

SERMON X.

BY THE REV. JOHN TILLOTSON, D.D.*

WHEREIN LIES THAT EXACT RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH IS REQUIRED
BETWEEN MAN AND MAN ?*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.—Matthew vii. 12.*

THESE words being brought in by way of inference from something said before, we must look back a little, to find out the relation of them to the former verses. At the seventh verse Christ commands to ask of God those things which we want; to encourage us to ask, he promises we shall receive; to induce us to believe this promise, he puts a temporal case: Our earthly fathers, who are evil, give us good things when we ask them; how much more easily may we believe this of a good God, of Infinite Goodness! Now, as we desire God should give us those things we ask, so we should do to others; and not only so, but universally in all other things, what we would that men should do to us, that we should do to others. *That men should do unto you*—Though the persons be expressed, yet we may take it impersonally, by an usual Hebraism; as if it had been said, “Whatever you would should be done unto you,” leaving the person to be supplied in the largest sense: thus, Whatever you would should be done unto you by God or men: *This is the Law and the Prophets*—That is, this is the sum of the Old Testament, so far as concerns our duty to our neighbour.

The observation which ariseth from the words is this:—

The great rule of equity in all our dealings with men is this,—to do as we would be done unto.

This rule hath been otherwise expressed, but not more emphatically in any other form of words than this here in the text. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Matt. xxii. 39.) This requires that we should bear *the same affection* to our neighbour which we would have him bear to us; but the rule in the text expressly requires that we should do *the same offices* to others, which we would have them do to us. Severus the emperor, as the historian† tells us, did learn this rule of Christians, and did much reverence Christ and Christianity for it; but he expressed it negatively: *Quod tibi non vis, alteri ne feceris.*‡ Now this forbids us to do injuries to others, but doth not so expressly command us to do kindnesses and courtesies.

In speaking to this rule, I shall give you,

I. The EXPLICATION of it.

* Dr. Tillotson afterwards became archbishop of Canterbury.—EDIT. † LAMPRIDIUS.

‡ “What thou wouldst not wish to be done to thyself, that do not thou to another.”—EDIT.

II. The GROUNDS of it.

III. The INSTANCES wherein we ought principally to practise it.

I. For EXPLICATION.—The meaning of it is this: Put thyself into the case and circumstances of every man with whom thou hast to do; that is, suppose thou wert he and as he is, and he were thyself and as thou art: that, then, which thou wouldest desire he should do to thee, that do thou to him; and that which thou wouldest be unwilling he should do to thee, do not thou do to him. Now, this is an *exact* rule; for we are very curious in determining our own privileges, and what duty others owe to us. Just so much as we take to ourselves, we must allow to others; what we expect from others when we are in such circumstances, we must do the same to them in the like. And this is a *plain and easy* rule. Many men cannot tell what is law or justice or right in such a case; many cannot deduce the laws of nature one from another; but there is no man but can tell what it is that he would have another man do to him. Every man can take his own actions, and put them into the other scale, and suppose, “If this that I do now to another were to be done to me, should I like it, should I be pleased, and contented with it?” And thus, by changing the scales, his own self-love, and self-interest, and other passions, will add nothing to the weight; for that self-interest which makes a man covetous, and inclines him to wrong another man for his own advantage, makes him likewise, when the scales are changed, unwilling that another man should wrong him. That self-conceit which makes a man proud, and apt to scorn and despise others, makes him unwilling that another should contemn him.

I question not but, by this time, you understand the meaning of the rule; but we are not yet past all difficulties about it. Three things are to be done, before this rule will be of use to us:—

1. We must make it appear that it is *reasonable*.
2. Make it *certain*; for till it be certain it cannot be a rule.
3. Make it *practicable*.

1. We must make it appear to be *reasonable*.—The difficulty about the reasonableness of it is this: according to this rule, I shall be obliged to do that many times which is sinful, and to omit that which is a necessary duty. I will give two or three instances. Saul would have had his armour-bearer to have killed him: might he therefore have killed his armour-bearer, if he had been willing, and had desired it? I may not be an instrument or furtherer of another man's sin, though I were so wicked as to desire that another would be so to me. If I were a child, I would not have my father correct me; or a malefactor, I would not have the magistrate cut me off: must there therefore be no correction or punishment? Now, because of these and the like instances which may be given, the rule is necessarily to be understood of things that may be done, or omitted, that is, which are not unlawful or unreasonable. Saul might not kill his armour-bearer; I may not further another man's sin, in the cases propounded; because these things may not be done; they are morally impossible, that is, unlawful. A parent or magistrate may not wholly omit correction or punishment,

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because such omission would tend to the ruin of good manners and of human society.

2. We must make the rule *certain*.—The difficulty about the certainty of it is this: everlasting disputes will arise about what is lawful and reasonable, and unlawful and unreasonable. Now, we must reduce it to a certainty thus: Whatever I would that another should do to me, that I should do to him, unless the thing be plainly and evidently unlawful or unreasonable: and this cuts off all disputes; for though there may be perpetual disputes about what is lawful and reasonable, or the contrary, yet there can be no dispute about the unlawfulness and unreasonableness of those things which are plainly and evidently so; for that which is plain and evident is out of all dispute. To confirm this, let us consider another text, Phil. iv. 8; where the apostle exhorts Christians to follow whatever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure; and, as a discovery of what things are such, he adds, "Whatever things are lovely, of good report, and praiseworthy;" that is, whatever things are amiable, well spoken of, and praised by wise and good men; (who are the only competent judges of these things;) if they be not plainly contrary to truth, or honesty, or justice, or purity,—follow these things; and if this be not the meaning, those words, "lovely, of good report, praiseworthy," are superfluous, and do not at all direct our conversation, which certainly the apostle intended to do by them.

3. We must make it *practicable*.—There are two things which make the practice of it difficult. (1.) A seeming *contradiction* in the rule. (2.) *Partiality* in judging of the circumstances of other men's conditions and our own.

