

wandering. "My heart is inditing a good matter;" and then "my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." (Psalm xlv. 1.) A man that boileth and concocts truths in his heart, hath a greater readiness of words and affections: there is a "good treasure" within him, (Matt. xii. 35,) out of which he may spend freely. One expresseth it thus: "He that hath store of gold and silver in his pocket, and but a few brass farthings, will more readily, upon every draught, come out with gold and silver than brass farthings: so he that hath stocked his heart with holy thoughts, will not find carnal musings so rife and frequent."\*

(2.) *By use a man gets a greater command over himself.*—When we constantly leave the thoughts at random, and never lay restraints upon them, it is in vain to think we shall keep them in order when we please. Fierce creatures are tame to those that use to command them. Every art is difficult at first, as writing, singing, playing upon an instrument; but we get a facility by use and exercise; yea, not only a facility, but a delight in them: and those things that at first we thought impossible, by a little practice grow easy. Certainly, "the way of the Lord is strength to the upright;" (Prov. x. 29;) and the more we set ourselves to any good thing, the more ready and prepared are we for it.

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## SERMON XX.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM COOPER, A.M.

HOW MUST WE IN ALL THINGS GIVE THANKS?

*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*—1 Thessalonians v. 18.

THE more comprehensive any mercy or duty is, the greater they are.

There are three duties here together, which the apostle exhorts to; all which have a kind of universality annexed to them; of which my text contains one.

1. *Rejoicing.*—We must "rejoice evermore;" for even holy mourning hath the seed of joy in it, which the soul finds by that time it is over, if not in it. (Psalm cxxvi. 6; xcvi. 12.)

2. *Prayer.*—"Pray without ceasing."† We must be ever, at least, in a holy disposition to this duty, when we do it not actually. "Prayer is the wall that compasses the city: there must be no gap in it. It is as the sun in the firmament: it must always keep its round."‡

3. *Thanksgiving.*—"In every thing give thanks," &c.

Observe in the words these two parts:

- (1.) *A duty enjoined.*
- (2.) *A reason annexed.*

\* COBBETT "Of Prayer."

† Though not in the heretical sense of [the] Euchites

and Messalians.

‡ CHRYSOSTOMUS, *Orat. ii. De orand. Deum.*

- (1.) In the *duty* note four things :—  
 (i.) The *matter* of it : “ thanksgiving.”  
 (ii.) The *object* of it, implied : “ God.”  
 (iii.) The *performers* of it : “ believers ;” for to them he writes.  
 (1 Thess. i. 1—3.)  
 (iv.) The *extent* of it : “ in every thing.”  
 (2.) In the *reason* we have three things :—  
 (i.) *The ground of the duty.*—It is “ the will of God,” the revealed will of God, the rule of all obedience.  
 (ii.) *The manner of declaring God’s will to us in this behalf.*—It is “ the will of God in Christ Jesus ;” \* it is a gospel duty. Christ Jesus was the prophet and messenger of it ; it is suitable to the mind of Christ ; it is accepted of God in Christ and for Christ. Lastly, Christ himself was a pattern of it : “ This is the will of God in Christ Jesus.”  
 (iii.) *The special application.*—“ This † is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Mr. Calvin doth excellently show the sweet harmony between these three duties, how one helps the other ; ‡ but I cannot insist on that.

The lesson, then, which the Holy Ghost would have us learn in the text, is thus summed up :

#### DOCTRINE.

*It is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning Christians, that in every thing they give thanks ; that they be thankful, as our word is more proper to our purpose.*

For though we have nothing of our own that is good to give God but thanks, yet neither do we properly give him *that*, seeing both our giving and the right manner of doing it, even in thanksgiving, are of the Lord. (1 Cor. iv. 7 ; 1 Chron. xxix. 14 ; Phil. ii. 13.)

Our *continual praying* shows that we are always beggars, and our *continual thanksgiving* shows us always debtors. Our thanks, then, indeed, is the rebound of mercy heavenward, whence it came, and a holy reflection of the warm sun-beams of God’s benefits shining on us.

That which I principally aim at in the pursuance and pressing of this truth, is, not only to speak somewhat to it in the nature, necessity, and excellency of it, but to the extent of it as a special case : *How Christians may be said to give thanks in every thing, and why ?*

#### QUERIES.

- I. Who are properly concerned in this duty ?
- II. Why, and upon what grounds, are Christians bound to give thanks in every thing ?
- III. How, and in what manner, are Christians to give thanks in every thing ?

\* It is pleasing and acceptable unto God.—BEZA *in locum.* *Vel ista per anthypophoram dicta sunt.*—*Idem, ibidem.* “ Or these expressions are employed in the form of an answer to an objection.”—EDIT. † *Illud autem toto referendum non ad gratiarum tantum actionem, sed et ad preces.*—GROTII *Annotationes in locum.* “ But the word *this* must refer not only to giving thanks, but also to praying without ceasing.”—EDIT. ‡ *Comment. in 1 Thess.*

IV. How in afflictions, and why?

V. How shall we bring our hearts to give thanks to God in every thing?

QUERY I. *Who are or ought to be thankful?*

ANSWER. The Lord hath a return and tribute of praise due to him from all creatures. David names animate and inanimate creatures, and bids them sing hallelujah; (Psalm cxlviii;) as if all the world were but one concert of musical instruments tuned to God's glory. But he looks for it principally from men and angels; from all men.

It is charged as an inexcusable sin, incapable of any apology, upon natural men, "that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." \* Upon which place Beza brings in Galen, a heathen man, praising and blessing God, not with sacrifices and sweet incense, but acknowledging and proclaiming the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, &c. "I write this," saith he, "as a hymn, and account it the true worship of that God." †

The law of thankfulness is written upon the hearts of very Heathens; as may be proved at large, not only from heathen instances, but [from] scripture also; as the Philistines, when they had taken Samson and killed Saul; (Judges xvi. 24; 1 Sam. xxxi. 9;) and Belshazzar, who "praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone," &c.; (Dan. v. 23;) which although it be enough to shame unthankful Christians, yet it signified little; for all wicked men, though they have cause, yet they have no heart to this work, at least not often, nor at all as it should be.

Some are so curious as to inquire whether reprobates in hell have not cause to give thanks that their torments are less than the merits of their sins, and for that the justice of God is glorified in the inflicting of them; but this is foreign to our case.

The persons engaged and most bound to this duty are the Thessalonians that believed, and all the faithful upon the same account.

THANKFULNESS DESCRIBED.

