

12  
THE MORNING EXERCISES

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CRIPPLEGATE, ST. GILES IN THE FIELDS,

AND

IN SOUTHWARK :

BEING

DIVERS SERMONS,

PREACHED A. D. MDCLIX—MDCLXXXIX.

BY SEVERAL MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

IN OR NEAR LONDON.

*Annesley, Samuel, ed.*

FIFTH EDITION.

CAREFULLY COLLATED AND CORRECTED.

WITH NOTES AND TRANSLATIONS,

BY JAMES NICHOLS,

EDITOR OF FULLER'S "CHURCH HISTORY OF BRITAIN," &c.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

CONTAINING "A CONTINUATION OF MORNING-EXERCISE QUESTIONS  
AND CASES OF CONSCIENCE:"

BEING THE THIRD VOLUME OF THE EXERCISE AT CRIPPLEGATE.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR THOMAS TEGG, 73, CHEAPSIDE.

1844.

11822.

A CONTINUATION  
OF  
MORNING-EXERCISE QUESTIONS  
AND  
CASES OF CONSCIENCE,  
PRACTICALLY RESOLVED,  
BY SUNDRY MINISTERS,  
IN OCTOBER, MDCLXXXII.

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak: not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, &c.—1 Thessalonians ii. 4—6.



## TO THE READER.

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WHAT I have formerly endeavoured in these Exercises, I need not here tell you: my design is still the same; when too many are contending about comparatively trifles, or worse, I would do my utmost, by calling in better help than mine own, to promote practical godliness. I will not mention the cases unavoidably (some by sickness, some otherwise) omitted; and for those here, should I place them in this preface, as I intended them in the book, though it might somewhat rectify their order, it would not add to their usefulness; and therefore take them as they are, and the blessing of God go along with them; and certainly it will (as to you) if you are willing it should: pray try else. (SERMON I.) We are surrounded with vanities: let your conversation be in heaven, you will be above them. But be sure your (II.) Godliness be such, that you may feel its excellency, and expose their folly that deride it. Then (III.) God will not only be your Rewarder, but your exceeding great reward. And (IV.) As you mind religion, mind unity, be of a healing temper. And (V.) Mourn for their sins from whom you must separate. When (VI.) You can say, through grace, you love God, abide in his love. And (VII.) Be as solicitous for your children's salvation, as your own. (VIII.) Do not flatter yourselves to think, that you need not be cautioned against flattery. (IX.) Let those of us that are ministers, thirst after the conversion of souls. And (X.) The practical love of truth will best preserve from Popery. (XI.) Let not melancholy persons neglect their remedy. And let all persons (XII.) Press after a growing knowledge of Christ. (XIII.) Then whatever God doeth in the world, cannot but be well done, because God doeth it. (XIV.) What you hear and read, do not let it slip. (XV.) Let your obedient love to God, evidence your love to his children. (XVI.) Avoid spiritual pride, as a mischievous sin. (XVII.) Count a middling condition best, as to the world, though not as to religion. (XVIII.) Admire and improve those truths and works of God, which are to you incomprehensible. (XIX.) Do all you do, with an eye to God, though you meet with unanswerable

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These are the Cases: several of them had been more polished, had not the authors and their books been separated; and I must confess, that the tolerable errors of the press are as many, as an ingenuous reader can well pardon: what then can I say for those which are inexcusable? Bear with this word of alleviation: It was next to impossible for every one (in our present circumstances) to correct his own sermon, and none else could so well do it. I will add but this: They are Cases (most of them) of great moment, and daily use: do but bring (or endeavour to get) an honest heart to the perusal of them; and I doubt not but you will bless God for them, and, I hope, put up a prayer for

Your soul-servant,

SAMUEL ANNESLEY.

*April 9th, 1683.*

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A CONTINUATION  
OF THE  
MORNING-EXERCISE QUESTIONS.

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SERMON I.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL ANNESLEY, LL.D.

HOW IS THE ADHERENT VANITY OF EVERY CONDITION MOST  
EFFECTUALLY ABATED BY SERIOUS GODLINESS?

*Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life?—*  
Ecclesiastes vi. 11, 12.

I BEGAN my “Morning Exercises” with this comprehensive case, *How to be in all things, at all times, exactly conscientious*; and “the Supplement” with this, *How to attain and improve such love to God, as may influence all the graces, actions, and passages of our lives*; and now I would fain direct you, *How to prevent or cure the vanity that is incident to every condition.*

Solomon—upon the review of his life; the honours, pleasures, wealth, and wisdom he had so abundantly enjoyed; the many observations he had made of things, natural, moral, domestical, civil, sensual, and divine; the curious, critical inquiries he had made after true happiness, and what contribution all things under the sun afford toward it—at last demonstrates the utter insufficiency of all things merely worldly to make us happy. In the first six chapters of this book, he shows wherein happiness doth *not* consist, confuting the vain opinions of all sorts of irreligious persons; and in the six last chapters, he shows wherein it *doth* consist, rectifying the judgment of all those who seek after it.

In this chapter is continued a further description of the vanity of riches, and honours, and children, and long life, &c.; and in these two last verses he takes-up a general conclusion of all the precedent vanities: “Since there are so many things that increase vanity, what is man the better” for all of them? Considering our ignorance, we do not know what is best for ourselves; many and great things do but distract us: and if we did know, and could obtain, what is good for us, we can enjoy these things but a little while; and what will

come to pass hereafter, we know not. To make every condition as easy as it is possible, I shall endeavour to discuss this

QUESTION.

*How is the adherent vanity of every condition most effectually abated by serious godliness?*

You will all grant, that Solomon was the fittest man that ever lived, to find out the very quintessence of creature-excellences, and to extract what was possible to be extracted out of worldly vanities: he doth, upon both his own impartial scrutiny, and the infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost, give you the total sum at the head of the account: "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities;" (Eccles. i. 2;) that is, extreme vanity. This he demonstrates by an induction of particulars; but to dispel, as much as it is possible, that vexation of spirit that steams from such multiplication of vanity, he doth, upon his own experience, and the Holy Ghost's direction, commend this prescription at the foot of the account, namely, serious godliness: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments," &c. (Eccles. xii. 13.) And do it now, as you will wish you had done it when you come to judgment. For the discussing my question, I shall lay down these

PROPOSITIONS.

**PROP. I.** *Every condition is clogged with vanity.*—All things that men generally set their hearts upon, are vanity. Vanity is that which seemeth to be something, and is nothing; it is a shadow,—empty, without substance,—unprofitable, without fruit: if you put any confidence in it, it will not only deceive you, but hurt you. We are loath to think so, more loath to believe it; every one hath a kind of unaccountable confidence about the things of this world, that if they might but be their own carvers, they doubt not of an earthly happiness; whereas they cannot but be mistaken. For,

1. *God never made the world, nor any condition in it, to be a place of rest and satisfaction.*—And since sin hath so far marred the beauty of the universe, there is a judicial vanity upon the whole creation. (Rom. viii. 20.) Now men must needs fail of their expectation, when they look for that in the creature that God never placed there; as if we could mend the works of creation and providence. I confess, it is ordinary for persons to attempt it, and to glory in their achievements. For instance: God made *man* only to have the use of speech; but how do persons please themselves with teaching birds to speak some few words, which they cannot possibly furnish them with reason to make use of; and yet they are delighted to hear them speak what they understand not, more than to hear the most edifying discourse of a serious Christian! How have others cried-up some chemical extracts to make men immortal, when their own being cut-off in the midst of their days unanswerably confuted their ill-grounded boasting! How do others prate of governing the world by stars, as if they would ease God of the trouble of it; while they know not one

star of a thousand, nor what is their influence! Just as the old world would fence themselves against another deluge; when God did nothing to defeat them, but let them forget their mother-tongue, and so speak gibberish one to another, that they ran up and down like persons distracted, till they could find out any to understand them, and ran away from the rest as savages. So true is that of the Psalmist: "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain show." (Psalm xxxix. 5, 6.)

2. *We know but very little of the true nature of things, nor of ourselves, nor of our temptations, nor of our interests.*—And therefore we cannot find out that good that is possible to be had in the creature; there must be some distinct knowledge of these things, or we can never find out what is best for us. For example: let one that is utterly unacquainted with *Materia Medica* go into a physic-garden, where are all manner of simples, and thence into an apothecary's shop, where are all manner of drugs and compounds, with which medicines are made for all diseases. He knows not what to do with them; his disease may to him be incurable, though surrounded with remedies. "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow." (Job viii. 9.)

3. *That little that we do know of any thing, we come so droppingly to the knowledge of it, that, ere we can lay things together, so as to compare them, and separate them, and sort them, and compound them, so as to make a judgment, either things themselves or our circumstances are altered, or upon alteration.*—There is such a mutability both in persons and things and times, that it is as if one would undertake to gather at the same time primroses and violets, and roses and gilliflowers, to make a nosegay, when some of these are withered ere the others be budded. When we call in the help of wiser heads than our own, there is nothing more ordinary than [that] when wise men give good advice, those [whom] they give it to, want wisdom to receive it, suspecting some over-reaching design, and therefore dare not trust them. And who can say how soon "his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth? In that very day his thoughts perish." (Psalm cxlvi. 4.) The prince's thoughts perish, and the thoughts of him that trusted in him perish.

OBJECTION. "This is the way utterly to dispirit men from every thing, and make them fit for nothing. Whither can such doctrine as this tend, but to put us into a maze, and to confound us in our thoughts and endeavours?"

ANSWER I. Will nothing but flatteries and lies encourage you to the duties of your several stations? Must things be presented better than they are, or you will needs be worse than otherwise you would be? Are you so ridiculously proud as to delight to dress yourselves by a false glass? "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." (John viii. 45.) Will you only believe those truths that humour you?

ANSWER II. The true discovery of the evils and dangers of every condition is so far from discouraging men from their duty, that it is

the best way to bring them to the best resolutions for the well discharge of their duty. Cowards wink when they fight; but the truly valiant dare face their danger. It was Christ's method, in the whole course of his ministry, to tell his hearers the worst they should meet with: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 26, 27.) And, "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." (Matt. xxiv. 9.)

**ANSWER III.** Religion is best able to manage and master all the evils that are in any condition, and every thing on this side the power of godliness is too feeble to grapple with any one inconvenience. Let but grace be asleep, (if I may so speak,) and how weak is the best! How was Peter, the forwardest of all the disciples, in a fright, foiled by a servant-maid! But to grace in exercise nothing is impossible. (Mark ix. 23.)

**PROP. II.** *All things on this side religion, whereby men endeavour to get above vanity, increase it.*—The multiplication of cyphers amounts to less than nothing. "All nations," the persons and things of all nations, "before him," compared with God, ay, and in the esteem of the godly, "are as nothing; and they are counted to him," and, so far as they are gracious, to them, "less than nothing, and vanity." (Isai. xl. 17.) Happiness is that which every one aims at. Now that which can make us happy, must supply all the wants, satisfy all the desires, fill all the capacities, of the soul, and, above all these, be of equal duration and continuance with the soul itself. Now none of all these are to be found in any thing on this side serious godliness, but the quite contrary; and therefore every thing that pretends to it doth but "increase vanity." Can any thing of the world supply the soul with grace, satisfy the desires in so much as any one thing, or fill any one faculty of the soul to satisfaction? Can the world fill the mind with heavenly light, or the will with heavenly love, or the conscience with that "peace that passeth understanding?" But you will say, "This is to beg, not prove." Forbear me a little, till I have answered a by-question; and I will, in the prosecution of the next proposition, prove this by little less than demonstration.

**QUESTION.** "What makes all sorts of persons dote so much upon vanity, and upon adding one vanity to another, and upon heaping one vanity upon another, if they can be no better for them? We see wise men as eager as others: Solomon himself, though he had his extraordinary wisdom given him in his youth, yet he continued trying experiments till his old age; and though he so much decried the vanity of all things, yet he was scarce able to bear the thoughts of his son's inability to carry on the search. (Eccles. ii. 18—23.)"

To this several things may be said, more plausibly than satisfactorily, if you but thoroughly consider the allegations; but, to avoid tediousness, I will mix the pretended and real causes.

**ANSWER I.** "There is a necessity of these things, while we are

in the world; and we need variety of them, more than for present use. For instance: childhood and age are helpless, and need greater supplies: there is difference between sickness and health, and we must provide for both." And is not this very plausible? Whereas, did but persons consider, how many superfluities shroud themselves under the wing of necessities, and how persons love to be at their own finding, rather than God's, though there is no comparison between them; as Israel, Num. xi. 5: "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." They preferred the food which the Egyptians gave their slaves, before manna, which, if the inhabitants of the upper world needed food, were fit for them. We would not only have mercies, but we would be humoured in the circumstances of them. Rachel must presently have children, or she will be weary of her life; whereas she might have learned from her own husband and grandfather, that those children of patiently-believing parents were the greatest blessings, that came from teeming prayers and barren wombs. But she considers not this; she must have children, or die. Well, God so far gratifies her; she shall have children: but that which she reckoned would be the greatest comfort of her life, proved to be her death.

ANSWER II. The flattery of worldly things prevails with many. The grandeur of the world,—*that* pleaseth the eye; the esteem of the world,—*that* pleaseth the fancy. Whereas, would but these persons consider, all things of the world appear better at a distance than we find them near at hand. I dare confidently make this offer,—and, without imposing upon God any thing indecent, peremptorily assure you, God will make it good,—that if you can but give any one instance of any one person made happy, satisfyingly happy, by any worldly enjoyment, you shall be the second. I grant, many are through grace contented with a little pittance of the world; but where dwelt the man that was ever yet contented merely with the world? The wealth of the world promiseth satisfaction: "Money answereth all things:" (Eccles. x. 19:) but "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." (Eccles. v. 10.) The pleasures of the world promise refreshment, to relieve us of all our cares: but instead of it, they are "all vanity and vexation of spirit." (Eccles. ii. 11.) The honours of the world promise quiet and contentment: but surely they are "set in slippery places," as upon a pinnacle, whence though they do not presently fall, yet they are "utterly consumed with terrors" of falling. (Psalm lxxiii. 18, 19.) In short: "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not" how to honour God with it, "is like the beasts that perish;" (Psalm xlix. 20;) degrades himself into a beast; and the time is at hand when he would count it a greater happiness than ever he shall obtain, if his soul and body might die together like a beast.

ANSWER III. "Experience is beyond speculation: we see others

grow great ; they fare better, and go finer, and are more esteemed in the world ; every one respects them ; and if he but grow rich, he must presently be the best in the parish. Whereas, those that are low and mean in the world,—they are despised, though never so well qualified.” This thou speakest upon thine own observation ; thou canst name the persons and the places whence thou hast this experience. Very well : thou takest this for a demonstration that there is such a thing as an earthly happiness ! Hold a little ; be but entreated to push the observation a little further, and consider impartially, how loath thou wouldest be to take-up with that for thy happiness which thou so much admirest. Single out any one of those thou accountest most happy in their outward enjoyments, and be sure thou art as thoroughly acquainted with all the circumstances of his condition as thou art with thine own ; and then sit down and seriously consider : is this the person whose happiness thou admirest ? View him inside and outside ; and tell me, wouldest thou have his condition, and all the circumstances of it ? It is true, he is great in the world ; but wouldest thou have all his cares and fears ? his restless nights and troublesome days ? Wouldest thou have just his qualifications of mind ? that half-wittedness that makes him ridiculous ? his peevish humours, which make him a burden to himself and others ? Wouldest thou have just his temper of body ? to be always sickly, or conceited to be so ? He cannot eat this, nor digest that, nor relish any thing, as do meaner persons. Those relations that should be the greatest comfort of his life, hanker after his death ; his children, upon one account or other, almost break his heart ; his servants are vexatious ; his business distracting, or his idleness wearisome. Whereas, perhaps, his next neighbour, that hath scarce bread to eat, hath a quieter frame of mind, a better temper of body, a better stomach, better digestion, better health, more comfort in relations, and longer life to enjoy all these, than he [whom] thou countest the world’s darling. Think of this before thou concludest for an earthly happiness.

ANSWER IV. The restlessness of the mind of man upon so many disappointments, makes him eager after any thing that promiseth satisfaction ; he hath experience of the uneasiness of his present condition, and none of that which flatters him : so that he becomes like one that hath been long sick, who is willing to try every medicine that every visitant commends, never considering how he heightens his disease by the use of false remedies. For example, shouldest thou take medicines proper for an erysipelas, to cure a dropsy ; or medicines for the stone, to cure a consumption ; though those medicines would not presently kill thee, they would never cure thee, but thou must still complain of disappointments, and be worse and worse, instead of having any amendment. Do not deceive yourselves ; one vanity will never cure another.

ANSWER V. Satan will not be wanting to set-in with all the other cheats,—the inclinations of the flesh, the flatteries of the world, and the various pleadings of carnal reason. Satan, you may be sure,



will do what is possible to be done, to entangle the soul in a fool's paradise, or plunge it into inextricable difficulties, especially when he hath a good second, as in this case; though one might rationally think, there should need no more to fright him to his watch, than to assure him, "The hand of Satan is in all this." Suspect him in every thing; he cannot be thy friend; he cannot make any one motion for thy good; where he seems to do so, it is to do thee greater mischief. Thus have I jumbled together something of what may be said, both with real and seeming weight, (for empty reasonings weigh most with empty understandings,) why all sorts of persons are hankering after an earthly happiness. And now I shall speak largely in the third, to what I little more than hinted in the second, proposition.

PROP. III. *It is only serious godliness that can any whit really abate the vanity that cleaves to every condition.*—Other things may, like topical medicines, (as plasters to the wrists,) repel the disease; but while they do not remove the cause, they cannot cure it. We may exchange one vanity for another, and the novelty may please us for a while; but when that is over, the vexation returns. It is true, God alone can cure us; but whatever method he takes to do it, whether of indulgence or severity, it is always by framing the heart and life to serious godliness. To hate sin and love holiness; to live a life of faith, in dependence upon God and resignation to him; to live above the transports of hopes and fears about things temporal; and to grow-up in the graces and comforts of the Holy Ghost for things eternal; in short, to be blessings to the world while we live, and to be blessed with God when we die: this is the business and fruit of serious godliness; and this alone is that which at present can effectually abate the vexatious vanities which every condition swarms with.

The wisest man in the world cannot tell what is good for man in this life; no man can tell what worldly condition is better for him than that which is his present condition. Among the variety of things under the sun, which the heart of man is apt to be drawn out unto, neither he himself, nor any other for him, is able certainly to inform him, which of all those it is best for him to enjoy and to reap comfort from; whether it be better for him to be rich or poor, high or low, in private retirement or in public service. Some men's greatness hath undone them; they had never been so wicked, had not their wealth been fuel for their lusts. Ahithophel might have lived longer, had he not been so wise. No man can tell, whether that [which] he snatcheth at with most greediness, have not a hook under the bait, or be not tempered with poison. Those that live by rapine and violence,—“they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.” (Prov. i. 18.) “But,” you will say, “these are hot-headed persons, live extravagantly, walk by no rule, do not take time to consider.” Well, turn your eyes from these, to those that are most accomplished for human wisdom and knowledge: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;” (Rom. i. 22;)

drowning their some-way right (though every-way short) notions [which] they had of God, in unreasonable idolatry. You will say, "These were but Heathens; and therefore no marvel if 'they did not like to retain God in their knowledge:' it is better with Christians." Look next upon Christians, and those of the highest notions and *form* of godliness on this side the *power* of it: "While they speak great swelling words of vanity," about that [which] they call "Christian liberty," "they themselves are the servants of corruption: and it had been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than" not to have walked in it. (2 Peter ii. 18, 19, 21.) "Well, but, for all this, Job tells us of some of even the worst of men that account themselves so happy as if they needed nothing from God to better their condition." But he tells you withal, in the same breath: "Lo, their good is not in their hand," (Job xxi. 15, 16,) though they think it is. They have not their "fortune," as they call it, in their own power, to retain it while they live, and dispose of it when they die: God can overturn it when he pleaseth, and will do it, to their sorrow. Whatever persons may hope or fancy, if they "fear not God, nor obey the voice of his servants," though they are not at present "in trouble like other men," but can speak loftily, "setting their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth;" though they compass themselves about with some sparks or blaze of comfort, yet this shall they have of God's hand; they "shall lie down in sorrow." (Psalm lxxiii. 5, 6, 9; Isai. i. 10, 11.)

Now, thus, when every one is rummaging among heaps of vanities, that pretend to be good for man upon earth, will you accept of a guide to direct you to what cannot but be good for you, and that in every condition? that shall not only abate the vanity, but discover the excellency, that is in every condition. This will be most distinctly done, by an induction of particulars, and setting contrary conditions one against another,—what may be said for and against each condition; and how serious godliness makes every condition amiable.

I. *Who knows whether riches, or poverty, be best for man in this life?*

1. For *riches*, I need say but little, because most persons are ready to say too much. They seem to be the cause without which there can be not so much as the fancying an earthly happiness: what pleasures or esteem can worldlings have, without an estate to feed them? The riches of the mind are too spiritual to be seen by carnal eyes. But when you consider these or such-like inseparable attendants on a great estate, you will see the desirableness to shrink, as the vanity swells. For instance: some run out the greatest part of their life, before they can reach what they can call an estate; to say nothing of those that die the world's martyrs, in the pursuit of that they never attain. Those that have got an estate, or have an estate left them, have ordinarily as great care and difficulty in keeping, as they or others have had in the getting, of it. O the tiresome days, the restless nights, the broken sleeps, the wild passions, the fretting disquiet of those troublesome occurrences which

they cannot possibly prevent! And when you come to speak of an enjoyment, to speak strictly, they have nothing worth the name of an enjoyment, which they may not have as well, if not better, without what they call an estate. Yet though it is thus while they have it, they are not able to bear the parting with it; the very thoughts of losing put them into heart-convulsions. So that an estate can neither be got, nor kept, nor lost, without manifold vanity and vexation of spirit. "Alas! what remedy?"

*Serious godliness* carries a gracious person above all heart-breaking vexations of *getting* the world, for his thoughts are filled about getting something better;—about *keeping*, for comparatively he cares for keeping nothing but faith and a good conscience;—about *enjoying*, for he counts nothing on this side God worth the name of an enjoyment;—and as for *parting with* the world, he impartially considers, that he cannot have the possession of his heavenly inheritance, till the world and he shake hands for ever; so that there is no room, without the *regret*\* of grace, to edge-in so much as a distracting thought about worldly vanities. Faith in exercise treads the world under feet, and alone makes it know its place. (1 John v. 4.) When riches capacitate a gracious person for those offices and employments from which the poor are excluded, the power of godliness not only teacheth, but enforceth, them to employ all their capacities for God and to do good. They know they are God's stewards, to whom they must be accountable, God's almoners; and God makes the poor their creditors, to whom they must pay alms as debtors: Matt. vi. 1: "Your alms," *δικαιοσυνην*, your "justice." In short, it is only the holy person that receives this for a maxim, that a worldly estate is no otherwise desirable, but to capacitate him to do that good with it which he cannot do without it. This for riches. "What may be said for poverty?"

2. *Poverty* is so desirable to many thinking persons, that they have not only in words, for discourse' sake, but in practice, for happiness' sake, preferred it before the greatest wealth and grandeur in the world. And this hath been done, not only by melancholy, mopish persons, but by men of great name for wisdom and learning; and that upon great deliberation and counsel, upon weighing of circumstances, and trying [of] experiments: and, further yet, not only [by] bookish men, to whom beloved retirement is much the same, whether they are rich or poor; but [by] those that have worn an imperial diadem, that have commanded victorious armies, swayed the sceptres of flourishing kingdoms, and some of the then greatest empires of the world; † and these again not only Ethnic, but Christian. ‡ And some of these, even after their self-deposition, have been importuned to re-accept their dominion, but have refused it. § What greater demonstration can you expect of the preference of poverty before riches, and to be a cipher rather than to bear the greatest figure in the world?

\* Perhaps our old word *re-greet* is here intended; and the antithesis will then lie between *the world and a good man shaking hands, and the farewell salute of grace.*—  
 EDIT. † Diocletian. ‡ Charles V. § Casimir.

OBJECTION. "All this is true : but, alas ! the world is full of the miserable effects of poverty. The poor have great temptations pressing them to the use of unlawful means for their livelihood. They are generally despised, and contempt is one of the things most intolerable to human nature ; and, which is yet more, they are under an impossibility of being so serviceable as otherwise they might be. 'There was a poor wise man, who by his wisdom delivered the city ; yet no man remembered that same poor man. The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.' (Eccles. ix. 15, 16.) As to all the instances that have been or can be given of persons quitting troublesome riches for a quiet poverty ; [in] those great men that have done it, it hath plainly proceeded from vexation of mind, that they were not able to have their will upon Christians for their extirpation. And as for the several orders of friars, that have vowed poverty and renounced property, this is to be reckoned among the damnable cheats of the Romish apostasy, whose religion is made-up of lying 'hypocrisy and doctrines of devils ;' (1 Tim. iv. 1, 2 ;) their prodigious wealth and abominable luxury sufficiently confuting their pretence of poverty. What help, then, in this case ?"

ANSWER. *Serious godliness* sweetens all the bitterness of a poor condition, bears-up the heart under all those difficulties that were otherwise intolerable. God makes-up their worldly poverty with riches of grace. It is the poor [that] receive the gospel and the blessings of it : it is the poor that are best contented with their condition ; and without content every condition is uneasy. What, though the poor are secluded from serving offices ? They are also excused from the oaths and snares that attend them. At first, when Christianity was managed without tricks and artifice ; when, for once, upon particular circumstances never to be repeated, the disciples of Christ used a compassionate levelling ; it is said, "Great grace was upon them all." (Acts iv. 33.) They were greatly in God's favour ; they were greatly enriched with the graces of the Holy Ghost ; and they were greatly honoured by those that did but gaze at them. You may easily observe that very few grow better by growing rich ; but it is ordinary for God to advance holiness by worldly abasement : and who live more in heaven, who have more satisfying communion with God, than those that are mean in the world ? In short : to be poor and wicked, is to be in some respect more miserable than devils ; to be poor and gracious, is to be conformable to our blessed Jesus and his chiefest apostle, who were "poor, yet made many rich ; who had nothing, and yet possessed all things." (2 Cor. vi. 10.) And thus I have endeavoured to set forth the vanity of the first pair, *riches and poverty*, and how *serious godliness* wears-off the vanity that cleaves to them. I see I must not, indeed I need not, be so large in the rest.

II. *Who knows whether a life of pleasure, or a life of sorrow, be best for him?*—Whereas your vain persons will presently determine, without weighing one against the other ; yet you will find, it is only the practical Christian that can improve either, as God shall deal with him.

1. For *pleasure* : to live without the pleasure of life, seems in some respect worse than to be buried alive ; most prefer a short life and a merry, before a long life and a sad ; and those that are not sensualists, yet would fain have their lives comfortable in all the circumstances of it. In every change of life, from the birth to the grave, in every new employment, relation, preferment, it is the universal salutation to "wish them joy : " so that a life of comfort is the desire of mankind.

But now, when we consider the unreasonable cravings of a carnal mind, and how impossible to be satisfied, and, when most satisfied, soonest cloyed, wearisome to the flesh that is most gratified, and infamous in their eyes whose esteem we value ; most of our carnal pleasures are the same with brutes : only they have the better relish of them in the use, and no after-claps when past ; they eat, and drink, and frisk, and sleep, without any disturbing cares, or subsequent reflections ; you cannot force them to excess in the use, nor impose upon them any corroding remembrances. For example : let but a voracious glutton be bound to sit at a well-furnished table but two hours after he hath filled his paunch, he would account it an intolerable penance. Let but the crop-sick drunkard be forced to drink-on with those that drink him down, how is he a burden to himself, and a scorn to his fellow-drunkards ! And for those that glory of their conquest in out-drinking others, how are their best friends ashamed of them, as "glorying in their shame !" Let but a lazy sluggard be confined three days to his bed, and how weary will he be of his bed of down ! How is the idle person more weary of his idleness than another is of work ! I am loath to blot paper with naming the loathsome rottenness of filthy persons, the unpitied poverty of huffing gamesters, and, in a word, the unpleasant *exit* of most pleasure-mongers ; and for those that escape these common effects, they as commonly contract a carnal security, which is as bad as the worst of these. And for those pleasures that are above sensual, I will say no more at present, but this : The better the objects of our delights are on this side God, and the pleasing of God, the more our carnal wisdom is fortified against the true method to real happiness. Upon the whole matter, then, pleasures are a kind of dangerous fruit, which, if not well corrected, are poison : we can scarce taste without danger of surfeiting.

" But now, what doeth the *power of godliness* in this case ? " What ! It will not meddle with unlawful pleasures, though never so tempting ; it will strain-out the dregs of lawful pleasures, that they may not be unwholesome ; it will moderate the use of unquestionable delights, that they may not be inordinate ; and it will teach us to be thankful to God for making our pilgrimage any way comfortable. It will raise the soul to prepare and long for heaven, where are pure and full joys, and that for evermore. Thus for a life of pleasure.

2. What shall we say to a life of *sorrow and pensiveness* ? to live a recluse from the flattering vanities of the world ? " I said of laugh-

ter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccles. ii. 2.) What music is the giggling mirth of the world to a serious soul? Those that the frothy part of the world count melancholy, the sober part of the world count them wise.

"But yet, to give way to sorrow, dispirits us for any considerable service either to God or man; it unfits us for every thing: 'The sorrow of the world worketh death.' (2 Cor. vii. 10.) Such are burdensome to themselves and others; they are weary of themselves, and every body else is weary of them. If a melancholy, mopish temper be not checked, it will lead to hard thoughts of God, to blasphemy, infidelity. In short, a life of sorrow is a degree of hell upon earth, and such persons torment themselves before their time. But what can religion do in this case?"

*Serious godliness* bears up the soul from sinking under worldly sorrow: "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." (Eccles. vii. 3, 4.) Religion will teach us how to turn worldly sorrow into sorrow for sin, "to sorrow to repentance after a godly manner; and godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." (2 Cor. vii. 9, 10.) It is serious godliness that teacheth how to mourn for the sins and dangers of the times we live in. And, Christians, pray take special notice, that this is our present great duty, a duty that every Christian not only ought [to,] but may, perform, and none can hinder it. And, O that this duty were frequently thought of, and more universally practised! The land is even drowned in pleasure; the conscientious performance of this duty would be a token for good, for the abating of the deluge: and though the times should be such that their own sorrows should be increased, yet then, even then, how cheering would the forethoughts of heaven be to such serious Christians! How may they chide their hearts out of their dejections! "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet," ay,\* and ever, "praise him," who now is, and for ever will be, "the health of my countenance," שְׂוֵיָהוּת פָּנָי: *salutes faciei mei*, and "the salvation of my face, and my God;" (Psalm xlii. 11;) because thou art my "God," my "own God," my "exceeding great," not only rewarder but, "reward." (Psalm lxvii. 6; Gen. xv. 1.) And thus much for the second pair, *pleasure and sorrow*.

III. *Who knows whether honour or obscurity be best for man in this life?*—At first sight it seems easy to determine; but when both sides are heard, it will seem otherwise.

1. For *honour*: every one would be somebody in the world, would be esteemed and preferred before others; disgrace and infamy seem most intolerable. When Job had done contesting with his censorious friends, he is greatly concerned about the contempt poured upon him, though but by infamous enemies; (Job xxix., xxx. ;) and David, though he could even in desperate cases encourage himself in God,

\* It is difficult to determine whether the author meant, *Yes, and for ever*; or the old proverb, *Aye [always] and ever*.—EDIT.

yet complains, "Reproach hath broken my heart." (Psalm lxix. 20.) Matter of honour and reputation is a tender point; not any, of what rank soever, but deeply resent the being slighted.

But for honour, when we consider how hazardous it is to get; though all are clambering, few reach it; consider further, when it is got, it is slippery to hold; others' envy and their own fear distract them; and then if you add the falling from it, that is worse than if they never had it: but there is worse than all this,—the insuperable temptation to pride, oppression, and impenitency, all which nothing but grace can prevent or cure. And for that lesser reputation and esteem which comes short of the name of honour, it is troublesome to carry it, like a Venice-glass, that the least touch may not crack it. "What can religion do in this case?"

