

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.

BY THE REV. BENJAMIN NEEDLER, B.C.L.,

AND SOMETIME FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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."

2. *A double reason and enforcement* : "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 so again, verse 30.

In the handling of these words, I shall first speak to them by way of **EXPLICATION**, and then by way of **OBSERVATION**.

1. For the **EXPLICATION** of them, I would entreat you to take into your thoughts these particulars :—

1. We must inquire into the meaning of these two expressions, the "right eye," and the "right hand." Most expositors by far carry it, that these words are to be expounded improperly and figuratively : and here I shall not acquaint you, how popish writers abound in their own sense concerning these words. There are sweet truths, that, kindly and freely, without straining, may be deduced from this scripture. Like the bee, I would not tear the flower I light on.

There are two interpretations given of this place that I shall take notice of :—

(1.) There are some, that by "right eye" and "right hand" understand our nearest and dearest comforts which we have in this world, which must be parted with for Christ's sake, yet not absolutely, but upon this consideration, *if they offend* : "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." Now this is *bona expositio*, "a good exposition," as our divines distinguish ; but not *recta expositio*, "a right exposition ;" agreeable to the analogy of faith, but not suitable to the scope and design of our Saviour in this place. Therefore,

(2.) There are others, that by "right eye" and "right hand" understand beloved lusts, as hard to be parted with as right hands or right eyes. Our Saviour mentions the right eye and the right hand, because they are most prized, as having more than ordinary of spirits and natural heat, and so more fit for action : I am sure this may be said concerning the right hand.

Indeed, I conceive it a hard matter to prove, that by divine appointment one hand should be more useful than the other : but as God hath given us two eyes, and two ears, so two hands, to use both indifferently, and that, if need required, the one might supply the loss of the other. If any, methinks the left hand should be preferred ; because it is nearest the heart, the fountain of life and activity. But Christ takes them as he finds them, as he doth in many other cases ; and, as we have ordered the matter, the right hand is more active and strong than the other, and so more precious. But, to our purpose :—

Some, I say, by the "right eye," and the "right hand," understand our beloved lusts. It is the usage of the Spirit of God in the scriptures, in a figurative way to express corruption by the parts and members of our bodies. So St. Paul : "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." (Rom. vii. 23.) And the same apostle : "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection," &c. (Col. iii. 5.) As the members of

the natural body need castigation, ("I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," 1 Cor. ix. 27,) so the members of the sinful body need mortification : and here, in the text, sin is expressed by the right eye and the right hand.

2. *If thy right eye offend thee*—In the Greek it is *σκανδαλίζει σε*, "scandalize thee," hinder thee in a way of duty. For you must note, that obedience and holiness are often in scripture represented unto us by "a way." To give you one place for all : "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord : " (Psalm cxix. 1 :) and men are said to be offended, when something causes them to stumble, or fall in this way. Sin is, as it were, a block or a stone, at which men stumble and fall. "Let him which thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

3. *Pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; cut it off, and cast it from thee*—A metaphor taken from surgeons, whose manner it is, when the whole body is endangered by any part, to cut it off, *ne pars sincera trahatur* ["lest the sound part be drawn after that which is corrupt"]. But before I leave these expressions, take notice of the emphasis that is in them, in these particulars :

(1.) It is not said, "*Suffer thy right eye to be plucked out, or thy right hand to be cut off :*" but, "*Thou thyself pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; cut it off, and cast it from thee.*" To note two things :—

(i.) That we ourselves must engage in the mortifying of our lusts.—Sinners, with their own hands, must pull out their own eyes. It is not enough to cry unto God for help, and, in the mean time, to be careless and idle, as if nothing were to be done on our part. Mortification is a work incumbent upon us, although we are empowered thereunto by the Spirit : "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.) We must mortify, although by the Spirit. The duty is ours, though the strength be God's. So here : "If thy right eye offend thee, thou thyself pluck it out, and cast it from thee."

(ii.) That we must be a willing people in this, as in all other duties.—A Christian *dieth to sin, is not put to death.*

(2.) It is not said, "If thine eye offend thee, *observe it more than ordinarily*, look narrowly to it," but, "pluck it out ;" to note, that nothing less is like to do our souls good, than the mortifying, the killing, the cutting off of our corruptions.—Let a man's hand be cut off ; it is a dead member immediately. It is not so with plants when they are cut off from their roots ; they will grow and sprout again : and so it is with the most inferior sort of sensitive creatures ; for instance, cut worms into several pieces, every part will live, and stir ; hence the learned call them *insecta*. When the head of a fowl is separated from its body, it will live and flutter for some time. But this cannot be said of the most noble sort of creatures. This is a sure rule in nature : *Unitas et indivisibilitas est comes perfectionis ; multitudo et divisibilitas, imperfectionis* : "Union is a sign of perfection, divisibility of imperfection." The more perfect any being is, the more united it is to itself, and the less any part of it can live *nisi in toto*, "but in the whole." So that this phrase is a great elegancy, to note the killing of our beloved lusts : "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee," &c.

(3.) It is not only said, "Pluck it out," but, "Cast it from thee;" to note, that it is not enough for a man to leave his sin for the present, but he must renounce it for ever.—We must not part with sin, as with a friend, with a purpose to see it again, and to have the same familiarity with it as before, or possibly greater. *Amantium iræ amoris redintegratio est*: "The falling-out of lovers is the renewing of love." We must not only shake hands *with it*, but shake our hands *of it*, as Paul did shake the viper off his hand into the fire: "Pluck it out, and cast it from thee."

Thus much for the explication of the words, for I shall have occasion only to deal with the former part of these two verses at this time.

II. I am to give you the OBSERVATIONS. I shall speak but a few words to some of them, that I may reserve myself for that which I mainly intend.

OBSERVATION I. *That the eye and the hand are excellent and useful parts of the body of man.*—You see here our Saviour singles out these, from all other parts, as being very precious: "If thy right eye offend thee," &c. "If thy right hand offend thee," &c.