Now, howbeit all the service we perform to God, both mediate and immediate worship, the duties of both tables, yea, and the whole work of our Christian obedience in a holy conversation, be but a return of thankfulness unto God; ‡ yet thanksgiving, in the text and doctrine, is taken more strictly for a particular part of God's worship distinct from prayer, (of which he spake immediately before,) which sometimes includes praise and thanks too, by which we render due praise to God for all or any of his benefits promised or bestowed, and that with our hearts, lips, and lives.

Some affirm that much of religion is seen in piety to parents, observance to our betters, and thankfulness to our benefactors. God is indeed all these to us. Yet the proper notion of our thankfulness refers to God

\* *Eis to einai autous anakoloyhtous.* (Rom. i. 20, 21.)  
*Δημιουργησαντος η̄μας ὄνον ἀληθινον, συντιθημ' και νομιζω̄ τουτ' ε̄ωαι την ο̄ρω̄ς ε̄υσεβειαν, &c.*—GALENUS *De Usu Partium*, lib. iii.

† *Ἱερὸν λόγον ε̄γω, του*  
 ‡ POLANUS.

as our benefactor, every benefit from God makes the receiver a debtor; \* thankfulness is rather the confessing of our debt than the payment of it; and forasmuch as we are bound always to be thankful, it doth acknowledge we are always beholden to God, and always insolvent.

Now, a child of God is bound to be thankful to God above all men, because,

1. He is more competent than any other.
2. He is more concerned than any other.

1. *More competent.*—By acts of reason and grace too. All that the scripture speaks, as to the duty of thankfulness, may be referred to these heads:—

- (1.) To know and acknowledge the Lord's mercies.
- (2.) To remember them; that is, to record and commemorate them.
- (3.) To value and admire them.
- (4.) To blaze and proclaim them.

In all which a gracious soul is much more competent than a mere natural man, though endued with quick understanding, strong memory, and great eloquence. For the Spirit of God hath enlightened his soul, and taught him this lesson: he is principled for it; he is a well-tuned instrument; his heart boileth with good matter, and his "tongue is the pen of a ready writer," as David speaks on this occasion, when he spake of the praises of the king in his "Song of loves." (Psalm xlv. 1.)

This Spirit of God in a thankful soul is as the breath of the organ, without which the pipes make no sound; yea, as the breath of the trumpeter, by which the trumpet gives a certain and melodious sound.

This is it that makes that noble evangelical spirit, yea, that heavenly angelical spirit, in Christians. See a place for it: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Eph. v. 18—20:) showing that what wine doth in poets and good-fellows, (it makes them sing and roar out catches, by which they make music to the devil,) so the Spirit of God in saints is the principle of all true thankfulness and holy joy towards God: and, indeed, there was a very gracious frame of spirit this way in primitive Christians.

2. *More concerned.*—As having received more than others: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required;" (Luke xii. 48;) a proportion of duty according to the degree of every portion of mercy, whether you consider what is given, or what is forgiven, you.

There are two things which every gracious soul will acknowledge: "No man," saith he, "in the world hath deserved less of God than I; and none hath received more of God than I: how much, then, am I concerned to be thankful!"

I have read of a holy man, that was seen once standing still with tears in his eyes, and looking up to heaven; and being asked, by one that passed by, why he did so, said, "I admire the Lord's mercy to me

\* "We praise God for all his perfections, we thank God for his benefits."—FILLIUCIUS, out of Aquinas.

that did not make me a toad ;” that vermin being then casually at his feet.

The least common mercy affects a gracious soul that knows his desert [to be] nothing but misery. Mephibosheth “bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?” (2 Sam. ix. 8;) when David had told him he should have his lands, and eat bread at his table. When the Lord spares our lives, and gives us common mercies, we must admire and adore his goodness.

And this leads me to the second general question.

QUERY II. *Why, and upon what grounds, Christians are bound to give thanks in every thing?*

ANSWER I. *It is the will of God in Christ Jesus.*

The will of God in Christ Jesus is the clearest rule, and the highest obligation, to any soul for the performance of any duty. O that men would now-a-days study more, act by, and hold fast to, this rule; and ask conscience in the performance of every duty, “Is this the will of God in Christ Jesus?”

It was meet that this duty of thankfulness should be pressed and practised under the gospel, because it argues a spiritual and noble frame of soul, the highest pitch of grace, which is a true gospel-frame.

David, under the Old Testament, had a New-Testament heart in this particular: his Psalms, which were all penned upon emergent occasions, are all *tehillah* and *tephillah*, “prayer and praise;” his heart and harp were so tuned to the praises of God, to “Psalms of Degrees,” to Hallelujahs, that some have thought the Lord is praised with those psalms in heaven.

Yet is it promised under the gospel, that “he that is feeble shall be as David;” (Zech. xii. 8;) which some understand as to praise and thanksgivings, upon the account of gospel grace.\*

More punctually, “this is the will of God in Christ Jesus;” that is, Jesus Christ shows us the duty of thankfulness, both by pattern and by precept; for he was not only ushered into the world with songs of thanksgiving by angels, by Zachary, by Mary, by Simeon, by the shepherds, &c., (Luke i. 46, 68; ii. 13, 14, 20, 29,) but the Lord Jesus himself was a great Pattern and Precedent of thankfulness all his life long; and in this also was a true Son of David: he thanked God frequently and fervently: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;” (Matt. xi. 25;) when his disciples preached and cast out devils. Thus, also, when he raised Lazarus: “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.” (John xi. 41.) When he was to eat *common* bread, he blessed it with giving of thanks; (Mark viii. 6;) much more *consecrated* bread. (Luke xxii. 19.)

Thus was he a pattern of thankfulness, he did “in every thing give thanks.”

In like manner we find him reproving the nine lepers for their unthankfulness; (Luke xvii. 17, 18;) which shows that he held out thankfulness as a duty; personally, he gave a pattern and precept for it.

Now, though this were enough to show it [to be] “the will of God in

\* GREGORIUS, *Hom. xx. in Ezek.*

Christ Jesus," yet these words reach further; namely, to show that it is the strain of the gospel in the apostles' doctrine and practice; for they, through their commission, and the great measure of God's Spirit in them, declared "the will of God in Christ Jesus:" "They worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen." (Luke xxiv. 52, 53.)

What the apostle Paul's spirit was in this, (by whom so much of "the will of God in Christ Jesus" is revealed and penned,) I need not rehearse; for all his Epistles breathe out the praises of God's grace.

ANSWER 2. *Thanks and praise is the homage we owe to God for all we have and are.*—Therefore, in every thing to be rendered.

