

“First Lecture,” sec. xii. p. 15. In a subsequent passage, bishop Sanderson translates *synteresis*, “the unstained conservation of the mind.”

The verb *συντηρεω* is also employed in the New Testament, by three of the Evangelists; (Matt. ix. 17; Mark vi. 20; Luke ii. 19;) and in each of the passages our learned translators have given this good word its highest *conservative* character and signification.

As in the note from Ames, in page 6, and in that which precedes it from Estius, I have rendered *synteresis*, through an allowable circumlocution, in the one instance, *unsullied mental integrity*, and in the other, *conscious uprightness*,—both of them opposed to the erroneous meaning contained in our English dictionaries; it became requisite for me to show cause why such a marked discrepancy exists; and this duty, in defence of my translation, I have now briefly performed. I might indeed have made a parade of great names; but every one who is competent to form a judgment on the matter will be content with the name, and the decisive language, of the most accomplished Protestant casuist of the seventeenth century, the amiable and learned bishop Sanderson,—EDIT.

SERMON II.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM GREENHILL, A.M.

WHAT MUST AND CAN PERSONS DO TOWARDS THEIR OWN CONVERSION?

Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.—Ezek. xviii. 32.

THE words are part of that serious exhortation, begun in verse 30: “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions:” continued in verse 31: “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit:” and concluded in this verse: “Wherefore turn yourselves,” &c.

In the former part of the verse, the Lord saith, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” “I had rather men should come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved, than die in their sins, and perish through their impenitency. ‘Wherefore,’ or ‘therefore,’ ‘turn yourselves,’” &c.

The exhortation in these words is backed with a reason of great (yea, the greatest) strength, namely, life: “Turn, and live;” that is, Ye shall live comfortably here, and happily for ever hereafter.

There be four propositions deducible from these words:—

1. That man is turned from God.
2. That it is man’s duty to turn unto God again.
3. That the Lord’s willingness that men should rather live than die, should be a strong argument to move them to turn.
4. That those who do turn shall live.

I shall wave all those great truths, and come to that which the words seem to import; namely, *a power in man to turn himself*. It is a good rule which Glassius, in his “Philology,”* gives us: that active verbs are given to those things which do not, properly and by immediate influx, do that which they signify; *sed certâ tantùm ratione concurrunt* [“but

* L b. iii. p. 290.

which, in a certain degree, only concur in their being done"]. God said to Moses, "Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it." (Exod. xiv. 16.) Moses had not power to divide the sea; but, because there was a certain concurrence of Moses's using the rod according to divine direction, therefore it is attributed unto Moses; whereas it was the work of God alone; for it is said, verse 21, "The Lord caused the sea to go back." So in the work of conversion, because man doeth something about it, therefore he is said to turn himself, although the action be peculiar to the Lord. Ephraim saith, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." (Jer. xxxi. 18.)

The query here is, "What CAN or OUGHT persons to do towards their own conversion?"

Something first is to be spoken of man's power, or CAN; and then something of what man OUGHT to do.

I. For the first of these: There is a threefold power considerable,—an active, a passive, and an obediential, power.

1. *An active power*; as in fire there is such a power to warm; in a good tree there is such a power to bring forth good fruit.—This kind of power is denied to be in man: "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matt. xii. 34.) If they cannot *speak* good things, much less can they *do* good things.

2. *A passive power*; as in wax to receive the impression of the seal; and in wood to receive the engravings of the carver.—This power is not found in man: Paul saith expressly, "The natural man" (or *souly* man) *ου δεχεται*, "receives not the things of the Spirit of God:" and *ου δυναται*, "neither can he." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) A stiff, dead hand receives nothing, neither can it.

3. *An obediential power*; which consists in a capability to receive what form or impression soever the mighty God by his power shall put upon a creature.—Such a power is in a stony heart to become flesh; it is capable to be made fleshy when God puts forth his power. This is the power granted by divines to be in men; and it is a very low power.

The sacred writ is plentiful in setting out the impotency of man. It tells us, that he "is not subject to the law of God, neither can he;" (Rom. viii. 7;) that he "cannot please God;" (Rom. viii. 8;) that he cannot come to Christ; (John vi. 44;) that he can do nothing without Christ; (John xv. 5;) that he cannot believe; (John xii. 39; v. 44;) that he cannot love God; (1 John iv. 20;) that he cannot do good; (Jer. xiii. 23;) [that he cannot] yield good fruit; (Matt. vii. 17;) that he cannot think a good thought. (2 Cor. iii. 5.)

