed him; and such a person receives blessing from God, Heb. vi. 7. Certainly that Christ, that never turned away a little faith without a blessing when he was upon earth, will much less now disappoint it when it is exercised on him. Since in heaven there is no diminution of his compassion, there can be no increase of his severity to such an one.

7. Should not all of us, that have at any time of our lives been partakers of this ordinance, reflect upon ourselves, yea, the best of us? Can any of us say that we never contracted the guilt of the body and blood of Christ; that we always had some worthy dispositions for him; that our minds were never wavering, our hearts never cold, our affections never languishing, our spirits, that should have been in heaven, never sunk to the earth? Is there not then a partial guilt? Yet God hath admitted us again and again, spread

his table, filled his cup, put manna into our mouths, and his cup into our hands. Wonderful patience in God, to bear with a wonderful sin in us! 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God,' may be the cry of every one of us, as it was David's, Ps. li. 14. How often have we wounded him that hath delivered us, killed him that hath saved us, abused that blood that was the price of no less than the redemption of our souls and bodies! Who doth not condemn the Jews for crucifying the Lord of life in his infirmities? And ought we not as well to condemn ourselves for crucifying the Lord of life in his glory?

8. How, then, should we take heed, whenever we approach to the Lord's table, of any unworthy demeanour towards him, whereby to contract such guilt and incur such displeasure? How should we endeavour after as clear affections to Christ as he bears to us, with meltings of heart and faintings of soul for him? We receive benefit according to our worthiness. As we prepare our souls for God, so he prepares himself for us: Isa. lxiv. 5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and works righteousness, that remembers thee in thy ways.' He is a feast of fat things to them that have faith to receive him. If we value not the pledges of his love, we shall bear the marks of his indignation. Adam, the first rebel of mankind, had the sweetness of a promise, and was not given up to that justice of God which he had provoked, and the malice of that devil whose temptation he had swallowed. Nor was Peter, who, in the denial of his loving Master in so base a manner, had gratified the devil, given up to be winnowed by him. But the first that ever offended in an unworthy receiving the Supper (if he did receive it) was, without remedy, given up as a possession to that devil who had animated him to his treacherous design. It is a dreadful eating when attended with such a sin and such a judgment. To receive worthily is to be affected with the sufferings of Christ; the cause of those sufferings, sin; the end of those sufferings, redemption from the guilt and filth of sin; the acceptance of those sufferings by God, the confirmation of the fruits of them; to cast ourselves into the arms of a crucified Saviour, washing our souls in his blood; pleading his merits before God, humbly and believingly applying them to ourselves. Let us, then, raise up our spirits, drink deep of the cup of salvation, drink abundantly of that love which is sweeter than wine. If we come before him in a becoming posture, with our hearts burning, our souls thirsting, our drooping faith may be then revived, our closed eyes opened, dark shades may fly away. The disciples that knew not Christ in the way, neither by the features of his countenance, nor the spirituality of his discourse, yet knew him in the efficacy of a sacrament, if that were the celebration of it, as some think, which is mentioned Luke xxiv. 30, 31. He withheld his grace before, to honour this ordinance with it. Let, then, the bounty of Christ engage us.* He hath not given us a hand or an arm, his head or his feet, a few drops of his blood, but his whole body, his whole soul, his graces, his virtues, the fruits of his death, to be participated by us, to be insouled with us. He hath given himself wholly for a sacrifice; he hath given himself wholly in a sacrament; a greater gift could not be given on the cross; a greater gift cannot be given at a table. He is given for our comfort, our refreshment, our physic, our victory. The relation the sacrament hath to the sacrifice, and the benefits conveyed to us, call for a becoming carriage from us. Let us discern the Lord's body, which is the mystery and subject of the sacrament; value it in its due rank as the price of our redemption, the delight of God, the admiration of angels, a body that hath nothing comparable unto it in the whole world.

* Lingend. de Eucharist. p. 185.