We live precariously, and at mercy: "By the grace of God we are what we are." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) God in his sovereignty might have left us in the womb of nothing, and never made us, and have crushed us into nothing as soon as he made us; for "hath not the potter power over the clay?" (Rom. ix. 21.) Every moment we depend on him, and hold all from him; (Acts xvii. 28;) his power over us is arbitrary and infinite; to this sovereign God we owe all, and therefore our thanks: "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. xi. 35, 36.) For not considering this, Belshazzar smarted: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." (Dan. v. 23.) The birds that lift up their bills at every drop they take may mind us of this duty. Common and constant mercies deserve special thanks, because constant.

ANSWER 3. *Christians must give thanks in every thing, because they have spiritual mercies innumerable and invaluable superadded to common mercies.*—Special and spiritual mercies in Christ Jesus: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible," &c. (1 Peter i. 3, &c.) "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation," &c. (2 Cor. i. 3.)

Papists distinguish grace into "grace freely given," and "grace that makes men grateful to God the Giver of grace."\* This distinction is idle and untrue; for all grace, as freely given, obligeth us to be grateful; but yet special grace binds us to a more special gratitude; namely, sanctifying and saving grace.

The decreeing and sending of Jesus Christ to and for poor sinners; the opening a fountain of grace in and by him; the making and ratifying a covenant of grace, whereof the Lord Jesus is the Angel and Mediator; the precious promises, both absolute and conditional, thereupon; with all other choice gospel-privileges of grace and glory, as far as God's all-sufficiency, and the infinite merit, satisfaction, and righte-

\* *Gratia gratis data, et gratia gratum faciens.*—BELLARMINUS, VALENTIA, &c.

ousness of the Son of God can reach:—this deserves a suitable proportion of thanks and blessing from us, both here and in heaven. “Because thy loving-kindness is better than life,\* my lips shall praise thee;” (Psalm lxxiii. 3;) that is, I will render special and continual praise for this above all other things.

QUERY III. *How and in what manner Christians are to give thanks in every thing.*

ANSWER. The difficulty lies here as to the act and the object both. 1. That is, how a man can *always* have his heart and tongue exercised unto this duty. 2. If he could be supposed to do this, yet it seems that *every thing* is not a fit subject-matter of thanksgiving: for, a great part of our life being sin and misery, which is rather the ground of mourning than of thanksgiving, our thankfulness seems to be restrained to a narrower sphere than what the text holds out.

1. “*Can a child of God in any sense give thanks for sin?*”

ANSWER. No, not properly; because, (1.) That which is the ground of detestation cannot be the ground of thanksgiving; but sin is a “detestable thing.” (Ezek. v. 11.) (2.) That which produceth a curse, cannot properly cause blessing; but sin is a cursed thing. (Gal. iii. 10.) (3.) As we may not “sin that grace may abound,” nor “do evil that good may come” of it, (Rom. vi. 1; iii. 8,) so sin cannot be the ground of thanksgiving; being contrary to the honour, image, and will of God. (4.) Sin is none of God’s creatures,† therefore a plague and not a benefit; therefore the subject of sorrow and shame, not of thanks.

Nevertheless, *improperly, by accident*, occasionally and consequentially, as men speak, sin is a ground of thanksgiving. “How?” That the Lord by his unlimited power can so master sin, and by his infinitely wise providence can so permit, dispose of, and bound sin, and by his free grace pardon sin; yea, make grace superabound where sin did abound; fetching light out of darkness, and make great sinners become great saints; and from all lay a foundation, and raise a revenue, of infinite glory to himself:—this is praiseworthy in God.

Now, as Pilate and Herod, Judas and Jews, are not to be praised for their treachery and cruelty against Christ, although they did, by all they did, fulfil and execute God’s decrees in that behalf; so no man must thank sin, or God for sin, albeit God hath extracted treacle out of this viper. (Acts iv. 27, 28.)

Wherefore, when we read of a holy man that said, he was more beholden to his corruptions than to his gifts and graces, because the former made him humble, the latter made him proud;—or when we hear another cry out, *O felix culpa*, &c., “O happy sin of our first parents, happy tree of knowledge, that bore such fruit, that brought forth such a promise, such a Saviour,” &c.;—I say, when we hear such rhetorical strains as these from the devout, ancients or moderns, we must understand them warily.

Yet, when the Lord doth demonstrate the glory of his attributes in overruling and pardoning sin, to the salvation of poor sinners, there is

\* A meiosis. † *Deus non est author, sed ultor, peccati.* “God is not the author, but the avenger, of sin.”—EDIT.

reason we should magnify him to the height. (1.) Because all the dishonour which God hath in the world is upon the account of sin. (2.) Because we ourselves, having dishonoured him much that way, it is meet we adore and admire him the more in the power of his grace, that can fetch a pearl out of this dunghill, and by such a foil set-off his glory.

Let us, then, as many as profess to be made partakers of this grace, speak good of the Lord for it, and give others occasion so to do; as the Romans did to Paul: "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you;" (Rom. vi. 17;) that is, that ye were once sinners, and are now saints.

2. Come we then from moral evil to penal evil; that is, *if we may not give thanks properly for sin, without sin; whether may we give thanks for crosses and calamities?*

ANSWER. Here, say some, we may not properly give thanks for penal evils, because, as such, they are the strokes of God's vindictive justice, the fruit of sin, and destructive to the creature; in which sense they have not *rationem beneficii sed supplicii*, "they are not benefits, but punishments."

But, whereas the Lord hath so ordered that all things shall work together for good to them that are good, and *crosses* are some of those things, they are hereby sanctified and become the matter of thanksgiving to a child of God.

And this was that noble primitive frame of spirit among Christians: under what providence soever, dark or light, sweet or sour, they were thankful in all; always thankful.

St. Augustine, upon Psalm cxxxii., commendeth that ancient custom among Christians, in whose mouths you should always hear these words: *Deo gratias*, "Thanks be to God!" when they met and saluted one another, *Deo gratias*, "God be thanked;" when they heard any tidings of persecution or protection, favour or frown, gain or loss, cross or comfort, still *Deo gratias*, "The Lord be thanked;" at which custom the Circumcellians pick quarrels, but St. Austin defends it as laudable and religious: "What," saith he, "shall brethren in Christ not give God thanks when they see one another? What better thing can we speak, or think, or write, than this? *God be thanked!* Nothing can be more compendiously spoken, nor more gladly heard, nor more solemnly understood, nor more profitably acted, than this; *God be thanked!*"\* Thus he. Such a frame of heart had holy Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." [Job i. 21.]