Man's liberty or power is referrible to *natural*, *moral*, or *spiritual* things. To the first, he hath *great* strength: To the second, *some*: To the third, *none*. A man freely doeth natural and moral things; he can live soberly, and chastely, *quoad externos actus*, "as to outward acts;" he may abstain from gross sins, theft, murder, drunkenness, &c.; he may come to the congregations freely, hear the word, and not stop his ears as the deaf adder doth; but as to spiritual acts, *qua tales* ["as such"], he is impotent.

For the better understanding of the query, "What persons *can do* towards their own conversion," I shall lay down several theses or conclusions, which I shall make good by scripture as I proceed.

CONCLUSION I. *All dispositions and inclinations to spiritual good which man had at first in his creation, are lost and ruined by the fall.*—"The carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom. viii. 7.) It is so far from having inclination to God, or the things of God, that it is not only an *enemy*, but *enmity* against God. And the Lord saith, "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" (Jer. ii. 21.) They had lost their original sap, and were degenerated into a wild vine, and could not bring forth good clusters.

CON. II. *Man being altogether averse from good, the servant of sin and death, sold under sin, Satan's captive, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength and power, to convert or prepare himself thereunto.*—(Rom. iii. 10, 12; viii. 2; vii. 14; 2 Tim. ii. 26; Col. ii. 13; Rom. v. 6.) There must be the Father's giving and drawing, his gift and power, otherwise there is no coming to Christ. (John vi. 44, 45.) Men are without Christ in their natural conditions; (Eph. ii. 12;) they are dead to his life and righteousness.

CON. III. *The Lord calls for human endeavours; and would have men do more than they do.*—To those who had the talents he saith, "Occupy till I come:"* (Luke xix. 13:) Be pragmatical; bestir yourselves, and improve your talents, so that at my return I may find you gainers; and he that hid his talent in a napkin is branded for a "wicked servant," (verse 22,) and for a "wicked and slothful servant." (Matt. xxv. 26.)

CON. IV. *Men may do more than they do.*—"There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." (Isai. lxiv. 7.) They did not shake off lukewarmness and laziness, and rouse up themselves to take hold of God by faith and prayer. It is the complaint of Christ that he was hungry, and they gave him no meat; thirsty, &c. They might have done those things, and bestowed their estates upon Christ's members, as well as others. It is evident men may do more than they do, for that they do not that in their healths which they do in time of their affliction; then they will "early" seek God. (Hosea v. 15.) Weak ones do more than stronger; many of weak parts act beyond those of larger abilities. Many complain in their sickness, that they have lost time, and not done what they might. Where is the man that dares plead it before the Lord, that he hath done all he could? Because men do not what they might, the Lord may not only deny grace unto them doing something, yea, doing much, but justly condemn them because they did not what was in their power.† It is a common saying among Papists, Jesuits,

* Πραγματευσασθε. This signifies, *Negotiari in aliquâ re ad lucrum.*—BUDÆUS. "Trade in something which may produce profit."—EDIT.

† *Nos negamus ullos unquam fuisse bene utentes bono natura propter Deum, itaque nos dubitamus esse aliquod meritum congrui.*—CHAMIERI *Panstratia Catholica*, tom. iii. l. 14. c. 4. "We deny that there have ever been any men who employed aright, according to godliness, the good which they had by nature; and we therefore doubt concerning the existence of merit of congruity."—EDIT.

Arminians, and others, *Facienti quod in se est, gratiam non denegat Deus.* ["God denies not grace to him who does that which it is in his power to do."] This is no sound foundation, for it supposeth some men do act to the uttermost of their power. But whoever yet did all that was in his power? Whoever went so far, as that he might not have gone one step farther? Did ever any read, hear, or pray so much, but he might have read, heard, and prayed more? Jehoram might have waited on the Lord longer. (2 Kings vi. 33.)

CON. V. *Human endeavours are not required to co-operate with God's grace, and so make it effectual; but his grace makes their endeavours effectual when he pleaseth.*—Physical means make not God's power effectual; but his power makes them effectual; and so it is in men's endeavours. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." (Rom. ix. 16.)