1. As for the eye, our Saviour tells us, that it is "the light of the body:" "The light of the body is the eye." (Matt. vi. 22.) What is the world without the sun, but a dark, melancholy dungeon? What is "a man without eyes, but monstrous and deformed," *monstrum horrendum, informe, cui lumen ademptum*? The two eyes are two luminaries, that God hath set up in the microcosm, "man's little world." When God would express his tender love unto his people, he calls them, "the apple of his eye." "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye:" (Zech. ii. 8 :) and the like phrase St. Paul makes use of, when he speaks of the love of the Galatians unto himself: "I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes, and have given them to me." (Gal. iv. 15.) I have read of the emperor Adrian, that, with an arrow, by accident, put out one of his servant's eyes. He commands him to be brought to him, and bids him ask what he would, that he might make him amends. The poor man was silent. He pressed him again. He told the emperor, he would ask nothing, but he wished that he had the eye which he had lost; intimating, that an emperor was not able to make satisfaction for the loss of an eye.

O be very watchful over this excellent part! Make a covenant with your eyes. (Job xxxi. 1.) Shut your eyes from seeing evil. (Isai. xxxiii. 15.) Set no wicked thing before your eyes. (Psalm ci. 3.) As the apostle saith in another case, "Doth not even nature teach you?" God hath made a covering for the eye, that opens and shuts with a great deal of easiness, to teach us, that it is expedient sometimes that the eye be closed, and not holden open to every object.

2. As for the hand, it is the prime part for action. Aristotle calls it *organon organon*, "an instrument of instruments." Without this, there could be no cities, no towns, no merchandise, no husbandry, no manufactures. Without this, man would differ but a little from "the beasts that perish;" for, what would his reason stand him in stead, if he had not an hand to improve it? The naturalists observe, that man could

neither do nor say, without this useful and necessary part : for if a man did not eat with his hands, he must, as a brute, feed with his mouth ; and by that means the lips would become so thick, that he would not be able to speak with any distinctness ; and, indeed, we find by experience, that they that have thick lips have an imperfection in their speech.

O improve this excellent part for God ! A good life is expressed in scripture by "a clean hand : " "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners ; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." (James iv. 8.) It is the greatest absurdity imaginable to plead a good heart, as many do, and yet have a foul and wicked hand : this is as if a man should say, "Here is a tree that bears ill fruit, but it hath an excellent root."

OBS. II. *That offences are from ourselves : or the cause of stumbling and falling is from ourselves : some lust or other, some right-eye sin, or some right-hand sin.* "If thy right eye offend thee," &c.—Sin unmortified will very much endanger a man's falling. Truly, if you would not have your right eye, or your right hand, offend you, you must offend them : "Pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; cut it off, and cast it from thee." If you would see clearly in God's way, ye must pluck out your right eye ; if you would walk evenly in God's path, you must cut off your right foot.

OBS. III. *That sin is, properly and to all intents and purposes, our own.* "If thy right eye offend," &c. "If thy right hand offend," &c.—The apostle, writing to the Colossians, speaks thus : "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection," &c. (Col. iii. 5.) These sins were their members. The whole body of sin is ours ; and the members of that body are ours. There is a great difference between our *natural* body and our *sinful* body : our natural body is ours *quoad usum*, "with reference to our use ;" but it is God's *quoad creationem*, "with reference to its creation." The body of man was originally and fundamentally created. Now there is a twofold creation :—

1. When a being is made of nothing : this is called by the learned, *creatio immediata*, "an immediate creation."

2. When a being is made of something, but that something is *materia inhabilis*, "matter altogether indisposed for the producing of that effect ;" and so "is little, if any thing, more than nothing with reference unto that which is made ;" *materia est aliquid in se, nihil tamen respectu opificii*. Thus when God made the woman of a rib, when Christ turned water into wine, when God made man of the dust of the earth, it was a creation ; and this is called by the learned, *creatio mediata*, "a mediate creation : " and our *natural* body still, in a way of generation, is God's creature, but our *sinful* body is our creature. Hence the apostle : "Mortify your members which are on the earth ;" and our Saviour in the text : "If thy right eye offend thee," &c. So that sin is, properly and to all intents and purposes, our own.

OBS. IV. *That although all sins are our own, yet there are some sins that in a more especial manner may be called ours ; namely, our right-eye sins, and our right-hand sins.* Or, if you will : every man hath his proper, particular iniquity, his beloved sin. "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."—And the handling of this doctrine will suit the case that is my task this morning; namely, "How may beloved lusts be discovered and mortified?"

In the prosecution of this observation, I shall follow, by God's assistance, this method:—

I. I shall inquire, why sin is expressed sometimes in scripture by the parts and members of our body; as in this place by the "right eye," and the "right hand."

II. I shall show you, that our right-eye sins, and our right-hand sins, our beloved lusts, may in a more special manner be called ours; or, that every man hath his proper, his particular, iniquity.

III. I shall inquire, how this comes to pass, that particular persons have their proper and particular sins.

IV. The use and application.

I. I am to inquire, *why sin in scripture is expressed by the parts and members of our body, and particularly here by the "right eye," and the "right hand."*

1. You must note, that the whole mass of corruption in scripture is called by the name of "the old man," and "the body of sin:" "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." (Rom. vi. 6.) It is called "the old man." In every young man there is an old man. And it is called "the body of sin." Now, if sin in the lump and bulk be a body, then particular sins may fitly be termed the parts and members of this body.

2. Sin may be thus expressed; because as the natural body makes use of its several parts for the managing and carrying on of those works that are *natural*, so corruption makes use of several lusts for the effecting and promoting of those works that are *sinful*.

3. According to their notion that hold the soul by creation, as I conceive, sin is conveyed into the soul at first by means of the body. Certainly, the soul of man is pure and undefiled as it comes out of the hand of God. I do humbly propose to men of learning, whether that rule, *Corporeum non agit in incorporeum*, or that "a body cannot defile a spirit," is not further to be taken into consideration. We find by experience, that as the soul communicates its affections unto the body, the body hath life, and sense, and motion from the soul, that of itself is a * lifeless lump of clay; so the body again hath a very great influence on the soul, and can and doth communicate its distempers unto it. For instance: Those that have sanguine bodies are inclined to lust; those that are choleric, unto rashness and passion; those that are melancholy, unto suspicion and tenaciousness; those that are phlegmatic, unto dullness and cowardice. So that sin may be in the body *dispositivè*, before it be enlivened by the soul, though not *formaliter*. My meaning is, the body may have a disposition to defile the soul, before it is united unto the soul; and if so, no wonder if sin be expressed by the parts and members of our body.