(1.) A seeming *contradiction* in the rule.—Which you will see in these instances: if I desire a thing, I would not have another stand in competition with me for it; if another desire a thing, I would not have him think much that I stand in competition with him. If I be indebted to another, I would not have him arrest me; if another be indebted to me, I would not have him think much that I arrest him. When we sell, we care not how dear; when we buy, we care not how cheap. Now, if this were a real contradiction in the rule, it were impossible it should be put in practice; but it is only a contradiction in our wills, which must thus be reconciled to the rule:—

(i.) We must consider which of these wills is most reasonable, and the greater reason and equity must carry it; and that which is plainly unreasonable, in comparison of the other, is not to be regarded. If we consider the two first instances, this is most reasonable, that where men have an equal right, they should be allowed an equal liberty to use that right. Another man hath as much right to stand in competition with me for any thing, as I to stand in competition with him; and to arrest me in case of debt, as I to arrest him; and it is plainly unreasonable that I should use this right, and another be debarred from it.

(ii.) If both these contradictory wills be plainly unreasonable, as in the third instance of buying and selling, they must be accommodated by finding out such a medium as is equally and mutually good for all buyers and sellers; that is, such a proportion of gain may be taken, and must

be allowed to be taken, as will be equally and mutually good for all buyers and sellers.

(2.) Another difficulty in the practice of this rule ariseth from men's *partiality* in judging of the circumstances of other men's conditions and their own.—We are apt to lessen the circumstances of another man's condition, and to overvalue our own; another man's concerns seem less to us than they are, and our own greater than they are. Now, this difficulty will most eminently appear in cases of passion, and interest, and those subordinate relations which are at the greatest distance. Another man provokes me; I revenge myself on him: one asks me, "Would you be contented to be thus dealt withal?" I am ready to answer, "Yea, if I should so provoke another:" I aggravate the fault of his provocation, and lessen that of my own revenge: here is passion. I desire a courtesy of a man which he cannot conveniently do for me: he denies me: I think much at him, because I judge the courtesy less, and his obligation to do it greater, than indeed it is: here is interest. I think, "If I were a father, I should not carry myself so severely towards my children. If I were a master, I should give more liberty to servants, and use them with a greater familiarity. If I were a minister, I should not gall the consciences of people by so free and open a reproof of sin. If I were a magistrate, I should make other laws, or punish some crimes more or less severely." Now, if men frequently thus misjudge, how shall this rule be put in practice?

To remove these difficulties as much as may be, and to make the practice of this rule more easy, observe these rules:—

(i.) *Labour to understand truly every man's condition, so far as you have opportunity.*—This is easily said; but how shall we come to do it? Thus, when you are in any condition, observe diligently the motions of your own mind, and how your affections then work, and what apprehensions you then have of things, and what it is that in such a condition you desire and expect from others; and labour to remember this when you are out of that condition, and to retain the sense which you then had of things.

(ii.) In cases wherein you are unexperienced, and which you cannot reasonably be presumed to understand, partly because of your distance from that condition, partly because of the opposition of your own interest, and partly because of the mists and clouds of your own passion; *trust the concurrent experience of others that are in that condition*: and think that you ought not to do that to another which the generality of mankind count grievous; and that fit to be done, which the most and wisest in such a condition and relation do usually expect. If men, when they are under, and lie at the mercy of others, generally desire that clemency and moderation should be used towards them; how just soever thou mayest think thy severity is, and that thou wouldest be contented that another should deal so with thee, yet do, not trust thy present apprehensions of things, but believe that thou wilt have the same sense of things, when they lie heavy upon thee, with the rest of mankind, and [that] when thou art in their circumstances, thou wilt desire quarter as they do. In like manner, that respect and obedience which parents, and

masters, and magistrates, do generally expect, even the best and wisest of them, that do thou pay to them; and though it may have some appearance of rigour and injustice, yet believe that when thou comest to be in the same relation, thou wilt expect the same things as they do; and that thou dost now judge otherwise, proceeds from thy inexperience, and distance from that condition, or from passion and opposition of interest.

(iii.) Conclude, *that in cases betwixt superiors and inferiors, the partiality is usually on the inferiors' side.*—And it is reasonable thus to conclude, both because inferiors have seldom had experience of the other condition, as superiors usually have had; (a child hath not been a parent, or a servant ordinarily a master, or a subject a magistrate; but all parents have been children, and most masters have been servants, and many magistrates subjects; and so they have had experience of both conditions;) and likewise because inferiors cannot so well see the condition and circumstances of those that are above them, as those that are above can of those that are below them; they have the advantage of ground, and better opportunities of knowledge.

(iv.) *In judging of your present condition and circumstances, always abate something for the presence of them, and for self-love, and self-interest, and other passions.*—He that doth not consider how apt every man is unequally to favour himself, doth not know the littleness and narrowness of human nature. We are near to ourselves, and our own interest is near to us; and we see it in its full proportions, and with all possible advantages: other men and their interests are at a distance from us, and seem less to us than they are. Now, we must make abatements for this, according to that experience which we have had of our own mistakes; which, if we will observe, as we pass from one condition into another, we may easily be convinced how great many times they are.

II. For the **FOUNDATIONS** of this.—The equity of this rule stands upon these foundations:—

1. *All men are equal in many things, and those the greatest things.*—Now, I should deal equally with him whom I acknowledge to be mine equal. “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?” (Mal. ii. 10.) Are we not all made of the same materials? Is it not “appointed unto men once to die,” and after death to stand before the impartial judgment of God? (Heb. ix. 27.) We have all the same notions of right and wrong; we are all obnoxious to one another, and may be all beneficial one to another; we all love ourselves, and study the advancement of our interest and happiness. Thus far [we are] equal.