CON. VI. *All that men do before conversion is not in vain, fruitless, and to no purpose.*—When Rehoboam and the princes humbled themselves at the preaching of Shemaiah, they were reprieved and delivered from destruction. (2 Chron. xii. 12.) Ahab's humiliation did adjourn the judgment. (1 Kings xxi. 27, 29.) The Ninevites found favour with God upon their fasting and repentance. (Jonah iii. 8—10.)

CON. VII. *All the actings and endeavours of men, whatsoever they be, are not formaliter dispositions and preparations to conversion, so that conversion must necessarily follow upon them; for there is no necessary connexion between the actings of men and divine grace.*—The Lord hath nowhere said, "If you act so far, or be so disposed, qualified, or prepared, I will convert you." If God's grace did depend upon men's actings, then those that are most civil and moral must be taken, and those who are profane and rebellious must be left; but Pharisees were excluded, when publicans and harlots were admitted. Great sinners sometimes are brought in, who did nothing towards their conversion, when those that did much are shut out. Mary Magdalene, a great and infamous sinner, is taken, when the foolish virgins were refused. They were virgins, free from the spots and pollutions of the world; they had lamps, professions; they did much, they went out to meet the Bridegroom, they gat oil into their lamps, they went to the door, and they cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" and there was no opening to them. What preparations had Paul to this work of conversion? He was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and an injurious person;" these were his dispositions and* preparatory works [which] he had towards his conversion. (1 Tim. i. 13.) †

CON. VIII. *Those that live under the means of grace, the administrations of law and gospel, have some operations and gifts of the Spirit, (which some call "common, preventing, and exciting grace,") whereby they are enabled to do many things towards and in order to conversion.*—The scribe that was teachable, and answered Christ discreetly, was "not far from the kingdom of God." (Mark xii. 32, 34.) He was nearer unto it

* The words, "his dispositions and" are omitted in the fourth edition.—EDIT.

† *Hæc sunt opera preparatoria, quibus se effert Paulus.*—JUNIUS in locum. "These are the preparatory works of which Paul boasteth."—EDIT.

than those [who] had not the means. The preaching of the gospel is to make the converted meet for glory, and the unconverted meet for grace, to prepare and bring them to regeneration. "I have begotten you through" the preaching of "the gospel," saith Paul to the Corinthians. (1 Cor. iv. 15.) The preaching of it wrought much in them, before conversion itself was wrought. Balaam, living under the law, and amongst or nigh the people of God, was much enlightened, and greatly convinced; insomuch that he desired to "die the death of the righteous."

CON. IX. *No actings of men, or qualifications in men, are causes of conversion, do merit it, or make them congruous for it.*—They are not antecedent causes, or so much as *causæ sine quibus non*; ["causes without which a thing cannot be effected;"] but the Lord doth, according to his prerogative, work sometimes where they are not, as, "When thou wast in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live." (Ezek. xvi. 6.) There was no cause, condition, or qualification in them to beget affection, or move the Lord to do aught for them. It was the time of his love, and he said, "Live."

CON. X. *Whatever the endeavours and dispositions of men be, they are only by way of order, before conversion.*—They are only antecedaneous thereunto on man's part, not necessary on God's part, who can, and oft doth, work where there be no such previous acts or dispositions, as in the dry bones in Ezekiel; they had no disposition or power in them to rattle and come together; neither had the dead womb of Sarah any power or virtue in it to conceive.

CON. XI. *Acts of men towards conversion are not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, as making the person acceptable to God, or as inducements of God towards conversion.*—But we must acknowledge ourselves "unprofitable servants," when we have done all that is commanded us. (Luke xvii. 10.)*

CON. XII. *Man's quickening, believing, repenting, or turning, are not acts of man in part, and partly of God; but they are wholly of God and from God.*—"You hath he quickened." (Eph. ii. 1.) They were "dead," and could not quicken themselves; it was he, the Lord. So, "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him." (John vi. 44.) This drawing, or causing the soul to believe in Christ, is wholly the Father's work. And Ephraim saith, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." (Jer. xxxi. 18.) He could not turn himself: if the Lord had not done it, it would never have been done. Paul saith, "It is not in him that wills," &c., "but in God," &c. (Rom. ix. 16.) The will and deed are of him, not of man. (Phil. ii. 13.) It is the Lord who is *Causa totius entis* ["the Cause of all being"]. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." (James i. 17.) It is not a perfect gift if man contribute to it.† The