4. Corruption looks at, and shows itself by, the sinful actions of the

* This line is unaccountably omitted in the fourth edition.—EDIT.

body; and therefore may have its denomination by the parts of it. Hence it is that the apostle, when he had concluded that the Jew and the Gentile were both under sin, to make this manifest he tells the Romans how sin discovered itself in the outward man: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues have they used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips," &c. (Rom. iii. 13, &c.) We read in scripture of the sins of the flesh, as well as of the spirit: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." (2 Cor. vii. 1.) The sins of the spirit, like so many plague-sores, break out into the flesh. Wicked men are all over bespotted and be-leopard'd* with sin: lying is a spot in the tongue, pride is a spot in the eye, wrath a spot on the brow, bribery a spot in the hand, idolatry a spot on the knee: yea, they are called "spots and blemishes;" (2 Peter ii. 13;) not *spotted*, but "spots." Sin itself is a spot, and, like fire, it turns the subject it hath to deal with into its own nature. One part of the body in scripture is called "a world of iniquity:" "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." (James iii. 6.) How much iniquity is there in the world, when in this little member there is "a world of iniquity!"

Thus much shall suffice to have been spoken to the first thing propounded, namely, *why sin is expressed sometimes in scripture by the parts and members of our body.*

II. My second work is to show you, that *our right-eye sins, and our right-hand sins, our beloved lusts, may, in a more especial manner, be called ours; or, that every man hath his proper, his particular iniquity.*—"If thy right eye offend thee," &c. "If thy right hand offend thee," &c. Look, as it is with good men, though they have the seeds of every grace in them, yet some one may be said to be theirs in an eminent manner: (Abraham was eminent for obedience; Moses, for meekness; Job, for patience:) thus it is with wicked men; though they have the seed of every sin in them, yet some one may be said to be theirs in an especial manner. Wicked men in scripture are, as it were, marked out for several sins *calculo nigro* ["with a black stone, with an unfavourable suffrage"]:*—Cain, for his murder; Simeon and Levi, for their treachery; Corah and his company, for their conspiracy; Nebuchadnezzar, for his pride; Manasseh, for his cruelty; Balaam, for his covetousness. Or, look, as it is in the natural body; (though every man hath blood, phlegm, choler, melancholy, yet some humour or other is predominant from which a man hath its denomination;) so it is in the sinful body, some sinful humour or other hath the predominancy. Most men have some peccatum in deliciis, "some sweet morsel" that they roll under their tongue, which they will by no means spit out or part with. It would be no hard matter to show you, that several nations have their proper and peculiar sins,—as the Spaniards theirs, the French theirs, the Dutch theirs. Look into the scripture, and you will find, that the Corinthians had their sin, which is thought to be wantonness and uncleanness; and therefore the apostle, in the epistles that he writes to them, uses so many*

* The pious and learned author seems to have intended this word to refer to the spots of the leopard, as though it had been written *be-leoparded*, to distinguish it from a word much older, *belepered*, "spotted like a leprous person."—EDIT.

pressing arguments against this sin. The Cretians are branded for liars; the Jews, for idolaters. So your towns have their sins; villages, theirs; cities, theirs. Possibly, London's sin may be loathing spiritual manna, neglect and contempt of the gospel, a non-improvement of ordinances.

III. I am to inquire how this comes to pass, that *particular persons have their proper and particular sins.*

1. *Men have particular temperaments and constitutions of body, and therefore they have their particular sins suitable to their temperaments and constitutions.*—You heard before, how particular temperaments inclined men several ways. Creatures in the general are naturally delighted with those things which are fitted, suited, and accommodated to the genius and frame of their respective natures: as, in the same plant, the bee feedeth on the flower, the bird on the seed, the sheep on the blade, the swine on the root. The same seeds are not proper for the sand and for the clay. Every thing thrives most where it likes best. So it is in this case: *that sin is like to thrive most in the soul that we make most of, that we are most delighted in, that suits best our complexions and constitutions.* We must be careful here, lest we strain this too far, with some physicians and Epicureans, that hold the soul to be nothing else but the temper of the body. But, questionless, this hath a very great influence on the better part. Hence, some have adjudged it not fit for illegitimate persons to be admitted into ecclesiastical orders: and you know, under the law, by the appointment of God himself, “a bastard was not to enter into the congregation, to the tenth generation.” (Deut. xxiii. 2.)

And I humbly conceive, that a toleration of unclean mixtures is not only against religion, but against principles of polity and government; the children of filthy persons, for the most part, proving degenerate, ignoble, lascivious, and by that means become the blemishes, the ulcers, the plague-sores of the body politic, kingdom, and state whereunto they do belong.

2. *There are distinct and peculiar periods of times, distinct and peculiar ages, that incline to peculiar sins.*—For instance: childhood inclines to levity and inconstancy; youth, to wantonness and prodigality; manhood, to pride and stateliness; old age, to frowardness. You know, diseases make men fretful: now, *ipsa senectus morbus*, “old age itself is a disease.” If we take not heed, the sinful body will grow strong, when the natural body grows weak. I have heard of a good woman, something inclinable to passion, that used to say, “I must strive against peevishness when I am young, or else what will become of me when I am old?” And so covetousness is a sin that old age is very much addicted to. Windelin, in his “Moral Philosophy,” (cap. 25,) discourses learnedly, *Cur senes sint magis avari quàm juvenes?* [“On the reason why old men are more avaricious than their juniors.”] When God is taking people out of the world, they cling fast about it, and cry, “loath to depart;” truly, this is no good sign. You know, men that are sinking, and in a desperate case, lay hold on any thing.

3. *Men have distinct and particular callings, that incline them to particular sins.*—For instance: a soldier's employment puts him upon

rapine and violence. And therefore John the Baptist, when the soldiers demanded of him, "What shall we do?" tells them: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." (Luke iii. 14.) A tradesman's employment puts him upon lying, deceiving, over-reaching his brother. Ministers, upon the account of pleasing *the best*, as we many times catachrestically call them, or *the greatest*, of the parish, are tempted to flattery, to please men, to sew pillows under their people's elbows. Magistrates and judges are tempted to bribery and injustice: if great care be not taken, their very calling and office may prove a snare upon that account.