2. *In most of those things wherein we are unequal, the inequality is not considerable, so as to be a ground of any unequal dealing with one another.*—As to strength of body, whatever the difference be, the inequality is not considerable; because as to the greatest effects of strength there is an equality. “Every man that will venture his own life, may take away another man’s,” * either by open force or by surprise. As to abilities of mind, which we usually call parts, there is originally a great equality,

* *Dominus est alterius vita quicunque contemnit suam.*

especially if that received opinion be true, that souls are equal ; and, as the French philosopher Des Cartes hath ingeniously observed, there is this notable sign of the equality of men's understandings : *Nulla res, saith he, æquabilis inter homines distributa est quàm bona mens, &c.* " Nothing is more equally divided among men than a good understanding. Men will acknowledge others to be richer and stronger than themselves ; few will acknowledge others to be wiser, or to have better parts, than themselves. Every man thinks himself to have so good a proportion of parts and wisdom, that even those who are most covetous, and have the most insatiable desires as to other things, and whom nature could never satisfy in any thing else, yet would not desire to have more wit than they have, or exchange their parts with any man." * Now, there is no better sign of an equal distribution of things than that every man is contented with his share.† Now, because all men generally think thus, it is to be presumed that all are not deceived, but that there is some real equality, which is the ground of this conceit. A difference, indeed, must be granted, but which ariseth usually from one of these two causes,—either an unequal exercise of our parts, or an unequal temper of body. Now, those who are so happy as to exercise their understandings more than others, are very often rather conceited that they are wiser than others, than really so ; " for the greatest clerks are not always the wisest men." Those who are unhappy in the temper of their bodies, are thereby inclined, how weak soever they be, to conceit themselves as wise as others. So that whatever real inequality there be, conceit levels all again. So that whether men be really wise, or only think themselves so, it makes no difference as to men's dealing with one another ; for they that think themselves equal will not deal but upon equal terms. So that Aristotle's pretty notion, that " wise men are born to govern, and fools to obey,"‡ signifies very little in this case ; for there are but few such fools in the world, but would govern if they can. So that by virtue of wisdom or parts, no man can challenge a privilege or prerogative to himself above others, which another will not pretend to as well as he.

3. *In all those things wherein men are unequal, the inequality is not fixed and constant, but mutable and by turns.*—All things that belong to us are either the endowments of the mind, the accidents of the body, or the circumstances of our outward estate. Now, those that are most unequal in any of these, may be equal ; for the inequality may turn, and be as much on the other side. A disease may ruin the most happy and excellent memory, and make a man forget his own name. A little knock on any side of the head may level the highest understanding with the meanest. Beauty, health, and strength may be blasted by a disease, or a thousand other accidents. Riches, and honour, and reputation are the most slippery and brittle things that belong to us ; and when these are gone, friends will fall off, like leaves in autumn. Now, why should I despise another man, when I may be as silly as he ? or bear down another by my strength, when I may be as weak as he ? or insult over another's

* *Dissertat. de Methodo.* † *Qui velit ingenio cedere rarus erit.* " It very rarely happens, that any man owns himself to possess less genius than another."—EDIT.
‡ *Polit. c. 3.*

poor and low condition, when a day may level me with his meanness, and raise him to be as great and rich as I am?

4. Another ground is *the mutual and universal equity and advantage of this rule*.—Upon those terms I and all men shall be equally dealt with: it will be well with me, and well with all men. The observation of this rule would secure peace to the world; and if it were generally practised, those few that should offend against it would be looked upon as the pests and troublers of human society. As by the violation of this rule every man becomes a wolf and beast of prey to another, so, by the mutual observation of it, every man would be a God to another; men would be full of mutual goodness, and pity, and compassion; they would be mutual benefactors one to another. All men would be as happy as it is possible for them to be in this world; and no man could be miserable, if it were in the power of his neighbour to help him.

5. The last ground I shall mention is *the absurdity and inconvenience of the contrary*.—And this is the most proper way of proving this; for, as Aristotle tells us, “First principles which are evident by their own light, cannot be proved by way of demonstration, but of conviction.” As thus: contradictions cannot be true at once. This cannot be demonstrated *a priori*, because there is nothing true before it to prove it by; therefore whoever shall deny it, must be convinced of the truth of it by showing the absurdities of the contrary. In like manner, this being one of the first principles of human society,—that we should use no more liberty towards other men, than we would allow them to use towards us, the best way to convince any man of the reasonableness and equity of it will be to show him the inconveniences of the contrary. Wherever this principle is violated, men will think themselves injured; where men are injured, they will be apt to vindicate themselves. Hence come contention and wars, which loose the bands of human society. Or, if a man can pardon an injury, that hath received one; yet he that hath done it cannot believe so, but he will fear revenge; and fear of being oppressed makes a man seek to anticipate and prevent another: so that every injury endangers the peace and security of mankind, and lays the foundation of perpetual mischief; for by the same reason that I injure any man, I am obliged to ruin him.

He that breaks this rule, doth what he can to break human society; that is, to spoil himself of all common protection, and to leave himself to stand upon his guard against all the world: in which state no man can hope to continue that is not wiser and stronger than all the world. Aristotle tells us, “He that desires to be alone, must either be a God or a wild beast;”^{*} that is, he must either be self-sufficient, and stand in need of nothing; or else be wild and savage, and delight in cruelty and mischief.