* *Qui nobis ipsis nihil a Deo meriti sumus, quibus Deus nullam gratiam, nullam mercedem debet; scilicet si jure nobiscum agat juxta conditionem servorum.*—LUCAS BRUGENSIS *in locum.* "We are those who have merited for ourselves nothing from God, and to whom God owes no (*gratiam*) favour, no reward; that is, if of right God act toward us according to the condition of servants."—EDIT.

† *Nisi donum Dei esset ipsa ad Deum nostra conversio, non ei diceretur, Deus virtutum, converte nos.*—AUGUSTINUS *De Gratia et libero Arbitrio.* "Unless our very conversion to God were his gift, we could not address to Him this request: 'Convert us, (or, Turn us again,) O God of hosts.'" Psalm lxxx. 7.—EDIT.

saying of the father is sound: *Velle habemus; sed bene velle, et in parte et in toto, est a gratia.* ["We have the power simply to will; but to will aright, both in part and in whole, is entirely of grace."]—AUGUSTINE.

CON. XIII. *Man, in the first act of conversion, is merely passive.*—Those who believe are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" (John i. 13;) nothing of man's will comes in. Not *ultimum dictamen intellectus* ["not the last dictate of the understanding"] did set the will on work here, but the Lord "begat them of his own will." (James i. 18.) So that man's will is not *semiviva et semimortua*, but *penitus extincta ad bonum spirituale*, [is not "half-alive and half-dead; but, with regard to all spiritual good, it is completely dead and extinguished,"] and so *ad hoc*, "to this" of conversion, as the vital faculty is gone in a dead man.

CON. XIV. *Man's will, being first converted to God, and by God himself, converts itself also unto God, (acta agit;) ["it acts again what had been already done;"] as a child's hand in writing being acted by the master's hand, it writes.*—Hence man may be said to turn himself; for, the will being healed and made good, of unwilling willing, it hath an intrinsical principle of willing good, and so dominion over its own acts, whereby it turneth itself to God. Where there is the Father's drawing first, there is presently the soul's coming.

These conclusions being laid down, I shall show you what men can do towards their conversion: but first I must inform you, that conversion may be taken two ways:—

1. Strictly for the infusion of grace into the heart and will of man, whereby he is regenerate, and his will made good. Here man and his will being merely passive, (for in this act *voluntas nec est libera nec voluntaria*) ["the will is neither free nor voluntary,"] he can do nothing towards his own conversion in this sense,

2. It may be taken *pro totâ serie auxiliorum quibus ad eam movemur*; "for all helps and means which further us that way;" and in this sense it is affirmed, that men may do much towards their conversion; they may materially dispose themselves thereunto.

1. *They may do as much as Heathens have done, or would have done had they lived under the same means, and had such motives, as they have.*—The Lord tells Ezekiel, that, if he had sent him to a people "of a strange speech, and of a hard language," (that was, to the Gentiles,) "they would have hearkened unto him;" (Ezek. iii. 6;) they would have received him, and obeyed his doctrine. It is certified from the mouth of Christ, that, "if the mighty works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented;" (Matt. xi. 21;) and that "the men of Nineveh should rise in judgment with the then present generation, and condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas was there." (Matt. xii. 41.) If one sermon of Jonas, who was one of the lesser prophets, prevailed so much with Heathens, why should not many sermons of Christ, who is the chief of all the prophets, prevail as much, if not more, with Christians? *Væ torpori nostro!* ["Alas for our torpor!"] What will

become of us? Rahab showed kindness to the people of God, and that was antecedaneous to her conversion. Herod heard the word gladly; (Mark vi. 20;) and Pharaoh desired the prayers of Moses and Aaron. (Exod. viii. 28.)

2. *They may sit under a powerful ministry, coming with reverence before God, not offering the sacrifice of fools, but [may] hear the truth without being "contentious against it," as they were, Rom. ii. 8.*—They may let the truth have a full stroke at them and their corruptions. They may "receive the love of the truth;" (2 Thess. ii. 10;) and not "hold it in unrighteousness;" (Rom. i. 18;) so that they will not suffer it to have influence into their affections, and to break out into action.