And such a one was in the sweet singer of Israel: "I will bless the Lord at all times." (Psalm xxxiv. 1.) Notable is that of Chrysostom: "There is nothing," saith he, "nothing can we study more pleasing to God, than to be thankful, not only in good days, but when things likewise fall out cross. This is the best sacrifice and oblation we offer God."† Of a

\* *Quid melius et animo geramus, et ore promamus, et calamo exprimamus, quam "Deo gratias?" Hoc nec dici brevius, nec audiri lætius, nec intelligi grandius, nec agi fructuosius potest, "Deo gratias."*—AUGUSTINUS, *Epist.* 77. † Ουδεν γαρ ούτως τω Θεω περισπουδαστον ὡς το ευχαριστοει ειναι και μη μονον εν ταις ευημεριας, αλλα και των πραγματος εναντιως διακειμενων, &c.—CHRYSOSTOMUS in *Psalium* cxy.



like spirit was famous Mr. Bradford, martyr: speaking of Queen Mary, at whose cruel mercy he then lay, "If," said he, "she will release me, I will thank her; if she will imprison me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her," &c. So saith a believing soul: "Let God do with me what he will, I will be thankful."

This made one of the ancients\* to say, "It is peculiar to Christians to give thanks in adversity. To praise God for benefits,—this Jew and Gentile can do; but to give God thanks in dangers according to the apostle's sense, and in miseries, and always to say, 'Blessed be God,'—this is the highest pitch of virtue; for a true Christian's language is this: 'I cannot tell how I should suffer less; these things are but little to my sins: I deserve much more at the Lord's hands.' Here is your Christian; such a one takes up his cross, and follows his Saviour: no loss or cross can dishearten him; but, as the poet saith, 'If the world break and fall about his ears, he would not be afraid.'" Thus St. Jerome.

By whom it should seem, that to give God thanks for crosses and afflictions is  $\tau\iota$   $\omega\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\sigma\omega\nu$ , "to be numbered among those singular things which Christians are bound to excel in" beyond Heathens and publicans; as to love enemies, to bless them that curse, &c., to which our Saviour exhorts and commands. (Matt. v.)

Papists, indeed, tell us, they are counsels and commands, and therefore required only of *perfect ones*, in order to merit and supererogation; which is a blasphemous fancy. Those duties, and so this of thankfulness, in every thing is required of every Christian, *virtute præcepti*; ["in virtue of the command;"] "This is the will of God concerning you," saith my text.

QUERY IV. *Why and how we do give thanks in and for afflictions?*

ANSWER 1. *We must give thanks for good: afflictions are not evil, but good.*—David tells you so, and wherein: (Psalm cxix. 67, 68, 71:) which every child of God also finds. To this agrees that of the Schools, that crosses are not evil, but good: †

(1.) Because inflicted by the Lord, who is the Chief Good.

(2.) Because suffered by the Lord Jesus, who is the Chief Good.

(3.) They conform us to the Lord, who is the Chief Good.

(4.) They prepare us for communion with the Lord in heaven, which is our chief good: therefore, be thankful for crosses.

ANSWER 2. *We must thank God for every token of his fatherly love.*—But now crosses and troubles are such fatherly love-tokens. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;" (Heb. xii. 6;) therefore, give thanks for them; as well for the rod, as for bread.

"This is thankworthy:" this is acceptable to God. God will thank us for suffering patiently; therefore we must thank him for inflicting it as a tender Father on beloved sons. (1 Peter ii. 19, 20.)

Would you be counted bastards? Alexander cashiered one of his name that would not fight; the eagle is said to cast off those young ones that cannot bear the sight of the sun; and some Germans counted such

\* HIERONYMUS.

† BIEL and others.

children spurious brats that could not swim: so our heavenly Father will never own them for his children that will not submit to his rod, and kiss it too. "Lord, when thou strokest, and when thou strikest, thou art alike a Father," saith St. Austin.\*

ANSWER 3. *The Lord by afflicting his people doth prevent sin, and purge it.*—Therefore, give thanks for it, for this is good, because it frees us from the greatest evil.

(1.) *He prevents sin by it.*—"Lest," saith Paul, "I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." (2 Cor. xii. 7.)

(2.) *He purgeth sin by it.*—"By this," saith the prophet, "shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged." (Isai. xxvii. 9.) †

Now, do we not thank and pay the surgeon that lets out our bad blood, that lanceth our festered sores, that cuts out our proud and rotten flesh? Yes, surely, we do thank him. Do we not also thank the physician that keeps us to a strict diet, confines us to our chamber, gives us bitter pills and potions, and crosses our appetites? Yes, we do thank him; for hereby he cures a disease, defends and preserves both our health and life.

Now, what else, I beseech you, doth the Lord do, more or less, by all that we suffer at his hands? And doth not he deserve our thanks, as well as the physician and surgeon?

"When we are vexed and pinched, then ought we more especially to give the Lord thanks, who, as a most indulgent Father, will not suffer our corruptions to spread further, but represses and corrects them by severe strokes and scourges," saith Lactantius. ‡

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (Prov. xxiii. 13, 14.) O blessed rod that can do this! God's rod doth it surely. "Then it is better to go to God's house of correction, than to the place of torment." § Happy children, then, who have the Lord for their Father and for their Physician! this he takes for one of his eminent titles, אֱלֹהֵי הַרְפוּקָה "The Lord thy Physician." (Exod. xv. 26.) He doth it "skilfully, easily, safely, quickly, thoroughly," || according to all the properties of the best artists; therefore, thank him.

ANSWER 4. *We must thank the Lord for afflicting us, and for laying the cross upon us, because it is so far below what we deserve at his hands.*—What is a drop of wormwood sweetened, to the gall of bitterness? to the lake of fire and brimstone? Hear what Zophar tells Job: "O that God would speak, and open his lips against thee; and that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." (Job xi. 5, 6.)

The like saith holy Ezra; and then, surely, we have much more cause

\* *Et cum blandiris Pater es, et cum cedis Pater es.*—AUGUSTINUS in *Psalmum* xcviii.  
 † CHRYSOSTOM. ‡ *Institut.* lib. v. de *Justitia*, cap. 23. § ΒΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙ ΝΥΝ  
 παιδεύθηναι η βασανφ παραπεμφθηναι.—GREG. NAZIANZENUS. || *Tuto, cito, sine dolore.*

to say so; and is not this ground of thankfulness? "If thou suffer a thousand evils, thou wilt never suffer what thou meritest," saith that Father.\*

Jesus Christ drank off the dreggy part of the cup for us. We do but as it were sip for fashion, that we may seem to pledge; for, to drink as he drank it we cannot, we need not. (Matt. xx. 22.) † Thank God, then, that thou hast so little a share of it, when all was thy portion by right and justice. This is thankworthy.

