

THE LORD THE OWNER OF ALL THINGS.

AN INDUCEMENT FROM EARTHLY-MINDEDNESS.

For all . . . is thine.—1 CHRON. XXIX. 11.

THESE words are part of David's praise and solemn thanksgiving to God. In which we may observe, 1, the occasion or ground; 2, the form and mode of it.

1. The occasion of it is this, as laid down in the former verses: David, in a general assembly of his people, declaring his design to prepare for the building of a temple for the solemn worship of God, moves them to contribute towards it, and encourages them by his own example. They comply with him herein, and contribute 'willingly,' cheerfully, of their own accord, without further importunity; ver. 6, 'sincerely,' not out of ostentation, not to gratify their king, but to honour God in promoting his interest and service; ver. 9, 'liberally,' in great proportion; for reckoning a talent of silver at £375, and a talent of gold at £4500, what they offered amounted to above twenty-six millions of pounds sterling (besides the ten thousand drams of gold, the other metals, and precious stones, ver. 7), which, with what David himself gave out of his private treasury, being above sixteen millions more, ver. 4, makes a very vast sum. For this he and the people rejoice. Pleasure is *εὐλασίας εὐσεβείας ἐπιγινόμενον τέλος*, the result of an excellent act, ver. 9, and David lets forth this joy in public praises, ver. 10. He blesses and praises God, not because they had so much, but because they had hearts to lay out so much for God and his worship. It is more occasion of joy and praise to expend much for God and for his service than to have much to expend. To have much may be a curse and a snare, and matter of greater condemnation; but to have a heart to employ it for God is a happiness indeed, a far more blessed thing than to keep it, or to gain it, or any way to receive it, Acts xx. 25. And this is a truth so evident to reason (though a paradox to worldlings), that the heathen did acknowledge it. Isidore tells us it was the maxim of some amongst the Persians.

2. The form or mode of his praising God we have in this verse. It is an ascribing all excellencies to him. Whence we may learn wherein the true praising or blessing of God consists; it lies in acknowledging that to be God's which is his. We can give him nothing, for all is his; we can add nothing to him or his glories by blessing him, he is far above all such

praises and blessings ; he wants nothing that is excellent, he is all-sufficient of himself, and infinite in all his perfections, and was so from, and will be so to, everlasting. All that men and angels can do is to acknowledge him to be what he is, and to have what he hath. And to do this is to praise or bless him. Thus, when our Lord Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray, and how to praise the Most High, this is the mode of praising him, Mat. vi. 13, 'Thine is,' &c. And after the same manner does David here praise him.

'Thine is the greatness.' Thou art immensely, infinitely great, and all other greatness besides is from thee, it is thine.

'The power.' Thy power is almighty, and the power of all others is derived from thee, and depends altogether upon thee, it is thine.

'The glory.' Thou art all-glorious, and all other glory is but the shadow of it.

'The victory.' Thou conquerest all that oppose thee, and givest victory to all that vanquish, the victory is thine.

'The majesty,' or 'authority' as some render it. Thou hast all authority in heaven and earth, and all that have authority have it from thee ; what is not exercised for thee is no authority, and what is duly exercised is thine.

'The kingdom.' Whoever rules in any realm, the kingdom is thine ; O Lord, they do but rule by commission from thee, and as substitutes under thee ; thou art supreme governor of them all, thou art exalted as head above all, and, in a word, all is thine, all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine.

All dominion is here ascribed to God, whether it signify rule, or whether it signify propriety ; God is both the ruler of all, and likewise the owner of all. I have insisted on the former at large in some late discourses, and the latter I have chosen for my present subject. Take it in this observation, clearly held forth in the words of the text,

Obs. The Lord is the owner of all things.

Whatever is in being is either in heaven or on earth, and all this is the Lord's ; he has the best title to it, he is the true proprietor and owner of it.

This is a truth of great moment and consequence, yet little, or not at all (so far as I have observed) insisted on in pulpits, and but sparingly touched in writings ; but since it is of much importance, and exceeding useful to stay a little on, it may not be amiss.

In the prosecuting hereof, I shall endeavour to shew, I. What evidence there is in Scripture for the Lord's title to all things. II. What kind of title it is for which he is called the owner of all. III. What the ground and foundation of it is, upon what account he challenges it and will have it acknowledged. And then, IV. What useful application may be made of it, how much and excellent fruit it will bear if it be duly improved.

I. For the first, the Scripture abounds with evidence for this purpose, asserting the Lord's title to all things, even such as we count ours, whether ours in *common* with others, or such as we think to be *properly* ours.

1. Of the former sort ; the world in general is said to be his own, Ps. l. 12, the fulness, the furniture of it, whatever fills it or adorns it, whatever does replenish or beautify it : 'The world, and all that it contains, is mine.' More particularly the principal and integral parts of this great fabric, with appurtenances. Heaven is his, Ps. lxxxix. 11, and whatsoever has the name of heaven, Deut. x. 14. The heaven of heavens ; i. e., the highest heavens, these are the throne of the Most High ; and the heavens,

i. e., both the ether, the place of stars and planets, and the air, called heaven, Gen. i. 20, &c., this is called his chamber, Ps. civ. 8, the beams of his upper rooms in the watery clouds; and these clouds are his chariot, and the winds (which are but air in motion) are the wheels of his chariot. All, from the highest to the lowest, are his own.

The sea also is his, Ps. xcv. 5, and so are the rivers; and he resents it as an intolerable arrogance in Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he would lay claim to the river Nilus as his own, Ezek. xxix. 9. The earth likewise, Ex. xix. 5, not one, or many regions of the earth, but all, and all the parts of it, high and low, even to the centre, Ps. xcv. 4, and all the furniture of the whole, and every part of it, Ps. xxiv. 1, whatsoever in the least takes up any part of the earth, whatsoever is in it, Dent. x. 14. He lays claim to whatever is under the whole heaven as his own, Job xli. 11.

Finally, no more need be, if any more may be added, under this head. Time is his, and every season and moment of it, Ps. lxxiv. 16, 17. We are ready to say, We have time enough for this or that; but if we presume that it is ours, and at our disposing, it must be such time as falls neither under night nor day, nor any season of the year; for every moment of this is the Lord's, and so wholly at his disposal.

2. But there may be more question of things under the other head, such as we count properly ours. Yet here we may be deceived in the title, and mistake the true owner. There is as much evidence that the Lord is the true proprietor and right owner even of these. We may be proprietors in respect of men, so far as none of them may be able to produce any good title, or lay any just claim to what we have, nor can of right deprive us of it; but we are no proprietors in reference to God. He is the owner of us, and all we have, and not ourselves, as will be manifest by an induction of particulars collected from the Scriptures.

(1.) Lands; that which is left one as his inheritance, or that which he purchaseth, or which he is otherwise legally instated in; this he counts unquestionably his own: and so it may be, as to any title that man can set up against it: Ps. xlix. 11, they impose their names upon their lands, signifying thereby that they are the undoubted owners of them; and others agree with them herein, and say, This is such a man's land, and that is such a man's. But the Lord puts in another claim, which will carry it: 'The land,' says he, 'is mine,' Lev. xxv. 23. This is spoken not of the land as it was then only, but as it would be when the Lord had given it them, as much as he gives anything, when they had conquered it, and the law of nations, *καταῦμεν ἡ ** τῶν καταούρων ἵναί φασί, when it was divided amongst them, and each one had possession of his share; when it was as much theirs as anything could be among men, yet then says the Lord, 'The land is mine.' You cannot dispose of it as you will, but as the chief landlord, the true proprietor will allow you.

And the same may be said of houses as of lands; we are no more the owners of the one than of the other in reference to the Lord of all. The Lord shewed how much they are his own in giving not only the lands, but the houses and cities of the Canaanites to the children of Israel. And when the Israelites built a house, they used to dedicate it, Dent. xx. 5; and the solemnity of the dedication was feasting and thanksgiving, and by this means they acknowledged the Lord's interest in their habitation. The 80th Psalm is such a thanksgiving at the dedication of David's house, as the title of it tells us. So when the walls of Jerusalem were built, they

* Qu. 'καταῦμενα'?—Ed.

were solemnly dedicated, Neh. xii. 27. And because they were wont to be dedicated by other nations, hence the civil law determines, that the gates and walls of cities, *nullius in bonis sunt*, are no man's property, *ædificio * cadit solo*.

(2.) The fruits of the land, whatever it yields, is as much the Lord's as the land itself. Though among us he that does but farm some ground, and pretends to no other title, yet the fruits of it, and what through his industry it produceth, he counts his own; yet whoever let it, or take it, whatever care, or pains, or culture is spent upon it, the Lord is the owner of all that it yields, Hosea ii. 9. She calls all her own, ver. 5; but the Lord shows her who was the true owner, and will make her understand effectually whose it was by disposing of it as he pleases. He that has the present disposal, has the propriety. So it is made an aggravation of the people's idolatry, that what was the Lord's of right they offered to idols, Ezek. xvi. 18, 19.

Cattle also, wherewith the land is stocked, and wherein, in ancient times, their riches did principally consist, Job i. 3, are as much his. Whoever have the possession, the Lord is the owner, Ps. l. 10, 11. Hence it was ordained under the law, that the children of Israel should offer the first-born of their cattle, and the first-fruits of their trees and lands, unto God, Exod. xxxiv. 19, 20. This was the tenure by which they held of him all they had; by this part they acknowledged him to be Lord of all, and that he was the proprietor, though they had the use of all. Thus what was not fit to be offered, was to be redeemed; and if they did not redeem it, though it were but an ass, no man had any right in it so much as to use it, Exod. xiii. 18. God's propriety in such things is evident by one instance, Mat. xxi. 2.

(3.) Money and clothes also are as much his, though they be on our backs, or in our coffers, as that which is most our own; yet the Lord is more the owner thereof than the possessor, Haggai ii. 8. This David acknowledges in this chapter. All the silver, and gold, and precious stones, and other metals which they offered so willingly for the building of the temple, it was all the Lord's, even before they offered it, ver. 14, 16. And thus the act of the Israelites is best justified, when they spoiled the Egyptians, and restored not the jewels of silver, and gold, and raiment which they had borrowed, Exod. xii. 35, 36. To detain that which is not ours, without the owner's consent, is theft; but here the Israelites had the consent of the chief Owner; they had his special warrant for it, who was the Lord of all the Egyptians had, and had right to dispose of it to whom he pleased. If the Lord had not been more the owner of the Egyptians' raiment and jewels, then they themselves, the Israelities could not be excused.

(4.) There is something counted more ours than any of the former, viz., our children; the parents' relation to them is such as cannot be extinguished, nor transferred to any other; they have such interest in them, and such power to dispose of them, as amongst the Israelites they might, in some cases, sell them, as when they could not otherwise pay their debts, or were not able to sustain them, Exod. xxi. 7. And amongst the Romans they had power of life and death over their children: *καὶ παρέσταν τοὺς παῖδας τοῖς γονεῦσιν ἐπιτρέψαν καὶ πονεύειν ἀτιμωμένως*. The ancient laws of the Romans, says Simplicius,† allowed parents both to sell their children

* Qu. 'ædificium?' That is, the building goes with the ground on which it is erected.—Ed.

† Ad Epicteti Enchiridium.

and to put them to death without being questioned for it. Yet for all this parents are not so much the owners of their children as God is, who is the owner of all, Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. The ground of parents' interest in their children, and why they are judged so much their owners, is because they give them life and being; but this reason will shew the Lord more the owner of them, for he contributes more to the life and being of children than the parents do, and without him they could do nothing towards it. It is in him that all the children of men live, move, &c., Acts xvii. 25, 28. And we find when he calls them 'my sons,' then the ground of it is added, 'the work of my hands,' Isa. xlv. 11.

(5.) We are thought to have much propriety in our children, but much more in ourselves, and yet the Lord has more propriety in our persons than we ourselves; so much more, that we are said in Scripture not to be our own in comparison, 1 Cor. vi. 19. His title and interest in us is so great, that all which we conceive we have in ourselves is swallowed up by it. We are not our own. Whose are we then? who has more right to us? Why, his we are who made us, Ps. c. 3. He hath made us, and (as it may be as well read) his we are. We are his people, his servants. A bond-servant was no way *sui juris*, could no way dispose of his own person, it was part of his master's goods; *peculium domini*, he might sell it, or do what he would with it, *in servum omnia licent*. Our persons are no more our own than such servants were. We are more the Lord's than they were their master's.

(6.) It need not now seem strange to tell you that the Lord is the owner of our bodies, that he has so much propriety therein as they are more his than ours. The apostle tells us as much: 1 Cor. vi. 20, 'Glorify God in your bodies, which are his.' Our bodies, and every member thereof, are his; for if the whole be so, no part is exempted. And therefore they spake proud things, and presumptuously usurped the propriety of God, who said, 'Our lips are our own,' Ps. xii. 3, 4; as though their lips had not been his who is Lord and Owner of all, but they had been lords thereof, and might have used them as they list. This provoked God to shew what right he had to dispose of such lips and tongues, by cutting them off.

(7.) But what shall we say of our souls? Our bodies indeed may be so in our power, and at the disposal of others, that we cannot count them, nor use them as our own; they may be imprisoned or enslaved, yea, or sold. That has been ordinary heretofore, to make sale of the bodies of men as well as anything else; but the soul would remain free in such a condition, and is not in danger of any such bondage, confinement, or alienation, nor anything else that can hinder it from being called or used as our own. Is it not so, are not our souls our own? The Lord answers this himself, Ezek. xviii. 4; and the apostle says both the body and the spirit or soul is the Lord's, and not our own, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; consequently all the powers of the soul are his, and all the abilities of those faculties, in what degree soever they are found or exercised in the soul of man, for he that is the owner of the principal has right to the accessories.*

So you see it is most clear in Scripture that God is the owner of all, and every thing and person.

II. Now, since all just propriety and right has some good ground and foundation, let us inquire in the next place what is the ground and foun-

* Caius. Si in alienis scribat, licet aureis vel argenteis litteris, ejus est scriptura cujus est charta.—*Instit.*, lib. ii. tit. 1, sect. 6.

dation of the Lord's title to and propriety in all things, and so discover the reason why he is the owner of all; and this will shew the justness of his claim, and the necessity and reasonableness of acknowledging it, and yielding to it. Now, the ground of God's propriety in all things is his creating of all, and (which is equivalent to creation) his upholding them. Redemption is a ground of peculiar interest in the redeemed; but it is not pertinent here to insist upon that, because the question is of an universal propriety, not in some, but in all, and the foundation of this general title to all is creation. Accordingly, you may observe in many of the scriptures before quoted, as also in others, where the Lord's propriety is asserted, this, as the ground of it, is annexed: Ps. lxxxix. 11, 12, the heavens, the earth, the whole world, and all therein is thine. Why so? 'Thou hast founded them.' And so are all the regions and quarters of the world, northern and southern, western and eastern; for Tabor was on the west, and Hermon on the east; all are thine, for thou hast created them. So sea and land, Ps. xcv. 5. As all things measured by time, so time itself, the measure of all, Ps. lxxiv. 16, 17. 'Thou hast made the light,' i.e., the moon for the night, and the sun for the day. He lays claim to all the climes of the earth, and all the seasons of the year, on this account; he made them. So children are his, being the work of his hands, Isa. xlv. 11; and our persons his own, because he made us, Ps. c. 8. He still produceth.* He that gave all their being is clearly the owner of all; he has all right in the work of his hands, to dispose of it as he will. This will be more evident and unquestionable, if we take notice of these particulars.

1. He made all for himself. He was not employed by any to make it for another, for in that case the maker is sometimes not the owner; but the Lord did employ himself in that great work, and for himself did he undertake and finish it, Prov. xvi. 4, Col. i. 15, 16. The first-born, the heir of all, because all created, not only by, but for him, Rev. iv. 11. Not for the pleasure of another, as the Israelites wrought for Pharaoh.

2. He made all things of nothing, either without any matter at all, or without any but what himself had before made of nothing. A potter when he makes an earthen vessel, if the clay be not his own which he makes it of, he is not the full owner of the vessel, though he formed it: the form is his, the matter is another's; but since the Lord made all of nothing, or of such matter as himself had made, all is wholly his, matter and form, all entirely. *Caius; Ex alienis tabulis navim fecit, navis ejus erit de cujus ligno.*†

3. He made all without the help or concurrence of any other. There was none that assisted him, or did in the least co-operate with him in the work of creation. He created all, *οὐδενος ἐπιδείμμενος*, as Athanasius. He needed none, he used not any help foreign, Isa. xlv. 24. Those that assist and concur with another in the making of a thing, may claim a share in it; but here lies no such claim in this case, where the Lord alone did all, alone made all. All is his only.

4. He upholds all things in the same manner as he created, continues the being of all things in the same way as he gave it. He does it of himself, without other support, without any assistant. All would fall into nothing in a moment, if he did not every moment bear them up. So that all things upon this account have still their being from him every moment, and their well-being too, and all the means which conduce to it; and there-

* Ps. civ. 36. He still produceth. All things within the course of nature receive being, so they are his works, ver. 31.

† Tom. i. page 188.

fore all are his own, Col. i. 16, 17, Heb. i. 2, 3. His Son is the heir, *i. e.*, the owner of all things, not only because he made the worlds, but also because he, as one God with the Father, upholds all things. He that thus created all, thus maintaineth all, must needs be the owner of all. There cannot be a more full and clear title to propriety in all or any things, than the Lord's so creating, and so upholding of all and every thing. Why the Lord is owner of all hereby we see.

Now for the *ſc.* that he is so, may be thus made evident. Propriety is a right of possessing, disposing, and using the thing or person owned. And such a right the Lord has in reference to all things and persons, and shews he has it by acting accordingly.

1. He has a right to possess all, and is actually in possession of all. The 'possessor of heaven and earth,' *i. e.*, of the 'whole world, is his title and attribute, Gen. xiv. 19, 22. Ps. cxxxix. 14, he 'fills heaven and earth;' he is actually everywhere and in everything, as the maker and preserver of it; and so, as the owner, he has taken possession of all, and keeps it, and will do, while it is capable of possession. And sure he would not take and keep possession of anything but what is his own; he has undoubted right and title to all he possesses.

2. He has right to dispose of all as he will, and does actually dispose of any things and persons as he thinks good. He disposes of the things in this world when, and to whom, in what manner, and upon what terms, and for what time he pleases. He has *jus præſenter diſponendi*, the right of present disposal, which is properly dominion or property.* He gives possession and ejects, puts in and throws out, lifts up and casts down, whom and when he will, Isa. xl. 22-24, 1 Sam. ii. 6-8. Why does he thus dispose of all? Why, because all is his own. The pillars, *i. e.* (say many), the poles of the earth, the whole earth from one pole to the other, is all his own. Dan. ii. 21, he gives kingdoms as we give farthings; he disposes of them to beggars, and throws the loftiest princes out of their thrones upon the dunghill, Isa. xliii. 3, and xlv. 12, 14. You see he disposes of persons and things, kingdoms and countries, houses, and lands, and cities, of money and merchandise, and all. He would not do this, but that he has right to do it; and how could he have right to do it, if all were not his own? And he has right to dispose of persons as he pleases, not only as to their outward condition in all circumstances, but as to their eternal state. So much propriety has he in soul and body, that he can make both everlastingly happy or miserable as he will, Rom. ix. 18-20. Can any reasonably except against God for dealing with man as he pleases, since he is his own creature, of his own forming? He shews how much right the Lord has herein, by one that has less, ver. 21. He that disposes of all things and persons as he pleases, shews thereby they are his own. If they were not his, what right could there be to do it?

3. He has right to use all as he will, to make what use of persons or things he pleases. Accordingly, he can make the land barren or fruitful, he can improve the ground or consume it, he can hold up kingdoms, cities, houses, families, or let them fall. Who can tie him to keep the world, or any part of it, in repair? He can sow it with man and beast, or he can sow it with salt or with fire, and has right to do it. He can turn a place like the garden of God into a vale of Sodom, or let Sharon run into a desert. He shews what right he has, Jer. i. 10; he has right to use all as he will. He can employ what persons he pleases for the highest or the meanest

* *Dominium est jus, sive facultas habendi, regendi, utendi rebus vel personis.*

uses. He can make use of Hazael, as a man or as a dog, 2 Kings viii. 13: as a man when he was a subject, and as a dog when he was a king; and could use the great Nebuchadnezzar as a king or as a beast. He binds all others to such use of what they have, as he thinks fit; * and they have no right to use anything otherwise. They are obliged to employ whatever they possess, and all the improvement of it, for his use, for his interest and honour. And if they do not thus employ it, they forfeit it, and he has right to take the forfeiture, though he always does not. And how could he of right do this to all the world, if all were not his own?

Thus much may serve to shew both that the Lord is owner of all, and why he is so.

III. Let us now further endeavour to be satisfied concerning the nature and quality of this propriety, that so we may understand in what sort and way, in what capacity or degree, the Lord is the owner of all. Take an account of this in some particulars.

1. He is the primary and original owner of all. His title and propriety is underived. Whatever right any other has, it descends from him; but his right is not derived from any other. He had it not from any former owner, for he was the first; he had it not by inheritance, for he has no predecessor, nor does he succeed any; nor had he it by contract, for in that very instant wherein he created anything, it was upon that account then his, before any moment wherein we can conceive any contract to have been possible. That which he gave for all things that are his, was their very being; and from his giving this, his right to them did result immediately, before and without any act of theirs, and so without any contract or bargain, which includes mutual acts.

Nor had he it by gift, Rom. xi. 85. The question here is a peremptory denial. No creature can pretend that he gives God anything, any right which he had not before. It is true the holy angels and sanctified men do give up themselves unto God; but this does not make them his first, but is an acknowledgment that they were so before. As soon as they were creatures they were his, even before they did act either as good or intelligent creatures; and when they resign up themselves unto him, they do not hereby give him a title to them, but effectually recognise it. They were his before, whether they would or no; but now they are his voluntarily, and hereby acknowledge it. They now oblige themselves to regard him as their owner, and he now owns them in a more peculiar manner. But he was before the owner of them, as he is of all things, by a primary and original right.