4. *Men have distinct and particular ways of breeding and education, and upon that account have their particular sins.*—The child that hears his father and mother swear, is like to swear too. That child that hath frequently wine and strong drink given to it by the parents when it is young, it is likely, may get a smatch of it, and love to it, and so prove intemperate when it is old. Joseph, by living in the court of Pharaoh, learned to swear the court-oath. Man is ζῶον μιμικόν, "a creature very much given to imitation." Examples have a very great influence on men, both in reference to virtues and vices, especially to the latter: we catch sickness one of another, but we do not catch health. For instance, the scripture, speaking of the son of Jeroboam, tells us, that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." (2 Kings xv. 9.) He writ after his father's copy, and therefore the sins of his father in a particular manner are taken notice of by the Spirit of God in that place. So in 2 Sam. vi. 20, you have an account of Michal's jeering of David, because he danced before the ark; and you will find that she is called there, not *the wife of David*, but *the daughter of Saul*: "And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!" Now, why is she called there *the daughter of Saul*? Because she had learned this wickedness from her father. We have woful experience of this in our days. Formerly people could say: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what works thou didst in their days, in the times of old." (Psalm xlv. 1.) Truly, the people of this generation may say: "We heard our fathers swear, and curse, and scoff, and mock at the ways of God." In reason we may expect men's manners to suit their education.

Thus much shall suffice to have been spoken to the third particular propounded to be discussed; that is to say, *how it comes to pass, that particular persons have their proper and particular sins, and thus much also for the doctrinal part.*

IV. The fourth and last thing is the USE and APPLICATION of this to ourselves.

USE I.

[*The first use is*] for lamentation and humiliation in the presence of God this day.—We trouble ourselves about other men's sins, (magis-

trates' sins, ministers' sins,) as the Pharisee: "Lord, I thank thee, I am not as other men are, an extortioner, an adulterer," &c., "or as this publican." And, in the mean time, where is the man that considers his own iniquity, his right-eye sin, or his right-hand sin? There are great outcries amongst us, "What have *others* done?" But who smites upon his thigh, and says, "What have *I* done?" We search every where, save where our Rachel sits upon her idol.

Possibly some poor soul may say, "Did I know this particular sin, this right-eye sin, or this right-hand sin, the Lord knows I would quickly pluck out the one, and cut off the other:" and that brings me to

USE II.

[*Which is the use*] of examination, how this sin may be discovered.—Now to this purpose, take these marks, or rules:—

1. *It may be known by the loves and tender respects the sinner bears unto this sin.*—Strong love, for the most part, hath but one single object. Affections are like the sun-beams in a burning-glass; the more united they are in one point, the more fervent. A wicked man hath a particular affection for his particular lust. As Abraham cried, "O that Ishmael may live in thy sight!" so a wicked man, "O that this sin may be spared!" This is his Benjamin. The soul is ready to say, "Here is one sin must be plucked out, and here is another sin must be cut off; and must this beloved lust die also? All these things are against me." The sinner seems to repent of sin, and to condemn sin, and himself for sin. But when the time of execution comes, the man is very tender-hearted: here is a reprieve for this sin, and there is a pardon for another sin. O it goes against him to cut the throat of his darling lust! (It is a woful case when a man will undertake to pardon his own sin: this is *crudelitas parcens*, "sparing cruelty!") And if it fall out that his beloved sin die a natural death,—that is, if the adulterer, for instance, cannot actually engage in bodily uncleanness as formerly, upon the account of old age,—he follows it to the grave, as we do our dear friends, and heartily mourns that he and his dear lust must part.

2. *It may be known thus: that sin that distracts us most in holy duties is our beloved sin.*—You may know that cold is natural to the water, and that it likes that quality best; because, let it be made never so hot, it will be still working itself to its own proper temper. Souls possibly may sometimes be warmed at an ordinance; but they quickly cool again, and are still working towards their proper lust, the sin they like best. You may take notice in scripture, that God, to speak after the manner of men, in an especial manner remembers the sins of wicked men in the performance of holy duties: "They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins." (Hosea viii. 13.) As if a felon or murderer convict should escape out of prison, and afterwards presume to come into the presence of the judge: this brings his felony or murder into remembrance; and herein their punishment is visible sin. They remember their sins in their duties, and so will God. The people of God themselves are tainted with this. Pride was the disciples' master-

sin; and whilst they were healing diseases, and casting devils out of other men's bodies, the *proud* devil was stirring in their own souls: and our Saviour gives them a rebuke for that: "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (Luke x. 20.)

3. *It may be known by its domination, its commanding power over all other sins.*—Look, as there is a kind of government in hell, (such an one as it is; Beelzebub is called "the prince of devils,") so, in a wicked man's soul, one sin or other is still uppermost, and keeps the throne. All other sins do, as it were, bow the knee to this sin, hold up the train of this sin, are obedient servants to this sin: it says to one, "Go," and it goes; and to another, "Come," and it comes. For instance: if *covetousness* be the beloved sin, lying, and deceiving, and injurious dealing, will serve that. If *ambition*, temporizing and sinful compliance will serve that. If *adultery*, sinful wasting of time and estate and body will serve that. If *vain-glory* be the Pharisees' great sin, "devouring widows' houses, under pretence of long prayers," will serve that. As it is with a man's body when it is hurt or maimed,—all the ill-humours will flow to the part that is ill-affected. Hence it is, when a man is first wounded, he feels but a little pain, because he suffers only upon the single account of the division of the part: but afterwards the pain is increased; for then he suffers doubly,—upon the account of the division of the part, as also by the conflux of ill-humours. When the soul hath received some gash, some hurt more than ordinary by its particular sin, all the sinful humours will make haste to feed that iniquity; so that this is the sin that carries it, and bears the sway in the soul. In a word: the sinner hath the curse of Ham as it were pronounced upon him: "A servant of servants" is he; his other sins are servants to his beloved sin, and he himself is a slave to them all.

4. *That sin that conscience in a particular manner doth chide a man for, that, it is likely, may be his particular sin.*—The Greek word for conscience is *συνησις*: it signifies "a joint knowledge," or "knowledge with another." It takes notice of things together with God. Conscience is God's deputy, God's spy, God's intelligencer, (pardon the word,) in our bosoms, an exact notary of whatever we think or do, a co-witness with God, as St. Paul is bold to call it. (Rom. ix. 1.) Now, wouldst thou know thy beloved sin? Harken to the voice of conscience. Doth that condemn thee for pride, for passion, for worldliness, for persecuting the ways of God? O remember, it is God's viceroy: honour it so far as to weigh and consider thoroughly what it saith. It is likely, this may be thy particular sin: that which dishonours God most, if conscience be any thing tender, will trouble thee most. Many a man deals with his conscience as Felix did with Paul,—harken to it awhile, whilst it tells them of their lesser faults, or that they are sinners in the general; but when it rebukes them for their darling lust, though they cannot say, "Go thy way," as Felix to Paul, yet, "Hold thy peace, and when I have a convenient season I will give thee the hearing!"