ANSWER 5. *We must give thanks in every thing, even in and for afflictions, under the rod and cross, because thereby the Lord doth discipline us, and learns us much which else we never would have learned.*—By this David learned God's commandments, and they became dearer to him "than thousands of gold and silver." (Psalm cxix. 71, 72.) By this the Lord "opens the ear to discipline," saith Elihu, even when men are "bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." (Job xxxvi. 8—10.) For as wax, unless it be heated and softened, takes no impression of the seal; so no man, unless exercised with much affliction, will receive the prints of divine wisdom. ‡

Παιδεύω, the word commonly used by the Holy Ghost in the New Testament for "chastise," signifies, properly, "to teach a child as a schoolmaster or father, with a rod." (Heb. xii. 5—12; Luke xxiii. 22.) This is God's way of teaching; and the best scholars in Christ's college have come by their learning this way. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." (Lam. iii. 27.) By this, the poet saith, wise Ulysses was trained up. We use to say, They are usually the best scholars that have bought their learning dearest. § I am sure this is the choicest saints' academy.

ANSWER 6. *Give thanks in and for afflictions, because hereby the Lord fits us for heavenly glory.*—Saints are called "vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory;" (Rom. ix. 23;) but how do men make and prepare vessels? If it be a vessel of earth, the potter beats the clay to make it well-tempered, then he moulds it on the wheel, then he bakes it in the oven, and then it is fit for use. If it be a vessel of wood, it hath many a turn and many a cut, before it is fit. If it be a vessel of gold or silver, it hath both heats and knocks, before it be complete. So must every vessel of mercy be served, before it be fit for glory. || "We must

\* Κατὰ μύρια πάλαι δεύα, οὐδεὶς τὴν ἀξίαν εἰδικας δίκην.—CHRYSOSTOMUS in Psalmum xli. 1. † Vide GREGORIUM, Hom. xvi. in Ezek. x. Hb. 2. ‡ The cross teacheth more the way to heaven than all the sermons of the doctors.—TAULERUS.

§ Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam,

Multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit, &c.—HORATIUS De Arte Poetica, 412.

"A youth who hopes the' Olympic prize to gain,

All arts must try, and every toil sustain;

The' extremes of heat and cold must often prove,

And shun the weakening joys of wine and love."—FRANCIS'S Translation.

|| Sub malleo premitur aurum tusionibus, ut vas fabricetur magni pretii: sic veluti sub malleo sunt iusti, premunturque laboribus, ut fiant vasa magna gloriæ.—GERHARDUS. "Gold is crushed under many and repeated strokes of the hammer, that out of it may be fabricated a vessel of great value. Thus, as under a hammer, are the righteous placed, and are oppressed with labours, that they may become vessels of great glory."—EDIT.

through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts xiv. 22.) Thus the apostle Peter tells us also, "that the trial of our faith, being much more precious than of gold," will be "found unto the praise and honour and glory" of God; (1 Peter i. 7;) for "the cross is the whetstone of faith,"\* and all other grace, setting an edge and lustre upon it; it is the awakening of the north-wind and south-wind, to make these spices flow. (Canticles iv. 16.) The stone that is most hewed, cut, carved, and polished, is usually set in the chiefest part of the building. So are suffering saints prepared for the highest degrees of glory.† For these are prepared the *aureolæ*, those additional "flowers and ornaments" that all shall not partake of, say the Schools.

Those only that were beheaded or slain "for the witness of Jesus," reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 4.) So that it may be said of the Lord's sufferers, as David speaks: "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." (Psalm lxxviii. 13.) This may be truly said, when the Lord shall "change our vile bodies, and fashion them like to his glorious body." Notable and curious is that of Tertulian upon Jacob's blessing the two sons of Joseph "with his hands across," (which is granted by all,) *decussatis manibus*, that he might bless Ephraim the youngest with the blessing of the first-born: (Gen. xlviii. 14:) "That we might know, no blessing comes to us more kindly and properly than by the cross."‡ Therefore give thanks in and for thy afflictions.

ANSWER 7. *It is a very high privilege for a Christian to be conformed to Christ.*—To be conformists to Christ, is to be nonconformists to the world. (Rom. xii. 2.) But now, what doth more conform us unto Christ than the cross? Therefore give thanks for it. "That I may know the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. iii. 10.) This is part of that excellent knowledge for which he accounted all other worldly privileges but dung. To this conformity in afflictions unto Christ we are predestinated. (Rom. viii. 29.) This privilege appears in verse 17: "If we suffer with him, we shall be glorified together." § This way Christ entered into glory. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26.) Now, if we will enter with him, we must follow after him. How? By taking up his cross. "Christ, like a good physician, first tasted the medicine that he gave his patient." || "The cross of Christ sweetens our sufferings in the bitterness of them; as that piece of wood sweetened the waters of Marah, being cast into them." ¶ Therefore, John wrote to the saints, as partakers together of a great privilege, when he said, "Companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of

\* *Cruz est cotricula fidei.*—HIERONYMUS. † AUGUSTINUS in *Psalmum xxxvi.*  
 † *Ut intelligeremus benedictionem non nisi per crucem haberi posse.*—TERTULLIANUS *De*  
*Baptismo*, cap. viii. § *Oportet nos crucifigi cum Crucifixo, ut glorificemur cum*  
*Glorificato.*—MACARIUS, *Homilia xii.* "With the Crucified One we must be crucified,  
 that we may be glorified with Him who is glorified."—EDIT. ¶ *Christus prius ipse*  
*bibit potionem quam suis paravit.*—BERNARDI *Parv. Serm.* ¶ LUTHERUS in  
*Exod.* xv.

Jesus Christ." (Rev. i. 9.) Then never hope to go another way than the Captain of our salvation hath led us; for if we baulk his track, we are lost.\* Must we not then give thanks for affliction that conforms us to our Head?

ANSWER 8. *The cross is a Christian's banner, his honour, and the special favour of the Lord towards him.*—Therefore be thankful for it. Let not this seem a riddle or paradox. "I have you," saith the apostle, "in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace;" (Phil. i. 7;) where by "grace" many understand, a special act of God's favour to him and them, wherewith they were to account themselves highly graced. Hence he saith again a little after, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Verse 29.) This he accounts a peculiar gift of God to them, whereof but few in comparison do partake.† Hence saith one upon that place, "It is a most noble, yea, and almost divine, thing to suffer for the Lord Jesus."‡ For the Lord gave Christ himself, on this very account, "a name which is above every name." (Phil. ii. 9.) Mark what the apostle Peter saith: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." (1 Peter iv. 14.) Which words must be understood emphatically§ [as] the highest manifestation and operation of the Spirit of God. God's Spirit manifesteth itself variously in several subjects; but in sufferers for Christ the very spirit and quintessence of glory seems to be extracted and poured on them.