2. He is the absolute owner of all, without any condition or limitation. His right and propriety is not in any way limited, nor in the least conditional. He holds not anything *sub certa lege*, upon certain terms and conditions. For who could give law to God, or prescribe him terms, or tie him to conditions, or any way bound or limit him who was Lord of all, before any were in a capacity to deal thus with one another. Some, in what they possess, are limited as to the time, they may hold it so long, but no longer; some as to disposing, they may not alienate it at all, or not convey it but to such and such; and some as to the use, it must not run to ruin or out of heart, and some proportion of the profits must be paid out of it. But the Lord is not under any such restraint, as to all, or anything. None can limit him but himself. He makes his own terms, and has no other

* ἔστιν ὅπως ἀνθρώποις χρῆσθαι

bounds but his own will. He holds all as long as he will, disposes of all as he pleases, uses all as he thinks fit, and none can say unto him, What doest thou? They that are, or count themselves most absolute in their possessions or kingdoms, in respect of God, have but a limited and conditional tenure. And if they transgress their bounds, and observe not the conditions they are under, they do it at their peril, and he will call them to account for it, they must answer for it before the great God of heaven and earth. But he is accountable to none, being under no tie nor obligation from any in the world, Dan. iv. 84, 85. The work of his hands could not tie him to terms, more than the clay can bind the potter; nor would he limit himself to the prejudice of his own right. His title to all remains such as becomes him, the greatest, highest, and most excellent, and therefore every way most absolute.

8. He is the principal owner. All others that have right to anything, have it under him, and in subordination to him, and are tied to acknowledge it by doing him service for whatever they have.

No creature has such a dominion or propriety, as the feudal laws call *allodium*, an independent and sovereign right, so as to be *nemini leudes*, under none, and to owe no service or acknowledgment for what he hath; though some owe it not to men, yet all owe it unto God. For he is Lord paramount, and all hold of him and under him, not only their estates, but their beings; and so are obliged to him, more than he that had *feudum ligium*, who upon that account *contra omnes fidelitatem domino ilebet*, was bound to be faithful to his lord against all men, the emperor not excepted. Amongst us, some hold what they possess of their landlords, some of manors, some of the king. But lord, and king, and all, hold of God, and owe him service and fealty as his liege vassals; they have all from him, and can duly dispose of nothing but by him, nor use anything but for him, Rom. xi. 86.

4. He is total owner of all. He has a full title to all, and the right is wholly in him; he has no copartner nor associates therein. When David gave the possession mentioned, 2 Sam. xix. 29, between Ziba and Mephibosheth, they had a joint interest therein, as Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah would have had in the navy and adventure, if they had joined their ships, according to the proposal, 1 Kings xxii. 49. But none has a joint interest with God. He has a plenary title to the whole world, not a half, or a divided right. As none could have such a title to the land of Egypt and the people thereof, as Pharaoh had, Gen. xlvii. 20, but he that was king of Egypt; if he had had a partner therein, he would have had a share in the royalty; so here, it is the royalty of God to be the owner of all things. This is not separable from him, nor communicable to any, but he that is God. If any should share in his title, they would share in his lordship; but he is Lord alone, Isa. xliii. 10, and xlv. 5, 6. Besides, the foundation of this propriety, as I shewed before, is God's creating of all things. Now, none can have a share in the right, but such as have a share in the ground of it. But God alone createth all things, and none beside him can create anything; and therefore, none can pretend to partake in the title with him. He had no partners in making all of nothing, or of sustaining all so made; and therefore he has no partner in the title to all. The propriety is wholly in him, he is the total owner of all.

5. He is the perpetual owner of all. His interest and right to all is never transferred, never diminished, never lost or extinct. However things are disposed of in the world, he still remains proprietor, and will do so for

ever, and he alone. In respect of God, there are no such owners as the civil law calls *perpetuarios*. For though one man may convey to another estates of inheritance to him and his heirs for ever, and thereby cuts off himself from all right, to deprive the other of his possession, yet the Lord always retains a right to dispossess whom, and when he pleases, being ever the full and absolute owner. This right abides in him for ever, for none can deprive him of it. What is said of one particular, holds true as to his propriety, in all, John x. 29. He must be greater and more powerful than the Almighty, that can wrest his right from him. There is no way of parting with it, unless he himself will voluntarily quit it. But neither will he divest himself of it, for it is one of the glories of his crown, that all should hold of him as the chief Lord and absolute Proprietor. And this honour will he not give, this glory will he not part with, to any other. It is annexed inseparably to his kingdom, and so must last no less than that which is everlasting, Dan. vii. 14. It can no way cease, unless the ground of it should fail. *Dominium non amittitur, nisi amisso eo in quo fundatur*,* property is not lost, unless the foundation of it fail. But that is here impossible, unless the Lord should cease to be what he is, the maker and preserver of all things, for therein his propriety is founded. And whereas it may be said, The Lord gives away many things, and that in one way of alienation, the propriety passes by gift to him that receives, he becomes the owner, I answer, So it is amongst men in full donations. But the Lord gives nothing so as to divest himself of the propriety he has therein. He gives us the use of things, an use limited as he thinks fit, and an answerable possession of them; but he never gives away his interest and propriety in what he bestows on any. And so you may observe in Scripture, that after he has given things, yet they are said to be his own still. He has given the earth unto men, Ps. cxv. 16, yet not so given it, but that it is his own still, Ps. xxiv. 11, 1 Cor. x. 26, 28. So he gave the land of Canaan to the Israelites, and gave it for an inheritance, Deut. iv. 21, yet did he not give away the propriety, it continued his own still. 'The land is mine,' Lev. xxv. 23. So Hosea ii. 8, 9, he gave, and yet still they were his own, and Ezek. xvi. 18, 19. So he gives us our souls, Ecces. xii. 7. The Father of spirits gives the spirit, the soul, but so as it is his still, Ezek. xviii. 4. He gives to the children of men some use and possession of things, but he does not give his interest and right in them. He is as much the owner of them as before he gave them, and so perpetually.

6. He is transcendently the owner of all. He has the greatest right to them, a super-eminent propriety and interest in them, far exceeding all that any other can challenge. He has more right to all than we have to any thing, and is more the owner of all than we are of that which is counted most our own. The nature and being of all things are his, he being the maker and upholder of them; but the use of things only is ours, and therein also we are subjected to him, and are to be ordered by him, having no right to use any thing, but as he appoints us, or gives us leave, no otherwise than according to the rules of our tenure prescribed by him. But he in this is ordered and regulated by none, but has right to, and may use all or any thing as he pleases. We count that which we pay for more our own than that we borrow, and an estate of inheritance more ours than that which we have but as tenants, and our children more our own than other possessions, and our persons more our own than children are; and our souls more our own than any thing. Yet the Lord is more the owner of

* Gerson.

all things than we are the owners of our souls; for propriety in things is more or less as the right and power to possess, dispose of them, or use them, is more or less; for herein dominion or propriety consists. Now we cannot hold, or retain, or possess our souls as long as we will: Eccles. viii. 8. No man has dominion over his spirit or soul, to keep it in his body while he pleases. Death comes (when the Lord will send it), and takes away the soul, whether we will or no, we have no right to keep it a moment longer; but the Lord has right to keep, or hold, or retain any thing as long as he pleases. And so, in this respect, all or any thing is more his own than our souls are.

Further, We have no right or power to dispose of our souls in what state we will, either a state of grace here, or of glory hereafter; but the Lord, who worketh or disposeth of them and all things, according to the counsel of his will, Eph. i. 11, has right to dispose of all things, in any state, as to their being or well-being, as to their happiness or misery, as he will. And so, in this respect also, all things are more his own than our souls are ours.

Finally, we have no right to use our souls, or any faculties thereof, as we will, but only according to the laws and rules he has given us; but the Lord has right to use all, or any thing, as he will himself; and so, in all respects, he is more the owner of all things than we are of our souls. He has more propriety in any, in all things, than we or any else have, even in that which is counted most our own.

7. He is the sole owner of all things. He is the only proprietor in the sense expressed in the former particulars; yea, none else but he is strictly and properly the true owner, not only of all, but of any thing. And that you may be satisfied herein, and assent to it as a truth, which at first sight may seem new and strange, and upon a bare proposal may meet with some contradiction, let me give some reason for it; for I would not impose any thing upon you of this nature, liable to exception, upon my bare assertion.

(1.) If the whole right be in him, none can have a part of it; but he is the full owner of all, and the right to all is wholly in him, as I made it evident in the fourth head.

(2.) If he have right to take all, or any thing away when he will, and to dispose of it to whom, and when, and how he pleases, and to tie and oblige the possessors to what uses they shall employ all they have, so as they have no right to employ it any otherwise, then is he the sole proprietor, and the right and title is only in him; for this power is a clear and undeniable evidence of it, as appears by the nature and essence of propriety, and the severals wherein it consists, of which I have given an account before. He that has right to do what he will with all, and every thing, and none else but he, is the sole owner of all, and every thing; but such is the Lord's dominion over all, such a right hath he as to all and every thing. Therefore, &c.

(3.) If the persons of the possessors be not their own, then nothing else is. He that is not the owner of himself, is owner of nothing; *ὁ δεσπότης τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ, πῶς οὐχ' ἔξει τὸ ὑποδεχόμενος*; he that is the lord and owner of the principal, cannot but be the owner of the accessories; but so is he who is Lord of all, the owner of all persons, and so the owner of all that belongs to them, and not they themselves. So a bond-servant, being part of his master's goods, *domini in bonis*, since himself was not his own, he was owner of nothing; all that he had was his master's. Thus, a Hebrew hav-

ing sold himself, or being sold by others, to be a servant, so that his person was become his master's possession, all that he had in that capacity was his master's, even his wife and children, Exod. xxi. 4. When he himself was free (as he might be by law in the seventh year), yet, by the same law of God, his wife and children were to continue with his master as his own goods. And so we need not wonder, that in the Roman empire, by the common laws of it, if a servant had an inheritance or a legacy left, it was his master's, he being not his own man, could not be the owner of it. So Ulpian, *Si hæredes instituti sunt, et hæreditates nobis adquirunt, et legatia ad nos pertinet*. If our servants be made heirs, the inheritance is ours, and the legacy left them belongs to us. So Caius,* *Quicquid iis a quolibet personâ donatum, vel venditum fuerit, &c., id dominis sine aliquâ dubitatione conquiritur*. Whatever by any person is given to (servants) or sold to them, that without all doubt is their master's; so that in all law and reason, if our persons be not our own, nothing that we possess is ours, but his who is lord and owner of our persons. But I shewed before, that our, and all persons are his, and therefore he is the sole owner of all.

Obj. But are we owners of nothing (may some say)? Both Scripture, and law, and common sense, make and speak many things to be ours.

Ans. I shall shew you how these things are ours, and how they are not, both to prevent mistakes, and also thereby to declare more fully and evidently how the Lord is owner of all things, and how he is the sole owner of all. Take it in these particulars :

(1.) We are not true proprietors of any thing in respect of God, though otherwise what we possess may be called ours. To clear this, and leave no room for misunderstanding, observe, that things in our possession may be considered either in respect to the right lord and true owner, or in respect to others. In reference to God, who is the right Lord and true Proprietor of all things, we are not properly owners of anything. But in reference to others, such things as the providence of God in a just way gives us the possession and use of may well be called ours, because no others can challenge them, or lay any just claim to them. This will be clearer by some parallel instances.

That which we borrow may be considered with respect either to the lender, or to others. In reference to the lender, we have no propriety in that which is borrowed; for, as the Civilians say,† *in commodato res non ita datur, ut fiat accipientis*. A thing lent, is not so given as to become his who borrows it. 'Alas, master, it was but borrowed!' 2 Kings vi. 5. The lender is still the owner, though it be in another's possession.

But in reference to others, that which we borrow is so far ours, as another may not take it from us, nor hinder us from the use of it. So in what a tenant possesses, in reference to the landlord, he is no owner, for he has the possession and use only, not the propriety. So it is a rule in the feudal laws,‡ *Possessio per beneficium ad eum pertinet, proprietatis ad alium spectat*, possession belongs to the tenant, propriety to the lord. But in reference to others, it is and may be called his land, his own farm, because no other has anything to do with it; he may challenge it as belonging to him, and if any take it from him, they do him wrong, and he may maintain a right against them.

In like manner, in reference to God, we are no more owners of what we have, than a borrower is in reference to the lender, or a tenant is in respect of his landlord; but in respect of others, they are and may be called

* Institut. Tit. 19, sect. 19, vid. 18, 20, 21. † Jura Gothofred. ‡ Lib. ii. tit. 8.

ours, because others have no interest therein, cannot justly deprive us of them, have no right to disturb us in our possession, or hinder us in the use, or from the profits thereof. In these respects we are *quasi domini*, as it were owners, but not *verè domini*, not true owners, as Civilians distinguish* between *verum dominium*, and *quasi dominium*, true propriety, and that which is but as it were such. The Lord alone is truly proprietor, we are but the improvers of his possessions; so some understand those expressions in Scripture, where the servants of God are called strangers, or sojourners; and in two places there seems good ground for such a sense in the context: one is in this chapter, where, having in many expressions ascribed all to God as the owner of all, and he only, he adds, ver. 15, *Non proprietarii sed tui coloni*, say divers of great note, we are not proprietors, but thy husbandmen; so Levit. xxv. 23, ye shall reap the fruits of it, but the land is mine; ye are חֲכָמִים, ye are my labourers, or husbandmen, *coloni*, it is rendered. Now, husbandmen in the Roman empire, such as were *ἐναγγάφοι*, enrolled, had nothing of their own, but all they had was their master's, as appears by that of the emperor Anastasius, in *Cod.*,† *τὰ τούτων πικύλια τοῖς δισπόταις ἀνήκει*, their proper goods belong to their lords. Answerably the Lord says here to the Israelites, 'The land is mine,' not yours; and David, in the other place, acknowledges, 'All is thine own;' so that we are not what landlords are accounted in reference to their tenants; nay, we scarce are so much as tenants in respect of the Lord of all. For,

(2.) We have not a full tenant's right to what we count ours. Those who are thought to be most the lords of their lands, are not so much as tenants in respect of God.

[1.] For a tenant is sole possessor, though he be no proprietor. He that lets him a farm, keeps it not in his own hands, but gives whom he lets it to investiture,‡ or, as we call it, livery or seisin, gives him possession, and so parts with that to the tenant, though he give him no propriety.

But we are not sole possessors in respect of God; for though he give us possession of what we have, yet he gives it not away from himself; he puts nothing out of his own hands, but continues always in possession of heaven and earth, and all things, as much as if there were none else in possession, Gen. xiv. 19; he has *jus retinendi*, and *insistendi rei* (as possession is defined), a right to hold and abide upon everything, everywhere; he never divests himself of this right, as others do to their tenants; yea, he always actually exercises this right, keeping all in his hands, and remaining in and upon his possessions, and every part thereof, every moment (as none else can do), Jer. xxiii. 24.

[2.] A tenant hath usually some time in what he holds; some have it for life, some for years; and if less, yet for some time certain; and those that have no lease are not turned out without some warning; but we have no time certain in anything that we possess. The Lord may turn us out when he will; he may take it from us, or us from it, whenever he pleases; nor is he obliged to give us a moment's warning, Mat. xxiv. 42, 44, 50. Our tenure is no better than that of the most ancient feudatories,§ whose possessions *domini quando vellet auferre*, their lords might take away at their pleasure; or theirs of old in England, who were called tenants at will, but were really bondmen,|| who had nothing of their own (person or estate),

* Feud. Lib. ii. Tit. 8, *ibid.*—*Gothofred.*

† Lib. xi. Tit. 47, lin. 18.

‡ Investire est in possessionem mittere.—*Gothofred.*

§ Feud., Lib. i. Tit. 1.

|| Villainage tenure.

and no time in what they improved for another, but were wholly in the power and at the will of their lord for all. It is not so good as that of those feudal tenants,* who, after a year, their lord turned out of possession, *quacunq̃ue hora vult*, at any hour when he list; they had a year certain, but we have not an hour nor a moment. We have warning, indeed, not to let us know what time we may be certain of, but to give us notice, that we are not certain of any time at all, nor of the least parcel of it, *Mat. xxv. 13*. Whenever he comes, he turns us out of all our earthly possessions; and we know not but he may come the next day, the next hour; he comes whenever he will, *Mark xiii. 35*, and ordinarily when we least expect it, *Luke xxi. 34, 35*.

[3.] A tenant, observing conditions and paying his rent, hath the rest of the profits for himself and his own use.† *Proprietas rei penes dantem remanet, usus fructus vero rei ad accipientem transit*, is the rule in law betwixt lord and tenant; though he have not the propriety, yet he has the use and profit for himself; so when Pharaoh had got all the land of the Egyptians into his own hands, he lets it out to them upon these terms, that paying a fifth part to him, the rest of the profits should be their own, for the use of them and theirs, *Gen. xlvii. 20, 23, 24*.

But all that we have must be employed for the use and interest of our Lord; not for ourselves, but for him. Accordingly, the Lord represents himself to us by a householder, who, having planted a vineyard, lets it out to husbandmen, but sends his servants to receive the fruits of it for him and his use, *Mat. xxi. 33, 34*; all the fruits of our lands, trading, labour, studies, belong to him; and he expects they should be wholly employed for him one way or other; and we have no right to spend them upon ourselves, or relations, or others, any otherwise than may be for his service and interest. We have nothing simply for our own use (as tenants are supposed to have), but all we are bound to use for him; all the profits and advantages of what we have should be ordered so, as to advance his honour, and serve his pleasure, and promote his interest, or else they are abused, and usurped against all right, and contrary to the terms and conditions upon which we hold all we have; but if we are neither true proprietors, nor have so much as the right of tenants, how are things said to be ours? I answer positive:

(3.) We have them as stewards, entrusted by their master with his treasure, or goods, to dispose thereof to such persons, and for such uses, as he appoints. Thus we are frequently in Scripture represented as stewards, particularly *Luke xii. 42*. A steward has his master's stores committed to his trust; he has them in his custody, and so far they are in his possession; he has power to dispose thereof according to his trust, and so he is said to be the ruler over the household, *i. e.*, the disposer of things belonging to the family, *ver. 44*. And accordingly he makes use of, and employs what is in his hands: he provides and brings forth necessaries for the family, gives them their meat, &c. And so Abraham's steward is *בן משק*, one who runs to and fro to provide what is requisite; or as others, *filius eductionis*, who brings forth necessities out of the stores, *Gen. xv. 2*; but all according to his master's order and appointment, *Mat. xx. 8*, *Gen. xlv. 1*. And no other has any right to take from him what is in his custody and possession, or to dispose thereof as he may, or to hinder him from so using or employing it. And so far, that which he, and no other, has right to possess and dispose and use, may be well said to be his; but

* Use of the Law, Lib. i. Tit. 11, page 87.

† Lib. ii. Tit. 23.

it is not his to keep, or use as he list, as the steward in the parable found, Luke xvi. 1, and xi. 45, 46.

And even thus are things ours. The Lord has entrusted them in our hands, to dispose of them as he appoints, and use them as he has given us order, and no otherwise; because we have right to such a possession, disposal, and use of them, a right which no other can claim to the things in our trust; upon this account they are and may be called ours.

Or as an artificer's tools, which he entrusts in the custody of his servant, so as he may dispose them most conveniently for his work, and use them for his service; another has no right to take them from him, or to use them without his leave. So far they may be said to be the servant's tools.

We are the Lord's servants, and a servant is, as Aulus says, *τοῦ δεσπότου ὄργανον*, his master's tool. So are we, so are all our members and faculties, our Lord's instruments; but he gives us them to be employed in his work, and used for his service, and none can justly hinder us from so employing them. So far they are ours; and other things which we possess proportionably, ours in trust, but the Lord's in true propriety.

So much for the explication and proof of this point, in which I have stayed the longer, that our judgments might be more clearly and firmly settled in this truth, too little understood, or too little regarded, as we may suspect, since the genuine consequences of it in practice are so much neglected. That which is dubious or obscure being cleared, we may proceed more currently with the practical improvement of it, to which I now pass.

Use 1. Of information, in many particulars of great concernment.

1. Herein we may discern the greatness of that Lord whom we serve, and whose we are. The whole world, and its fulness, all that is in it, both persons and things, are his own, wholly and absolutely his. The heaven is his throne, the earth is his footstool; hell is his prison, the devils are his executioners; the angels are his ministers, as much his servants as those who are bought and sold; they do nothing but his will, and have nothing but at his allowance; they cast their crowns at his feet, as having them and all from him, and holding them and all at his pleasure. The greatest monarchs in the world, and those that are called *terrarum domini*, lords of the earth, are his vassals; they hold what they have of him, by a tenure of as much subjection as that which was anciently known here by the name of villainage. They have nothing of their own; all they possess is his. They have it but to improve for him and his service, and they are turned out of possession at the will of the supreme Lord; and though they may seem to have much in their hands, yet the greatest empire, that of Abasnerus, consisting of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, or that of Alexander greater than the Persian, or that of the Romans much larger than the Grecian was, is but as a mole-hill, or the small possession of an ant, yea, much less, compared with the dominions of the great Lord of all. The whole earth is but as a needle's point to the visible heavens, and how much less these are than the heaven of heavens we cannot tell. But this we know, that these and all are his own, and more at his disposal, than any clod of earth is at ours. In brief, all that are in the heavens, or on the earth, or under the earth, are his, his creatures. Whoever they are, whatsoever they have above mere nothing, they have it all from him, and so hold it as that they and all are still his own. Oh what reason have we to adore and admire him, to ascribe all to him, and to him alone! Thine

is the greatness, and the majesty, and the kingdom, and the dominion. 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable,' Ps. cxlv. 8; 'Great is the Lord,' &c. He is exalted far above all. What high thoughts should we have of him! How should we revere him! How should all the earth tremble before him! 'For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great king over all the earth,' Ps. xlvii. 2, over all the heavens, over all the world. Let us strive for suitable apprehensions of him, and praise him according to his excellent greatness.