5. *It may be known by being impatient of reproof.*—Herod hears John Baptist gladly, till he preached against his Herodias. This is a *noli me*

tangere, "touch me not." The plant-animal, or the sensible plant, (so called,) when it is touched, shrinks up and contracts itself; the sinner shrinks when he is touched in the sore place. The eye is a tender part, and apt to be offended if you meddle with it. This is the reason why people are enraged against a powerful, soul-searching, soul-saving ministry. Most men are for mountebanks and quacksalvers, that make use altogether of lenitives, and healing plasters; but as for your faithful surgeons, that, according to art, will probe, and search, and cleanse the wound, they cannot away with them! "I hate him," saith Ahab of Micaiah; "he never prophesies good concerning me, but evil." Only I shall add this, that man, especially that minister, that reproves another for his sins, had need to be blameless as much as may be himself. Thus the apostle intimates: "Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" That man that is a teacher of others should teach himself so much the more. We teach others, when we deliver unto them rules and precepts, unto which they are to conform; we teach ourselves, when we obey those rules. "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?" &c. (Rom. ii. 21, 22.) That man that hath a beam in his own eye, is not likely to pull out the mote that is in his brother's.

6. *It may be known by this: it makes a man notoriously partial in his own case.*—David could allow himself another man's wife; and could condemn one to death for taking away another man's lamb.

7. *It may be known, by the covers, and cloaks, and fair pretences, that the sinner hath for this sin.*—Uncleanness and intemperance are "but tricks of youth, and sowing his wild oats;" luxury is "magnificence;" covetousness is "good husbandry;" pride is "a piece of nobleness, and grandeur of spirit;" yea, (which is more,) it is "humility." You have some that disparage themselves in company, and they call this "humility;" when, in truth, it is the height of their spirits; like the archer, that draws back the arrow, that it may fly so much the higher, and so much the further. It is strange blindness or deceit, or both, to call (not yellow or some middle colour, but) black, "white:" yet thus it is with many; they shape their darling lust like those virtues unto which they are extremely contrary. Every wicked man is sin's advocate, and will plead its cause gratis. "O," saith Judas, "to what purpose is this waste? This ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." (Matt. xxvi. 8, 9.) "This he said," saith another evangelist, "not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." (John xii. 6.) Beware of speaking any thing towards the justification of yourselves in any way of wickedness. You know, the malefactor is condemned before he is put to death; and so it is in the case of sin: *Cum peccator justificatur, peccatum condemnatur*, "When a sinner is justified, his sin is condemned;" and after condemnation followeth execution. Job vindicates himself in this particular: "If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom," &c., then "let thistles grow instead of wheat." (Job xxxi. 33, 40.) As if he had said: "I did not hide mine iniquity as Adam did; I did not cover my transgression; I was

open and ingenuous." The Psalmist saith, "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." But then it must be by God's hand, not ours.

8. *If there be any one sin, more than other, that the soul doth readily close with, that is its beloved sin; its right-eye sin, or its right-hand sin.*—Samson, when all the world could not take away his strength, is easily persuaded by Delilah. See how Solomon expresses the harlot's dealing with the young man: "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him:" (Prov. vii. 21:) the most she could do was to flatter him; and yet, notwithstanding, it is said, she forced him. Sin works altogether by enticement. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James i. 14.) Yet it is so powerful, that it amounts to a force, as the request of a king amounts unto a command.

9. *That sin which a man wishes were no sin, is like to be his beloved sin.*—The case of the young man in the gospel is considerable to this purpose. Saith our Saviour, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me. When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful:" (Matt. xix. 21, 22:) that is, he was very much troubled that there was such a truth as this, that the world, for Christ's sake, was to be parted with. So, Psalm xiv. 1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." "O," saith the fool, "that there was no God! that there was no heaven! that there was no hell!" Atheism was the beloved sin in that case. First men *wish* there were no Deity; and then they *judge* so, and *say* so. Carnal affections after some time settle in opinion and judgment. It is possible for men, by ways of unrighteousness, by a constant course of cheating and cozening, so far to shut up and imprison their natural light, and so to muffle their reason and understanding, that at length they may cheat and baffle their own souls; and think it a piece of justice and righteousness so to do.

10. *That sin which we think of first in the morning, and last in the evening, is like to be our beloved sin.*—God is the chiefest good, the prime object of our love: and therefore, as he is Alpha and Omega in himself, so he is also unto his people "the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." They begin the day with him: "When I awake, I am still with thee." (Psalm cxxxix. 18.) They end the day with him: thus the spouse: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth." (Canticles iii. 1.) You have mention of both these: "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early." (Isai. xxvi. 9.) Now this sin that I am treating of (like that *ανομος*, that "lawless person" that we read of, 2 Thess. ii. 8, "that man of sin") "opposeth and exalteth itself in the soul above all that is called God; and sitteth in the seat of God." (Verse 4.) A beloved lust is usually the sinner's *first* and *last*: he gives it entertainment first in the morning, and takes his leave of it last in the evening. Yea, this darling sin must be entertained and made much on in the bed-chamber. The Psalmist, speaking of a wicked man, tells us,

"He deviseth mischief on his bed." (Psalm xxxvi. 4.) For the most part, that is a very friend that we admit to our bed-sides.

11. *That sin which most infests us and troubles us in our solitudes and retirements, that is our beloved sin.*—My meaning is, when a man is alone, in his closet, or in the fields, and his thoughts run adrift, that sin which of themselves they move towards and close with, that may be his beloved sin; the current of the soul is that way. O Christian! mark the workings of thy heart in private, and thou mayest possibly make some discoveries. When a man retires himself into some solitary place, it is usually absurd to trouble him. It is a friend indeed, that falls in with him, and offers his company in that case. That sin is more than ordinarily beloved by us, that interposes in our privacies.

12. And, lastly, *that sin, that we are willing to endure greatest hardships and sufferings for, that is our beloved sin.*—For instance: suppose covetousness be the darling sin; what base, absurd, unreasonable offices will it put a man upon! how scraping, and niggardly, and dunghill-like will that man live, in his town, or in his parish, and expose himself to scorn and contempt from every one that knows him! Suppose ambition be the beloved sin; how will a man in that case swear, and forswear, and temporize, and, like the boatmen, look one way and row another; almost any thing for preferment! If uncleanness be the man's particular sin, how will he destroy his body, disgrace his name, overthrow his estate, for the gratifying of his lust! I dare aver, that the worst and basest drudgery imaginable, to scour kettles and dishes, to tug at the oar, to dig at the mine, are honourable employments, in comparison of this.