*Serious godliness*,—it will never be beholden to sin nor Satan for wordly honour: it values it no more than as it adds to a capacity of honouring God. He that is truly religious is neither so fond of honour as to sin to get or keep it, neither doth he count himself undone to lose it. He values the privilege of adoption beyond all the honours in the world: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable." (Isai. xliii. 4.) He is graciously ambitious of doing God and Christ some service in the world; he appears for God, to discountenance, prevent, or remove sin; to encourage, promote, and advance holiness. This God in condescension accounts an honouring of him, and hath accordingly promised, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. ii. 30.) In short, you may know what faith you have, by what honour you prize. "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John v. 44.) This for *honour*. Some prefer,

2. *Obscurity* in the world: to snudge in quiet, to live retired and reserved, out of the vexatious hurry of a captious world; to keep in the shade out of the scorching sun, to steal out of the world, without any noise or notice; O how sweet is this to many wise and judicious persons, that are every way above what is vulgar! But how do these, in running from one vanity, fall into another! They debase the human nature and the reasonable soul, while they industriously conceal themselves from being serviceable; they are guilty of a civil self-communication, while they shut-out themselves from those employments wherein they might be useful. God hath made every thing for use; to rust in a corner for the avoiding of trouble, can proceed from nothing but uncharitable pride or wilful ignorance; from base pride,—you think the neighbourhood not good enough to be blessed with your endowments,—or slothful weakness, which you are conscious of, but will not take pains to cure. In short: to choose retirement for love of ease, is an envious kind of life, and therefore far from happiness. "But what can religion do in this case?"

One that is *serious in religion* can best manage an obscure station, whether it be forced or voluntary. It is only he that is crucified to the world, that can scorn the world's scorns, and condemn the world's contempt. He that hath learned the great lesson of self-denial in the

school of Christ, is well pleased with his secrecy for communion with God. In short, his religion keepeth him from being fond, or weary, of worldly obscurity.

Thus I have run over the beloved disciple's summary of all worldly vanities, (1 John ii. 16,) and their contraries, and how godliness, in the power of it, corrects the vanity, and extracts the excellency, of all those. But let these pass, and let us examine things of a higher nature, for which more may be pleaded than can for these be pretended; and here you will find, that without serious godliness their vanity is intolerable.

IV. *Who knows whether wisdom, and learning, and the endowments of the mind, be best for a man; or whether to be without these, and their troublesome attendants?*—Now we come to a close and inward search.

1. For *wisdom, and learning, and intellectual accomplishments*: they are of such incomparable excellency, that he is scarce worthy the name of a man that slights them: "Wisdom excelletth folly, as far as light excelletth darkness." (Eccles. ii. 13.) This is Solomon's sentence, even *then* when he is sentencing all worldly vanities. But, (and who mistrusts such a *but* here?) the wiser men are, the more they are exempted from the ordinary comforts of human society; they meet with but few, and those but seldom, that they can converse with, to any satisfaction. The more learning they have, the more sense of, and sorrow for, their ignorance: "In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." (Eccles. i. 18.) Hence it is they affect an uncomfortable solitude, that they are fain to force themselves into a sociable compliance, where they seldom meet with any thing but what they slight or pity; they are ordinarily the objects of their own grief, and of others' envy. There is nothing more ordinary than for persons of lower accomplishments to carry their designs and attain their ends before them. They cannot sneak and flatter like lower-spirited animals; [so] that while they are *pursuing* a notion, others *catch* preferment; and while they are enriching their minds, others are filling their coffers.

"What doth *serious godliness* in this case?" It is this alone that makes wise men truly wise, and learned men truly learned. Unsanc-tified parts and learning may, in some respects, be reckoned among Christ's worst enemies; ay, and among *his* worst enemies *that* has them. They furnish him with cavils, which they call "unanswerable reasons," against the simplicity of the gospel; they fill him with those prejudices that nothing but grace can remove: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) But where grace is grafted upon good natural parts, there wisdom and learning are excellently beneficial; it is they that have the clearest understanding of gospel-mysteries,—it is these who are the most substantial-grounded Christians. These are the only Christians who are able to defend the truth, and convince gainsayers; it is their lips that can "utter knowledge clearly;" (Job xxxiii. 3;) it is they that can best speak or write "to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." (1 Cor. xiv. 3.)



2. "What then can be said for the *want of parts and learning?*"

Those that have no considerable parts nor learning, that do not trouble themselves nor others about the difficulties of knowledge or practice, but take those things to be truth that are commonly received,—these are more satisfied than those that are more inquisitive. Besides, these better suit the generality they live among: they are wise enough to get estates; (for men are ordinarily afraid to deal with those that are wiser than themselves, lest they be overreached;) and they are esteemed in the world; and what care they? They do not impair their health by study, nor perplex themselves with great matters. What can be more desired to make them happy? Happiness, as it were, drops into their mouth unawares; for when they compare their condition with others, they find it more eligible, though they did nothing to make it so. But, alas! what use do these make of their souls? A lazy neglect of improving of parts, and of getting of learning,—who is able to express the sin and mischief of it? To be contented to live and die but one remove from a brute,—who can express the baseness of it? "Ignorance" may well be "the mother of" *their* "devotion" whose religion is a cheat; but the scripture tells us, and we believe it: "When wisdom entereth into thine heart, knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;" (Prov. ii. 10;) and without it neither heart nor state can be good.

"But what doeth *serious godliness* in this case?" These, though they have not any considerable parts and learning, yet they bewail their ignorance, and are willing to learn. They get a savoury knowledge of necessary practical truths, and they increase the knowledge of them by practice: though they are fools to the world, they are wise for their souls, and wise for eternity; and this is the best wisdom. They have learned Christ, which is the best learning. This you shall find:—Those great doctrines of Christianity, which learned men bandy to and fro in doubtful disputation, such as these, namely, the unaccountableness of predetermination, the supra- or infra-lapsarian aspect of election, the controverted extent of redemption, the manner of the concurrence of the divine and human will in vocation, the formality of justification; in these and such-like doctrines, wherein the most eminently learned can neither give nor receive satisfaction, serious Christians, of but ordinary knowledge, are so far satisfied as to admire the grace of God in Christ, and press after such holiness of life as adorns their profession and muzzles revilers. So that, by what hath been said, you may plainly see that both the *excellency and deficiency of intellectual endowments* are best managed by *serious godliness*; without which, whatever can be said for either is not worth the mentioning.

V. Having named several things of real worth, and compared them with other things that others *think* so, let me for once name one pair, the worst of sins, that have scarcely any barefaced advocates, yet have more hearty admirers than what really deserve it; and that is, a *form of godliness*, or downright *atheism*. Whether of these is to be preferred? I am sensible it is dangerous to compare sins; for we are

not to make choice of any, though the necessity be never so great, or the excuses never so plausible. Of afflictive evils we may choose the less; but of sinful evils we must choose neither, but rather suffer the worst of deaths, than commit the least of sins. My only design, therefore, in this instance, is, to strip these sins-of-the-times of their specious pretences, and to do what I can to persuade these self-applauding sinners to serious godliness.

1. *A show of godliness* seems to carry it both with God and man: till his hypocrisy is discovered, he seems to be the favourite of Heaven, and the glory of earth. Some that are sincere think their estates well bestowed upon them, so they may but enjoy their prayers. (Matt. xxiii. 14.) They have religion enough to get credit by it, and to make their markets of it; and that is all they care for. On the other hand, they have latitude enough to avoid danger; [so] that, unless they be surprised by sufferings, their religion shall cost them nothing; if they cannot win what they play for, (alas! they do but *play* with religion; they were never religious in good earnest,) yet they will save their stakes. Are not these the only wise men that are, as they call it, "zealous with discretion?" that will not expose themselves to danger, but will, more warily than conscientiously, avoid it? These censure those that are more venturous than themselves to befriend the gospel, when it is despised and persecuted: "Is not religion of such a size, a conscience thus manageable, most fit for doubtful times, when dangers surround us? What, 'if I build again the things which I destroyed,' must I therefore needs 'make myself a transgressor?' (Gal. ii. 18.) Here is the indifferent moderation, and Gallio-like discretion: is not this highly commendable?"

*Commendable, say you?* Hypocrisy is odious to God and man. It is too true, that persons of no religion decry the most sincere Christians by the name of "hypocrites;" this is unreasonable and devilish, but it is not my business now to deal with them. Thus far I will join with them: whatever their most envenomed mouths can speak against hypocrisy, I will add to it, and say more, and that from scripture; and that not from here and there a verse scattered up and down, (though that is sufficient proof for the highest doctrines of Christianity,) but I shall commend to you above twenty chapters together, from Job iv. to xxvii. inclusive: wherein you have such a dialogue, none like it in the Bible, between Job,—so eminently sincere, [that] God, as it were, boasts of him that there was none like him in the world, though at present God hid his sincerity from his friends;—the discourse was between this Job and his three compassionate, though censorious, friends, who could not but suspect, there must some extraordinary guilt bring such extraordinary punishment. They knew him to be free from open wickedness, and therefore conclude it must be for secret hypocrisy; and thereupon they speak the most convincingly they can of the evil of it. Job adds considerably to all they say against it,—only denies himself to be a hypocrite. His justifying himself makes them press more hard upon him; and every one strives to be more close than other, and to make a more home-thrust into his

conscience, to force the acknowledgment of his hypocrisy. So that, upon the whole matter, here is something of Satan's temptation, though over-ruled by the Spirit of God; here is something of the height of grace, though allayed by human frailty; and something purely divine, eminently from the Holy Ghost: and these all agree in the conclusion, though they differ in the premisses; namely, that hypocrisy is the worst of sins, most odious to God, most ruinous to man; the better any one seems to be, and is not what he seems, the more severity he must expect from God, and the less humanity from man. I know not whether it is possible to speak worse of hypocrisy than it deserves; for though studied hypocrites, who industriously set themselves to deceive others, may long do it, yet they are, *often* in this world, but *always* in the next, worst deceived themselves. A mere *form* of godliness is not, then, to be rested in.

“But what can the *power of godliness* do in this case?” What? what can it not do? It is that alone that is worth the naming, worth the getting, worth the owning; and therefore, O that I could persuade and prevail with all that have the name of Christians, that they would be as loath to *be* hypocrites, as to *be thought* so. For, what, if you should be accounted sincere, while the heart-searching God knows you to be hypocrites, and will deal with you as such? I grant, the resting in a form of godliness is a disease rarely cured, and therefore upon that as well as upon other accounts most dangerous; but yet through grace it may be both pardoned and cured. Will you try an easy experiment? (It is difficult, I confess; but as easy as possible for such a disease.) Hypocrisy is ordinarily defective in the *manner* of doing what is good; and those who are most sincere complain most of their “ill manner” of performing of duties, and improving of ordinances. Now, if I can at once satisfy the sincere with the assurance of his sincerity, and cure the hypocrite of his soul-deceiving hypocrisy; and all this by a prescription, that the bare work done shall work the cure; there is little danger about the manner of doing it; if you do it at all, you cannot but do it well, and it cannot but be effectual;—doth not this raise your expectation to know what this infallible receipt is, that never so much as once missed curing every one that took it? I would I could hold you a little longer in suspense, till you would resolve to try the experiment before you reject it, unless you can object something against it. If you will but resolve thus, I will refer it to your own conscience to be judge of the weight of your objection. What say you? Will you upon this condition resolve to make trial of my proposal? Shall I take it for granted, you will? Then here it is, and the blessing of God accompany it, that you may not be the first unsuccessful taker of it!

*Do but endeavour to get and keep in your hearts as actual apprehensions of the all-seeing God as it is possible.*—“Thou God seest me: have I also here looked after him that seeth me?” (Gen. xvi. 13.) As if she had said: “Now I am come out of Abraham's family, where God is worshipped, I never thought of God's looking after me here;

but now I find he sees me as well when I am sinning, as when I am praying. Wherever I am, whatever I am about, whether busy or idle, my thoughts, that no creature can know,—God knows them; though I equivocate in my words, God discerns them. Whether I draw near to God to flatter him, or run away from God to escape him; though I lay myself to sleep, that I may not think of him, or get into the dark, where I may see nothing of him; yet God's eye is everywhere all this while upon me." (Psalm cxxxix. 1—13.) Christians, be but so far sincere as industriously to endeavour to keep upon your hearts such apprehensions of God, and this alone will effectually cure you of reigning hypocrisy, and clear-up your suspected sincerity. I grant, some men may be so impudently wicked as daringly to sin while they think God looks on. But this is seldom, and only in the heat of temptation: they cannot, no, they *cannot*, nay, the devil himself cannot help them to, keep-up their hearts to this pitch of impiety. The most daring sinners are but like men in a fire-ship. What, though they venturously run it in, to fire the fleet? They themselves get away as fast as it is possible. So though, in their drunken frolics, they set themselves to out-face God, yet when they are sober they retreat to this: "How doth God know? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not." (Job xxii. 13, 14.) "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten;" and if he can but quell his twinging gripes of conscience, he not only quickly forgets them, but flatters himself that God forgets him too, and that "he hideth his face, and will never see it." And so, though he contemn God, yet "he hath said in his heart, God will not require it." (Psalm x. 11, 13.) Yea, further, "they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." (Psalm xciv. 7.)

But men of the most seared consciences cannot always thus carry it; there are some of the worst of sinners, of whom it may be said, "God is always in their thoughts while they are awake; (and they sleep little;) they think of nothing else; and yet these are far from sincerity, or the way to it." I grant this; for it confirms, not enervates, my remedy. They, under horror and despair, think of God, and cannot but think of him; but it is sore against their wills; they would out-run those thoughts, but the wrath of God pursues them; they "would fain flee out of his hand." (Job xxvii. 22.) But now, to pray and strive that we may get and keep God always in our eye; to be inwardly grieved that our thoughts of God so easily slip from us; so to presentiate God to the soul, as to be able to appeal to God: "All the while I am awake, I am still with thee;" (Psalm cxxxix. 18;) and when I sleep, it is "under the shadow of the Almighty; he shall cover me with his feathers," (Psalm xci. 1, 4,) "as the hen doth her chickens:" (Matt. xxiii. 37.) Christians, those that can comparatively see nothing else with delight, nor rest any where else with content, *they* are truly religious, *they* are certainly sincere. Let us now consider the other extreme.

2. Too many think, or do what they can to make it sink into their thoughts, that *atheism* is best for them. These would be

accounted men of a great soul; they scorn the pusillanimity of conscience; they are neither allured nor frightened with the forethoughts of a future state. They slight any discourse of heaven, and they laugh at the torments of hell; they live without care in a continued frolic. And are not these the only happy men? Though they restrain their blab, they let loose their thoughts, and it is the common language of men's hearts and lives: men secretly bless themselves that they are not religious, when they see men suffer from conscience's sake; all the pity they express, is from deluded fancy.

But will this always hold? Job tells us, no man can harden his heart against God in the way of his providence, and prosper; (Job ix. 4;) much less, sure, can he set himself against God in his very being, and prosper. He is really a "fool," though the world count him a wit, that "saith in his heart"—that is, he heartily wisheth that there were—"No God;" (Psalm xiv. 1;) but God hath a witness within him that he cannot silence, but will, in despite of him, convince him, that there is a God. Never could any man yet blow out that "candle of the Lord," (Prov. xx. 27,) which God hath set-up within him. It cannot be expected, that he who strives in his practice to be an atheist in his judgment, should be so ingenuous as to tell us what convulsions of conscience he is incurably troubled with: if he would, we should need no other testimony but his own to convince him; and seeing he will not, I will only bid him, first get the mastery of his own conscience before he decry that God that masters it. I might press him to consider the works of creation and providence, and how unreasonable it is to expect, that another should believe thy profound arguments, (as thou esteemest them,) when thou unbelievest them thyself every time thou hearest it thunder; (for why should I coast about for convictions?) whilst thou carriest that within thee, which neither thyself, nor all the devils in hell to help thee, can extinguish; thine own conscience, man; conscience, I say, not another's, but thine own; and thou mayest as soon tear thy soul out of thy body, as thy conscience out of thy soul. And while conscience hath a being, the being of God shall not be denied. It is too true, thou mayest sear thy conscience from speaking any thing for thy good; but thou canst never silence it from speaking to thy terror. That never-dying worm will be still gnawing, to make thee feel, both here and to eternity, that there is a God. One thing, I confess, I have sometimes wondered at,—that ever any atheist can die without horror; the approaches of death commonly undeceive us. But when I consider, that those who industriously endeavour to stupify their consciences while they live, should in God's righteous judgment be so far besotted as not to have their consciences so much as quitch\* when they die; but, as they have industriously proselyted others to their atheism, they should be so far deserted of God, as to leave their companions under that delusion, till hell undeceive them. "O! but what can religion do for the cure of atheism?"

\* One of our old words, sometimes written *queach*, *quech*, *quich*, and *quetch*, and signifying "to budge, stir, or move."—EDIT.

*Serious godliness*, in the lowest degree of it, expels atheism. I grant, those that are eminently godly may be tempted to atheism: but they reckon these among Satan's fiery darts, and accordingly set themselves presently to quench them; which though they cannot so easily do, as they imagine who have not experience of such temptations, yet there is this palpable difference between them and atheists; namely, the atheist is inquisitive for arguments to *promote* his atheism, the tempted Christian as inquisitive for arguments and grace to *destroy* it. Those that are seriously godly do not only seek a perfect cure of their own (in part) mortified atheism, but mournfully bewail the insolent atheism of the age they live in. If it be, as it is, "as a sword in their bones" for their enemies to "reproach them, while they say daily unto them, Where is your God?" (Psalm xlii. 10;) if it, as it were, break their bones, to have their interest in God, and God's peculiar care of them, so much as questioned; it must needs be as *a sword to their heart*, a killing wound, to hear the fear of God ridiculed, and the being of God denied. Certainly, as grace is heightened, a gracious person is next to being overwhelmed. Though God hath an evidence of his Deity [that] lies lieger\* in the worst of his enemies, yet, upon the miracles of mercy [which] he works for and in his own people, God may say to them, they are his witnesses that he is God. (Isai. xliii. 12.) And the more eminent any one is in grace, the more experimental witness he is that the Lord is God. This may not only be sufficient for the instances already given, but be sufficiently instructive, what to do in all other cases that might be named. I had thought to have proportionably enlarged upon these, which I shall but little more than name, and therefore shall not add them to the number.

1. *Who knows whether a full or a vacant employment be best for him?*

*A full employment* is that which every one that hath dealings in the world gapes after: this leaves no room for melancholy nor idleness, each of which are unspeakably mischievous. But those that live in a hurry of business, do neither enjoy God nor themselves; it is tiresome both to body and mind. The truth is, the desire of it is ordinarily naught in the *rise*,—it is from covetousness and ambition; naught in the *progress*,—it neglects God and godliness; and naught in the *close*,—it ends at best in disappointment. But here *religion gives relief*; for a heavenly-minded person to be full of worldly business,—it is he alone that minds the main business of his life, to work out his salvation: it is he alone that both will and can keep the world from justling out what is better. The world in this is like the gout, though you keep it at your feet, it is troublesome; but if it reach the heart, it is mortal: the world through grace may be a good servant, but it is impossible to be a good master.

*Is vacancy from employment* better? It is tedious to be always drudging for we know not whom nor what; to have no time to spare for refreshment and recreation, that we may enjoy what we have, be

\* That in the character of conscience, "resides as God's ambassador."—EDIT.

it more or less; this seems better. But yet to have little or nothing to do, exposeth us to we cannot say what; idleness is an inlet to the most monstrous abominations; relaxation from business, and recreation after weariness, is at best but a banquet, no way fit for ordinary food. Beside this, Satan watcheth, and never misseth prevailing upon an idle person. What can *serious godliness* do in this case? When one whose heart is set upon godliness hath but little to do with the world, he finds enough to do as a Christian. The considerate Christian hath not one hour in his life wherein he hath nothing to do: he alone can make a virtue of necessity; he alone can redeem time for God; he alone can fill his life with duty and comfort. In short, it is through grace alone, that a man hath never too much, nor too little, business: it is the power of godliness that is thus powerful.

2. *Who knows whether many or few friends be best for him?*

For *many friends*: man is a sociable creature, and cannot live of himself. To be destitute of friends seems very doleful: "A friend is born for adversity;" a friend may be better than an estate. To have many dear friends and relations, it carries us through our lives with comfort; it is a duty to prize them, it is a sin to slight them: and therefore this seems unquestionably best. But (and there are no friends on earth without a *but* in their commendation) friends themselves are troublesome, apt to take exceptions, to mistake, to be weary of us if we have long need of them. And beside this, there is none in the world, whose friendship is not founded on grace, [that] can be so much my friend now, but he may be as much my enemy hereafter. And if you can find any friend above these exceptions, how do the thoughts of parting abate the comfort of enjoying! Alas! we dare not think of it. "Can *serious godliness* stand us in any stead here?" Much every way: if our friends be irreligious, this necessitates us to do what is possible to make them friends to Christ and to religion; and this attempt is always successful, if not to make them gracious, yet to make ourselves more gracious. And if thy friends be already religious, thou wilt have a foretaste of heaven in the communion of saints; though this is rare, and rarely enjoyed.

Some think it is best to have *few or no friends*. We are too apt to flatter ourselves, and to bear upon our friends, to reckon upon their interest, when we ordinarily find disappointments; whereas, expecting nothing from them makes us learn to live without them, and in some sort above them; we need neither flatter nor humour any body. But now to be friendless,—that is very uncomfortable; a friend greatens all the joys, and lessens all the sorrows, [that] we meet with in this world. It argues a crooked and perverse disposition, to be without friends, or not to care for them. Beside this, we had need to have every man our friend, for we know not into whose hands our life may come before we die. That person must needs be miserable, who lives undesired, and dies unlamented. "What can *serious godliness* do in this case?" A serious, holy person, though he have but few, or perhaps no, worldly friends,—he hath the most and the best friends. He

hath God to be his friend; he hath an interest in the "whole household of faith;" and he can make-up in God what he wants in any other persons or things of the world. What, though he hath no friend to stand by him? Innocency and independency dare do, and can suffer, any thing.

3. *Who knows whether freedom from affliction, or an afflicted condition, be at present best for him?*

*Freedom from afflictions* seems most desirable both to nature and grace. We naturally love our ease, and would have nothing befall us that is grievous to flesh and blood; and gracious persons pray and strive to prevent and remove afflictions. But yet the experience of all, good and bad, in all ages of the world, proclaims this upon the house-tops, that more have got good by afflictions, than by being without them: "The prosperity of fools destroys them." (Prov. i. 32.) "What doeth *religion* in this case?" The truth is, there needs a great exercise of religion to carry us safe through freedom from affliction. Job's extraordinary devotion, (Job i. 5,) upon his children's ordinary rejoicing in their prosperous condition, may convincingly instruct us, that there is more danger in freedom from affliction than we are willing to suspect; and it is more difficult to love, and fear, and trust God, when we have the world, than when we want it: so that, *without* serious godliness, it is impossible to withstand the insinuating and pleasing temptation of flattering prosperity; and unless faith be in exercise, we cannot do it *with* it. "What, then! is an afflicted condition to be preferred?" Some that have had experience of both, say, "Yes;" they have been afraid to come from under their afflictions; some sick persons have been even afraid of health, though they desired it, lest what they got in their sickness they should lose in their health.

But yet *the continuance of afflictions* breaks the spirits, and hinders that cheerful serving and praising of God, which is, or should be, the life of a Christian. Though many are bettered by afflictions, yet none are allowed to pray for afflictions, but against them, and use all good means to avoid or remove them. It is one thing [that] makes heaven desirable,—the putting an end to all our afflictions. In short: "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous," whatever be the after-fruit of it. (Heb. xii. 11.) This therefore is clogged with vanity. "But what doeth religion in this case?" *Serious godliness* by afflictions becomes more serious. God makes great use of afflictions for the working and promoting of piety; and in this, I think, all experienced Christians are agreed;—they reckon sanctified afflictions among the choicest providences of their lives. I commend the enlargement of this by your own thoughts out of your own experiences. And thus including these three cases as in a large parenthesis, there is one case more that I would cautiously speak to, which the church catholic (truly so called) may have more cause than ever tremblingly to consider, and to seek more satisfying resolution than I can give for its determination.

VI. What man upon earth can preempторily assert, whether *peace*



or *persecution* be, just at such a time, infallibly best for the church of Christ? It is easily granted, that we must at all times pray for and endeavour the universal, both outward and spiritual, peace of the church; and this—that we may at all times do any thing but sin—to avoid or put an end to persecution. But let us consider each, as in the former instances.

1. That *the peace of the church* is beyond expression desirable, he is no Christian that denies it. Those that are the greatest troublers of the church's peace, do usually proclaim their friendship to it, calling their affection to a party, "love to the church," and the welfare of their party, "the peace of the church." Now though their charity is too narrow to contract the church into a party, their notion of peace is large enough,—they would have it commensurate with "the church;" so that I need not be large to prove what nobody denies. Outward prosperity was so much the blessing of the old covenant, that some confine it to that; but others upon better grounds expect more under the gospel; for this was no inconsiderable end of Christ's coming into the world, to "deliver us out of the hands of our" worldly "enemies, to serve him, without" affrighting "fears" of men, "in holiness before God and righteousness" before men, "all the days of our life." (Luke i. 74, 75.) Which prosperity when the church hath enjoyed, according to Christ's purchase and promise, then they have walked in the filial "fear of the Lord," and in the encouraging "comforts of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" in number of converts, and increase of *their* graces *that* were formerly converted. (Acts ix. 31.) But here, as we use to say of pleasant weather, "It is pity fair weather should do any harm;" so it is pity the church's prosperity should do any harm.

But, alas! the church of Christ can as little bear continual prosperity, as long adversity: a calm is sometimes as dangerous as a storm. Many are the temptations and snares of a prosperous condition: it breeds hypocrites; errors and heresies spring up like weeds in rank ground; professors are apt to grow remiss and careless, wanton and secure; to be too fond of the present, and to hanker after more temporal happiness than God judges good for them. How hardly were the very apostles awakened from dreaming of Christ's temporal kingdom, and the very best of them from suing for great offices at court! O the divisions among brethren, when pride makes them quarrelsome! When the world favours the church, the church slides into the world; then their worldliness spoils their Christianity, and their Christianity palliates their worldliness; and so those things are mixed which can never be compounded.

But now *serious godliness* is the best preservative against surfeiting on prosperity. It is grace in the exercise and growth, that powerfully enables and necessarily provokes to improve the church's peace to all spiritual advantages. The church of the Jews was never in such a flourishing condition as in Solomon's reign; and is it not well worthy our observation, that the posterity of his servants, who became proselytes to the Jewish religion, were, several ages after his death, doubly

recorded by the Spirit of God, above the proselytes of former ages? (Neh. vii. 57, 60.) It is serious godliness that keeps them humble, and always upon their watch against flattering temptations; that keeps them low in their own eyes, and from despising others. And what on this side great grace could make David, who had a greater sum of ready money than ever any had in the world, either before or since, (1 Chron. xxii. 14,) prefer that little of scripture that was penned in his time, before an innumerable treasure? (Psalm cxix. 72.) He had also a list of worthies, never the like in the world; (2 Sam. xxiii;) yet he prefers the communion of saints before them. (Psalm xvi. 3; cxix. 63.) To have our conversation in heaven, when it is best with us upon earth,—this can only be effected by the power of godliness: believe it, Christians, this is no easy matter.

2. “What, then! is a *state of persecution* more eligible?” Before I dare speak a word to this, I must premise this caution: Let not persecutors take encouragement to be more outrageous in their persecution, and then scornfully tell you, “This is good for them; their pastors tell them it is sometimes better for them than peace.” This is like Julian, who in every thing he did, with a deep reach and greater malice than former emperors, to undermine and worm-out the Christian religion, he still twitted the Christians with some advice or promise of Christ to his disciples about persecution, jeeringly telling them it was for their good. Let such persons know, and O that they would consider, that though God hath, and doth, and will bring good out of evil, and over-rule the fury of men for the good of his people; yet this is not the least excuse for their sin, nor can it be pleaded to abate their punishment. To give you an instance; I cannot give a greater, and I need give no more: the Jews’ persecution of our blessed Saviour—it was predetermined of God, and eventually proved the greatest good to man; yet no thank to them, nor alleviation of their guilt: “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts ii. 23.) They pretended high to piety and necessity for their process against him; they charge him with blasphemy against God, treason against Cæsar, devilism against the souls of people, and luxury as to his common conversation; whereas he was no other than “the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” (Acts vii. 52.) It was good counsel that Gamaliel gave those rulers who “were cut to the heart,” that is, vexed at heart, and counted it criminal, that the apostles should dare to tell them, “We ought to obey God rather than men:” “Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.” (Acts v. 29, 33, 38, 39.) For it is said of others of them that slighted this, They “have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak unto the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sin alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” (1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.) And how heavy doth that

doom lie upon them to this day! I will add no more to this caution, but a request to persecutors, to read and think and pray over the second psalm.

This premised, much may be said of the good which God doeth in and for and by his children, by bringing them into, his presence in, and deliverance out of, persecution; how God increaseth their graces, heightens their comforts, multiplies their experiences, beyond what he doeth [at] any other time of their lives. I remember, Augustine hath a passage, (though, being separated from my books, I cannot name where,) that "if a person suffer death for Christ before conversion, his martyrdom shall be to him instead of regeneration;" but if you will not receive his testimony about the first grace, I am sure you will not deny my next about the exercise of grace. Our great Exemplar, though he was the Son of God, yet, as he was the Son of man, he experimentally "learned obedience by the things which he suffered;" (Heb. v. 8;) and the Holy Ghost tells us, "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Heb. ii. 10.) It is hard to say what kind of perfection Christ had by suffering, but it is easy to observe how sufferings tend to the perfecting of Christians; they force them to a more severe examination of heart and life, and to a more thorough repentance of what provoked God to lay them under sufferings. Then their prayers are more fervent, and their whole conversation more regular, than at other times. So that I know not whether as well the former as the latter part of that passage may not be a gracious promise: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break," &c. (Psalm lxxxix. 30—37.) In short, their greatest sufferings shall be medicinal, not destructive; the more they exercise their graces, the more they increase them. For here is the difference between an earthly and a heavenly treasure: *the one*, the more you spend, the less you have; *the other*, the more you lay out, the more you augment the treasure. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world," those especially who are impoverished for righteousness' sake, "rich in faith?" (James ii. 5.) And according to our faith are all our other graces, and all our other comforts; and it is by "believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter i. 8.) And the apostle tells you expressly, that it is for the comfort of others he acquaints them, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ." (2 Cor. i. 5.) Those Christians that have walked droopingly all their days, when God hath singled them out for sufferings, God hath cleared up their evidences: never did any martyr die in desertion.

• It was in the captivity that, one while, Christ, the Angel of the

Covenant,—another while, a created angel, one of his menial servants, —did revive, instruct, support, and comfort Daniel, as God's "greatly beloved." (Dan. x. 10—21.) The blessed apostle in one chapter (2 Cor. xi.) gives us an account of his sufferings, and in the next (2 Cor. xii.) of his (some degree of) beatifical vision; and both beyond all the other apostles. And God doth not only this in and for themselves, but God makes them more eminently useful unto others: persecution was the occasion of spreading the gospel all the world over. Blessed Paul wrote more epistles in his bonds, than any one of the other apostles in their liberty; and it was in one of those epistles that he appeals to his readers to "understand his knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. iii. 4.) It was in the time of the beloved disciple's banishment into Patmos, that Christ gave him a prospect of the state of the church from his time to the end of the world; through all the times of the heathen persecutions, and through the rise, reign, and ruin of the antichristian apostasy; with peculiar prophecies, suitable directions, terrible threatenings, and cheering promises, through the several visions; all which, though not very easy to be understood, yet well deserve the name of "revelation;" evidencing Christ's peculiar care of his persecuted servants, that nothing befalls them by chance, but that the main outrage of enemies is ordered and bounded by Christ's infinite wisdom and compassionate love. And though time hath confuted many mistaken calculations of the continuance of the church's troubles, yet God will not delay the church's deliverance one moment in favour to their enemies, but gradually to ripen his own design; and God will in the best time do more for his people than their present faith and hope can grasp; and as we need the understanding of these dark scriptures, God will unriddle them to us.

But at present the church's persecution is grievous to it, and that upon many accounts. In times of persecution, hell seems to be let loose as to all manner of wickedness: when nothing but the service of God is criminal, the service of the devil seems meritorious. Some will be frighted from the entertainment of the gospel, and die in their infidelity; and they are lost for ever. Others so far shrink, that they lose their peace, (though they do not lose their souls,) and never recover it more. And the spirits of the strongest will be apt to faint, if the sufferings be sharp and long: they "shall wear out the saints of the Most High." (Dan. vii. 25.) When persecution comes to its height, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. xxiv. 22.)

"But what is to be done at that time, that what is intolerable to flesh and blood may be borne with triumph? that we may be so far from stumbling at the cross of Christ, that we may humbly glory in it? 'Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.' (Acts v. 41.) In a word, how may the time of their persecution be the best time of their life?"