2. This may inform us that the Lord hath right to deal with us, or any creature, as he will. However 'he use us, he can do us no wrong. This is manifest, in that we are his own. This is enough to answer whatever may be objected against his disposing of us or anything at his pleasure. Shall I not do with my own as I will? Mat. xx. 10, 15. If our diminutive, limited, dependent interest gave us right to do what we will with what we call our own, we think it our due to exercise it as we please upon the inferior creatures, what right and power has he, who is Lord of all, to use us or anything as he will, when he is so fully, so absolutely, so transcendently the owner of us and all things? It is true, and should be observed and remembered, that in reference to rational creatures, the Lord has restrained the exercise of his plenary right by his laws and promises; he has declared hereby, that though he has undoubted right to use us any way as he will, yet he will not use us but so and so, according to the import of those laws and promises. Yet though he will not exercise all that right and power over us, as he is our ruler, yet otherwise, as he is our owner, it fully belongs to him. And thus, if we consider him as a lord and proprietor antecedently to his determination of forbearing such exercises of his right, so he might use us however we would; nor could whatever he did be any wrong to us. No usage of us whatsoever, no, not that which seems most grievous to nature, or most harsh at first sight unto reason, could possibly be unjust in him or an injury to us; for justice or righteousness *ἐν τῷ ἀφικτικῷ καὶ ἀβλαβεί κριταί*, consists in abstaining from what is not our own; or, as others commonly place it, in giving *suum cuique*, every one his own; so that which is unjust or a wrong to us, must be a withholding or taking from us that which is our own. Therefore nothing that he can take or withhold from us can possibly be injurious to us, because in respect of him nothing is our own; he is the true owner of us, and all we have or can have.

Yea, if we were innocent, and without sin, yet the Lord, as our proprietor, might deny or take from us anything whatsoever, our estates, lives, being, or well-being, righteously, and without doing us the least wrong; for what injury could it be to take that from us which is his own and not ours?

If he should take from us what estate we have, as he did from Job, and as is generally conceived, without respect to his sin, he would not thereby wrong us, he takes but his own.

If he should take away life, or give others a special command to do it, as he did to Abraham in reference to his son Isaac, Gen. xxii., the taking away his life in that case had been no murder in Abraham, no wrong to Isaac, because the Lord and owner of his life gave order for it, who had right to call for his own, and take it in what way he pleased.

If he should take away our being, and quite annihilate us, he would but take his own, and that which we wholly owe to him. Thus, as our Lord and proprietor, he has right to do, but only that he has declared he will

not do it. If we have so much power over the being of other creatures, as to destroy them, so as they are never restored again, though they be not reduced to nothing; if we may kill them for our use, food, or physic; if we may burn wood and other things, turn them to ashes for our service, and yet do them no wrong, what right and power hath he over our being who is full and absolute Lord and owner thereof!

If he should take away our well-being, if he should inflict pain on us in any degree or for any continuance, so as to deprive us of a comfortable, a well-being, this would be to take his own, and that which he owes us not; this he might take, considered as our proprietor, and without respect to his promise; that indeed declares that he will not so use us, but otherwise, setting that aside, he hath right to do it, and might inflict what pain he would, and continue it as long as he pleased, as a mere affliction, without respect to sin, though not as a punishment. If freedom from pain, any degree of it, be not due to us, then it would be no wrong to inflict it on us in any degree, and if freedom from it for a moment is not our due, then it would be no injury to inflict it for any continuance; for it is no wrong to deny us that which is not due to us, and that is not due to us which we cannot challenge as our own. And what can we count our own, if being, well-being, and all, be wholly and absolutely his, who is Lord and owner of all? In that which is not due to us, we can have no right; and in that where we have no right, we can have no wrong; and so the Lord, as owner of us and all things, may deal with us, or any, as he will, without doing us any wrong. *Rationabiliter autem negatur, quod nulla ratione debetur.**

3. Let this inference be minded and believed according to the reason you see for it. It clears up the absolute dominion of God, and those difficulties which concern it, very much to my own satisfaction, and it may do such service to others. It is no curiosity nor useless speculation, but tends much to illustrate the freeness of grace, and to manifest the righteousness of God's decrees with the execution of them, and by the help thereof we may vindicate it from the reasonings of such as would impeach it.

But so much for the general inference. The truth before us will give us more special information concerning the Lord's righteousness in some particulars, which our partial reason may be apt to call in question. As,

(1.) That the Lord has right to pass by some when he chooses others; to leave some to misery, while he sets apart others for life and happiness. Unless the sovereign Lord of all have less right and power to dispose of that which is more his own, than common reason acknowledges men to have for the disposal of that which is less their own, he may righteously, and without any show of injury to others, do what he will with his own, and so may choose some of the sons of men to be the objects of his special favour, and refuse others, without any injury to those that are rejected; for, in this case, both the persons whose state he will have to differ, and the things which make the difference, are more incomparably his own than anything we have power to dispose of is ours. The persons are his own, they are the work of his hands entirely, they are his creatures; whatever they are, or have beyond nothing, is wholly his. And may not he of right dispose of that which is so much his own, into what state he will? And then the things are his too; life and happiness are his gift, Eph. ii. They are more his than anything which we have right to give to whom we will. And has not the Lord right to give what is his own to whom he pleases, and to bestow his bounty on what objects he thinks fit, and to single out

* Aquinas Disp. de Prædest., Art. 2.

some from amongst others to partake of it? Till the common notions of equity and righteousness be razed out of the souls of men, methinks this should be counted most equal and righteous. The Lord asserts his own right to dispose his mercy to whom he will, Exod. xxxiii. 19. This the apostle applies to the present case, and by the light and evidence of it disperses the objection of unrighteousness, as a mist is scattered by the sun going forth in its strength, Rom. ix. 13-15. If it be not righteous with the Lord to shew his mercy, or refuse it to whom he will, he has not the right (which men have) to do with his own what he will. Those who dispute against this, leave not the Lord so much right over his own as the potter hath over his clay or his vessel, as the apostle's argument proceeds, ver. 20, 21. Both persons and things here concerned are his own, more the Lord's than either the clay or the vessel is the potter's. If he have not as much power and right to dispose of us for happiness or misery, for honour or dishonour, as the potter has to dispose of his clay or vessel, then he will have less right when the ground of it is more.

And whereas it is said that the Lord, dealing thus differently with persons otherwise equal, makes him chargeable with respect or acception of persons, which he both disclaims himself, Acts x. 34, 35, Rom. ii. 11, and forbids and condemns in others, Lev. xv. 16, it will appear by the truth we insist on, that this objection (how much soever some great pretenders to reason would make of it) is altogether impertinent; for acception, or respect of persons, which is culpable, has place only in judicial acts (or those of like nature), where justice must be done according to the merits of the cause, without respect to the quality, relations, accomplishments of the person concerned. He that is swayed by such personal respects, to pass sentence otherwise than the cause itself in justice requires, is an acceptor of persons in a criminal sense. But in acts of bounty it has no place, where one is not deciding what is right and just betwixt others, but where he is disposing of his own; he may dispose of his own, and express his bounty to whom he pleases, and not be liable to any charge of unrighteous respect to persons.* And this is the case here: the Lord proceeds not in these acts as a judge, distributing to every one what is due in law, but as a lord and proprietor, disposing of what is his own to whom and how he pleases. And there is not herein any shadow of respecting persons, since he is not moved thus to deal with us by any external respect whatsoever.

(2.) That the Lord has right to vouchsafe his gospel unto some, and not to others. It is his own, and if he have right to dispose of his own as he will, he may vouchsafe it or deny it to whom he pleases. He has used this right in all ages, apparently under the law, Ps. cxlvii., and afterwards also, Mat. xi. 25. In the apostles' times, the gospel did go through all the world; but that world was little more than the Roman empire, for anything appears in Scripture, and that empire is called the world, Luke ii. 1. Take the world in its full latitude, and there are many parts of it in which no footsteps of the gospel could be discerned in latter ages. This some cannot digest, that the ordinary means of salvation should be denied to any. But the Lord does them no wrong that want it; it is no injury to withhold that from any which is no way due to them. And how does it appear that the gospel was due to any that want it. By what right can they challenge that of the Lord which is his own and at his free disposal?

* Nulla est acceptio personarum quia sic alius honoratur, et alius debito non fraudatur.—*Augustin.* in Tom. 325.

(3.) That the Lord has right to deny his grace to some when he gives it to others. It is his own, he may give it or deny it to whom he will. He has declared it to be his right, by communicating or withholding it as he pleased, Deut. xxix. 2-4, Mat. xxii. 14. 'Many are called' (he says not all any way), 'but few are' called effectually; few have grace to answer the call, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. Yet the Lord wrongs none to whom he imparts it not. If it were a debt indeed, this might be alleged, but it is grace, Rom. iv. 4. It is his own, and comes not to any but by free gift, and so with right and liberty to bestow or deny it to whom he pleases. He owes it no way to any, unless he have promised it;* and where has he promised it to all, or to any that never have it?

(4.) This shews us evidently the freeness of the love of God, to all that are the objects of it, men or angels, and of all the acts and expressions of it. If the Lord could not love most freely, he would love nothing at all besides himself. For hereby it appears, that all else is most worthless; not only utterly incapable of deserving love, but far from any way of obliging his affection, or moving him to vouchsafe any expression of it.

1. We are most worthless creatures; we are worth nothing at all; we have not anything of our own, not anything that is good or fit to be loved that we can call our own, James i. 17; whatever we have that is any way good, it comes from him; it is his gift, and he gives it not so, but that it is his own still. If we were stripped of all that is not our own, we should have nothing at all left, that could be the object of any love, or capable of any expression of love; we should not have so much left as our mere being, for even that is not our own; we should be no better than just nothing.

If a prince should take a beggar from off the dunghill, and set his affections on her, the freeness of his love, to such a wretched object, would be a wonder; and yet the beggar would have more of her own in respect of him, in such a condition, than we in our best estate have in respect of God. Her person would not be his till she gave her consent; but our persons, parts, accomplishments, all are not our own, but his, whether we yield to it or no. Oh then, how wonderfully free is the love of God! how admirable is it, that he could think of loving such as are worse than nothing! What we have of our own, we may take an account of, in the description of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. Who can love wretchedness, and misery, and poverty, and blindness, and nakedness? Why, we have nothing better of our own; and if the Lord loves us not for our own, he loves us freely. If the Lord could not have loved most freely, we had never been the objects of his love; for we had nothing at all of our own, but what might rather stop and non-plus love, than any way encourage it. Oh with what sense and affection, with what admiration, should we look upon such declarations of his love! Hosea xii.

2. How far are we from deserving his love! How ridiculously unreasonable are those conceits of our deserts in reference to the love of God, or any expression thereof! There are three conditions necessary to make anything in us deserving; and this truth discovers them, and every of them, to be utterly impossible, and so the fancy of merit to be an absurd chimera.

[1.] If we deserve anything, it must be by virtue of that which is our own. But we have nothing of our own; all that we have and are is his

* Neque cuiquam obnoxius est, nisi quatenus se per promissiones suas obligavit. —*Arminius.*

that loves us, and therefore lets us have whatever we have. Can one deserve anything of another by letting him have what is his own? He that lends may deserve something of us, but not he that only restores what he borrowed; he is so far from meriting hereby, that he would be no better than a thief if he did it not. The Lord lends us what we have, he deserves of us for trusting us; but can we deserve anything by letting him have his own when he calls for it? Prov. xxii. 7. Whatever we do, whatever we bestow for God, we give him but his own, 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 16. We deserve nothing of him, unless it be the reputation of not being cheats and thieves; no more love or expression of it than this.

[2.] If we deserve anything, it must be by virtue of that which we owe not. Now, since we have nothing of our own, but all is the Lord's, and from him, we owe him all we have, and all we can do, it is a due debt; and no man merits by paying his debts. Not to be grossly dishonest, is far from being meritorious.

[3.] If we deserve anything, it must be by virtue of that which is of some advantage to another; but what advantage has the Lord by us? Job xxxv. 7 and 22, and Job xli. 11. Who has prevented him? Who has given him anything which he had not first received of him? He prevents all; for all is his, before any be in a capacity to give to him. And if we should give him what is his (as, alas! we do not) he is but as he was; it was his before, he is no better for it, we do but give him his own; and upon this account, when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, Luke xvii. 10. We deserve not so much as thanks; and that which merits not so much, deserves nothing, ver. 9. We are but such servants as a master has no advantage by. He gets but barely his own by us, seldom so much. When he that was by his Lord entrusted with a talent restored it to him, and said, 'Lo, there thou hast that is thine,' he suffers as an unprofitable servant, Mat. xxv. 25, 30. And if we make any improvement of what he entrusts us with, even that is his also, and for him we have it, Philip. ii. 13.

So that if the Lord express any love to us, we do not any way in the least deserve it, and so he loves freely.

And this is not only true of the children of men in the state of degeneracy and imperfection, but even of the angels in the height of their blessed and perfect condition. All they do for him cannot deserve his love; they give him but his own; they do but what they owe him, and he is no better for it. Whether he loves angels or men, he loves freely.

[4.] We cannot oblige him to love us, or to express it. Yet one may be obliged to that which is not deserved of him; that which is deserved is due in justice; but we may be obliged as to equity and ingenuity, and so we are engaged to return love for love; but thus we never do, we never can oblige him to love us, for his love is before ours, 1 John iv. 10, 19. Even our love to him is from him; this is his as all things else, he works it in us. As he puts his fear, so his love, into our hearts, else it would never be there, Deut. xxx. 6.

We cannot any way oblige the Lord to love us. It is his promise that obliges him to express love to us; and our love, and whatever else we can think may oblige him, is that which is promised, and so is his gift, and given after he has obliged himself; and so no possibility of our obliging him beforehand, since all that might be thought to do it is the issue and effect of his own love.

He loves us freely, we can no way oblige him to do it.

[5.] We can no way move him to love us, or to express it. We have not anything of our own to attract his affection. We have nothing of our own that is lovely, nothing that is delightful, nothing desirable. Whatever of this nature is in us, it is his, not ours. We have no estate (and that moves some to love) but what he is the owner of; no sweetness of temper, but what he helps us to; no good quality, but what he plants in us; no beauty, but what is lent us by him. And who will love a person that has no loveliness of her own, no beauty at all, but what is borrowed? We may discern how far we are from having anything that may move the Lord to love us, by looking ourselves in the glass of that description, whereby he represents Jerusalem; we may see our unlovely state therein, Ezek. xvi. 6, instead of rare, fine complexion, and lovely features, all covered with blood and pollution; so far from being amiable, as we were ghastly and loathsome, more fit to be cast out with abhorrence than to be embraced; not only too bad to be loved, but to be pitied; not only without beauty and ornament, but without life; no more in us to move love, than in a dead carcase. Such were we, such the state of our souls; and could the sovereign Lord of the world set his love on such objects as we, having nothing in the world that we can properly call our own, but sin, the most hateful, the most ugly, and loathsome deformity in the eye of God? Oh how free is that love, that would pitch on such objects as we, who had nothing in us fit for love, nothing of our own that could deserve it, nothing that could oblige it, nothing that could any way move or attract it, nothing of our own, but what might sooner have provoked hatred and loathing.

Oh if the Lord had not loved most freely, if his love could not have moved itself, we had never met with it, nor any expression of it. We see hereby the Lord loved us (as he shews mercy), because he would love; we see that wonderful freeness of it exemplified again in us, as it was in Israel, Deut vii. 7, 8.

[6.] This shews us the great evil of sin, how exceeding heinous, how extremely dangerous it is; what reason there is both to hate it, and fear it, and bewail it, and be ashamed of it; how much we are concerned, both to avoid and mortify it.

First, It is the worst that we can possibly do against the greatest benefactor; we cannot act or contrive anything worse against him who deserves the very best, infinitely the best of us. And so it is the most horrid ingratitude that a creature can be capable of; *si ingratum dixeris, omnia dixeris*, when you call a person ungrateful, you brand him in one word with all that is odious. Oh but there is no ingratitude to men that has anything in it of a like hateful and abhorred import, as ungratefulness to God in sinning against him. It is ungratefulness not to return good for good; one kindness for another; what is it then to return evil for good? It is ingratitude to return the least evil for a small courtesy, for any one good turn; what is it then to return the greatest evil for all that is good? This, in reference to men, would be counted, not only inhuman, but devilish. A devil cannot be more odiously disingenuous than to render the worst he can for the best, and to do him the greatest mischief who has done him most good. Yet this, how odious and horrid soever it seem, we do, and are guilty of in reference to God, when we sin against him; for sin is the worst thing of all in the account of God; it is all the evil we can do him, and we do it against him from whom we have all the good we are possessed of; for he is the owner of all, we have nothing at all of our own; all we have, all we are, we had it from him. Our very being, our well-being, all that

belongs to, or makes up, or sustains either of them, is from him ; and so when we sin against him, we do the very worst against him, from whom we have all the good we have. And what can be more odious and disingenuous in the worst of creatures, of devils, than this ! Oh think of this when you are tempted to sin, when you would excite a greater hatred of it in your hearts, when you would engage yourselves more resolutely for the mortifying of it. It is ingratitude hateful to our natures, odious and abhorred by a temper that is anything ingenuous. It is ungratefulness in the highest degree, and of the most hateful and intolerable strain, not tolerable in the account of any, who have not exchanged humanity for devilism ; it is a return of the worst evil for all good.

Secondly, Hereby it appears that sin is an abusing of the good things of God against himself. It is a turning of the goods you are entrusted with against him that entrusts you ; as it were, the converting of the instruments which he lends you for your advantage, to do execution upon him who lends them. There is no sin which you act any way, but it is by the help of some instruments or enjoyments which you have from God, which he is the true owner of. You have nothing of your own, he is the owner of all, and so when you sin you employ that which is his own against him. When you think evil, when you conceive it, when you incline to it, or resolve on it, or affect it, your minds, wills, or affections are the instruments of this evil. Now your souls, and all their faculties, belong to God ; he challenges them as his own, and so you make use of his own against him ; they are his ; so are your tongues, when you speak evil ; so are your other members, when they act sin ; so are your estates, when they minister to pride, or covetousness, or sensuality, &c. You make use of these to help you to sin ; and these are not yours, but his who is the owner of all, and so you employ that which is God's against himself. What a horrid and intolerable provocation is there in this dealing with God ! And what would it be accounted if you should deal thus with one another ? It is as if a wretch should take the clothes and jewels of his wife to adorn his harlot ; she would be ready to say, when she saw her rival tricked up with her ornaments, Can flesh and blood endure this ? Oh but the Lord endures more, and has worse usage at our hands. We bestow more upon sin, and that which is more his, when it is a rival, more odious to him than any can be to us.

It is a great evil not to employ for the Lord what we have from him, as appears by the dreadful doom passed on the slothful servant, Mat. xxv. 30 ; his crime was, not the using his talent against his lord, but only not using it for him. It would be a horrid thing to employ anything against God, if it were not his own ; to be found striking at God with any weapon, from whomsoever we had it. What is it then to turn his own weapons, which he has furnished us with for our security and advantage, against himself ; to make use of that which is his own, to do him the greatest injury ; not only not to employ it for him (which he may reasonably expect, since we have it upon these terms), but to employ it against him ! Sure this is most intolerable. As if one should give you wood for firing to warm you, and you should make use of it to set his house on fire, from whom you have it.

By this the Lord sets forth the sinfulness of Jerusalem's sin ; this made it not only abominable, but did aggravate it into an abomination in the abstract. That what was his she employed against him, laid it out on idols, made use of what was his own to serve her idolatry, Ezek. xvi. 17-23.

She employed what was the Lord's against him ; this made her actings so exceeding abominable. And this we do in every sin against God. When he is the owner of all, we still make use of something or other which is his to help us to provoke and dishonour him.

Thirdly, This shews us (and thereby the extreme danger of sin directly appears) that we cannot make the Lord satisfaction for the injury we do him by sin. We have no way to satisfy his justice, so as to obtain freedom from what it is most just to inflict on us for sin. We can make him no satisfaction but what is our own, and what we do not owe him, and is not his, and due to him, though we had not offended him.

If we have injured a great person in his honour, it will be no satisfaction to give him some of his goods, or to pay him what was his due if we had not injured him.

How then can we satisfy the Lord, since we can part with nothing but what is his own, nor do anything but what was due to him on another account than the injury we have done him ?

If you perform most perfect obedience for time to come, as sinless as that of any saint in heaven, yet this would be no satisfaction for any former sin ; for such obedience is due to him if you had not sinned ; you owe it him, because you are his own, his creatures ; and so being no more than is due on that account, it cannot discharge that which is due on another. The paying of one debt is no satisfaction for another.

If you should offer all your estates, yea, or all the treasure in the world for satisfaction ; if you should 'come before him with thousands of rams, or ten thousand rivers of oil ; if you would give your first-born for your transgression, or the fruit of your body for the sin of your souls,' Micah iv. 7 ; if you should offer him your lives, your well-being, or your very being itself, this would be no satisfaction for any of your sins ; for all this is his own already, and you tender as good as nothing for his satisfaction, when you can give no more but what was his own before.

Oh consider this when you sin ; you do the great God such an injury as neither you, nor all the men on earth, nor all the creatures in the world, no, nor all the angels in heaven, can make satisfaction for. The dreadful penalty of sin will be inflicted, if the Lord be not otherwise satisfied. And you having nothing of your own, nothing but what is his, who is owner of all, can give no more towards a satisfaction, which will procure a discharge, than that which comes to nothing.

Use 2. For exhortation. This truth leads you to very many duties of greatest moment and consequence, such wherein the glory of the most high God, and the honour of your profession, and your own safety and comfort, your own happiness and salvation, is very highly concerned. This truth has in it the force of a powerful motive, to engage you in and for those duties. And the due sense how it obliges soul and conscience therein, will be an effectual means to help you to the performing of them. And I shall endeavour, in the prosecution of this use, to lay both jointly open before you, that you may neither want motives nor means, and may neither be left unwilling nor unable, if you be willing to practise what the Lord hereby calls you to. The first duty I shall instance in is,

1. *Thankfulness* : a duty so pleasing, so honourable to God, that he will have it continued to eternity ; and will have it not only to be the employment of earth, but in heaven, where many other acts, now our duties, will be out of date.

This engages us to thankfulness for all things and at all times, so that

our whole life should be made up of acts of gratitude. Whatever we do, should be some way or other a giving thanks to God ; otherwise we do not, we cannot answer the engagement which this truth lays upon us, 1 Thes. v. 18. It is his will that you be thankful in everything ; it is his will that everything should be an occasion of thankfulness. It is of his good will that everything is so ordered for good, as to minister cause of thankfulness. It might have been otherwise if he would, for everything which obliges you to be thankful was his own, he might have disposed of it as he would ; and so, if he had pleased, it might have been worse with you in everything than it is.

But that you may see more distinctly how you are hereby obliged to have your whole life all made up of thankfulness, and that continually, whatsoever we have that is good is from him, of his mere good will and pleasure, and not only the substance, but every degree of it. And we owe it to him as much every moment, as if every instant we did anew receive it of him.

(1.) Whatever is good is from him. Take a survey of all you have : begin at the foundation, at your very being, whatever is added to make it a well-being ; the ground-work and the whole structure, the subject and all the accessaries, are wholly from him, for all is his own. How then come you or others to have anything, but merely of his favour and good will, who disposes of his own to whom he pleases ? None could constrain him, none could oblige him to part with anything (for by what could they do it, all being his own ?), to dispose of his own any otherwise than he would. So that whatever you have, you have it of him, and you have it freely. You have not, you could not have anything, but of his good pleasure. To this you owe all, and so owe thankfulness for everything. All are as free favours (though not so great) as Christ and heaven is. You received everything, and everything *gratis* ; so that you have no occasion of glorying in the least, nor in the least an excuse for not being thankful in and for everything, 1 Cor. iv. 7, since there is nothing which thou hast not received, nothing wherein thou canst glory, as if thou hadst it not from his mere bounty. Wherefore art thou not as thankful for everything, as the unworhiest beggar ought to be for the freest alms ? Gen. xxii. 11, the word translated 'not worthy,' is קטני, 'I am little, or less, by the least, in respect of thy mercies.' Take away all that Jacob owed to free mercy, and he would have had little left ; indeed, he would have been just nothing ; he owed all to the mercy or the truth of God, to דוד, or אמת. Some favours he had which were not so much as promised : these were free indeed ; the Lord had not obliged himself to bestow them. And some he had by virtue of the promise : these came from the truth and faithfulness of God ; but even these were from free mercy too, for this alone moved him to promise, and this moved him to perform the promise, when Jacob's miscarriages might otherwise have obliged his truth and faithfulness.

And thus are we little, thus have we nothing but we owe to mere bounty, and so should make a thankful acknowledgment of it in everything, if it be but a grain above nothing. All was his own ; and it was at his free choice, whether we should have anything of it or nothing.

(2.) Every degree of what is good to us, we have it from him, for all is his own wholly, every degree of it, and wholly at his disposal ; and so it was at the choice of his own will, whether we should have it in such a degree or no ; and if we have it, we owe it to his good will and pleasure, and therefore owe thankfulness for every the least degree or advance of what we have.

If it be better with us in any degree than it might have been, or than it has been, or than it is with others, we owe it to him who is the owner of all. And so, wherever we look, there will be matter obliging us to thankfulness still in our eye.

If it be better with us than it might have been, for this we should be thankful; it might have been worse, if he would have had it so. We might have been toads or serpents, instead of rational creatures: the matter he made us of was his own; he might have formed it into what shape he pleased. If he had given us the shape of those creatures which we count most ugly, instead of that we have, he had done us no wrong, nor could we have had the least cause to complain; all expostulation had been unjust and unreasonable, Isa. xlv. 9, Jer. xviii. 4-6.

If we had been fools or idiots, without the exercise of reason or the use of senses, he had but done what he had all right to do, in so disposing of us. Could we oblige him any way to make us better, before we were? What we have more desirable than such a lamentable condition, is from the good pleasure of his will. He might have done what he would with his own, and disposed of it in that or a worse condition. The paper cannot oblige the writer; he may put a flourish on it, or make it a blot, as he pleases, no more, &c.

We might have been without common gifts, or without ordinary comforts, without estate, without friends, without ease, without health; we might have consumed our days in want and poverty, in affliction and misery, in languishing sicknesses or torturing pains. What could have hindered the Lord from so disposing of us, his own? Only he would not do it. Not because we could any way engage him to deal better with us, but because he would not do it. We owe every degree of a better condition to his good will; and how much thankfulness do we owe on this account, since every degree of our well-being, in all its latitude, is a free favour?

Yea, he might have cut us off and cast us into hell, before we had got into the way to heaven. You may say his eternal purpose and decree was otherwise: and this is true concerning the elect. But what is his purpose and decree, but his will? And what determines his will but himself? not anything existent or foreseen in us. And might not he who hath right to dispose of his own as he will, both in time and from eternity, have otherwise disposed of thee and me, or any, if he would? Oh what thankfulness does this oblige us to!

(8.) If it be better with us, in any respect or degree, than it has been sometimes, this is from him too who owns all, and to him should it be thankfully ascribed.

If we were sometimes darkness, but are now light in the Lord; if we were dead in sins and trespasses, but are now begotten again to a lively hope; this is from him, and must be gratefully ascribed to the good pleasure of his will, James i. 18.

From whence is this happy change? Might not he, who may do with his own what he will, have left thee still in the gall of bitterness, a state of sin and wrath? If you look for a reason of this, as far as from everlasting, you will find none but his good pleasure. He did this for thee because he would, and if he would, he might have done otherwise. And why may he not do according to his pleasure with his own? And that he deals so graciously with thee, when he had all right to deal otherwise, what heart will it not constrain to all thankfulness!

So if thou hast, in any degree, more comforts, or more health, or more

wisdom, or better gifts, or more grace, than heretofore, thou owest it to him who is the owner of all, and owest thankfulness for it. And the more because thou hast it so freely, of his mere good will, when he was not obliged, either by others or by himself, to let thee have so much of his own in these particulars. For as nothing can oblige the Lord to us but his promise, so he has not obliged himself by promise to give any of these, to such or such a degree.

(4.) If it be better with us in any degree than with others ; if we have had better education, example, more restraints, means, light. To touch this last a little. Darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the people. How is it that it does not cover you ? Why have you the light of life, that of the gospel, when others have nothing but the light of nature, very dim and obscure, and almost extinct ? Are your lines fallen in a pleasant place, in a valley of vision ? Why were you not disposed of in some valley of the shadow of death, when such valleys take up far the greatest part of the world ? Why did not your lot fall in those dark places of the earth, where Christ is not known, and the way to life not discovered, where they breathe in no air but what is dangerously foggy and pestilential, where is no air for souls but what conveys poison to them, and is infected with the mortal contagion of popery, heathenism, or Mohamedanism ? This is the condition of ten to one in the world ; and how comes it that your lot is fallen with the fewest, in the light, rather than with the most, in darkness ? All places and persons are the Lord's ; he disposes of them as he will. What thankfulness do you owe for his disposing of you so mercifully, in comparison of others, so many others, almost all the world ? Our Lord Jesus shews how much this obliges to thankfulness by his own practice, Luke x. 21.

(5.) If it be better with you, not only as to that which is good, but, in any degree, as to that which you count not good. Such are afflictions. These are occasions of thankfulness, 1 Pet. iv. 6. The apostle has respect to them, 1 Thes. v. 8. These engage us to glorify and praise God, not only when we are called to suffer for Christ, and have therein a peculiar honour, which the Lord will not vouchsafe to every one of his own, not only because they are sanctified to produce comfortable and blessed effects, but on this account also, because they are easier and more tolerable than they might have been. We never met with any thing grievous in this life, but it might have been heavier. It is never so bad with us in this respect, but it might have been far worse. It is heavy and grievous, but it is not too heavy to be borne ; it might have been so. There are very bitter ingredients in it : oh, but they might have been more, and those more bitter ; the bitterness of death is not in it. How bad soever it be, it is not hell. So much better as it is than it might have been, so much cause of thankfulness we have ; and so in every affliction, thousand and thousand causes of thanks, because it might have been, by many thousand degrees, worse than we suffer.

The Lord has taken away some degrees of our ease, or health, or liberty, some of our friends or dear relatives, some part of our estates, some portion of our comforts ; but he might have taken away all, in every degree, for all is his own. And why might he not have taken all that is his own, as well as any part or degree of it ? He deals mercifully with us, when he leaves us any thing, when he leaves us so much ; when we can challenge nothing as ours, but by his good will and pleasure only. Every good thing, every degree of it left us, is an act, a degree of mercy ; and if thank-

fulness be due for every degree of free mercy and bounty, we have innumerable occasions of thankfulness in the most afflicted condition we meet with.

(6.) We owe him as much thankfulness, every hour or moment, for all we have, as if, every hour or moment, we did receive all; for every moment's continuance thereof is as much a favour, and so as much obliges us to thankfulness, as the first giving of it, because all being his own, he might take what we possess the next instant, and is no more obliged to continue it another hour, than he was at first to let us have it.

As we say, the Lord does as much every moment in preserving the world as he did at first in creating it, the same power and influence which at first made it being put forth every moment to uphold it, so that the preservation of all is no less than a continued creation of all; and all things owe their being to him every minute, as much as if they received it anew of him every minute. Answerably here. The Lord does as much for us, in continuing what we have, as he did at first in giving them, the same favour which at first bestowed it being shewed every moment in not taking it away, so that the continuing of what we have is as much as a continual giving of it; and we owe as much to mercy every hour; in that we lose not what we have, as if every hour we received all from his hand.

God may take away his own when he will; every moment that he does not, the mercy which at first gave them is as good as renewed, and so there is renewed occasion of thankfulness, for all we have, in every moment of our lives; as much cause for it as if we received all by a new gift every hour and moment, so that no part of our lives should be void of thankfulness. We are every moment as much obliged to it, as if every moment we were receiving from him all we have. Let us therefore, as Heb. xiii. 15,—

2. Give up yourselves unto God as your owner, and as to such an owner as indeed he is. This is a great duty, indeed the sum of all that the Lord requires of you. And this truth shews you that there is all reason for it; that you are so strongly obliged to it, that there is no refusing, there can be no pretence for declining. You are his, for all things are his own; and will you not let him have that which is his own? Give unto God the things that are God's. It is most unjust and unreasonable to deny him anything that is his; and if you be not willing yourselves should be his, that which is most in your own power, you will be wholly inexcusable. It is true, the Lord needs not your consent to give him a title to you; you are, and will be his, on a common account, as all other things are, whether you will or no; but by resigning up yourselves to him, you will honour him by acknowledging his title; and this is the way for you to be his in a special manner, and to be owned by him as his peculiarly to be his own, upon an account more for your comfort, advantage, and happiness, than other things and persons are. So, as there is the greatest reason for it, the advantage is answerable; and the danger, in case of refusal, no less. It will prove dreadful in the issue, to put the Lord to distrain for his own, and to make you acknowledge his right and title. Perforce he will secure his honour this way, but you will have nothing left but guilt and misery. And what can they expect better who are not willing the Lord should have his own? If you have any regard of the Lord's honour, or your own happiness; if you would not defraud God, and make yourselves miserable, then resign up yourselves freely to him.

But how must this be done ? Wherein does this resigning up of ourselves to God consist ?

Ans. It requires an act of the judgment, of the will, and of the life.

(1.) Be apprehensive that you are his, and how much you are so ; what clear and full title he has to you, upon the grounds formerly opened ; what evidence there is for it in Scripture, and in common reason ; and hereupon you must yield a full assent to it, and firmly believe it ; and be fully persuaded that you are more his than anything which you count your own is yours ; such an act of faith, such a belief and persuasion, of his interest in you, is the foundation of all ; and without it nothing will follow to purpose, either in the will or life ; but the judgment being fully possessed and convinced hereof, and the apprehension of it being quickened and reinforced with frequent and due thoughts hereof, so as the belief of it be kept firm, actual, and lively ; this will facilitate all the rest, and make the will (upon which the acts of the whole life depend) come off more freely to this great work of resigning up ourselves unto God.

(2.) The will must consent, that the Lord shall possess you, and dispose of you, and use you as his own. When the will gives consent to this, thereby we become his own peculiarly ; for this is our entering into covenant with God ; upon which the Lord owns us, not only as he does all other things, but as his own by covenant, Ezek. xvi. 8 ; you are his before, but not so as now ; not his by covenant till you give consent ; you give up yourselves unto him, and effectually acknowledge that you are his, when you consent to the particulars, wherein propriety consists.

[1.] To be possessed by him as his own. You must be willing that he should have possession of mind and heart ; that he should have highest place in your minds, the chief place in your hearts. It is fit that the owner should have the best ; the best and highest of your thoughts ; the best and strongest of your affections, Ps. cxxxix. 13 ; reins are the seat of desires ; the Lord took up his affections, Ps. lxxiii. 25, and his thoughts too, ver. 17. It is not fit that any should be entertained but who the possessor likes ; if you yield up your souls to God, as his possession, you must not admit any thoughts, yield to any inclinations, give way to any motions, harbour any affections, but what he allows ; none that will take place of him ; none that will disturb him in his possession ; nor any that will not please and serve him. You yield him not possession, unless you admit him as your King and Lord, for he is so ; therefore he must have the throne in your souls ; all must be cast out that rebels against him, or any way resists him ; nothing must be entertained or tolerated, but under him, or for him ; as his footstool, or as his ministers and servants, to observe his will, and do his pleasure ; the will must consent to this, if you resign up yourselves unto him.

[2.] To be disposed of by him as his own. You must yield to be ordered by him, as to your condition in this world ; to be low as well as high ; poor as well as rich ; afflicted as well as delivered, if he see fit, so to dispose of you ; so was John Baptist, John iii. 30, and the apostle Paul, Philip. iv.

You need not fear that he will dispose otherwise of you than will be for the best ; he has given you sufficient security as to that ; or if he had not, yet would it be your duty still to yield to be wholly ordered by him ; if you do not resign up yourselves to him, you deny, in effect, that you are his own, if you will not be fully at his disposal ; you, yourselves, do not count that your own which is not at your disposal.

[8.] To be used by him as his own. Yield soul and body to be put to

what use he will ; give all powers and members into his hand, to be used his instruments, for what he pleases, and for nothing but what may please him ; dedicate them to his use, and his alone ; be resolved and ready to be used by him, in any service, active or passive, what suits you, or what suits you not ; both in what is easy and what is difficult ; not only in what is applauded, but what is reproached ; not only in what is gainful, but what is expensive ; not only in what is safe, but what is hazardous, and may endanger your outward concerns. You are his own, and if you will acknowledge it, and resign up yourselves to him as his own, you must consent to be used by him as he will ; otherwise, you may pretend to give up yourselves to him, but you do it not really. You think it just to allow another to use his own as he will, upon this account, because it is his own ; and if you be not willing, the Lord shall put you to what use he will, though you profess to be his own, yet hereby you deny it indeed, and contradict your profession ; when there is a sincere resigning of yourselves unto God, he will consent to all this ; see it in Paul, Acts ix. 6, 15, 16, a chosen vessel, ready for any use his master would put him to ; they were great, and difficult, and hazardous services, and sufferings too, when it came to the trial, Acts xxi. 18.

(8.) You must lay out yourselves for him, in your whole course ; employ soul and body, your whole person for him, under a continual sense that they are not your own, but his ; an apprehension of his interest in you. No consent is enough without this ; indeed, you did never consent enough, *i. e.*, cordially, unless this be the issue of it. The apostle calls for it upon this ground, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20, employ body and spirit for the interest of his glory ; think it not much nor hard to employ both all the members and faculties of both, thus for him, and thus continually. It is not hard, it is no more than is highly reasonable and equal, that both should be thus employed, and thus only ; for both, and whatever in either you call your own, is indeed not yours, but his ; and for whom should they be laid out, but for their owner ? For whom should a servant be employed but him who bought him for his service ? His person was part of his master's goods ; he had bought it, and paid for it ; if he had followed his own employments, or been set a-work by others, instead of doing his master's service, it would not have been endured. We are more the Lord's, not only than mercenary hired servants, but than *mancipia*, bought servants ; both our bodies and spirits are his, not our own. If we will let sin, or the world, or self set us a-work, and employ our faculties, senses, or members, the Lord, whose we are, is wronged by it. You may as well work another man's horse without his leave, or command his servant to do your business, as do what these other usurpers would have you ; you deny the Lord's interest in you by obeying them, Rom. vi. 16 ; if we will acknowledge ourselves to be his, we must do his work, and none but that which is some way his ; we must be only at his command, ready to do whatever he enjoins, and to undergo what he would have us endure, and to resist what he would have us oppose, and to avoid what he forbids us, and to part with what he would not have us possess.

This may serve to shew you what it is to give up ourselves to him as our owner. This is it which this truth obliges us to. But this is not all ; we must give up ourselves to him not only as our owner, but as to such an owner as he is indeed. The particulars you may collect from what was delivered in the explication. I shall instance only in four. We must give up ourselves to him,

[1.] Absolutely, without offering conditions, or making any terms. The Lord is the absolute owner of all; there is no obligation restraining him from disposing of his own as he pleases, but what flows from his own free will. If we will offer to restrain him by any condition as to his disposal or using of us, instead of giving up ourselves to him, we take from him the glory of his absolute dominion.

To say, I will give up myself to him, if he will not urge such a duty, grievous to me, and prejudicial to my wordly interest; if he will allow me in the neglect of this one, or if he will tolerate me in such or such an evil, which is gainful or pleasant, or otherwise endeared to me; this is not to resign up yourselves to him as becomes such a Lord, but to do nothing, yea, that which is far worse than nought; for to make terms with God, and prescribe conditions to him, is an intolerable presumption in the greatest of men, yea, in the highest angels. To make any terms but what himself has made, to offer yourselves to him with an *if*, is to offer him an affront of an unspeakable provocation.

[2.] Principally; for he is the principal owner of all, and of us. Others may have some interest in us as superiors and parents, and so may challenge some observance from us; but we owe none to any but for him, and in subordination to him. They are to have no affection from us but such wherein a greater love is expressed to God. As we love the picture of a dear friend, not for itself, but for something of him in it, so that, even in loving it, we love him more, so are we to love other things and persons, and no otherwise, but for something of God in them; something of his authority, or of his image, or of his goodness, as they resemble him, or as they come from him, or point at him, or lead us to him, or help us in serving him; so that affecting them for him, we may shew even in that affection we more love him.* Likewise they are to have no obedience but such wherein we obey God, and this is to obey in the Lord, Eph. vi. 1, 5-7.

[3.] Entirely; without exception or reservation of anything; for he is the total owner of all, and of us and all wholly. To deny or withhold any one thing is in construction to deny him all; for he has the same title to that one as to any; and so his title, not acknowledged in any one particular, is, by consequence, disclaimed in all; it will hold no more in any than in that. All the superior powers, the mind, conscience, memory, the will and affections; all the inferior faculties, the fancy, appetite, senses, the whole body, with all its parts, must be resigned to him, and given into his hands, to be ordered and disposed of by him, to be used and acted for him, and wholly for him.

No habit or disposition, no inclination or resolution, no intention or motion, no act or word, or thought, must be exempted from his disposal or use; must be ordered or used not as we will, but as he will, as that which is his own. Whatever of these will not serve him must be suppressed, noway tolerated; and what is capable of serving him must be used in his service, and ordered for it.

This is it which the apostle desires for the Thessalonians, and thereby shews it is the duty of all to desire and endeavour it, 1 Thes. v. 23. To be sanctified, is to be given up and dedicated to God, so as to be set apart from all other uses for his use alone, as that which is his own, and

* Our honouring of them must be an honouring God in them, our loving of them a loving of him in and for them, and delighting in them a delighting in God in and by them.

no other's. This is the proper notion of holiness or sanctification. Now thus he would have them sanctified, *ὁλοτελεῖς*, entirely; wholly as to every part and motion, and the whole of each. He would have *ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν*, the all, the whole of them, their body, soul, and spirit; all the parts of the body, all the powers of the soul, both higher and lower, both rational and sensitive; the whole of this thus given up to God, and set apart for his use alone, as the way to be preserved blameless to the coming of Christ.

We are as much concerned in this as they were. We profess Christ to be our Lord, the full owner of us, and he that has a plenary dominion in and over us, and therefore we are obliged to let him have his own; to give up soul, and body, and spirit; to set apart the whole of them wholly for his use, that so, at his coming, we may be found blameless, as those who have effectually acknowledged that he is our Lord, and we wholly his, and have not withheld anything of his own from him.

[4.] Perpetually; for the Lord is the perpetual owner of us, as of all things. His right never ceases, and he is ever actually exercising it; and therefore we should give up ourselves to him by an irrevocable act, such as will never be recalled or repented of; and by a continued act, such as will not admit of any intermission. We must resign up ourselves to be always his own, and always acting as his own. We are hereby obliged to be always his servants, and to be always serving him.

* Not only as those husbandmen mentioned in the code, who were to serve their masters, so as all they had and did was his and for him, during the space of thirty years, but afterwards had more freedom and property.

Nor only as those Hebrews, whose service lasted but for seven years, Exod. xxi. 2, but rather like those of them who loved their masters, and would not leave them when the law gave them liberty, and so were to have their ear bored, ver. 5 and 6, and fastened to the door, Deut. xv. 17, whereby was signified, that he was fixed inseparably to his master, and was never to quit his service. He thereby became *עֶלְמָא עֲבָדָא*, a perpetual servant, fastened to his master for ever.

Thus should we give up ourselves to God, to cleave to him inseparably, and continue his servants for ever, as Ruth i. 16, 17.

And as we should be perpetually his servants, so should we be always actually serving him one way or other.

Take care you be always so employed, as if any inquire, at any time, what you are doing, you may be able to answer it, the Lord's work, viz., that which he sets me about, whose I am, and to whose service I am obliged every hour. Be ever doing that which you may be blessed for, if the Lord should come when you are at work, and 'find you so doing.'

But then you need not think that you are only employed in your Lord's work, when you are about acts of worship. For in a due following of your lawful callings, if you sincerely design to employ what you get thereby for the Lord, and to dispose of it, as the Lord, who is owner of you and it, would have it disposed of, you are therein truly serving him. Yea, in eating, sleeping, recreations, if you use these only for this end, to render you more serviceable to the Lord, you may be herein truly said to be serving him. But you must never be employed, but either in that which is his work directly, or that which conduces to it, and is requisite to help you therein; if you will demean yourselves as those who have resigned up themselves unto him, and would effectually acknowledge his interest in you, as those who are his own.

(4.) Improve all you have for God. Your parts, your time, your strength, your estates, all that you have, as well as all that you are, should be laid out for God. The truth in hand leads you directly to this duty, makes it evident that it is your duty, and powerfully obliges you to mind, pursue, and perform it.

For all is his own. All that the world hath, all that you have. And should not all be improved and used for the true and right owner, especially when we are entrusted with all we possess upon these terms, that all of it should be employed for him, whose it is, and for whom we have it in trust ? Which is our case, as I shewed you in the explication.

If all be not thus used for God, one way or other, as he has directed you in his word, you will bring great guilt upon your souls, and expose all you have to greater danger than I can easily express, or you apprehend.

Mind this, as to your estates, to instance in that one, where it is so much neglected ; and what is said of this, holds proportionably of all, and yourselves may easily apply it to the rest. I must not stay to dilate on severals.

[1.] Let this be your design and end in following your particular callings, to employ what you get for the Lord and owner of all. You should not have the end and design of worldlings in anything ; no, not in your earthly affairs ; but such ends and intentions as become Christians, if you would approve yourselves to be such really, and not in name and profession only. Your end, in your main course, will shew what you are, whether you have given up yourselves to God or the world. A worldling would be rich. That is his aim in following his calling, therefore is he careful and industrious, therefore sparing and saving, and parts with little to others or himself. But a Christian would be rich in good works, or rich unto God, that is the main end of his care and pains. A worldling would have abundance for him and his. A Christian would have more, that he may do more good, and be more serviceable. A worldling would have the reputation and credit which riches procure, that esteem and respect which a sordid degenerate world almost appropriates to riches. A Christian would honour God with his substance, according to the divine rule, Prov. iii. 9. A worldling would gratify the flesh, or his fancy, with such a garb, state, or accommodation, as a great estate will afford. A Christian would please and glorify God more, and that is his end in desiring and seeking more of the world, that he may be able to lay out more for God. If you be out as to the end of that which is the business of your lives, you are greatly and fearfully out indeed. God will judge of you, not by this or that particular act, but by your whole course, and principally by the end of that. If your end in your callings be that of worldlings, and not of Christians, what portion or reward can you expect from God, but that of worldlings ? And if your end be not to employ all you have, all you get, for God, is there any hopes you will so use it ? Is it likely you will do that which you never intended to do ? When you would express yourselves farthest from doing a thing, you say, You never did intend it. How far are you then from honouring God's dominion, and acknowledging all to be his own, by employing all for him, if it be not your end in possessing or getting what you have, if you do not so much as intend it ? Make sure that this be your end in all.

[2.] And that being done, pursue it. Shew that you did sincerely design all for God, by conscientiously employing all for him ; that so, when you

are thinking to dispose of anything, or actually doing it, and inquiry be made, Who is this expended for? you may be able truly to say, It is for the Lord; I am disposing of it as he, who is the owner of it, and has entrusted me with it, would have it used. Some may say, How can it be our duty to expend all for God? Something must be laid out for ourselves, something for our relatives and families, and something for others. This is true, and yet all may, and must be employed for God principally and ultimately; for no other chiefly, but for him; for others only in subordination to him; for no others, as the last end, without looking further; for others, with respect and reference to his pleasure, and service, and honour; for it, and in subserviency to it, and so only.

Now thus it is not employed,

First, When it is buried; when what we have is kept close to ourselves and ours, as if the Lord had not designed it, or any considerable share of it, for any besides us. Nothing in comparison of what the Lord expects, is laid out for the adorning of their profession, or maintaining of the gospel, or relief of those in want, or comfort of those that suffer. When it should be brought forth freely and plentifully, for these and such uses as the Lord and owner of it would have it employed for, it is hid in the earth, and there they keep it for themselves. This is, with the unprofitable servant, to hide your Lord's money, instead of improving it for him. Consider his dreadful doom, and tremble at being guilty of a crime which the Lord will punish everlastingly with such severity.

Secondly, When it is consumed. When it is laid out for the support of pride, vainglory, earthliness, or sensuality; to nourish the lust of the eye, or the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life; this is not to improve, but to consume it, James iv. 3.

Thirdly, When it is thrown away. As it is no better, when used idly, vainly, on such things as will turn to no account; when laid out upon such superfluities, as are not helpful to soul or body, in any way of serviceableness to the great Lord or owner. If the servant entrusted with one talent, had only played with it, or laid it out in trifles, his Lord had got no more advantage by this, than by his hiding it; he had been as unprofitable a servant, and might have met with as much severity.

Fourthly, When no due proportions are observed in employing what you have; but that has all, or very much, which should have little or nothing; and that has little or nothing which should have most; when that which tends, certainly, directly, or advantageously, to the promoting of the Lord's interest, is scantied and pinched, while the main stream of what we possess runs another way; we let but out some drops there, and the sluices not opened but for other occasions.

To clear this a little, and to shew you withal what it is to employ what you have for God, observe these severals.

First, There is a way to lay out what you are entrusted with certainly for God; and that is, when you employ it so as he commands you. That is undoubtedly for his interest, which he himself directs you to. You may have a discovery of this in part from these few scriptures, 1 Tim. vi. 17-19. To do good with what you have, and to do it richly, according to the proportion of your estate; to be as ready to distribute, as willing to communicate, as if it were the way to be rich; so it is indeed to be rich in God's account. What you do thus, you do it for God certainly; for it is by his appointment, Gal. vi. 10, 16, Mat. xxv. 84, 85, 86, 40. You see a way certain, so to employ what you have, as Christ will take it as employed for

himself, Heb. xiii. 16. This will be as much for his service, as ever the most acceptable sacrifice was.

These are ways of laying out what we possess for God, who has entrusted us, and that most certainly. Yet many there are, too many, who will expend little this way, in comparison of what they reserve, at great uncertainties, whether ever it will be employed for God or no. Some will be sparing till they have raised their estates to such a pitch, and then they will be free and bountiful ; but when this will be, none knows ; or whether they will be then of the same mind, all utterly uncertain.

Others will be sparing while they live, but when they come to die, they will leave abundance to good uses ; but this is as uncertain as their lives. Others will reserve more for a child, than all the good they have done in their whole life comes to ; and it may be for such a child as gives no hopes, much less any certainty, that he will employ what is left him any way for God.

Others, who have no children, will save and spare for they know not who. But all this, and the like, are but wicked attempts of covetous hearts, to defraud God of his own. Those that mean to employ what they have for him, will never neglect those certain ways of his own prescribing, for such ways of their own, as are mere uncertainties. They will rather choose to do nothing at uncertainties (though it be the fashion of the world to do most there), than not to be free and open handed, in a way which they are certain is for God.

Secondly, There is a way to lay out what you have directly for God and his interest, more directly than some other ways which are commanded us. Such is the promoting of his worship, the upholding of his gospel. You cannot lay out what you possess upon any thing that tends more directly to the promoting of God's interests than this ; and those that mean to be free for God any way at all, will not be sparing here. The nobles of Israel, upon David's motion in this chapter, contribute more towards the worship of God than the whole estates of all our nobility will amount to. They were sensible it was for the Lord in a special manner, being for his worship ; they thought it their duty to return him his own in greatest proportion, when there was so fair an occasion for it. And for the gospel, you cannot expend anything which tends more directly to serve the interest of Christ, than what serves to keep it amongst you, or help others to it ; for the several lines of Christ's interest do all, in a manner, centre in the gospel. To uphold that, is to employ what you have to scatter darkness and ignorance, to suppress wickedness and ungodliness, to advance holiness and righteousness, to convert souls, to enlarge Christ's kingdom, and destroy the dominion of Satan ; and what can you do which will more directly honour Christ, and serve his interest, than what is of this tendency ? Yet many there are (though I hope few, if any, here) who own God and his dominion, yet think a very little to be much, for the upholding of the gospel, for themselves and others. They like *ἀδάπανον ἐναγγέλιον*, a gospel, a religion that will cost them nothing ; but they will make a shift for their souls rather than it shall be chargeable. They will and do lay out far more for superfluities, than for that wherein God and his interest is so directly and highly concerned. They who have devoted what they have unto God will omit no occasions to shew it ; but such as more directly concern him, they have a particular respect for ; they will not only spare some little out of their superfluities (as one that has little sense of God's interest may do), but will pinch themselves in necessities, rather than the

gospel shall want support amongst themselves or others. As those of Macedonia, in the like case, 2 Cor. viii. 23, and the Galatians before they were seduced, Gal. iv. 18, John xxiii. 12.

Thirdly, There is a way of employing what you have for God advantageously, and that is, by laying it out for a common good. It is obvious to common reason that a public good is to be preferred to a private; it is best, says Plato, both for the whole and each particular, τὸ κοινὸν τίθεσθαι καλῶς μᾶλλον ἢ τὸ ἴδιον, that the common good be regarded more than any particular. And this is evident, not only because therein we do good to more, and do more good at once, than we can do in many particular acts, but because hereby we serve our Lord's interest more advantageously, this being more extensively promoted by a diffusive good than by that which is but personal and particular. This is to act more like God, and to lay out what we have in a way that he likes best. A public spirit is upon this account a more divine and excellent spirit, and most becomes those who would imitate their heavenly Father; it is as far to be preferred before that private spirit which acts too many, and confines them to themselves and relatives, as the sun, which enlightens so much, is to be preferred before a candle, which gives but light in one private room. The Lord would not have our light to shine to ourselves and ours only, but before men, because this is more for his interest, Mat. v. 15, 16. We put that which should make us shine under a bushel when we reserve it for ourselves and ours; when others, far and near, have advantage by it, it is set upon a candlestick, and so it reflects most glory upon God, and best serves his interest. Those who mean to employ what they have for God will be most free where they may do it most advantageously.

This may serve to shew how what you have may be improved for God. What enforcements there are in this truth, to oblige us to improve all we possess for him, I shall next give some account of. From hence we may clearly collect the equity and the advantage of so improving all, and likewise the danger of neglecting it.

1. The equity of employing all for God is hereby apparent. If all be the Lord's, all that is in heaven and in earth, then all that we possess is his. If he be the full and sole owner of all, then is he the owner of all that we have. And if it be his own, is it not equal and reasonable that it should be employed for him?

If he be so much the owner of all, as I have shewed, what we possess, we can have no otherwise than in trust; and the trust, the intent of it, is declared, it is left in our hands for the owner's use, and can it in any equity be employed to other uses? If you should convey any part of your estate to another in trust, and declare for what ends and purposes you did it, you would count it a great iniquity for him who is so entrusted to convert it to other uses. We have our time, opportunities, parts, gifts, graces, health, strength, estates, and all, upon such terms; he is the proprietor, we are but trustees. Is it not equal his own should be used for him according to the trust?

2. The advantage we shall have by employing all for God may be hereby discerned; to use all for him as he would have us, and as all that is his own should be used, is the way to be entrusted longer and entrusted with more.

We need not fear that to improve all for another is the way to have nothing ourselves. To use all for God is the most advantageous improvement thereof for ourselves.

We shall be far from losing anything thereby. He who is owner of the whole world, and all that is in it, has enough to reward us, enough to encourage us, and has declared himself willing and ready to do it. He has so obliged himself, as we have all assurances we shall not have less but more.

It is so with men. If you have a factor that manages your concerns for you to the greatest advantage, you will count it your interest to trust him still, and to commit more to his hands. And thus the Lord represents himself to us in the parable of the talents: he that had improved five talents to the gaining for his lord five more, because he had been faithful in a little, is entrusted with much, Mat. xxv. 22, 23, 30, 31; for the faithful improvement of one pound for his lord, he is made ruler of ten cities, Luke xix. 16, 17. One that is wise in the world's account, would have thought it more for his advantage to employ the money for himself than for his master, at least to have reserved something of the improvement to himself; but if he had made use of such wisdom he had lost all, it would have undone him. He found that the wisest and surest way to make him a man was to be faithful to his lord. By improving all for him, nothing for himself, he got much more than both stock and improvement came to. And of the like advantage are all assured, ver. 29. To him that uses all he hath for his Lord, though he seem to neglect himself and his particular concerns, yet he shall find it the way both to secure and advance them, to him much shall be given; he shall be entrusted with much more, and shall have abundance. The talent is taken from the unprofitable servant, who would not employ it for his Lord, and given to him who was faithful, ver. 28. Thus the Lord confutes the wretched wisdom of worldlings, who think nothing is to be gained but by serving themselves. Their way of saving and gaining is the direct way to be undone; and his way of improving, by using all for him, and according to his order, though it seem the way to leave ourselves nothing, tends most to the increase of what we have, Lev. xix. 23-25. The three first years they were not to meddle with the fruits of their trees. The Lord was to be first served; he was to have the first-fruits, those being reserved as an acknowledgment that all was his own, and they were not fit for him till they came to full maturity and perfection, which, it seems, in new plantations, was not till the fourth year; so that four years' fruit seem lost to them. Was this the way to make the best advantage of their plantations? Yes; the increase thereof depended on it. It would yield the increase if the Lord had his due and his orders were observed, otherwise they were not to expect it. If you would have anything you possess yield its increase, dedicate it to God, employ it for him. This is not the way to diminish what you have, though it may seem so to carnal and selfish reason, but to have it increased with the increase of God; a blessed increase.

3. The danger of neglecting to improve all for God is hereby discovered; and that both in respect of sin and suffering. It is a dangerous sin, and exposes us to answerable sufferings. The sinfulness of it is great, and the Lord will proceed against it accordingly.

(1.) For the sinfulness:

[1.] There is intolerable unthankfulness in it. It is as if one who had received all that he has in the world from the bounty of another, should, when he has it in his possession, refuse to acknowledge the owner who lent it him, but should call it all his own, and use it accordingly. All that hear of such dealing would cry out of him as a most disingenuous and

ungrateful wretch ; yet we deal no better with God. Our being, our well-being, all we are and have, he lends us, yet by not employing it for him, we refuse to acknowledge his interest in what we have. We look not upon him, but ourselves as the owners. We say, It is not his, but ours, in using it as we list ourselves, and not as he would have us. And this is all he gets by dealing thus bountifully with us ; this is the return we make for all he vouchsafes us, and it is such ingratitude as heaven and earth may condemn. To them the Lord seems to appeal, Isa. i. 2, 8. I have dealt with them as children ; they owe their being, their nourishment, their advancement all to me, and yet, as if they owed nothing at all, they do not acknowledge me to be the owner of them and theirs, they are more disingenuous herein than the very beasts. The ox will, according to his capacity, acknowledge his owner, but my people will not consider, not take notice that they are mine, and all they have too, but act as though they had right to dispose of themselves, and all that they have, as their own.

[2.] It is horrid unfaithfulness to God. It is as if a steward, having his master's goods in his hands to be employed for his use, should refuse so to employ them, but challenge them as his own, and convert them to his own use. We are but the Lord's stewards, 1 Peter iv. 10. We have no more right to any gift, grace, enjoyment we are entrusted with, than a steward can claim in his master's goods. We have them but to use and lay out for him, and as he appointed. Now, 1 Cor. iv. 2, 'it is required in a steward that he be found faithful ;' but how are we faithful if we observe not the Lord's orders, acknowledging not his propriety, nor him as owner, and employ not all for his use, but as if all were our own, not his, use all as we please, and dispose of all as we list ; not for him, but for ourselves and ours, without regard whether therein we serve his interest or not ? Oh, what account will be given of such unfaithfulness when the Lord calls us to give an account of our stewardship ?

[8.] It is gross theft, and the worst kind of it that any creature can be guilty of ; it is a stealing from God, a robbing of God. 'Will a man rob God ?' says the prophet, Mal. iii. 8. He is a desperate wretch that will offer to rob a man in the face of death, which the law sets before him. What then is he that will attempt to rob God ? Can any such wretch be found out of hell ? Alas ! they are to be found everywhere. Every one who employs not what he hath for God, is a thief to God, and offers to rob none less than the Almighty. He would take that which is God's, and make it his own, and uses it as if God had no title to it, no right to have it used for him.

By the civil law,* if a man have the use of a thing, if he use it otherwise than the owner allows, *si aliter ea usus fuerit quam acceperit, furti actione tenetur*, he is liable to an action of theft. The Lord is the owner of all, he lets us have the use of what is in our hands, but allows us not to use it any otherwise than for himself, 1 Cor. x., 1 Peter iv. 11. If then we lay it out for ourselves, or ours, in any way which may not justly be accounted an using of it for him, we are no better than thieves, not only to men, but to God, and that even by the determination of human laws, Mal. iii. 8. The Lord charges the Jews for robbing him. They, not imagining themselves guilty of so horrible a crime, ask wherein they had robbed ? He answers, 'In tithes and offerings ;' in not bringing that which was requisite for the upholding of his worship. To which that in the first chapter may be also reduced, in offering the refuse, that which was of

* Caius. Instit. lib. ii. tit. 10.

small value, to him, and keeping the best for themselves. Now, if we allow not what is necessary for the maintaining of his worship, or give but the Lord the offal of our estate, some crumbs or driblets, something little worth, and of small value in comparison, and reserve the most and best of what we have for ourselves and relatives, will not this in us be proportionably a robbing of God?

And since it is a robbing of God, I need not tell you that it is unrighteousness, that is a dealing most injuriously and unrighteously with God. To deal thus with men was abominable even to the heathen. It is the character of a very odious person to make no conscience of letting others have their own. What is it not to let God have his own? What is it to defraud, to go about to put a cheat upon him, and so act as such cheats in our whole course? To detain from him what is his own, when we know it to be so; to put him off with a little, when we know that all is due; and not to restore, when we are convinced of the fraud; when we profess that all is his, and that we ought to use all as his servants, to use it for ourselves, and as we list, will the Lord endure this? Do we think that he perceives not the fraud of our dealings, the hypocrisy of our pretences? Will he not bring it upon our heads in the issue? Gal. vi. 6, 7. We may deceive and cheat ourselves herein, but God will not be cheated, he will not be abused. We may be sure that as we sow we shall reap; as we deal with God in using what we have for him, or not for him, so will he deal with us.

[4.] It is virtual atheism, and no less in effect than treason against the Most High. We cannot deny that to be his which properly is so, but thereby we shall deny him to be what he is. When we deny his propriety in all, or anything, it is constructively an attempt to dethrone him; it is in effect a denying him to be God. If he be not the owner of all things, if he be not the rightful possessor of heaven and earth, and all things therein, he is not God. Deny his universal propriety and dominion, and you deny him that which is essential to him, viz., to be universal Lord.

But you practically deny his dominion and right to all, when you use what you have as though it were your own, and not his; when you use it not for him, as his own should be employed, you deny in effect that [it is his, and thereby deny that he is Lord and owner of all, and consequently that he is God.

Now what a dreadful and dangerous thing is it to go on in practical atheism through the whole course of your life; to be guilty of not owning God in the continued and main concerns of your conversation and actings; to order your improving and using of what you have, so as it will be a disowning of God! And so it is, and will be, if what you have be not improved and used for him as his own.

I need not add that this involves a denial of his infinite power, or wisdom, or justice, which are essential to him, so that, without any one of them, we cannot conceive him to be God. A thief would not adventure to rob a man if he did believe that he was able to resist him, and would be too hard for him; neither would he attempt, if he was sure he should suffer for it according to law. A cheat would not offer to defraud a man, if he perceived that he was aware of him, and discerned all his intents and practices.

And would you neglect to employ what you have for God, which he accounts a defrauding or robbing of him, if you did believe his omniscience, that he is perfectly aware of you in all that you act or design; or his

almighty power, that he would certainly be too hard for you; or his justice, that he will undoubtedly have his law executed upon you? If you believe not this, you do not believe that he is God; and you do not believe this to purpose, if you do not resolve and endeavour to employ what you have for God. Though you profess to acknowledge and believe God, yet in works, and that in a continued course, you deny him. You profess yourselves Christians, owners of God and his dominion, but herein you act more like atheists, and deniers of God and his interest in yourselves and in the world.

I beseech you consider these things, and when you are tempted to save or spare what God would have you lay out freely for him, say thus to yourselves, Shall I be such an ungrateful miser as to grudge him anything he calls for, when I owe to him all that ever I have? Shall I be such an unfaithful wretch as to reserve and convert my master's goods to my own use? Shall the world prevail with me to be so desperate as to offer to rob or defraud God of what is his own? Shall I act so atheistically under the profession and vizard of a Christian, as to disown God in the improvement and use of what I have? Oh far be this from me; far be this from any of us. It would be incomparably better, and more tolerable, that we and ours should be utterly beggars, than that we should involve ourselves, under any pretence whatsoever, in such horrible guilt. And this they will one day acknowledge, and be sensible of as a real truth, who are now farthest from believing or considering it.

(2.) You see the danger in respect of guilt, how great it is. Let me shew you also the hazard, in respect of suffering, in a few particulars.

[1.] You forfeit all you have if you employ it not for God. You are by him entrusted with it upon these terms; upon these you hold all; and upon the observing of the terms your right of holding what you have depends. If you observe them not, your right is gone, and all you have is forfeited. What right soever may continue in respect of men, yet you leave yourselves no right at all in respect of God. And to hold what you have without any such right, is a lamentable tenure. You are but as usurpers in the sight of God, though human laws do allow your title.

If a tenant pay not his rent, observe not conditions, his lease is void; he has no right to what he holds. So in the feudal laws,* *negato servitio amittitur feudum*; he loses his land, who denies the homage he is obliged to for it. And there is an instance of the emperor Frederick, who, holding a dukedom of another, and denying fealty for it because he was sovereign, yet, by the judgment of his peers, for the refusal, he forfeited the dukedom.

The homage and fealty which we owe to God for what we have, is the employing it for him for his honour and interest. Upon these terms we hold it; and if they be neglected, what we have is forfeited. He shews, when he will, that no right remains to the possessors, by turning them out, and taking what is in their hands away. He does it not always, but he may do it when he will; and Israel is threatened accordingly, Hos. ii. 8, 9. She did not acknowledge that she had them from God, and that they were his own; she did not employ them for him, but as her own inclination led her; thereby she forfeited them; and the Lord will take the forfeiture, and strip her of all, ver. 10-12; 'She forgot me,' ver. 18. So by those ancient laws,† if one acknowledge not the interest of the lord in his estate,

* Lib. ii. tit. 100, *eid.* lib. ii. tit. 24, sect. 'Non est alia justior causa,' &c.

† Gothofr., L. ii., p. 510.

si propriâ autoritate capiat, if he hold it as his own, *feudum amittit*, he loses it. So we hold it; when we employ it not for God, we extinguish what right we have, and provoke the Lord to take the forfeiture, and to deal with us as with Israel, ver. 8.

[2.] That which you have, if you employ it not for God, will never prosper, nor will a blessing attend it. If he takes it not away, he will some way or other blast it; and you will find it, or yourselves, blasted for it sooner or later. When one gets or increases what he has fraudulently or unrighteously, it is the common sense of mankind, and we are wont to express it by saying confidently, It will never prosper. And why? But because we think (as we have reason) that the righteous God will never encourage unjust and unrighteous practices with his blessing; he will not let that fraud and injustice to prosper whereby others suffer; and can we think he will be more favourable, where himself, in his honour and interest, suffers? Doth he curse us, when we cheat men? And will he bless us, when we defraud God? Will he bless us in unrighteously withholding his own from his own use, that which he has given and designed it for? No, sure, you may make account, that what you spare or save, when it should be laid out for God, will be followed with a curse; which will seize either upon your estate, or souls, or other concerns, or all together. You may expect either a visible, or (which is far worse and more dangerous) an insensible curse: Mal. iii. 9, 'Cursed with a curse;' i. e., exceedingly, superlatively cursed. Why so? Ye have robbed God. Wherein? In not giving that which was due to his worship, and his officers employed in it, ver. 8. They may think that the sparing of so much, and keeping it to themselves, was the way to be rich; but the Lord confuted their vain imaginations with a curse. He cursed what they had, and cursed what might have supplied them with more. A blessing did neither attend their possessions nor their hopes.

If they had laid out all which was due to God, in his worship and servants, they might have thought this the way to impoverish them, lessen their estates, and keep them low. But their worldly hearts did befool and delude them; it was quite otherwise: this had been the way to all plenty and abundance, ver. 10, 11. Their hands and hearts were shut, so that God could have little or nothing of what was due to him; this shut the windows of heaven: whereas large hearts for God would have set them wide open, and made way for more than they had room for, and, what was more than all, his blessing with it. If you would not have what you possess cursed of God, and blasted from heaven, employ it faithfully for God.

[3.] God will judge for this. He will have an account of you for all his own wherewith he entrusted you. It may be, you hope to make shift, as to the curse here (as some seem to do, when it falls especially upon the soul, and there is not taken notice of, though the fall of it there is heaviest and most dreadful), but what will you do hereafter, when God will reckon with you for all that you have had of his?

The day is coming when he will say, 'Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.' He will then mind you of that which it may be now you forget, for he has a book of remembrance; and then the books will be opened, and there you may find what has been done with all you had, and how and for whom it has been disposed of; so much to please my humour, my fancy, my appetite, my vanity, my curiosity; so much for the excess of my garb, my table, my other accommoda-

tions, to please myself, or answer the vain expectation of others ; great sums for these : and for some there will be so much to satisfy pride, or revenge, or lust, or vain-glory, no small quantity, the rest left to my children or relatives. For what ? To educate them so, as they might be more serviceable : it may be some respect to that ; but principally to make them rich, or great, to bear up my name and family, or that they may live like the children of one who had a better estate than others.

Well ; but what in all this for God ? what for his worship ? what for his gospel ? what for his suffering messengers ? what for his poor members ? what for others in need and distress ? what for the adorning of your profession, and winning others to a good opinion of the ways of Christ ? what for any public good ? Why, something for these, or some of them, what little I could spare from those other uses, wherein myself alone, or myself multiplied, was so much concerned.

Or another, who loved the world too much to be expensive any way, will have nothing to say, but, 'There was that which is thine.' I did no good with it while I lived, and when I died I know not what became of it. The napkin I carefully hid it in was opened when I was gone ; I left it amongst them, and if they have squandered it away, I cannot help it.

But, may the Lord say, all that you had was mine own, and should have been all employed for me, How comes it then to pass that so little account was made of me, and of my interest, and so very little laid out for me, in comparison of the great sums expended otherwise, whenas it should have been all for me ? More for a costly garment, or a needless ornament, or a modish excrement, in one day sometimes, than for me directly in a whole year. And, upon the whole, more for mere superfluities and excesses, than for the special concerns of my interest in your whole life. Is this the account you will give God of all his own you have had ? Is this to be faithful stewards, or not more like to unfaithful and unprofitable servants ?

What will be answered for these things ? What can be expected but confounded silence ? what but shame, and remorse, and confusion ? what but that dreadful sentence which Christ, at the last day, will pronounce against, and execute upon, those who have not been faithful in using what they were entrusted with for him ? Mat. xxv. You see those who employ not what they have for Christ, will at the last day be counted goats, useless and odious creatures, in comparison of the sheep ; they will be set at his left hand, as those that are castaways, rejected by him ; they will be cursed, as he who turned what was set apart for God to another use was *anathema*, cursed, Lev. xxvii. 28. They will be separated from the blessedness of the divine presence, as those who had not given up what they had to him, and separated it for other uses from him. They will be cast into everlasting fire, and there tormented with the devil and his angels, and that for ever. And why all this severity, in so fearful a sentence and so terrible an execution ? It is plainly upon this account, because they laid not out what they had, so as it might be accounted laid out for Christ. Oh that you would avoid the wrath of the Lamb, and of him that sits upon the throne ! If you have been guilty herein, yield to conviction. Break off this dangerous evil without delay, persist not in such wickedness. Take warning before it be too late. Employ what you have so as, when you stand before the tribunal of Christ, you may give an account thereof with joy, and not with grief, and shame, and terror, and a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will then devour those who continue in such

ungrateful, unfaithful, injurious dealing with God, and will be devouring of them for ever and ever.

[4.] I might add, as another inducement, the comfort we may have thereby. This is the way to make all we have, and all we do, to be holy, holy unto the Lord, and used holily. How acts of worship, and what is set apart thereto, are holy, we easily apprehend ; but how our particular callings, our earthly business and worldly enjoyments, should be made so holy, and those pursued, and these used, in a holy manner, is the difficulty, and yet a most necessary duty, for otherwise we cannot be holy in all manner of conversation, which is required of us indispensably, 1 Pet. i. 15. Not only in that part of our conversation which immediately respects God in duties of worship, but that part of it which respects the world, and the business and enjoyments of it. How may these be made holy, or we shew ourselves holy in them ? Why, plainly, thus : that is holy which is set apart to God, and used for him. That which you design and really resolve shall be for God, you consecrate it, and make it holy, and what you use (as so set apart) for him, you use as a holy thing ; so that if God be your end and design in your particular callings, if you follow your business for him, and employ what you get for God, all thus become holy, and you use them as becomes holy persons to use holy things. If your intention in all be to please, and serve, and honour God, and you employ all in a subserviency to these ends, and no otherwise, you are holy, even in this part of your conversation, and not only in that part of it which is taken up with his worship, Heb. xiii. 16, Philip. iv. 16-18.

The art* of sacrificing was a holy employment, and the sacrifice offered to God was a holy thing, and so are you employed, when you are doing good with what you have ; and that portion of your estates which you do good with, which you employ to please, and serve, and honour God with, it assumes, as it were, the nature of a sacrifice, and is offered to God as a holy thing.

You see the way that holiness to the Lord may be upon all you have and do in the world. Use it as that which is God's, and as he who is the owner would have it used ; use it not for yourselves or others, but so as God may be served, and pleased, and honoured by it, and then it is employed for God. It is as it were offered to him ; it will be holy and acceptable to him, as the sacrifices of his own appointing were.

And how comfortable will it be for you to have the Lord look upon the use and employment of what you have in the world, as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to him, and to make it the end of your callings, and the business of your lives, to be (when others are sacrificing all to their lusts, or themselves) still offering to him (in the use), or preparing for him (in your care and industry) such holy offerings.

[5.] What you have will hereby be better secured. The Lord will be particularly interested in the preservation of it as that which is his own, not only by a common right which he has in all things, but by a particular right, such as he has in things dedicated to him.

If our end and design be, if we sincerely intend to employ what we have for God, we have thereby given it up, dedicated it to God ; and so it is his own peculiarly, and those that wrong us therein, wrong God himself, not as common transgressors only, but as those who should steal away that which was provided and prepared for a sacrifice for God. This would not only be a wrong to the person who provided it, but to the Lord for whom

* Qu. 'act' ?—Ed.

it was designed, and to whom it was to be offered. God is herein more particularly concerned than in common injuries, and will shew it by taking special vengeance for it. Those that will oppose or defraud you, or by deceit or violence take anything from you, when you have given up all to God, and are accordingly employing all, run a more dreadful hazard than any other deceivers or oppressors, they shall not escape so well as others. He will make them know they had better have employed their fraud or violence anywhere than upon such, they shall feel what it is to attempt upon that which is God's own, Jer. ii. 8. 'Israel was consecrated or set apart to me, and the first-fruits of my revenues, all that devour him shall offend,' not as common offenders, but as those which devoured that which was God's, as such who attempt to rob the exchequer of the Most High; 'evil shall come upon them,' some grievous evil answerable to the offence. They shall not escape without exemplary punishment.

Hereby you have assurance, that the Lord will secure what you have as he will secure his own. All you have is his, and so should be given up to him, and used for him; hereby it becomes his own peculiarly. And so this is the way to engage him to take care of your concerns as his own. But enough of this; though indeed never enough of it, till it lead you effectually to the practice of this most important duty, of employing all for God.

4. Another duty that this truth leads us to is patience, and the continual exercise of it, as there is occasion. It will help us, being duly considered and effectually believed, in patience to possess our souls, whatever our condition or the circumstances of it be. It will serve both as a motive and a means to keep our souls in a submissive, quiet, composed, undisturbed temper, even in such cases which are most like to disturb and discompose us, to make us yield submissively to the disposal of God when others rise up against it, and to silence and quiet our hearts when they are tempted to grumble and murmur and shew themselves unsatisfied. This will shew us that the least degree of impatience is most unreasonable, very sinful, and exceeding dangerous, that it reflects untowardly upon the universal dominion and propriety of God as to all things, and either denies it, or questions whether he duly exercise it towards us, and by such guilt very much endangers us, and tends to make our condition far worse, when we think it too bad already. Let me instance, in three particulars, when impatience has the greatest advantage, and usually most prevails.

(1.) In wants and necessities. When we have not what we desire, or so much of it as we would have, this brings us into impatience. But how unreasonable it is to yield to it, whatever our wants be, how heinous and dangerous it is, hereby appears evidently.

The Lord is the owner of all: that which we would have, as well as that which we have, is his own, and so he has all right to dispose of it as he will. No, says impatience (this is the voice and language of it, though we are apt to put a better construction on it), it ought to be disposed otherwise; I should have more than I have, I have not enough, my share is too little in this, or that, or many degrees. And what is the meaning of this, but a denying that God is the owner of what we would have, or that he has not the right to dispose of his own as he pleases? And how intolerable is this, for a poor worthless creature, who has nothing at all but what he owes to the mere bounty of God, thus to rise up against the Lord of heaven and earth, and question his interest, and impeach his undoubted right, and prescribe to him how he should order that which is his own! If a beggar,

when you have given him what you think fit, should murmur and repine, and say you gave him not enough, he wants this, and that, and so much of it, and ought to have it of you, you would take him up as saucy and impudent, for challenging more than you think fit to give, and prescribing to you how you should dispose of what is your own, you would tell him if he were not satisfied with what you think fit to give, he should have nothing at all, as he deserved. A greater sauciness in such a beggar would be nothing to that of our impatience in God's account; the absoluteness of his dominion and right, with the infiniteness of the distance betwixt us, raises the provocation inconceivably higher.

: It were more tolerable if that which we are impatient to have were our own, or any way due to us; but this truth leaves us no plea nor pretence for that. God is the true and sole owner of all; and therefore this should hush and quell all the stirrings of impatience, and quiet our hearts when our needs would disturb us, as it silenced those in the parable, who murmured that they had no more, Mat. xx. 11, 13, 15. Is it not most intolerable not to allow the absolute Lord of all that right which we challenge ourselves, to do what we will with our own, when that we call our own is nothing so much ours as all are his? If any say, the Lord has promised what I would have, and so, though it be not otherwise due, yet by virtue of his promise it is; for that creates some right;—

Ans. The Lord has nowhere promised earthly blessings in such a degree to thee or any; he has promised in general what is good for his people in temporal enjoyments, but not such or such a degree thereof, or so much as they may desire, no, nor spiritual blessings in such a degree, though we are in little danger of impatient desires after these (alas! we do not so much value them, we are not so sensible of our want of them, the Lord encourages importunate eagerness after these), our danger is in respect of temporal enjoyments; and the degrees of these he has nowhere promised, and so he has not, as to these, any way restrained his own right of disposing of them in what degree and proportion soever he will. His dominion herein continues fully absolute, and altogether unlimited and unrestrained, so that we cannot challenge this or that degree of them as any way due to us, no, not so much as by his promise. He is at liberty to give less or more, as he thinks fit. And if we will impatiently desire this or that, or more of it, which he has reserved to his free disposal, we exalt ourselves against the dominion of God, as though he were not the owner of all, and might not distribute them as he pleases.

(2.) In losses. When we lose much, or that which is dear to us, we are apt to be impatient at the loss. But to arm us against the assaults of this evil, let us consider whose it is we part with, and who it is that takes it from us. It is the Lord that takes, whoever be the instrument, and it is he that is the owner of it, for he is the owner of all. He takes but his own; and should we repine, or think much that the Lord should have his own when he calls for it? Is this reasonable? Is this tolerable? Should you not rather be thankful that you had it at all, and that he would let you have it so long, than grudge that he should have liberty to take his own when he sees fit? Job had as great temptations to impatience as any we are like to meet with, considering how much he lost, and how dear some of it was to him, and in what way he was bereaved thereof, and yet by such considerations became an example of patience to the world. He was so far from repining at his losses as he blesses God under the pressure of them, Job i. 21. It is the Lord of it who gave it; it is the Lord, the owner of

it, who took it : blessed be his name in both, adored and admired be his dominion both in giving and taking away.

If you should, in kindness, lend a friend what he needs ; and he, after he has had the use and advantage, should think much to let you have your own again, when you have occasion to call for it ; what a heavy censure would you think he deserves ! We are worthy of a heavier censure ourselves, when we give way to the least impatience, when the Lord calls for anything in our possession. He did not give, but lend us what we have. He lets us not have the propriety, but the use of it. Our estates, outward comforts, dearest relatives, they are but lent us ; when we have them, he is the proprietor, not we ourselves. And shall we think much to part with his own to him, when he will ? Do we think ourselves the owners, because we have been so long entrusted with what is truly his ? Will we deny his universal right and interest in all, because he has been so kind and bountiful to us ? Is not this shameful, and to be abhorred by a temper that has the least tincture of ingenuousness ? Let it then make us ashamed to give way to any impatience in such a trial.

(8.) In troubles and afflictions ; when they are many, or grievous, or smarting, or tedious, then we have need of patience ; and this truth, duly considered, that the Lord is the owner of all, may help us to it. He who is the owner of all things, is the owner of us. We are more his own than anything is ours, which we think we may use as we please, because it is ours. And has not he, then, all right to deal with us as he will ? May he not do all his pleasure with that which is so much his own ? And shall we be any ways impatient, when he does us no wrong at all, nor can do ? Shall we repine, when we have not the least cause to complain ; as we have not, when we are not at all wronged. And can he do us any wrong, who has all right to do with us what he will ? And so he has, if we be his own ; and so we are, if he be the owner of all : Job ii. 10, ' Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil ? ' so Job checks the impatience of his wife. Shall we think ourselves wronged in one more than the other, when the Lord has equal right to do both ?

When all those grievous things were threatened Eli, which the Lord declared he would inflict upon him and his, what says he, but that which expresses a great patience ? And this is the ground of it, 1 Sam. iii. It is the Lord, he who has all dominion over me and mine ; he has right to inflict on us whatever seems good to him ; it will be good and righteous, whatever it seem to be ; he will herein do us no wrong. And so we shall have no cause to complain, not the least excuse, not the least reason for any touch of impatience. It hereby appears to be a most unreasonable evil, and that which those who have the use of reason should be ashamed of, and blush at, as if it transformed them into the state of brutes.

5. This will serve, as a powerful means, to help us to humility. It may be improved, as one of the best expedients to make us humble, and to keep us so ; to cast down all high thoughts and imaginations of ourselves, and to keep them under. All that we are, all that we have, may, by this consideration, be converted into the nourishment of humility, a grace which nourishes all other graces. This will teach you to make use of everything which others are proud of, to lay you low, and make you humble. There is nothing more tends to ' hide pride from man,' and to make ashamed, and afraid of it, as a most shameful, and one of the worst of evils. For hereby it appears,

(1.) That it is a most absurd and ridiculous evil. If God be the owner

of all, we have nothing of our own. And, therefore, whoever is proud of anything, he is proud of that which is not his own. Now we count it matter of scorn and laughter, to see one proud of that which is another's ; to see one strut or look big, because he wears a jewel or a rich garment, when we know it is but lent him, is occasion of derision or indignation to any that observe it. Such a person is counted a fool, as being proud, when there is not the least occasion, nor any shadow of reason for it. And this is our case ; we have nothing to lift us up, nothing to set us off in our own eyes, or in the eyes of others, which is truly and properly our own. We have no accomplishments, no enjoyments, which we can call our own. God is the owner of all we are and have. And to think better of ourselves for that which is not our own, is to shew ourselves fools, and to make ourselves ridiculous, and worthy of all scorn and indignation. Upon this account, that may be acknowledged as true, which passes for a rule amongst the masters of reason ; so far as any man is proud, so far he is a fool. If he wants not reason, yet herein he wants the use of it ; he has not judgment enough to discern what is nearest him, or to understand himself in that which is most obvious. If we have a high opinion of ourselves, when there is not the least reason for it, we are unreasonably, absurdly, ridiculously proud ; and no person on earth can be proud at a more intolerable rate, because he has nothing of his own, and so no reason in the world to give way to the least stirring of pride, 1 Cor. iv. 7. If thou art exalted upon the account of anything thou hast, it is without reason. As if the madman at Athens, who fancied all the ships which came into the port were his own, should have been proud upon this conceit. There is as little reason, as much madness, in all the pride of the world ; it is all for that which is not their own.

(2.) That it is a perverse and desperate malady. Pride feeds itself by that which should starve it ; turns that into poison which should cure it ; is swelled and puffed by that which should take down the tumour. We are proud of something which we have ; whereas everything we have should humble us, because we have nothing of our own. What a desperate malady is this, which is enraged and heightened by that which is most proper to assuage and heal it ! How incurable by any art, by any hand, but that of the great Physician ! How impossible the cure of it by anything but infinite wisdom and power ! How dreadful to us should that distemper be, which is so hard to cure !

(3.) That it is a transcendent wickedness. You could not be proud, if you did effectually believe that you were nothing, that you had nothing at all of your own. If you do not believe this, you disown God ; you do not acknowledge his universal dominion, his propriety and interest in all things. And what a horrid and monstrous wickedness this is, I need not tell you. Yet when you give way to pride, you harbour such a monster, which rises up against God, opposes his dominion, and denies him to be the Lord and owner of all.

Make use of this to make and keep you humble ; to suppress and quell all the stirrings of pride ; to repel and baffle all temptations to it.

When you are in danger to be proud of gifts, or parts, or any accomplishments wherein you seem to excel others, ask yourselves, From whom had I these ? Whose are they ? Wherefore are they in my possession ? Did I receive them ? If I be any way before others, who made the difference betwixt them and me ? did I make myself to differ ? And when he let me have them, did he part with his propriety ? Is he not the owner still ?

Are not all these my master's talents? Have I them otherwise than in trust? And shall I be proud of that which is another's, and put a greater value on myself, for that which is not my own, or have higher thoughts of my own condition, because I have more of another's in my hands? If all those feathers which set me off, and make so fair a show, were plucked away, and none left me but what I might truly call mine own, what should I have left, for any to be proud of?

Some are in danger to be lifted up with a conceit of their *beauty* and comeliness. Now what would you think of one that is proud of a painted face? You would judge her worthy of scorn and laughter. It is not her own beauty, you will say, she owes it to the art and colours of another. And do not you more owe what comeliness you have to the hand of God? And does not this make it as little your own as that which you deride is hers? Native and painted beauty differ not in this respect; neither is your own; it is equally groundless and ridiculous to be proud of either.

Some are so vain as to be proud of what they *wear*, if it be finer and richer than others have. This seems some pre-eminence, and may possibly puff up a mind that has no better ballast than mere vanity. They think better of themselves for it, and think others will do so too. Now if you should see one adorned exactly according to the mode, with all the art and cost that might set her off to the eye of the beholders, and while she is shewing how proud she is thereof, by looks and gesture, one should declare, in the hearing of her, and all about her, that nothing of this was her own; that all from top to toe was stolen or borrowed; this would be enough to prick the bladder, and make the empty thing fall lank, and blush at her folly. Why, whatever you were, it is no more your own than that which is borrowed; nay, many times it is stolen, as it is always, when it should have been employed to better uses. At the best, he that clothes the lilies affords you clothes; you owe it to another as well as they, and have no more reason than they to be proud of it. If you were stripped of all that is not your own, you would be left, not only without your ornaments, but without your being. And should he be high-minded, who is as much in debt as all that he has comes to?

Others are in danger to be proud of their *estates*. The apostle will have those that are rich warned that they be not high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. Something in them apt to lift up the mind. Riches are apt to puff men up. There is some venom attends them, which if those who have them be not aware of, will make them swell. And the world is ready to feed the poisonous humour, which being not acquainted with the precious things of heaven, and the treasures above its reach, will have that most valued which is visible and sensible. Many are apt to be raised in their conceits, and to look upon others as below them, because they have more than others; they value themselves more, because they have much.

Well, but whose is that which you have? Is it your own? 'The land is mine,' saith the Lord to Israel. 'The silver and the gold is mine,' saith he to the Jews, Haggai ii. All the riches in the world is his, Ps. civ. 24, 25. If all the riches in the earth and in the sea be his, what is there that is properly yours? What has any to be proud of, unless they will be proud of nothing? You have more in your hands than others, but whose is it, and wherefore have you it? Is it not the Lord's, since he is the owner of all? And are you not to improve it for him? And were you not entrusted with it for this end, and upon these terms? And will you think better of yourselves, because you have more than others in your

hands, whenas nothing of it is your own? yours only in trust, and for the use of him who is the true owner. You will count that steward little better than a changeling, who will be proud because his master is rich. It is true, the more his lord has, the more the steward may be entrusted with; but what is that to him, since he cannot call justly one penny of it his own, nor can otherwise employ any of it but for his master's use, unless he will play the knave, and be false to his master and his trust?

Those that have most have no more of their own than such stewards who have nothing but their master's goods. What the richest have, they have but in trust, and the Lord entrusts them with it for this end, that it may be wholly employed for his use, and according to his appointment. And what occasion in the least to be high-minded for what they have, when it is not theirs properly, nor at their disposal, but according to the Lord's appointment?

So that those that have most have no more of their own than they that have least; and so no more reason to be high-minded in respect of their estates than the poorest; only one is more in trust than the other. And if it be said, It is more honour to be entrusted with more; and he that is more honoured may be more valued by others, and may have some sense of it himself; I answer, It is more honour to be entrusted with more, if the faithfulness be answerable to the trust; otherwise it is no more honour than to be a greater cheat and deceiver than to be a less. The greater fraud, the greater infamy and reproach. And such is the fraud of those that are unfaithful in the employing of great estates. And if they be faithful, this also is from him from whom they receive what they are faithful in, 1 Cor. vii. 25. So that they owe both what they have, and their faithfulness in it, to him who is the Lord and owner of all; and therefore have no occasion for anything, but a great humility in all.

6. Another great duty which this truth teaches us is self-denial. It leads us to it directly, and strongly obliges us to the continual exercise of it. If God be the owner of all things, he is the owner of us; and if he be the owner of us, we are not to own ourselves, and not to own ourselves is to deny ourselves; to deny ourselves is to make account we are not our own, but belong to another as our owner; and to demean ourselves as in the condition of such a one who is not *sui juris*, his own man; as children in respect of their parents, or more fully, as bond-servants in respect of their master. They are not their own, but pertain to another as their owner. If they look upon themselves as their own, they wrong the true proprietor.

So the Lord being our owner, we wrong him if we account ourselves our own. If we deny not ourselves, we deny his right and interest in us. So far as we own ourselves, we deny him; and his universal dominion, we acknowledge it not in all things, because not in ourselves. If we will give him the honour to be the owner of all things, we must not own, we must deny ourselves. You see what a necessary connection self-denial has with the acknowledging of this truth. Let us shew how it obliges us to the exercise of this grace, in some particulars, wherein self-denial consists.

(1.) As to our own judgments. He that is not his own man, must not follow his own judgment, must submit to be ordered by the discretion of his owner. Children must be guided by their parents, and servants must be ordered at the discretion of their master: δούλος πείρυκας, οὐ μένεται ἐν λόγῳ. Thou art a servant, what hast thou then to do with reason? The master's reason must conclude the servant; for why, he is not his own

man, and so not to be ordered by his own judgment, but give up himself to the conduct of his owner. We are no more our own, the Lord is more our owner; therefore we must quit our own mind and judgment, and be guided by the wisdom of him who is our Lord and owner. We must give up ourselves to the conduct of that judgment which is laid down in Scripture, that which is called the mind of the Lord.

(2.) As to our *wills*. He that is not his own man, must not be ruled by his own will; he is to be disposed of at the will of him in whose power he is. The will of his owner must be his will. Since the Lord is our owner so fully, so absolutely, so transcendently, we must have no will of our own. This must be denied, crossed, laid down; and the will of the Lord must take its place, and be our will.

(3.) As to our *ends*. We own ourselves in that which is of greatest moment, that which influences our whole course, and moves all the wheels of it, if we pursue our own ends and designs. We are far from acknowledging ourselves to be wholly the Lord's, if we mind our own ends instead of his. Unless we deny ourselves herein, we deny his propriety and interest in us. If we be wholly his, we should give up ourselves wholly to serve his end, an end higher than our own, and that in all things. The pleasing, and honouring, and enjoying of God is the end, the only end, that they should propose to themselves, either in holy duties or worldly business, who look upon themselves as entirely the Lord's, and not their own. Whatever is not subservient to this, is wholly excluded, &c.

(4.) As to our *interests*. That which is God's must be ours, and that only, if we own him, and none else, as our owner. He acts as if he were his own man, and not his master's servant, who minds his own interests, and not his master's, as Ziba did, 2 Sam. xvi. 8. He shewed that he had more mind to be a master than a servant, and acted as a traitor, not like one faithful to his lord, when he did Mephibosheth that disservice to serve his own turn.

If the Lord be your owner, you ought to own and mind his interest, and none else. You must disclaim the interest of the flesh and of the world, as inconsistent with the interest of your Lord; you must espouse that.

(5.) As to our *business* and employments. He that is not his own man must not do his own work, but that which his owner sets him about. So did the Israelites when they were bond-servants in Egypt, they did what work Pharaoh would have them. A servant, says Aristotle, is *δουλόου ὄργανον*, his master's instrument; so must we be in the hand of God as living tools, to act as he moves us, to do what he would have us, to follow that business, and that only, which he employs us about. Our Lord Jesus, when he took upon him the form of a servant and acted in our stead, gave us an example what we should be always doing, Luke ii. 49, John iv. 84, and ix. 4. We must be followers of him, making it the business of our lives not to do our own work, but the work of him that sent us, and that only. We must not do what our own humour, or inclination, or interest leads us to; nor what Satan, or the world, or the flesh, would have us. None should set us a-work, but our Lord and owner. We shall shew whom we acknowledge ourselves to belong to, by the work we busy ourselves about. If we let Satan employ us, we shall thereby confess he has interest in us, John viii. 41, 44. If we do Satan's work, we shall thereby declare that we own his interest in us, rather than God's.

If we follow the world, for the world's sake, and do its drudgery, we

shall thereby shew that we are the children *τεῦ κόσμου τοῦτου*, of this world, and that we belong to it of choice, and to no other than this present world.

If we do what the flesh would have us, that is our master, and we can expect no other reward but what such a lord and owner can give us, Gal. vi. 8 ; Rom. vi. 20, 21 ; Rom. viii. 13.

If we do our own work, that which seems good in our own eyes, self prevails, and we shew hereby, that we think we are our own, and acknowledge not the Lord to be our owner. We own not God and his propriety and interest in us, unless it be the business of our lives to do his work, unless it be of that nature as it may be some way truly counted his.

(6.) As to our *possessions*. If the Lord be the owner of all, and of us, we ought to deny ourselves so far as to look upon what we possess as his, not ours.

Self-denial includes a denial that we are owners of ourselves. And he that is not the owner of himself, can call nothing his own. A bought servant, as I told you, being his master's possession, could neither count his person, nor anything he had, his own. Yea, whatsoever fell to him while a servant, it was his master's, and that by law, Lev. xxv. 45, 46, Exod. xxi. 21. And if a woman had a child while in service, and that by a free-man, the child was as much the master's as the mother, as much his servant, and part of his possession, as she. The Lord is more the owner of us, than any lord is of his servant. And we do not acknowledge his dominion and propriety in all, or in us, unless we look upon what we have as not our own but his, and so use it. But of this before.

We are not the disciples of Christ, unless we endeavour to live in the practice of self-denial. And how much this truth engages us to it, and how far the belief and due consideration of it may help us herein, you may discern by the premises.

7. This may be improved as a powerful means to wean us from the world. To bring us to a holy indifferency as to the riches and plenty of it ; to make us contented with what the Lord has allotted us, though it be or seem but little ; to take down the immoderate esteem we are apt to have of earthly enjoyments, a large portion of them ; to moderate our affections towards them ; to help us against an excess of love to, or delight in, or desires after them, or care to get, fear to lose them, or grief when they are lost ; and so to crucify our hearts to the world, and the world to them ; and likewise to take us off from that eagerness in pursuing the world, which engrosses the time, strength, endeavours, of so many, and leaves so little of this for heaven and their souls ; and so dry up both the spring and the stream of those excesses and inordinacies towards the world, which are so common, and bear down the most that meddle with it, and are too hard for the best, both to cure this reigning disease, and to remove the symptoms and ill consequences of it.

Those who mind their souls, and are sensible how much they are endangered by the world, will look upon that, which may effect such a cure, as a receipt of sovereign virtue, and exceeding great value. Now such is the truth before us ; if it be duly improved, there is that in which it may be effectual to cure this deadly distemper where it is working, and to prevent it where it is not. There are several considerations which flow from it, that are powerful for this purpose. For hereby it appears that,

(1.) Whatever you have of the world, how much soever you can get more of it, yet you will be nothing the richer for it all. Now if men were fully convinced of this, that if they could get as much as they would have, if

they could compass all that is in the large grasp of their worldly designs, yet they would not be in any degree richer than they are at present, or than such are, who have but a very little for their earthly portion ; if we could make them believe this, that all their care and pains, and affectionate industry, would nothing increase their riches, this would do much to quench that feverish thirst wherewith so many are distempered ; for this is manifest, that it is eagerness to be rich that sets all the wheels a-going, and whirls them into disorderly motions ; and had they no hopes to grow richer, they would drive on more heavily ; they would be more moderate in their pursuit of the world.

Now if you believe this truth, that God is the owner of all things ; the absolute, the total, the sole owner of all, as I have explained and proved it ; it will not be hard to convince you, unless the love of the world have left no use of reason, that whatever you get more will make you nothing the richer ; for if God be the owner, the sole owner of all things, then he is and will be the owner of all that you have already, and of all that you can get hereafter ; and if so, you are not, you cannot be the true owner of it ; it will not be your own, but his (whatever your title be in reference to men), and that which is not your own, how much soever it be, cannot make you rich, how much soever it be increased, cannot make you richer ; how much soever you have in your hands, if it be all another man's, you count yourselves no richer for it. Now whatever you have, or can get into your hands, it is and will be another's. God is still the owner of it, and not you yourselves ; and will you count yourselves the richer, for that which is none of your own ? When you have done all you can to raise and enlarge your estates, yet he that has the least, and is the poorest, will have as much of his own as you, and so will be as rich as you. Men may count you rich, and human laws may give you title to more than others, and in reference thereto the Scripture calls you rich, speaking according to common apprehension ; but, in respect of God and his dominion and propriety, all that you can get will make you no richer than those who have least, unless more of that which is not your own can make you richer.

You count not a tenant rich for having much land in his hand, because it is none of his own ; nor is he like to be rich, if he be tied to let his landlord have all the improvement of it, all that he can make of it ; such a tenure there was once in England ; and we hold all we have of God by no other tenure ; the Lord lets to us all that we have, he continues Lord and owner of it, and has obliged us to improve it all for him ; both the estate and the improvement is his, not ours. If, then, we have never so much in our hands, what shall we be the richer, since nothing of it is our own ?

You count not a man the richer, because he has much in his possession ; if he have borrowed it all, and be bound to restore it when the owner calls for it ; so it is with those that have most ; the Lord has but lent them what they have ; he parts not with the propriety, though he lets you have the use and possession ; he is still the owner of it ; and you are obliged to part with it whenever he calls for his own ; and will that which is but borrowed, how much soever it be, make you richer ? Joseph had a great trust, when Potiphar, a great officer of Pharaoh's, put all he had in his hand, Gen. xxxix. 4-6 ; but Joseph counted himself not the richer for all this ; because all in his hand was his master's, not his own ; and answerably, some understand that passage, 'and he knew not aught that he had,' referring it to Joseph ; he converted none of all that he was entrusted with

to his own use. What was he the richer for it, when it was not his own, nor might he turn any of it to his own use ? So it is with those that have most, and with those that are industrious to get more ; they are but labouring to get more of their master's goods into their hands ; and when they have got all they can, they will be no richer for it ; it will not be their own, nor for their own use, if they mean to be honest and faithful to the owner of it, as Joseph was. They have as much of their own already, as ever they will have ; nor will they be richer, do what they can, unless that which is not their own will make them so.

If riches be that which you so highly esteem, so much affect, so eagerly labour for, this may be sufficient to moderate and restrain you herein ; since God is the owner of all, more of the world will not make you richer, nor rich at all, how much soever you have, unless you could call it your own ; which you cannot call it, nor account it, since it is his who is the Lord of all. Much of the world is (whether for this I do not now examine) in the account of Christ, riches but falsely so called and accounted, Luke xvi. 11. ' True riches ' are put in opposition to that which is riches in the world's account, which therefore is not true riches.

You see also by this, what reason we have to be contented with what we have already, though it seem little, since we can have no more that will be our own ; and what a strange humour is it not to be satisfied, unless we have more in our hands that is not our own !

(2.) You will have no more to spend than you have already, if you should get more of the world ; no more to lay out, as it is the guise and custom of the world to lay it out ; and this is it which endears a large share of earthly things unto us ; this makes us put so high a value on it, and affect it so much, and follow it so keenly, even with the neglect of better things ; this is counted the great privilege and advantage of having much ; they who have it may lay out more than others in ways that please them ; but this truth will let us see that those who have much have no more to expend in the way expressed. For God being the owner of all things, and so of all we have, we have no right to use it, but as he would have us ; we are obliged to employ it so (and no otherwise, but) as he has appointed us ; and so, how much soever you have, you will have nothing to expend, as the world is wont to do it ; those that have most, have no more to spend upon their lusts than those that have least ; no more for pride, or lust, or revenge, or intemperance, or sensuality, or ostentation, or the maintaining of factions and parties, or the countenance of any evil whatsoever. If they expend anything of their abundance in any such way, they are thieves to God, and thieves to men also, viz., to those for whose relief and refreshment that was due, which runs into such a sink. The employing great estates and revenues this way is no better than unjust wars are called, *magna latrocinia*, great robberies, and persons so spending them, the greatest robbers ; they have no more to spend idly and vainly, so as no way tends to serve the Lord's interest, than those who have least ; they have not a penny to spend this way, more than the poorest have ; and if they venture to do it, it is at their peril ; they do it against the express order of him who is the Lord and owner of it, and has entrusted them in it for no such purposes. But have they not more to lay out for themselves and relatives ? No ; not for themselves simply and precisely, but only for God upon themselves ; only in such ways, and such a manner, as the laying it out on themselves may be justly said to be an employing it for God, the owner of it.

As for their relatives and children, they may have more, if thereby the Lord's interest may be best served; but if they be such as give no hopes that they will employ what is left them for God, but rather against him, they ought to have no more, from those that have most, than what will serve them with mere necessities, and keep them from being chargeable to others. And that seems to be all intended in that text, which is much abused otherwise in favour of worldly designs, 1 Tim. v. 8. He is speaking of poor widows whom the church relieved. Those of them who belonged to families, and had relatives that could maintain them, they were to be provided for by their pains and industry, so as they might not be chargeable to the church.*

Now if those that have more than others have no more to spend, in ways desirable to a carnal heart and a worldly temper, than those that have less, as it is plain they have not, because the Lord, who is the owner of all they have, allows them no more to expend in any such way, why are we not content with less? why not more indifferent whether we have more or no? why do we so much value, so much affect more of the world, and take so much care and pains for it? Is it because we would have more to lay out for God? He, who is the owner of it, and all, approves of no end but this, or what may be reduced to this. Indeed, when we see any so eager after the world, singly and sincerely because they would have more to expend for God, and manifest it by so employing it, they should be so far from being discouraged or pulled back, that they ought to be greatly admired, as those who have attained such a high degree of holiness and love to God, and zeal for his interest, as is rarely to be found amongst the children of men.

For those who cannot say they desire more of the world for this end, because they would have God to have more from them, here is all reason to abate this keenness. They have no right from God, the owner of all, to spend any of it in the other ways they propose to themselves; though they be worth many thousands, they have not one penny to spend in their own ways more than the poorest beggar. And if they take the liberty to do it, they do it in opposition to God's dominion and right in themselves and the world.

(8.) The more you have, the more you are in debt; and where is the advantage then of a great estate, if the more it be increased the farther you run in debt? But so it is, and by the truth in hand it appears to be so: for the Lord is the owner of all, you owe to him all you have, and he that has most owes most; and you owe to all those to whom the Lord and owner orders you to pay it; and the debt to these is proportionable to your estate, and rises higher as the estate is raised; for 'to whom much is given, of him shall much be required,' Luke xii. 48.

The more you get, the more you owe to God, the more for the upholding of his gospel and worship, the more to his messengers, the more to his suffering servants, the more to all in want, especially those of the household of faith, the more to the common good; the more for the honouring your profession, the more for the promoting of his interest here and abroad. And the debt grows vastly and insensibly through the neglect of payment, yea, or for the improvement of every parcel which was due, but not discharged, ever since it was neglected. None so much in debt as those that

* So the provision there urged comes to no more than what would keep them from being chargeable to the church, when it was not in a condition to be charged with them.

have most in their hands : it sometimes eats them up, and they owe more than they are worth before they are aware, because they employed that otherwise which should have discharged it. What a hole would be made in many men's estates, if their debts were paid, if all were deducted which they owe even in God's account ? The Lord will not dispense with their neglect of payment, though they have so little conscience as to dispense with themselves. He would have the people of old so just in paying what they owed, that he allowed them and their children to be sold for satisfaction of their creditors, if they had not otherwise wherewith to satisfy : Lev. xxv. 89, 41, 2 Kings iv. 1, Mat. xviii. 25. Now did the Lord admit of such a course for the discharge of what was due to men ? What course then will he take with those who neglect to discharge what is due to him and his ? The best plea that can be used, in excuse of such neglects, is a great charge of children, many poor relatives to be provided for. But he was so far from allowing they should be provided for out of what was due to men, as he would rather let them be sold for slaves or servants ; and will he allow provision to be made for them out of that which is due to himself ?

You owe much of what you have ; and the more you have the more you owe, and the Lord keeps an exact account of it, and will not think (as you may) that the great sums which you owe can be discharged with a trifle. Till what you owe be faithfully paid, you hoard up or spend that which is another's, that which should pay your debts. You eat that which should feed others, and wear that which should clothe others, and make yourselves fine, and fare deliciously, with that which you owe to others' necessities, and live upon the estate of your creditors. Those whom the Lord has made such, you eat their meat, and wear their clothes, and lay up that for yourselves which should be in their purses, if you would be so just as to pay your debts. In like manner does Basil* express this wickedness, *Τὸ ἐκ-
κὶνῶντος ἑαυτοῦ ὁ ἄστρος ὅν σου κατὰ χεῖρας*, it is the bread of the hungry that thou eatest ; *Τὸ γυμνῶντος, &c.*, the garment of the naked which thou wearest ; *Τὸ χρηζόντος τὸ ἀργύριον, &c.*, the money of the needy which thou hoarest up. And the ground of it, which Augustinet thus delivers : What the Lord lets us have, above what we need, he doth not give it to us, but transfers it, that we may lay it out for others ; *et si non dederimus, res alienas invasimus*, which, if we give them not, we invade other men's goods. This is no better than to defraud our creditors, *οὐ δὲ οὐκ ἀποστερη-
της, ἀ πρὸς δικονομίαν ἰδέξω, ταῦτα ἰδια σαυροῦ ποιοῦμενος* ; art not thou a defrauder, which keepest that to thyself which thou receivedst to be distributed to others ? If you should see one sumptuous in his habit, diet, and accommodations, and designing great portions for his children or relations, when you know him to be over head and ears in debt, would not this move your indignation ? Would you not judge him void of all conscience and honesty ? Alas ! this is the case of many who little think of it. None are more in debt than those who have much of the world. You can scarce look anywhere but you may see something they are indebted to some persons whom the Lord has made their creditors ; and many times deal with them, as the unjust steward did with his master's debtors, Luke xvi. 5-7. They deal worse with those they are indebted to on the Lord's account ; when they owe eighty or an hundred, they set down not eighty or fifty, but put him off with one or two, and so make a shameful composition, when they have more than enough to pay all. The Lord and

* Serm. de Avarit, page 155.

Serm. 29. de Temp.

Owner of all will not thus be put off: he will not be so defrauded, though men may.

And since the having of more will put you more in debt, and the Lord will see it paid, or have satisfaction for it here or hereafter, what is it that men propose to themselves? What is it that they expect? What makes them so greedy after more? You use to count that no great or desirable advantage which will put you as much in debt as it comes to.

(4.) The more you have, the greater charge is upon you; and the greater charge, the heavier burden; and we care not in other cases to be burdened. Every one cannot bear a great burden, and to those who can make a shift to bear it, yet is it heavy and troublesome; and they are wont to desire rather to be eased of some of it than to have more weight laid on.

To have children is counted a charge, as the world now goes. Those that have very many are said to have a great charge of children; their condition is not thought to be so easy, there is more lies upon them. A great estate is as truly a great charge. If all that is required of those that have it were duly minded, it would be so accounted. They have more to maintain proportionably to what they have; there is far more lies upon them than upon others.

And it is not an easy burden that lies upon them, if we believe the Scripture, where riches are called thorns, Mat. xiii. 22.

It would be a wonder to see one forward to take up a burden of thorns on his back; an astonishment to see him eager for more and more, unless he be void of sense, and feel neither weight nor smart. Who else would be earnest to pierce himself through and through with so sharp a load? 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. He that would bear such a wounding weight, and that too not for himself, but another, might well be counted a person of rare self-denial. And if you count it your own, you wrong God, deny him to be the owner of all; and if you would have it for yourselves principally, you would not have it in God's way, nor upon his terms, nor as becomes those who profess they are his. Yet it is selfish aims and respects most commonly, which makes all seem easy and light, and takes away sense of smart or burden, and digests all those fears, cares, perplexities, sorrows, cumber, trouble, which otherwise would make much of the world an uneasy burden and a burdensome charge, if at all tolerable.

Consider it as a trust (as it is no more indeed); the more you are entrusted with, the greater is your charge. A man in a journey would not choose to have along with him a great charge of money, especially if it were another's, and himself responsible for it; nay, he would be loath to have much treasure that is not his own long in his own house, if he had no other meaning but to be honest and faithful to the owner.

If we look upon what we have as no otherwise ours than in trust (and this truth allows us to look upon it no otherwise), why are we so importunate to be still charged with more, and to have more of that which is another's in our hands, unless we think to defeat the true owner, and convert what we are entrusted with for another to our own use?

If you observed one to make it his business to be entrusted with all that he could any way compass, and to get into his hands of other men's all that possibly he could, you would suspect he had some dishonest design for himself therein, and that he did not intend only the advantage of those that trusted him, because none are wont to be so desirous of more trust and charge. We have cause to suspect ourselves, that our ends are not right, and such as become our profession, when we are still earnest for

more of the world, which, when we have it, we know will not be our own, but his who is the owner of all ; since in other cases we rather decline a mere trust and charge, the benefit and fruit whereof not we, but others, must reap. If we intend our own advantage thereby, we are unfaithful to our trust, and to the Lord of all, whom we would have to trust us. If we intend not our own pleasure or profit, and design not to serve ourselves of it, why are we not content without a greater trust and charge ? Even self will be content with less, when more does not tend to serve it.

(5.) The more you have, the more is your danger. And great danger is enough to those who are apprehensive of it, to take them off from that which they have otherwise a mind to. Those that have most are in most danger, not only of cumber and trouble, and those torturing affections which attend much, nor only of losing more, fraud and violence being most levelled against such ; those who live by preying upon others being most eager upon the richest prey ; such men being set in slippery places, and they being in most danger to fall who stand highest, when the place is slippery, and the fall from such a height being more dangerous, such tumbling, *lapsu graviore*, with a more terrible fall.

Nor only of losing that which is more valuable than all the world, of losing their souls, and heaven, and eternal life, and of being drowned in perdition. Those who are cast into a depth, with a greater weight about them, sinking lower and most irrecoverably, and those who have more, having more to obstruct their way to heaven, and make the passage so difficult, as it will be next to impossible, Mat. xix. 23, 24. But also in most danger of that which is worse than the loss of all the world, yea, worse than the loss of heaven, yea, worse than hell itself. What is that ? Why, they are in more danger of sin, 1 Tim. vi. 9. They fall into temptation, and the most dangerous temptation, a snare ; and such a snare as makes them sure, entangles them in not one, but divers, lusts ; and such lusts as are not only foolish and hurtful, but most destructive, *βυθίζουσι*, such as engulf or plunge them deep, past recovery, in utter perdition.

More particularly, to insist upon that which is most pertinent, he that has more is in danger of greater unfaithfulness. He is entrusted with more, and so, if not faithful, he is false to the greater trust, which is to be most heinously false.

He that is trusted is thereby tried ; so he that has more is, all the time he has it, under the greater trial ; *Τὰντα δοκιμασίας ἕνεκα πολλὰν δίδουσι*. Outward enjoyments, says Isidore,* are for the most part given us for trial's sake, just as afflictions are frequently called trials in Scripture. Riches are not counted afflictions ; but they are no better in this respect, they are trials no less than afflictions ; and the more dangerous trials, because the danger of them is not so well discerned, nor so much feared, and so not so easily avoided. Both are trials or temptations ; for the import of *πειρασμός*, which is rendered temptation, is no more than a trial. But much of the world is the more dangerous trial or temptation. And so the apostle, when he says it leads men into temptation, adds, ' and into a snare ; ' the danger of which is the greater, because it is laid secretly, so as those for whom it is laid do not see it, and so may not fear, and consequently take no care to escape it, but be fast in it before they are aware.

Such a trial or temptation, and, in the issue, such a snare, is a plentiful estate. The Lord tries those with whom he trusts it, whether they will employ it for him who is the owner of it. He tries whether they will be

* Ep. ccciv. lin. 5.

faithful in seeking, and possessing, and using it for him as his own ought to be, or whether they will be unfaithful, in doing this for themselves only or principally.

Now, here is the danger, the world minds not the end of getting, nor the rule in keeping, nor the proportion which is to be observed in disposing of what they possess. It is the custom of the world (so far has the temptation prevailed) to look upon what they have, and what they can get, as their own; and so make account they have right to dispose of it as they think fit, forgetting that God is the owner of it, and not they themselves; and that they have no right to dispose of any of it, but some way or other for him, and according to his order, who is the Lord and owner of all. And accordingly they do actually use it as if God had actually parted with the propriety, and made them the owners.

This, being so common, taints professors also, whose apprehensions and actions should be conformed to the word, and not to the world; and so they become guilty in not acknowledging the Lord to be the owner of what they have, and not employing it for him; and the more they have, the greater the guilt, the greater the danger.

(6.) The more you have, the more you are to give an account for, and the more difficult will it be to give a good account of it, Eccles. xii. 14, Rom. xiv. 10, 2 Cor. v. 10. If you must give account to God of all you get, of all you possess, of all you do dispose of, you are highly concerned to look after it. There is nothing can possibly come into your thoughts that is of more weight and consequence than such an account, nothing that should strike your souls with a more awful regard than how you may acquit yourselves therein, as being your very greatest concernment. Those who look no further than the present world, judge it their great concernment to mind whether they or theirs be poor or rich. Poverty is a dreadful thing to them, and wealth a principal, a highly-valued attainment. Oh but riches or poverty are but trifles, no more to be regarded than children's playthings, in respect of the consequence of that last account! In that you are infinitely concerned, for all eternity depends on it; in comparison of which this life is but as a moment, and all the enjoyments of it are but as bubbles of one or two minutes. The consequence of that account is the eternal state of your persons hereafter; the everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery, of soul and body. No less are you concerned in such an account, and it is certain such an account you will be called to; it is evident by this truth; for if he be the Lord of all, and the true owner of all you have, he will certainly reckon with you for his own. If he be the right proprietor, and what you possess you have but from him, and hold but of him in trust, he will undoubtedly examine whether you have been true to him and your trust or no. If he be the chief Lord, and you but stewards, he will have an account of your stewardship. It would be blasphemy to imagine him like those careless lords who never look after what they have, or those whom they trust with it; that is not for his honour, nor consistent with his perfections. His dominion over all, and his wise and righteous exercise of it, requires an account, and obliges us to look and prepare for it. He who is Lord and owner of all you have, will have an account of all you have, why you sought it, and how and wherefore you kept it, and how you employed and disposed of it, and every parcel of it, to whom, and upon what, and in what manner, and for what end, and in what proportions.

And so much for the considerations which this truth affords to secure

us against the most ensnaring temptations of the world. They are such as (if duly believed and weighed) may be helpful to wean us from earthly enjoyments, to satisfy us that they are not so highly to be valued, or so much affected, or so eagerly pursued with any neglect of heaven and our souls, and to help us against those excesses and inordinances, wherein the men of the world are quite drowned, and worldly professors are dangerously overwhelmed.

Use III. For encouragement. Here is great encouragement to all sorts.

1 (1.) To those who have not yet given up themselves to God; to those that are yet in their sins, and engaged in the service of other lords, that have hitherto continued in the service of sin, or of the world, or of themselves; what encouragement is here to relinquish these, and to make choice of God to be your Lord! If you will be his, he will be yours, and so all will be yours; for all that is in heaven and earth is his.

(2.) He will be your friend. And what an infinite advantage will it be to have such a friend, one so rich, and who can do so much for you! If you were a friend, a favourite of some prince of great dominions, you would think you had enough, having such interest in one that had so much, and would deny you nothing. Why, but all the dominions of earthly princes are but mole hills, compared with the possessions of that great Lord. The greatest kings are but stewards to him, who will be your friend, if you will but enter into covenant with him. You may be his favourite, if you will but set your hearts upon him; you may have such interest in him, as he will deny you nothing that the greatest favour and friendship can afford, nothing of all that is in heaven, and all that is in earth, that is good for you. He were not a friend if he would let you have that which is not good; but all that is good you may be sure of, for all is his own, and he can dispose of it to whom he will, and to whom so soon as his friends and favourites? And such you may be, if you will relinquish his enemies, and make choice of him, and reserve yourselves for him only.

(8.) He will be your Father. And what will it be to have him for your Father, who is the Lord and owner of all things! 'We have Abraham to our father,' said the Jews. That was an honour, a privilege which they were proud of. We have a king to our father, say others. They think they have much to boast of who can say that. But both these are nothing in comparison of what you may say, if you will give up yourselves to God. If you will make choice of him, he will adopt you, own you as his children; you may say, he is my Father, to whom Abraham was a servant, and few kings are so much as subjects, so good as servants to him; he is my Father, who is absolute King and Lord of all kings, and their dominions, who can say, All that is in heaven and earth is mine: 'Thine is the kingdom, and majesty, and thou art exalted as head above all.'

Oh, what can they want who have such a Father! Is not all that is in heaven, and all that is on earth, enough to supply you, enough to provide for his children? What need you fear? Has not your Father all things in his hands? Are they not his own, so as he can and may dispose of them as he will? And can he not dispose of what you fear, so as it may prove a comfort and security to you, instead of what you fearfully expect from it? Can he not do it? And who more ready to do it than a father? So he will be, if you be but heartily willing to be his.

(4.) He will be your portion. Do but make choice of God for your portion, and he will be so. And what a portion will this be! What is it to have him for your inheritance, who is the owner of all things, who

possesses and disposes of all that is in heaven, and all that is in earth, as his own ! Interest in him will give you interest in all, insomuch that all the wealth which the men of the world possess will be but as the drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance in comparison of it.

Then may it be truly said, all are yours, as 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22. Not only ordinances and offices, spiritual things and enjoyments, but the world, so far as it is good, so much of it as is truly desirable ; not only things present, but things to come, which are so much greater and better than this present world can afford, as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive how much greater and better they are ; life also for the enjoyment of things present, and death to convey you to the enjoyment of things to come. Oh where will you have such a rich possession ? or, who will make you such an offer, or can make good any considerable part of it ? Can you gain any such thing by serving sin, or following the world, or seeking yourselves ? 1 Sam. xxii. 7.

What can sin, or Satan, or the world offer to move you to continue in their service, comparable to what the Lord offers you, if you will come over to him ?

Oh how great will the condemnation of the children of men be, who will be tempted from God with a trifle, while he is offering them, what he will really give, himself and all. These deluders promise you much, but they are cheats and deluders ; they cannot, they will not make good anything. But the Lord can make it good ; for all that is in heaven and earth is his own.

2. To those who have interest in God.

What comfort is it, what ground of rejoicing, to have interest in him who is the owner of all things ; to be able to call him yours, who can, and who only can, call all that is in heaven, and all that is in earth, his own. What reason have you to rejoice in the Lord, and to rejoice in him always, and to say with joyful hearts, ' My lines are fallen in a pleasant place,' &c. What a goodly heritage have you ! What comparable to it, when you can lay claim to him who is Lord and owner of all !

What cause have you to be contented in every condition, to be well satisfied, though your share of earthly things seem small ! You have enough in God, if all in heaven and earth be enough. All is his, who allows you to call himself your own. What if all be not in your hands, is it not better for you that it is in his hands, who vouchsafes to call himself your Father, your Husband ? You are richer, and it is more for your advantage that it is in his hands than if all were in your own. He is able, he is willing to manage it more for your advantage than if it were in your possession. Be satisfied then, and say, as you have reason, ' Return to thy rest, O my soul.'

What support is here to your faith ! What encouragement to expect the accomplishment of all those great and precious promises which he has given you ! This leaves no occasion to doubt of it in the least. When men promise many and great things to us, the multitude or greatness of them may make us apt to question the performance, especially if it be delayed. But though the Lord has promised more and greater things to us than men or angels could have expected, or can make good, yet, since the Lord hath promised, there can be no doubt but he will perform all, if he be able ; and that he is able to make good all to a tittle, there can be no doubt, if all in heaven and earth can make it good ; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is his own, and fully, absolutely at his disposal.

Unless that which you expect to be performed be more than heaven and earth, and all that is therein amount to, this truth leaves you not the least occasion of unbelief or doubting.

More particularly, this truth affords you encouragement in those special cases which are most apt to trouble and deject you.

(1.) In wants and necessities, whatever they be, whether they concern your inward or outward estate. If the Lord be both able and willing to supply you, you need not be careful, you need not be troubled. But hereby it is evident that the Lord is both able and willing to supply you.

[1.] That he is able. For what are your needs? Are they such as anything in heaven or anything in earth can relieve? Why, then, no doubt but he can relieve you; for all heaven and earth is his own, and he can give any of it to whom he will.

Want you wealth, or what you judge a competency? ver. 12. All the riches of the world are in his hands, and he can dispose thereof to whom and what proportion he see good, 2 Cor. ix. 8, Philip. iv. 19.

Want you authority to countenance and secure you? All the authority in the world is his; the greatness, and the power, and the majesty, and the kingdom, ver. 11. He has the disposing of it all.

Want you victory over enemies, those that afflict and oppress your souls? The Lord can give it you; it is his own.

Want you strength outward or inward, to do, or to suffer, or to resist? This he can also help you, for it is all his own, ver. 12.

Want you wisdom? This is his too: thine is the wisdom, James i. 5.

Want you gifts or graces, or a greater measure of them? These he can help you to; they are his, even as light is the sun's, James i. 17. He can give them as easily as the sun gives light.

Want you comfort? He is the owner of that too, 2 Cor. i. 8.

Want you friends? That cannot be, if you want not God. All the friends in the world are but cyphers to him. He is the best, the most powerful friend, who has all, and can dispose of all, in heaven and earth. You see hereby he is able; he is all-sufficient for your relief, whatever your necessities be. And,

[2.] That he is willing also, is manifest by this truth, divers ways. For,

First, You are his, since he is the owner of all. And who is the Lord willing to provide for, if not for his own? You see him ready to supply all that any way pertain to him. He makes provision for the ravens, the young lions, the wild beasts, the grass of the field, the lilies. His hand is open, and he is ready to satisfy every living thing, Ps. civ. 10, and xxi. 24, 27, 28. He provides for all; he neglects nothing that is any way his. But if you have given up yourselves to him, you are his own peculiarly; and since he is ready to provide for all that are but his by common title, can you think him unwilling to supply those that are his own by special interest?

Will not he who provides for the very dogs of his great family, and takes care of the least thing that any way pertains to it, be more ready to make provision for his own children? There is little faith indeed, where there is any doubt of this, Mat. vi. 26, 28, 29, 30.

For whom does a father design the best share of his possessions? Is it not for those whom he counts most his own, his children? And will your heavenly Father deal worse with those whom he counts most his own? Mat. vii. 9-11.

Secondly, The Lord has nothing the less, for what he affords to relieve and supply you, how much soever your necessities require. For he continues ever the owner of all, whatever is transferred into other hands ; it remains still as much his own, as if none else were the possessor of it. The words of the text are eternally true, ' All that is in the heavens, &c., is thine.'

If the Lord lost anything by supplying your needs, there might be some question whether he were willing to afford you all supplies. But how much soever you have of him, he loses nothing ; he has nothing the less than if you had it not, for he parts not with the propriety ; that and all is his own still, and he is as much in possession of it, as if it were not in your hands. It is not with him as with men, who, the more they give, the less they have. But he gives all things, as the sun gives light ; and accordingly the apostle, in reference to his gifts, calls him ' the Father of lights,' as the sun is called the fountain of lights, James i. 17. The sun, when it communicates its light to the whole world, and diffuses it through heaven, and air, and earth, yet has not one jot the less light for all this ; in what place soever, or how much soever it shine, it is all the light of the sun still ; so how much soever the Lord communicates to you, he has nothing the less, it is all his own still. And why should you doubt of his willingness to supply all his children's needs, when all those supplies will not in the least impair his own stores ?

Thirdly, The more the Lord does for your supply, the more he gives, the more he shews himself to be the owner of all ; the more conspicuous does he hereby make the glory of his riches, and the greatness of his dominion.

As the sun is so far from losing anything, by communicating its light to the world, that the more it shines, the more glorious it appears ; so the Father of lights, by expressing his bounty in relieving his people, gets himself more glory ; he makes it appear that all is his own, in that there is no wants whatsoever but he can supply them. And you do not doubt but he is willing to be glorified.

(2.) Here is encouragement, to undergo or undertake anything for God which he calls you to ; to offer yourselves willingly to the most difficult, or expensive, or hazardous services, for his name's sake ; for why ? He is the owner of all things, and so has enough to requite you, to reward you, if all that is in heaven and in earth be enough to do it.

Why do men venture themselves freely for princes or great persons, but because they know such can do far more for them than all their hazards or expenses in their behalf come to ; and because they hope that those that are able will be effectually mindful of such eminent services ? And shall any be more free to venture themselves and what they have for men, than we are for God ? Does not he take more notice of all you do, or suffer, or expend for him ? And is not he infinitely more able to recompense you, when he has all things in the world at his disposing, for that purpose ? This made Moses contemn the greatest things on earth, and prefer sufferings, before the honours, and pleasures, and riches of a flourishing kingdom, Heb. xi. 24-26. Let this make all difficulties in the work of God seem easy. You are working for him who has all in heaven and earth at his disposal to reward. Let this make all sufferings for him seem light. You are suffering for him who is the Lord and owner of all things. Are you like to lose anything by suffering for such a God ? Rom. viii. 18.

Let this make all expenses for him seem small. You understand not

your own interest, when you will be saving or sparing in anything wherein God is specially concerned. If you had assurance to receive an hundred-fold for all you lay out, either in hand or that which is equivalent, you would think it the best improvement you could possibly make of what you had, to lay out all you could spare in such a way. The Lord has given you assurance of this, as to all you part with for him, Mat. xix. 29. And since he has promised, nothing can hinder you from this hundred-fold advantage, unless the Lord be not able to make it good. But who can question that, since he is Lord and owner of all things?

Particularly, [1.] In losses for God. When anything is taken from you because you will not sin against God, the case, as this truth directs us to state it, is this: they take that which is the Lord's out of their hands, whom he has made his stewards, because they will not be unfaithful to their Lord. You need not question but the Lord, in due time, will take order with such wretches as dare attempt this. And in the mean time, you ought to be sensible that he suffers more by it than you, it being more his than yours. Nor need you to fear that you shall lose anything by such a loss, if you had assurance that you should receive an hundredfold.

[2.] In banishment. In case you should be forced to leave your country, and your enjoyments in it. This is great encouragement. None can ever send you out of your Father's dominions. You will be still there, where he is the owner and disposer of all. If a child were sent from one of his father's houses to another, what great affliction would that be, so long as he is still in his father's house, and amongst no persons nor things but such as he is the owner and disposer of! This was Chrysostom's support, when he was threatened by Eudoxia the empress, *ἡ Ὁὐδοκία ἐξορίζεν*, if she will banish me, *ἐξορίζω*, let her banish me; the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness of it; every part of it is part of his dominion. What matter is it to be sent out of the emperor's dominion? You can be sent to no place but where the Lord is the owner of all, for all is his own; and so can dispose of all as easily for your comfortable subsistence, as much for your satisfaction, in any place, as in that which you most affect. He could not be counted the owner of all if he could not so dispose of all, and that everywhere.

[3.] In fears and dangers. If the Lord be the owner of all, then you are his own; and if you have resigned up yourselves to him, to be possessed, and disposed of, and used as his own, then are you his by a special title. And will not the Lord secure and take care of that which is his own? This may encourage you to call upon him in the day of distress, and to expect relief from him.

The people of God of old did find support upon this ground. This has encouraged them to pray, and to pray in faith. This hath strengthened the weak hands and the feeble knees under great pressures, Ps. cxix. 49, Ps. xlv. 4, Jer. xiv. 8, 9. Thy name is put upon us, as men mark what is their own with their name. This encouraged to hope the Lord would not leave them unregarded, undelivered in their distress, Jer. ii. 2. Israel being set apart to God as his own, he looked upon that people as part of his revenue; this he would not suffer to be spoiled and devoured. He would make them examples, that would so provoke him by devouring that which was his own.

[4.] In reference to your children. We are apt to be solicitous about them, how they shall be disposed of, how they may be provided for when we are gone, when they are many, and but a little to leave them. As

Andrew said, John vi. 9, so we are ready to say, What will my little be, divided amongst so many? Well, but if the Lord be the owner of all, then sure he has enough both for thee and thine. Though thou hast not, yet he has sufficient for them, if all that is in heaven and in earth be sufficient; for all this is his. True, you may say, he is all-sufficient, but will he take care of mine? For this, too, look again upon the truth before us. If the Lord be the owner of all, then he is the owner of your children. If he have a transcendent interest in all, then those children are more his than they are yours. And whom will the Lord take care of, whom will he provide for, if not for his own?

You have given them up unto God; let it be your greatest care that they may give up themselves unto him, as becomes those who are in covenant; and then remember what he says to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. If he will be a God to thy seed after thee, he will own them when thou art gone; he will dispose of them, and provide for them as his own. And what can you desire more?