USE III.

[*The third use*] is for exhortation and direction, to press you to the mortification of your beloved sin, and show you how it may be mortified.—Let me take up that scripture again, "Mortify your members which are upon the earth;" (Col. iii. 5;) that is, let every sin be mortified: for, you must know, as death is to the members of the natural body, so is mortification to the members of the sinful body. Now in death the soul is separated not only from one member, (as it is in a paralysis or numb palsy,) but from all, even from the principal parts of the body as well as others. So it is in spiritual death; there is a separation of the soul, not only from this or that sinful member, but from the whole body of sin, from the principal parts and members of this body as well as others. The right eye is dead, the right hand is dead: it must needs be so; the one is "plucked out," and the other is "cut off."

A Christian must deal by his darling lust as the Israelites dealt by Adoni-bezek: "they cut off his thumbs and his great toes." (Judges i. 6.) So must thou deal with this sin; hack it, maim it, that it may not be able to go nor stand, nor act, nor stir, if it were possible. And for that purpose take these directions:—

1. *Labour to have your heart steeled with an holy courage and resolution against this sin.*—It is upon the account of baseness and cowardliness of spirit that people fall by the right hand of their spiritual enemy. Shall I give you some instances for this? Doth the devil tempt

thee to uncleanness? Is that thy right-eye sin, or thy right-hand sin? Take up St. Paul's resolution: "Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot?" Μη γενοιτο, "God forbid." (1 Cor. vi. 15.) [Take up] Joseph's resolution: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.) Doth the devil tempt thee to blasphemy, or to perjury, or to lying, or to any other sin of that nature? Take up the Psalmist's resolution: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked are before me." (Psalm xxxix. 1.) Art thou tempted to idolatry, to deny the truths of Christ, to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience? Take up the three children's resolution: "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan. iii. 18.) Every man should be a prince over his lusts; and, like Joshua's captains, should put his feet upon the necks of them. Here courage, resolution, severity, is very successful; and, in special, exercise your revenge on your beloved lust. "Fight not against small or great" comparatively, but against this kingly, this master-sin.

2. *Let your repentance be particular for your particular iniquity.*—It is not enough to confess your sins in the lump, in the general; but in prayer you must take particular notice of your right-eye sin, your right-hand sin. Thus David was particular in his repentance: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight:" (Psalm li. 4:) this evil of murder, and this evil of adultery,—pointing, as it were, with the finger to particular sins. Zaccheus makes a particular confession of that wrong and injustice that he had been guilty of: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (Luke xix. 8.) This particle "if" in that place may not be a note of doubting, but supposition.* "If I have taken," that is, *Seeing* I have taken "from men by false accusation!" *Si Deus est animus, "Seeing God is a Spirit."*

3. *Beware of those things that may occasion the commission of this sin.*—For instance: if thou art prone to the sin of lying, "keep a door before thy lips:" if to gluttony and drunkenness: "when thou goest to a feast, put a knife to thy throat." We use to say, proverbially, "Occasion makes a thief." This is true also in other cases: occasion makes a liar: occasion makes a drunkard. It is a sign of a naughty heart to dally with occasions to sin. "Look not thou upon the wine," saith Solomon, "when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." (Prov. xxiii. 31.) It is not simply unlawful to look upon wine in the glass; but, if this may occasion intemperance, here is a law laid upon our looks. That command which forbids a sin, forbids also those things that have a tendency thereunto, as is observed by learned commentators on the Decalogue. Sometimes this is expressed in scripture: the commandment that forbids adultery, takes-in all causes and occasions thereunto. Thus Solomon, speaking of an harlot: "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house." (Prov. v. 8.) Harlots, like pestilential diseases, make the

* In every edition except the first, these words are misprinted or *suspicion*.—EDIT.

houses infectious where they are; and therefore "come not nigh the door of her house." "Avoid all appearance of evil." (1 Thess. v. 22.) I know, there are some that dislike the translation of *εἰδος* by "appearance," and rather think it should be expounded "sort or kind." But whether the word be taken in a logical notion in the whole book of God, is very questionable; and therefore why we should depart from the current and stream of expositors, and the sense of our learned translators, I know not. When God would forbid the sin of injustice, selling wares by false weights, mark how it is expressed: "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small." (Deut. xxv. 13.) It was a sin not only to sell wares by one sort of weights, and take wares in by another; but to "have a great and a small weight in his bag." God would not have us come near the sin of injustice. Hence also is that caution of St. John: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." (1 John v. 21.) If you would avoid idolatry, beware of idols. He that would not hear the bell, must not meddle with the rope.

4. *Pray unto God, that thou mayest not fall into such a condition as may draw forth that corruption that thou art most prone to.*—This was that which undid Judas: he was naturally inclined to unjust gain, and he had the office of carrying the bag; and thus his lust was drawn forth. When a man is apt to be high-minded, it is a snare to be in a high place. When a man is passionate, it is sad to converse always or mostly with those that are "kindle-coals;" that, by provocations and unworthy carriages, are casting fire-balls into a man's soul; and he, having a gunpowder nature, is in a flame presently. And the nearer the relations in this case the worse. It is sad when my next neighbour's house is on fire; but it is worse when mine own is on fire. It is a promise made to the people of God, that all conditions of life, and all passages of providence, "shall work together for their good;" and, therefore, on the contrary, when our conditions and relations make for the worse, especially with reference unto our souls, it must needs be very sad.

5. *Learn to suspect things that are delightful.*—"The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes." (Gen. iii. 6.) Carnal pleasures are forbidden fruit. Agrippina poisoned her husband in that meat he loved best. The devil tempts us with dishes sweetly-poisoned. Love and delight *pari passu ambulant*, "walk together, and keep the same pace." Many a man hath been undone by riches, and honours, and worldly comforts, like the bee that is drowned in its own honey. Christians, be careful; every one of us hath Eve's sweet tooth in our heads.