Upon all these accounts, and many more such, we are to thank God for crosses and corrections, because the good of them doth flow from God's goodness, not from their nature. When the horse-leech, by the physician's direction, sucks our blood, and thereby performs a cure, the horse-leech is not to be thanked, but the physician for his application. So the Lord can make the bloody persecutors of his people to be instruments of good to his people: no thanks to them, but to him, for it.

QUERY V. *How shall a Christian bring his heart to this holy and heavenly frame, so as in every thing to give thanks?*

ANSWER. Harken to these few directions, and lay them up in your hearts, and draw them out in your constant practice.

1. *Pray earnestly for the Spirit of God.*—Without that Spirit thou canst never pray or praise God duly, because not spiritually; none can sanctify the Lord God in his heart, (which is the first principle of this work,) but he whose heart the Lord God hath sanctified.|| The Holy Spirit breathing in a man, makes him a living organ, tuned to and sounding out his praise. "Praise is comely for the upright;" (Psalm xxxiii. 1;)

\* AUGUSTINUS in *Psalmum* lli. † *Utrumque ostendit Dei donum, quia utrumque dicit esse donatum.*—AUGUSTINUS. "He shows each of these to be the gift of God, because he declares them both to have been given."—EDIT. ‡ VASQUEZ, in *locum*. § הרוח "The Spirit," per He emphaticum. || *Canticum novum et vetus homo male concordant.*—AUGUSTINUS. "The new song, and the old man, (unsanctified human nature,) make sad discord."—EDIT.

but as uncomely in a carnal mouth as a jewel in a swine's snout. The pompous dresses and melodious choirs of *Magnificats*,\* without the Spirit of God breathing among them, are but as "a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." † For, indeed, without the Spirit of God in men, they neither can nor will remember the Lord's mercies, nor consider them, nor value them, nor be affected with them, nor blaze ‡ the praise of them. "The dead," saith David, "do not praise thee;" dead hearts produce dead works; it is the Spirit that quickens.§

2. *Labour to get a continual quick sight and sense of sin.*—This will make thee sensible of every mercy, and thankful for it. So the provocation and merit of sin is nothing but curses; death and wrath being due to it. That yet thou shouldest be so tenderly spared, and instead of miseries shouldest enjoy blessings, how shouldest thou be affected with this, as Mephibosheth was with David's kindness to him! A humble, broken heart is the most thankful heart: this was most eminent in the most eminent saints: Jacob, (Gen. xxxii. 10,) David, (*per Psalmos*,) || Paul, &c. (1 Tim. i. 12—17.) He that knows he hath forfeited all, knows he deserves nothing but the reward of that forfeiture, which is wrath; and he that deserves nothing, thanks God for every thing, even for the least drop and crumb. ¶

3. *Behold every mercy coming to thee in the stream of Christ's blood, and through the covenant of grace.*—This gives the mercy both an estimate and a relish; this doth both sanctify it, and sweeten it, and sublimiate it.\*\* A crust of brown bread, coming thus, is better than a purse full of gold another way; as that king's kiss to one friend was said to be better gold than a cup of gold which he gave another friend. †† "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name." (Psalm cxi. 9.) The deliverance *there* was, in David's account, and that truly, the more thank-worthy, as being upon a covenant-account; for thus every mercy is a token of the Lord's favour to his favourite: it is that which makes common mercies to become special mercies. Carnal men, so they enjoy mercies, they mind not which way they come-in, so they can but have them; but

\* *Magnificat*, the well-known title of the song of the virgin Mary, (Luke i. 46,) is adopted as part of the even-song in the ritual both of the church of Rome and of England; in the chanting of which, as a canticle of great joy, the præcentors, vicars-choral, choristers, and other tuneful sprites in cathedrals and collegiate churches, rise up and pour forth their "notes symphonious." By an allowable metonymy it is here used for the persons engaged in this lively service.—EDIT.

† *Non musica chordula sed cor, non clamans sed amans cantat in aure Dei.* "In the ears of God, that is the most delightful harmony which proceeds, not from musical concord, but from a well-tuned heart; not from a loud singer, but from a true lover of Christ Jesus."—EDIT. † In the old meaning of "make known, or spread abroad."—EDIT. § "I will sing with the spirit." (1 Cor. xiv. 15.)

|| "Throughout the book of Psalms."—EDIT. ¶ *Invitat ad magna, qui gratanter accipit modica.*—CASSIODORUS. "When a man receives small favours with thankfulness, his grateful expressions serve as an invitation for his benefactor to bestow on him much greater benefits."—EDIT.

\*\* *Anima immersa sanguini Christi aurea redditur, ut manus in aurum liquefactum injecta deauratur.*—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "A soul immersed in the blood of Christ is rendered golden; even as a hand dipped into a crucible containing the metal in a liquid form, is completely encrusted with gold on its being withdrawn."—EDIT. †† See this anecdote related of Alexander the Great in page 386.—EDIT.

a child of God knows that every thing that comes through Christ's hands is the better for it, and tastes the sweeter by far.\*

4. *Look on thy mercies as answers to thy prayers, and bless the Lord for them on that account*:—For that is double mercy:—(1.) That God hath inclined and directed thine heart to beg such a mercy; for this is a special act of the Spirit of adoption. (Rom. viii. 26, 27.) (2.) That he hath answered such prayers; for this is a sign [that] he accepts thee in Christ. Many blessings come-in unasked-for, and unlooked-for: yet these require thankfulness.

But when the Lord is inquired-of for the things we have, and doth grant them to us, this is a blessing upon his own institution, and a seal to his promise. Hear David: "Come and hear," saith he, "and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue;" (Psalm lxi. 16, 17;) as if he had said, "This was a signal favour for the Lord to grant what I petitioned him for; and therefore deserves a special acknowledgment." For this Hannah calls her son, Samuel, that is, "asked of God;" (1 Sam. i. 20;) and Leah calleth her second son, Simeon, that is, "hearing," because God heard her prayer for him. (Gen. xxix. 33.) And Rachel called her son, Naphtali, that is, "wrestling," because she wrestled for him. (Gen. xxx. 8.) Now as Samuels should be Lemuels, that is, "dedicated to God," so all our mercies we get by prayer should be the more solemnly dedicated to the Lord by thanksgiving; and such a frame of a thankful heart is a spiritual frame.