3. *They may hearken to the voice of God's judgments and rods, when they are abroad upon themselves and others.*—No man should despise the chastisement of the Lord; but every one should hear the voice of the rod, and who hath appointed it. The prophet Isaiah tells us, that "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness, when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth." (Isai. xxvi. 9.) His judgments are the best schoolmasters, and teach many good lessons.* Waldus was taught, by the hand of God upon one of his sociates, to become a new man. When Manasseh was in affliction, "he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly." (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.) *Vexatio dat intellectum*; ["Vexation imparts understanding;"] when the Lord doth box and buffet us with his judgments, our understandings are opened, and fear falls upon us: † and though this fear be *servile* at first, yet it may end in *filial*; the spirit of bondage may become the Spirit of adoption.

4. *They may observe the difference [which] is made in men's lives after conversion, from that which was before.*—Conversion is a strange work, it makes a man another man. ‡ They, in Peter, thought it a strange thing that men left their old courses. (1 Peter iv. 4.) In conversion, wolves are made lambs, and persecutors, preachers. How was it, that when Paul preached, "all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" (Acts ix. 21.) True, it was he unconverted [who] did so, not he converted; now he was another, a new man; now he was a Christian, and had other principles and practices than before; there was a great change wrought in him, and so in Mary Magdalene. Observation of such examples has its use and energy: § for examples are strong traces to draw men from wicked practices. "Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" said Paul to Peter. (Gal. ii. 14.) Peter's example was the compulsion. There is a kind of compulsion in examples, not violent, but alluring and attracting. The example of the

* *Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere numen.*—VIRGILII Æneis, vi. 620.

† "Be just, ye mortals! by these torments awed,
These dreadful torments, not to scorn a god!"—PITT.

‡ Παθων δε τε νηπιος εγω.—HOMERI Illas, xvii. 32. "To be taught by sufferings only, is the part of fools."—COWPER. † *Ego non sum ego.* "I am no longer my former self."—EDIT. § *Præcepta docent et ducunt, exempla trahunt.* "Precepts teach and lead men; examples draw and attract"—EDIT.

believing wife may win the unbelieving husband. (1 Peter iii. 1.) A prudent, gracious wife gains much upon a graceless husband, by her modesty and obedience.

5. *They may see what equity there is, that they should serve the Lord, being his creatures and servants; and not only serve him, but so serve him as they have served their sinful lusts, and something more, seeing they depend on him.*—*Ἀνθρώπινον λέγω*: “I speak after the manner of men,” saith Paul; It is rational, just, and equal, that “as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, &c., so now yield them servants to righteousness, unto holiness:” (Rom. vi. 19:) it is reason, justice, and equity that you should do so. Should not men take as much pains for heaven, as for hell, for their souls as for their bodies, for the Lord Christ as for creatures? Should they not be as diligent to weaken their lusts as they have been to strengthen them? Should they not be at as much cost to maintain the pure worship of God, as the inventions and traditions of men? It is a complaint of the Lord: “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” (Isai. lv. 2.) They might have spent their money, labour, time, and strength, and as much for true bread which would have fed their souls, as they did for that which was as no bread, but rather husks for swine. (Luke xv. 16.)

6. *They may remove and abate sin in part, which is done by the contrary.*—Knowledge removes ignorance, as light doth darkness; grief abates pleasure, and fear boldness in sinning; patience keeps under passion, and fasting tames unruly lusts. When the strength of a fever is abated by physical means, a man is disposed towards health; and when a man hath gotten moralities, (which he may do,) and by them made an abatement of his sins and lusts, he is *materially* disposed to grace; as the ground when ploughed is for seed, though the seed be not yet sown.

7. *They may do MATERIALLY what converts do.*—There is no act, considered in its mere nature and kind, which a true Christian may perform, but one unconverted may perform also, and may have like dispositions * unto those [which] they have. They may love God: it is clear, they loved God who loved “pleasures more than God.” (2 Tim. iii. 4.) They may have faith: Simon Magus believed. (Acts viii. 13.) They may hate sin in others, if not in themselves: Absalom hated Amnon’s uncleanness. (2 Sam. xiii. 22.) They may delight in God, and in his ways. (Isai. lviii. 2.) They may have a zeal for God, and such a zeal as may prevail more with them than temporal things: the Jews were so zealous of the law, and for the traditions of the elders, that they would have ventured their lives for them: (Rom. x. 2:) so Paul before his conversion, how zealous was he! (Acts xxii. 3, 4; Gal. i. 14.)