6. *Labour to act that grace in especial manner, which is contrary to thy beloved sin.*—For instance: if passion be thy darling sin, labour to act the grace of meekness; if excess, the grace of temperance; if uncleanness, the grace of chastity. Let me tell you, Where grace is helped by nature, upon the account of a man's temper and constitution, there a little grace will go far. But when grace is to be employed against nature, it had need to be strong and active. Your watermen in some cases take their ease, and their boats will go of themselves; but

when wind and tide are against them, then they must labour at the oar. *Hic labor, hoc opus.* ["Here is need for labour and exertion."]

7. *Keep a watch over thy heart.*—"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23.) So our Saviour: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Matt. xv. 19.) Godliness is but a fancy till the heart be reformed. We read in the book of Psalms of Israel's turning unto God: "When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned, and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer." (Psalm lxxviii. 34, 35.) But was their conversion right? No: "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongue." (Verse 36.) And whence was this? "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." (Verse 37.) Therefore, mortify sin in its rise, in its first principle. Lay the axe to the root. There is more sap in the root than in the branches; there is more sin in the heart than in the life. One stroke at the root of the tree conduces more to the deadening of it, than many at the body, or the boughs, or any other part whatsoever.

To quicken your industry in this, know, that the motions of original sin, as they are permanent, so they are exceeding violent and impetuous. I remember the learned Davenant gives this difference between the remission of *actual* and *original* sin: "When *actual* sins are forgiven," saith he, "*penitus tolluntur, quoad maculam et reatum*, 'both as to their guilt and filth.' But it is not so with *original* sin: the *guilt* is done away, but the *stain* remains. This is a sin that dwells in us, that abides in us and abides by us; we shall not be rid of the body of death, till the death of the body." (*De Justitiâ habituali et actuali*, cap. v.) Sin is an ill tenant; it will not out till the house fall upon its head. Now, the certainty of the inherence of this sin is an argument of the more efficaciousness of its operation: *Modus operandi sequitur modum essendi.* ["The manner of its working follows the manner of its being."] Unquenchable fire burns more fervently than that which may be extinguished. The reason why the angels at this day do the will of God in a more eminent way than the saints on earth is,—because they have such a principle of holiness as cannot be lost to eternity; whereas the saints on earth have a weaker principle of holiness, which may unhappily be abated, though it be recruited again. The reason why the soul of an healthful person moves and acts with more vivacity, and energy, and power, than the soul of a sick man is,—because in the latter it may be departing, and taking its leave of the body, or at least may be in danger so to do; whereas the former, being a man of an hale and good constitution of body, the soul may act, inform, enliven it many years.

8. *Get a respect to all God's commandments.*—"Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." (Psalm cxix. 6.) The reason why men indulge any one lust is,—because they pick and cull their duties, and so indeed serve not the will of God, but their own choice. O! how many are there that answer the Lord with half obedience! like the echo, which makes not a perfect response of

the voice, but of *some part* thereof. Many make such a difference amongst the tables [of the Decalogue], as if only one side or one part were of God's writing. O sirs! this will not do, this will undo. The man that, like Agrippa, doth but *almost* believe, *almost* repent, *almost* conform to the will of God, that man shall be saved proportionably *almost*! One sin unrepented of will cause you to miscarry to all eternity. One crack in a bell may make it unserviceable, untunable; and till it be new-cast, it is good for nothing. One wound may kill your bodies, and so may one sin your souls. O Christians! what had become of you and me, if Jesus Christ had satisfied the justice of God for all but one sin? There is a text in Ezekiel that is usually taken for a place of the greatest mercy in the whole book of God: "When the wicked turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." (Ezek. xviii. 27.) You have to the same purpose, in verses 21, 22, of the same chapter. But pray mark what follows: "Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed." (Verse 28.) No mercy to be expected from this scripture, unless a man *turn away from all his transgressions*. The vessel of honour is distinguished from the vessel of dishonour, by this character, that it is "sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." (2 Tim. ii. 21.) And this is the commendation of Zachary and Elizabeth: "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke i. 6.) Halting in religion is a troublesome, deformed, dangerous gesture; and there is no cure for this like cutting-off the right foot.

9. *Lay hold on God's strength for the mortifying of thy beloved sin.*—Surely, this is no easy work. See how it is expressed in scripture. Sometimes it is called "the mortification of our members:" is to *mortify* a part of the body an easy work? Sometimes, "the circumcising of the foreskin of our hearts:" (Deut. x. 16:) did the Sichemites count *circumcision* an easy work? [It is also expressed] by "crucifying of the affections and lusts:" (Gal. v. 24:) was *crucifixion* an easy death? And here, in the text, it is called "a plucking out the right eye, and cutting off the right hand." The apostle Paul, in the fore-mentioned place, tells the Romans: "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.) He who is the Fountain of spiritual life, is also the Principle of this spiritual death. This is a work to be done by us, but *through the Spirit*. Hence in scripture God is said to do this: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed:" (Deut. xxx. 6:) and the apostle expresses this by "circumcision made without hands;" (Col. ii. 11;) intimating that it is not a work of man's hands, but God's.

QUESTION. If any ask me, "But how shall we lay hold on God's strength?"

REPLY. By faith. Great things are attributed unto this grace, because it lays hold on God, and sets God at work. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." (1 John v. 4.) It overcomes not only the honours, and riches, and pleasures of the world,

but the lusts of the world, of which you have mention, 1 John ii. 16. Faith is a self-emptying grace; a poor beggarly hand, rich only in receiving from another; something like David's sling and stone against Goliath-lusts. But, in the name of the Lord of hosts and by his strength, even a babe in Christ, through faith, shall overcome the world. I must tell you, that Hannibal, and Alexander, and all the glorious victors that we read of, were but fresh-water soldiers, in comparison of one that is born of God.

I shall only, to what I have said, add a few MOTIVES, to quicken you to your duty, and so commend all to God's blessing.

MOTIVE I.