III. The INSTANCES wherein we ought chiefly to practise this rule, are these:—

1. *In matters of civil respect and conversation*.—I must treat every man with that fair respect which I would have another to show to me. We must accommodate ourselves to men’s particular tempers; and not be froward or intractable, or tenacious of our own humour, especially when

^{*} Ἡ ἑνότης ἡ Θεός.—ARISTOTELIS *Polit.* c. ii.

it lies in another man's way. But we must be apt to recede and give way, that there may be room for other men's tempers and humours, as well as ours: our humour must not take up all the world. Those who want this complaisance are, in society, as one ingeniously compares them, like irregular stones in a building, which are full of roughness and corners: they take up more room than they fill: till they be polished and made even, others cannot lie near them. So men of sharp and perverse humours are unsociable, till the ruggedness and asperities of their nature be taken off. We must not carry ourselves insolently, or superciliously, or contemptuously towards others. We must not be contumelious; nor by deed or word, countenance or gesture, declare hatred or contempt of others. We must not upbraid one another with any imperfection, or weakness, or deformity. We must not peremptorily contradict others. We must not use to talk things displeasing to others, wherein their credit, or relations, or especially their religion, is concerned. Josephus saith, this was one of Moses's laws (it was a good one, whose-ever it was): *Οὐς ἀλλὰι πόλεις νομιζουσι θεους, μηδεις βλασφημεῖτω** "Let no man blaspheme that which other nations count a God," or make their religion. Not but that every man may confute a false religion, and endeavour by all fair ways to convince a Jew, or Turk, or Heathen; but we may not reproach another man's religion, or provoke any man in ordinary conversation, by unseasonable and uncivil reflections upon it; for we are with meekness to convince gainsayers, to reprove men for their sins, but not to upbraid them with them. We must give no offence to the Jew or to the Gentile, remembering always that the wrath of man doth not work the righteousness of God; and that Michael the archangel, when he contended with the devil, did not bring a railing accusation against him; he did not revile him, no, not in the heat of dispute. And there is great reason why we should thus carry ourselves towards others, because we ourselves would not be contemned or despised; we would not have any man jeer us, or insult over us, or upbraid us, or peevishly contradict us, or affront us by speaking unhandsomely of us, or of our relations, or of our religion. Now, if we would have others to consider us, we must not neglect them; if we would be taken notice of for somebody, we must not overlook others with contempt. Every thing thinks itself considerable, and there is nothing comes sooner to us, or continues longer with us, than a sense of our own worth; and we judge ill of human nature, if we think another man is not as impatient of rude and uncivil usage as we are. Nothing would be despised, a worm would not be trod upon. Nay, men do usually overvalue themselves, and are apt to think that they are owners of that singular worth which may command respect from all men, and that every one that passeth by ought to fall down and do obeisance to them. They have Joseph's dream waking, they think "all men's sheaves bow to their sheaves;" they think every man takes notice of them, and observes their carriage and actions, when probably not one of a thousand ever took them into consideration, or asked who they were. Now, we must consider, that it is a hundred to one but there is a little of this vanity in us also, and that we do usually

* *Antiquit. Judaic. lib. 4.*

look for more respect than is due ; therefore it will not be amiss, in our respects towards others, *largiri aliquid*, "to give men something above [that which] we think they deserve ;" and the rather because civil respect is cheap, and costs us nothing ; and we expect from others full as much as comes to our share : for it is a mistake to think, that we do but righteously esteem ourselves, and that we have no more than a just value of our own worth.

2. *In matters of kindness and courtesies.*—We must be useful to one another. I would have no man churlish to me, but ready to gratify me, and do me a kindness. Do I think much to be denied a reasonable favour, and doth not another so too ? We would have all men love us, that is, bear such an affection to us, that when it falls in their way, they should be ready to do us a courtesy. We would not have courtesies done in a discourteous manner, extorted by importunity, or upbraided to us afterwards. Let us likewise dispense favours with a liberal hand and a cheerful countenance, that men may see that they come from a kind heart, and a real good-will.

3. *In matters of charity and compassion.*—If any man be in misery, pity him, and help him [according] to your power. If any be in necessity and want, contribute to his relief, without too scrupulous inquiries about him ; for we would be thus dealt with ourselves ; we would not have others to harden their hearts, or shut up their bowels of compassion against us. Is any man cast down ? Do not insult over him, and trample upon him ; do not look upon him with scorn, and rejoice over him in the day of distress. *Res est sacra miser* : "Persons in misery are sacred, and not to be violated." When you see any man in calamity, think ye hear him say to you, with Job : "I also could speak as ye do : if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief." (Job xvi. 4, 5.)

4. *In matters of forbearance and forgiveness.*—We stand in need of forbearance and pardon from others, from God and men. We should be loath God should take advantage against us upon every provocation, and let fly at us with a thunderbolt every time we offend him. We would not have men storm and fall into passion with us upon every slight occasion : I would have great allowances given to me ; I would have my ignorance, and inadvertency, and mistakes, and present temper, and all occasions and provocations, and every thing considered ; and, when I have done amiss, upon acknowledgment of my fault, I would be forgiven and received to favour. Now, if we would be thus dealt with, we must bear with others : the best men need some grains of allowance : *Nullum unquam ingenium placuit sine venia* : "No man was ever so perfect, so accomplished, so unexceptionable, but there was something or other in his carriage that needed pardon." Every man hath a particular humour ; we must give some allowance for that. Every man is subject to mistake : we must allow for that too ; and if a man have committed a fault, we must accept of an ingenuous acknowledgment, and be ready to grant him peace. There is a shame and disdain in human nature of too vile a sub-

mission ; therefore we must not bring a man too low when we have him at advantage.

5. *In matter of report and representation of other men, and their actions.*—We must not take up a rash prejudice, or entertain a sinister apprehension of any, upon slight grounds. Do not represent any man, his words or actions, at a disadvantage. Make the best of every thing. A man's good name is like a looking-glass ; nothing is sooner cracked, and every breath can sully it. Handle every man's reputation with the same tenderness thou wouldest have every man use towards thine. Do not slander or defame any man, or rejoice to hear other men's miscarriages ripped open. Do not account it an entertainment to censure and backbite all the world.

6. *In matters of trust and fidelity.*—Where I place a confidence and repose a trust, I would not be deceived : I must not deceive another, nor let any man fall that leans upon me. If a man trust me with the management of his business, or lodge a secret with me, or put his life into my power, or commit the care of his estate or children to me after his death, these are all ingenuous trusts, and must be discharged with the same faithfulness we expect from others.