By *serious godliness*, by a more vigorous exercise of all the graces

of the Holy Ghost. When we feel what there is in that life of faith, [which] we have at other times but talked of; what, though the furnace be heated seven times hotter than ordinary, may we be but seven times more purified than ordinary! Christians, let this be your great care, never to "suffer as evil-doers;" but so walk, that your enemies may despair of ever finding any occasion against you, except they find it against you concerning the law of your God. Persecutors will never own it, that they inflict evil upon persons for doing good; but always pretend something criminal. As when Paul and Silas preached Christ at Thessalonica, "the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar." (Acts xvii. 5—7.) When Paul was afterwards taken and arraigned, he, "earnestly beholding the council," (he could look them boldly in the face,) "said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." And though this plea enraged some of his persecutors, others became his advocates, saying, "We find no evil in this man:" therefore "let us not fight against God." (Acts xxiii. 1, 9.) And when he was afterwards, in this process, brought before a heathen magistrate, corrupt enough, and thereby prejudiced against him, yet there, "as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." (Acts xxiv. 25.) Nothing so ruffles the consciences of persecutors, as the uncontrollable blamelessness of sufferers: as Job told his prejudiced friends, "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" (Job xix. 28.) I will close all these propositions with Job's resolution, which I request may be this: "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live." (Job xxvii. 5, 6.)

And now, though I have thus made out what I proposed in behalf of serious godliness, yet I am sensible it is not done beyond contradiction. I shall therefore next endeavour to remove the objections that are of moment, and leave the cavils to die of themselves.

#### OBJECTIONS.

OBJECTION I. "If our present condition be, for aught we can possibly know, best for us; why should we seek to alter it? Why should we seek health when we are sick, or right ourselves when we are wronged? or why should we seek peace of conscience, when we are under trouble of conscience? This seems to make a confusion in our very prayers, to hinder praying, and to stagger our faith in prayer; for our prayers are for the altering of things for the better; that is the sum of all our petitions. Now if we be 'wavering' in our minds about what is good for us, how can we think to 'receive any

thing of the Lord? A double-minded,' unresolved 'man is unstable,' uncertain, 'in all his ways.'" (James i. 6—8.)

ANSWER I. This is so far from hindering or confounding our prayers, that, next to the Spirit of God, it is our best guide and instructor for prayer. This will teach us, that our petitions are not to direct God what to do, nor may we expostulate with God in a quarrelling manner, as if God wronged us if he do not humour us. Whatever we pray for, *that*\* cannot but be good for us. For instance: renewing, strengthening, stablishing grace,—these cannot but be good for us; for these we may insist with so much earnestness as not to be contented with a denial. God hath nowhere made it our duty to be willing to be damned, to be his enemies, to hate him and blaspheme him for ever: and therefore herein, if a pretended angel from heaven (for God never sent any *holy* angel upon such an errand) should tell us, as from God, that God would not hear us, nor bestow his grace upon us; we might tell him, "God never denied his grace to any that were not willing to be denied; and therefore, where God hath by preventing grace so far engaged the will restlessly to desire grace, he hath given a token for good that he is pleased with our importunity." And therefore, peremptorily to resolve humbly to lie at God's foot, and to live and die with this petition for grace,—your endeavours being answerable to your prayers,—you may comfortably believe, never any perished that did it. But now, in things not necessary to salvation, (and of such things is the question,) we must pray in another manner: we are to consider our circumstances, the promises that suit them, how far God useth to fulfil such promises in the letter of them, how in his wise love he fulfils a spiritual promise, when they are earnest for a temporal; and we shall never have hard thoughts of God, though he deny us any thing in this world for which we are most earnest. And the truth is, let but serious, praying Christians deeply reflect upon their own hearts, how they have been differently affected in prayer according to the things they prayed for; and they will certainly find, that whatever their expressions have been about things less necessary, yet their hearts have been more thoroughly broken and more inexpressibly longing for spiritual supplies. It is about God's bestowing of his grace that they adore his sovereignty, justifying God though he should reject them, and wondering even to astonishment how he can show kindness to *them*: so that, the more spiritual any Christians are, the more they lose their will in the will of God, and the less they quarrel with God, let him do what he will with them. They do not think it in vain to serve God, though he should (but he will not) cast them off at last; they thankfully acknowledge they receive so many mercies from God here, as are infinitely more worth than all the services they can do him; and they see cause to love God, though there is no cause why God should love them: so that they will pray and wait, hate sin and love holiness, admire God and abase themselves, and let God do what he will with them. This is the temper and practice of the most serious Christians.

\* "The altering of things for the better." See the objection.—EDIT.

2. This will teach us to observe God's answering of prayer, so as to be thankful or penitent, to retract or alter or urge our petitions, as our case requires. And this I think I may say,—One of the choicest exercises of grace is about the improving [of] the return of prayer. For example: I think such a thing to be good for me; suppose, a better frame of health: for this I fill my mouth with arguments, and my heart with faith; but God answers me with disappointments. This teaches me upon reflection; I find causes more than are good, why God should deny me. Suppose, further, I beg the pardon of sin, am sensible that I must perish if I be denied, and therefore reckon I cannot be too earnest; but am so far from speeding, that to my apprehension God seems implacable, and I have less hopes every day than other. Well, this puts me upon a more thorough scrutiny, and I find I have not observed God's method for pardon: I would have the comfort of a pardon without a suitable sense of the evil of sin; which if I should obtain, I should not be so shy of sin as when I have felt the smart of it; I should not look upon myself as so much beholden to Christ, but that I might venture upon sin, and have a pardon at pleasure; I should not so much pity others under their soul-troubles. In a word, the more we consider, the more cause we shall see, why God answers prayer according to his own wisdom, not our folly.

OBJECTION II. "We do not see that religion doeth any great matter toward the bettering of every condition. Those that pretend to religion, have always their own good word; they love to speak and hear of the achievements and privileges of religion, though they are invisible to all but themselves. A little more modesty and less arrogancy would better become them."

ANSWER I. To our grief we must acknowledge, that serious Christians are shamefully defective in living up to such a height of heavenly-mindedness, as to have the experiences [which] they might have; and shall we, when we are injurious to ourselves, expect God to fulfil conditional promises, when we neglect the condition of them? No, Christians; God will say to us, what he once said to Israel: "If thou wilt walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;" then "the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee," &c. "But if ye will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you, and ye shall know my breach of promise." (Lev. xxvi. 3, 21—24; Deut. xxviii. 1, 2; Num. xiv. 34.) God doth not only in displeasure, but in kindness, make his people feel a difference in their comforts, from the difference in their walking. You may as well expect to buy things without money, because "money answers all things," as expect promises fulfilled to godliness, when you want that godliness to which the promise is made. It is true, God may give it of bounty, but not of promise; and then it may be a mercy, but not a blessing. Make conscience of performing the condition, and make conscience of believing the promise: for God will certainly fulfil that promise, or a better: so that the fault is our own that we do not "inherit the promises."

2. When I have granted all that can rationally be demanded in the objection, do but impartially observe, and you will find, that notwithstanding all the defects and imperfections of Christians, it is they alone that live most above the vanity of every condition. It is they only [who] have received those "exceeding great and precious promises," whereby they are "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust:" (2 Peter i. 4 :) and though they have not "already attained" that heavenly frame they hope for, neither are "already perfect; yet this one thing they do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, they press toward" a full experience of what is to be found in the ways of holiness. (Phil. iii. 12—14.) If this be not a sufficient answer to this objection, what I shall add will be more than enough. Whereas I have by an induction of six comparative cases (I hope) demonstrated the excellency of serious godliness, I shall now in as many instances, beyond all comparison and beyond contradiction, demonstrate the superlative excellency of the power of godliness; all which may serve as arguments for practical godliness.

1. *Serious godliness will make your present condition good for you, be it what it will.*—Every thing but religion will make you think any condition better than your present condition. There is one text I would commend to your consideration in this matter, 1 Tim. vi. 5, 6: Those that are "destitute of the truth, suppose that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain." As if he had said, "Those that only talk of religion, and wrangle about it,—they have no higher design than to make a gain of it; avoid all familiarity with them: but those that are sincerely religious, that know and fear and worship God aright,—there is a treasure, a great treasure, 'a constant revenue, an inexhaustible spring.'"\* And then content is not mentioned as a condition added to piety, as if piety were not "great gain" without content added to it; but content is mentioned as "the very genuine effect of piety."† The godly man is so well contented with his condition, that he is not so solicitous as others for the bettering of it: whatsoever is wanting to him, is made up by tranquillity of mind, and hope in God, that God will supply him with necessaries; and he acquiesceth in his will. Now where is that man in all the world that can do this beside the Christian?

2. *Serious godliness will make every change of condition good for us, though the change shock both nature and grace.*—A change of condition is either the hope or fear of every one in this world; and it is not the least part of heaven's happiness, that there is no fear of change. In that state of happiness wherein men and angels were created, mutability was their outlet into sin and misery; but now through grace there is no change formidable. Alas! we change more or less every day; and who is it that meets not with some almost overwhelming changes in his life, and doth, or should, preparingly expect his

\* Ποσιππος, fundus, quasi perennis fons.

† Purum putum pietatis effectum.



greatest change at death? And let the consciences of all that are not worse than dead say, whether any thing on this side now-despised godliness, can so much as endure the thoughts of such a change. In the comparatively petty changes of our life, when we but change plenty into want, or credit into disgrace, or health into sickness, how do persons fret and toss like a wild bull in a net, or lie down sullen under God's hand, as if he had done us wrong, or were to give us account why he grieves us! But now grace in exercise turns our eyes inward, and shows us what we have more cause to lament; no evil comparable to the evil of sin! Whatever God doeth against us, on this side hell, it is less than sin deserves. Will God any way prepare us for our unchangeable change? Glory be to free grace!

3. *Serious godliness will make relative afflictions (which of all outward afflictions are the most grievous) good for us; and nothing else can do it.*—I confess, it is morally worse, for all the relations of a family to go the broad way to ruin, and though their lusts clash one against another, yet to be all agreed to be the devil's willing servants. It was sad in Egypt, when "there was not a house where there was not one dead;" (Exod. xii. 30;) but it is far worse to have whole families where there is not one spiritually alive. But though it is sinfully worse than divisions in families about religion, yet it is at present more dolefully afflictive to have those, whose souls' welfare we desire as our own, to be devils incarnate: for a David, a "man after God's own heart," when he comes from public worship "to bless his household," to be so reviled by Michal as to divert his zeal to a twitting her with her father's rejection, and his blessing of his household into God's curse upon herself. (2 Sam. vi. 20—23.) On the other hand, for a most obliging Abigail to have "such a son of Belial" to her husband "that a man cannot speak to him;" that when by her prudent foresight he was preserved from sudden death, he was so drunk as not to be capable of hearing of his danger. (1 Sam. xxv. 17—36.) Again: for Abraham, the "father of the faithful," to have a seven-years' promise of a son, and for God to give that son his name, and this son to prove a scoffing Ishmael; for Isaac, the quietest of all the patriarchs, to pray twenty years for a son, and to have his first-born prove a profane Esau; for good Eli to have such children as made the offerings of the Lord to be abhorred. (1 Sam. ii. 17.) And, on the other hand, for Hezekiah, of whom it is said, "After him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him," (2 Kings xviii. 5,) to have such a father as Ahaz, that, as it were, devoted his children to the devil, (2 Kings xvi. 3,) and hath this peculiar brand upon him, that "in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz." (2 Chron. xxviii. 22.) How might every one of these complain as Rebekah did! "I am weary of my life, because of" some wicked relations; and if I should have more such, "what good shall my life do me?" (Gen. xxvii. 46.) Again: for masters to have such servants as Mephibosheth had of Ziba, who irreparably blasted him in his reputation, and ruined him in his estate; (2 Sam. xvi. 1—4;) for servants to have

such a master as Laban was to Jacob, who gives this account of his twenty years' service: "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes;" and had not God relieved him by little less than miracle, "surely thou hadst sent me away empty." (Gen. xxxi. 40—42.) And now having mentioned sinful relative afflictions, I will mention no other; for there is no evil comparable to sin, nor any evil so intolerable to a gracious soul; [so] that if serious godliness can keep from sinking under this burden, you need fear no other. To be inseparably related to one that is loaded with infamy, or even famished through poverty, loathsomely diseased, or incurably distracted,—these are but flea-bittings to the stabbing wounds of wicked relations. But now serious godliness doth not only support, but grow under, this burden; which is a privilege they are injurious to themselves to overlook. Christ takes upon him all those relations that are impossible to meet in any other, that what is grievous in any relation may be comfortably made up in him; and God usually increaseth their graces, though not always their present comforts.

4. *Serious godliness will make horror of conscience and divine desertions good for us.*—These, where there is no godliness nor working toward it, they are none of the least of hell-torments; but where they befall any one that is godly, or that God is about to make so, they prove healing, though rough, physic. When God thoroughly awakens the conscience, though with a fright; and drops spiritual influences, though withdraws; he makes convictions more deep, and repentance more sound. You may take this for a tried case: Those serious Christians whom God is pleased to exercise with tremblings of conscience, temptations of Satan, and apprehensions of desertion, God thereby makes them eminently gracious and compassionately useful; they walk most humbly with God, justifying and praising him under his most astonishing providences. And though, above all temptations, these are so far from joyous, that they are most grievous; yet these, even these, "afterward yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 11.)

5. *Serious godliness will force something good out of the evil of sin.*—Here it concerns me to speak with more caution than in any other case whatsoever; for we must not dare to venture upon sin, through hopes of extracting good out of it, as chymists extract spirits out of soot and urine, &c. No; the apostle tells us, that those that do but "say," that offer to say, "We may do evil, that good may come of it,"—the "damnation" of those slanderers "is just." (Rom. iii. 8.) So that it is next to impossible to be too shy of sin, unless when Satan frights us into the omission of some duties, for fear of the sins that inevitably cleave to them. In short, I would have you understand this instance to refer to sins past, not future; to sins already committed, that there is no other possible way of undoing what is done, but by repentance; not of sins not yet committed, as if I gave so much as the least encouragement to so much as the least sin. Thus understanding the instance, I dare say it over again,

*Serious godliness will force something of good out of the evil of sin.* These are the persons that cannot forget "the wormwood and the gall" of their mortification; their "soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in" them. (Lam. iii. 19, 20.) These are the persons that put a due estimate upon pardoning mercy, and love Christ the more, for the more sins he hath forgiven them: as Christ said of Mary Magdalene, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (Luke vii. 47.) The blessed apostle, that brands himself for the "chief of sinners" before conversion, (1 Tim. i. 15,) dares own it, that he "laboured more abundantly than all" the apostles after his conversion: (1 Cor. xv. 10:) and it is peculiar to him to coin words, to magnify the grace of God in Christ.\* Christians, I beseech you, let not any one take encouragement hence to sin, but let the worst of sinners take encouragement hence to repent. What, though thou hast been one of the vilest wretches upon earth? thou mayest through grace be one of the highest saints in heaven; and the sense of what thou hast been may promote it. The rising ground of a dunghill may help to raise thy flight towards heaven. Once more:

6. *Though to your own apprehension you have no faith at all to believe any one word of all this, nor any skill at all to know what to do; yet serious godliness will make all this good to thee.*—Here, you see, I take it for granted, that one may be seriously godly, who, in his own present apprehensions, hath no faith at all, nor skill at all for anything that is spiritually good. Many may be in this like Moses; their faces may shine (their grace may shine) to others, and they themselves not know it. (Exod. xxxiv. 29.) Many that are dear to God, live many years in the growing exercise of grace, and yet dare not own it, that they have any at all. God bestows the faith of assurance upon those of his children that are not able to bear up without it; (mistake me not, as if it were not every one's duty to seek it, and a great privilege to have assurance;) when others of his children, who have a stronger faith, live and die without it. To give you an instance beyond all instances: our Lord Jesus Christ, who, it is certain, could not want assurance, yet died in as great desertion as it was possible to befall him. When he had hung six hours upon the cross, he "cried with a loud voice, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark xv. 25; Matt. xxvii. 46.) As if he had said, "This is beyond all my other torment." And "when he had cried again with a loud voice," with a vehement affection and a strong faith, he laid down his soul. (Matt. xxvii. 50.) But what was that [which] he spake with such vehemency the second time? "Father, into thy hands I will commend my spirit;" (Luke xxiii. 46;) Παράθησομαι. "I will depose my soul with thee, I will thrust it into thy hands." Now that Jesus Christ was under this unexpressible desertion during the three-hours' preternatural darkness, it is more than for the best of Christians to be so during their whole life; which

\* Rom. v. 20: "Ἐπεπερισσεύεν, [Grace "did much more abound;"] 1 Tim. i. 14: "Ἐπεπλάσασε, [The grace of our Lord "was exceeding abundant."]

doth more than prove what I asserted,—that a person of great grace may be so much in the dark as not to see he hath any. “But what must he do in this case? Can serious godliness afford any relief?” Christians, pray mark it; these persons,—they are, and through grace cannot but be, seriously godly; and their serious godliness finds them work enough, and support enough to keep them from sinking. They daily do what they complain they cannot do; they do “fear the Lord;” they fear nothing more than sinning against him; they do “obey the voice of his servants;” there are none [who] receive instructions more obediently; though they “walk in darkness,” they will never follow a false fire; if they have “no light” from God, they will have none from any else. They do “trust in the name of the Lord;” they lie at God’s foot, let him do what he will with them; they do “stay upon their God;” (Isai. l. 10;) they “come up from the wilderness” of the world, “leaning upon their Beloved.” (Canticles viii. 5.) Religion is the whole business of their life, and comparatively they do nothing else; and though they have not ravishing comforts, they have that peace that exceeds “all understanding” that is merely human, and that doth “guard their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” against all the stratagems and fiery darts of Satan. (Phil. iv. 7.) Their state is good, their souls are safe, and they cannot but be happy in both worlds. And thus I have endeavoured to be so practical in the doctrinal part, that there needs but little to be added for the application: the Lord make that little to be like chymical spirits,—to be more effectual than a greater quantity! Rouse-up yourselves to do your part, that it may be so.

## USES.

**USE I.** *Set your hearts upon serious godliness.*—This *must* be the first use; for you can make no use at all of this doctrine, till you have made this use of it. Every thing without this is but an abuse of it; you do not only wrong the truth, but you wrong yourselves, whatever you say or do about it, till you make it your business to experiment the truth of what hath been spoken in its commendation; and this I can assure you, never any one repented of his downright godliness. Therefore live in the practice of those plain duties, without which it is in vain to pretend to religion. For instance: daily read some portion of the Old and New Testament; not as your child reads it for his lesson, but as God’s child reads it for his profit. Be more frequent in prayer; not as those that pass their prayers by number, but as those that pour-out their hearts to God in holy fervour. Let your thoughts be so filled with heavenly objects, that you may in some respect make all things such [which] you think of. Discourse of the things of God, not in a captious or vain-glorious manner, but as those that feel the truths they speak of. Receive the sacrament, not as a civil test, but as sealing that covenant wherein you will be as careful to fulfil the conditions, as you would have God faithful in fulfilling the promises. Look out so sharp to the progress of your sanctification, that sin may not expire, but be mortified; and that grace

may be so lively, as to confute the reproach of enemies, and exceed the commendation of friends. Bear afflictions, not as a malefactor goes to execution,—because he cannot help it; but as chary not to miss the fruit of affliction,—the participation of God's holiness. Though you look first to yourselves, be not only selfish, though in the most gracious manner, but endeavour to be blessings as far as your name is heard of. In short, perform all your duties to God, yourselves, and others, in the name of Christ, through his strength, according to his command, relying upon his promises, that you may feel what it is to be accepted in God's and your Beloved. This is to be serious in religion.

USE II. *Learn to be more than barely contented with your present condition.*—It is that which God in wisdom chooseth for you, preferring it before any other condition. Every condition hath some lessons peculiar to it, which are better learnt in that condition than in any other; and those things that may be best learnt in thy condition, are the things you most need learning; which when you have learnt, then God will put thee into other circumstances, to teach thee something else. Every condition hath something grievous in it, by reason of the sin and vanity that cleaves to it; but that which is most grievous, if it be used as physic, will help to cure thee. We all grant, it is best to take physic when we need it: “Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold” trials; (1 Peter i. 6;) and when we take physic, we imprison ourselves in our chamber, as much as others in a gaol; we abstain from riot, as much as they that want bread; we tend our physic, and need no arguments to do so. Christians, let God be your Physician, and prescribe what physic he pleaseth; we have nothing else to do, but observe his instructions for its beneficial operation. Apply this to any condition that is uneasy to you, and you will see cause not only to justify, but to praise, your wise Physician. But if this argument be not cogent, I will commend one that is. (I confess I love those directions that will apply themselves, that will work their way for application.) That you may so far like your present condition, as to perform the duties of it, before you desire an alteration of it, take this course: sit down and consider,—should God so far humour thee, as to let thee frame thine own condition to thine own mind, to give thee thy choice for a worldly happiness; suppose he allowed thee time to think, to consult friends, to alter and add, upon second and third, yea, upon your twentieth, thought, whatever the wit of man could suggest, or the heart of man desire; and all this for a whole month together, before you fixed your choice; I suppose, when you chose, it should be wealth without care, pleasure without weariness, honour without hazard, health without sickness, friends without mistake, relations without crosses, old age without infirmities: and if God should thus alter the course of his providence, unto what would your own pride and the world's envy expose you? “O, but,” you will say, “all this with grace will do well.” Do you think so? But would not grace without all this do better? Can you think that such a condition would wean you from

the world, and fit you for heaven? Or is earth the place where you would live for ever, and have no more happiness than that can afford you? Return, poor soul, return to thyself and to thy God; acknowledge that God is wise, and thou art a fool; and it is better [to] be employed in the present duty of thy present condition, than to doze-out thy life in wild imaginations.

USE III. *Make conscience of both sorts of duties,—religious and worldly; and allot fit and distinct times for heavenly and worldly business.*—But with this difference, let religion mix itself with worldly business, and spare not; but let not the world break-in upon religion, lest it spoil it. Religion will perfume the world, but the world will taint religion. Though every thing in the world be clogged with vanity, yet there is something of duty about every thing we meddle with, and we must not call neglect of duty, “contempt of the world.” Use the world as you do your servants, to whom you give due liberty, as the best way to prevent their taking more than is due: so, to take a due care about the world, is the best way to prevent religion’s being justled out by worldly cares. Count not any sin or duty about the least matters so small as to venture upon the one, or neglect the other; but proportion your carefulness according to the business before you. I see more cause every day than other, to commend both the truth and weight of the observation, that “all over-doing is undoing:” you cannot bestow too much diligence about one thing, but you rob something else of what diligence is necessary, and mar that about which you are over-solicitous. I will close this with that of the apostle: “This I say, brethren, the time is short;” we have none to spare: “it remaineth,” for the future, “that both they that have wives be as though they had none;” let them not be uxorious; “and they that weep, as though they wept not;” if God bring them under sorrow, let them but water their plants, not drown them; “and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not;” we must at best “rejoice with trembling;” “and they that buy, as though they possessed not;” there is nothing we can purchase worth the name of a possession; “and they that use this world, as not abusing it” to any other use than what God hath appointed: “for the fashion of this world passeth away;” the pageantry of this world will soon be over. “But I would have you without carefulness,” without distracting carefulness about worldly things. (1 Cor. vii. 29—32.)

USE IV. *Whatever you do for the bettering of your condition, follow God, but do not go before him.*—This is a direction of great moment, being a necessary caution against that sin that doth always beset us. Every man is an orator, to aggravate his own grievances; and thinks himself a politician, for fitting them with remedies; yea, hath the confidence of a prophet, that they shall certainly be effectual, if God will but take *his* time and method for their operation. “Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass’s colt,” (Job xi. 12,) to kick up his heels against God’s unsearchable wisdom. You may at once see both your proneness to the sin, and Christ directing to this remedy, in one and the same instance; namely, when Peter

had made such a confession of faith, that Christ never commended any like it; but would prescribe to Christ an exemption from suffering, not considering that mankind would have been undone by that advice; but Christ with a sharp reproof bids, "Get thee behind me;" &c. (Matt. xvi. 16, 23.) In all cases, about settling in the world, getting estates, seeking preferment, entering into marriage, removing from one place to another, be not self-conceited nor hasty, to run before God, nor to go out of his way; but follow him, follow his commands in a way of obedience, follow his providence in a way of observance; follow God, and you may expect his blessing.

USE V. *Remember these two words, though you forget all the rest of the sermon; namely, CHRIST and HOLINESS, HOLINESS and CHRIST.*—Interweave these, all manner of ways, in your whole conversation. Press after holiness as much as it is possible, had you no Christ to befriend you; (for it is a shame to mind holiness the less, for any benefits you expect from Christ;) and rest as entirely upon Christ, as if there were nothing else required; for the best of your holiness doth not merit acceptance. It is serious Christianity that I press, as the only way to better every condition; it is Christianity, downright Christianity, that alone can do it. It is not morality without faith; that is but refined Heathenism: it is not faith without morality; that is but downright hypocrisy. It must be a divine faith, wrought by the Holy Ghost, where God and man concur in the operation; such a faith as works by love both to God and man, a holy faith, "full of good works:" "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;" (Eph. ii. 10;) "worshipping God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh; yea, doubtless, counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus: that we may be found in him, not having," not trusting in, "our own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that we may know him," &c. (Phil. iii. 3, 8—10.) I will close all with this of Solomon, of whom it is said, "He spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." (1 Kings iv. 32, 33.) Now consider, his treatises of natural philosophy are utterly lost, though we may well suppose them the best that ever were writ; nay, of his three thousand proverbs, those that were not divinely inspired are lost; and those that were, are some of them collected by other hands, not his own: (Prov. xxv. 1:) but his two last and best treatises, Ecclesiastes and Canticles,—the one to abate our love of the world, and the other to increase our love to Christ,—these are the books, these are the things, with which he did [close his life,] with which we should close our lives.

## SERMON II.

BY THE REV. EDWARD VEAL, B.D.

OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD; AFTERWARDS SENIOR FELLOW OF TRINITY  
COLLEGE, DUBLIN.HOW MAY WE EXPERIENCE IN OURSELVES, AND EVIDENCE TO  
OTHERS, THAT SERIOUS GODLINESS IS MORE THAN A FANCY?*Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a  
reason of the hope that is in you.*—1 Peter iii. 15.

CHRISTIANITY was no sooner come into the world, than it was assaulted by Satan and his instruments, persecuting believers, and either reproaching their religion as impious, or censuring it as madness, or ridiculing it as folly. The Holy Ghost in the scripture, foreseeing this, not only forewarns them of it, but arms them against it; and, among others of his holy penmen, employs this apostle to fence those saints to whom he wrote against this temptation, and to direct them what to do if it came to be their case.

1. He *encourageth* them under sufferings of all sorts “for righteousness’ sake;” tells them, that so to suffer would be so far from making them miserable, that it would be their happiness: “Happy are ye;” (verse 14;) answerably to what his Master had before told him and the rest of his hearers: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you,” &c. (Matt. v. 11.)

2. He *directs* them how to carry themselves,

(1.) When *persecuted*; and that,

(i.) *Negatively*.—Verse 14: “Be not afraid of their terror,” &c. Be not daunted nor affrighted with those fears [which] your enemies would work in you. This passage relates to that of Isaiah viii. 12: “Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid;” where the saints are bid not to fear what others were afraid of. But here, with a little variation, they are exhorted not to give way to, or be overcome by, those terrors [which] their adversaries would strike into them.

(ii.) *Positively*.—Verse 15: “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” Fear him more than your persecutors; stand in awe of his power more than their rage; fear him so as not inordinately to fear them; be so afraid of offending him, as not to fear suffering by them. And this advice likewise is agreeable to that [which] our Saviour gives, Matt. x. 28: “Fear not them which kill the body,” &c.: “but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

(2.) When *reproached, or scoffed at, or traduced*, by their enemies. If they accuse or mock your religion as impious, or childish, or unreasonable, if they demand a reason of you why you believe or



practise as you do, "be always ready to give" them "an answer;" to give an account of yourselves, and show upon what grounds ye are Christians, and to make it appear that your faith is real, and your obedience reasonable.

Three things only in the words call for a little explication :

1. *What is meant by "hope?"*—Either "hope" here is the same that faith is; (and so it is in divers other places;) and then to give a reason of their hope is to make a confession of their faith; so some take it:\* or it may be taken synecdochically, for the whole of their religion; as others.† And indeed, the hope of a Christian being one of the most eminent acts of religion, and seeming withal to the profane and ignorant world one of the most strange things in it, and which was most cavilled against and laughed at, (Acts xvii. 18, 32,) for men to expect a life after death, a glorious resurrection after a dishonourable lying in the grave, and to renounce all worldly enjoyments, and expose themselves to the bitterest sufferings, merely in hope of something they did not see, nor expected to enjoy till after they were dead; it might well be put for the whole of religion, as being so remarkable in it.

2. *What is meant by this ἀπολογία, "answer," they were to give?*—It is elsewhere frequently rendered by "defence;" (Acts xxii. 1; Phil. i. 7, 17;) it is rendered "answer," as here, 1 Cor. ix. 3. You may call it "an apologetical or defensive answer," as relating to their enemies' accusation or charge against them, or examination of them. They might look upon the religion of Christians as an unreasonable thing, and therefore require a reason of their faith and practice; which if they should, the apostle would have them ready to make their defence, and show how good grounds they had for both.

3. *How they were to "be always ready to give an answer."*—It doth not imply that they were bound to do it to every caviller or trifler; but when the glory of God and the honour of the gospel required it, and when their silence might be injurious to the truth, to their own consciences, or their brethren's souls. And so Christian prudence ought to judge of the seasonableness of their making their defence; they were not bound always actually to do it, but to be always actually "ready," whenever God in his providence should call them to it.

Now from what our apostle enjoins these saints to be always ready to do, I infer what all true saints may be able to do, at least what the nature of the thing is capable of; and so the doctrinal inference [which] I deduce from the words, is this :

#### DOCTRINE.

*That true Christians may give a satisfactory account of their Christianity, that it is something both real and reasonable, not folly nor fancy.*

In speaking to this truth, two things are to be done:—

I. I shall show, that true believers may give an account of the religion they profess according to the gospel.

\* CALVINUS in loc.

† GROTIUS.

II. I shall give directions in answer to the question, *How a believer may be able to experience in himself, and evidence to others, that his religion, that powerful godliness in the practice whereof he lives, is more than a fancy.*

I. *That true believers may give a good account of the religion they profess.*—Most that the carnal world is wont to object against powerful religion in the saints, may be reduced to three heads:—

(I.) Against their *faith*, (in which I include their hope, as of kin to it, and the fruit of it,) it is objected that it is but a *fancy*.

(II.) Against their *obedience*, and close walking with God, and diligence in duty, which is the fruit of their faith, [it is objected] that it is but the *effect of fancy*, and so no better than folly, an unreasonable and groundless niceness and scrupulosity.

(III.) Against their *comforts* and spiritual enjoyments, [it is objected] that they can be no better than their faith and obedience from which they proceed, and are no more than mere *imagination and delusive conceits*. In answer to each of these, I shall, I hope, evidence the contrary to be most true.

(I.) *That the faith of a true believer is something real, and not a fancy.*—By “the faith of a saint,” I understand only that lively and effectual faith which is the instrument or means, (call it as you please,) not only of a saint’s justification, (Rom. v. 1,) but sanctification; (Acts xv. 9;) that which is called “precious faith,” (2 Peter i. 1,) “the faith of God’s elect,” (Titus i. 1,) as being peculiar to them, and the effect of their election; (Acts xiii. 48;) that faith, in a word, which is an apprehending Christ as “the author of eternal salvation,” (Heb. v. 9,) a believing “the record that God hath given of his Son, that eternal life is in him.” (1 John v. 10, 11.) This faith imports in it a respect to Christ as the author of all other spiritual benefits antecedent to eternal life:—*justification*, whereby a believer is entitled to it; *sanctification*, whereby he is prepared for it; *consolation*, by which he is encouraged in seeking it, and supported under the opposition and difficulties he meets with in the way to it. But here I speak of faith especially as respecting eternal salvation, which is one principal act of it, and which includes or supposes the other; and the rather because the belief and expectation of life and immortality after death is that which the unbelieving world looks upon as most strange and unreasonable, and takes all a believer can say of his expecting future things in another world to be but strong fancies of great nothings. There is no act of faith against which the objections of carnal reason are more usually levelled than against this; and if the reality of a Christian’s faith appears in this, it can scarce be denied in others. Now, that this belief of eternal life is something real in a saint’s heart, and not merely a fancy in his brains, might appear more than probable in that it hath been, and still is to be, found in those who are least fanciful, men as serious, as judicious, as rational as any in the world. Though “not many wise men after the flesh are called,” (1 Cor. i. 26,) yet some are; and it cannot reasonably be imagined, that they

who are confessedly grave, and prudent, and discreet, and free from conceits and fancies in all other things, should dote in those only which are of the greatest concernment to them. Especially if we consider that this faith is stirring in them at such times as men use to be least given to fancies; as on the most solemn occasions, under the greatest afflictions, and at the approach of the most terrible of all temporal evils,—death itself. Men are most apt to be taken with fancies and appearances, when they are wholly at ease and flush in the world, and have hope or some prospect of great things in it: then they are apt to fancy things according to their appetites, and fondly to believe that *that* will be, which they desire may be. But when death draws nigh, they have nothing to encourage such imaginations; and then usually their fancies vanish, they come to discover their folly and deceitfulness; they judge quite contrary to what they did before; they then see those things to be real which they counted but fancies, and those things to be but fantastical which they had thought to be real. Now, at such a time as this, the faith of a saint (saving what desertions or temptations may occasion in particular instances) is ordinarily more strong and active. As his judgment of earthly things is more true when he is leaving them, so his apprehension of heavenly is more clear when he draws nigh to them; the approach of death proves an enlivening to his faith; he hath the fairest view of the crown of glory, when his Lord is about to set it on his head. The same thoughts, indeed, he then hath which before he had; only more clear and affecting they are at the last, there being less to interrupt or discompose him. It were hard to say that all the comforts and joys of dying saints and martyrs have been mere delusions and cheats; and yet so they must be, if the apprehensions [which] they have had of heavenly things were but fancies and ravings.

