

SERMON XVI.

BY THE REV. RICHARD MAYO, A.M.

WHAT MUST WE DO TO PREVENT AND CURE SPIRITUAL PRIDE?

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.—2 Corinthians xii. 7.

THE case that calls for resolution, and falls under our present consideration, is, *What we must do to prevent and cure spiritual pride.*—Pride is said to be “spiritual” in a double respect:—

1. In respect of its *object*.—When that is something which is spiritual; as gifts, graces, privileges, &c. For it may be differenced from fleshly pride, which is conversant about more carnal objects; as strength, beauty, riches, honours, or the like.

2. In respect of its *subject*.—Which is the heart, or “spirit,” of man; there is its proper seat. And so all pride, whatsoever be the object of it, may be said to be “spiritual.”

“To prevent and cure” are terms that may be thus differenced:—the former respects more especially the *actings* of pride; the latter, the *habit* of it in the heart. “Pride” is an evil and a sore disease; some call it “the tumour or tympany of the soul.” It is dangerous to all; it is deadly to some. The scope of this discourse is to prescribe proper remedies against it.

These words of the apostle Paul are the foundation upon which I shall build. He speaks a little before of “a man in Christ” that had a wonderful vision or revelation from God. (Verses 1—5.) By “a man in Christ” he means either a man united to him, or else a man that was extraordinarily acted and transported by him.* Some expound it by that passage in Rev. i. 10, where the apostle John says, he “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day;” that is, he was extraordinarily acted and transported by the Spirit.

Farther: by this “man in Christ” the apostle means himself. Because he is speaking of his own privileges and enjoyments, he chooseth to speak in the person of another. A good man is always backward to speak any thing in his own praise. He knows, it savours of pride and folly; that it should come out of another man’s lips, and not his own: (Prov. xxvii. 2:) therefore he never doth it, but when it is necessary for the honour of God and the vindication of his truth. And as he is always backward to it, so he is ever modest and self-denying in it: therefore the apostle speaks of another person, when he means himself.

* *Ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ*, (Mark i. 23; v. 2.) is “a man acted or agitated by a diabolical spirit.”

I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago—Some think, the apostle had this rapture or revelation [which] he here speaks of, at the time of his first conversion: then he lay three days and three nights in a kind of ecstasy, “and did neither eat nor drink.” (Acts ix. 9.) Several at their first conversion to God have found such raptures and ravishments as they have had cause to remember all their life after, and such as they have not experienced again during the whole course of their lives. Others (for the good reasons too long here to insert) are of opinion, that the time of this revelation was after his conversion, yea, several years after it.

During the time of this extraordinary vision or revelation he was *caught up to the third heaven*—So he calls it, as some think, with respect to the heavens under it. The air in which we breathe is the first; therefore the fowls of the air are called “the fowls of heaven:” the starry firmament is the second: and the place of the holy angels and glorified spirits is the third. Others do not like this distribution of the heavens; and, indeed, we can speak of them but conjecturally. This third heaven which the apostle was “caught up to,” he calls “Paradise;” (verse 4;) for he doth not speak of two raptures, but of one and the same; only he doubles it, to show the certainty of it. Heaven is elsewhere in scripture called “Paradise,” in allusion to that excellent and delicate garden that Adam was put into before his fall. Our Saviour said to the repenting thief, “Thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” (Luke xxiii. 43.)

The way and manner of this rapture he professeth himself to be ignorant of. Hence he says it, that *whether he was in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell*—That is, whether he was caught up soul and body together, or in soul only. The soul is not so tied to the body, but that for a season it may be separated from it, and afterwards return again to it.

While he was in this condition, *he heard unspeakable words*—Such as he neither could nor might “utter;” it was “not lawful” for him: possibly, he was forbidden. God saw not all *that* meet to be communicated to a world of sinners, *which* was allowed and indulged to this one eminent saint.

This divine rapture or revelation was like to be an occasion of self-exaltation to the apostle; he was in danger of being *exalted above measure* by means thereof—This he mentions twice, that it might be the better minded. It is the nature of pride, as it is of fire, to turn all things into fuel to feed itself. The holiest saint on earth is not secure from spiritual pride: if one should come down from “the third heaven,” and bring this imperfect nature with him, he were still in danger of this sin.

To prevent this sin in the apostle, lest he should be exalted in himself as he had been exalted by God, *there was given him a thorn in the flesh*—This pricked the bladder of pride, and kept him from being trussed up* “through the abundance of revelations.”

* In the signification which obtains in falconry, of a hawk *proudly rising up into the air with its prey*.—EDIT.

“By whom was this given him?” By God himself; it was by his wise ordination or permission. The love of God to his people is wonderfully seen in his preventing mercies, particularly in his preventing their falling into sins; as here, by putting a thorn into Paul’s flesh, he prevents the pride of his heart. This is that mercy for which David prays, and for which he also praiseth God. It is as great a mercy to prevent our committing of sin, as it is to pardon it when it is committed.

“But what was this ‘thorn in the flesh,’ which was given the apostle to prevent spiritual pride and self-exaltation?” Various are the conjectures of interpreters about it. The Greek word, *σκολοψ*, is but this once used in all the New Testament: it signifies “a sharp stake,” upon which malefactors of old were fastened, when executed; as also “a pricking thorn” that runs into a man’s flesh or foot, as he goes through woods and thickets. Some think that this thorn in the flesh was a fleshly lust, some evil concupiscence that the apostle felt to be active or stirring in him. Others think that we are thereby to understand some sore temptation of Satan, a blasphemous or atheistical suggestion or injection: this is a pinching thorn indeed, and hath made many of the souls of God’s people to bleed. Others understand it of a wound in his spirit or a sting in his conscience, whereby he was pressed down, as it were, to hell, as before he was “caught up to heaven.” Others understand it of the reproaches and persecution of his enemies: wicked men are likened unto “thorns” in scriptures. Others, again, understand it of some bodily distemper, an acute, tormenting pain; such as stone, or gout, or the like: of this opinion are some ancient and many modern writers. Augustine freely confesseth, *se nescire quid sit*, “that he did not know what it was.”

The apostle himself tells us, be it what it will, that it was a “messenger of Satan:” he sent it, though God gave it. A godly man, at the same time and by the same means, may be both afflicted of God and buffeted of Satan. God and Satan both (though with a different design, and to a different end) may have a hand in the same affliction; God intending the good, and Satan the hurt, of a child of God. What a gracious God do we serve, who over-rules Satan in all his devices against us, so that he cannot have his ends upon us!

Thus I have briefly paraphrased upon the words of my text, and set before you several useful notes from them, as they lay in my way. The main observation which I shall insist and dilate upon, is this:—

OBSERVATION.

That one great design of God in all his dispensations to his people, is to prevent and cure the pride of their hearts.—This, you see, was the thing [which] God designed in letting Satan loose to afflict and buffet the apostle, and therefore he gave him a thorn in his flesh. This was his design in leading the children of Israel such a dance in the wilderness. They might well have gone from Egypt to Canaan in less than forty weeks; yet there he made them to wander for the

space of forty years : and why was it? The Spirit of God tells us, that it was "to humble" them. (Deut. viii. 2.) There are other reasons also assigned ; but this was the first and greatest reason. Elihu informs us of God's various dealings with the sons of men, and of his various ends therein ; and, amongst the rest, this is none of the least,—"to hide pride from man." (Job xxxiii. 17.) Two ways may God be said "to hide pride from man." 1. By *pardoning* it.—And so this very word is used in another place, to note the gracious act of God in pardoning the sin of man: "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," or "hidden." (Psalm xxxii. 1.) 2. As God hides pride from man by pardoning it, so also by *preventing* it.—"To hide pride" is all one with hindering it ; and in this sense it is here taken. God is said "to hide pride from man," not by pardoning it when it is acted, but by hindering and keeping man from the acting of it.

I might show you how God designed this in his *creating* man. At first he made him of the dust of the earth ; and this might keep him humble,—even the sense of his original. God designed this in his way of *redeeming* man by his Son Jesus Christ. We are thereby given to understand, that we could no more have redeemed ourselves, than we could have created ourselves ; that we are as much beholden to a Redeemer for salvation and eternal life, as to a Creator for our natural life. Yea, God designs this in his way and method of *saving* man ; which is by his grace, and "not by works of righteousness which we do." (Titus iii. 5.) We must condemn ourselves, before he will justify us ; and renounce our own righteousness, if ever we will be made righteous. And why is this, but that pride should be excluded, and that "no flesh might ever glory," or exalt itself, "in his sight?" (Rom. iii. 20 ; 1 Cor. i. 29.)

Yea, farther, I might let you see how this is God's design in his more inferior providence and dispensations.

This is his design in his *exalting* his people, not that they might be made proud, but more humble ; that they might think and say, with David, "What are we, Lord? and what are our father's house, that thou shouldest bring us hitherto?" (2 Sam. vii. 18.) This is his design in *afflicting* them : therefore he brings them low, that they might be more lowly-minded. Affliction is the physic by which he brings down that swelling which is in their souls. This is his design in *deserting* them : therefore he hides his face, that he may hide pride from his people. He leaves them, as he did Hezekiah, that they "might know all that was in their hearts." (2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) For this reason he leaves them to be reproached and persecuted by men : for this reason he leaves them to be tempted and buffeted by Satan : for this reason he leaves them to be overcome or overtaken by sin. By their sins and falls they are made more watchful, and more humble, too. Peter was too much opinionated of his own strength and love to Christ. "Lord," says he, "though all thy disciples forsake thee, I will not forsake thee." (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35.) But after his fall he was crest-fallen, and more modestly conceited of himself. Our

Saviour said to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" He answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." (John xxi. 15—17.) He speaks to the reality, not to the degree, of his love to Christ. He had done now comparing with, and preferring himself before, the rest of the disciples.

The main reason of the point is this,—because pride is a sin that is most hateful unto God: he hates all sin, but more especially this sin. There are "six things that God hateth: yea," there are "seven that are an abomination unto him;" and the first and chiefest of those is pride. He hates "a proud look," (Prov. vi. 16, 17,) but he hates more a proud heart: "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord;" (Prov. xvi. 5;) not abominable only, but "an abomination" in the abstract. Twice it is said in the New Testament,—once in the Epistle of James, (chap. iv. 6,) and the second time in the first Epistle of Peter, (chap. v. 5,)—that "God resisteth the proud;" *αντιτασσειται*, "he fights and sets himself in battle-array against" them. He opposeth them, because they oppose him; nay, if it were in their power, they would depose him, too; they would be God to themselves. This is the devilish nature of pride, that whenas other sins are against God's laws, this sin is against his sovereignty and his being; other sins are a turning from God, this is a turning upon him. Hence it is that God is said to behold "the proud afar off," as if he could not endure the sight of them. (Psalm cxxxviii. 6.) He hates the proud with his heart, he curseth them with his mouth, he punisheth them with his hand; for proof of this, peruse the texts in the margin. (Psalm cxix. 21; Prov. xvi. 5; Isai. xxv. 11; xxiii. 9; ii. 12, 13.) I hasten to what I principally intend.

Is this so? Doth God design in all his dispensations to prevent and cure the pride of the heart? Then let us be exhorted to comply with God herein; let us make it our care and endeavour so to do. This exhortation concerns us all, forasmuch as we are all infected with this plague; none can say they are free of this contagion. There is no distemper more epidemical; it reacheth the poor as well as the rich, the godly as well as the wicked; though it hath dominion only in the latter, yet it dwells in the former. You see how it was with the apostle Paul; you read how it was with the apostle Peter, with David, with Hezekiah, &c. The holiest persons on earth are more or less sick with this disease; how therefore are we all concerned to endeavour the prevention and cure thereof! And if any ask what they must do in order thereunto, the remainder of the discourse shall be spent in the resolving and satisfying of this inquiry.

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Be thoroughly convinced of the greatness and sinfulness of this sin.*—How that it is a sin of the greatest magnitude, a first-rate sin, greater than theft, intemperance, or uncleanness, or any other fleshly wickedness. It is, indeed, the strength and heart of the

old man ; it lives in us, when other sins are dead ; yea, it will help to kill other sins, that it may boastingly show their heads, and blow the sinner up with a conceit of his own strength and holiness. It is a sin that will take sanctuary in the holiest duties, and hide itself under their skirts ; yea, it will pollute our holy things, and turn remedies themselves into diseases. I prefer this direction, and shall be the longer upon it, because when men are convinced of the sinfulness of this sin, that it hath more evil in it than other disgraceful sins, they will then set themselves in good earnest to mortify and subdue it. Then they will put it far away from them, and deal with it as they do with those sins that argue them, in the judgment of all men, to be graceless and ungodly persons. Remember, therefore, what hath been already hinted concerning the odiousness of this sin. It is hateful indeed to men, when it is discerned ; but it is most hateful unto God. His nature and his honour both engage him against it ; he doth severely punish it, both in this world and in the next. Pride is the forerunner not only of temporal, but of eternal, destruction. (Prov. xvi. 18.) This one sin, unless it be pardoned and subdued, is sufficient to turn us all into hell ; it was the sin and the condemnation of the devil and his angels.

There are two properties in pride which greatly aggravate it, and make it out-of-measure sinful and abominable :—

1. The *antiquity* of it.—It was the first enemy that God ever had. This was the sin of the fallen angels, and also of our first parents ; this was the original of original sin. Some have disputed whether pride or unbelief had the precedency in man's fall ; (“ a question,” as one says, “ much like that,—whether repentance or faith hath the precedency in his rising ;”) but all are of opinion that man's pride, if it was not antecedaneous, yet at least it was contemporary with his unbelief ; and that pride was the great cause of his apostasy. He proudly affected to be as God, to have known good and evil. (Gen. iii. 5.) He fell from what he was, by a proud desire of being what he was not.

2. The *pregnancy* of it.—It is a big-bellied sin ; most of the sins that are in the world are the offspring and issue of pride. Let me instance in several other sins that are the genuine spawn of this sin :—

It causeth *covetousness*.—Though covetousness is said to be “ the root ” of other evils, yet this root itself springs from pride. What is covetousness but the purveyor of pride, and a making provision for the lusts thereof ? Why are men greedy of worldly wealth, but for the feeding and maintaining of “ the pride of life ? ” Habakkuk tells us, that “ he who is a proud man enlargeth his desire as hell.” (Chap. ii. 5.)

Again: it causeth *ambition*.—Proud persons have aspiring thoughts, and think themselves the fittest persons to preside in church or state. Haman said, “ Whom should the king honour but myself ? ” (Esther vi. 6.) A proud person takes it for an injury if any be preferred before him, though never so deserving ; and he bears a secret grudge

to any that had a hand in it, though they did it with the greatest sincerity and impartiality. None are friends to proud persons, but those that humour and honour them.

Again : pride causeth *boasting*.—Hence it is that, in two places of scripture, “proud” persons and “boasters” are put together. (Rom. i. 30 ; 2 Tim. iii. 2.) A proud person is ever praising and commending himself ; and when he is ashamed to do it by open ostentation, then he doeth it by secret insinuation and circumlocution.

Again : it causeth *scorning*.—Disdain of others comes from men’s over-valuing of themselves. Compare two scriptures : you read, James iv. 6, how God hath said, that he “resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the humble.” Now where hath God said this ? You will find it, Prov. iii. 34 : there it is said, “Surely he scorneth the scorners : but he giveth grace unto the lowly.” You see, the same persons that are called “scorners” in the Old Testament, are called “proud” in the New ; so that scorning is the immediate fruit and effect of pride.

Again : it causeth *lying*.—Proud persons are great liars. Most of the lies and falsehoods that are told in the world, are to avoid disgrace and shame, or to purchase applause and esteem.

Again : it causeth *contention*.—The scripture is express in this : “Only by pride cometh contention.” (Prov. xiii. 10.) Ay, that is the greatest makebate in the world : “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife :” (Prov. xxviii. 25 :) he is a very firebrand in the place where he lives ; he is like an unpolished stone, that will never lie even in any building.

Again : pride causeth *unthankfulness*.—Hezekiah’s pride and ingratitude are coupled together in scripture. (Isai. xxxix.) Proud persons,—instead of prizing, they despise, the mercies of God, and think diminutively of them ; they look upon God’s gifts as due debts, and, instead of being thankful for what they have, they are ready to think [that] they have not what they do deserve.

Again : it causeth *selfishness*.—Pride makes men prefer themselves, not only before others, but before God himself. Proud persons idolize themselves, and make self their principal end. They love themselves more than God, and they live to themselves more than to God ; they are not so zealous for his honour as for their own. Their estates and parts are more at the command of their pride, than at the command of God.

Again : it causeth *carual confidence*.—Proud persons are fearless persons ; they are so persuaded of their own strength and the goodness of their hearts, that they can walk in the midst of snares, and venture upon temptation, and fear no harm. “The fool rageth,” says Solomon, “and is confident.” (Prov. xiv. 16.) Pride makes men insensible of their danger, till it be too late.

Again : pride causeth *self-deceit*.—Proud persons “think themselves something, when they are nothing ;” and so “deceive themselves.” (Gal. vi. 3.) They take gifts for grace, and the common, for the saving, works of the Spirit. Presumption goes with them for

faith, and a little sorrow for sin is repentance. They do not distinguish between the form and power of godliness, betwixt a blockish stupidity and true peace of conscience.

Thus I have told you many, but not one half, of the evil effects of pride. Let me proceed a little farther in this discovery.

Pride makes men *ensorious and uncharitable*.—Proud persons are very prone to judge and censure others, especially if they differ from them in opinion; a little matter will make a proud person to count and call such “hypocrites,” or “heretics.” He no sooner espies a mote in their eyes, but he thinks it a beam; he would have others to think the best of him, but he himself will think the worst of others.

Again: it makes men *whisperers and backbiters*.—Such are joined by the apostle Paul with “proud” persons. (Rom. i. 30.) Those who are proud do not only censure others in their hearts, but they reproach and defame them with their tongues: they hope [that], by speaking evil of others, they shall be the better thought-of themselves; they endeavour to build their own praise upon the ruins of others’ reputation.

Again: it makes men *dislikers and haters of reproof*.—Proud persons are ready to find fault with others, but they do not like to hear of their own faults. Solomon says of “a scorner,” (that is, a proud person, as ye heard before,) that he doth “not love one that reproveth him;” (Prov. xv. 12;) and in another place he says, that he “hates” him. (Prov. xii. 1.) Though the reprover was his friend before, yet now he counts him as his enemy. Herod imprisoned John for telling him of his sin, though, before, he revered him. (Mark vi. 17—20.)

Again: pride makes men *heretical*.—One says of pride, that it is “the mother of heretics.”* Simon Magus, that great heresiarch, was a very proud man: the Gnostics, the Manichees, the Eunomians, were all noted for pride; the latter vainly and blasphemously boasted that they knew God as well as he knew himself. Experience teacheth, that if any infection of heresy comes into a place, those that are proud do soonest catch it. “Mark those,” says one, “that are turned anywhere from the way of truth; and see if they were not proud and conceited persons.”

Again: it makes men *separatists and schismatical*.—There are such persons amongst the professing people of God, though all are not such that go by that name. “These be they,” says Jude, “who separate themselves.” (Jude 19.) “They went out from us,” says the apostle John, because “they were not of us.” (1 John ii. 19.) Proud, conceited Christians are not contented to come out and separate from the unbelieving, idolatrous world, but they will separate also from the true church of Christ, and cast off all communion with them who hold communion with Him. They will say to those that are holier than themselves, “Stand off; for we are holier than you.” (Isai. lxxv. 5.) O, it is pride that is the chief cause of all church-

* *Hæreticorum mater superbia*.—AUGUSTINUS.

rents and divisions. We may thank pride for all the factions and fractions that are in the churches of Christ at this very day.

Again : pride makes men *hypocrites*.—It prompts them to put on a vizard and mask of religion, and to be in appearance what they are not in reality. Proud persons “love the praise of men more than the praise of God ;” (John xii. 43 ;) and therefore they are more careful to *seem* religious, than to *be* so indeed ; they more study to approve their ways to men, than they do their hearts to God.

Again : pride makes men *malicious and wrongful*.—Proud persons are forward to do wrong, but backward to bear or endure it. They expect that others should forgive and bear with them, but they will not forgive or bear with others : they require “an eye for an eye,” and “render evil for evil,” nay, sometimes evil for good. A proud person careth not whom he wrongs or betrays, so he may accomplish his own ends. He makes no bones of falsehood, slander, oppression, or injustice, if he apprehend it necessary to his own honour or ambition.

Again : it makes men *murmurers and complainers*, μεμψιμοιροι.—Proud persons “find fault with their lot,” and are “discontented with their condition.” They think themselves wiser than God himself,—that in some things they could mend what he doeth or hath done. They suppose they could guide God’s hand, and “teach him knowledge ;” (Job xxi. 22 ;) if they were of his council, they could give him direction for the better governing of the world in general, and for the better ordering of their own conditions and concerns in particular.

Again : pride makes men to *slight the authority and command of God*.—Proud persons do not only oppose their wisdom to God’s wisdom, but their wills, also, to God’s will. They not only disobey, but despise, the commandment of God, and say, (at least in their hearts,) as that proud king, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice ?” (Exod. v. 2 ;) or as those proud ones in Jeremiah, “We are lords, we will come no more unto thee.” (Jer. ii. 31.) The prophet calling the Israelites to “hear and give ear,” he immediately subjoins, “Be not proud ;” and by-and-by he adds, “If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.” (Jer. xiii. 15, 17.)

Again : it maketh persons to *establish their own righteousness, and to set that up in the room of Christ’s righteousness*.—Proud persons will “not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God ;” so it is expressed in the epistle to the Romans. (Chap. x. 3.) God hath provided a righteousness for sinners of the children of men, such as is every way sufficient to justify and save them ; and that is the righteousness of his Son. What he did and suffered, may by faith be imputed and made over to them, as if they themselves had done and suffered it ; so that, “as by the disobedience of” Adam they “were made sinners, by the obedience of” Christ they might “be made righteous ;” (Rom. v. 19 ;) and as Christ was “made sin for” them, so they may “be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. v. 21.) But such is the pride of man’s heart, that he will

not submit to this way of justification and salvation; he will not be beholden to another for that which he thinks he hath in himself; he will not go abroad for that which he thinks he hath at home. A proud sinner sees no need of a Saviour, and thinks he can do well enough without him. Thus I have set before you two decades of the evil effects of pride; I might have given you as many more. May all serve to show you the sinfulness of this sin!

DIRECT. II. *Be thoroughly persuaded that this sin of pride is in yourselves; that you are deeply guilty of it, and in great danger by it.*—Though you see it to be a sin, and a great sin, yet if you do not see it to be *your* sin, and that it is in you in a prevailing and dangerous degree, you will let it alone, and little trouble yourselves about it. This therefore is a second thing that you must be convinced of; and one would think there needed not much ado to bring you to this conviction. Pride, indeed, is such a hateful thing that few will own it; the proudest persons would be accounted humble: but if you look into yourselves, you will easily discover the manifest symptoms and indications of this evil disease. Run over the foregoing effects of pride; and then consider how many of them are found in yourselves. Effects do always imply and suppose their proper causes. Some bless themselves, and say, they thank God they are not proud, because they do not follow fashions, and go brave in their attire; because they do not affect great titles and high places, but would rather move in a lower sphere: but let such know, this plague may be in their hearts, though they have no such tokens of it in their faces. Little do men think what a humble outside, what contempt of honourable places and titles, what meanness and plainness of apparel in themselves, what exclaiming and crying out against pride in others, yea, what confessing and bemoaning of this sin to God, will consist with the prevalency and predominancy of it in their own hearts. You remember, I distinguished in the beginning between fleshly and spiritual pride; and the latter is much the worse sort, and more hateful to God. He is a Spirit; and as he likes best of spiritual worship, so he hath the greatest dislike of spiritual pride. What matters it, then, that thou art not lifted up with airy titles, with gay apparel, and the like, so long as thou art puffed up with things of a more spiritual nature,—as with thy gifts and knowledge, thy privileges and enjoyments, thy graces and duties? Pride is a worm that will breed in any of these. The apostle Paul was like to have been caught in this snare, by means of his being “caught up to the third heaven.” A Christian, if he hath not a care, may be proud of his very humility: it is hard starving this sin, whenas there is nothing almost but it can live upon. But, I remember, I was too long in the first direction; therefore I must be the shorter in this, and those that follow.

DIRECT. III. *Be much in the meditation of death and judgment.*

1. The serious and frequent meditation of *death* will be a means to kill pride.—Some, to mortify the pride of their hearts, have kept a death's-head, or a dead man's skull, always in their chambers: it is

of more use to have the thoughts of death always in their minds. What is man, but a little living clay? And what is his life, but "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?" (James iv. 14.) Augustine doubted whether to call it *mortalis vita, vel vitalis mors*, "a dying life, or a living death." One says of man's life, that "it is a little warm breath, turned in and out at the nostrils." The prophet Isaiah tells us, that "man's breath is in his nostrils," and therefore in nothing "is he to be accounted of." (Isai. ii. 22.) And as, for this reason, man is not "to be accounted of" by others, so neither by himself. It is but a little, a very little while more, and you must be gone hence, and be seen no more; your "breath goeth forth," and all your "thoughts perish," (Psalm cxlvi. 4.) and you yourselves will rot and perish: and shall rotting and perishing things be proud things? Shall man be lifted up with what he hath, who shortly himself must not be,—I mean, in this world? Now you differ, it may be, from other men, and are above them in riches and greatness, in parts and privileges; but two questions may clip your wings, and keep you from soaring too high in your own conceits:—

(1.) *Who made you to differ?*—I suppose, none of you will say (as one once did) that you made yourselves to differ: you will confess, I hope, that you have nothing but what you have received; and so there is no room for pride or glorying therein. If you excel in any gift or grace, you must say of it, as he of his hatchet, "Alas! it is but borrowed." (2 Kings vi. 5.)

(2.) *How long will there be this difference?*—Death is at hand; it stands at the door; and that will level you with those that are lowest. In the grave, whither we are all hastening, there is no difference of skulls; there "the rich and the poor," the learned and the unlearned, do all "meet together:" (Prov. xxii. 2:) the dead bones of men are not distinguished by the ornaments or abasures of this temporal life.

2. As the meditation of death will be a means to mortify pride, so will also the meditation of *judgment*. The time will come when you must be accountable unto God for all [that] you have and do enjoy: all your mercies and enjoyments are but as so many talents with which you are intrusted, and for which you must give an account. You are not owners, but stewards, of them; and the time will come when you must "give an account of your stewardship." (Luke xvi. 2.) So the apostle Paul concludes: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. xiv. 12.) He must give an account of himself in his natural capacity, as a man; in his civil capacity, as a great or rich man; and in his spiritual capacity, as a good or religious man. He must give an account of all his receipts, of all his expenses; what he hath received of God, and how he hath laid it out for God. A serious reflection upon this one thing will have a double effect:—

(1.) *It will make you careful.*

(2.) *It will keep you humble.*—You will not easily over-reckon your-

selves for any thing, when you consider the reckoning that you must make for all things. Especially if this be added, that the more you do receive, the greater will be your reckoning. That is a sure word of our Saviour's: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." (Luke xii. 48.) When God sows much, he expects to reap much; he requires, not only an improvement of our talents, but a *suitable and proportionable* improvement of them; that they should be doubled; that two talents should be made four, and five talents ten. (Matt. xxv. 20—23.)

DIRECT. IV. Consider the many and great imperfections of your *graces and duties*.

1. Consider the imperfections of your *graces*.—How much water is mingled with your wine, and dross with your silver, and honeycomb with your honey! How much greater your ignorance is than your knowledge, your unbelief than your faith! How the love of the world is as much [as,] if not more than, your love of God! If you were perfect in grace and holiness, then you would have no pride at all. How is it, then, that you are so proud and conceited, when grace is so imperfect, when you are so short of what is attainable, and of what others have attained? Should that man be proud, who hath so little love to God and delight in him as thou hast? whose faith and patience, whose holiness and heavenly-mindedness, is so little as thine is? Should that man admit of a proud thought, whose grace and holiness is so small, that he is uncertain whether he hath any at all in sincerity? Surely the weakness and imperfection of your graces should prevent the pride and haughtiness of your hearts.

2. Consider the imperfections of your *duties*.—If you did all that was commanded, you were but "unprofitable servants." (Luke xvii. 10.) What are you then, when you fall so short of your duty? You neither do what God commands you, nor as he commands it to be done. How often are duties neglected! and how often are they negligently performed! How listless are you to them! how lifeless in them! how quickly weary of them! Can they be proud who consider how coldly they pray, how carelessly they hear, how distractedly they meditate, how grudgingly they give alms, and the like? Leave pride to the Papists, who vainly think [that] their works are works of *super-erogation*: let us be humble, who know that our works are works of *subter-erogation*. God may say of the best of us, as he doth of the angel of the church of Sardis, that our works are not "perfect," or "full," before him. (Rev. iii. 2.) O no! the Lord knows they are full of gaps and imperfections.

DIRECT. V. Reflect seriously upon the *sinfulness of your hearts and lives*.—Our defects in grace and duty may keep us low, but our abounding in sin and wickedness may keep us much lower. Can that heart be proud and lifted up, that considers the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness that dwells in it and proceeds out of it? Those thefts, adulteries, murders, blasphemies, and such-like, that appear abroad in the lives of others,—they lie lurking at home in your

hearts. How would it humble and shame you, if others should know the one-half, nay, the hundredth part, of that sin and wickedness by you, that you know by yourselves! In order, therefore, to the cure of spiritual pride, be you much in self-reflection; be not strangers to yourselves, and to the sinfulness of your own hearts and lives. Should that man be proud, that hath sinned as thou hast sinned, and lived as thou hast lived, and wasted so much time, and abused so much mercy, and omitted so many duties, and neglected so great means? that hath so grieved the Spirit of God, so violated the laws of God, so dishonoured the name of God? Should that man be proud, who hath such a heart as thou hast? so full of atheism, unbelief, ignorance, impenitency, hypocrisy, envy, malice, discontent, worldliness, selfishness, &c.? Nay, should not thy very pride itself be a matter of great humiliation to thee? Surely it should greatly humble thee to think that a sin so odious in itself, so mischievous in its effects, should be still so predominant in thy soul. It is possible that a Christian may turn his pride against itself, and his very reflecting upon it may be a means of the subduing of it.

DIRECT. VI. Labour after a more distinct knowledge of God and of his excellencies.—It is helpful to cure pride, for a man to know himself,—his own nothingness and vileness; but it is a greater help to know God,—his holiness and greatness, &c. The apostle Paul saith, that some “knowledge puffeth” men “up;” (1 Cor. viii. 1;) but this pulls them down. It is true, by all our searching we cannot “find out God unto perfection,” (Job xi. 7,) we can never come to a full understanding of all his excellencies; but so much may be known of God as may make us to admire him and to abhor ourselves. What is man, the best of men, in comparison of him? Job sometimes thought and spake overvaluingly of himself; but when once he came to compare himself with God, and to set God before him, then he is presently in the dust; yea, he “abhors himself in dust and ashes.” (Job xlii. 6.) We never have such low thoughts of ourselves, as when we have the clearest discoveries of God. When the prophet Isaiah had a glimpse of the glory and holiness of God, he presently cries out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” (Isai. vi. 5.) He had a deep sense upon him of his own vileness and wretchedness. The true reason why men’s hearts are so lofty and lifted up within them is, because they have not right notions and apprehensions of God, and do not consider that infinite distance that is betwixt him and them. It might serve a little for the cure of spiritual pride, to compare ourselves with such men as are above us. As it is a good means to keep down discontent, to consider that many others are below us; so it is a good means to keep down pride, to consider that many others are above us. Our knowledge is but ignorance, our faith but unbelief, our fruitfulness but barrenness, if compared with theirs. But this will more subdue our pride,—if we compare ourselves with God, and consider how infinitely he is above us. We are no more to him than a drop to the ocean, than “the small dust of the balance” to the whole body of

the earth: our wisdom is foolishness to God, our strength is weakness, and our holiness is wickedness unto him.

DIRECT. VII. *Be well-instructed in this,—that humility and lowliness of mind is the great qualification and duty of all Christ's true disciples and followers.*—They must be “converted, and become as little children.” (Matt. xviii. 3.) In two things especially they must be as such,—in malice, and in humility. Instead of contending to be greater than others, they must be servants of all, (Matt. xx. 27,) “in honour preferring one another.” (Rom. xii. 10.) They must follow their Lord's example in stooping “to wash one another's feet;” (John xiii. 14;) and must learn of him to be “meek and lowly in heart.” (Matt. xi. 29.) “As the elect of God” they must “put on bowels of mercies,” and “humbleness of mind.” (Col. iii. 12.) They must “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and long-suffering.” (Eph. iv. 1, 2.) “In lowliness of mind” they must “esteem others better than themselves.” (Phil. ii. 3.) These are all scripture-injunctions, and they plainly show how all Christians ought to be qualified. Let me add that excellent passage: “All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.” (1 Peter v. 5.) The word *εγκομβοομαι* signifies to “tie or fasten together.” Humility is the riband or string which ties together the graces and fruits of the Spirit: if that fails, they are all scattered and weakened. Humility, as well as “charity, is the bond of perfectness.” (Col. iii. 14.) The noun *κομβος*, from whence the verb is derived, doth signify a “knot.” It was the usage of old, and so it is still, for persons to adorn their heads and other parts with knots. The apostle exhorts Christians to adorn themselves rather with humility; that is the great ornament of a Christian; therewith all Christ's disciples must be clothed and adorned. This renders them comely in the sight of men, yea, and in the sight of God too. As “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” so the ornament of an humble and lowly spirit, “is in his sight of great price.” (1 Peter iii. 4.) Indeed, all along this was the great requisite in the people of God: the main thing that he required of them was, “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with” and before him; so the prophet informs us. (Micah vi. 8.) “To do justly, and to love mercy,”—that is the sum of all duty to man; “to walk humbly,”—that is the sum of all duty to God.

DIRECT. VIII. *Set before your eyes the examples of humble and lowly persons.*—Some are greatly influenced by examples, more than they are by precepts.

1. Look upon *the most eminent saints that ever were upon the earth.*—And you will find, they were most eminent for humility. Jacob thinks himself “less than the least of all God's mercies.” (Gen. xxxii. 10.) David speaks of himself as “a worm, and no man.” (Psalm xxii. 6.) Agur says, that he was “more brutish than any man.” (Prov. xxx. 2.) The apostle Paul says of himself, that he is “the chiefest of sinners,” (1 Tim. i. 15,) and “less than the least

of all saints." (Eph. iii. 8.) How does that great saint and apostle vilify and nullify himself! Bradford, that holy man and martyr, subscribes himself in one of his epistles, "A very painted hypocrite." The apostle Peter said unto our Saviour, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" (Luke v. 8;) *ανηρ ἀμαρτωλος*, "a man that is a great sinner." Thus the heaviest ears of corn do always hang downwards, and so do those boughs of trees that are most laden with fruit.

2. Look upon *the angels of God, the elect angels*.—They "excel in strength," (Psalm ciii. 20,) and so they do in humility likewise. They readily condescend to minister unto the children of men, that are abundantly inferior to themselves; they take charge of them, and bear them up, as it were, in their arms. (Psalm xci. 11, 12.) "Are they not all ministering spirits?" says the apostle to the Hebrews. (Heb. i. 14.) The interrogation is an affirmation: the greatest angels do not disdain to minister to the least saints. When they have appeared to men, they have utterly rejected the reverence [which] they would have shown them, and have openly declared themselves our "fellow-servants," that we and they have but one common Lord. (Rev. xix. 10.)

3. Look upon *the Lord Jesus Christ himself*.—He is the great instance of humility. Though he was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet he "was made in the likeness of men, and took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation;" or, as the word signifies, he "emptied himself of all his glory;" he sought his Father's glory, and not his own; (John vii. 18;) yea, "he humbled himself," so as to "become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. ii. 6—8.) The very incarnation of Christ is condescension enough to pose both men and angels; what, then, was his crucifixion? When you feel any self-exaltation, then remember and reflect upon Christ's humiliation, and think how unsuitable a humble Master and a proud servant are, a humble Christ and a proud Christian. This alone, through the Spirit's assistance, is sufficient to bring down the swelling of the spirits.

DIRECT. IX. *Use all God's dealings with you, and dispensations toward you, as so many antidotes against this sin*.—You hear, they are designed by God—I pray you, let them all be improved by you—for this very end and purpose. "Hath God shined in your hearts, and given you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of" his Son "Jesus Christ?" (2 Cor. iv. 6.) Says Judas, "not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John xiv. 22.) Hath he quickened and saved you from sin and death? Say, then, "By grace we are saved." (Eph. ii. 5.) "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii. 5.) Is [that] grace and life preserved and increased which was at first infused into your souls? Give God the glory: say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy

name' be the praise." (Psalm cxv. 1.) Yea, let all God's outward dispensations have this operation upon you. Let mercies humble you : if God gives you worldly wealth and honour, and lifts you up above others in estate or esteem, say, as David, "Who are we, Lord?" and as Jacob, "We are less than the least of thy mercies." Let afflictions humble you : if God lays his hand upon you, then lay your mouths in the dust ; if he smites you upon your backs, do you smite upon your own thighs. We are called upon in scripture to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God." (1 Peter v. 6.) You read of Manassch, how, "when he was in affliction, he humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.) May your afflictions have the like effect!

DIRECT. x. *Be much in the duty of prayer.*—"Give thyself to" it. If pride doth not hinder prayer, prayer will subdue pride ; and whilst thou art in this duty, make this one of thy chief petitions, —that God would cure thee of this evil disease. Some are ready to wonder, why prayer in all cases is one of our chief directions and prescriptions : they may as well wonder why bread in all meals is one chief part of our food. Why, prayer is the principal thing that calls in God to our assistance, without whose help we shall never be able to master the pride of our hearts. This was the course [which] the apostle took, when he was like to "be exalted above measure : " he "besought the Lord thrice," that is, often ; a definite number for an indefinite. He did not only pray that God would take the thorn out of his flesh, but that he would also cure the pride that was in his heart : he knew, if the cause were taken away, the effect would cease.

O, for this do you beseech the Lord again and again ! Pray, and that earnestly, that God by his Spirit would help thee to mortify the pride of thy spirit. Be humbled, as Hezekiah was, for the pride of thy heart in times past ; (2 Chron. xxxii. 26 ;) and pray, as Paul prayed, that God would prevent and cure the pride of thy heart for time to come. Desire God to use what preservatives and medicines he pleaseth, so that the cure be effected. Beg of God that he would help thee on with this "ornament," and "clothe thee with humility." He hath promised to "give grace unto the humble ; " do you pray that he would give you the grace of humility. (1 Peter v. 5.)