To come more particularly and closely to the question: Though conversion be wrought in an instant, yet men have some previous dispositions thereunto, who live under the sound of the gospel; and obtain such knowledge as worketh in them several things, which I shall show unto you from Acts ii. 37, 38: “Now when they heard this, they were

* In the first edition, the clause stands thus: “and have many like dispositions.”—EDIT.

pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you," &c. Many preparative dispositions or qualifications they had unto repentance or conversion, but they had not yet repented; for Peter saith, notwithstanding these, "Repent."

1. *Men may be convinced of sin, as these were.*—They found they had transgressed the law of God, and were guilty before him; for they were pricked in their hearts. Men may have strong convictions of sin, and not [be] converted from sin.

2. *They may mourn for sin, and grieve that they have done such and such things.*—These men had crucified the Lord Christ, put an innocent person to death, saw themselves in an ill condition, and thereupon mourned and grieved sorely, as the word "pricked" intimates: * they had such grief as pained and afflicted their hearts. There is a *how* set upon Ahab's humiliation by the Lord himself: "Seest thou *how* Ahab humbleth himself?" (1 Kings xxi. 29.)

3. *They may be filled with fear, and dread the threatenings and punishments of God due to sin.*—This was the case here: They had provoked the Lord against their souls, felt their consciences condemning of them, apprehended the judgments of God near unto them, and so were possessed with much fear lest the Lord should destroy them; and therefore say, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" We know not whither to go, where to hide ourselves, or what to do, that we may escape the things we have deserved and fear."

4. *They may confess their sin, renounce it, and reform much.*—These auditors of Peter, being pricked in their hearts, said, "What shall we do?" We have sinned, and that greatly; we confess and acknowledge it before God and you; it was a cursed act of ours, and we abhor it; we will never do so hereafter." They were sick of sin, and vomited it up, as they in Peter; (2 Peter ii. 22;) and would change their minds and manners, and walk in any way the apostles should direct them. The merchant "sold all that he had" for the "pearl," before he "bought it." (Matt. xiii. 46.) This *selling all* is made, by some interpreters, to be his restraint from all inward sin, and his conformity to all outward duties. This was much, and yet not more than unconverted persons may attain unto. Herod reformed many things. The foolish virgins went far, as was said before: They were virgins, free from spot and pollution; they had lamps, visible professions; "they went forth to meet the bridegroom;" they had some faith in him, and affection to him, else they would not have gone forth.

5. *They may justify the law and the Lord, should he condemn them, [and] deal severely with them.*—"What shall we do?" say these persons. "We are guilty. We have broken the law, which is holy, righteous, and good; and so is God likewise, who is the author thereof. If therefore we be condemned, and must bear the curse and punishment of the law, we must both justify the Lord and it." Men may accept the punishment of their iniquity, and justify the inflictors thereof. Man hath no

* *Κατενυγησαν* *acutum animi dolorem significat.*—PISCATOR. "It signifies acute sorrow of spirit."—EDIT.

cause to complain of the punishment of his sins. It is brought in by way of objurgation: "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Lam. iii. 39.) He may complain of his sins, not of his punishment. Many malefactors, after sentence passed on them, do justify both judge and law.

6. *Men may seriously consider the nature of their sin, what circumstances it is clothed with; what aggravations it admits; what crimson and scarlet is in it; what light, love, mercies, means, engagements it is against.*—"What shall we do?" say these troubled souls. "We have sinned against the light of nature, the law of Moses, our own consciences, the love of God and Christ towards sinners, in that we have crucified Christ, 'a man approved of God,' who, we knew, had done many 'miracles and wonders and signs,' (Acts ii. 22,) and deserved not death! O 'what shall we do,' our sins are so dreadful?"