5. *When any of God's dealings do either draw us, or drive us, nearer to God, this is a special mercy*.—When we consider that well, we cannot but be greatly affected with it, and will be accordingly thankful for the mercy, for the dispensation is thereby the more merciful. Mercies are drawing-cords, afflictions are whip-cords to drive us; by both we are brought nearer to God: thank him. If the chief Shepherd hunt us together, and keep us from straggling, and bring us under command, this is a mercy to Christ's sheep. If the Lord "hedge up our way with thorns," that we cannot find our lovers, this is a mercy. And if the Lord recover† his mercies from us, that in the want of them we may know he was the Founder and Fountain of them,—this is a mercy. (Hosea ii. 6—9.) When Absalom burnt Joab's corn, it was to make Joab (who before that kept off) come to him: so all the angry dispensations of God towards his children are, that they [may] return to him. (Amos iv. 6—12.) That storm that sinks and splits some ships, drives others faster into the haven: so do the troubles of this world make a true Christian's voyage toward heaven the speedier.

6. *That soul that is truly and spiritually thankful, will so order his whole conversation, that God may have the glory of it*.—This the Psalmist, who was well skilled in this art, seems to point at often. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." (Psalm l. 23.) We cannot better

\* *Non tam beneficium, sed ratio beneficii attendenda est.* "We must have regard not merely to the benefit which we receive, but also to the manner and reason of its having been conferred."—EDIT. † In its legal meaning of *regaining*, or *taking back*, in judgment.—EDIT.

glorify God than by a well-ordered conversation : this is in every thing to give thanks indeed. So likewise in Psalm cvi. 1 : "Praise ye the Lord ! *Hallelujah*. O give thanks unto the Lord ; for he is good : for his mercy endureth for ever." There is, (1.) The doxology ; (2.) Invitation ; (3.) The reason that we should, and why we should, give thanks always. But "who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all his praise?" That is, It is impossible for any man in the world to do this great duty aright, and as he should. "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." (Psalm cvi. 2, 3.) As if he had said, "This indeed is a vast duty ; but yet *he* makes the best essay towards it *that* sets himself constantly to serve God and keep his commandments." Now, this no man can do, neither perfectly, but only by the merits and in the strength of Christ ; he, making it the desire of his soul to serve the Lord, is accepted, though endeavours fall short ; and therefore [he] is pronounced blessed. For to be "a doer of the work" by evangelical obedience, makes him "blessed in his deed." (James i. 25.) Labour, then, to bless the Lord, not only in words, but in deed, and you shall be blessed.

7. *If we would offer thanks to the Lord acceptably, let us do it "in the name of the Lord Jesus."* (Eph. v. 20.)—Thus are we directed by the Spirit of God, (1.) Because all mercy comes to us by him. (2.) Because nothing is accepted but in him.\* (3.) Because it is one part of his priestly office to receive the prayers and praises of the saints in his golden censer upon the golden altar, with much incense. (Rev. viii. 3, 4.) "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name ;" (Heb. xiii. 15;) alluding to that of the prophet, who calls it, "the calves of our lips:" (Hosea xiv. 2:) that through Christ's propitiatory sacrifice our eucharistical sacrifices are accepted, and that we must offer these under the gospel "continually," *jugiter* ; alluding to the daily sacrifice.† Now this must needs sanctify our service, because the "altar sanctifies the gift;" and therefore mention is made of a golden altar in this case.

## USES.

*Is it the will of God in Christ Jesus that in every thing we give thanks?*—Then this serves to condemn the horrid ingratitude of Christians.

1. *Those that in nothing will give thanks, at no time, for no mercy.*—These are swine that devour all that drops from the tree of God's bounty, and never look up whence it cometh. These are worse than the ox and ass that know their owner's and master's cribs. (Isai. i. 3.) These are mere Heathens,‡ who, though they profess "they know God, yet do not glorify him as God, nor are thankful." [Rom. i. 21.] These are like buckets that run greedily down into a well when they are empty with open mouth ; but when they be full, they turn their hinder part upon the

\* *Per eundem est decursus beneficiorum et recursus.* "The same Divine Person is the conduit through which our mercies flow down to us in benefits, and are returned in thanksgiving."—EDIT.

† *Juge sacrificium.* "An unceasing, never-failing sacrifice."—EDIT.

‡ *Perraro grati homines reperiuntur.*—CICERO. "Truly grateful men are very rarely to be found."—EDIT.



well that filled them. Thus dō unthankful men call greedily for mercies; and when God hath filled them, they "turn the back, and not the face."

2. *Another kind of unthankful men is that sort, who, having received mercies from God, arrogate the honour of them to themselves.*—Let Papists and Pelagians, old and new, who attribute more to free-will than to grace, which the one makes the root of merits, the other gives the casting of the scale in man's conversion to it;—let these see how by such principles they can acquit themselves from the crime of sacrilegious ingratitude, for they rob God of his glory; and then let them hear, not me, but St. Austin, thundering against them: "O Lord, he that assumes the glory of any good he hath to himself, and ascribes it not to thee, that man is a thief, and a robber, and like the devil, who robbeth thee of thy glory."\* Thus also they who attribute their riches, children, honours, victories, health, safety, knowledge, &c., to their wits, labours, merits,—these are ingrateful robbers of God. Thus they burnt incense to their drag and yarn. (Hab. i. 15, 16.) Thus Nebuchadnezzar gloried in the great Babel of his own building. (Dan. iv. 30.) Thus the Assyrian also ranted and vaunted himself, as if by his own great wisdom and valour he had conquered the nations. (Isai. x. 13—15.) But mark the end of these men; how the Lord took it, and how he dealt with them for it. He turned Nebuchadnezzar out to graze† among the beasts. He kindled a fire in the Assyrian's forest, and burnt it. He struck Herod, that he was eaten up with worms, because he gave himself, and not God, the glory. (Acts xii. 23.)

3. *Another sort of unthankful ones there is, that seem to be very thankful; but it is only complimentally, and with the lip.*—These are like apes that eat up the kernel, and leave God the shells; they care not to go to the cost of a heart- or a life-thankfulness; they are cursed hypocrites: they put him off with the blind and the lame in sacrifice, and never once give him the male of their flock. (Mal. i. 14.) God will pay them in their own coin; they are thankful in jest, and God will damn them in earnest. "That man," saith Lactantius, "cannot be a godly man that is unthankful to his God."‡ And Aquinas saith, that "unthankfulness hath in it the root and matter of all sin;" § for it denies or dissembles the goodness of God, by which we live, move, and have our being, yea, and all our blessings, the thankful acknowledgment whereof is our indispensable homage unto God. Unthankfulness was a huge ingredient into Adam's sin: to sin against his Maker as soon as he was made; yea, by whom he was so fearfully and wonderfully made,—little lower than the angels! (Psalm cxxxix. 14; [viii. 5.]) Unthankfulness was the sin of Noah and Lot after their deliverances, the one from water, the other from fire; (Gen. ix., xix. ;) the sin of Israel, that forgot their Rock, their Husband that found them in "the waste howling wilderness;" (Deut. xxxii. ;) and when they "lay in their blood, no eye pitying them, cast out to the loathing of their persons;" (Ezek. xvi.