But, to pass this by, it will sufficiently evince the reality of a Christian's faith, if we can make it appear, that *the object* of it is real, *the ground* of it certain, *the actings* of it sensible to himself, and *the effects* of it evident to others. This I shall endeavour to do.

1. As for the *object* of a believer's faith and hope, that good which he believes shall be, and expects after this life, a state of glory for the spirits of just men: *he that shall deny that such a thing is, must not own the name of Christian, when even the light of nature will go so far toward the proving of it.* For,

(1.) That shows us, *that the soul is immortal*, as being of a spiritual nature, and independent on the body in its most proper and noble operations,—the actings of the understanding and will.

(2.) *That there is a reward after this life for them that do well*, no less than, on the contrary, punishment for evil-doers. This the generality of the pagan world, that knew not distinctly wherein that reward did consist, yet have granted the thing; and who is not instructed by his own conscience in the knowledge of it? “The work of the law written in the heart,” (Rom. ii. 15,) and the secret pleasure and satisfaction [which] men take in their own innocence or

good actions, prove a reward on the one hand; as well as the fears and horrors which the consciences of the most sly and secret sinners subject them to, speak the punishment they expect on the other. And if these things were only impressions made upon men's fancies in their tender years, it were strange that all the reason they grow up to exercise, and all the art many obstinate sinners make use of on purpose to obliterate them, and to impress the contrary upon their minds, together with a thousand other species printed on their imaginations by their employments, their pleasures, and all the various occasions and accidents of their lives,—should never be able to rid them of these so unpleasing sentiments.

(3.) Something may be said even from natural reason to prove *this reward to consist in the enjoyment of God*; and so not only to evince the reality of some happiness, but of this in particular, in the other life. For,

(i.) It will scarce be denied but that *the soul of man is capable of enjoying God as its sovereign good*.—That is, of most intensely delighting and entirely acquiescing in him, as a good suitable to the spiritual nature, and sufficient for the vast capacity, of an immortal soul. Some of the Heathen came near this, when they stated man's happiness as consisting in the contemplation of the Highest Being. And indeed the very nature and operations of the soul, and its apprehending spiritual objects, amount to little less than a demonstration of this.

(ii.) *The enjoyment of God is the greatest good any creature can be capable of*.—God is in himself absolutely the greatest good, because an infinite one, and comprehensive of all perfection; and there can be no greater good than to be possessed of him that is the greatest.

(iii.) *The reward and happiness of a holy soul can be nothing less than the greatest good*.—And therefore must needs be the enjoyment of God himself. This appears in that,

First. *Less than the greatest good cannot satisfy man's soul*.—And then, to be sure, cannot make it happy, when its happiness consists in its being fully satisfied. All the riches and pleasures of this world, and delights of sense, can never be to the soul instead of God; because they are unsuitable to its nature, which is spiritual; to its duration, which is immortal; and to those appetites [which] God hath implanted in it. Its very capacity of enjoying God is attended with a secret inclination to it; insomuch that many times, when a man may not have an explicit and distinct knowledge of the good he wants, yet being unsatisfied with what he hath, though never so great, he finds a want of something else; and because he wants it, he desires it, though he know not clearly what it is, to make him happy.

Secondly. *It is most congruous to the wisdom and goodness of God to appoint the greatest good to be the happiness of the noblest of his creatures*.—Not that they deserve it; but because he may be most glorified by it, and because he hath given them a nature capable of it. As he suits the good of other creatures to the capacities he

hath given them, so he doth the good of man. None but angels and men are capable of enjoying or actively glorifying him; and God, having capacitated them for that, suits their good to their capacity. It had not been agreeable to the wisdom of God for man to have had only some inferior good in this life assigned to him as his chief happiness, when he had made him capable of a higher. Thus much hath been said, and more might, even from reason itself, to prove the reality of those things [which] believers look for in the other life. How much might be said from scripture, with respect to which only they are the objects of faith! But this I refer to the next head,—*the ground of a Christian faith.*

2. *That is certain.*—The same things sometimes may both be believed with a divine faith, and known too by natural reason; but then the medium whereby they are known, and the ground whereon they are believed, are very different: the one is some rational argument; the other, the word of God. In the case before us, the being of eternal life (the present object of faith [which] we speak of) may be proved by reason; but then so far it is not the object of faith, but of knowledge. But withal it may be proved by scripture; and so it is the object of faith; and as such I am now to speak of it, and so to show that the ground on which a Christian believes eternal life, is most certain; and that is no other than the word of God, particularly the promise of the gospel. *The scripture, therefore, is the ground of the faith of eternal life,*

(1.) *As it reveals it.*—For that it doth more fully and clearly. Though something a man may know of future happiness by his natural light, as before was said; yet the fairest and most distinct notion [which] he hath of it, is by revelation in the word, that tells us plainly what is that great good in which man's happiness consists, —seeing “God as he is,” and being “like him.” (1 John iii. 2.) “Life and immortality” are “brought to light,” especially by “the gospel;” (2 Tim. i. 10;) not only more distinctly discovered than ever nature could discern them, but than God himself had revealed them in the Old Testament.

(2.) *As it shows the way to it.*—The terms on which it is to be obtained; sets before us eternal life as in Christ. It not only tells us of the thing itself, but shows how man, sinful man, may attain to the enjoyment of it; declares true holiness to be the way in which he is to walk, and Christ the door by which he is to enter.

(3.) *As it secures it upon those terms.*—For so it doth; it is the scope and end of the promise to secure life and glory to those that accept of it upon the terms propounded; the command directs in the way, and the promise makes-over and conveys the blessing: “Believe, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts xvi. 31; so John iii. 16.) And, Rom. ii. 7: “To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” is promised. Now the word and promise of God, not only as revealing life to us and the way to it, but as conveying it, is the ground of our faith and hope. Though without the word we might have some more general knowledge of a

state of happiness in the other world, yet without the word we cannot know the way to it, nor ever attain to an interest in it, nor have so full certainty of the very being of it as by the word we have, the certainty of faith being greater than that of any natural knowledge whatever. We have no ground at all to believe we shall be saved, but what the promise affords us; and that is sufficient ground to build our faith upon; and a better we cannot have than the word of Him that is the Truth itself, and so can neither deceive, nor be deceived: "God, that cannot lie, hath promised eternal life." (Titus i. 2.) Upon the infallibility and veracity of that God in his holy word, the faith of a Christian rests; and a surer foundation for it cannot be imagined, and need not be desired. As the certainty of any assent of the mind to a truth depends upon the strength and firmness of the reason or argument which moves to and procures that assent, and is the cause of it; so likewise the certainty of faith proceeds from the goodness and validity of the authority which is the motive to and reason of our believing, or (which is the same) the ground of it. If we believe a man, that belief is more or less certain according as the person on whose authority our belief is grounded is more or less credible; and so, when we believe God, our faith is such as its foundation is: (the effect imitates the cause:) the foundation of that faith, God's veracity, is the best; and therefore the certainty of our faith is the greatest. If a man be sure that what he believes is the word of God, he may be sure it is most true, and never will fail. And this, no doubt, may be sufficient to satisfy a believer in his own mind, or any one that receives the scripture as the word of God, concerning the reality of the faith he professeth,—that the ground of it is so certain; but if he hath to do with those that believe not the scripture, and so question the foundation of his faith, in that case he may have recourse to all those arguments whereby we are wont to prove the divine authority of the word; and they all confirm the faith of a Christian. And so, the same account a believer may give of the foundation of his faith, as of the divinity of the scripture: if the scripture be the word of God, and that word be true, his faith built upon it is certain.

3. *The actings of a Christian's faith are perceivable by himself.*—Habits which cannot be discerned of themselves when they lie still, yet may be known by their actings: such a habit faith is, which, though it discover not itself or be not perceived when unactive, yet may be discerned in its exercise. When a man actually believes, he may know he believes, reflect upon his own act, as well as, when he hears, or sees, or walks, he may know he doth so, and is not deceived in it. Inward sense hath as much certainty in it as outward, and spiritual sense as natural: if a man, therefore, assent to the truth of God's promise, he may know he assents to it; and if he accept of and close with the good promised, he may know he doth so. Though sometimes temptations may be so strong, and the actings of faith so weak, and the mind so clouded and distracted, that a man may hardly be able to pass a right judgment on those acts, yet it is not always so;

but otherwhiles, when the workings of faith are more strong and vigorous, and a man more clear of temptations, he may do it. In this, therefore, a man may give an account to himself of his faith, that it is real; he may know that he believes the promise of eternal life as really as he believes any ordinary truth proposed to him, and that his believing and resting on God's word is no more a fancy than his believing the word of a man. As for others with whom he hath to do, I know no reason why they should not believe him when he says he believes God's promise, as well as when he says he believes their word; or why one should be a fancy any more than the other.

4. *The effects of a believer's faith are evident to others in a good measure, as well as to himself more fully.*—As he may perceive his faith purifying his heart, taking it off from the world, drawing it nearer to God; so others may see his conversation ordered correspondently to his believing. They may see him shy of sin, diligent in duty, conscientious in his calling, patient in sufferings, charitable to those that need him, meek toward those that offend him, profitable, spiritual, savoury in his converse, just and righteous in his dealings, and, in a word, the main of his course and ways such as is agreeable to the faith he professeth, and the recompence he expects. So that, if the lookers-on cannot be infallibly certain of the reality of his faith, or that such a carriage proceeds from such a faith, yet they may not only have their mouths stopped, that they cannot reasonably object against it; but they may be bound in charity to believe his faith to be true and real, when they see so much in him answerable to it, and what he professeth to be the effect of it. When they see him live like one that expects eternal blessedness, well may they believe that his faith concerning it and hope of it are not feigned. They see him walking strictly, mortifying his flesh, denying himself as to his outward enjoyments and carnal liberties, and generally acting at such a rate as none would do that did not expect eternal life; and what ground can they then have to suspect the faith [which] he pretends to, to be only a conceit or fancy?

(II.) *An account may be given of the practice of a Christian.*—His obedience and holy walking, the strictness and, as the world counts it, singularity of his manners, his universality, diligence, and constancy in the most spiritual and difficult duties, his watchfulness over his words, thoughts, actions, his mortification and self-denial, and whatever it is in a believer's life which the world is most apt to quarrel with, and to look upon as the effect of humour, or fancy, or error. It may be made appear that his practice is reasonable and well-grounded, he hath good cause to do what he doeth. His practice is reasonable,

1. *In respect of God's command.*—For that he hath to allege for the reason of what he doeth in pursuance of the glory he expects in the other world. So long as he doeth nothing in religion but what God commands him, he cannot justly be taxed with folly or unreasonableness; it being the greatest reason to obey God in all things. If, indeed, a man should add to God's word, devise worship out of his

own head, contrive new means for his salvation which God hath not appointed, and so be strict and punctual in things not enjoined; or should he be very exact in ceremonials, insist upon the minutes [minutiæ] of the law, and be more negligent of morals,—the more weighty things of it; he might be well charged with folly for making himself wiser than God, and thinking [that] he better knew how to please him than he doth himself. But let a man walk never so strictly, if it be but according to the strictness of the rule [which] God hath given him, it is no folly in him. If God commands us to “walk circumspectly,” (Eph. v. 15.) to “keep” our hearts, (Prov. iv. 23,) to “deny” ourselves, and “take up our cross,” &c.; (Matt. xvi. 24;) it is reason we should do so, though we had no other reason beside the command. If in civil things the command of superiors in their laws be counted a sufficient warrant for the obedience of subjects, though perhaps it may seem strange to foreigners who have other laws and customs; why should not the law of the Governor of the world be warrant good enough for the greatest holiness and most strict walking, though perhaps carnal men may “think it strange” or unreasonable? (1 Peter iv. 4.)

2. *In respect of their own faith*, which requires such holiness.

(1.) *Serious holiness is most agreeable to the object of their faith, that great good they expect in the future life.*—The holiest practice suits best with the highest hope; it is but reasonable that they that expect to live in heaven, should live answerably while on earth; they that hope to be perfectly holy there, should be as holy as they can here. It ill becomes them to lead sensual lives now, that look for spiritual enjoyments then; to live like beasts, or but like men, that hope hereafter to live with God; and to neglect him at present, whom they hope to enjoy at last.

(2.) *It is serious holiness which must maintain life in a Christian's faith.*—A man can no longer maintain his faith than while his practice is answerable to it: “Faith without works is dead.” (James ii. 26.) Faith hath a respect to commands, as well as promises; or to the condition of the promise, as well as to the mercy promised. Now, the promise being made to holiness as well as faith, (though perhaps in a different respect,) a man cannot have a true faith without holiness; not believe that God will save him, if he walk not in that way in which God hath promised to save him. Though men have not their title to heaven by their holiness, yet they cannot be saved without it. (Heb. xii. 14.) It is the qualification required in all that are saved; and no man can be assured of his salvation, if he be not in some measure qualified and fitted for it. It is certain that holiness is a condition, though not of justification, yet of salvation; and therefore faith, wherever it is in the life and power of it, provokes and stirs a man up to the exercise of holiness, as being the way in which he must, if ever, attain to happiness. Where a promise is conditional, it is presumption to apply it with a neglect of its condition; and in this case the promise doth no further encourage a man's faith, than the command quickens his obedience.



(3.) *Powerful godliness in the practice of it is reasonable in respect of a Christian's peace.*—He can no longer maintain his peace than while he walks in the way of peace, and that is the way of holiness. "There is no peace to the wicked:" (Isai. lvii. 21 :) may we not say, as to the sense of peace, "Nor to saints, neither, so long as they approach to them that are wicked, and live not like saints?" Believers experience in themselves that, when they neglect holiness, they wound their consciences, weaken their faith and hope, lose the sight of their interest in Christ and heaven, expose themselves to God's displeasure and the reproaches of their own hearts, and are many times filled with trouble and bitterness; or, as the prophet, Isai. l. 10, "walk in darkness, and have no light." And is it not then most reasonable for them to take heed of any thing that may break their peace, and to labour so to walk as that they may best secure it? If some single gross sin causes broken bones, and doleful complaints, and lamentable cries in the choicest saints; have they not cause to walk as circumspectly as they can, and keep-up in themselves the exercise of grace, that so they may keep their peace too? And so, upon the whole, the most strict and severe obedience of a Christian is far from unreasonable, when God's command warrants it, his own faith calls for it, and he cannot enjoy his peace without it.

(III.) *That a believer's comforts are real, not fantastical or delusive.*—I deny not but the delusions of Satan, especially transforming himself into an angel of light, or the deceits of men's own hearts, may sometimes impose upon them, and pass with them for divine consolations. Thus carnal men, who mistake their state, and apply those promises to themselves which belong only to God's children, may usurp the saints' privileges, as if they had a right to them; and so speak peace to themselves, when God doth not speak peace, and when they "walk in the imagination of their own hearts." (Deut. xxix. 19.) But it follows not that no comforts are true, because some are false; or that the comforts of the saints are not real, because those of hypocrites are but imaginary. We may say, therefore, that the comforts of religion are then real,

1. *When they are wrought only in souls capable of them.*—Such as have faith and holiness already wrought in them, are real saints, persons justified and sanctified; for others, carnal men, unbelievers, whatever they profess, whatever show they make, are not yet capable of gospel-consolations, as not having a right to any gospel-promise or privilege from whence such comforts are wont to flow.

2. *When they are wrought in a regular way, by the Spirit as the principal efficient, and the word as the instrument.*—When the Holy Spirit applies the promise to those to whom it belongs, and thereby comforts them. They that are qualified according to the scripture, experience the comfort of the scripture; the Spirit speaks in their hearts what he speaks in the word, and conscience says but the same [that] the scripture says. Now the comforts [which] believers pretend to may, for method's sake, be reduced to two sorts; the truth and reality of both which we shall labour to evince.

(1.) *Such as proceed from the direct acts of grace.*—By this sort, I understand nothing else but that inward delight and pleasure which usually accompanies the exercise of any grace, or gracious performance of any duty, and is in a manner intrinsic to it. And the reality of this is confirmed by the experience of all the saints: who of them doth not find a secret sweetness, delight, and satisfaction in the exercise of faith on Christ, love to God, and holiness? Nay, “sorrow for sin,” mortification, self-denial, “have something of pleasure in them.”\* There is, I dare say, more pleasure in a kindly melting of the heart for sin, (where the sorrow is not merely legal, but evangelical, and mingled with love,) than there is in the commission of it; more in denying a man’s self as to any unlawful appetite, than in gratifying himself; in resisting a temptation, than in yielding to it; in mortifying a lust, than obeying it: and how much more is there in the exercise of faith and love, &c.? If our natural faculties are delighted with their proper actions about suitable objects, why may not our spiritual too? Are they less capable of pleasure? Or are spiritual operations less congruous to our faculties when renewed and spiritualized, or the objects less suited to them, than natural actions and objects are to our faculties in their mere natural state? If excellent objects and intense operations commonly produce the greatest pleasure in our natural powers when rightly disposed, why may it not be so in spirituals too? What more excellent object than God and Christ? What more noble act is there of a renewed soul, than faith and love? What delight, then, may such a soul take in closing with its chief good in those acts! And so, if a natural man may take pleasure in the contemplation of natural things, why may not a saint in the meditation of heavenly? If one may delight in the exercise of moral virtue, why may not the other in the exercise of grace? If a just, a generous, a valiant act afford some delight to the actor, how much more a holy one? If the excuse or applause of a natural conscience, and its testimony of our well-doing, afford some delight and sweetness; how much more may the approbation of a renewed conscience yield to a renewed soul?

(2.) *Such as proceed from the reflex acts of grace.*—Or men’s reflecting upon and perceiving their own graces; as, suppose, a man’s knowing [that] he believes in Christ, or that he loves God, or hates sin. And this kind of comfort is no other than that which flows from assurance; which, wherever it is in exercise, always brings comfort along with it. Assurance in the act is nothing else but a conclusion drawn by the practical understanding of a renewed soul, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, from two premisses; whereof *the major* is of faith, the very language of the scripture, usually some gospel-promise: for instance: “Whoever believes in Christ shall have eternal life:” (John iii. 16:) *the minor* is the language of spiritual sense: “I believe in Christ:” *the conclusion* from both is: “Therefore I shall have eternal life;” which, following the major proposition, which is of faith, and therefore invident, and consequently in a

\* *Res jucunda est respicientia.*—LUTHERUS.

logical sense the weaker, (though theologically more strong, as being more certain,) is itself of faith too, and therefore most certain. No man that believes the scripture will deny the major: and he that shall deny the minor, must deny all spiritual sense, and the reflection of a gracious soul upon its own actions, and so all possibility of assurance in any such way of ratiocination; and then he may well deny the comfort of assurance, when he takes away assurance itself. And therefore there needs no more to prove the reality of this kind of comfort, (which is so strong and satisfactory to the soul of a believer, that he is never at rest in himself till he have attained to it,) than to prove the being of that assurance from whence it proceeds; and all the arguments which evince the one, will infer the other. He that shall grant [that] a man may be sure of heaven, cannot doubt but he may take abundant comfort and satisfaction in being so assured, and that that comfort is no fancy. And so, if a man may certainly know [that] he believes in Christ, loves God above all, truly fears him, is "pure in heart, poor in spirit, hungers and thirsts after righteousness," (Matt. v. 8, 3, 6,) or hath any grace which accompanies salvation in sincerity in him, which is an evidence of his right to and interest in any gospel-promise or privilege thereby conveyed,—it will amount to the same; and the sight and sense of any such evidence cannot but bring the greatest sweetness and refreshment to a gracious heart, and which is as real as the delight he takes in the exercise of any of his natural faculties.

If a man may take much real delight in knowing his interest in a prince here on earth, is it a delusion when he delights in the knowledge of his interest in a Saviour in heaven? If a man be so much pleased with his being the son of a great man, may not a believer be as much pleased with his being a child of God, his being born of him, and adopted by him? If men do ordinarily comfort themselves with the hope of some worldly inheritance [which] they reckon themselves sure of, why may not a saint much more "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," (Rom. v. 2,) triumph in expectation of an "inheritance among the saints in light," (Col. i. 12,) when no man in the world can ever be so sure of obtaining the things of the world as a saint may be of coming to enjoy the things of eternity? The hope and assurance a Christian hath, is according as the promise which is the foundation of it is; but the promise of future blessedness is a better promise than that of any temporal enjoyment, not only because the good promised is better, but because the promise of the one is more peremptory and absolute, when the other is but conditional and limited.

Thus much may suffice to have been spoken to the first general propounded,—*that a true believer may give an account of his Christianity, and such an one as is satisfactory to himself, and ought to be to others*; he may make it appear that *that serious godliness in the practice of which he lives is more than a fancy.*

II. I come to the second general mentioned,—*to give directions, and show, in answer to the case, how we may experience this in ourselves, and evidence it to others.*

There be two parts of the question which must be distinctly spoken to : *how we may experience this in ourselves ;* and then, *how we may evidence it to others.*

(1.) *How may a believer experience in himself, that that serious godliness [which] he lives in the practice of, is more than a fancy ?*

1. *See that your religiousness came into you the right way.*—Was wrought in you by the word of God, the power of which ye have found changing your hearts, and reforming your lives. When men leap into religion they know not how, can give no account to themselves of their conversion or reformation, that the word which is the ordinary means [that] God useth in converting sinners hath had any influence upon them in working such a change, it is suspicious that what they take to be godliness in themselves is not real ; that which is unaccountable is most like to be a fancy. True, a man may not know the just time when God did work grace in his heart, nor the particular word which was the seed of it, or which did first draw the heart to a closing with the promise, and subjecting itself to the terms of the gospel. He may not know when the new man was first quickened in him, not be able to discern distinctly the first vital motions of grace in his soul. Some may have been wrought-on in their education, by which they have been restrained from more gross sins, and influenced to some diligence in religious duties ; and in them the passing from one extreme to the other, from a state of nature to a state of grace, may not be so remarkable, and therefore not so easily discerned. However, a change they find, and that the word hath wrought it, which they have experienced effectual in many things. It hath been the means at one time or other of enlightening their minds, melting their hearts, exciting their affections, directing their ways, and refreshing their spirits. Though they cannot say what truth wrought the first degree of grace, yet they can say, such and such truths have had an influence upon them, and promoted the work, whenever it was wrought ; such a command quickened them to their duty, another brought them off from some evil way, another helped them when they were tempted ; such a promise supported them when burdened, eased them when troubled, or comforted them when cast down : and so, what good they have done, the word hath put them upon it ; what evil they have escaped, *that* hath kept them from it ; what refreshment they have had, *that* hath brought it in. They know they are in their journey to heaven, and that they do not dream that they are so ; because, if they cannot tell which was absolutely the first step they took in the way, yet they are sensible of many stages they have travelled, many removes they have made ; what accidents have befallen them, what difficulties they have met with, what guide they had, what directions were given them. Their journeying agrees with the map of their way ; the word hath been a light to their feet, and a lamp to their paths ; that hath still gone before them, and conducted them in their march, and their steps have been ordered according to it. (Psalm cxix. 105, 133.) They have not taken up a religion at a day's warning, not passed from being profane and worldly to be even

superstitiously strict all upon a sudden, without being able to give a reason of so great a change. Look, therefore, to the way of God's working upon you, and the means he made use of in it; and though you cannot trace the workings of his grace in all the particular steps he hath taken, yet ye may conclude it to be his work, and not your own fancy, because it was wrought in his way, and by his word, which is his usual instrument in it.

2. See to your faith, as to the foundation of it, and the effects of it.—That it be rightly grounded and rightly qualified; built upon the word, and fruitful in good works.

(1.) See to the *foundation* of it, that it be the word itself, and not your own mistakes about it.—When men misunderstand the scripture, and so believe it, they build on their own errors, not God's truth; and then what they call "faith" is but a fancy, as not being grounded on the word of God, but their own conceits. See, therefore, that ye rightly understand what ye profess to believe, and know the mind of God in the word; and so, indeed, believe what he speaks, not what you imagine. See that your faith respect commands as well as promises, duties as well as privileges, what you are to do, as well as what you are to expect. God joins both together; and if you separate them, you set up a conceit of your own instead of his truth. Take heed of believing promises as absolute, when they are conditional, or when made with some limitations or restrictions, or when they suppose the use of some means prescribed by the command. In such cases men may think they believe, when they do not: there being no right object for their faith, they believe what God never spoke. This fallacy appears, when men apply promises to themselves, but overlook the condition or the command annexed:—as suppose [they] believe they shall be pardoned, though they never desire to be purged; shall find mercy, though they do not forsake sin, contrary to the tenor of the word; (Prov. xxviii. 14;) or that they shall see God, though they do not follow after holiness, contrary to Heb. xii. 14:—and so when they believe one promise, and not another,—the promise of justification, but not of sanctification; when yet there is a connexion between them, and to whom one belongs, the other belongs too. In a word, let your faith take-in its object in the whole latitude, there being the same reason, God's authority, for your believing one truth, as well as another.

(2.) See to the *effects and fruits* of it.—The reality of it must be proved by the fruits of it: a barren faith is a dead faith; and indeed, if any faith be a fancy, it is the faith of those that live destitute of holiness, and under the dominion of sin, and yet expect eternal salvation; bring forth no "fruit to holiness," and yet hope "the end" will be "everlasting life." Faith will work as long as it lives; and where there is no fruit, you may be sure there is no root; if it act not, it lives not.

3. *Therefore look to your obedience too.*—Not only that it *be*, (as in the former,) but that it *be right*, and such as it should be; that is, regular, universal, spiritual; for otherwise it is not reasonable.

(1.) *Regular*: such as the word of God calls for, and hath its warrant from thence. Whatsoever we do in the things of God, and what we would have looked on as acts of obedience, should be done with a respect to God's commands, and not of our own heads: obedience it is not, if it be not commanded. Men may do many seemingly good things, and place religion in them, and think they please God by them, which yet may be no true acts of obedience to him, because not according to his word. They do but obtrude a worship upon God, and fancy it will please him, because it pleaseth them: whereas, indeed, nothing is acceptable to him, but what is enjoined by him; nothing is duty, but that which hath a warrant from God for the performance of it. Men may abound in will-worship, and come short in obedience; they may do more than is enjoined them, and yet less too; much which will never be reckoned to them, as it was never required of them. You must judge of yourselves not merely by what you do, but by the ground you have for the doing of it; when God's will is the reason of it, and not the precepts of men, nor your own fancies. So much, and no more, you do for God, as you do in obedience to his command.

(2.) *Universal*: both as to the *extensiveness* and *continuance* of it.

(i.) As to its *extensiveness*.—See that you be not “partial in the law;” (Mal. ii. 9;) that you walk with God “in *all* his ordinances,” (Luke i. 6,) “have respect unto *all* his commandments.” (Psalm cxix. 6.) There is the same reason for obedience to one command as well as another,—God's authority, who is the Lawgiver: (James ii. 11;) and therefore, when men choose one duty and overlook others, they do not so much obey the will of God, as gratify their own humours and fancies, pleasing him only so far as they can please themselves too; and this is not reasonable; we never yield him a “reasonable service,” but when it is universal.

(ii.) As to its *continuance* and duration.—If God's command be still the same, and the obligation of it, it is but reasonable that our obedience likewise should be still the same. Constancy and perseverance in serious godliness will greatly confirm and evidence the reasonableness of our practice and reality of our principles. Fancies are usually transient and variable, and so are their effects in men's actions; few live by fancy all their days, but one time or other they find their error. When a Christian's carriage is uniform in the course of his life, and still continues the same in a congruity and suitableness to his principles, it can hardly be imagined that it should be the effect of mere fancy, but must proceed from something in him more fixed and settled.

(3.) *Spiritual*: if the obedience we yield to God be conformable to his nature, who is a Spirit; so far it is reasonable, and that is such as Christ requires; and this [is] the reason [which] he gives for it: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John iv. 24.) See, therefore, that the service you do him, be not merely external and carnal, but inward and spiritual.

(i.) *Spiritual in its principle.*—The goodness of your outward actions proceeds especially from within; and you cannot judge rightly of them, but by the principles from which they proceed. Those principles are faith and love. Your work must be the “work of faith,” (1 Thess. i. 3,) your obedience the obedience of faith. (Rom. i. 5.) Faith both in the command and promise must put you upon it: and if your believing both makes you act conformably to them;—the faith of the command presseth you to obedience, and the faith of the promise encourages you in it;—[if] you therefore serve the Lord, because you believe him and trust in him; that service cannot be unreasonable. And so likewise for love. Love to God must set you at work for God: Exod. xx. 6: “Those that love me, and keep my commandments.” If love within command all without; if that make you labour in his service, fear to offend him, strive to please him; if you can not only see your own obedience, but feel your love to God working your hearts to it; you may be sure *that* obedience is reasonable, because its principle is so real. Love felt in your hearts, and breaking out in your lives, cannot be a fancy; and what more reasonable than for him that loves God to do all he can for God?

(ii.) *Spiritual in the end for which ye act.*—See that, whatever you do, you do it for “the glory of God” as the supreme end. (1 Cor. x. 31.) It is most reasonable, that as you do all *from* God, so you should do all *for* him; that he who is the first cause of all you have, should be the ultimate end of all you do: and if you can be content to be abased, that God may be exalted,—to deny yourselves as to your credit and interest and all worldly concerns, purely that God may be honoured,—it is your desire that in all things Christ Jesus may be “magnified in you, whether by life or by death;” (Phil. i. 20;) and so in doing or suffering, that obedience which is not only qualified as before mentioned, but is directed to such an end, is not folly, nor the effect of fancy.

(iii.) *Spiritual in the acts of it.*—Not that all gospel-obedience or worship consists only in the internal acts and workings of the mind: for *external* worship itself may be spiritual worship; and so it is, when rightly performed; that is, when it is accompanied with and proceeds from *internal*. But by “spiritual in its acts,” I mean that which principally consists in the inward acts of faith and love and fear, &c., which is a serving God in our spirits; (Rom. i. 9;) yet *withal* is productive of and manifests itself in an outward behaviour correspondent to those internal workings. See, therefore, that your religion do not consist merely in externals; that you make as much conscience of inward and heart-worship, as outward and bodily; of the actings of faith and love, as of praying and hearing: look as much, at least, to what is within, as to what comes out. Do not rest in the outside of duty, nor satisfy yourselves with what you do, when yet it is without life and warmth: have as much regard to the manner of performing, as to the performance itself; to the motions of your hearts, as to the labour of your lips or postures of your bodies. To conclude this direction: let your work in the whole of your conver-

sation be as much about your hearts, as your lives : (Prov. iv. 23 :) be the same in secret that you are in public ; the same when under God's eye only, that you are in the face of the world. This, I am sure, cannot be said to be foolish and unreasonable, when it is grounded on the greatest reason. God "sees in secret," (Matt. vi. 6,) "looks on the heart," (1 Sam. xvi. 7,) and calls for the heart ; (Prov. xxiii. 26 ;) and therefore it is but reason we should look to them too. It is the seat of sin, the fountain whence it springs ; and therefore must be looked to, that we may prevent the working of it, and mortify the root of it : and it is the seat of grace ; there is no more good in any man, than what is in his heart ; such as that is, such he is. Now if a man's chief work be about his heart, to watch that, to purify that, to suppress the corruptions of it, to reduce it into order, and keep it in order, to bring it into a holy frame, and maintain it in such a frame, when he hath so much reason for it, it cannot be the effect of fancy or a mere pretence.

4. *Let grace influence you in all you do, even in your ordinary civil actions.*—Do all graciously ; do your common work as your duty ; labour in your callings, enjoy your refreshments, visit your friends, make use of your recreations, with a sense of duty and an eye to God ; do all as commanded by him, and with a respect to his glory and your own salvation. In a word : interest God in all, let all be done by his grace as the ruling and directing principle ; and when ye find it so powerful, ye may well believe it to be real.

5. *Labour to outdo all you ever did while in a state of nature.*—Think what have been the highest actions you have ever been put upon, not only by fancy or humour, but by the best reason you then had, by natural conscience, or good education, or legal convictions, or any present impressions from things without ; and then make it your business to outdo them all. Labour so to act, as nothing less than a settled principle of holiness in your hearts could ever make you act. Living in the love of God ; delighting in his ways ; rejoicing in Christ Jesus ; mortifying your beloved lusts, your most secret, or most pleasant, or most creditable, or most profitable, corruptions ; renouncing all trust in your own righteousness, when yet you do your utmost to work righteousness :—are such acts, as nor mere nature, nor any thing in nature, can reach unto ; and for any to say that fancy can put a man upon so acting, is itself the veriest fancy.

6. *Keep an even course of holy walking, in the most different or contrary conditions.*—If you can hold-on in God's ways when most disheartened in them, serve him never the worse for his afflicting you, walk holily when you have least of the comfort of holiness, not only keep to God when the world is against you, but [when] you fear he is himself against you, trust in him when you think he is slaying you, follow him when he withdraws from you ; and, on the other side, not abuse his goodness, not grow wanton with his smiles, not presume upon his encouragements ; if the taste of God's graciousness whet your desires after him, (1 Peter ii. 3,) his comforts do not cloy you, nor dull you, nor make you grow more loose or slack in his ways ; if, when you



rejoice most in God, ye rejoice most in his work, the comfort of your hearts purifies and spiritualizeth your hearts, so that the more ye enjoy of God, the more ye do for him; and so, in a word, all God's dispensations help you forward in his ways; his rods drive you on, his gifts draw you out, and both further your progress in faith and holiness; neither his consolations puff you up, nor his corrections cast you down, so as to abate your affections to him, and care of pleasing him; you can love the Lord and his holiness, and "fear the Lord and his goodness;" (Hosea iii. 5;) love him when he frowns, and fear him when he smiles;—this will certainly speak the reality of that holy principle which is in you; nothing not real could ever have so real, so great effects upon you.

7. *Be much in the exercise of those graces which have least affinity with your natures, least footing in them, and in mortifying those corruptions which your natures are most inclined to.*—And that will evidence a real change in you and a real principle. Some graces may be further off from your natural tempers than others; be more in the exercise of them: and some corruptions may be more agreeable to them; so, in some, pride is; in others, anger; in others, fear; be sure, exercise yourselves especially to beat them down; go contrary to the stream and current of your own inclinations. It must be something more than a fancy, that can either outdo the best of nature, or mend its worst. Men's fancies usually have some foundation in their tempers and dispositions; and therefore, as their tempers are various, so are their fancies too; some carry them one way, some another; but for the most part it is for the promoting or gratifying [of] some natural inclination: and then that which crosseth such inclinations most, is most like to be something constant and fixed. Fancy will hardly overcome nature in a wrathful man, and make him become meek and gentle; nor make one that is dull and phlegmatic active and zealous; nor a proud person humble, nor a churl liberal: though, where grace meets with a good disposition, it makes the greater show, as, suppose, gracious meekness in one who hath already a natural meekness,—yet the power of grace is especially seen in its influence upon such inclinations in men's natures as are most contrary to it, when it corrects them, regulates them, or makes men act most oppositely to them. And that which thus rectifies the most crooked dispositions, sweetens a harsh nature, moderates a furious one, elevates a dull one, whatever it be, it is more than a fancy.

8. *Labour to act to such a height of holiness, and walk so closely with God, that ye may have some sensible communion with him in duties and ordinances.*—That you may see his power and his glory in his sanctuary, (Psalm lxxiii. 2,) may taste his graciousness. (1 Peter ii. 3.) David did taste sweetness in the word; (Psalm xix. 10;) and why may not you? Why may not the spiritual senses of a believer, an enlightened understanding and renewed conscience, take as real pleasure in spiritual objects, as his natural senses may in natural ones? God may beam in his love into your souls, shed it abroad in your hearts, (Rom. v. 5,) make you taste its sweetness and feel its

power, cheering-up your spirits, and filling them with "joy unspeakable and glorious." (1 Peter i. 8.) The Father may come, and the Son come, and manifest themselves to you, and take up their abode with you; (John xiv. 21, 23;) so that you may say, in the joy of your hearts, "This is the Lord; and we have waited for him: this is our God; and he will save us." (Isai. xxv. 9.) And if you experience this in yourselves; in your conversing with God in his ordinances, find something [that] you never found anywhere else, and can scarce express, or make others understand that have not felt the same, like the white stone with the new name, which none knows but he that hath it; (Rev. ii. 17;) you will find God's consolations carry their own evidence along with them, and speak their own reality; they have something divine in them, such a stamp of God upon them, that they will satisfy your hearts as to their being no delusions. And then let scoffers scoff on; they shall never be able to laugh you out of those comforts whereof you find such real effects, in reviving your hearts, enlivening your graces, breaking the snares of worldly temptations, abating the force of your lusts, and adorning even your outward conversations. I dare say, they may as soon persuade you that honey is not sweet, when yet you taste it; snow not white, when yet you see it is, or not cold, when you feel it so; as persuade you, either that these comforts are not real, or *that* holy principle in you which is attended by them, is but fantastical.

To these directions I shall add two general rules, by which you may best judge, if you would pass a right verdict on yourselves, as to your spiritual state.

1. When you would judge of the reality of grace in your hearts, *judge of yourselves by what you are [when] alone in the most secret duties of religion.*—Closet-prayer, meditation, self-examination, &c. What men are when alone, that usually they are for the main. The heart which may be awed or some way swayed when in company with others, is most apt to discover itself then. If ever grace be working at all, it will be at such a time; and if none appear then, it is odds but there is none in the heart. As some corruptions may be most apt to show themselves (such is the secret atheism of men's hearts, and little sense of God's presence) in secret, when men are free from the restraint of fear and shame, and such-like motives, which many times give check to and keep them under in the company of others; so likewise grace may more readily act in secret, where men may use such means, and take such liberty, for the awakening and exciting it, as might not in the presence of others be so convenient; and be rid withal of some temptations which at least in some tempers may prove a hinderance to the more free actings of it. If you would therefore take the just measure of your spiritual stature, and know what in you is real, do it when alone, when retired, when your hearts are most likely to discover themselves fairly, and have least temptations to deceive you, or impose upon you.

2. *Be curious and diligent in observing, not only the inward workings*

of your souls, but the ordinary, settled inclination and main bent of your hearts.—Observe them, therefore, as to what they are in the main, and not only what they are by fits, at some certain times, or when, it may be, under temptations. The heart of a carnal man may seem to be very good under a pang of conscience or fit of conviction, or in relation to some more gross and scandalous sin, which yet in the general is stark naught. Ahab may humble himself and put on sackcloth, when under the apprehensions of threatened judgments; (1 Kings xxi. 27;) Pharaoh may cry, *God mercy*, when under his hand; (Exod. x. 16, 17;) and Herod may do “many things,” when convinced by John Baptist’s ministry: (Mark vi. 20:) and yet still they may continue the same they were. And, on the other side, the heart of a saint may appear very wicked under a temptation; as David’s did in the business of Uriah, and of numbering the people, in both which grace was for the present run down by a lust. And so, many times, passion or carnal fears or distrust may lie uppermost in the saints, when yet there is grace within, and that which at present appears is not the ordinary, settled frame of their hearts; and though, whatever corruption at any time breaks out, you may be sure it is within, yet that may not make a discovery of the habitual temper and disposition of your spirits, nor argue that there is no grace in you. Judge therefore of yourselves by your course and ordinary carriage, and by that you may see what is most prevalent in you; and if you find your souls mainly looking to God, and respecting his ways, and best-pleased when ye keep closest to him, you may be sure there is something more in you than a fancy or humour: you may in some particular “go astray like lost sheep,” and yet “not forget God’s commandments.” (Psalm cxix. 176.)

(II.) The second part of the case is, *How may we evidence to others, that serious godliness in us is more than a fancy?*

In this there seems to be more difficulty than in the former; we may more easily satisfy ourselves concerning our inward workings, and the temper of our own minds, than we can others. We judge of ourselves by our inward actings and principles, of which, by inspecting our own hearts, we have a more immediate knowledge, and therefore are less liable to be deceived in our judgment; but when others have to do with us, they can judge of what is in our hearts only by our outward carriage which is patent to them, and so are liable to more errors in their thoughts about us. Here, therefore, if we cannot give so clear proofs and evident indications of a real principle in us, as may work a full conviction of it in gainsayers and cavillers, so as to force them to an acknowledgment of it, it may be sufficient if we can go so far as to stop their mouths and put them to silence, (1 Peter ii. 15,) that they may not be able reasonably to oppose what yet they are unwilling to grant; and if it amount not to a demonstration which may overpower their reason, and compel it to yield us to be real in our profession, yet [it] may, as before was intimated, lay an obligation upon their charity to believe us to be so. And in this we must especially have respect to that outward carriage of profes-

sors, which may make the best discovery of their inward frame, and is most obvious to the sense and observation of those that are to be satisfied.

1. In general: *Let men see that you live up to the faith you profess.*—That your practice is agreeable to your principles; and then they cannot deny the reality of your faith, when it is so powerful, nor the reasonableness of your practice, when it is so answerable to it. You profess before men to believe there is a God; let them see that you walk as before him, desire to approve yourselves to him, dare not sin against him. You believe a Christ, let your conversations be an imitation of him: “walk as he walked.” (1 John ii. 6.) You believe a future judgment; live as becomes those that would be able to stand in it, and give an account of yourselves to the Judge. Let your carriage be such as not only your own consciences, but your adversaries when they quarrel with you, tell you it ought to be; that is, such as best suits your faith and hope, even in their judgment, as well as your own. What is it [that] makes the profane world question the reality of godliness in God’s people, but because they think they do not live and act as *they* should do *that* believe such weighty truths, and expect such great things, as they profess they do? If, therefore, your conversation be correspondent to your faith, you take away the great cause of their cavilling with you, and slandering your profession.

2. More particularly: *Be as much in acting for God, as speaking for him.*—Not only commend his ways, but walk in them; not only plead his cause verbally, but really, by being, in your proper sphere, active for it. Not only speak well of them that are good, but do good to them. Many will speak for God and good men; but when it comes to doing, there is an end of their goodness; they will not stir a step, not part with a penny: they can say as [those in] James ii. 16: “Be thou filled, and be thou warmed;” and yet “not give them those things which are needful to the body.” They will be religious as far as good words will go, which cost them nothing, but are loath to be at the charges of doing any real good. How many have their tongues tipped with good discourse, whose lives are unfruitful as to good works! See, therefore, that your actions keep pace with your words; that your religion do not consist merely in talking; *that* will be a sign it is either fantastical or hypocritical. When the fruit of it reacheth no further than the tongue, it is odds if the root reach any deeper than the head; but when your religion appears in action, your enemies themselves will confess the reality of it.

3. *Be as diligent in, and make as much conscience of, the duties of the second table,—righteousness and mercy, in their place and order, as those of the first.*—Without this, your religion cannot be real; and then no wonder if men think it *not* real. “Pure religion and undefiled in the sight of God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction,” &c. (James i. 27.) *In the sight of God*—God himself, that searches the hearts, yet having given men such a law as may govern their outward as well as inward man, and

influence them in those things which relate to their neighbour, as well as [those] which relate to himself, doth accordingly look to their outward carriage toward men, as well as the inward respect they bear to him, and so expects the fruits of righteousness in their lives, as well as the root of piety in their hearts. That holy principle [which] he hath put within them is such as extends to their conversation outwardly, and not to the inward frame of their hearts alone; and so the reality of it in itself must be evidenced by the power of it in its effects. Now if these external actings (where opportunities and means are) are requisite to ascertain the truth of godliness in the heart, as to its very being, we may be sure they are no less necessary as indications of it in the sight of men. The world, which is apt to traduce you as hypocritical or fanatical in religion, will be best confuted by your carriage in those things which relate to themselves, and from which some benefit redounds to them. If men see you just, and righteous, and merciful in your dealings with and behaviour toward others, helpful toward them that want you, pitiful to them in their misery, &c.; what is in your hearts and minds they cannot see, but they will be more ready to judge well of it, because they see so good effects of it; what they see, they will think is real, because it is sensible. True, indeed, the first place is due to the moral duties of God's immediate worship, prescribed in the first table; but yet those of the second must accompany them, or you will never be able to prove the reality of your Christianity, or reasonableness of your practice, to yourselves, and much less to others. They must and will judge of what is within, by that which appears without; of what they do not see, (as your faith and inward holiness they do not,) by that which they do see.

4. *Be most diligent in those duties which all own to be duties, whether of the first or second table.*—Those which are confessedly moral, and which your enemies themselves cannot deny to be duties. Some duties have an intrinsic loveliness in them, and “are of good report” even among those themselves that are but carnal. (Phil. iv. 8.) These carry conviction along with them; and if you be diligent in the practice of them, you will have the consciences of your adversaries take part with you, and their judgments to applaud you, when, perhaps, their malice censures you, and their lusts oppose you. You will have something within them to bear testimony to you; and when they do not love you, yet they cannot condemn you.

5. *Labour to outdo and excel others in the world in all those good things in which they excel most.*—Whatever you see praiseworthy in any, though enemies, do it, and outdo them in it. If they be just, do you be more just, either more exactly, or more universally, or more constantly so. If they be temperate and sober, if it be possible, go beyond them in it. If they be charitable, be you more charitable. If they be humble, meek, gentle, courteous, endeavour to excel them in each. If you think that cannot be in some cases, yet it is but in some; and may you not exceed them as to the general course and whole of a moral conversation? Labour, then, to make it appear

that a nobler principle out of which you act, a higher end at which you aim, and a more perfect copy after which you write, can raise and heighten you to a pitch above any thing, not only that fancy might do in you, but natural conscience or moral virtue in them. And though the best and highest of such moral performances in your external conversation might be in themselves but insufficient arguments, as to your own personal satisfaction, of the truth of grace in your hearts; yet your overtopping others in what they excel most, or in the main of your life and practice, may be an argument *ad hominem*, and be a means to silence enemies, and stop their mouths,—it may be, convince their judgments; or if it do not make them acknowledge what you do to proceed from a supernatural principle, it may, however, force them to own it as coming from something more than a conceit or fancy.

6. *Be diligent in those duties the performance of which hath least connexion with a secular interest.*—So Christ commands, Luke vi. 35: “Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again.” Sow good seed, though upon barren ground, and which is like to yield but a poor harvest. “Buy the truth,” and never “sell it,” though you should for the present be losers by it; nay, follow it at the heels, though it should kick out your teeth. They that do good to others only from whom they expect good,—give to them that are likely to give again,—do plainly turn religion into bartery, and may be said to be good traders, but scarcely good Christians. When men appear for religion only when and where it is countenanced, or while there is something to be got by it,—practice in an employment, custom in a trade, or the favour of men, or applause from them; they may well be suspected, if not of fancy, yet of design and hypocrisy. But when men will do duty and keep God’s way, though they get nothing by it but frowns or blows, detriment or danger, it cannot be reasonably imagined but that they have some better thing in their eye which they look for hereafter, and some very powerful principle at present within them, to support them under difficulties, and prompt them to such duties as are, for aught the spectators can discern, both unprofitable and hazardous.

7. *Labour so to carry yourselves in the sight of men, as to let them see that you are as much set upon gaining heaven, as getting or keeping the world.*—Be as active, as busy, and show as much concern for the things of the other life, as the things of this. Scarce any thing is a greater blemish to religion, or disreputation to them that profess it, than their passionate and over-eager pursuit of temporal things, with a coldness and visible indifferency in seeking eternal; when they can rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, spend their time and strength in labouring for the world; nay, lose the comfort of their lives by scrambling for the things of this life; and in the mean time put God off with some little superficial service, neglect some duties, and hurry over others, let the crowd of business thrust their spiritual work into a corner of their time, if not quite out of it; the world, indeed, juggle God and Christ and heaven out of their

discourse and conversation, which savours of nothing but trades and bargains and adventures and getting estates, and tends to nothing but the promoting a mere worldly interest. "Are these men," think their carnal neighbours, "in good earnest for religion, when they are so mad upon their business? Doth their happiness lie in heaven, when their labour is only for the earth? Can their treasure be above, when their hearts are below, and their actings plainly show that they are so? Can their hope of eternal glory be any better than a fancy, who do so little for that glory, and lay out themselves for this world as if there were no other?" And indeed who can judge otherwise of some men, that hears their pretences, and yet sees their practice? And therefore, Christians, think with yourselves, how doth it become you to act, if you would persuade others that you have real designs for future happiness? What would you do, if you did pretend to the hope of some great estate or enjoyment in the world, to convince them that that hope were reasonable and well-grounded? Would you not act at such a rate, as to make them acknowledge you were serious? Would you not make it your great business, to attain your great ends? Do the same in the present case: let men see that your belief of things to come is as real as of present things, by your pursuing them as earnestly, and acting as vigorously for them. Nay, show a greater concernedness for them; and that will be a means to convince men that you believe a greater excellency in them, and that they cannot be obtained upon easier terms.

8. *The more you pretend to the comforts of Christianity, the more mortified let your conversation be to the things of the world and pleasures of sense, and your carriage more apparently holy.*—Let it never be said, that the comforts of the Spirit make you give liberty to the flesh. When men see that the more you pretend to spiritual enjoyments, the more spiritual you are; and the more pleasure you profess to find in God's ways, the more exactly you walk in them, and the less ye dare sin against him; they will have little to say against you. Those comforts cannot but be real which have so great, so good effects; and when men see the effects so real, they cannot judge the cause to be less so. Whimsies and fancies do not use to make men grow in righteousness and humility and meekness and mortification. Let men see the respect you bear to all God's commands, and they will scarce dare to question the comforts you receive from his promises.

9. *Labour to make such advances in the way to heaven, as may not only be sensible to yourselves, but perceivable by others.*—Let your "profiting appear unto all" men. (1 Tim. iv. 15.) Let your "paths be as the shining light," shining forth "more and more." (Prov. iv. 18.) Not only grow in grace and inward holiness, but abound in the fruits of righteousness. A sensibly-thriving religion cannot be thought to be an imaginary one: they that observe the progress you make, will not be able to question the grounds upon which you go. When they see that, as you grow older and wiser, so you grow better, they cannot reasonably imagine that strength of fancy ever raised you

to that height of goodness, but rather suppose that you do more good than you did, because you see more reason for it, and have more lively hopes of being gainers by it.

10. Lastly. *Be sure to persevere and hold on in the faith you profess, and the practice of godliness.* (Heb. x. 23.)—Your constancy may be a special means to evidence your reality, not only to yourselves but others. When men grow weary of God's ways, their courage fails them, their zeal is out of breath, it is a sign their religion was never real: but when they act uniformly, under the most contrary providences, and among all the vicissitudes and changes of human affairs, in conformity to the principles they have all along professed and owned; the shock of temptations [which] they meet with cannot juggle them out of the way of holiness, nor the enticements and courtship of a (sometimes) fawning world wheedle them into a compliance with it; they "hope to the end," (1 Peter i. 13,) are "not weary in well-doing," (Gal. vi. 9,) labour and faint not, (Rev. ii. 3,) bring forth fruit with patience, and persevere to do so, serve God as long as they have their being, live to him as long as they live at all, (Psalm civ. 33,) act by the same rule, aim at the same end, while they live, and when they come to die;—in a word, when opposition from men, temptations from Satan, nay, frowns from God himself, have not discouraged them, nor lessened their love to him, or activeness for him, or diligence in his service, and at last upon reflection they approve of that good course they have now finished, and have the same thoughts of God and holiness [that] they had before; the worst of enemies cannot (but as impudently as unreasonably) charge them with acting out of fancy or humour, or any thing but a fixed and stable principle.

Beside what hath been spoken by way of direction in answer to the question, some further improvement of this doctrine may be made.

#### USES.

USE I. *By way of information.*—If true Christians may give an account of their Christianity,

1. *They, then, are no true believers, no true Christians, of whose religion no good account can be given, either how they came by it, or whereon it is grounded.*

(1.) *How they came by it.*—When they pretend to be saints, but cannot in the least tell how they came to be saints; have found no real change in themselves, are the same they have always been; they have, they *think*, loved God, and believed in Christ, and had hopes of heaven, ever since they can remember, but know not how any of these things were wrought in them, or by what means: such a faith, I dare say, is but a fancy, and so is their hope and their love and whatever grace they pretend to.

(2.) *Whereon it is grounded.*

(i.) *When their faith is not rightly grounded, it is no better than a fancy.*—When it is built on the authority of a church or the tradi-



tions of men, and not on the word of God; or on the word misunderstood, or misapplied, or divided, or maimed; when they believe promises without respect to commands; believe Christ is their Saviour, and yet never receive him to be their Lord; believe they shall "see God," though they be not "pure in heart," follow not after holiness. And such indeed is the faith and hope of profane worldlings, and whoever live in contradiction to God's commands, and yet expect the benefit of his promises.

(ii.) *When their practice is not rightly grounded, it is no better than folly, how fair soever and plausible it may seem.*—When men set up a religion merely of man's devising, contrive new ways of worshipping God which he himself never appointed, and so indeed impose upon him, and prescribe to him, what they think must certainly please him. This is unreasonable, for men to think that their inventions or others' traditions can be more acceptable to God than his own institutions, that sacrifice can go further than obedience would have done. They would themselves be served according to their own minds and not their servants' pleasure; and why should not God? They would not have their commands neglected, that their servants' will might be performed; and how foolish is it, then, to adhere to their own inventions, though with the slighting of God's institutions? And yet how few be there that are so addicted to human observances, but they are careless of God's appointments! God's commands being the great and only warrantable reason of all divine worship, whatever worship is uncommanded cannot but be unreasonable.

2. *How great is their sin that question, nay, deride, the grace that is in believers, as not being a real thing!*—Count the most serious powerful godliness to be no better than humour or fancy! All the religion [that] they own consists but in a few outward forms or some moral actions, and whatever is above this they look upon as not real; and so they leave us a lamentably empty religion, when they condemn our faith as fancy, our practice as folly, and cashier all our comforts as mere delusions. This usually proceeds either,

(1.) *From the atheism and infidelity of such men's hearts.*—Some question all religion, and so the true religion among the rest. They are themselves for none, and therefore quarrel with all; they think all religion is but fancy or policy, and so the Christian religion too. They do not really believe the grounds of Christianity, and therefore laugh at them that do.

(2.) Or, *from pride and conceitedness of their own wisdom and reason.*—They magnify their own notions, are in love with their own wisdom, and so condemn all else; like the Athenians, that laughed when they heard of "Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts xvii. 18, 32.) The high opinion they have of their reason makes them deny the reality of faith; what they cannot themselves comprehend, they will not believe, nor allow others to do it. They will scarce allow of any thing between demonstration and fancy; and this makes them innovate so much in religion, and scoff at the faith by which they should be saved.

(3.) Or, *from ignorance of spiritual things, and their not experiencing the power of grace in their own hearts.*—They will believe nothing in religion but what they have themselves felt. They never found the light of divine truths shining into their dark minds, and overcoming their carnal reason; nor the power of grace renewing their wills, and subjecting them to God's will, breaking the force of their sinful inclinations, mortifying their lusts, regulating their affections, changing the habitual temper and disposition of their spirits; nor the efficacy of faith in the purification of their hearts, their resting upon the promises, cleaving to Christ, and fetching-in supplies of the Spirit from him; nor the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, enlarging them in duties, quickening them in his ways, supporting them under burdens, strengthening them against temptations, and comforting them under afflictions: and therefore they question all these things, and take them to be nothing else but canting phrases and unaccountable fancies. A man that never was at Rome or Constantinople, might at the same rate deny there ever were such places; one that never tasted honey might deny it to be sweet, or a blind man laugh at colours because he never saw them,—though contrary to the experience of thousands that had,—with as much reason as they who live merely by sense, and never experienced any better pleasures, deny a higher principle by which believers are acted, and more spiritual comforts which they enjoy.

USE II. *Of exhortation.*

1. *Labour to experience the reality of your religion in yourselves.*—So live as that you may not be deceived, and may know that you are not. So act grace as that you may feel it working, and from thence conclude the principle to be in you, and may taste the sweetness of the comforts it brings with it. Labour to be fully satisfied that you do not live by fancy, and act by fancy, think you believe and hope, when you do not; that grace in you is as real a principle as reason is.

(1.) *This becomes you as reasonable creatures.*—As such, you should know the reason of your own actings, upon what grounds you do what you do, and believe what you believe. You would think a man very weak and foolish in the concernments of this present life, that could give himself no account of his own actions or expectations,—should have high hopes of great things, but not tell why he entertained them. How unreasonable, then, is it for a man to hope for greater things in the other life, to engage in a religious course, be diligent in duties, deny himself as to his worldly interest; and yet not know why he doth so!

(2.) *It is a matter of great consequence to you.*—For,

(i.) *If you cannot give yourselves an account of your religion, you will never enjoy the comforts of it, never take comfort in its comforts.*—The comforts of true religion are too great, too sweet, too precious, to be vainly lost, or but coldly sought after. “Joy unspeakable and full of glory” is well worth having: but, alas! how shall you come by this joy, these strong consolations, if you are not satisfied in the

reality of that principle in your hearts upon which they depend? You have no joy or peace but in believing, and hoping, and walking holly; (Rom. xv. 13; xii. 12; Psalm cxix. 56;) and if you know not but your faith and hope may be a mere fancy, and so your diligence in holiness, which is the effect of faith, but the effect of fancy, what comfort can you have in one or other? What pleasure can you have in reflecting upon your sincerity, when you question your sincerity? or upon your interest in Christ, and the benefits of his blood, and privileges of the gospel, when, for aught you know, the faith upon which that interest immediately stands, is not a grace of God's Spirit, but a fancy of your own heads?

(ii.) *You will never be able to give an account of it to others.*—What you understand not yourselves, you will not be able to make out to others that ask you a reason of it. If you cannot tell why you believe, how can you evidence to others that you do believe? And if you cannot tell why you practise thus or thus, how can you satisfy others that your practice is reasonable? If you would be able to answer them, first see [that] you be able to answer yourselves: when you can satisfy your own conscience, you may the better answer their cavils, or check their revilings, or bear their censures.

(iii.) *You will never be able to suffer for your religion, if you cannot give, at least, yourselves an account of it; nor suffer for that, the reality of which is doubtful to you.*—You will soon make shipwreck of a good conscience, if you be at uncertainties about that faith which should help you to keep it. Get well settled, or you will be easily shaken: you will very scarcely venture your all in the world in expectation of eternal life, when you are not sure [that] there is such a thing, or that you have a title to it; but rather fear that the hopes you had of it were no better than waking men's dreams, or pleasing visions of an imaginary happiness which had no subsistence but in your own fancies. You are likely enough to come into sufferings; you had need see upon what ground you stand, that you may be able to hold out. If you once come to question the reality of your faith, you will soon come to forsake it; and if you know not but your practice hitherto hath been unreasonable, you will think, when troubles come upon you, you have reason to alter it. If your former strictness and zeal in religion seem folly to you, you will count it your wisdom to grow loose and cold and careless in it, especially rather than hazard estate or liberty or life for it. What man of sense would hang or burn, rather than forego that which he himself took to be but a fancy,—at least, had no assurance that it was not?

(iv.) *You shall not need to fear the scorns or censures of enemies, if you be fully satisfied in yourselves that your faith is really a grace of God's Spirit in you, and not a deceit of your own heart.*—And the holiness of your conversation, a well-grounded, scriptural practice; not an unwarrantable, irrational niceness. Let the profane world scoff its fill, and call you "deceivers," or count you fools; it is no shame to be called "fools" for believing Christ's truth, or doing Christ's will; it hath been the lot of others before you. And so long as you

feel the power of faith in your own souls, you are sure it purifies your hearts, makes you fearful of sin, conscientious and painful in duty, strong against temptations, patient in afflictions; and so long too as you find holiness growing and thriving in you, your spiritual strength increasing, your fruit abounding;—so long you may be sure you are not fools, and the world's flouts or scorns cannot make you so. You would not be much concerned, if those that bore you an ill will should make themselves sport with you, and attempt to persuade you that you were blind, or lame, or sick, or asleep, when in the mean while your eyes were open, and you saw all things about you as at other times;—you could walk and exercise your limbs, discourse and exercise your reason, perform all the actions of men that are awake or in health. If you experience the workings of a holy principle in your hearts, and the effects of it in your lives, neither the sophistry nor censures nor jeers of those that are otherwise minded, will be able to beat you out of the conviction of your spiritual senses, any more than of your reason and understanding or bodily motions.

2. *Labour to evidence the same to others.*—And to be able to give a reason of your faith and hope and holy obedience, to them that demand it of you; and, if possible, to satisfy them as well as yourselves.

(1.) *This may be much for the glory of God and credit of the gospel.*—When it is seen that you are men as well as Christians, and act reasonably as well as religiously, and never more reasonably than when most religiously; that that “Divine nature” [which] you are made “partakers of,” (2 Peter i. 4,) is a perfection and elevation, not the destruction, of your human; that you have great reason for that good way, that holy course, in which you have been walking; and that the greatest strictness in religion is really your greatest wisdom. How may your confession, when joined with a godly conversation, which is a speaking practice and the most forcible conviction, stop the mouths of cavillers, falsify their slanders, make them know themselves to be liars, and own themselves to have had too hard thoughts of you, and that they, and not you, have been in the wrong! And if you come into sufferings, it will be for the honour of the gospel so to demean yourselves as to make it appear that you suffer, not only not as evil-doers, (1 Peter iv. 15,) but not as fools; that there is enough in your religion to justify you before men, not only in your greatest preciseness, but in your deepest sufferings; and though you pass for fools with the unbelieving world for exposing yourselves to a thousand miseries and apparent present ruin in expectation of an invisible and only future happiness, yet your faith is so well grounded, your hope so sure, that you need not be ashamed of undergoing evil, any more than of doing good.

(2.) *It may be a means to encourage the hearts, and strengthen the hands, and confirm the faith, of your fellow-saints.*—When they see that you believe as they believe, and hope as they hope, and practise as they practise; that they are not alone nor singular in what they do. Though a true believer ought to hold on constantly in the way

of faith and holiness, notwithstanding the opposition of all the world against him; yet it may be no small encouragement to him to find others of the same mind, acting at the same rate and upon the same grounds.

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## SERMON III.

BY THE REV. THOMAS WATSON, A. M.

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HOW GOD IS HIS PEOPLE'S GREAT REWARD.

*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*—Genesis xv. 1.

ABRAHAM is called “the friend of God;” (James ii. 23;) the Lord spake with him familiarly; (Gen. xvii. 22;) he was made of God’s privy council. (Gen. xviii. 17.) And in the text: “The word of the Lord came unto” him “in a vision.” Representations of things in a vision differ from revelations by dreams. (Gen. xxxi. 11.) And what was the word that came to this holy patriarch in a vision? “I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward:” words too great for any man or angel fully to expound. Both the Hebrew and Greek carry the phrase very high: שְׂכָרְךָ הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד “I am thy super-abundant, very exceeding much reward,” ὁ μισθὸς σου πολὺς σφοδρὰ. In the text is a climax; it riseth, as the waters of the sanctuary, higher: “I am thy reward, thy great reward, thy exceeding great reward.”\* There are four things here to be spoken to:—

- I. *That nothing beside God can be the saints’ reward.*
- II. *How God is their reward.*
- III. *How God comes to be their reward.*
- IV. *Wherein the exceeding greatness of this reward consists.*

I. *That nothing beside God can be the saints’ reward.*

1. Nothing on earth can be their reward. The glistening of the world dazzles men’s eyes; but, like the apples of Sodom, it doth not so much delight as delude. The world is *res nihili*, [“a thing of nought,”] gilded emptiness. (Prov. xxiii. 5.) The world is made circular, the heart in the figure of a triangle; a circle cannot fill a triangle: the world is enough to busy us, not to fill us.† “In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits.” (Job xx. 22.) It seems a riddle, to have sufficiency, yet not have enough. The meaning is,—When he enjoys most of the creature, yet *aliquid deest*, “there is something wanting.” When king Solomon had put all the creatures into a limbeck, [alembic,] and went to extract and still out the spirits, they turned to froth: הַכֹּל הִנָּהוּ קֶבֶל “All is vanity.” (Eccles. i. 2.) God never intended [that] we should dig happiness out of the earth which he hath cursed.

\* *Mercēs tua magna nimis.*—GROTIUS. † *Fumus et ventus sunt omnia mundana.*  
—AUGUSTINUS, tom. ix. “All things terrestrial are but smoke and wind.”—EDIT.

2. *Heaven* itself is not a saint's reward: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) "*There* are angels and archangels,"\* saith Musculus; ay, but though these are for a saint's comfort, yet not properly for his reward. Communion with seraphims is excellent, yet can no more make a saint's reward than the light of the stars can make day.

II. QUESTION. *How is God his people's reward?*

ANSWER. In bestowing himself upon them. The great blessing of the covenant is, "I am thy God." The Lord told Abraham, kings should come out of his loins, and he would give the land of Canaan to him and his seed; (Gen. xvii. 6;) but all this did not amount to blessedness. That which made up the portion was, "I will be their God." (Verse 8.) God "will not only see that the saints shall be rewarded, but his own self will be their reward."† A king may reward his subjects with gratuities, but he bestows himself upon his queen: God saith to every believer, as he did to Aaron, "I am thy part and thine inheritance;" (Num. xviii. 20;) and as the king of Israel said to Benhadad, "I am thine, and all that I have." (1 Kings xx. 4.)

Abraham sent away the sons of the concubines with a few gifts; but he settled the inheritance upon Isaac. (Gen. xxv. 5, 6.) God sends away the wicked with riches and honour, but makes over *himself* to his people. They have not only the gift, but the Giver. And what can be more? As Micah said, "What have I more?" (Judges xviii. 24;) so what hath God more to give than himself? What greater dowry than Deity? God is not only the saints' rewarder, but their "reward."‡ "The Almighty shall be thy gold:" (Job xxii. 25;) so much the Hebrew word imports.§ The sum of all is: the saints' portion lies in God: "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."|| (Psalm xvi. 5.)

QUESTION. "But how doth God give himself to his people? Is not his essence incommunicable?"

ANSWER. True, the saints cannot partake of God's very essence; (an error of Montanus and the Familists;) the riches of the Deity are too great to be received in specie.¶ But the saints shall have all in God, that may be for their comfort: they shall partake so much of God's likeness, his love, his influence, and the irradiations of his glory, (1 John iii. 2; John xvii. 26, 22,) as doth astonish and fill the vessels of mercy, that they run over with joy.

III. QUESTION. *How God comes to be his people's reward.*

ANSWER. Through Jesus Christ; his blood, being *sanguis Dei*,

\* *Ibi sunt angeli et archangeli.*—MUSCULUS. † *Non tantum sua, sed se, nobis impertit.*

‡ *Merces idem valet, quod hereditas.*—CALVINUS. "The meaning of reward is as full and comprehensive as that of inheritance."—EDIT. § *בצר Aurum lectissimum.* ["The choicest gold."]—JUNICUS, BUXTORFIUS. || *Notant grammatici, rectionem plurium synonymorum auzesim denotare.* "Grammarians remark that the government of several synonymous words by one another, denotes augmentation."—EDIT. ¶ *Perperam et impie delirarunt, qui complementum Dei (Eph. iii. 19) interpretati sunt plenam Divinitatem, quasi homines fiant Deo aequales.*—CALVINUS. "They uttered gross and impious nonsense, who interpreted 'the fulness of God' (Eph. iii. 19) to be 'the full Divinity;' as though men might become equal with God."—EDIT.

“the blood of God,” hath merited this glorious reward for them. (Acts xx. 28.) Though, in respect of free grace, this reward is a donative, yet in respect of Christ's blood it is a purchase. (Eph. i. 14.) How precious should Christ be to us! Had not he died, the portion had never come into our hands.

IV. QUESTION. *Wherein the exceeding greatness of this reward consists.*

ANSWER 1. God is *merces ampla*, “a satisfying reward.” “I am God Almighty:” (Gen. xvii. 1:) the word for Almighty, אֱלֹהִים signifies “him that hath sufficiency.” God is a whole ocean of blessedness; \* which while the soul is bathing in, it cries out in a divine ecstasy, “I have enough.” Here is fulness, but no surfeit: “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” † (Psalm xvii. 15.) When I awake out of the sleep of death, having my soul embellished with the illustrious beams of thy glory, I shall be satisfied. In God there is not only sufficiency, but redundancy; not only *plenitudo vasis*, “the fulness of the vessel,” but *plenitudo fontis*, “the fulness of the fountain.” When the whole world was defaced, Noah had the copy and emblem of it in the ark. In God, this Ark of blessedness, are all good things virtually to be found. Therefore Jacob, having God for his reward, could say, “I have enough;” or as it is in the original, לֹא-אֶבְיָשׁ; “I have all.” ‡ (Gen. xxxiii. 11.) God is all marrow and sweetness; he is “such an exuberant reward as exceeds our very faith.” § If the queen of Sheba's heart fainted within her to see all king Solomon's glory, what would it have done to have beheld the astonishing and magnificent reward which God bestows upon his favourites?

2. God is *merces adæquata*, “a suitable reward.” The soul, being spiritual, must have something homogeneal and suitable, to make it happy; and that is God. Light is not more suitable to the eye, nor melody to the ear, than God is to the soul. He pours-in “spiritual blessings;” (Eph. i. 3;) he enricheth it with grace, feasts it with his love, crowns it with heavenly dignity.

3. God is *merces jucunda*, “a pleasant reward.” He is the quintessence of delight, all beauty and love. To be feeding upon the thoughts of God, is delicious: “My meditation of him shall be sweet.” (Psalm civ. 34.) It is delightful to the bee to suck the flower; so, by holy musing, to suck out some of the sweetness in God, carries a secret delight in it. To have a prospect of God only by faith, is pleasant: “In whom believing ye rejoice:” (1 Peter i. 8:) then what will the joy of vision be, when we shall have a clear intuitive sight of him, and be laid in the bosom of Divine Love? Is God so sweet a reward in affliction? “I am exceeding joyful,” Ὑπερπερισσυστομαι, “in all our tribulation.” (2 Cor. vii. 4.) Philip,

\* *Perfectionem omnium bonorum in se uno comprehendit.*—RIVETUS. “God embraces in himself alone the perfection of all that is good.”—EDIT. † *Spiritualium vult felicitatem quando facie ad faciem se nobis fruendum exhibeat Deus.*—CALVINUS. “He desires spiritual bliss, when God shall disclose himself to us, face to face, in order to our enjoyment of him.”—EDIT. ‡ *Ipsè Deus sufficit ad præmium.*—AUGUSTINUS. “God himself is a sufficient reward.”—EDIT. § *Præmium quod fide non attingitur.*—IDEM.

landgrave of Hesse, said that in his confinement he had the divine consolations of the martyrs. Then what a delicious reward will God be in heaven! This may be better felt than expressed. The godly, entering upon their celestial reward, are said to "enter into the joy of their Lord." (Matt. xxv. 21.) O amazing! The saints enter into God's own joy: they have not only the joy which God bestows, but the joy which God enjoys.\*

4. God is *merces transcendens*, "a transcendent reward." The painter, going to take the picture of Helena, not being able to draw her beauty to the life, drew her face covered with a veil. So, when we speak of God's excellencies, we must draw a veil. He is so super-eminent a reward, as [that] we cannot set him forth in all his oriency and magnificence. Put the whole world in balance with him, and it is as if you should weigh a feather with a mountain of gold. God hath got the ascendant of all other things: he is better than the world, better than the soul, better than heaven: he is *Causa causati*, "the original Cause of all" good "things;" † "nothing is sweet without him;" ‡ he perfumes and sanctifies our comforts, he turns the venison into a blessing.

5. God is *merces infinita*, "an infinite reward." And being infinite, these two things follow: (1.) *This reward cannot come to us by way of merit.*—Can we merit God? Can finite creatures merit an infinite reward? (2.) *God being an infinite reward, there can be no defect or scantiness in it.*—"There is no want in that which is infinite." § Some may ask, "Is God sufficient for every individual saint?" Yes; if the sun, which is but a finite creature, disperseth its light to the univerec, then much more God, who is infinite, distributes glory to the whole number of the elect. Every individual Christian hath a propriety in a community; as every person enjoys the whole sun to himself, so every believer possesseth whole God to himself: the Lord hath land enough to give all his heirs. Throw a thousand buckets into the sea, and there is water enough in the sea to fill them: though there be millions of saints and angels, there is enough in God to fill them. God being an infinite reward, though he is continually giving out of his fulness to others, yet he hath not the less; his glory is imparted, not impaired; it is a distribution without a diminution.

6. God is *merces honorifica*, "an honourable reward." Honour is the height of men's ambition: Aristotle calls it *μεγιστον των αγαθων* ["the greatest of blessings"]. Alas! worldly honour is but a "pleasing fancy." || Honour hath oft a speedy burial: but to enjoy God is the head of honour. What greater dignity than to be taken up into communion with the God of glory, and to possess a kingdom with him, bespangled with light, and seated above all the visible orbs?

\* *O gaudium vincens omne gaudium, extra quod non est gaudium!* "O joy surpassing all joys, and beyond which no other joy can exist!"—EDIT. † *Quod efficit tale id est magis tale.* "That which endows any thing with certain qualities, must itself possess those qualities in a more eminent degree."—EDIT. ‡ *Quicquid præter Deum est, dulce non est.*—AUGUSTINUS. § *In infinito non datur ελλειψις.*

|| *Μετα πολλης φαντασιας.* (Acts xxv. 23.) ["With much pomp."]



A great heir, while he is in a foreign land, may be despised; but in his own country he is had in veneration. Here the people of God are as princes in a disguise; (1 John iii. 1;) but they shall have honour enough in heaven, when they shall be clothed with white robes, and sit with Christ upon his throne. (Rev. iii. 21.)

7. God is *merces æterna*, "an everlasting reward." Mortality is the disgrace of all earthly things.\* They are in their fruition surfeiting, and in their duration dying; they are like the metal [that] glass is made of, which, when it shines brightest, is nearest melting: but God is an eternal reward. Eternity cannot be measured by years, jubilees, ages, nor the most slow motion of the eighth sphere. Eternity makes glory weighty: "This God is our God for ever and ever." (Psalm xlvi. 14.) A Christian cannot say, "I have an estate in the world, and I shall have it for ever;" but he may say, "I have God, and I shall have him for ever." O ye saints of God, your praying and repenting are but for a while, but your reward is for ever. As long as God is God, he will be rewarding you. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever:" † עֲלֵיךָ (Hosea ii. 19:) God marries himself to his people, and this admits of no divorce. God's love to his elect is as unchangeable as to Christ: "My portion for ever." (Psalm lxxiii. 26.) This portion cannot be spent, because it is infinite; nor lost, because it is eternal. We read of a "river of pleasures" at God's right hand. (Psalm xxxvi. 8.) "But may not this river in time be dried up?" No; for there is a fountain at the bottom: "With thee," Lord, "is the fountain of life." (Verse 9.)

QUESTION. "But if this reward be so exceeding great, will it not overwhelm us?"

ANSWER. In the other world our faculties shall be extended, and through the Mediator Christ we shall be made capable of receiving this reward. Put a back of steel to a glass, and you may see your face in it: so, Christ's human nature being put as a back of steel to the divine, God's glory will be seen and enjoyed by us. There is no seeing the sun in the circle, but in the beams: so, whatever of God is made visible to us, will be through the golden beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

QUESTION. "Wherein appears the certainty of this reward?"

ANSWER. God, who is the Oracle of truth, hath asserted it. A charter, legally confirmed under the Broad Seal, is unquestionable: the public faith of heaven is engaged to make good this reward; God's oath is laid at pledge. ‡ (Psalm lviii. 11.) Nay, God hath not only pawned his truth, the most orient pearl of his crown; but he hath given the anticipation and first-fruits of this reward to his saints, in joy and consolation, (Gal. v. 22,) which assures them of a harvest afterwards.

QUESTION. "But when shall we be possessed of this reward?"

\* *Inter peritura vivimus*.—SENECA. "We live among perishing things."—EDIT.  
 † *Adsciscam mihi in sponsam*.—CORNELIUS A LAPIDE. ‡ *Væ nobis, si nec juranti Deo credimus!*—AUGUSTINUS. "Woe unto us, if we do not believe God, when he swears by himself!"—EDIT.

ANSWER. The time is not long: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me." (Rev. xxii. 12.) Sense and reason think it a long interval; but faith looks at the reward as near. Through a perspective-glass, the object which is at some distance seems near to the eye: so, faith looking through the perspective-glass of a promise, the reward seems near. Faith as it doth substantiate, so it doth anticipate, things not seen; it makes them present. (Eph. ii. 6.)

QUESTION. "But why is this reward at all deferred?"

ANSWER 1. God sees it not fit that we should yet receive it. Our work is not done; we have not yet "finished the faith." A day-labourer doth not receive his pay till his work be done: even Christ's reward was deferred till he had completed his mediatory work, and said upon the cross, "It is finished."

2. God defers the reward, that we may live by faith. We are taken with the reward, but God is more taken with our faith. No grace honours God like faith: (Rom. iv. 20:) God hath given himself to us by promise; faith trusts God's bond, and patience waits for the payment.

3. God adjourns the reward a while, to sweeten it, and make it more welcome to us when it comes. After all our labours, watchings, conflicts, how comfortable will the reward be! Nay, "the longer the reward is deferred, it will be the greater:" \* the longest voyages have the largest returns.

If still it be asked, "When shall the time of this reward be?" I say, The righteous shall receive part of their reward at death. No sooner is the soul out of the body, but it is "present with the Lord." † (2 Cor. v. 8.) And the full coronation is at the resurrection, when the soul and body shall be re-united and perfected in glory. Christians, faint not in your voyage, though troublesome; you are within a few leagues of heaven: your "salvation is now nearer than when" you "first believed." (Rom. xiii. 11.) Several orollaries follow.

#### USE I. INFORMATION.

BRANCH 1. Hence it is evident, that *it is lawful to look to the future reward.*—God is our reward; is it not lawful to look to him? Moses had an eye "to the recompence of the reward:" (Heb. xi. 26:) what was this reward, but God himself? Verse 27: "As seeing him who is invisible." Looking to the reward quickens us in religion: it is like the rod of myrtle in the traveller's hand, which, [it] is said, revives his spirits, and makes him walk without being weary. Who that is subject to fainting-fits will not carry cordial-water about him?

BRANCH 2. If God be such an exceeding great reward, then *it is not in vain to engage in his service.*—It was a slanderous speech: "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God." (Mal. iii. 14.) The infinite

\* *Quò longius defertur, eò suavius letatur.* † *Piæ animæ a corporibus solutæ cum Deo vivunt.*—CALVINUS. "The souls of the pious, when set free from the body, live for ever with God."—EDIT.

Jehovah gives a reward that is as far beyond our thoughts as it is above our deserts. How apt are persons through ignorance or mistake to misjudge the ways of God! They think it will not quit the cost to be religious: they speak evil of religion before they have tried it; as if one should condemn a meat before he hath tasted it. Beside the *vales*\* which God gives in his life, provision, protection, peace, there is a glorious reward shortly coming; (Psalm xix. 11;) God himself is the saints' dowry. God hath a true monopoly; "he hath those riches which are nowhere else to be had,—the riches of salvation."† He is such a gold-mine as no angel can find the bottom: "The unsearchable riches of Christ." (Eph. iii. 8.) Is it vain, then, to serve God? A Christian's work is soon over, but not his reward. He hath such a harvest coming as cannot be fully inned; it will be always reaping-time in heaven. How great is that reward which thoughts cannot measure, nor time finish!

BRANCH 3. *See the egregious folly of such as refuse God.*—Psalm lxxxi. 11: "Israel would none of me." Is it usual to refuse rewards? If a man should have a vast sum of money offered him, and he should refuse it, his discretion would be called in question. God offers an incomprehensible reward to men, yet they refuse; like the loadstone, which refuseth gold and pearl, and draws the rusty iron to it. Man by his fall lost his head-piece: he sees not where his interest lies. He flies from God, as if he were afraid of salvation; and what doth he refuse God for? The pleasures of the world: ‡ we may write upon them, Προσκαιρα ["Temporary"]. These are like Noah's dove, which brought an olive-branch in her mouth, but quickly flew out of the ark; and to lose God for these perishables, is a prodigy of folly worse than that of Lysimachus, who for a draught of water lost his kingdom. We read in scripture of two cups: Psalm xvi. 5: "The Lord is the portion of my cup." They who refuse this cup shall have another cup to drink of: Psalm xi. 6: "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone: this shall be the portion of their cup."

BRANCH 4. If God be such an immense reward, then *see how little cause the saints have to fear death.*—Are men afraid to receive rewards? There is no way to live but by dying.§ Christians would be clothed with glory, but are loath to be unclothed; they pray, "Thy kingdom come;" and when God is leading them thither, they are afraid to go. What makes us desirous to stay here? There is more in the world to wean us than to tempt us. Is it not a valley of tears? and do we weep to leave it? Are we not in a wilderness among fiery serpents? and are we loath to leave their company? Is there a better Friend we can go to than God? Are there any sweeter

\* Pecuniary gratuities to servants; sometimes written *vails*.—EDIT. † *In uno Deo omnes florent gemæ ad salutem.* ‡ Αφυσιας σημειον διατριβην εν τοις περι το σωμα.—ΕΠΙCΤΕΤUΣ. "It is a mark of stupidity to spend one's time in corporeal and sensual pleasures."—EDIT. § *Aliæ hæreditates in morte deseruntur; sed ad solidam hujus possessionem per mortem immittimur.*—RIVETUΣ. "Other inheritances must be left when we die; but it is death itself that admits us to the actual possession of this eternal inheritance."—EDIT.

smiles, or softer embraces, than his? Sure, those who know [that] "when they die they go to receive their reward, should neither be fond of life nor fearful of death:"\* the pangs of death to believers are but the pangs of travail by which they are born into glory.

## USE II. EXHORTATION.

BRANCH 1. *Believe this reward.*—Look not upon it as a Platonical idea or fancy. Sensualists question this reward, because they do not see it: they may as well question the verity of their souls, because, being spirits, they cannot be seen. Where should our faith rest, but upon a divine testimony? We believe there are such places as Africa and America, (though we never saw them,) because travellers who have been there affirm it; and shall we not believe the eternal recompences, when *αυτος εφη*, God "himself affirms it?" The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's power: and shall not our faith hang upon the word of his truth? Let us not be sceptics in matters of such importance. The Rabbins tell us, the great dispute between Cain and Abel was about the future reward. Abel affirmed it, Cain denied it. The disbelief of this grand truth is the cause of the flagitiousness of the age. Immorality begins at infidelity; (Heb. iii. 12;) to mistrust a future reward is to question the Bible, and to destroy a main article of our Creed,—“Life everlasting.” Such atheists as look upon God's promise but as a forged deed, put God to swear against them, that they shall never “enter into his rest.” (Verse 18.)

BRANCH 2. If God be such an exceeding great reward, *let us endeavour that he may be our reward.*—In other things we love a propriety: “This house is mine; this lordship and manor is mine;” and why not, “This God is mine?” “Go,” saith Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron, “sacrifice to your God;” not, “my God.” The leaving out one word in a will may spoil the will: “the leaving out of this word ‘my,’ is the loss of heaven.”† Psalm lxxvii. 6: “God, even our own God, shall bless us.” He who can pronounce this Shibboleth, “my God,” is the happiest man alive.

QUESTION. “How shall we know that God is our reward?”

ANSWER 1. *If God hath given us the earnest of this reward.*—This earnest is his Spirit: ‡ “Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.” (Eph. i. 13, 14.) Where God gives his Spirit for an earnest, there he gives himself for a portion: Christ gave the *purse* to Judas, not his Spirit.

QUESTION. “How shall we know we have God's Spirit?”

ANSWER. The Spirit “carries influence along with it:” § it consecrates the heart, making it a sacrary, or “holy of holies;” it sanctifies the fancy, causing it to mint holy thoughts; it sanctifies the will, strongly biasing it to good. As musk, lying among linen, perfumes it, so the Spirit of God in the soul perfumes it with sanctity.

\* *Καλον το θνησκειν ος κερδος θνησκειν φερει.*—MENANDER. † *Tolle Meum et tolle Deum.*—See vol. ii. p. 539.—EDIT. ‡ *Pignus redditur, arrha retinetur.*—HIERONYMUS. “A pledge is restored to him who left it; but earnest-money is always retained by the receiver.”—EDIT. § *Est vehiculum influentia.*

OBJECTION. "But are not the unregenerate said to partake of the Holy Ghost?"

ANSWER. They may have the common gifts of the Spirit, not the special grace; they may have the enlightening of the Spirit, not the anointing; they may have the Spirit *movere*, not *vivere*, "move" in them, not "live" in them. But, to partake of the Holy Ghost aright, is when the Spirit leaves lively impressions upon the heart; it softens, sublimates, transforms it,\* writing a law of grace there. (Heb. viii. 10.) By this earnest, we have a title to the reward.

2. If God be our reward, *he hath given us a hand to lay hold on him.*—This hand is faith: "Lord, I believe." (Mark ix. 24.) A weak faith justifies; † as a weak hand can tie the knot in marriage, a weak faith can lay hold on a strong Christ: the nature of faith is assent joined with affiance. (Acts viii. 37; xvi. 31.) Faith doth *διοποιεῖν*, "make God ours." Other graces make us *like* Christ; faith makes us *one with* him. And this faith is known by its virtue. "No precious stone," saith Cardan, "but hath some virtue latent in it." Precious faith hath virtue in it: it quickens and ennobles, it puts worth into our services; (Rom. xvi. 26;) it puts a difference between the "Abba, Father," of a saint, and the "Ave-Mary" of a Papist.

3. We may know God is our reward by *our choosing him.*—Religion is not a matter of chance, but of choice. (Psalm cxix. 30.) Have we weighed things in the balance, and, upon mature deliberation, made an election,—“We will have God upon any terms?” Have we sat down and reckoned the cost? what religion *must* cost us,—the parting with our lusts; and what it may cost us,—the parting with our lives? Have we resolved, through the assistance of grace, to own Christ when the swords and staves are up? and to sail with him, not only in a pleasure-boat, but in a man-of-war? ‡ This choosing God speaks him to be ours: hypocrites profess God out of worldly design, not religious choice.

4. God is known to be our reward by *the complacential delight we take in him.* (Psalm xxxvii. 4—8.)—How do men please themselves with rich portions! What delight doth a bride take in her jewels! Do we delight in God as our eternal portion? § Indeed, he is a whole paradise of delight; all excellencies meet in God, as the lines in the centre. Is ours a genuine delight? Do we not only delight in God's blessings, but in God himself? Is it a superior delight? Do we delight in God above other things? David had his crown-revenues to delight in; but his delight in God took place of all other delights: "God, my exceeding joy;" (Psalm xliii. 4;) or, as it is in the original, *בְּיְהוָה חֵן מִשְׁמַן*, "the gladness," or "cream, of my joy." Can we delight

\* *Implet Spiritus Sanctus organum suum, et tanquam fila chordarum tangit digitus Dei corda sanctorum.*—PROSPER. "The Holy Spirit fills his own instrument with his breath, and the finger of God plays upon the hearts of the saints as on the chords of a lyre."—EDIT. † *Credo, Domine, languiddā fide; tamen credo.*—CRUCIGER. "Lord, I do believe, though my faith is weak."—EDIT. ‡ *Ουδενος λογον ποιουμαι των δευρων, ουδε εχω την ψυχην τιμιαν, ως αγαπων αυτην μαλλον η τον Κυριον.*—IGNATIUS *Epist. ad Tarsenses.* "I make no mention of my sufferings, neither do I prize my life highly, as if I loved it more than I love the Lord."—EDIT. § *Hæ sunt piorum delicia, Deo pacato frui.* "These are the delights of the pious,—to enjoy a reconciled God."—EDIT.

in God when other delights are gone? Hab. iii. 17, 18: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom," &c., "yet I will rejoice in the Lord." When the flowers in a man's garden die, yet he can delight in his land and money: thus a gracious soul, when the creature fades, can rejoice in "the pearl of price." Paulinus, when they told him the Goths had sacked Nola, and plundered him of all, lifting-up his eyes to heaven, said, "Lord, thou knowest where I have laid-up my treasure."\* By this delighting in God we may undoubtedly know he is our reward.

QUESTION. "What shall we do to get God to be our reward?"

DIRECTION I. *Let us see our need of God.*—We are undone without him. Lift not up the crest of pride. Beware of the Laodicean temper: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and have need of nothing." (Rev. iii. 17.) God will never bestow himself on them that see no want of him.

DIRECT. II. *Let us beg of God to be our reward.*—It was Austin's prayer, "Lord, give me thyself." † "O do not put me off with common mercies; give me not my 'portion in this life.' (Psalm xvii. 14.) Make-over thyself by a deed of gift to me." Be earnest suitors, and God cannot find in his heart to deny you. Prayer is the key of heaven, which, being turned by the hand of faith, opens all God's treasures.

BRANCH 3. *Live every day in the contemplation of this reward.* ‡ —Be in the altitudes. Think what God hath "prepared for them that love him!" O that our thoughts could ascend! The higher the bird flies, the sweeter it sings. Let us think how blessed they are, who are possessed of their heritage. If one could but look a while through the chinks of heaven-door, and see the beauty and bliss of Paradise; if he could but lay his ear to heaven, and hear the ravishing music of those seraphic spirits, and the anthems of praise which they sing; how would his soul be exhilarated and transported with joy!

O Christians, meditate of this reward! Slight, transient thoughts do no good: they are like breath upon steel, which is presently off again. But let your thoughts dwell upon glory, till your hearts are deeply affected: "What, Lord! is there such an incomprehensible reward to be bestowed upon me? Shall these eyes of mine be blessed with transforming sights of thee? O the love of God to sinners!" Stand at this fire of meditation, till your hearts begin to be warm. How would the reflection on this immense reward conquer temptation, and behead those unruly lusts that have formerly conspired against us! "What! is there a reward so sure, so sweet, so speedy? and shall I by sin forfeit this? Shall I, to please my appetite, lose my crown? O all ye pleasures of sin, begone; let me no more be deceived with your

\* *Domine, ubi sunt omnia mea tu scis.*

† *Da mihi te, Domine.*—AUGUSTINUS.

‡ *Nihil in hac vitâ dulcius sentitur, nil ita mentem ab amore mundi separat, nil sic animam contra tentationes roborat, nil hominem ita ad omne bonum opus excitat, quàm gratia contemplationis.*—BERNARDUS. "In this life there is no feeling so sweet, nothing separates us so much from the love of the world, nothing strengthens the soul so greatly against temptations, nothing so excites a man to every good work,—as the grace of contemplation."—EDIT.

sugared lies, wound me no more with your silver darts. Though 'stolen waters are sweet,' yet the water of life is sweeter." No stronger antidote to expel sin, than the fore-thoughts of the heavenly remunerations. It was when Moses was long out of sight, that Israel made an idol to worship: (Exod. xxxii. 1 :) so, when the future reward is long out of our mind, then we set up some idol-lust in our hearts which we begin to worship.

BRANCH 4. This may content God's people: though they have but little oil in the cruse, and their estates are almost boiled away to nothing, *their great reward is yet to come.*—Though your pension be but small, your portion is large. If God be yours by deed of gift, this may rock your hearts quiet. God lets the wicked have their pay beforehand: "Ye have received your consolation." (Luke vi. 24.) A wicked man may make his acquittance, and write, "Received in full payment." But the saints' reward is in reversion; the robe and the ring is yet to come. May not *this* tune their hearts into contentment? Christian! what, though God denies thee a kid to make merry? if he will say, "Son, all [that] I have is thine," (Luke xv. 31,) is not this sufficient? Why dost thou complain of the world's emptiness, who hast God's fulness? Is not God reward enough? \* Hath a son any cause to complain that his father denies him a flower in the garden, when he makes him heir to his estate? The philosopher comforted himself with this, that though he had no music or vine-trees, yet he had the household gods with him.† So, Christian, though thou hast not much of the world, yet thou hast God; and he is an inexhaustible treasure. It was strange, after God had told Abraham, "I am thy exceeding great reward," yet that Abraham should say, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" (Gen. xv. 2.) Shall Abraham ask, "Lord, what wilt thou give me?" when he had given himself? Was Abraham troubled at the want of a child, who had a God? Was not God "better than ten sons?" "Who should be content, if not he who hath God for his portion," and heaven for his haven? †

Let this "exceeding great reward" stir up in us a spirit of activity for God. Our head should study for him, our hands work for him, our feet run in the way of his commandments. Alas! how little is all [that] we can do! "Our work bears no proportion with our reward." *Mercedi an tantæ par labor esse potest?* § The thoughts of this reward should make us rise off the bed of sloth, and act with all our might for God; || it should add wings to our prayers, and weight to our alms. A slothful person stands in the world for a cipher: and God writes down no ciphers in the book of life. Let us "abound in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.) As aromatic trees sweat out their precious oils, so should we sweat out our strength and spirits for Christ. St. Paul, knowing what a splendid reward was behind,

\* *Quid ultra querit cui omnia suus conditor fit?*—PROSPER. "What else does he seek, to whom his Maker is become all things?"—EDIT. † *Εὐθα καὶ οἱ θεοὶ εἰσι.* "Here also are the gods."—EDIT. ‡ *Quid homini sufficit, cui ipse Conditor non sufficit?*—AUGUSTINUS. § VERINUS. || *Spes præmii solatium fit laboris.*—HIERONYMUS. "The hope of reward sweetens labour."—EDIT.

brought all the glory he could to God: "I laboured," *περισσοτερον*, "more abundantly than they all." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) He outwrought all the other apostles. St. Paul's obedience did not move slow as the sun on the dial, but swift as the sun in the firmament.\* Did Plato and Demosthenes undergo such Herculean labours and studies, who had but the dim watch-light of nature to see by, and did but fancy the pleasures of the Elysian fields after this life? and shall not Christians much more put forth all their vigour of spirit for God, when they are sure to be crowned, nay, God himself will be their crown?

BRANCH 5. If God be so great a reward, *let such as have an interest in him be cheerful*.—God loves a sanguine complexion: cheerfulness credits religion: † *Ευθυμια* causeth *εὐεξία*. "The goodness of the conscience" is seen in "the gladness of the countenance." Let the birds of Paradise sing for joy. Shall a carnal man rejoice, whose hopes lean on earthly crutches? and shall not he rejoice whose treasure is laid up in heaven? Be serious, yet cheerful: a dejected, melancholy temper, as it unfits for duty, especially praising God, so it disparageth heaven. Will others think God is such a great reward, when they see Christians hang the wing, and go drooping in religion? It is a sin as well not to rejoice, as not to repent.

OBJECTION. "But how can I be cheerful? I am reduced to great straits."

ANSWER. Let God take away what he will from thee, he will at last give thee that which is better. As Pharaoh said, "Regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours;" (Gen. xlv. 20;) so I say, "Regard not your stuff;" be not too much troubled at the diminution of these earthly things; "for the good of all the land of" heaven "is yours." In the fields of Sicily there is a continual spring, and flowers all the year long: an emblem of the Jerusalem above, where are flowers of joy always growing. There you shall tread upon stars, be fellow-commoners with angels, and have communion with the blessed Trinity. Let the saints, then, be glad in the Lord; in God are treasures that can never be emptied, and pleasures that can never be ended.

BRANCH 6. If God be an exceeding great reward, *let such as have hope in him long for possession*.—Though it should not be irksome to us to stay here to do service, yet we should have an *αποκαραδοκιαν*, a holy "longing" till the portion comes into our hand. This is a temper becoming a Christian,—*content to live, desirous to die*. (Phil. i. 23—25.) Doth not the bride desire the day of espousals? ‡ (Rev. xxii. 17.) Did we but seriously consider our condition here,—we are compassed with a body of sin; we cannot pray without wandering; we cannot believe without doubting—should not this make us desire

\* *Ὡς ἀσώματος πόνων και κινδύων καταφρονει*.—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "He despises toils and dangers, as though he were incorporeal."—EDIT. † *Acceptior est Deo grata lætitia quàm querula tristitia*.—BUCHOLCERUS. "Grateful joy is much more pleasing to God than querulous sadness."—EDIT. ‡ *Veni, Domine Jesu, ut ad te veniam; veni, dulcedo mea; emancipato animam hanc, ut te Marito suo fruatur*.—ROLLOCCUS. "Come, Lord Jesus, that I may come to thee! Come, O my delight! Emancipate this soul, that she may enjoy thee, her Divine Husband."—EDIT.



to have our pass, to be gone? Let us think how happy those saints above are, who are solacing themselves in God: while we live far from court, they always behold the smiling face of God;\* while we drink wormwood, they swim in honey; while we are perplexed between hope and fear, they know their names are enrolled in the book of life; while we are tossed upon the unquiet waves, they are gotten to the haven. Did we but know what a reward God is, and what "the joy of our Lord" means, we should need patience to be content to stay here any longer.

BRANCH 7. Let such as have God for their exceeding great reward, *be living organs of God's praise*.—Psalm cxviii. 28: "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee." Themistocles thought he was well requited by the Grecians for his valour, when they took such notice of him in the Olympics, saying, "This is Themistocles." God counts it requital enough for all his love, when we are grateful, and present him with our thank-offering:† and well may we stand upon Mount Gerizim, blessing and praising, if we consider the greatness of this reward. That *we* should be made heirs of God; and that this surpassing reward is not a debt, but a legacy; and that, when many are passed by, the lot of free grace should fall upon us; let this make us ascribe praise unto the Lord. It is called "the garment of praise:" (Isai. lxi. 3:) the saints never look so comely as in this garment. Praise is the work of heaven: such as shall have angels' reward, should do angels' work. The word "praise" comes from a Hebrew *radix*,  $\text{רָדַף}$ , that signifies "to shoot up:" the godly should send up their praises as a volley of shot toward heaven. Shall you live with God, and partake of his fulness in glory? Break forth into doxologies and triumphs; long for that time when you shall join in concert with the angels, those choristers of heaven, in sounding forth hallelujahs to the King of glory. Such as are monuments of mercy, should be patterns of thankfulness.

USE III. CONSOLATION.

Will God himself be his people's reward? This may be as bezoar-stone, to revive and comfort them.

1. In case of *losses*.—They have lost their livings and promotions for conscience' sake; but as long as God lives, their reward is not lost. (Heb. x. 34.) "I cannot be poor," saith Bernard, "as long as God is rich; for his riches are mine." *Habet omnia qui habet habentem omnia*.‡ Whatever we lose for God, we shall find again in him. "We have left all," say the disciples, "and have followed thee." (Mark x. 28.) Alas! what had they left? A few sorry boats and tackling! What were these to their reward? They parted with

\* *In visione Dei ut primi Veri, et amore Dei ut summi Boni, consistit corona*.—AUGUSTINUS. "The saints' crown of reward consists in seeing God as the first Truth, and in loving God as the highest Good."—EDIT. † *Gratius agere possumus, referre non possumus*.—AUGUSTINUS. "We can return thanks to God, but not favours."—EDIT. ‡ "He who enjoys the Great Proprietor of all things, possesses an ample sufficiency."—EDIT.

movable goods for the unchangeable God. All losses are made up in him : we may be losers *for* God, we shall not be losers *by* him.

2. It is comfort in case of *persecution*.—The saints' reward will abundantly compensate all their sufferings. Agrippa being laid in chains for Caius, [the latter,] when he came after to the empire, released Agrippa out of prison, and gave him a chain of gold bigger than his iron chain. So God will infinitely remunerate them that suffer for him ; for their "waters of Marah," they shall have the wine of Paradise. The saints' sufferings are but *ολιγον*, "for a while ;" (1 Peter v. 10 ;) their reward is for ever : they are *but a while* in the wine-press, *ever* in the banqueting-house. The Hebrew word for "glory," *קבוד* signifies "a weight ;" the *weight* of glory should make affliction light : the enjoying of God eternally, will cause Christians to forget all their sorrows.\* One beam of the Sun of Righteousness will dry up their tears : after trouble, peace ; after labour, rest. Then God will be "all in all" to his people : (1 Cor. xv. 28 :) light to their eye, manna to their taste, music to their ear, joy to their heart. O, then, let the saints be comforted in the midst of their trials ! "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.)

#### USE IV. TERROR TO THE WICKED.

Here is a Gorgon's head to affright them. They shall have a reward, but vastly different from the godly : the one shall be rewarded *εν τη βασιλικη*, ["in the King's palace,"] the other *εν τη φυλακη* ["in prison"]. All the plagues in the Bible are their reward : "Destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity." (Prov. x. 29.) God is their rewarder, but not their reward : "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) They who did the devil's work, will tremble to receive their wages.

Zophar doth notably set forth a wicked man's reward : Job xx. 7 : "He shall perish for ever like his own dung : " that is, He shall perish with disgrace ; he shall leave a stinking savour behind. Verse 16 : "He shall suck the poison of asps : " that is, The sin which was sweet as honey in his mouth, shall be bitter as the gall of asps. Verse 26 : "A fire not blown shall consume him : " that is, either *ignis a caelo delapsus*, † "A fire falling from heaven" shall consume him, as it did Korah ; or [by] "a fire not blown" may be meant, A fire casually happening among his goods and chattels shall consume him ; or, "a fire not blown," that is, The fire of hell, not blown with bellows, shall torture his soul ; he shall be ever consuming, never consumed. ‡ Verse 29 : "This is the portion of a wicked man : " and how tremendous is this ! For every golden sand of mercy that runs out to a sinner, God puts a drop of wrath into his vial.

\* *Ο εμπορος φερει τα κυματα. Ινα εδρη τα χρηματα*.—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "The merchant bears the buffets of the waves, in order to acquire riches."—EDIT. † MERCERUS. ‡ *Sic morientur damnati ut semper vivant*.—BERNARDUS. "The damned shall so die as to be always alive."—EDIT.

## SERMON IV.

BY THE REV. JOHN HOWE, A.M.

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WHAT MAY MOST HOPEFULLY BE ATTEMPTED TO ALLAY ANIMOSITIES AMONG PROTESTANTS, THAT OUR DIVISIONS MAY NOT BE OUR RUIN ?

*That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.—Colossians ii. 2.*

THIS question is propounded to me : *What may most hopefully be attempted to allay animosities among Protestants, that our divisions may not be our ruin ?*

I must here, in the first place, tell you how I understand this question.

1. *As to the end*,—the preventing our ruin,—I take the meaning chiefly to be, not the ruin of our estates, trade, houses, families ; not our ruin in these respects *who* are Christians, but our ruin as we are Christians ; that is, the ruin of our Christianity itself, or of the truly Christian interest among us.

2. *As for the means* inquired after, I understand not the question to intend, What is to be done or attempted by laws and public constitutions ? as if our business were to teach our absent rulers, or prescribe to them what they should do, to whom we have no present call or opportunity to apply ourselves. Nor, again, can it be thought our business, to discuss the several questions that are controverted among us, and show in each what is the truth and right, wherewith every man's conscience ought to be satisfied, and in which we would all meet and unite ; as if we had the vanity to think of performing, by an hour's discourse, what the voluminous writings of some ages have not performed. Much less are we to attempt the persuading of any to go against an already-formed judgment in these points of difference, for the sake of union ; and to seek the peace of the church, by breaking their peace with God and their own consciences. But I take the question only to intend, What serious Christians may and ought to endeavour, in their private capacities, and agreeably with their own principles, toward the proposed end.

And so, I conceive, the words read to you contain the materials of a direct and full answer to the question. Which I reckon will appear, by opening *the case* [which] the apostle's words have reference to ;—that will be found a case like our own ;—and by opening *the words*,

whereby their suitableness to that case will be seen, and consequently to our case also.

I. *The case* which these words have reference to, (as indeed the general aspect of the epistle, and, in great part, of the other apostolical letters, looks much the same way,) was in short this: that a numerous sect was already sprung up, that began, so early, to corrupt the simplicity and purity of the Christian religion, and very much to disturb the peace of the Christian church. A sort they were of partly Judaizing, partly Paganizing, Christians; (the disciples, as they are reputed, of Simon Magus;) who joined with the name "Christian" the rites and ceremonies of the Jews, with the impurities, even in worship, of the Gentiles, denying the more principal doctrines, and hating the holy design, of Christianity itself; while they seemed to have assumed, or to retain, the name, as it were on purpose the more effectually to wound and injure the Christian cause and interest: men of high pretence to knowledge, (whence they had the title of "Gnostics,") filched partly from the Jewish Cabbalism, partly from the Pythagorean. By which pretence they insinuated the more plausibly with such as affected the knowledge of more hidden mysteries. Whereto the apostle seems to have reference, where he adds, immediately after the text, that in Christ were "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" (verse 3;) and says, he did purposely add it, "lest any man should beguile" them "with enticing words:" intimating, there was no need to follow those vain pretenders, out of an affectation of sublimer knowledge, and forsake Christ, "in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were hid."

Of the progress and genius of this sect, not only some of the fathers of the church give an account,\* but even a noted philosopher among the Heathens;† who writes professedly against them, though not a word against Christians as such; both making it his business to refute their absurd doctrines,—that the world was in its nature evil, and not made by God, but by some evil angel, &c.; and representing them as men of most immoral principles and practices; worse, both in respect of their notions and morals, than Epicurus himself.

It appears, this sort of men did, in the apostle's days, not only set themselves with great art and industry, to pervert as many professors of Christianity as they could, but found means (as they might by their compliances with the Jews, who were then much spread, and numerous seated in sundry principal cities under the Roman power, and who were every where the bitterest enemies to Christianity) to raise persecution against them [whom] they could not pervert; which some passages seem to intimate in the epistle to the Galatians; (who, as that whole epistle shows, were much leavened by this sect, inasmuch that the apostle is put to travail as in birth again to have Christ formed in them, and to reduce them back to sincere Christianity;) namely, that some leaders of this sect so set the people's minds even against the apostle himself, that he began to be reputed by them as

\* CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS, IRENÆUS, EPIPHANIUS, &c.

† PLOTINUS, *En-*

*nead.* ii. lib. 9.

an enemy, (Gal. iv. 16,) and was persecuted under that notion, because he would not comply with them in the matter of circumcision, urged as an engagement to the whole law of Moses: "If I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased;" (Gal. v. 11;) and that they were as mischievous as they could be to fellow-Christians on the same account, biting and devouring them that received not their corrupting additions to Christianity, as the circumstances of the text show. (Gal. v. 15.)

How like a case this is to ours with our Popish enemies, I need not tell you. And now, in this case, when the faith of many was overthrown, so much hurt was already done, and the danger of greater was so manifest, partly by the most insinuating methods of seduction, partly by the terror of persecution; the great care was to secure the uncorrupted residue, and preserve unextinct the true Christian interest. The urgency of this case puts the solicitous, concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words do intimate: "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have;" and not for these Colossians only, but "for them of Laodicea," which was not very remote from Colosse, "and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." (Col. ii. 1.) For it was a common case; and upon him lay "the care of the churches." So that hence his musing, meditative mind could not but be revolving many thoughts, and casting about for expedients, how the threatening danger might be obviated and averted. And these in the text, which he fastens upon, and wherein his thoughts centre, how apt and proper they were to that case, and consequently to ours which so little differs, will be seen,

II. By our opening and viewing the import of *the text* itself: wherein he,

1. Proposes to himself *the end* which he apprehended was most desirable, and above all things to be coveted, for them: "That their hearts might be comforted." A word of much larger signification than in vulgar acceptance it is understood to be. Παρακαλεω signifies, with profane as well as the sacred writers, not only "to administer consolation to" a grieved mind, but "to exhort, quicken, excite, and animate, to plead and strive with," dull and stupid, wavering and unresolved minds. It was thought, indeed, comprehensive enough to express all the operations of the Divine Spirit upon the souls of men, when not only the Christian church, but the world, yet to be Christianized, was to be the subject of them; as we see, John xvi. 8: in respect whereof that Holy Spirit hath its name of office, "the Paraclete," from this word. And it being the passive that is here used, it signifies not only the endeavours themselves which are used to the purpose here intended, but the effect of them wherein they all terminate,—a lively, vigorous, confirmed state and habit of soul; and that not indefinite, but determined to one thing,—the Christian faith and profession, which the apostle's drift and scope plainly shows. It is not to be thought [that] he so earnestly coveted and strove that they might be jocund, cheerful, abounding with joy and courage, in any course, right or wrong; but that they might be encouraged, established,

confirmed in their Christianity. And if the word he here uses were large enough to signify, as was noted above, all that was necessary to make men Christians, it may as well [signify] all that is necessary to continue them such.

In short, the end which the apostle aims at, the *παρακλησις* intended to these Christians, was their establishment and confirmed state in their Christianity, as the effect of all apostolical or ministerial exhortations, persuasions, encouragements, or any whatsoever endeavours; made efficacious to that purpose by the powerful influence and operation of the Holy Ghost. And that it was no lower thing than this, we have sufficient evidence by comparing the close of the foregoing chapter with the beginning of this: where we find, (Col. i. 28,) [that] the avowed design of his "preaching, warning, and teaching in all wisdom," was, that he might "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:" that, whereas there were various arts and endeavours used, to adulterate the Christian religion, and pervert men from the simplicity of it, he might lose none, but to his very uttermost keep all in a possibility of being presented perfect in Christ Jesus at last; that is, that they might be all entire, complete, and persevering Christians to the end. And for this he adds, (verse 29,) [that] he did "labour, striving according to His working, which wrought in him mightily." All his labour and the strivings of his soul, acted by divine power and by a Spirit greater than his own, did aim at this end. And now hereupon he intimates how fervid these his strivings were: Col. ii. 1, 2: "I would you did but know," (what it is not for me to say,) *ἤλικον αγωνα*, "what an agony I endure! how great this my conflict is for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh!" And for what? "That their hearts might be comforted;" (as we read;) meaning manifestly the same thing he had expressed before,—that, notwithstanding all endeavours of others to the contrary, they might be complete and confirmed Christians to the last.

2. We have next to consider in the text *the means*, or what expedients the apostle conceives would be most effectually conducing to this blessed purpose. They are two:—*mutual love to one another*; and *a clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel*. The former is shortly and plainly expressed; the other by a copious and most emphatical periphrasis or circumlocution. He most earnestly covets to have them "knit together" by both, *συμβιβασθεντων*, "compacted," as the word imports, *in the one, εν αγαπη*, ["in love,"] and *unto or into the other*, as that particle signifies, *εις παντα*, &c., ["unto all," &c.]

(1.) *Mutual love to one another*.—As if he had said, The thing were done, or much were done toward it, if they were "knit together in love," compacted, made all of a piece; if by love they did firmly cohere and cleave to one another. For then it would be "one and all;" and it is scarce ever supposable they should all agree to quit their religion at once. But if that were to be supposed, he adds another thing that would put all out of doubt:

(2.) *A clear, certain, efficacious faith of the gospel*.—For the

several expressions that follow are but a description of such a faith. Where we are to note, *what he would have them apprehend, and the apprehensive principle.*

(i.) *What he would have them apprehend; namely, the sum and substance of the Christian doctrine.*—Which he calls a “mystery;” both because it was so in itself, and it is often spoken of under that name by our Lord himself, (Matt. xiii. 11,) and familiarly by this apostle; (Rom. xvi. 25; Eph. iii. 3, 9; Col. i. 26; and elsewhere;) and because of the high pretence of the Gnostics to the knowledge of mysteries; which sometimes he slights, especially being unaccompanied with love, as with them it most eminently was: “Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing.” (1 Cor. xiii. 2.) “Knowledge puffeth up; but love edifieth.” (1 Cor. viii. 1.) Sometimes, as here, he makes the sincere doctrine of the gospel to outvie theirs herein, intimating that *such* as made profession of it could have no temptation to go over to them for the knowledge of mysteries, (unless a “mystery of iniquity” were more pleasing to them,) *whose* very religion was that “great mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

Now this mystery he first more generally characterizes, by calling it “the mystery of God,” a divine mystery, not made one by merely human fiction; and then he very distinctly specifies it in the following words, “And of the Father, and of Christ.” Where the former “and” needs not be thought copulative, but exegetical, and might be read “even,” or “to wit;” or it may be read “both,” as it is usual with the Greeks as well as Latins, when the copulative is to be repeated, so to read the former. As if it were said, “By ‘the mystery of God,’ I mean, not of God alone and abstractly considered, as if it were enough to you to be mere deists, and that the whole super-added revelation concerning the Mediator might be looked upon with indifferency or neglect,” as by the Gnostics it was known then to be, and afterwards by some of their great leaders, in the substance of it, with downright hatred and opposition; “but that which I so earnestly covet for you, and wherein I would have you unite and be all one, is ‘the acknowledgment of the’ whole ‘mystery of God;’ that is, ‘both of the Father, and of Christ.’”

(ii.) *The apprehensive principle;* which we may, by a general name, call *faith*, and accommodately enough to the name here given us of its object,—a “mystery,” which is elsewhere called “the mystery of faith,” (1 Tim. iii. 9,) or a “mystery to be believed,” *faith* being the known principle of receiving the gospel-revelation. But he here expresses it by words that signify “knowledge,” *συνεσις* and *επιγνωσις*; thereby intimating that the faith of Christians is not to be a blind and unintelligent principle; but that, though there were contained in the gospel mysteries never to be understood, if God had not afforded a special revelation of them on purpose; yet, being revealed, we ought to have a clear and distinct, as well as lively and practical,

perception of them. By these two words, and the other expressions [which] he joins-in with the former, he seems to intimate two sorts of properties which belong to that faith of the gospel which he wishes to them:—

First. *The rectitude, clearness, and certainty of notion.*

Secondly. *The efficacy, impressiveness, and immediate aptitude to have influence upon practice, which he would have it carry with it.*—The latter properties supposing and depending on the former, he there highly exaggerates the matter, and heaps together expressions that might with most lively emphasis set forth the kind of that knowledge which he conceives would be of so great use to them. He wishes them a *συνεσις*, a “clear, perspicacious knowledge,” and an “assurance,” even to a “plerophory,” a “fulness of assurance,” in their knowledge of the truth of the gospel. Yea, he wishes them “the riches,” *πλουτον*, yea, and “all riches,” *παντα πλουτον της πληροφοριας*, “of that full assurance,” or “plerophory, of understanding,” and knowledge of that truth; apprehending that this would certainly fix them in their faith and profession, so as they would never recede from it. As when in Christ’s own days “many went back, and walked no more with him,” (John vi. 66.) that which retained others,—so that when Christ asks, “Will ye also go away?” (verse 67,) they presently answer, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” [they] could entertain no such thought,—was that, beside what they believed of him was of greatest importance to them, “Thou hast the words of eternal life:” (verse 68:) so their belief was with that assurance as to exclude all suspicion or doubt in the case: “And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God;” (verse 69;) and therefore neither canst want power to confer eternal life, as all thy words do import thy design and promise to do, nor truth to make good thy own plain words. And then he also knew that such a *συνεσις*, or “knowledge,” would produce—what he further wishes them—an *επιγνωσις*, an “acknowledgment,” an inward, vital owning, a cordial embrace, a lively perception, of the same blessed truths; which must needs further most abundantly contribute to this their so-much-desired joint and unanimous stability.

And now these are the two expedients by which he reckons they would be so closely compacted together as that no subtilty or violence could endanger them,—mutual love, and a clear, certain, operative faith of the gospel. If by the one they did cohere with each other, and by the other adhere to God in Christ; if the one might have with them the place, power, and bindingness of a cement, the other of a continual inclination, yieldingness, and compliance to the magnetism of the centre; they would never so fall asunder as to give any enemies opportunity to be the successful authors, or the gratified spectators, of their ruin. Thus, therefore, I would sum up the sense of this scripture, and the answer to the question proposed: *That the maintaining of sincere love among Christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measures of clearness, certainty, and efficacy in reference to the substantial of Christianity, are to be endeavoured,*



*as the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them against such as design the ruin of the truly Christian interest.*

The case was at that time urging and important. A great and numerous party was formed of such as did nauseate the simplicity of the Christian religion, and hate the true design of it. All the care was, what course was most proper and suitable to preserve the rest : and you see what was then thought most proper.

Counsel was not taken to this effect, and therefore Christians in a private capacity should not covet to have it so : " Let us bind them by certain devised preter-evangelical canons to things never thought fit to be enjoined by Christ himself, severely urge the strict and uniform observance of them, make the terms of Christian communion straiter than he ever made them, add new rituals of our own to his institutions, and cut off from us all that, never so conscientiously, scruple them." No ; this was the practice of their common enemies, and it was to narrow and weaken the too-much-already-diminished Christian interest. The " order," mentioned verse 5, might be comely enough, without things that were both unnecessary and offensive.

Nor was it consulted and resolved to agitate the controversy about this power and practice in perpetual, endless disputations, and stigmatize them that should not be enlightened and satisfied in these matters, as schismatical and wilful, though they never so sincerely adhered to the doctrine and observed the laws of Christ. That is, it was neither thought fit to urge the unsatisfied upon doubtful things against their consciences, nor to take order that continual endeavours should be used from age to age to satisfy them, or that the church should be always vexed with a vain controversy about needless things, that, if they were never so lawful, might as well be let alone, without detriment to the Christian cause, and perhaps to its greater advantage. Yea, the attempt of imposing any thing upon the disciples but what was necessary, is judged a tempting of God, (Acts xv. 10,) a bringing the matter to a trial of skill with him, whether he could keep the church quiet, when they took so direct a course to distemper and trouble it.

But it was thought necessary and sufficient that all did unite and were " knit together " in the mutual love of one another, and in a joint adherence to the great mysteries of faith and salvation. In the same case, when there were so many antichrists abroad, and, it is likely, Ebion with his partakers made it their business to pervert the Christian doctrine, the same course is taken by the blessed apostle St. John,—only to endeavour the strengthening of these two vital principles,—faith in Christ, and love to fellow-Christians ; as may be seen at large in his epistles. These he presses as the great commandments, upon the observation whereof he seems to account [that] the safety and peace of the sincere did entirely depend : " This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." (1 John iii. 23.) He puts upon Christians no other distinguishing test, but,

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” (1 John v. 1.) [He] is only solicitous that they did practise the “commandment which they had from the beginning,” that is, that they “loved one another,” and that they did “abide in the doctrine of Christ.” (2 John 5, 9.)

The prudence and piety of those unerring guides of the church—themselves under the certain guidance of the Spirit of truth—directed them to bring the things wherein they would have Christians unite within as narrow a compass as was possible, neither multiplying articles of faith nor rites of worship. These two principles, as they were thought to answer the apostles’, would fully answer our design and present inquiry. And we may adventure to say of them, that they are both sufficient and necessary, the apt and the only means to heal and save us; such as would effect our cure, and without which nothing will. Nor shall I give other answer to the proposed question, than what may be deduced from these two, considered according to what they are in themselves, and what they naturally lead and tend unto.

I shall consider them in the order wherein the apostle here mentions them, who, you see, reserves the more important of them to the latter place.

I. *The sincere love of Christians to one another* would be a happy means of preserving the truly Christian interest among us.—That this may be understood, we must rightly apprehend what kind of love it is that is here meant. It is specified by what we find in conjunction with it: “The understanding and acknowledgment of the mystery of” Christianity. Therefore it must be the love of Christians to one another as such. Whence we collect, lest we too much extend the object of it on the one hand, or contract it on the other,

1. *That it is not the love only which we owe to one another as men or human creatures merely, that is intended here.*—That were too much to enlarge it, as to our present consideration of it. For, under that common notion, we should be as much obliged to love the enemies [whom] we are to unite against, as the friends of religion [whom] we are to unite with; since all partake equally in human nature. It must be a more special love that shall have the desired influence in the present case. We cannot be peculiarly endeared and united to some more than to others, upon a reason that is common to them with others. We are to love them that are “born of God,” and are his “children,” otherwise than “the children of men,” or such of whom it may be said, “They are of their father the devil;” them that appear to have been “partakers of a divine nature,” at another rate than them who have received a mere human, or also the diabolical, nature. (1 John v. 1.) Yet this peculiar love is not to be exclusive of the other which is common, but must suppose it, and be superadded to it, as the reason of it is superadded. For Christianity supposes humanity; and divine grace, human nature.

2. *Nor is it a love to Christians of this or that party or denomina-*

*tion only.*—That were as much unduly to straiten and confine it. The love that is owing to Christians as such, as it belongs to them *only*, so it belongs to *all* them who in profession and practice do own sincere and incorrupt Christianity. To limit our Christian love to a party of Christians truly so called, is so far from serving the purpose now to be aimed at, that it resists and defeats it; and, instead of a preservative union, infers most destructive divisions. It scatters what it should collect and gather: it is to love factiously and with an unjust love, that refuses to give indifferently to every one his due; for is there no love due to a disciple of Christ “in the name of a disciple?” It is founded in falsehood and a lie,—denies *them* to be of the Christian community *who* really are so. It presumes to remove the ancient land-marks, not civil, but sacred, and draws-on not the people’s curse only, but that of God himself. It is true (and who doubts it?) that I may and ought upon special reasons to love some more than others; as relation, acquaintance, obligation by favours received from them, more eminent degrees of true worth and real goodness: but that signifies nothing to the withholding of that love which is due to a Christian as such, as that also ought not to prejudice the love I owe to a man as he is a man.

Nor am I so promiscuously to distribute this holy love, as to place it at random upon every one that thinks it convenient for him to call himself a Christian, though I ought to love the very profession, while I know not who sincerely make it, and do plainly see that Jews and Pagans were never worse enemies to Christ and his religion than a great part of the Christian world. But let my apprehensions be once set right concerning the true essentials of Christianity, whether consisting in doctrinal or vital principles, then will my love be duly carried to all in whom they are found under one common notion, which I come actually to apply to this or that person as particular occasions do occur; and so shall always be in a preparation of mind actually to unite in Christian love with every such person, whensoever such occasions do invite me to it.

And do we now need to be told what such an impartial, truly Christian love would do to our common preservation, and to prevent the ruin of the Christian interest?

1. *How greatly would it contribute to the vigour of the Christian life!* —For so we should all equally “hold the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” (As afterwards in this chapter, verse 19.) Thus, (as it is in that other parallel text of scripture, Eph. iv. 15, 16,) “speaking the truth in love, we shall grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Obstructions that hinder the free circulation of blood and spirits, do not more certainly infer languishings in the natural body, than the want of such a diffusive love shuts up and

shrivels the destitute parts, and hinders the diffusion of a nutritive, vital influence, in the body of Christ.

2. *It would inspire Christians generally with a sacred courage and fortitude, when they should know and even feel themselves "knit together in love."*—How doth the revolt of any considerable part of an army discourage the rest, or if they be not entire and of a piece! Mutual love animates them, as nothing more [can do,] when they are prepared to live and die together, and love hath before joined [them] whom now their common danger also joins. They otherwise signify but as so many single persons, each one but caring and contriving how to shift for himself: love makes them significant to one another, so as that every one understands himself to be the common care of all the rest. It makes Christians the more resolute in their adherence to truth and goodness, when, from their not-doubted love, they are sure of the help, the counsels, and prayers of the Christian community, and apprehend [that] by their declining they shall grieve those whom they love, and who, they know, love them. If any imagine themselves intended to be given up as sacrifices to the rage of the common enemy, their hearts are the apter to sink, they are most exposed to temptations to prevaricate; and the rest will be apt to expect the like usage from them, if themselves be reduced to the like exigency, and be liable to the same temptations.

3. *It would certainly, in our present case, extinguish or abate the so contrary unhallowed fire of our anger and wrath toward one another.*—As the celestial beams do the baser culinary fire, which burns more fervently when the sun hath less power. Then would debates, if there must be any, be managed without intemperate heat. We should be remote from being angry that we cannot convey our own sentiments into another's mind; which when we are, our business is the more remote; we make ourselves less capable of reasoning aptly to convince, and (because anger begets anger, as love doth love) render the other less susceptible of conviction. Why are we yet to learn that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God?" What is gained by it? So little doth angry contention about small matters avail, that even they that happen to have the better cause lose by it, and their advantage cannot recompense the damage and hurt that ensues to the church and to themselves. Our famous Davenant,\* speaking of the noted controversy between Stephen bishop of Rome,— "who," he says, "as much as in him lay, did with a schismatical spirit tear the church,"—and Cyprian, who "with great lenity and Christian charity professes that he would not break the Lord's peace for diversity of opinion, nor remove any from the right of communion," concludes that "*erring* Cyprian deserved better of the church of Christ than *orthodox* Stephen." He thought *him* the schismatical *whom* he thought in the right, and that his orthodoxy, as it was accompanied, was more mischievous to the church than the other's error. Nor can a man do that hurt to others without suffering it more principally. The distemper of his own spirit, what can recom-

\* *Sentent. ad Durcum.*

pense ! and how apt is it to grow in him, and, while it grows in himself, to propagate itself among others ! Whereupon, if the want of love hinders the nourishment of the body, much more do the things which, when it is wanting, are wont to fill up its place. For as naturally as love begets love, so do wrath, envy, malice, calumny, beget one another, and spread a poison and virulency through the body, which necessarily wastes and tends to destroy it. How soon did the Christian church cease to be itself, and the early vigour of primitive Christianity degenerate into insipid, spiritless formality, when once it became contentious ! It broke into parties, sects multiplied, animosities grew high, and the grieved Spirit of love retired from it, who is grieved by nothing more than by "bitterness, wrath, anger," &c.; as the connexion of these two verses intimates, Eph. iv. 30, 31 : "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." And to the same purpose is that, 1 Peter ii. 1, 2 : "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." By this means, religion, once dispirited, loses its majesty and awfulness, and even tempts and invites the assaults and insultation of enemies.

4. *It would oblige us to all acts of mutual kindness and friendship.*—If such a love did govern in us, we should be always ready to serve one another in love, to bear each other's burdens, to afford our mutual counsel and help to one another, even in our private affairs, if called thereto ; especially in that which is our common concern,—the preserving and promoting [of] the interest of religion ; and, to our uttermost, strengthen each other's hands herein. It would engage us to a free, amicable conversation with one another upon this account ; would not let us do so absurd a thing as to confine our friendship to those of our own party, which we might as reasonably [do] to men of our own stature, or to those whose voice and hair and look and mien were likest our own. It would make us not be ashamed to be seen in each other's company, or be shy of owning one another. We should not be to one another as Jews and Samaritans, that had no dealing with one another, or as the poet notes they were to other nations : *Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti* : "Not so much as to show the way to one not of their religion." There would be no partition-wall through which love would not easily open a way of friendly commerce, by which we should insensibly slide, more and more, into one another's hearts. Whence also,

5. *Prejudices would cease, and jealousies concerning each other.*—A mutual confidence would be begotten. We should no more suspect one another of ill designs upon each other, than lest our right hand should wait an opportunity of cutting off the left. We should believe one another in our mutual professions, of whatsoever sort, both of kindness to one another, and that we really doubt and scruple the things which we say we do.

6. *This would hence make us earnestly covet an entire union in all the things wherein we differ, and contribute greatly to it.*—We are too prone many times to dislike things, for the disliked persons' sake who practise them; and a prevailing disaffection makes us unapt to understand one another, precludes our entrance into one another's mind and sense; which if love did once open, and inclined us more to consider the matters of difference themselves, than to imagine some reserved meaning and design of the persons that differ from us, it is likely we might find ourselves much nearer to one another than we did apprehend we were, and that it were a much easier step for the one side to go quite over to the other. But if that cannot be,

7. *It would make us much more apt to yield to one another, and abate all that ever we can, in order to as full an accommodation as is any way possible.*—That if we cannot agree upon either extreme, we might at least meet in the middle. It would cause an emulation, who should be larger in their grants to this purpose. As it was professed by Luther, when so much was done at Marpurgh toward an agreement between him and the Helvetians, that "he would not allow that praise to the other party, that they should be more desirous of peace and concord than he." Of which amicable conference, and of that afterwards at Wittenburg, and several other negotiations to that purpose, account is given by divers,\* and insisted on by some of our own great divines as precedential to the concord [which] they endeavoured between the Saxon and the Helvetian churches of later time; as bishop Morton, bishop Hall, bishop Davenant, in their several Sentences or Judgments written to Mr. Dury upon that subject. And indeed when I have read the pacific writings of those eminent worthies, for the composing of those differences abroad, I could not but wonder that the same peaceable spirit did not endeavour with more effect the composing of our own much lesser differences at home. But "the things of our peace" were, as they still are, "hid from our eyes," with the more visibly just severity, by how much they have been nearer us, and more obvious to the easy view of any but an averse eye.

It is not for us to prescribe, as was said, to persons that are now in so eminent stations as these were at that time. But may we not hope to find with such (and where should we rather expect to find it?) that compassion and mercifulness in imitation of the blessed Jesus, their Lord and ours, as to consider and study the necessities of souls in these respects, and at least willingly to connive at and very heartily approve some indulgences and abatements in the administrations of the inferior clergy, as they may not think fit themselves positively to order and enjoin? Otherwise, I believe, it could not but give some trouble to a conscientious conforming minister, if a sober, pious person, sound in the faith, and of a regular life, should tell him [that] he is willing to use his ministry in some of the ordinances of Christ, if only he would abate or dispense with some annexed ceremony, which in conscience he dare not use or admit of. I believe, it would

\* HOSPINIANI *Historia Sacramentaria*, THUANUS, &c.

trouble such a minister to deal with a person of this character as a Pagan, because of his scruple, and put him upon considering whether he ought not rather to dispense with man's rule, than with God's. I know what the same bishop Davenant hath expressly said,—that “he that believes the things contained in the Apostles' Creed, and endeavours to live a life agreeable to the precepts of Christ, ought not to be expunged from the roll of Christians, nor be driven from communion with the other members of any church whatsoever.”\* However, truly Christian love would do herein all that it can, supplying the rest by grief that it can do no more.