It is in men's power to lay to heart what wrong an infinite, blessed, holy God hath by their sins, what mercies they keep from them, how greatly they defile them, what miseries and mischiefs they bring upon them, what a weight of wrath hangs over their heads for them! They may consider what checks of conscience they have stifled, what motions of the Spirit they have withstood, what precious seasons of grace they have neglected and slighted; what pains they have taken to satisfy a lust, how dear it hath cost them; how careless they have been of their souls, what a separation their sins have made between God and them! They may mind and meditate on it, that man's life is short; ("The pleasures of sin [are] but for a season;") that there is absolute necessity of turning to God; ("Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;") that turning is acceptable to God, else he would not call for it, nor make such gracious promises to it, as are in holy writ.

7. *They may come to it, to see no help in themselves or in any creature whatsoever.*—"What shall we do?" say these wounded men. "We cannot help ourselves. We have no plasters that will stick, no medicines which will heal. We are wounded in our consciences; and as our hands, so theirs, are too short to help us. It is not in human power to bind up our breaches. 'What shall we do?'" Men may see themselves helpless; that they are without strength, shut up under sin, guilt, and unbelief, children of wrath, and in a lost condition, the law cursing them and sentencing them to suffer.

8. *They may arrive to a resolution of doing or suffering any thing to be saved.*—"What shall we do?" We are resolved, if we may find mercy and live, to do whatever shall be commanded, to suffer whatever shall be imposed." The pride of their spirits is broken, their hearts become teachable and tractable, and their resolutions high for any thing to be done or suffered. So was it with the jailer. (Acts xvi. 30.) When men are in storms at sea, or on their sick beds at home, they resolve, if God will spare them, to do or suffer any thing for God and his ways, and their own salvation.

9. *They may conceive fair hopes of mercy.*—The Lord Christ being held out in the gospel, and freely offered to sinners, this breeds hope in them, a general and preparatory hope. "'What shall we do?'"

You told us that 'God had raised up that Jesus [whom] we crucified, and made him Lord and Christ;' and that 'whosoever should call upon his name should be saved;' therefore we hope there is mercy for us." Thus had they a hope kindled in them; and Peter, in the two next verses, strengthens their hope, saying, "Repent, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children," &c. (Acts ii. 38, 39.)

10. *They may thirst after, and pray for, the mercy hoped for.*—Such a qualification was in these men. "'What shall we do?' You men of God, we are athirst, and do entreat you to tell us where we may have water to quench our heat, mercy to pardon our sins, balm to cure our wounds." The publican in Luke hath left us his short, pithy, and affectionate prayer to imitate, being in this case and state. "Lord," saith he, "be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke xviii. 13.) He was sensible of his sin and of his want of righteousness; he had hope of mercy; and thereupon came to the temple to pray, and prayed earnestly for mercy,—and conversion is none of the least mercies of God, or least needful for a sinner.

11. *Men being come thus far, they are to wait upon God for doing the work.*—When the pots were filled with water, the water was not made wine till Christ put forth his mighty power. Neither were the men who lay at the pool of Bethesda cured till the angel came down and stirred the waters. So a man in this case is to wait until the Spirit of the Lord come in, *et omnipotentis suavitate*, ["by his omnipotent sweetness,"] or *victrici delectatione*, ["by his victorious and delightful solace,"] overcome his will, and set it for the Lord and spiritual things. When this is [done], the work is done, and done without violence to the will; for it is an omnipotent presence prevails with the will, and it is immediately made willing in the day of this power.

By these forementioned things men are in a proximity or nextness to conversion, but not converted. It must be an higher power than our own which lifts us up into an higher nature, or state, than we are in at present. Though men may do much upon moral persuasions; yet not so much as to make themselves converts or spiritual, of animal or natural. Previous actions and preparative dispositions may make a man a picture of a convert, not a true or living convert.

II. Having shown what persons CAN and may do towards their conversion, it remains to declare what they OUGHT to do.

The word "must" or "ought," the signification of *dei* in Greek, imports two things:—

1. *Necessity.* "There *must be* heresies." (1 Cor. xi. 19.) It is no man's duty to broach or bring in heresies, but they *must be*; it is necessary for the discovery of men "approved."

2. *Duty.* "God is a Spirit," and *must be worshipped* "in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 24.) It is men's duty so to do. It was the pharisees' and scribes' duty to "pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin," &c.; therefore saith Christ, "These things ought ye to have done." (Matt. xxiii. 23.)