Right-eye sins, and right-hand sins are the greatest hinderances of the soul's closing with Christ.—When you flay any creature, the skin comes off with ease, till it comes to the head, and there it sticks; more than ordinary skill is required to get it thence. Now I must tell you, the sin that I am dissuading you against is, not only the eye-sin, and the hand-sin, but the HEAD-sin; and here conversion sticks. The sinner forbears many sins, and performs many duties: but when it comes to this, "O master!" saith flesh-and-blood, "pity thyself, beware what thou doest! What! be thine own executioner? pluck out thy right eye? cut off thy right hand? A man's sin is himself. To deny ungodliness is, to deny thyself. This is a kind of *αυτοχρησία*, 'self-murder.' 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh.' (Eph. v. 29.) Is there no getting to heaven unless a man leave himself behind? This is *durus sermo*, 'an hard saying.'" As Naaman the Syrian: "When my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing:" (2 Kings v. 18:) so the sinner: "The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing!" The young man in the gospel tells Christ that he had kept all the commandments from his youth. But when Christ said to him, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up thy cross and follow me:" here he sticks: "He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions," (Mark x. 20—22,) or his great possessions had him. Alas! this poor young man little thought, that, notwithstanding his forwardness to keep the commandments, he was under the power of worldly lusts. O sirs! there is great strength in a river, when it runs smoothly and without noise.

MOTIVE II.

As these sins are the greatest hinderances of the soul's closing with Christ, so they prove the greatest trouble to the soul afterwards.—Your eye-sin will prove your eye-sore, yea, and your heart-sore. My meaning is, your conscience will suffer most upon the account of this sin all your days. Thus Job: "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." (Job xiii. 26.) When a man's conscience is disquieted and tormented for the sins of his youth,

then he may be said to "possess them;" yea, it may occasion not only grief, but guilt. Of all sins this is many times most unmortified, even after mortification. Soldiers that have received wounds and bruises when young, have smarted by them when they have been old. There are many good souls, that after cure have gone to heaven halting on the old maim.

MOTIVE III.

The mortifying of our darling lust, our right-eye sin, and our right-hand sin, is a choice evidence of regeneration.—Truth of grace hath, as much as any way, been declared thus. Paul after conversion becomes a preacher of that name which he before blasphemed. Those of Ephesus that were given to witchcraft and sorcery, after their conversion "brought their books together, and burned them before all men." (Acts xix. 19.) And many other instances of the like nature are urged by divines to this purpose. Cranmer, that had subscribed the popish articles with his right hand, afterwards, as a piece of revenge, put that hand first into the flames. A true convert, of all sins, will be revenged most upon that by which he hath most dishonoured God. His right eye and his right hand shall smart for it; the one must be "plucked out," and the other must be "cut off;" as we say of hunger, "He will kill that which, otherwise, would have killed him." I speak much of mortification and death to you this morning. Christians, be not afraid! To die thus, doth not argue imperfection: there is *corruptio perfecta*, "a corruption that tends to perfection." "I was alive," saith Paul, "without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." (Rom. vii. 9.) This is expiring unto life; just as an embryo expires after it becomes a child.

Here I would add two CAUTIONS under this head:—

1. *The forbearing of any outward act of sin whatsoever is no evidence of mortification or conversion.*—Sin may be restrained when it is not mortified. A chained lion is a lion still. A swine washed is a swine still. In some sense you may be said to be "a new man," and yet you may not be "a new creature." This may come to pass partly from the sense of temporal inconveniences, partly from the clamours of natural conscience, or from fear of wrath. Such principles as these are not strong enough to kill sin, or to heal the soul; but are like those odours which we use to raise men out of a fit of the falling-sickness, but [which] do not at all cure them of the disease.

2. *The mortifying of our darling sin is joined with an universal hatred of all sin.*—A true convert "hates every false way," as the Psalmist phrases it. (Psalm cxix. 104, 128.) Sin is often expressed in scripture by "abomination:" it is so to God; it should be so to man. *Anger* is only with reference to particulars; but *hatred* is *προς τα γενη*, "against the kind." A godly man hates sin *as sin*; and therefore he hates *every sin*. The devil hates goodness *as goodness*, and therefore he hates *all goodness*. *A quatenus ad omne, valet consequentia*. ["The consequence deduced from a part to the whole, is valid."] A man may be *angry* with sin, and not kill sin; but as "he that *hates* his brother is a murderer,"

so he that *hates* sin is a *mortifier*. When the right eye is plucked out, and the right hand is cut off, the whole body of sin hath its death's wound. The man that keeps himself from his iniquity, will keep himself from every iniquity. The heart with one hole reserved for sin, is not sound.

MOTIVE IV.

Mortification is a duty becoming the best of saints whilst they are in this world.—I told you in the beginning of this discourse, that the text was part of Christ's Sermon upon the Mount; and if you consult the first and second verses of this chapter, you shall find that it was preached to Christ's own disciples. *Vir bonus et pius, non est qui carnem non habet, sed qui carnem suam mortificat*: "A good man is not one that hath no flesh, but he that hath crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. v. 24.)

It is with our sinful body, as with our natural body: if you cut a wen, or any excrescence of that nature, it will grow again and again; and it will be an hard matter to be rid of it all your days. So though every day we be paring away our lusts, yet they grow again.

To close all: *Go on and persevere in the subduing and killing of thy beloved lusts.*—Mortification is a work once done, and yet in this life it is always a doing. There are some things that consist of an iteration of multiplied acts. As in wedlock, persons are actually married at once, the husband surrenders himself unto the wife, and the wife surrenders herself unto her husband; and yet if they live together suitably to that near relation, marriage is as it were renewed every day; there is a continual surrender of themselves each to other: so it is here. When the soul is first converted, the beloved sin is mortified; and yet there is a continual mortification of it. This is a duty that consists not in any one act, though never so good, never so vigorous; but it is a continued act of the whole life. It is not killing sin at one blow: the strength of sin decays by degrees; it begins in the weakening of sin, and ends in the destroying of sin. Sin dies a lingering death; therefore let us go on in this great and necessary work. You know, Samson denied, and denied Delilah, for some time; and would not discover where his strength lay. But, not holding out, he lost his strength and his life to boot. Beware of apostasy. Crabs, that go backward, are reckoned amongst unclean creatures. (Lev. xi. 10.) *Factum non dicitur, quod non perseverat*, ["That act of which continuity or perseverance forms no part, is not entitled to the appellation,"] is a maxim. A will not finished, is no will: a deed, unless it be signed, sealed, and delivered, is no deed. The sacrifice that was offered up unto God, was not to want so much as the tail. (Lev. iii. 9.) True Christians hate sin so perfectly, that they cannot be quiet till it be utterly abolished. First, they go to God for justification, *ne damnet* ["that sin may lose its condemning power"]; then, for sanctification, *ne regnet* ["that sin may not reign"]; then, for glorification, *ne sit* ["that sin may no longer exist"]. "Let us be faithful" as to this spiritual "death, that we may receive a crown of life." Amen.