\* *Qui de bono suo, O Domine, gloriam sibi quarit, et non tibi, hic fur est et latro et similis diabolo, &c.*—AUGUSTINI *Soliloq.* c. 15. † The editions vary thus in this word: *graze, grise, grass.*—EDIT.

‡ *Non constare homini ratio pietatis potest, &c.*—LACTANTI *Institut.* c. 3.

§ *Materialiter per connotationem, et adhaerentiam.*

1—36;) the sin of David; (2 Sam. xii. 7—9;) the sin of Solomon; (1 Kings xi. 9;) the sin of Hezekiah. (2 Chron. xxxii. 25.)

The great sin of the gospel is unthankfulness, by sinning against the light, love, free grace, and rich patience of God in it.\* This is “to turn his grace into wantonness;” to prefer darkness before light, to “neglect so great salvation,” not to come under Christ’s wing when he calls to us, to “despise his goodness and long-suffering, leading us to repentance,” not to “come to him that we may have life;” to resist his Spirit, and trample on his blood.† The sin of the greatest sinners in the book of God is unthankfulness: the sin of the angels that kept not their first station; the sin of Cain in his offering; the sin of the Sodomites; the sin of the old world, the sin of Saul, the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the sin of Nabal, the sin of Hanun, the sin of Judas, the sin of Julian, and of antichrist,—all is unthankfulness.

#### EXHORTATION.

I shall conclude with a solemn exhortation to all that hear this word, and profess the Lord Jesus, and to be ruled by the will of God in Christ Jesus revealed, that they study and practise this great, this comprehensive duty of thankfulness. Consider, that no people in the world have such cause of thankfulness as Christians:‡ they have received more mercy than any; therefore there is the more of them required; therefore the Lord takes their unkindness the more unkindly. (Deut. xxxii. 6.) Sins against mercy will turn mercy into cruelty, and patience into fury. To be unthankful to a bountiful God, is for a froward child to beat his mother’s breasts that gave him suck, and to kick his father’s bowels. The Lord, that he might upbraid his people’s ingratitude, compares them to a bullock that was fatted in good pasture, and then kicked. (Deut. xxxii. 15—25.) And what this cost you may read there.

When the Lord would preserve in his people the memorial of his mercies, see how he orders them: every man was to come with a basket of fruits; and the priest was to take it, and set it down before the Lord; and he that brought it was to make a solemn confession of his own poverty and wretchedness, of God’s goodness and faithfulness to him, and of his engagements to the Lord for the same. (Deut. xxvi. 1—10.) Hereby the Lord let them know that they had all from him, and held all at mercy, and this was their homage that they paid him. O what shall we then render to the Lord for all his benefits? who were “Syrians ready to perish;” [Deut. xxvi. 5;] who “with our staff passed this Jordan, and now are two bands;” [Gen. xxxii. 10;] who have not only nether springs, but upper also; the Lord hath opened a fountain and a treasure for us.

\* *Peremptoria res est ingratitude, hostis gratia, inimica salutis.*—BERNARDI Serm. i. de septem Miser. “Ingratitude is a most destructive vice, the foe of grace, inimical to our salvation.”—EDIT. *Ingratitude est ventus urens, et exsicicans fontem gratia, fluentia misericordia.*—Idem. “Unthankfulness is a hot and burning wind, drying up both the fountain of grace, and the streams of mercy.”—EDIT. † *Quousque se diffundit gratia, eo patet ingratitude.* “As far as ever grace has been diffused, so far has ingratitude developed itself.”—EDIT. ‡ *Crescentibus donis crescunt donorum rationes.* “Concurrent with the increase of the gifts of God is that of our liability to account for their receipt and employment.”—EDIT.

Think of this, all you malcontents and murmurers; read over your mercies; preserve a catalogue of them; compare them with what others enjoy. It is not with you as with Heathens; you have the gospel; if it totters, as if it were in a moving posture from you, thank your unthankfulness for it. You have had it with peace and plenty; and if that hath glutted you, and the Lord is now curing your surfeit by a sparer diet, thank your wantonness for it.

Yet consider: Turks and Tartars are not in your bowels, burning your houses, ravishing wives and daughters, killing old, sick, and infants, carrying away the rest captives, drinking healths in your dead nobles' skulls digged out of their graves. Yet all this is done among the poor Protestants in Transylvania; sword, famine, and pestilence making havoc in that flourishing country; not to speak of other places, what is felt or feared. Is not this ground of thanks?

Consider, yet again, what we have had long, and still have, though the land is full of sin from one end to the other; what we have deserved, and yet do,—even to be stripped naked of all life and liberty, peace and plenty, to have our doors shut up, our lights put out, our teachers all driven into corners, the good land to spue us out, and the abomination that maketh desolate to enter in among us, our land to keep her sabbaths because we profaned the Lord's sabbaths, the voice of the screech-owl to be heard instead of the voice of the turtle. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed;" for what privilege or patent have we to be secured and indemnified above others?

How long ago had Divine Justice made short work with us, if Divine Patience had not been stretched to long-suffering; if Mercy had not held back the hand of God's vengeance, as the angel caught Abraham's knife when it was lifted up to kill his son! For, surely, methinks Mercy and Justice have been long wrestling, and the Lord hath said long of England, as he said of Ephraim, "How shall I give up England? how shall I make thee as Admah and Zeboim, as Sodom and Gomorrah?"

Now, consider this, all ye that forget the Lord's benefits, lest he come not only as a moth to you, as he seems to be already in your trade, in your health, in your food, but as a lion to tear and go away. Wherefore, would you value your mercies? consider others' miseries. Would you thank God for them? consider your abuse and unworthiness of them. Would you continue and increase them? be thankful for them. Would you taste sweetness in them? get a sanctified use of them. Would you honour God in every condition? make a holy improvement of every dispensation. Would you be Christians indeed? "in every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Turn your hearts and tongues to it here, and you shall be chosen into the choir of angels, to perform it for ever in heaven.\*

\* *Haud quicquam ita propriè terris representat caelestis habitationis statum, sicut alacritas Deum laudantium.*—BERNARDUS, *Ser. 1. in Cant.* "Scarcely any thing on earth conveys to our minds so lively and appropriate a representation of the state of that 'house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' as does the cheerfulness with which those who praise God, in these his earthly courts, engage in that most delightful service."—EDIT.