7. *In matter of duty and obedience.*—We must give that honour to our parents which we would expect from our children ; and pay that reverence to masters which we would exact from our servants. We must rise up before the gray head, and give respect to old age ; for, let not us think but that the change of relation and of age will have the same effect upon us which it hath upon the rest of the world. It is a folly to talk, that when we are old we shall be pleased with the insolencies of youth ; when we are masters, we shall not be at all offended with the contemptuous carriage of our servants ; that it will not touch our hearts to have our children undutiful and void of respect, to see the fruit of our body unnatural and unkind to us.

8. *In matters of freedom and liberty, which are not determined by any natural or positive law.*—We must permit as much to others as we assume to ourselves ; and this is a sign of an equal and temperate person, and one that justly values his own understanding and power. But there is nothing wherein men usually deal more unequally with one another, than in indifferent opinions and practices of religion. I account that an *indifferent opinion* which good men differ about ; not that such an opinion is indifferent as to truth or error, but as to salvation or damnation it is not of necessary belief. By an *indifferent practice in religion*, I mean, that which is in its own nature neither a duty nor a sin to do or omit. Where I am left free, I would not have any man to rob me of my liberty, or intrench upon my freedom ; and, because he is satisfied such a thing is lawful and fit to be done, expect I should do it who think it otherwise ; or, because he is confident such an opinion is true, be angry with me because I cannot believe as fast as he. Now, if another do ill in doing thus to me, I cannot do well in doing so to another. And do not say that thou art sure thou art in the right, and he that differs from thee in the wrong ; and therefore thou mayest impose upon him, though he may not upon thee. Hath not every man this

confidence of his own opinion and practice? and usually the weakest cause bears up with the greatest confidence. Now, if thou wouldest not have another, that is confident he is in the right, to impose upon thee, do not thou impose upon another, for all thy confidence. We should rather be modest, and say every one to ourselves: "How came I to be so much wiser than other men? Which way came the Spirit of the Lord, from so many wise and pious men, to speak unto me? Is it a peculiar privilege granted to me, that I cannot be mistaken? or are not *they* most of all mistaken *who* think they cannot mistake? If, then, I be but like other men, why should I take so much upon me, as if my understanding were to be a rule, and my apprehensions a standard to the whole world? as if, when another man differs from me, I did not differ as much from him. Why may not another man understand the thing better than I do? or what crime is it if he understand it not so well? Were all men's understandings cast in the same mould? Is it presumption for any man to know more than I do, or a sin to know less?" Job doth well reprove this self-conceit. His friends would needs bear him down, and were very angry with him, that he was not of their mind, and would not acknowledge all to be true of himself which they said against him: he takes them up sharply: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?" (Job xii. 2, 3.) Let not any man think that he hath engrossed all the knowledge of the world to himself, but others know the same things which he doth, and many things better than he.

9. *In matters of commerce, and contracts which arise from thence.*—Now, a contract is a mutual transferring of right. When I buy any thing of another, he makes-over the right of such a commodity to me for so much money, or other valuable thing, the right whereof I make over to him. Now, in this kind of intercourse, we are to be governed by this great rule: *In making of contracts*, we must *agere bonâ fide*, "deal honestly and truly;" *in performing of contracts*, we must give *liberare fidem*, "satisfy the engagement we have made;" for thus we ourselves would be dealt withal.

Now, if any shall desire to be more particularly satisfied, what that exact righteousness is which, in matter of contracts, ought to be observed betwixt man and man, I must confess this is a difficult question, and to be handled very modestly by such as acknowledge themselves unacquainted with the affairs of the world, and the necessities of things, and the particular and hidden reasons of some kind of dealings. For he that is ignorant of these may easily give rules, which will not comply with the affairs of the world: he may complain of that which cannot be otherwise, and blame some kind of dealings which are justifiable, from particular reasons, not obvious to any man who is unseen in the way of trade. Besides, there are many cases fall under this question which are very nice, but of great consequence; and the greater caution and tenderness ought to be used in the resolution of them, because they are matters of constant practice, and the greatest part of mankind are concerned in them. Now, it is a dangerous thing to mistake in those things in which

many persons are interested, especially if they be things of such a vast difference as good and evil, right and wrong, are. For if that be determined to be lawful which is unlawful, men are led into *sin*; if that be determined to be unlawful which is lawful, men are led into *a snare*. For if this determination be to the prejudice of men in their callings, it is an hundred to one but common example and private interest will make many continue in that practice, and then the mischief is this:—Though men do that which is lawful and right, yet they are staggered by the authority and confidence of him who hath determined it unlawful; and so have some reluctancy in their consciences in the doing of it; and this by accident becomes a great sin to them: and when upon a sick-bed, or any other occasion, they come to be touched with the sense of sin, this will be matter of greater horror and affrightment to them than a real sin which they committed ignorantly, and were afterwards convinced of. Upon all these considerations, I ought to proceed with great wariness in the answering of this question: therefore I shall content myself with speaking those things which are clear and evident, though they be but general, rather than venture out of my depth by descending into particulars, and such things as are out of my notice.

I shall therefore,

1. Lay down the general rule;
2. Some propositions which may tend to the explication of it;
3. Some special rules for the directing of our commerce and intercourse.

1. The *general rule* is this: *That which it is not unreasonable for me to desire to gain by another when I am to sell, that I should allow another to gain by me when I am to buy; and that which it is not unreasonable another should gain by me when I am to buy, that, and no more, I may gain by another when I am to sell.*

2. The *propositions* which I shall lay down for the further explication of this rule, are these:—

(1.) *In buying and selling, such a proportion of gain may be taken, and ought to be allowed, as is mutually and universally best.*—And this every man is presumed to desire, because this will be certainly good for every one; whereas, if it be not universally good, it may be bad for any one; if it be not mutually so, it will be bad for me by turns.

(2.) *That proportion of gain which allows a reasonable compensation for our time, and pains, and hazard, is universally and mutually best.*—If the compensation be unreasonably great, it will be bad for the buyer; if unreasonably little, it will be bad for the seller; if equal and reasonable, it will be good for all.

(3.) *That proportion of gain which, in common intercourse and use of bargaining among those who understand what they buy and sell, is generally allowed, ought to be esteemed a reasonable compensation.*—This is evident, because the common reason of mankind doth best determine what is reasonable. Therefore, those who speak of *commutative justice*, and place it in “the equality of things contracted for,” need explaining; for value is not a thing absolute and certain, but relative and mutable.

Now, to fix the value of things as much as may be, this rule is commonly given : *Tanti unumquodque valet, quanti vendi potest* ; “ Every thing is worth so much as it may be sold for ; ” which must not be understood too particularly, as if the present and particular appetite of the contractor were to be the rule ; for every thing is not worth so much as any body will give for it, but so much as in common intercourse among knowing persons it will give. For this I take for a truth,—that, in the ordinary plenty of commodities, there is an ordinary and usual price of them known to the understanding persons of every profession : if I be out in this, the matter of gain will be more uncertain than I thought on.

(4.) *A reasonable compensation doth not consist in an indivisible point, but hath a certain latitude, which, likewise, is to be determined by the common intercourse and practice of mankind.*—Suppose ten in the hundred be the usual gain made of such a commodity, eleven the highest, nine the lowest ; the latitude is betwixt nine and eleven.

(5.) *Every man engaged in a way of commerce is presumed to understand, unless the contrary be evident.*—So that, keeping within the latitude of a lawful gain, I may use my skill against another man in driving a bargain. But if his want of skill be evident, that is, sufficiently known to me, I must use him as I would do a child, or other unskilful person, that is, fairly.

(6.) *Where the price of things alters, as it often doth almost in all things, no other rule can be given but the common and market-price.*—There are some things which are fixedly certain, as coin : there I have no latitude at all ; I may not put off a piece of money for more than its value, though a person out of ignorance would take it for more. There are some commodities which, in ordinary plenty, being of an ordinary goodness, have an usual price : here I have but little latitude, namely, that of the market. In the rising and falling of commodities, I have a greater latitude ; but usually in these cases the market sets some kind of price : unless I be the sole master of a commodity ; and here the latitude is the greatest, and my own reason and moderation must limit me. And if any ask why I make the market the rule, seeing this seems to be as if I should say, “ Let every man get as much as he can, for so men in the market do ; ” I answer, The market is usually more reasonable than the particular appetites of men ; and though every man be apt to get as much as he can, yet men generally have an appetite to sell, as well as to sell dear, and that checks this ; and men are brought to moderation, because they are unwilling to lose custom ; so that he that governs himself by the market prices, not catching at particular advantages, seems to me to follow the safest rule.

(7.) *There are some things allowed in common intercourse which are so rigorous, that they are hardly just, which are rather tolerable than commendable.*—I will give one instance instead of many : A man hath a small piece of ground lying within another man’s estate. He is willing to sell, but requires, possibly, forty or sixty years’ purchase, or more, according to the particular appetite of the purchaser. This seems not to

be so agreeable to this great rule of equity. I deny not* but some advantage may be made in this case, and I will not set any peremptory limits. I shall only say this in general, We should set a moderate value upon another man's appetite and convenience.

(8.) *It is to be feared, that something very like unrighteousness is woven into the mystery of most trades; and, like Phidias's image in Minerva's shield, cannot be defaced without the ruin of it.*—I think this is not a groundless jealousy; but the confession and complaint of the most knowing and understanding persons in human affairs. I shall instance only in the slightness of work, the imbasement of commodities, and setting them off by indirect advantages. I can only bewail this; for, unless the world could generally be convinced of this, it is not like to be amended. Perfection is not to be looked for in this imperfect state: we must be content if things are passable.

(9.) *Nevertheless, we ought to aspire after as great a degree of righteousness and equity as the condition of human affairs will admit.*—We should bend all our endeavours to the bettering of the world; and not only avoid all unrighteousness, but draw back, as much as in us lies, from the indirect practices of the world, and from all appearance of unrighteousness.

3. The more particular rules are these:—

(1.) *Impose upon no man's ignorance or unskilfulness.*—Thou mayest set a just value upon thine own commodity, but not a price upon another man's head. I mean, thou mayest not rate a man's want of understanding, or set a tax upon his ignorance: therefore, take no advantage of children, or any other incompetent persons; and do not only use them with justice, but with ingenuity, as those that repose a trust in you, and cast themselves upon your equity. And here are some questions to be resolved.

QUESTION I. "If a man be otherwise skilful in his calling, may not I take advantage of his ignorance of a particular circumstance wherein the contract is concerned?"

ANSWER. I will tell you how Tully resolves this in a particular case: "A man," saith he, "brings a ship of corn from Alexandria to Rhodes, in a time of great famine: he may have what price he will: he knows of a great many more ships that will be there next day: may he conceal this from the Rhodians?" He determines peremptorily, he may not.† If we will be worse than Heathens—I say no more.

QUESTION II. "But may we not take advantage of the ignorance of the seller, though not of the buyer? The difference is, he that offers to sell any thing at such a price is willing so to part with it: now there is no wrong done to him that is willing."

I answer: A man is so far willing, as he is knowing. Aristotle tells us, that "ignorance is a sort of unwillingness." If a man, out of forgetfulness, or want of consideration or sufficient understanding of his own calling, mistake himself, I may not make a prize of this man's weakness;

* The third edition has, instead of this commencement, *I do not see*; and the fourth has, *I doubt not*; but the reading of the first edition, as it stands in the text, is the correct one.
—EDIT.

† *De Officiis*, lib. III.

for he is only willing to sell it so upon supposition he remembers right, and understands himself aright; but, the thing being really worth more, he is absolutely unwilling, and I am injurious to him in taking advantage.

QUESTION III. "May I not sell secret faults and vices in a commodity?"

ANSWER. If the faults be such as men take for granted do often happen, and, notwithstanding them, they do not account any man to have deceived them, then they are faults pardoned by common consent. But if they be such as I am grieved at, and think myself not fairly dealt withal when they happen; then some think it is enough to allow for them in the price; but I think Tully hath determined it better: *Ne quid omnino quod venditor novit emptor ignoret*; * "That the buyer should not be left ignorant of any thing that the seller knows." And this seems reasonable; for I know not but another man may value those faults higher than I do: however, it is not so fair for me to make another man's bargain.

(2.) *Impose upon no man's necessity.*—If a man must needs buy now, or of thee, because none else is near, make no advantage of this.

(3.) *When God's providence hath put into thy hands some great opportunity and advantage, (as by the intervention of some unexpected law, by a sudden war or peace betwixt nations, or by some other casualty,) do not stretch it to the utmost.*—*Fortunam reverenter habe*, "Use this providential advantage modestly;" considering that He whose blessing gave thee this opportunity can blast thee a thousand ways.

(4.) *Use plainness in all your dealings.*—This the Roman laws called *bond fide agere*. Do not disparage another man's commodity, or raise your own beside truth: this is sinful. Do not insinuate a commendation or disparagement indirectly, thereby to lead a man into an error, that you may draw on a bargain the more easily. Do not, as your phrase is, ask or bid much out of the way; for if this be not simply unlawful, yet it doth not become an honest man. We commend the Quakers, because they are *at a word* in all their dealings. We would be loath not to be counted as good Christians as they are; let us, then, do as good things as they do, especially when we account those things praiseworthy; and I am sure this is no ways contrary to justice, and honesty, and truth. I know nothing that gives so real a reputation to that sect as this practice; and would it not adorn those who account themselves the more sober Christians? If we praise this in others, let us practise it in ourselves. We are apt to value ourselves much by our orthodox judgments; but let us take heed that sectaries do not confute us by their orthodox lives. For the sake of religion, next to your consciences, in all your dealings, tender your reputation; for, *quod conscientia est apud Deum, id fama est apud homines*: "that which conscience is in reference to God, that our reputation is in respect of men."

(5.) *In matters of vanity and fancy, and things which have no certain estimation, use moderation.*—And so much the rather, because in these thou art left to be thy own judge.

(6.) *Do not go to the utmost of things lawful.*—He that will always

* *De Officiis*, lib. iiii.

walk upon the brink, is in great danger of falling down. He that will do the utmost of what he may, will some time or other be tempted to what he should not. For it is a short and easy passage from the utmost limits of lawful, to what is evil and unlawful; therefore, in that latitude which you have of gain, use favour toward the poor and necessitous, ingenuity toward the ignorant and unskilful, moderation toward all men.

(7.) *Where you have any doubt about the equity of your * dealings, choose you the safest part, and that which will certainly bring you peace.*—For not only a good conscience, but a quiet conscience, is to be valued above gain. Therefore, in matters of duty, do the most; in matters of privilege, and divisions of right, and proportions of gain, where there is any doubt, choose the least; for this is always safe.

Thus I have laid down the *rule* and explained it, and have given as particular directions as I could safely adventure to do: I must now leave it to every man to apply it more particularly to himself, and to deal faithfully with his own conscience in the use of it. Circumstances which vary cases are infinite; therefore, when all is done, much must be left to the equity and chancery of our own breasts. I have not told you how much in the pound you may gain, and no more; nor can I. A man may make a greater gain at one time than another, of the same thing; he may take those advantages which the change of things, and the providence of God, give him, using them moderately: a man may take more of some persons than of others: provided a man use all men righteously, he may use some favourably. But I have on purpose forbore to descend to too many particularities, among other reasons, for the sake of Sir Thomas More's observation concerning the casuists of his time, who, he saith, by their too particular resolutions of cases, did not teach men *non peccare*, "not to sin," but did show them *quàm propè ad peccatum liceat accedere sine peccato*, "how near men might come to sin, and yet not sin."

The *USES* I shall make of all this are these two:—

USE I.

Let us not revenge ourselves.—The rule is not, "We should do to others as they do to us;" but, "*as we would have them to do to us:*" as if it were on purpose to prevent revenge. St. Luke forbids revenge from this rule: "For if ye love them which love you," &c. (Luke vi. 31, 32.) "But love ye your enemies." Revenge is the greatest offence against this rule; for he that revengeth an injury hath received one; he that hath received one knows best what that is which he would not have another to do to him; the nature of evil and injury is better known to the patient than to the agent; men know better what they suffer than what they do. He that is injured feels it, and knows how grievous it is; and will he do that to another?

USE II.

Let me press this rule upon you. Live by it; in all your carriage and dealings with men, let it be present to you. Ask yourselves upon every occasion, "Would I that another should deal thus with me, and

* In the fourth edition the word *your* is omitted.—EDIT.