Now, then, what persons can do they ought to do.

First. *There is a necessity of it.*—We must do what we can, else we are slothful and unfaithful, and our damnation will be just. One thing is necessary; namely, to turn unto God, that our souls may be saved. Here it will hold good, “Turn or burn.” If it be necessary to prevent burning in everlasting flames, it is necessary to turn, and so to do the utmost we can towards the same.

Secondly. *It is our duty.*—“Strive to enter in at the strait gate,” saith Christ. He commands it, and lays this injunction upon all, *Αγωναζεσθε*, “Strain, be in an agony;” as Christ was in the work of man’s redemption, so let men be in the works of their conversion, put forth themselves as they did in the Olympic Games. The wrestlers and runners exerted all their might to obtain; and so must men about the work of their conversion. The Lord, who hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, saith, “Turn yourselves, and live.” There is life in turning; and what should not men do to preserve or obtain life?

The Lord hath two great ends in saying thus: “Turn yourselves, and live ye,” although he know man is not able to do it:—

1. *That we may see how corrupt and impotent our nature is, and so [that he may] break the strength of human confidence thereby, and bring us to be sensible of, and thoroughly to bewail, our condition.*—It is not so as some think and speak; namely, that “whatever God commands, man hath power to do.”* What man ever kept the law since the fall of Adam? And is not the law given by way of command? If man could keep the law, we might be justified and have life by it. (Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iii. 21.) But the law can neither do the one nor the other; and why? Because man hath not power or strength to keep it.†

2. *To put us upon looking out for help from whence the command cometh.*—Hence is it that what the Lord commandeth us to do in one place, he promiseth to give in another. “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart;” (Deut. x. 16;) and God saith, “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart.” (Deut. xxx. 6.) In the former verse to the text, they are commanded to make themselves new hearts and new spirits, which they could not do; therefore, in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, the Lord promiseth to “give and put” the same in them. “Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols;” (Ezek. xiv. 6;) and, “I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.” (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) The Spirit [which] God would put in should turn them from their idols and own ways, and cause them to walk in his ways. “The Lord doth therefore command such things, that, our desires and endeavours being quickened, he may reach forth help unto us.”‡

Therefore let us apply ourselves to all these means and ways, by which the Lord worketh conversion. Let us make use of all the ways fore-named; and especially hear the word preached, and pray, “Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned.” And see to it that we use the means

* *Quicquid nobis præcipitur a Deo, ad illud faciendum sufficientem potentiam habemus.*

† *Dicit Pelagius, quod homo solius liberi arbitrii viribus potest perficere Dei mandatu.*—

BRADWARDINUS *De Causa Dei*, lib. ii. c. 4. “Pelagius declared, that solely by the power of his free-will man is capable of perfectly performing the commands of God.”—EDIT.

‡ *Ideo dat præceptum, ut excitet desiderium et præstet auxilium.*—LEO.

in good earnest. We may do more (as hath been showed) than we do. It is the counsel of him who was wiser than other men, that whatever our "hands do find to do," we should "do it with our might;" (Eccles. ix. 10;) that is, with our whole might. God must have the heart, the whole heart, and the fervency of it. "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." (Rom. xii. 11.) Laziness and lukewarmness will not promote the work; fervour and diligence may further it much. See Prov. ii. 3—6; and remember what the Lord Christ hath said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Luke xi. 9.)

SERMON III.

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HOW MAY BELOVED LUSTS BE DISCOVERED AND MORTIFIED?

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.—Matt. v. 29, 30.

My text is a part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. I shall not hold you long in the context or portal, but only pass through unto the words that I have read.

In the verse before, our Saviour tells us, that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." This was spoken in opposition to the scribes and pharisees; and may be urged against many carnal protestants, that have but gross conceits concerning the law of God; and in particular, that the outward act of uncleanness only is the breach of the seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Now, our Saviour corrects this mistake: that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" not *will do it*, but *he hath done it already*. There is a speedy passage from the eye to the heart: and because the eye and the hand are many times used as principal incitements to this sin, our Saviour gives his disciples and us this serious and holy advice, in the words that I have read: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee," &c.

The words contain a double exhortation, together with a double reason and enforcement.

1 *A double exhortation*: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee."