

THE CHILDREN OF GOD SHOULD NOT BE PARTAKERS WITH OTHERS IN THEIR SINS.

Be ye not therefore partakers with them.—EPH. V. 7.

HAVING given you a general account of the eighth verse, before I take a more particular view of the words, I thought it not amiss to take notice of a very useful and necessary truth, which this seventh verse offers unto our observation. It is this :

Obs. The children of God should not be partakers with others in their sins. Those that profess, &c., and would be accounted followers of God as dear children, should be careful not to partake with others in their wickedness.

The first thing ye should be careful of, is to avoid personal sins ; the next, not to be tainted with the guilt of other men's sins.

If you would walk as becometh saints, ver. 3, it is not enough not to act sin yourselves, not to be principals in sinning ; you should be fearful to be accessory to the sins of others. It is the apostle's advice to Timothy, 1 Tim. v. 22. Avoid not only the acting of sin thyself, but also a partaking with others' sins. If thou couldst live free from personal guilt, yet thou mayest contract guilt enough by other men's sins to make thee liable to condemnation.

The marrow of this truth lies in knowing how and in what ways we may be in danger to be partakers of other men's sins. Unless this be known, it will not, it cannot be well avoided ; and therefore I will endeavour to shew how many ways ye may be guilty in others' sin, guilty of that evil which other men act ; how ye may be accessory to that sin wherein others are principals. This may come to pass very many ways. To help your memories, I shall reduce as many as I have observed (for all I will not undertake to find out) to six heads, most of which are pregnant, and include in them many particulars.

Ye may partake of others' sins, by practising, concurring, causing, occasioning, countenancing, not hindering the sins of others.

1. By *practising* the like evils. The apostle seems especially to intend this. Commit not the like sins ; act not like the children of disobedience. They are guilty of fornication, vers. 3 and 4, take heed ye tread not in their steps : ' Be ye not,' &c. 2 Kings xvi. 10 : King Ahaz, going to Damascus, saw an altar there, and sent the pattern of it, that Uriah the priest might

build one according thereto; and it is said, 2 Chron. xxviii. 23, that 'he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus.' Here is an evident partaking in those idolaters' sin. Those that give us the best account of that mysterious book, expound that place, Rev. xii. 2, so as by the Gentiles they understand the papists. And these are called Gentiles, because guilty of the like superstitious, idolatrous worship with the Gentiles, in their worshipping of images, and praying to souls departed. They hereby so far partake of their sins as to partake of their name. That is a remarkable instance, Mat. xxiii. 34, 35. The Jews, by persecuting and killing the servants of Christ in their time, became guilty of the blood of God's servants, shed by their fathers in former times. That is the best account we can give why the Lord would bring upon that generation all the righteous blood that had been shed in all generations. By acting the like cruelty with their fathers, they did shew their real approbation of their forefathers' sins. This made them accessory to sins committed before they had a being, so far as they were to suffer for them also, not only for their own personal wickedness. Imitation is a participation; and this clears the justice of God in visiting the sins of fathers upon their children. If children imitate their fathers they partake in their sin; no wonder then if they partake of the plagues due to their fathers' sins.

Some take this as an excuse, &c. But you see how the Lord takes it. If you imitate the sins of ancestors, the Lord may not only charge the guilt of your personal sins, but the guilt of your forefathers' sins, upon your souls. Who would not tremble to hear the Lord Christ threaten to charge the guilt of all former generations upon that one generation? If ye be imitators of them, you are in some sense partakers with them; and so the Lord may justly punish you for them.

Hence we have both precept and example, to confess the sins of our fathers. Command, Lev. xxvi. 39, 40. Example of David, Ps. cvi. 6; of Jeremiah, iii. 25; of Daniel, ix. 5, 6. Now, why confessed, but that they may be forgiven? And forgiven to whom? to forefathers deceased? No, by no means, there is no forgiveness after death. But that they may be forgiven to the living. And why forgiven to them, but that they may be guilty of them. Guilty, then, ye may be of fathers' sins; and how more evidently than by imitation? To imitate is to participate.

2. By *concurring*. A concurrence, though it be but partial, may make thee guilty of sin as an accessory, whoever be the principal in sinning.

Now there may be a sinful concurrence; you may partake of others' sins, by concurring with them, divers ways, and so be guilty of that sin which others act.

(1.) By *contriving*. When sin is contrived, there is concurrence of the head, though not of the hand. Thus Jezebel was guilty of Naboth's murder, though the elders and nobles of the city were the actors in it. It was her plot, 1 Kings xxi. 9, 10. The guilt of his blood was upon her soul, though her hand was not imbrewed therein; and therefore the Lord threatens that in the very place that was the occasion of her murderous plot the dogs should eat her, ver. 25.

Thus David was guilty of Uriah's death, though Joab was the actor, and the Ammonites the executioners, 2 Sam. xi. 15.

Thus Rebekah of Jacob's dissembling. She contrived it, to defeat Esau, though he was the actor. And if he smarted for it in so many hardships after, she had her share in his chastisement.

Always the contriver is chargeable with a great part of the guilt, if not the greatest. If thou plottest and contrivest how to defraud, how to dis-

parage, defame, how to be revenged, &c. Whoever effect what thou plottest, though thy hand be not in it, though thou be not seen therein, the Lord, who is the searcher of hearts, will charge the sin upon thy soul.

(2.) By consenting. Where there is consent to sin, there is a concurrence of the will, though not of the outward man. This consent is always guilty, whether it be free, so Saul was guilty of Stephen's death, Acts viii. 1; or whether it be extorted, so Pilate was guilty of Christ's death, though the Jews seemed to overrule him thereto; or whether it be tacit, and shewed no way but by silence, *qui tacet, consentire videtur*. If, when anything that is unlawful is propounded, thou givest consent any way, though but as it were unwillingly and with reluctance; yea, though it be but by silence, that sin is thine, the Lord will charge its guilt on thee, whoever act it.

(3.) By inclination. Where there is an inclination to an unlawful act, there is a concurrence of the heart, though the outward man act not. If thy inclination be such, thou couldest wish in thy heart such or such a wickedness, which others act; though thou dost not contrive it, nor expressly consent to it, nor contribute anything to bring it to pass, yet thy heart is with the actors of it, thou hast a good mind it should be done, this is enough to bring the guilt of it upon thy soul. Instances of this must be sought in our own hearts; it is hard to find them elsewhere, because inclinations are not known but by outward expressions, and so without these are not related. That of Shimei comes near it. It is like he did not contrive Absalom's rebellion, or David's sufferings thereby occasioned, nor is it probable that he was called to give his consent, nor do we find him joining with Absalom in the war, yet his words shew it was the inclination, the desire of his heart, that all this evil should befall David; and this had been enough to make him guilty in the sight of God, though he had never broke forth into such expressions before men. If thy heart be inclined to that which others act in an evil way, even this, if there be nothing else, taints thee with the guilt of their evil actings. The Lord passes sentence according to the motion of the heart, though men judge only outward actions. 'He that lusts after a woman, has committed adultery with her in his heart.' He that desires revenge, does murder the man in his heart, though another do the act without thy consent or knowledge, thy heart concurs, because that is its inclination. And he that concurs with a sinner, so far partakes of his sin.

(4.) By rejoicing. When a man is glad that an unlawful act is done by others, he concurs in affection, though not in action. Thus was Ahab guilty of Naboth's blood. He did not contrive his death, the plot was Jezebel's; nor did he execute it, the fact was done by the nobles and elders of the city. Nay, for anything appears, he knew not of it till it was done; but when he knew of it, he was not sorry for it. His cheerfulness, readiness to take possession, shews he was glad enough that Naboth was dead, 1 Kings xxi. 16. And this makes him so guilty, though he was neither plotter nor actor, as the Lord charges him with killing Naboth, ver. 19, and the threatening falls heaviest upon him, vers. 21, 22.

If thou art glad when others do wickedly, this will make thee guilty of their wickedness. If thou art glad at the losses, disgraces, sufferings of those thou lovest not, though thou be not the oppressor, or the slanderer, or persecutor, though thou art not otherwise than in affection instrumental herein, yet thou art guilty hereof.

(5.) By sentence and vote. He that gives his vote that an unlawful thing shall be done, though others do it, he is guilty of it. Here is a verbal concurrence, though not real. Thus Saul was guilty of Christians' death, Acts

xxvi. 10. His sentence made him guilty, if he had no way pretended to execution. The apostle advises Timothy to beware he partake not of men's sins this way, 1 Tim. v. 22, 'lay hands,' *i. e.* admit no man to the ministry, suddenly, without due examination, without sufficient evidence that he is fitly qualified for that high calling. 'Neither partake,' *i. e.* if others joined with thee, will sin in admitting unworthy persons, and will vote them suddenly into the ministry, who are suspected of scandal or insufficiency; concur not with them, lest hereby thou be partaker of those other men's sins. So it is ordinarily taken; a verbal approbation of that which is unlawful, any expression which shews a liking of that which is sinful, brings a man under the guilt of that sin, whoever act it.

(6.) By assisting. He that contributes anything to the promoting of sin, though he be not the principal actor of it, brings the guilt thereof upon his soul. Thus was Saul also guilty of Stephen's death, Acts vii. 58. He did not cast stones at Stephen; so far as the relation acquaints us, he only kept the clothes of those that stoned him. Yet, promoting this sin but thus far, he made himself guilty of it. Here is a real concurrence, though but partial and inferior.

So Demetrius, and the rest of the silver-smiths, that made shrines for Diana, if they had not joined in the idolatrous worship of that idol, yet their craft tending to promote it in others, had been sufficient to involve them in the guilt of idolatry, Acts xix. 24.

So those tradesmen amongst us, who make use of their professions to nourish pride, drunkenness, voluptuousness, helping them to what they know will be so abused, bring upon themselves the guilt of these sins. Whatever such seem to get hereby, they will find a dreadful score hereafter, when they must be accountable, not only for their own personal sins, but for the sins of multitudes, which, by the abuse of their professions, they have nourished and promoted.

(7.) By communicating in the profits or pleasures of sin. When men are willing others should continue in sin, for the unworthy advantages they reap thereby. Thus panders are guilty of whoredom, though they personally act not uncleanness. So receivers are guilty of theft; 'cast in thy lot amongst us, let us all have one purse;' partaking of the gain, they partake of the sin: Ps. l. 18, 'When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedest with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.' So are they, who, for the pleasure they take in uncleanness, care not how many write immodest lines, or speak immodest language.

The masters of the damsel who was possessed with a divining devil, had rather she should have been still in his possession, than they dispossessed of the gains they got thereby; and so were hereby accessory, both to the devil's wickedness, and the damsel's misery.

Thus are they guilty of practising with the devil, who have recourse to those that practise by him; to wizards, or, as ye call them, cunning men. By seeking to these for the recovery of things lost, or the discovery of things secret, you are accessory to their witchcraft, and tainted with the guilt of that league which they have made with the devil, by virtue of which they come to that craft after which you inquire. Which practice, of seeking to wizards, is so clearly condemned, so severely threatened, in Scripture, as none dare use it but such as are ignorant of the word of God, or such as do not regard it. But I may meet with this hereafter. Thus, you see, these seven ways ye partake of other men's sins, by concurrence with them, which is the second general I propounded.

8. By *occasioning* the sins of others. When we give others occasion to sin, and that may be done many ways.

(1.) By evil example. One sin of an exemplary person may occasion many. When magistrates, or ministers, or parents, or masters of families, or any one eminent in the account of others, makes bold with that which is evil, it is a pregnant sin, has many in the bowels of it. We may say of it, 'Behold a troop;' it goes not alone, it has many followers. Such cannot sin at so easy a rate as others, one evil may bring the charge of a thousand upon their souls. Peter's failing in Judaizing, conforming to their ceremonies, withdrawing from the Gentiles, to the infringement of Christian liberty, it involved many in his guilt, and so himself in the guilt of many, Gal. ii. 12, 13. To this day, some encourage themselves in wickedness by the examples of Noah, Lot, David. It was thought wonderful that Abraham should have issue at an hundred years of age. Ay, but evil example is more fruitful; it can occasion sin many hundred, some thousands, of years, after it first appears in the world. Our first parents' sin is fruitful to this hour. Thou knowest not but the bad influence of thy sin may operate many years after thou art dead. Masters of families, and parents especially, should consider this. Those that are under you have their eyes upon you. They are more apt to be led by example than precept; they will do as they see others do before them, not as you bid them, but as you lead them. If parents be given to swearing, tippling, gaming, whoring, scoffing, contention, superstition, &c.; advise your children as much, as seriously as you will; you shall find one ill example do more hurt than a thousand wholesome admonitions will do good. Thy sin may lead others to hell, thy children's children when thou art dead; and will not that which sinks them burden thee? One sin may this way bring along with it the guilt of many thousands.

(2.) By the offensive use of things indifferent. When a professor will go to the utmost line of his liberty, in the use of things lawful in themselves, but of the lawfulness of which others are unsatisfied, this is to stand on the edge of the hill (as Chrysostom calls it). One that is strong possibly may stand there safely; but a weak one thereby encouraged to follow him, may be carried headlong. Is it not better not to go so high, than to endanger the ruin of others by following thee?

Two great questions there were of this nature in the apostle's time; the apostle gives many cautions in the use of liberty about them. One was, whether it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols. The intelligent sort of Christians then were persuaded to eat them, when sold in the shambles, or used in civil feasts. The weaker sort did not so well understand their liberty herein, were not satisfied that it was lawful. Now see what advice he gives to the intelligent, 1 Cor. viii. 8. This is indifferent, and you have liberty to use them, to eat these things; but, ver. 9, if one that is not satisfied be encouraged (by seeing thee use this liberty) to eat with a doubting conscience, the use of thy liberty becomes a stumbling-block to the weak, occasions him to fall into sin, by doing that which he is doubtful of.

Another question was, about the indifferent use of meats, whether it was lawful to eat what was forbidden by the ceremonial law. The more knowing Christians were satisfied of its lawfulness; the weak sort doubted. The apostle gives the like caution in this case, Rom. xiv. 20. Why evil? Since it was lawful in itself, why, says he, it is evil to thee, because it occasions sin in others. It caused the weak to stumble; they, following the practice of the strong, when they doubted of the lawfulness of the practice, did stumble, did sin, doing it with a doubting conscience, for, ver. 23, he cautions them in

using all things that are lawful; this may be an occasion to others of doing many things unlawful, and their guilt this way will reach thee.

The apostle advises to avoid all appearance of evil. *Quicquid male fuerit coloratum*. For that which has but a show of evil in itself may occasion a real evil in another, and so he that committed but evil in show may be tainted with a real guilt.

(8.) By scandalous sins, either in judgment or practice; for these are not only abominable in themselves, and the occasions of sin in others by example, but also in a more dangerous and dreadful way, by strengthening the hands of sinners, and opening their mouths to blasphemy.

Those that are guilty of the licentious opinions and practices of these times, besides that guilt, heavy enough to sink them deep into hell, they also contract the guilt of the blood of those souls, who are hereby hardened against the ministry of the word, against the providence of God, in their old profane superstitious courses. They contract also the guilt of that blasphemy, whereby the name of the great God is dishonoured, and the holy ways of Christ disparaged. This is your preciseness, and this is your Reformation! See the issue of it. Is it not better to keep in the old way, than to run mad in the new? So profane persons cry out, so blind wickedness casts dirt upon the strict profession of Christ and his holy ways, because some apostates have left the way that was too good, too strict for them. But the Lord will judge righteous judgment, and stop the mouth of profaneness in his own time. In the mean time, woe be to them to open it, that put these words into profane mouths, and give occasion to such blasphemies. Offences must come, but woful will it be, both for those that give them, and for those that take them.

David's sins were highly sinful in themselves, but there was a sinfulness, besides those heinous facts, which the Lord would not pass by, when he pardoned them, 2 Sam. xii. 13, 14. David's adultery and murder drew along with it the guilt of blasphemy; not that he blasphemed, but because he occasioned others to do it; and for this he must smart, and so must they, &c.

Take heed of scandalous evils: they usually occasion greater sins than themselves, and bring upon the actor a greater guilt than that of his personal acts.

(4.) By provoking. He that says or does that which provokes another to sin, is at least the occasion of it; and hereby, besides the guilt of the provocation, brings upon himself the guilt of the sin to which the sinner is provoked. Hence the apostle advises so often to beware of this, Gal. v. 26, Eph. vi. 4. It does not cease to be sin, because you are provoked to it; no, it is more sinful, because more sin therein, both the provoker and the provoked. The Lord shews who provoked Ahab, when he is aggravating his sin; so far is provocation from extenuating a sin, 1 Kings xxi. 25. He that provokes another to pride, by overvaluing expressions; or to lust, by filthy speeches; or to wrath and revenge, by incensing words; or wordliness, by covetous suggestions, he brings upon himself both the guilt of these sins, and the effects of them, whoever act them.

(5.) By ensnaring. Those whose garb, gestures, words, are as snares, may justly be accounted occasions of sin, and so guilty of those iniquities wherein they ensnare others. We read of the whoredoms of Jezebel, 2 Kings ix. 22. And no wonder, since we read of her painting, ver. 30. Where there is the occasion, usually there is the sin; every one avoids not the snare. Tamar's whorish habit and posture was the occasion of Judah's sin, it was a snare to him, Gen. xxxviii. 14. Her guilt was double, both

involved in the guilt of her own wickedness, and that of his, which she thereby occasioned. The apostle shews what direct snares, dangers, there are in words to occasion sin, 1 Cor. xv. 33. Corrupt, immodest, and such like evil communication, it is as sparks scattered amongst powder, a wonder if none take fire, if this be not an occasion of kindling an hell of lust, or other wickedness in the hearts of the hearers. But while this kindles others, he that throws abroad such sparks shall not escape scorching; the guilt is chargeable upon him as the occasion.

(6.) By leading others into temptations. So not only the devil, but men, therein like him, occasion sin, and draw the guilt of others' wickedness, so occasioned, upon themselves also. There are incarnate tempters, and such who do but expose others to temptations. So those that engage others in the company of debauched, unclean, drunken companions, are accessory to their wickedness if the temptation prevail. So those that lead others amongst seducers, if they catch infection, are answerable for it, even as he that leads another to a pest-house, if he die of the plague, is accessory to his death.

Those that present tempting objects to others, if they take, occasion the sin, and are guilty as well as the actor.

Thus was Eve guilty, not only of her own, but of her husband's sin, Gen. iii. 6. Thus men partake of others' sins when they occasion them, and occasion them by leading others into temptation.

(7.) By shewing opportunities to sin. This is evidently to give occasion, and so to partake. Thus Judas was guilty of crucifying Christ, by shewing the Jews an opportunity to apprehend and crucify him. Thus the Ziphites were guilty of Saul's intended cruelty against David, by shewing him an opportunity to execute it, discovering where he was hid, 1 Sam. xxiii. 19, 20. So those that shew others opportunities to fulfil their lusts, or satisfy their revenge, or get unjust gain, or gratify any other lust, are thereby accessory to their sin, and partakers with them.

(8.) By affording matter of sin to others, that which they know or suspect will be sinfully abused, hereby occasion their sin, and partake in their guilt. Cyprian, lib. iii. ep. 16, writing to the elders and deacons of the church, reproves them sharply for admitting some to communicate before they sufficiently testified their repentance; tells them hereby they furthered the ruin of such sinners, *ut magis pereant, et plus cadant*; and that the elders thus admitting such were hereby many ways guilty, *erunt autem rei qui præsunt*, &c. They contracted guilt, by not shewing the danger of such communicating, by not hindering such from it. As those who are grossly ignorant, or evidently live in gross sins, do, by intruding, eat and drink their own damnation, so those that admit such are hereby accessory to their damnation, and guilty of their profaneness. As when a dish or a potion, which will prove healthful to some, poison to others, is promiscuously offered to all, he that offers it is accessory to the death of those that are poisoned by it. Nor can this guilt be avoided by any, till a course be submitted to, by which, according to Scripture rules, it may be known competently who are fit, who are unfit, to whom it may be the seal of life, to whom it may be the savour of death.

If you be fearful of being accessory to the temporal death of any, should not we be fearful of being accessory to the eternal death of any?

So those also that afford others matter, which will be abused to drunkenness, gluttony, &c., they are thereby guilty of the intemperance of others, being this way the occasion of it.

(9.) By not removing the occasions of sin. He that can and may remove

those things which are the occasions of others' sins, and does not, is thereby the occasion of other men's sins, and so partaker with them.

The Lord has a controversy with divers of the kings of Judah, because the high places were not taken away, not because they did worship there, but because they being not removed, others did worship there, 1 Kings xv. 14, Asa; 2 Kings xii. 3, xiv. 4, xv. 4. The continuance of them was the occasion of others' sin, and they who had power, not removing them, did thereby partake of others' sins, and are therefore charged, condemned as guilty.

Things lawful, if indifferent (not necessary) when they are abused, and become occasions of sin, should be taken away. The brazen serpent, when the Israelites abused it to idolatry, though it was set up by Moses, and reserved as a monument, a memorial of their deliverance from the fiery serpents in the wilderness, yet when it became an occasion of sin it was broken in pieces, and Hezekiah is commended for breaking of it, 2 Kings xviii. 4. When the love feasts in the primitive church were abused to intemperance, the apostle regulates them.

Many indifferent things abused by the papists to superstition are upon this account excluded in the reformed churches, and retaining of some such amongst us, we find by experience has been of very ill consequence, and some can read the guilt of those who would not remove them, in the late sad providences wherewith this land has been exercised, though others will not open their eyes to see, nor their ears to hear the rod, and he that appoints it.

When costly apparel becomes an occasion of pride, or delicate fare an occasion of intemperance, &c. Those that have power, magistrates, parents, should reduce them to necessities, who abuse superfluities, else they are in danger of a participation in others' guilt. I might exemplify this in many particulars.

(10.) By authorising. When those are put into such place and office, as they are not fit, not qualified for, those that are instrumental in calling them thereto are accessory to their sinful miscarriages in the managing thereof.

This is evident, especially in the great callings of magistracy and ministry; and guilt may be herein contracted, either by interposal of authority in magistrates, or by the intervening of election and votes in the people. When places, which require men fearing God, hating covetousness, dealing truly, are filled with irreligious, covetous, unjust officers, those that are instruments to promote such are accessory to their sins.

So for ministry. It was Jeroboam's brand that he made priests of the meanest of the people, 1 Kings xii. 31. When people choose one scandalous in his life, erroneous in judgment, insufficient, unqualified in other respects of his life or holiness, they are guilty of the blood of their souls thereby endangered, though he be principal therein.

Accordingly, some give account of the apostle's words formerly quoted, 1 Tim. v. 22. Take heed of admitting such into the ministry, who are unworthy, unqualified, not apt to teach, not able to convince gainsayers, not exemplary in their lives, not holding the form of wholesome words. And be not partaker; for hereby, if thou authorise, admit such, thou wilt be partaker of their sins. If any perish through their ignorance and insufficiency; if any be tainted with their errors, superstitions; if any be led to or encouraged in wickedness by their evil example: it is the sin of the blind, profane guides; but thou hereby wilt be partaker of their sin, and accessory to the ruin of those souls, for he is the occasion who brings in the cause. Their blood will be principally required at their hands, but in the second place at thine, who was instrumental to bring such into place: of

them as the cause, of thee as the occasion, of them as principals, of thee as accessory; of them as actors, of thee as partaker. This is the tenth way of being guilty of others' sins as an occasion, which is the third general way of partaking of other men's sins.

4. By *causing*. He that is the cause of another's sin, partakes thereof; not only as an accessory, but many times as a principal. Now one may be the cause of another's sin many ways.

(1.) By commanding. He that commands, enjoins another to do that which is unlawful, is the cause of his sin, and so sometimes more deeply guilty than the actor; especially if the obedience to those commands proceed rather from the authority of the commander than from the disposition of him that obeys. This holds both in public and private.

In public; so those that enact things evil and unwarrantable, by laws and edicts, they involve themselves in the guilt of all that obey them. This is the highway to make sins national, and so make whole nations ripe for judgment; both magistrates and people being hereby tainted with guilt of rebellion against God. Hence the Lord denounces a woe against such decrees, and threatens desolation for them, universal calamities, of equal extent with the guilt, Isa. x. 1, 8.

Such were the statutes of Omri, whereby he enjoined the people to walk in the ways of Jeroboam, Micah vi. 16. Omri was dead, and so was Ahab, yet the people's observances of their wicked injunctions are called the works of the house of Ahab. Ahab and his house were answerable for the people's offences herein, as though they had been Ahab's works. Why, Omri and Ahab's statutes were the cause of the people's sin, 1 Kings xvi. 25, 26. Micah prophesied in the days of some kings, who repealed the wicked statutes of Omri; yet the statutes and works of Omri and Ahab are still remembered, and desolation threatened. If a people will observe idolatrous or superstitious customs, though the laws enjoining them be repealed, yet will the Lord remember the guilt of such law-givers, and bring desolation upon the observers of them: 'That I should make thee a desolation.'

This is true also in private commands; thus Saul was guilty of the murder of the priests, and the destruction of Nob their city, by commanding Doeg to execute that cruelty, 1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19. And there we have an example, shewing what must be done in case things unlawful be commanded, ver. 17. A king is not to be obeyed in unlawful commands; disobedience in this case is obedience in the sight of God.

Thus David was guilty of Uriah's death, for though he did but give the command, yet he is charged with the sin as much as if his own hand had murdered him: 2 Sam. xii. 9, 'Thou hast killed.'

So when masters command their servants, or parents their children, to lie, or to defraud others, or to profane the Sabbath, &c., both they sin in obeying, and the commanders are guilty in their disobedience; they are the cause of their sin by commanding, and so partake in their guilt, yea, are principals herein.

(2.) By threatening. He that threatens another, that he may thereby fear him to do that which is unlawful, is the cause of his sin, and so principal therein. Thus was Nebuchadnezzar guilty of all their idolatry, who were drawn by his threatenings to bow to his golden image, Dan. iii. 6. This threatening involved him in the guilt of all the people, nations, and languages that fell down, &c. One word, one sentence, may make a man guilty of millions of sins.

Thus persecutors are guilty of the grievous crime of those who fall off from the ways of truth and holiness, and also of the destruction of those

who are hindered from entering into those ways, for fear of what they threaten. So some wicked men will threaten their children, or those that depend on them, if they will be so strict, precise, conscientious, so much in praying, reading, following sermons; if they will not walk in the same ways of looseness, superstition, with their fathers, they shall not have their favour, their countenance, nor share in their estates; they shall be cast off or disinherited. Now, if hereby they be drawn off from ordinances, holy duties, society with the people of God, strict or holy walking, they shall die in their sins, but their blood will be required at the hands of those whose threatening was the cause of their sin.

(3.) By counselling and persuading. He that gives another evil counsel is guilty of his sin, if he bring it into action; or if it go not so far, he is guilty so far as it proceeds towards action. Whatever sinful influence thy persuasion has upon any one, thou art tainted with the guilt of him whom thou persuadest or counsellor. Thus Jonadab was guilty of Tamar's ravishment, though Amnon was the ravisher, because he was the counsellor, 2 Sam. xiii. 5. He counsels him to take this course to satisfy his lust, and so is equal in the guilt. Thus Ahithophel was guilty of Absalom's incest, because he advised him to it, 2 Sam. xvi. 21. Thus Athaliah was guilty of Ahaziah's wickedness, because she was his counsellor, 2 Chron. xxii. 8-5. A counsellor to sin is a partaker of the sin to which he advises; a persuader to wickedness is a principal therein, as being the cause thereof.

(4.) By alluring. He that entices another to that which is sinful, by promising any advantage in sinning, or proposing hopes of profit, pleasure, or credit thereby, so far as his enticements are effectual to draw others to sin, so far he sins with them. For this see Prov. i. 10, if they entice thee with hopes of gain, as ver. 18.

So the strange woman allures with hopes of pleasure, Prov. vii. 18. The force of such allurements, that they are cause of sin, ver. 21; such enticements have cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain thereby, as ver. 26; these are the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death, ver. 27. Such enticers, by destroying others, bring the guilt of their ruin upon their own heads.

So when they allure others in hopes of secrecy,—none shall perceive it, none shall be the wiser;—or in hopes of safety,—men shall not know, and so have no occasion to censure or punish, shall never find it out;—and God is merciful, he will not be so strict, so severe, as to damn his creature for one sin, for such a sin;—or by the example of others,—such and such, better than thou have done the like or worse things, and why shouldest thou scruple at it?

Satan, the master of this art of enticing, proceeded at first in such a method, in alluring to the first sin, as sinners have since learned of him: Gen. iii. 4, 'Ye shall not surely die.' Here he promises safety, notwithstanding the Lord had threatened it with death, yet he assures them of safety, no such danger for all this, &c. He proceeds, ver. 5, and promises advantage, your eyes, &c. He promises advancement too: 'as gods.' See how cunningly the arch-enticer baits his hook, and then see how it takes: ver. 6, 'Good for food,' there is the profit; 'and pleasant,' there is the delight.' 'To make one wise,' there is an higher advantage. Here is the effect of one enticement; they sin, the whole world sins in them, and the allurer sins in all, and so is cursed above all. The enticer to sin is always involved in the guilt of the sinner, and so in his suffering.

(5.) By deriding. Scoffing at scrupulousness and conscientiousness in avoiding sin. Jeer and abuse men because they follow not such practices,

use not such language ; because they fear an oath, or keep not company, or observe not their unwarrantable customs. Brand such as precisians or hypocrites, and so by discouraging a holy care to avoid sin, do what they can to make men careless in sinning. I remember not an instance of this nature in Scripture, neither amongst the Jews in the Old Testament, nor amongst Christians in the New. The more it is to be lamented that such wickedness should be found amongst us, as the history of so many hundred years does not afford an example of. Such scoffers do what in them is to open a floodgate of sin in others, and overwhelm themselves in the guilt of it, Isa. xxviii. 22.

(6.) By boasting of sin. Some there are who are risen up to such a height of desperate wickedness, as they will sometimes brag of it, and glory in their shame. 'Why boastest,' &c., Ps. xciv. 4. Some will boast of their uncleanness, that they have defiled others ; of their intemperance, that they are strong, Isa. v. 22 ; of their exceeding and overcoming others in drinking ; of their craft and deceit (or wisdom, as they call it) in circumventing and over-reaching others ; of their contentiousness, in wearying, silencing others.

Now this boasting of sin as though it were their glory, may be an encouragement, an inducement to embolden others in such wickedness, and so by causing others to sin, though their own guilt be unsupportable, they burden themselves, their souls, with the guilt of others.

(7.) By hiring others to sin. Thus Satan assaulted Christ : 'All these things,' &c., Mat. iv. 8, 9. Thus the Jews were guilty of betraying Christ, by hiring Judas to betray him. So are they guilty of perjury who suborn witnesses, as Jezebel in the case of Naboth. It is reported of the wicked Arian bishops, that when they could not otherwise prevail against Athanasius, that zealous defender of the truth, they hired a lewd woman to come openly into the council and accuse him of committing filthiness with her. In this case, she was the false accuser indeed, but they were principally guilty of the false accusation.

So those that encourage, reward others for publishing slanders, or raising false reports of those they love not, whoever be the instruments, the guilt will be charged upon them who plainly, or by interpretation, do as much as hire them.

So are those guilty of witchcraft who reward such as practise with the devil for discovery of secrets, or recovery of things lost ; such rewarding is a hiring of them still to be familiar with the prince of darkness.

So Judah was doubly guilty, both in his own person and in Tamar's ; both by committing lewdness with her, and hiring her to it.

Thus you see how many ways we may partake with others in their sins, by causing them. This is the fourth general.

5. By *countenancing* the sins of others. He that is a countenancer of others' sins, is a partaker of other men's sin ; and that sometimes of sins past, sometimes of future sins. Now ye may countenance the sins of others, and so be accessory to them, many ways.

(1.) By defending them. He that defends, secures sinners from censure and punishments ; does countenance them, and so partakes with them. Thus the Benjamites were guilty of that horrible wickedness which was committed by the men of Gibeah. The sin of one town involved the whole tribe in its guilt, because when justice was demanded against those sons of Belial, they refused to deliver them up to justice, they engaged themselves to protect, to secure them from punishment, Judges xx. 12-14. Now, what was the issue ? As they made the sin of those sons of Belial their own, by

appearing in the defence of it, so the punishment of those sons of Belial fell upon them. That numerous tribe, which consisted of so many thousands, were all destroyed, man, woman, and child, except six hundred, ver. 47. It was but the inhabitants of one town that were the actors of that wickedness, but all the towns, cities, and inhabitants were destroyed for this sin, because all partaked of it by defending it.

That sin which thou defendest by word or deed thereby becomes thine, whoever be the actor of it. Those that defend blasphemers, would not have them censured, proceeded against, thereby become guilty of their blasphemy.

Those that plead for such as the word of God censures, be their wickedness in judgment or manners, they are accessories to it, tainted with the like guilt, in danger of the same punishment.

(2.) By justifying others' sins. Denying that to be sinful which the word condemns, and that to be error which is contrary to gospel truth. Thus do some justify not only the wicked, but their wickedness, which, how sinful it is, the Lord declares, Prov. xvii. 15. If ye quit those whom the Lord condemns, plead for that against which the Lord has given sentence, be it with what arguments or distinctions soever, it is an abomination; it is so in itself, and it is withal a partaking of those sins of others, which are hereby countenanced.

Those that call evil good, or darkness light, or error truth, or superstition devotion, or will-worship religion, or cruelty justice, there is a woe denounced against this, Isa. v. 20. Christ foretells of some that would count the persecution of the apostles the doing of God good service, John xvi. 1. And some call that popish superstition, in placing holiness in times and places, where the Lord never placed it, an act of religion; count the doctrines and traditions of men the worship of God, as the Pharisees; abstinence from marriage holiness, and abstinence from meats, mortification. The apostle has another name for it, 2 Tim. iv. 1-8.

So some justify the calling in question of truths clearly revealed, under the notion of love to the truth, fear to be deceived.

So others justify many gross errors under the notion of new discovered truths, plead for a boundless licentiousness under the notion of Christian liberty, or liberty of conscience; so some call the impudence of others good breeding, and the profuseness liberality, a joining with drunken companions good fellowship.

Now suppose ye be not personally guilty of such wickedness in judgment or practice, yet if ye justify them in others under such names or notions, in these or the like ways, giving them terms improper for them, colouring them over as good, which are in themselves evil, this is a countenancing them. Whoever be the actors, this makes you accessories. If thou justify those that sin, thyself art condemned as guilty of that from which thou wouldst acquit others.

(8.) By extenuating of others' sins. Those that make sin less than it is, and excuse it when it should be aggravated, when those that are guilty are insensible of the guilt and sinfulness of their evil, this is a dangerous countenancing of sin, and that which makes the excuser guilty with the actor. So some, too much inclining to popery, will excuse the papists; their idolatries must not be counted superstitions, and their heresies but errors in smaller matters. So amongst carnal people, petty oaths must be counted but idle words and thoughts free, and riotousness and uncleanness tricks of youth. Many distinctions, pleas, pretences, excuses, are found out to mince and lessen sin, when the least is great enough to sink body and soul into hell. Some excuse it from custom; he does but as others do, and shall he

be singular? from age, he is but young, and youth will have its swing; from nature, we have all corrupt natures, and it will break out one time or other; from example, they do but as our forefathers before us, and shall we be so uncharitable as to think them damned? from education, excuse ignorance, they are not book-learned, want the means; from intention, though he have done ill, he means no hurt; from calling, excuse the neglect of their souls, much ado to live, and 'he is worse than an infidel that provides not,' &c.; from event or success, it proves well, and he prospers notwithstanding, and therefore God is not much offended, Jer. xlv. 11.

These, and many other fig-leaves, do men find out to cover the deformity; and though they make use of them to hide their own for the most part, yet sometimes, especially if they be concerned, they will find some for others.

It is true it is a duty to cover the failings and infirmities of others, but then they must be failings indeed. We must not make that small which is great, nor excuse them who are too ready to excuse themselves, and make little of that which they make nothing of.

To excuse sin in the presence of the sinner, when he is not sensible of, not burdened with his guilt, is to countenance his sin, and to encourage him in sinning, and to make thyself accessory to his wickedness. To excuse sin before those who are like to make use of it, so as to continue in impenitency, or to make bold with that which is extenuated and excused, is a most dangerous countenancing of sin, tending not only to make others guilty, but thyself with them.

(4.) By commending. When others are applauded for their sins, then is sin countenanced in a high degree; *e.g.* when those that will not forgive injuries, engage themselves in unjust quarrels, public or private, are commended as men of valour and courage; when wicked politicians are cried up for men of singular wisdom; when approaching to God by mediation of saints and angels is commended for humility, and men's inventions in the service of God is applauded as voluntary worship and free-will offerings; when rejecting of ordinances is cried up as a less formal, more spiritual way of worship; when curious and dangerous opinions are admired as deep and profound mysteries, Rev. ii. 24. The doctrines which Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, did then vent in the church, were called 'depths,' profound things, high attainments, but Christ tells what depths they were in his account; they spoke them depths, he calls them 'depths of Satan.'

To put a commendable name upon any sin or error, is a dangerous countenancing of it; to commend the wicked as righteous, whether they be so in respect of gross or of more refined and spiritual wickedness, is a countenancing of, and so a partaking with, that wickedness, Prov. xxi. 24. And well may the people curse, and the nations abhor him; because by thus countenancing the wicked, he encourages people and nations in wickedness, to their destruction. And he had need curse and abhor himself too, because as he involves others in guilt by countenancing, so himself in the guilt of all that he countenances.

(5.) By conniving at others' sin. Not declaring the danger and sinfulness of them as occasion is offered, not shewing our abhorrence and detestation of them, as becomes those who have tender consciences, who tender the honour of Christ and the souls of men. This is a tacit countenancing of such wickedness; silence in that case may be interpreted as approbation.

When we hear that Christ is blasphemed, his ordinances trampled under foot; when the prevailing delusions of Satan are related to us, the scandalous practices, the woful miscarriage, of those who bear the name of Christ; when we hear such things as should make our ears tingle and our hearts

tremble, and are not accordingly affected therewith ; when these are slighted, passed by as matters of small moment, especially when they are turned into matter of sport and merriment, which should not be heard or spoken of but with bleeding hearts and trembling spirits ; they are hereby in some degree countenanced, when they are not, as they ought to be, detested.

When others see such carriage in those that pretend love to Christ and the things of Christ, and see them no more affected therewith, they have hereby occasion to think, Surely there is not so much evil in these opinions or practices, else they would be more laid to heart by those who seem conscientious otherwise ; and by imagining them less (because they see them by us less detested), they may become more inclinable to them, more ready to close with the prevailing temptations of the times. So that this silent countenancing of such abominations, may occasion the fall of others thereinto ; and so we may contract a double guilt of these abominations, by countenancing them where they are, and occasioning them where they are not. Oh what guilt is daily contracted by this silent countenancing of those horrid evils we daily hear of !

(6.) By company. You may countenance wickedness by too much associating yourselves with those that are guilty of it.

It is true there is some converse necessary, and we must do offices of love to all, and the good of their souls should be endeavoured as long as there is hope and opportunity of doing them good ; and this may be done, if prudence and circumspection be used, without countenancing their sin ; but there is an unnecessary society, a too much familiarity, which is dangerous. When we make those who are noted for wickedness, in judgment or practice, our companions, our familiars, this may be interpreted a countenancing of their wickedness.

If you would deal faithfully with them and your own souls, according to the rule of the gospel, you should seriously admonish them ; if admonitions be rejected, or they not thereby reclaimed, then they are to be avoided, 2 Thes. iii. 14. Those Athenians are commended who would not wash in the same bath with the persecutors of Socrates ; and it is reported of the apostle John, that when Cerinthus, a noted heretic in the apostle's time, came into the bath where John was, he presently left the place, would not be where Cerinthus was. And Polycarp, the apostle John's disciple, when Marcion saluted him, and asked if he knew him, Yes, says Polycarp, I know thee, thou first-born of the devil. And that was all the countenance he would give that impostor.

You know how the Lord resents it, that Jehoshaphat would associate himself with Ahab ; and that expostulation which he puts into the mouth of the seer is very pathological, 2 Chron. xix. 2. And he is afflicted also for joining with Ahaziah, chap. xx. 37. Why, but what danger was there in this familiarity ? This ; those that knew Jehoshaphat to be a good king, walking in the commandments of the Lord ; and seeing him choose Ahab for his familiar, might thence conclude, Surely the ways of Ahab are not so abominable, else good Jehoshaphat could not be so intimate with him. And thus the bad opinion of Ahab being something taken off, they might be more inclinable to comply with him in his ways and worship ; and thus might Jehoshaphat's familiarity with Ahab be a snare to others. *Noscitur ex socio.* We know we judge of a man by his companion, and men are apt to think we approve of those whom we choose for our familiars ; and so by your company you may countenance wickedness, and thereby partake of it, though ye never act it.

(7.) By rejoicing. Those that take pleasure in the sins of others, do hereby

make themselves partakers of their sins ; so did they, of whom the apostle, Rom. i. 32.

So are they guilty of uncleanness, who, though they do not act it, yet take pleasure to hear or read of the uncleanness of others.

So they are guilty of participation, who are glad when others run with them to the same excess of riot ; when others join with them in the same ways of error, superstition, or profaneness. Besides their personal guilt in acting those sins, they are guilty of the sins of their associates, by rejoicing in them.

So those that rejoice in the effects of others' sins, are glad that those whom they hate are oppressed, disgraced, undone by others. So the Edomites, insulting over the Jews in their sufferings and miseries, involved themselves thereby in the guilt of the Chaldeans' cruelties, which was the principal cause of those miseries, Obadiah, ver. 11, 12.

Thus you see how many ways we may be guilty of other men's sins, by countenancing them. You may countenance others' sin, and so partake of it, by defending, justifying, extenuating, commending, &c.

6. By *not hindering* sin. He that hinders not others from sinning, is in danger thereby to partake of their sins. It is a received rule, *Qui non prohibet, facit*. He that hinders not others from doing evil, does the evil himself ; is guilty of, accessory to it. Only those two cautions must be added to limit the rule, *cum potest et debet*. He that hinders not sin when he can and should hinder it, is guilty of it. He that has both ability and authority, both power and a call to exercise it (as there are few men but have in one way, degree, or other), he is guilty of the sin he hinders not.

Indeed, if a man do all that in him lies to hinder sin, and yet it is committed, the guilt will lie upon the actor, thou art blameless, or if thou dost all that thou art called to, to hinder it ; for every one is not called to act alike in all ways and degrees for hindering sin ; some are called to more than others. Children and servants are not required to do that for the hindering of sin, which is the duty of parents and masters ; nor are the people called to act against sin in the same way as ministers ; nor are ministers called to act in the same way as magistrates. But it is the duty of all these to endeavour the hindering of others' sins, in ways which the Lord has assigned to them, and by means proper to their several degrees and places.

Now, those that do not, in their several spheres and stations, endeavour to hinder sin by all means proper to them and required of them, they thereby become accessory to, guilty of, the sins which they hinder not. And thus men may partake of the sins of others many ways.

(1.) By not punishing, censuring, correcting, in state, church, families. He that proceeds not against the sin of others according to the rules of the world, or laws agreeable thereto, makes himself guilty of it.

Thus magistrates are guilty when they execute not wholesome laws for the punishment of evil-doers. Thus Pilate involved himself in the guilt of Barabbas's murder, by acquitting him whom he should have executed, Mar. xv. 15. Thus the kings of Judah were accessory to the people's superstitions and idolatrous worship, though they be commended as upright in other things, because they tolerated and suffered the people to offer in the high places, 2 Kings. xii. 8.

Magistrates are appointed to be ministers of God, that they may be a terror to evil works, and revengers to execute, &c., Rom. xiii. 3, 4. That evil work which he is not a terror to he is guilty of. For this end he bears the sword, that those under him may be afraid to sin, and that the fear of suffering by him should be a restraint from sin. When he does not

thus improve his power, the restraint is taken off, and sinners grow bold. 'Because sentence,' &c.

This is the end of that great ordinance, and of the execution of justice, Deut. xiii. 11. The Lord commands that seducers, though they seem prophets, pretend visions, and work wonders, ver. 1, shall be put to death, ver. 6, 9. And when justice is thus executed upon seducers, the Lord promises two happy issues and effects of such severity: all Israel shall hear and fear, ver. 11, and the evil shall be put away from them, ver. 5. It shall be put away, ye shall not be accessory to, charged with the guilt of it. Whereas by the rule of contraries it follows, where such evil is tolerated, such seducers suffered, evil continues in the midst of a people; and being not put away, is chargeable upon them who tolerate it, suffer it to continue.

The fear of thus partaking with others' sins made the ten tribes resolute to punish the supposed idolatry of their brethren with the sword, Josh. xxii. The children of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh built an altar upon the borders of Jordan. The rest of the tribes, conceiving they had built it to offer sacrifice, contrary to the Lord's command, who had enjoined them to offer no sacrifice but in the place chosen and appointed by himself, hereupon, to free themselves from their guilt, they resolved to proceed against them in battle, ver. 12; and they declare the reason of it, ver. 18. Wrath will fall, not only upon you, but upon us, because, if we tolerate this, we shall be guilty of it, and so punished for it. Wrath will fall upon all; for, though you be principals, yet we, by suffering it, shall be accessories, and being hereby involved in the guilt, shall be involved in the punishment. And they prove it by an instance, ver. 20. And it is an argument from the less to the greater. If the whole congregation fall under the wrath of God for Achan's sin when they know not of it, much more shall we, if, knowing your sin, we tolerate it, and proceed not against it. The zeal of the Israelites, this jealousy over their brethren, is recorded to their praise, and if they had thus continued, they had not been overspread with guilt, nor overwhelmed with public calamities.

Men of place and office have much to answer for the sins of others. If all the excrements in a town should be laid at their doors, they would look on it as an high affront, a great displeasure. How much more grievous will it be to have the sins of towns and countries laid at their doors, charged upon their souls as guilty of them, by not hindering them, by not punishing and proceeding against them!

Thus churches may be guilty of the sin of a particular member, by not censuring the sin, and proceeding against the offender according to gospel rules.

Paul exhorts the church of Corinth to proceed against the incestuous Corinthian, to put away from among them that wicked person, to deliver him up unto Satan, 1 Cor. v. And he gives this reason, ver. 6. The leaven, which is but a little at present, being but in one person, it may diffuse its guilt through the whole church, may leaven the whole lump. If they tolerated this wickedness, they would be leavened by it, tainted with its guilt; therefore he urges, ver. 7, to purge it out.

Though Christ commend the church of Pergamos for many things, yet he has a controversy with her for tolerating those that taught false doctrine and loose practices, Rev. ii. 14, 15. And all the works, charity, service, faith, patience, of Thyatira, with her increase in these, could not exempt her from Christ's censure for tolerating false teachers and seducers, ver. 19, 20.

Thus masters are guilty of servants' sins, and parents partake of their

children's sins, if they correct them not for sinning; if they suffer them to lie, swear, profane the Sabbath, neglect the ordinances, without correction. 'He that spareth,' &c., 'he hates his child;' for what greater sign of hatred, than to let him run on without let in that which will ruin both soul and body? He hates himself, too, by bringing his soul under the guilt of that sin, which he hinders not by correcting the sinner for it.

He that, according to his place and calling, does not punish, censure, correct sin, is accessory to it by not hindering of it.

(2.) By not complaining of sin. He that has not power to punish sin, may complain of it to those that have power; and he that complains not, is in danger to be accessory to the sin which he conceals.

I confess there are many temptations to keep men from the practice of this duty. It is counted odious to be an accuser; and so it is, when it proceeds from spite, malice, and revenge, and not from tenderness to the glory of God and thy brother's soul; but against the temptations which may hinder thee from complaining of other sins, set the danger of sin to him, to thee, and the command of God; see how strictly and punctually he enjoins it, without respect of persons and relations, how near and dear soever, Deut. xiii. 6, 8. And it is prophesied there shall be such zeal in the times of the gospel, as the Lord here requires under the law; see Zech. xiii. 8. And whereas it may be objected, If I should complain to magistrates, and cause open offenders to be punished, this is the way to be hated; it is answered, ver. 6, if the sinner be thereby reclaimed, he will be so far from hating thee as an enemy, as he will look on thee as a friend. What are these wounds? How comest thou to suffer at the hand of justice? Then he shall answer, &c., Those that occasioned them, inflicted them, were friends to me in so doing; they were friends to my soul, hindered me from that which would have ruined it.

There are many wholesome laws in force amongst us for the punishing of drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, wizards, and other crying sins, for which the land mourns. The magistrate has discharged his duty in enacting these; justice cannot lay hold of them if they be not complained of. Where, then, will the guilt of this unrestrained wickedness lie, but upon those who conceal them; upon those who fear, or favour wicked men, more than they regard the favour or displeasure of the righteous God? Who will run the hazard of their own souls, and the souls of those sinners, rather than offend them, by bringing them to that shame or suffering, that might restrain them from sin. Oh what cause have we to be ashamed of, and humbled for our guilt in this particular! How heavy is it; how universal is it!

It is true, where private admonitions will prevail, and church censures may be had, these are first to be made use of; but where that is not regarded, or these cannot be exercised, if thou complaineest not, thou art accessory to the sin which thou concealest, and mayest be involved in the same punishment. We read, 2 Sam. xxi., there was a famine in Canaan for three years; David inquires of the Lord what was the cause of it. He answers, it is because Saul slew the Gibeonites. The sin was Saul's, and his house; and it is not probable the Lord would make so many suffer for his sin, but that they were some way accessory to it; and how more likely than because they did not inform David of the Gibeonites' unjust sufferings, that so justice might be executed on the offenders? We see, when this was done, the famine ceased.

He that conceals sin from justice, when he is called to inform of it, is accessory to it; for he does not what in him lies to hinder it.

It may be thou art no blasphemer, nor seducer, no swearer, or drunkard,

or open Sabbath-breaker; it is well. But dost thou not conceal these wickednesses? Dost thou not neglect to complain of them, that they may be discouraged, restrained, when thou art called to it? Why, this is enough to make thee accessory to these sins; thou dost not what thou canst to hinder them.

(8.) By not reproving or admonishing sinners. He that rebukes not, nor does not admonish, according to the quality of those who are guilty, makes himself guilty with them, Lev. xix. 17. To reprove another is a thankless office, and carnal men take it as an expression of hatred; but see how the Lord judges of it: 'He that rebukes not his brother does hate him in his heart.' The Lord knows how averse we are to this duty, and accordingly he proceeds; he begins with the answer of an objection, and concludes with an argument, And not suffer sin upon him; or, as the original may be as well translated, That thou bear not sin for sin;* so that he who reproveth not the sin of his neighbour, bears his sin for him, burdens himself with the guilt.

Thus ministers become accessory to the people's sins when they reprove them not, are loath to displease them; sew pillows under them, and cry Peace, peace, &c., to those that continue in wickedness; tell them not wherein they sin, warn them not of the sinfulness and danger of their evil ways. And though those that are faithful in so doing be usually ill requited, yet better are the worst returns from men than the guilt of the blood of souls; see Ezek. iii. 17, 18. If he know they live in any sin, and warn, admonish them not of it, 'they shall die,' &c.; 'but their blood,' &c.

So parents are guilty of their children's sin, and accessory to their eternal damnation, if they rebuke them not sharply; if the sharpness of the reproof be not answerable to the heinousness of the sin. We have a dreadful instance of this in Eli, 1 Sam. ii. His sons were wicked, and he admonished them of it, but too mildly, with too much indulgence, not according to the nature of their offence; and for this the Lord threatens to ruin him, his sons, his family, and to judge it for ever, chap. iii. ver. 11-14. The Lord will judge his house for ever; not for the iniquity which he acteth, but which he knoweth; not for sins he committed, but for sins he restrained not; not because he joined with them, but because he frowned not on them. He was not severe enough in rebuking their sins; and so the Lord proceeds severely against the whole family, whereof he, being the head, was concerned as an accessory in the sin, and as a partaker of the suffering.

The Lord has appointed reproof as a means to hinder, to restrain sin; he that for fear, favour, or any sinister respects, forbears reproof, does not what he can to hinder it, and so is involved in the guilt of it.

(4.) By not mourning for it. He that mourns not for the sins of others, is in danger to partake of them. Mourning is a means to hinder the increase of sin; he that bewails not the sins of others, does not what he can to hinder them, and so may be accessory to them. The Lord, Ezek. ix., representing the destruction of Judah, he sends a man to mark those who mourned for the abominations of the city, that they might be preserved, while all the rest perished, ver. 4-6. Now we cannot suppose that all those who were destroyed were principals in those abominations, but accessories they might be, by not mourning for that which others committed; but those that sigh and cry for the abominations of Jerusalem, all of them escape, as being neither principals nor accessories to those desolating sins. Their grief and sorrow for them acquits them; and therefore the Lord takes such special care to secure them, that the public calamities might not touch them.

* Qu. 'him'?—Ed.

The apostle, where he tells the Corinthians of their danger to be leavened, to be tainted with the guilt of that wicked person amongst them, in the same chapter he tells them the cause of it, they had not mourned for this wickedness, 1 Cor. v. 2. He calls them to repentance for another's sin; he would have them affected with grief and sorrow for it, that they might not be tainted with it. And when they had approved themselves herein, he commends their sorrow for that incestuous person's sin, by the effects which evidenced the sincerity of it, 2 Cor. vii. 11. Your sorrow for his sin appears to be after a godly manner, in that it wrought *carefulness* to correct the offence; *clearing* of yourselves, you hereby clear yourselves from the guilt of that wickedness, and the tolerating of it; *indignation*, you shew you are so far from approving, as you detest it publicly; *fear*, you shew yourselves afraid to partake of another man's sin; *vehement desire*, of removing scandal, and satisfying those that were offended; *zeal*, the intenseness of your desire to use all things for removing this evil; *revenge*, by censuring the offender, and casting him out, not suffering such wickedness to pass unpunished. By these effects the truth of their sorrow appeared, and by this sorrow they approved themselves to be clear in this matter, not accessory to his sin, not tainted with his guilt. Those, then, who do not thus mourn for the sins of others, cannot clear themselves from the guilt of others' sins.

It may be thou art not personally guilty of the blasphemies, apostasies, and scandalous evils of the times or places wherein thou livest; but dost thou not sigh and cry for these abominations, as those mourners in Ezra? He that can be charged for not mourning for the sins of others, cannot plead not guilty to the sins of others as accessory, though not as principal; as not hindering, if not as acting their sins.

(5.) By not praying against the sins of others. Prayer is a sovereign means to hinder sin. He that prays not against it, is accessory to it, by not endeavouring to hinder it. Job knew the efficacy of this means; and, therefore, apprehending his children in danger of sin, he continually made use of it, Job i. 4, 5. It is the virtue of Christ's prayer that still preserves his people from destructive evils, destroying sins, Job xvii. 5. The apostle directs that prayers be made for kings and magistrates, though in those times the wicked persecutors, that their cruelty and wickedness might be restrained, so as the people might lead a quiet and peaceable life, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

If ye pray not against the impostures of antichrist, that they may be detected and defeated; against the delusions of Satan as an angel of light, that he may be unmasked, his snares broken, and seduced souls, ensnared by him, reduced and delivered; against Satan's prevalency as a prince of darkness, that gross wickedness may not abound to the dishonour of the gospel and the profession of Christ; if ye pray not against the sins of the times, and those evils that appear in the places where ye live: ye do not what ye can to hinder sin, and so are accessory to it.

(6.) By not affording means whereby sin may be hindered. He that denies others the means requisite to the avoiding of sin, when it is his duty to afford them, is accessory to the sins of others by not hindering them; e.g. as we say, he that denies a man food, without which death cannot be prevented, is accessory to his death. So it is in spirituals; e.g. nothing is more destructive to the reign of sin and kingdom of Satan, than the preaching of the gospel. Therefore magistrates and others, that endeavour not (as it is their duty) to propagate the gospel, are accessory to the sins which reign in the absence of it.

* Qu. 'Ezekiel'?—Ed.

So those that are careless of their children, servants, or other relations; provide not that they be taught to read, do not catechise, instruct them; allow them not time or means to get knowledge: they are hereby guilty of their ignorance, accessory to that soul-destroying sin.

(7.) By not applying severe providences for the hindering of sin. The Lord sometimes speaks from heaven against sin by remarkable acts of providence. These, if not applied by those that discern them, may involve such in the guilt of those sins, against which they are intended; *e.g.* when our brethren in America were in danger to be over-run with monstrous opinions, two women, the chief broachers thereof, brought forth such monsters instead of children, as might well be interpreted the voice of God against their monstrous errors. These were seasonably applied, and contributed much to the rooting of them out.

The applying of such providences tends much to the restraint of sin. And he that clearly discerns them, and does not apply them to this end, does not what he is bound to do for the hindering of other sins, and so is accessory to them.

Thus you see how many ways ye may partake of the sins of others, by imitating, concurring, occasioning, causing them, by countenancing, not hindering them.

Use. Learn hence your necessity of Christ. This is the end of law and gospel; this is the end of all our preaching, all your hearing: to learn your necessity of Christ.

And what more shews a necessity of Christ than the multitude of sins? And how does this truth shew the multitude of thy sins, since it hence appears thou mayest sin so many ways in the sins of others?

The multitude of thy personal sins are wonderful, even to astonishment; but add to the numberless multitude of thy own sins, the multitude also of thy other-men's-sins; and then consider what the weight of thy guilt is, and what necessity thou hast of a Saviour.

For thy personal sins, that before conversion, every act, word, thought is a sin, *tota vita*, &c. The character of an unconverted sinner is that of the old world, Gen. vi. 5. What cause to complain, as Ps. xxxviii. 4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.'

Then add to this incomprehensible number, the multitude of thy other-men's-sins, those which thou art accessory to. How many sins art thou guilty of by imitating others in sinning? How many by concurring? How many hast thou occasioned? How many hast thou been the cause of? How many hast thou countenanced? How many hast thou been guilty of by not hindering them? How many hast thou not corrected when it has been thy duty to do it? How many hast thou concealed, not complained of? How many hast thou heard and seen, and not reprov'd, rebuked? How many are there, which thou didst never mourn for, never pray against?

Oh what sums are here! Who can reckon them? What man or angel can take an account of them? Ps. xix. Who can stand under such a burden? Who can appear in the sight of justice with such guilt?

Men and angels cannot satisfy for any one sin, for the least sin. And who can satisfy for such numberless millions? Yet justice must be satisfied before any sinner find mercy.

Oh then, what need of Christ! What necessity of a Saviour! Flee to him who only has a righteousness sufficient to cover all these sins. Fly to him whose blood only can expiate all this guilt. Make haste to that fountain,

that is set open for sin and uncleanness. There is not a drop in all the creatures, and nothing can cleanse thee but a fountain. Oh make haste to it, it is opened in Christ, and him only. Thy soul is pierced with millions of wounds, every sin wounds the soul. Oh look up to the brazen serpent, to Christ lifted up in the gospel. Without him thou art a dead man; all the world cannot save thee from eternal death. Give no rest to thy soul till thou be assured that, as thou art partaker of others' sins, so thou art partaker of Christ's righteousness.