carry himself thus towards me?" But I shall press this chiefly, *as to justice and righteousness in our commerce*. It is said that Severus the emperor caused this rule to be written upon his palace, and in all public places :* let it be written upon our houses, and shops, and exchanges. This exhortation is not altogether improper for this auditory. You that frequent these exercises seem to have a good sense of that part of religion which is contained in the *first* table : do not, by your violations of the *second*, mar your obedience to the *first*. Do not prove yourselves hypocrites in the *first* table, by being wicked in the *second*. Give not the world just cause to say, that you are ungodly, because they find you to be unrighteous ; but manifest your love to God, whom you have not seen, by your love to your brother, whom you have seen ; and if any man wrong his brother, he cannot love him. Do not reject or despise this exhortation, under the contemptuous name of "morality." Our Saviour tells us, this is a chief part of that which hath ever been accounted religion in the world : "It is the Law and the Prophets ;" and he, by enjoining it, hath adopted it into Christianity, and made it Gospel. We should have an especial love to this precept, not only as it is the dictate of nature, and the law of Moses ; not only as it is a Jewish and Gentile principle, but as it is of the "household of faith." When the young man told Christ, that he had kept the commandments from his youth, it is said, "Jesus loved him." (Mark x. 20, 21.) Wherever we have learned to despise morality, Jesus loved it. When I read the Heathen writers, especially Tully and Seneca, and take notice what precepts of morality and laws of kindness are every where in their writings, I am ready to fall in love with them. How should it make our blood to rise in many of our faces who are Christians, to hear with what strictness Tully determines cases of conscience, and how generously he speaks of equity and justice towards all men ! *Societatis arctissimum vinculum est, magis arbitrari esse contra naturam, hominem homini detrudere sui commodi causâ, quàm omnia incommoda subire.*† "This is the strongest bond of society, to account it to be more against nature, for any man to wrong another for his own advantage, than to undergo the greatest inconveniences." And again : *Non enim mihi est vita mea utilior, quàm animi talis affectus, neminem ut violem commodi mei gratiâ.* "Nor is my life more dear and profitable to me, than such a temper and disposition of mind as that I would not wrong any man for my own advantage." Again : *Tollendum est in rebus contrahendis omne mendacium.* "No kind of lying must be used in bargaining." And to mention no more : *Nec ut emat melius, nec ut vendat, quicquam simulabit, aut dissimulabit vir bonus.* "A good man will not counterfeit or conceal any thing, that he may buy the cheaper, or sell the dearer." And yet, further to check our proneness to despise moral righteousness, I cannot but mention an excellent passage to this purpose, which I have met with in a learned man of our own nation : "Two things," saith he, "make up a Christian,—a true faith, and an honest conversation ; and though the former usually gives us the title, the latter is the surer ; for true profession without an honest conversation, not only saves not, but

* LAMPRIDIUS.

† *De Officiis*, lib. iii.

increaseth our weight of punishment; but a good life without true profession, though it brings us not to heaven, yet it lessens the measure of our judgment; so that a moral man, so called, is a Christian by the surer side." And afterwards: "I confess," saith he, "I have not yet made that proficiency in the schools of our age, as that I could see why the *second* table, and the acts of it, are not as properly the parts of religion and Christianity, as the acts and observation of the *first*. If I mistake, then it is St. James that hath abused me; for he, describing religion by its proper acts, tells us, that 'pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world;' so that that thing which, in an especial refined dialect of the new Christian language, signifies nothing but morality and civility, that in the language of the Holy Ghost imports true religion. When the scribe told Christ, that 'to love God with all the heart,' &c., 'and our neighbour as ourselves, was more than whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices,' it is said, 'When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' (Mark xii. 33, 34.)*" They that would have a religion without moral righteousness talk indiscreetly, and are farther from the kingdom of God than a mere moral man. If we neglect this part of religion, we disparage the gospel, and abuse our profession; we are but pretenders to Christianity. Plutarch speaks somewhere to this purpose: "he had rather posterity should say, 'There was never such a man as Plutarch,' than that 'he was a vicious, or cruel, or unjust man.'"

I had rather a man should not call himself a Christian, that he should renounce this title, than that, by his life and actions, he should represent Christians to the world as oppressors, as unjust and treacherous dealers. If men will only use religion for to cover their unrighteousness, I had rather they would put off their cloaks, and be knaves *in querpo*, that every body may know them, than that they should go, like highwaymen, in vizards and disguises, only that they may rob honest men the more securely.

And to move you to the practice of this rule, I shall only offer to you one consideration, but which hath so much weight in it, that it may be instead of many: *As you deal with others, so ye shall be dealt with.* "With what measure you mete to others, it shall be measured to you," is a proverbial speech often used by our Saviour; and which, one time or other, you will find to be very significant. God doth many times, by his providence, order things so, that in this life men's unrighteousness returns upon their own heads, and their violent dealing upon their own pates. There is a Divine Nemesis, which brings our iniquities upon ourselves. No man hath any vice or humour alone, but it may be matched in the world, either in its own kind or in another. If a man be cruel and insolent, "A Bajazet shall meet with a Tamerlane;" if a man delight to jeer and abuse others, "No man hath so good a wit, but another hath as good a memory:" he will remember it to revenge it. He that makes a trade of deceiving and cozening others,—he doth but

teach others to cozen him; and there are but few masters in any kind but are outdone by some of their scholars. But, however we may escape the hands of men, how shall we escape our own consciences, either trouble of conscience in this life, or the worm of conscience in the next? How shall we escape the hands of the living God? How shall we escape the damnation of hell? "Let no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such." (1 Thess. iv. 6.) He will take their cause into his own hands, and render to us according to our fraudulent and cruel dealing with others. "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you," &c. (Matt. xviii. 35.) What our Saviour saith, that "there is no man that denies himself in houses or lands, &c., for Christ's sake and the gospel's, but shall receive in this life a hundred-fold, and in the world to come everlasting life," (Matt. xix. 29,) is true also here. There is no man that is injurious to his brother in houses, or lands, or good name, or any other thing, but shall probably receive in this world an hundred-fold; however, without repentance, in the world to come, everlasting misery. In the next world men will find, that they have but impoverished themselves by their ill-gotten wealth, and heaped up for themselves treasures of wrath. Read those words and tremble at them: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you," &c. (James v. 1—5.)

Let us, then, be persuaded—as we love God whom we have not seen; as we love the gospel which we read and hear every day, and would preserve the reputation of it; as we would better the world and the condition of mankind; as we love ourselves and our own peace and happiness—to deal justly and equally with all men. Till we come to live by this rule of equity, we can never hope to see the world a quiet habitation. But if this were practised among us, then "glory would dwell in our land; mercy and truth would meet together; righteousness and peace would kiss each other; truth would spring out of the earth; and righteousness would look down from heaven; yea, the Lord would give that which is good; and our land would yield her increase; righteousness would go before him, and set us in the way of his steps." (Psalm lxxxv. 9—13.)