8. *It would certainly make us abstain from mutual censures of one another as insincere for our remaining differences.*—“Charity that thinks no evil,” would make us not need the reproof, Rom. xiv. 4: “Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?” The common aptness hereunto among us shows how little that divine principle rules in our hearts, that, in defiance of our rule, and the authority of the great God and our blessed Redeemer, to whom all judgment is committed, and who hath so expressly forbidden us to “judge, lest we be judged,” (Matt. vii. 1,) we give ourselves so vast a liberty, and set no other bounds to our usurped licence of judging, than nature hath set to our power of thinking; that is, think all the mischievous thoughts of them that differ from us that we know how to devise or invent; as if we would say, “Our thoughts,” and then, by an easy advance, “Our tongues, are our own: who is lord over us?” I animadvert not on this as the fault of one party, but wheresoever it lies;—as God knows how diffused a poison this is!—among them that are satisfied with the public constitutions toward them that dissent from them, and with these back again toward *them*, and with the several parties of both these toward one another. *This* uniting, knitting love would make us refrain,—not merely from the restraint of God's laws in this case, but from a benign disposition,—as that which the temper of our spirits would abhor from; so that such as are well content with the public forms and rites of worship, would have no inclination to judge them that apprehend not things with their understandings, nor relish with their taste, as persons that therefore have cut themselves off from Christ and the body of Christ. They might learn better from the Cassandrian moderation, and from the avowed sentiments of that man, † (whose temper is better to be liked than his terms of union,) who, speaking of such as, “being formerly rejected,” meaning the Protestants, “for finding fault with abuses in the church, had by the urgency of their conscience altered somewhat in the way of their teaching and the form of their service, and are therefore said to have fallen off from the church, and are numbered among heretics and schismatics: it is,” saith he, “to be inquired how rightly and justly this is determined of them. For there is to be considered, as to the church, the head and the body. From the head there is no departure but by doctrine disagreeable to Christ the Head. From the body

\* *Sentent. ad Duræum.*

† CASSANDER *De Officio pii ac publicæ Tranquillitatis verè amantis Viri.*

there is no departure by diversity of rites and opinions, but only by the defect of charity." So that this learned Romanist neither thinks them heretics that hold the Head, nor schismatics, for such differences as ours are, from the rest of the body, if love and charity toward them remain.

And, again : where this love remains and bears rule, it can as little be, that they who are unsatisfied with the way of worship that more generally obtains, should censure them that are satisfied as insincere, merely because of this difference. It cannot permit that we should think all the black thoughts we can invent of them ; as if, because they have not *our* consciences, they had none ; or, because they see not with *our* eyes, they were therefore both utterly and wilfully blind. To be here more particular : the most, you know, are for the public way of worship ; and, of these, some are for it as tolerable only, others as the best way, and think all other ways of worshipping God in assemblies (being forbidden as they think by a just law) sinful. Others, dissenting, are of several sorts. Some think the conformity required of ministers sinful, because of previous terms required of them which they judge to be so ; but not that which is required of the people. Of which sort, some that think it not simply unlawful, find it, however, less edifying to them ; and though they can therefore partake in it at some times, think themselves more ordinarily bound to attend such other means as they find more conducing to their spiritual profit and advantage ; judging they have an undoubted right from Christ, anciently allowed from age to age in the best times of the Christian church, and never justly taken from them, of choosing the pastors to whose ordinary care and conduct they shall commit their souls. Others judge the public way simply unlawful, and therefore judge themselves bound to decline it wholly ; and are the more averse to any participation in it, as apprehending it to have no suitableness or aptitude to profit their souls ; wherein they are the more confirmed, that they believe not [that] God will ever bless the means which he hath not appointed. Now, how apt all these are unto very severe censures of one another, *he* knows not the age *that* is ignorant : one sort censuring the other as humoursome, factious, schismatical ; the others, them back again as formal, popishly affected, destitute of any savour of spiritual things, having nothing of God in them, or of the life and power of godliness.

Now is this suitable to the love that should rule among Christians, or to the reverence we ought to have for that authority that forbids such judging ? It ought to be considered, both that all have not *the same understanding*, nor *the same gust and relish* of things.

(1.) *Not the same understanding.*—And therefore, where conscience hath the same rule, it cannot have with every one the same actual latitude, that rule being so very diversely understood ; which different estimate of consciences the apostle hath express reference to in that large and most healing discourse of his, Rom. xiv. : " One," saith he, " believeth that he may eat all things : another, who is weak, eateth herbs." (Verse 2.) Nor doth he, in reference to such doubted things,



determine what all should do or not do, by particular rules concerning every such case that was then depending,—which, it seems, he reckoned was not necessary,—or that might afterwards fall out, which was little to be expected. But he lays down one general rule against judging one another, which he presses with that authority and such awful reasons as might make a Christian heart tremble to be guilty of it.

And in reference to the mentioned differences among ourselves, as well as others no nearer to the substantial and vitals of our religion, there is somewhat else to be done than to conclude against a man's sincerity because of such differing sentiments and practices, and which certainly would be done, if truly Christian love or even justice itself did take place as they ought; that is, it would be considered what these several differing parties have to say for themselves, what reasons they may allege, and whether, though they be not sufficient to justify their several opinions and practices, (as all cannot be in the right,) they be not such as by which a conscientious man, a sincere fearer of God, may be swayed, so as to take the way which he is found in by the ducture of an upright, though misguided, conscience, and not as being under the government of depraved, vicious inclination.

As those that can and do yield the conformity that is required of ministers, though perhaps they wish some things altered,—why may it not be supposed they sincerely think, though it should be mistakingly, that the things more liable to exception are capable of a sense wherein they are not unlawful; and, not being so, they think themselves bound to take the opportunity which they this way obtain of doing good to the souls of men? Others, also, apprehending it lawful,—how possible is it to them from a certain reverence they have for antiquity, and for our own first Reformers, to think it best and fittest to be continued! Nor is it unsupposable that many of the laity may, upon the same grounds, have the same apprehensions. Again: divers in the ministry judging the terms unlawful upon which only they can have liberty for the public exercise of it,—is it not possible they may, with a sincere conscience, think themselves not therefore obliged wholly to renounce their calling and office, to which they were duly set apart, and had by their own solemn vow given up themselves; but to do so much of the work of it as they can have opportunity for?

And whereas, of the people, some may think the public forms and ways of worship not simply unlawful, but find them less edifying to them than other means which the providence of God affords them; and therefore do more ordinarily attend those, though sometimes also the other; why should it be thought, on the one hand or the other, that it is so little possible they should be guided by reasonable and conscientious considerations herein, that nothing but corrupt inclination must be understood to govern them? Is it not supposable that, accounting the public worship substantially agreeable to divine institution, though in some accidentals too disagreeable, they may think there is more to incline them at some times to attend it, than

totally to disown it? For what worship is there on earth that is in all things incorrupt? And they may apprehend it fit to testify their union with the sincere Christians that may be stately under that form, and especially in a time when the contest is so high in the world between them that profess the substance of Reformed Christianity, and them that have so much deformed it; and may conceive it becoming them at any time to express their own unconfinedness to a party, and to use that liberty which, they think, should not be judged by another man's conscience, which yet they would have regard to, where there are not greater reasons to preponderate. They are, indeed, under a disadvantage with them that are apt to use a greater liberty in their censures than they do in their practice in these matters, when it falls out that their partial compliance is the means of their security from penalties; and *their* disadvantage is greater, *whose* judgment to this purpose hath not been formerly declared and made known. But *they* for shame ought to be silent *whose* total compliance gains them not only immunity, but great emoluments; and that, perhaps, yielded, not according to a former, but, at that time when the opportunity occurred, a new and altered, judgment. They may, however, know themselves to be moved by greater ends than secular interest; and so may these [whom] we now speak of; and yet may think the preservation of their earthly portion, where-with they are to glorify God in this world, not too little an end to be designed and endeavoured by lawful means. It were a very uncouth and sinful thing to do a spiritual action for a carnal end: but if the thing sincerely and supremely designed be the glory of God, that is the most spiritual end. If it be not, that ought to be changed which is wrong, not that which is right; the unlawful end, not the lawful action, if it be lawful. If it be not, their good end will not justify their action, but it will their sincerity, which is all that this discourse intends.

And then, for such as decline the public worship totally, as judging it simply unlawful: is it not possible they may be led to that practice by somewhat else than humour and factious inclination? Have they not that to say, which may at least *seem* solid and strong to a conscientious man?—"How jealous God did heretofore show himself in all the affairs of his worship! how particular in the appointment even of the smallest things [that] he would have appertain to it! How unsuitable multiplied ceremonies are to the mature state of the church! and how sensibly burdensome they were to the disciples of the first age, as 'a yoke' not to be borne! and that therefore God himself, when the season of maturity and the fulness of time came, thought fit to abrogate those of his own former appointment, with no (probable) design to allow men the liberty of substituting others in their room." Why is it not to be thought that the fear of the great God withholds them from doing what they judge would offend him? and that, if they err, it is for fear of erring? Why can nothing be thought-on whereto to impute their practice, but peevish humour?

Especially if that be considered, which is common to these two last-mentioned sorts of men,—that they sensibly find other means more edifying to them, or expect them only to be so, if the other be thought unlawful. If they be thought merely lawful, and such as may therefore be used upon weighty reasons at some times, but are found less edifying, who can doubt but I ought to use for my soul, at least in an ordinary course, the aptest means that I can ordinarily have for the promoting [of] its edification and salvation? Do we not reckon ourselves to owe so much even to our bodies? And what is another man's opinion to signify against my sense and constant experience? Is there not such a thing as a mental idiosyncrasy, or "peculiarity of temper," as well as a bodily; and whereto what is most agreeable, any man that is not destitute of ordinary understanding is the fittest judge himself? as every one, that is not a mere fool, is so much a physician as to know what diet suits him best.

And if it be said against the former of these two sorts, "Are they not at all times obliged to use the means which are most edifying?" they may say, At all times when they have nothing to outweigh their own present edification. But it is not impossible that a conscientious judgment may esteem all the fore-mentioned considerations, concurring, to be of more weight than the greater advantage hoped to be gained in that one hour. Nor need any man be ashamed professedly to avow that which may seem the least of them,—the saving of himself from temporal ruin; for he is to be accountable to God for what portion he hath intrusted him with of the good things of this life, and is not to throw it away without sufficient cause. Who sees not, that more is allowed and ordinarily done without scruple or censure upon the like account? as, to omit the hearing of a sermon, if at that time one's house be on fire, yea, or if it be to save my neighbour's, or the plucking of an ox or sheep out of a ditch on the Lord's day, when I might have been employed at that time in the solemn worship of God to my spiritual advantage. A mere commutation unto less advantage, upon an equally or more urgent necessity, is less than omission; and they that shall have learned, as our Saviour directs, "what that means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice," will "not condemn the guiltless." (Matt. xii. 7.)

Only, such are concerned first to search well and be satisfied concerning the lawfulness of their action in itself, that they do it not with a self-condemning conscience, nor with a groundlessly self-justifying one; and then especially to see to it that their end be right,—God's interest, not their own, otherwise than in a due, entire subordination to His. We can never act innocently or comfortably in any thing, till He be in every thing more absolutely our "all in all;" and have much more reason to be scrupulous, and, if others knew our hearts, were much more liable to censure, that, in our common affairs, He is so much forgotten, that we live not more entirely to Him; which we little animadvert upon, and are very officious to cast notes out of our brother's eye, when this beam is in our own.

The design of mentioning these hints of reasons for so different judgments and practices, is not to show which are strongest and ought to prevail, which cannot be the business of so short a discourse as this and so much of another nature; but to show that while there is any thing colourable to be alleged for this or that way, true Christian love, compassion of *common human* frailty, and a duly humble sense of a man's *own*, would oblige him to think that conscience toward God may have a greater hand (though, with some, misguided itself) in guiding men the different ways they take, than is commonly thought; and to consider, "Though such and such reasons seem not weighty to me, they may to some others, who are as much afraid of sinning against God as I; and, perhaps, their understandings [are] as good in other matters as mine." It would be considered, how really difficult the controversy is about the ceremonies, and some other parts of conformity. Perhaps, few metaphysical questions are disputed with more subtily than that controversy is managed with, by archbishop Whitgift, bishop Morton, Dr. Burgess, Dr. Ames, Cartwright, Calverwood, and others; and how very easily possible and pardonable is it to unlearned persons, or of weaker intellectuals, being obliged in order to their practice to give a judgment in reference to these things one way or other, to judge amiss! Why should we expect every sincerely pious man to be able to hit the very point of truth and right in matters that belong, as bishop Davenant once said in another case, *non ad filem fundamentalem, sed ad peritiam theologicam; et fortassè ne ad hanc quidem, sed aliquando ad curiositatem theologorum*,—"not to the foundation of our faith, but to the skill of divines; and perhaps not to this neither, but sometimes only to their curiosity?" What were to be done in reference to so nicely disputable things, made part of the terms of Christian communion, is more the matter of our wish than hope, till, by a gracious influence, God better men's minds, or, by a more deeply-felt necessity, bring us to understand what is to be done. Our case is ill when only *vesatio dat intellectum*, when "nothing but sorrow and suffering will make us wise," which is very likely, from the righteous hand of God, to be our common lot. In the mean time, it is hard to think that *he* cannot be a sincerely pious man whose understanding is not capable of so difficult things, as to make a certainly right judgment about them. *In absoluto et facili stat æternitas*;\* and why should not the communion of persons going into a blessed eternity have the same measure?

And beside the different size and capacity of men's understandings, and consequently of their conscientious determinations,

(2.) There are also as *differing relishes* of these things, which Christian love would oblige a man to consider with equanimity, so as thereupon to refrain hard censures. All good men have not the same relish of the various forms and modes of dispensing the truths and ordinances of Christ. Some of our suffering brethren in queen Mary's days are said to have found great spiritual refreshing by the Common

\* "Eternity consists of that which is completely free and devoid of difficulty."—EDIT.

Prayer; and in our own days some may profess to have their hearts warmed, their affections raised and elevated, by it. They are no rule to us; but it would less become us hereupon to suspect *their* sincerity, than *our own*. Others, again, cannot relish such modes of worship, when, in the ministry of such as use them not, they find a very sensible delight and savour.

And this, by the way, shows the great difference between such things as have their evidence and goodness from God himself, and those that borrow their recommendableness only from human device. All good men, in all the times and ages of the Christian church, have a constant value and love for the great substantials of religion, which have in them that inward evidence and excellency as commands and captivates a rectified mind and heart; whereas the mere external forms of it, the outward dress and garb, are variously esteemed and despised, liked and disliked, by the same sort of men, that is, by very sincere lovers of God, not only in divers times and ages, but even in the same time. How different hath the esteem been of the liturgic forms with them who bear the same mind, full of reverence and love, toward religion itself! As that habit is thought decent at one time, which in another is despicably ridiculous; whereas a person in himself comely and graceful, is always accounted so by all and at all times.

Now this various gust and relish cannot but have influence, more remotely, upon the conscientious determination of our choice, concerning our usual way of worshipping God. For how should I edify by what is disgustful to me? Though it be true that our spiritual edification lies more in the informing of our judgments and confirming our resolutions, than in the gusts and relishes of affection; yet who sees not that these are of great use even to the other? and that it is necessary that at least there be not a disgust or antipathy? What is constantly less grateful, will certainly be less nutritive: *that* is usually necessary to nourishment; though, alone, it be not sufficient. As it is in the matter of bodily repasts: who can without great prejudice be bound to eat always of a food that he disrelishes, though he may without much inconvenience, for a valuable reason, do it at some time?

And they that think [that] all this alleged difference is but fancy, show [that] they understand little of human nature, and less of religion: though they may have that in themselves, too, which they do not so distinctly reflect upon, even that peculiar gust and relish which they make so little account of. For have they not as great a disgust of the others' way, as *they* have of theirs? Would they not as much regret to be tied to *theirs*? Have they not as great a liking of their own? And doth not common experience show, that there are as different mental relishes as bodily? How comes one man in the matters of literature to favour metaphysics, another mathematics, another history, and the like? and no man's genius can be forced in these things. Why may there not be the like difference in the matters of religion? And I would fain know what that religion is worth that is without a gust and savour, that is insipid and unpleasant,

much more that would, being used in a constant course, this or that way, be nauseous and offensive.

If, indeed, men nauseate that which is necessary for them,—the gospel, for instance, or religion itself,—that is certainly such a distemper as, if the grace of God overcome it not, will be mortal to them; and we are not to think of relieving them by withdrawing the offending object, which itself must be the means of their cure. But is there any parity between the substance of religion, which is of God's appointing, and the superadded modes of it, that are of our own?

Upon the whole, nothing is more agreeable, either to this divine principle of love, nothing (within our compass) more conducive to our end,—the ceasing of our differences, (which are most likely to die and vanish by neglect,) or their ceasing to be inconvenient to us,—than to bear calm and placid minds toward one another under them, to banish all hard thoughts because of them. If I can contribute no way else to union, from this holy dictate and law of the Spirit of love, I can at least abstain from censuring my fellow-Christians. It is the easiest thing in the world, one would think, not to do; especially not to do a thing of itself ungrateful to a well-tempered mind; and a great privilege not to be obliged to judge another man's conscience and practice, when it is so easy to misjudge and do wrong; most of all, when the matter wherein I presume to sit in judgment upon another, is of so high a nature as the posture of his heart God-ward, —a matter peculiarly belonging to another tribunal, of divine cognizance, and which we all confess to be only known to God himself. And if I would take upon me to conclude a man insincere and a hypocrite, only because he is not of my mind in these smaller things that are controverted among us, how would I form my argument? "No one can with sincerity differ from that man whose understanding is so good and clear, as to apprehend all things with absolute certainty just as they are." And then go on to assume: (and a strange assuming it must be!) "But *my* understanding is so good and clear as," &c. It is hard to say whether the uncharitableness of the one assertion, or the arrogance of the other, is greater; and whether both be more immoral or absurd. But the impiety is worst of all; for how insolently doth such a man take upon him to make a new gospel, and other terms of salvation than God hath made, when his sentiments and determinations of things which God hath never made necessary, must be the measure and rule of life and death to men! How is the throne and judicial power of the Redeemer usurped, which he hath founded in his blood! "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." (Rom. xiv. 4, 9—11.) One would think, they that lay no

restraint upon themselves in this matter of judging their brethren upon every light occasion; reckon [that] this chapter came by chance into the Bible; and that our Lord spake himself, at random, words that had no meaning, when he said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," &c. (Matt. vii. 1.) What man, that fears God, would not dread to be the framer of a new gospel and of new terms of salvation? It is a great solace, indeed, to a sincere mind, but implies a severe rebuke in the mean time to such a self-assuming, censorious spirit, that it may in such a case be so truly said, "It is a much easier thing to please God than man."

They that find this measure, will have the better of it, if they can abstain from retaliating, whenas the reason of it is the same on both sides. For they may say, "You are to remember, I differ no more from you in this matter than you do from me; and if I judge not you about it, what greater reason have you to judge me?" And they have little reason to value such a man's judgment concerning their duty in a doubtful matter, who cannot see his own in so plain a case. The matter for which they judge me may be very doubtful; but nothing can be plainer than that they ought not so to judge.

9. *A due Christian love would oblige us, after competent endeavours of mutual satisfaction about the matters wherein we differ, to forbear further urging of one another concerning them.*—Which urging may be two ways: either by application to our *affections*, or to our *reason and judgment*.

Some, perhaps, find it more suitable to their own temper and measure of understanding and conscience, to go the former way; and only *vehemently persuade* to do the thing wherein the other shall comply with them, and in some sort justify the course which they have taken; without regard to the others' conscience, press them, right or wrong, to fall-in with them; sometimes labouring to work upon their kindness by flattery, sometimes upon their fear by threats and menaces. Sincere love would certainly abhor to do thus. Would it let me violate another's conscience any way? The love I bear to a fellow-Christian, if it be true, having for its measure that wherewith I love myself, would no more let me do it than hurt the apple of mine own eye. An inspirited, waking conscience is as tender a thing, and capable of a worse sort of hurt.

If some have *more latitude* than I, and think [that] what they *may* do in present circumstances, so far as they may, they *must*; would it not be the dictate of love patiently to admit it, especially when it comes to suffering? For, let me put my own soul in his soul's stead, and would I be willing to suffer upon another man's conscience, and not upon my own, and forfeit the consolations which in a suffering condition belong to them who "for conscience toward God endure grief?" Would I, if I loved them, be content [that] they had the grief, and did want the consolation? There will be still found in a state of suffering somewhat that will prove a common cause to good men, wherein they will most entirely agree, whatsoever smaller things they may differ in: as the pious bishops, Ridley and Hooper, well

agreed upon a martyrdom at the stake in the same important cause, who before had differed somewhat angrily about some ceremonies. Concerning which difference, how pathetic is the letter of the former of these to the other, when both were prisoners,—the one at Oxford, the other at London,—on the same account!—"But now, my dear brother," saith he, "forasmuch as we thoroughly agree and wholly consent together in those things which are the grounds and substantial points of our religion, against the which the world so furiously rageth in these our days; howsoever in time past, by certain by-matters and circumstances of religion, your wisdom and my simplicity, I grant, have a little jarred, each of us following the abundance of his own sense and judgment; now, I say, be you assured, that even with my whole heart, God is my witness, in the bowels of Christ, I love you in the truth and for the truth's sake, which abideth in us, and, as I am persuaded, shall by the grace of God abide in us for evermore." \*

Again: if others have *less latitude*, it would be far from us to add to the affliction [which] they are liable to upon that very account, by a vexatious urging and importuning them; especially to do it with insulting threats and menaces, and labour to overawe their brethren, against their consciences, into the embracing of their sentiments and way. Is it possible a Christian should not understand how necessary it is to every one's duty and peace, that he exactly follow that direction of the apostle's, and esteem it most sacred: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" (Rom. xiv. 5;) and that we firmly resolve never to do any thing with regret or a misgiving heart? At least, not against a prevailing doubt; for in very doubtful cases to be rid of all *formido oppositi*, or "suspicion that the matter may be otherwise," is perhaps impossible to me; but, to do any thing against the preponderating inclination of my judgment and conscience, were great wickedness, and such as, if it were known, would make me unfit for any communion whatsoever. And I do here appeal to you who most severely blame any of us for our dissent from you, whether if we should thus declare to you,—that "it is truly against our consciences to communicate with you upon your terms; we believe we should greatly offend God in it, and draw upon us his displeasure: but yet, to please you, and prevent our temporal inconvenience or ruin, we will do it:" I appeal to you, I say, whether we should not hereby make ourselves incapable of any Christian communion with you or any others? This is, then, the plain state of the case, and you do even put these words into our mouths: "If we follow the dictate of our consciences, we must decline you; if we go against it, you must decline us, supposing we declare it; if we declare it not, we have nothing to qualify us for your communion but hypocrisy and dissimulation. And what do you gain by such an accession to the church? You have gained, in any such case, not half the man,—the outside, the carcass only or the shadow of the man; that is, when you have debauched our consciences, when you have spoiled us, and made us

\* Fox's "Acts and Monuments."



worth nothing, then we are yours ; wherein you show nothing of love either to us or to yourselves."

Others, again, that are themselves men of more reason and conscience, take the somewhat more manly and Christian course ; and bend themselves by argument to *convince the reason* and satisfy the consciences of such as differ from them. But herein also there may be an excess, that is unprofitable and grievous to those they would work upon by this course, and from which, therefore, Christian love, studying the peace and quiet of their brethren, would restrain them. I say, from the ungrateful excess of such an endeavour : for I would fain know, can there not herein be an excess ? Is it not supposable that they who differ from me in such lesser things, may be some time arrived to a settlement and fixedness of judgment in them, as well as I ? Is it not possible, they have weighed the moments of things as much as I have done ? Is such a cause infinite ? Is it not possible that all may have been said in it which is to be said, and the matter have been sifted to the very bran ? so that all my further arguings may serve but to argue my vain self-confidence, or aboundingness in my own sense, as if all wisdom were to die with me. Or what, if they serve at length but to show the incapacity of the subject to be wrought upon, and the different complexion of *his* mind [whom] I am treating with ? All cannot receive all things : we cannot make our sentiments enter with every one. Perhaps they show the weakness of his understanding ; and then hath that direction of the apostle no authority with us ?—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." (Rom. xiv. 1.) He whom we account our weaker brother and of slower understanding, must be received, (not cast out of our communion,) and because "God himself hath received him," as verse 3. As if he had said, "Is he thought fit for God's communion, notwithstanding his unsatisfied scruple ? and is he unfit for yours ?" And he is not to be vexed and importuned with continual disputation, if that apostolical precept be of any value with us. Sometimes, at least, we should think, "We have tried in such a case as far as is fit, and driven the nail as far as it will go." Is it not possible [that] such a matter may be agitated beyond the value of it, and that more time and pains may be spent upon it than it is worth ? The obscurity and perplexity of the controversy show the less necessity : things most necessary are most plain. Must we always, in matters of confessedly little moment, be inculcating the same thing, rolling endlessly the returning stone, and obtruding our offensive *crambe* ?

Perhaps, as no good is done, we do much hurt. When is the saw of disputation long drawn about one thing without ill effects ? Reason, having at length spent its strength, grows (as weak people are) peevish and froward, degenerates into anger and clamour. In greater differences than our present ones, between the Protestant churches abroad, some of more prudent and peaceable minds have earnestly pressed the laying aside of disputes, and putting a period by consent to their theological wars. *Solitarum disputationum labyrinthos no*

*ingredi quidem conentur*, said a great divine in his days in reference to those controversies that he would have had composed by an amicable, brotherly conference.\* And that king of Navarre, who, at that time, seemed highly concerned for the peace and welfare of the Reformed churches, (afterwards Henry IV. of France,) in his negotiations with divers princes to that purpose, gave special instructions to his ambassador much to insist upon this: "That (till other remedies could be used) an end might be put to bitter contentions and disputations; that Christian love and a brotherly union might be restored."† And who sees not how much this would conduce to peace and union in our case too? who sees it not that is a hearty lover of peace, and that is not intent upon continuing and keeping a-foot a controversy, not so much as a means to that, but as an end, contending for contention's sake, and as a thing which he loves and delights in for itself? I am sure, love to our brethren would not let us continually molest and importune them to no purpose. And it is fit, they that urge to us, "These are little things," which they importune us about, should know [that] we have great things to mind, of eternal concernment to us; and that we cannot be always at leisure to mind little things, beyond the proportion of our little time on earth, and the little value of the things themselves.

10. *Sincere love, restored and exercised more among us, would certainly make us forbear reviling and exposing one another, and the industrious seeking one another's ruin.*—For such as can allow themselves to do any thing that hath this tendency,—not to preserve public order, but to gratify their private ill-will,—not in a sudden heat and passion, but deliberately, and so as to pursue a formed design to this purpose; if such men were capable of being reasoned with, (though it were to as good purpose to talk to a storm, or reason with a whirlwind or a flame of fire,) I would ask them: "What! are you altogether unatonable? Will nothing divert you from this pursuit? If any thing, what will? What more gentle thing than our destruction do you seek, or will content you? Is it our communion? And do you so recommend yourselves? Do you not know, Cain is said to have been 'of that wicked one, who slew his brother?' and that 'whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him?' (1 John iii. 12, 15.) Is it not said, that such 'are of their father the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do, who was a murderer from the beginning?' (John viii. 44.) And in the fore-mentioned 1 John iii. 10: 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not is brother.' If all were like you, under what notion were we to unite with them? The apostle tells us: 'I would not that ye should

\* DAVENANTICUS, *Sentent. ad Duram*. "Let them not even attempt to enter the labyrinths of their accustomed disputes."—EDIT. † *Ut acerbis illis contentionibus, quibus et verbis rixati sunt inter se theologi et scriptis, et ejusmodi disputationibus, silentio tandem finis imponatur: ut Christiana charitas et animorum fraternam conjunctionem revoletur.*—Mandata HENRICI REGIS NAVAR. *Jacobo Sigurio, Legato suo, &c., apud GOLDASTICUM.*

have fellowship with devils: ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.' (1 Cor. x. 20, 21.) And in good earnest, incarnate devils (though that text do not directly speak of such) have too much of devil in them to be participants in a communion that can seem desirable, or is likely to be grateful, to serious Christians." I must avow it to all the world,—it is not this or that external form [which] I so much consider in the matter of Christian union and communion, as what spirit reigns in them with whom I would associate myself. How can I endure to approach those holy mysteries, wherein all are to "drink into one Spirit," and declare their union with the God of love, with the Emmanuel, God most nearly approaching us, "God with us," collecting and gathering us in unto Him as our common centre, whence the blessed Spirit of holy love is to diffuse itself through the whole body, all enlivened by that Spirit, and formed by it unto all kindness, benignity, goodness, and sweetness? With what significancy can I do so, (though I were never so well satisfied with the external forms and modes myself,) if it be apparent, I say, if apparent, [that] I must cast-in my lot and join myself with them (were they generally such) whose souls are under the dominion of the quite contrary spirit, that fills them with malignity, with mischievous dispositions and purposes, toward many a sincere lover of God that cannot be satisfied with those forms and modes, and who decline them only from a sense of duty to God, and a fear of offending against the high authority of their blessed, glorious Redeemer?

I know, many are apt to justify themselves in their animosity and bitterness of spirit toward others, upon a pretence that *they* bear the same disaffected mind toward them. But beside that it is the most manifest and indefensible injustice, if they charge the innocent or such as they are not sure are guilty, if their own wrath and enmity be so potent in them as to enable their tainted, vicious imagination to create its object, or so to disguise and falsely clothe it as to render it such to themselves, as whereupon they may more plausibly pour out their fury; I say, beside that, how contrary is this vindictive spirit to the rules and spirit of the Christian religion! Is this to "love our enemies, to bless them that curse us and despitefully use us," &c.? How unlike the example of our blessed Lord, when, even in dying agonies, he breathed forth these words and his soul almost at once: "Father, forgive them," &c.; or of the holy martyr Stephen: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" How unlike is that aptness to the retaliating of injuries, to the Christian temper which the renowned Calvin discovers in an epistle to Bullinger, speaking of Luther's severity toward him!—"If Luther a thousand times," saith he, "call me devil, I will acknowledge him for a famous servant of God:" which passage both bishop Morton and bishop Davenant magnify him for; and the former saith, He herein spake "so calmly, so placidly, so indulgently, as if it were not a man, but humanity itself, that uttered the words."

Yea, and such retaliation is what Paganism itself hath declaimed against. A noted philosopher urges *that* against it that one would think should not need to be suggested to Christians; somewhat so prudential as might not only work upon the principle of love to others, but even that of self-love:—that then “the evil must perpetually circulate, and so must again and again return upon ourselves;”\* as indeed if that must be the measure,—to revile them that revile us, and “render evil for evil, railing for railing;” (1 Peter ii. 23; iii. 9.)—we should never have done. It were a course which, once begun, could by that rule never find an end.

This, then, is the first part of the answer to the proposed question, *What may be most hopefully done, &c.?* The endeavour of having our hearts knit together in love would surely do much toward it. And this is agreeable to any the most private capacity. No man can pretend his sphere is too narrow, if his soul be not, for the exercise of love toward fellow-Christians. And I hope it is agreeable to all our principles: sure, no man will say it is against his conscience to love his brother.

And the same must be said of,

II. That other expedient, *the endeavour to have our souls possessed with a more clear, efficacious, practical faith of the gospel*; which was to make the other part of the answer to our question. And though this is the more important part, it is also so very evident, that we do not need to make this discourse swell to a bulk too unproportionable to the rest [which] it is to be joined with, by speaking largely to it.

Although we have not the name of faith in this text, we have the thing. It is not named, but it is described, so as that it may easily be understood, both *what it is*, and *how necessary to our purpose*.

1. *What it is*, or what measure and degree of it, that would be of so great use in such a case, we are told with great emphasis:—the “riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.” Such as whereby,

(1.) *Our understandings are duly enlightened*, so as mentally to entertain aright the doctrine of the gospel; that is, (i.) *Distinctly to apprehend the meaning and design* of this mysterious revelation of God in Christ; (ii.) *And to be fully assured of the truth of it*.

(2.) Such, again, as whereby *our hearts are overcome*, so as practically and vitally to receive it; that is, to acknowledge, receive, resign, intrust, and subject ourselves unto God in Christ, revealed in it.

2. *And of how vast importance* this is toward our establishment, the confirming, fortifying, and uniting of our hearts, and our joint preservation in our Christian state,—the main thing we are to design, and be solicitous for,—we may see in these particulars:—

(1.) *Hereby we should apprehend the things to be truly great wherein we are to unite*.—That union is not like to be firm and lasting, the centre whereof is a trifle; it must be somewhat that is of

\* MAXIMUS TYRIUS, *Dissert.* ii.

itself apt to attract and hold our hearts strongly to it. To attempt with excessive earnestness an union in external formalities, that have not a value and goodness in themselves, when the labour and difficulty is so great, and the advantage so little; how hopeless and insignificant would it be! "The mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ," how potently and constantly attractive would it be, if aright understood and acknowledged! Here, we should understand, is our life and our all.

(2.) *Hereby we should, in comparison, apprehend all things else to be little.*—And so our differences about little things would languish and vanish. We should not only know, but consider and feelingly apprehend, that we agree in far greater things than we differ in; and thence be more strongly inclined to hold together by the things wherein we agree, than to contend with one another about the things wherein we differ.

(3.) *Hereby our religion would revive, and become a vital, powerful thing, and consequently more grateful to God and awful to men.*

(i.) *More grateful to God:* who is not pleased with the stench of carcasses, or with the dead shows of religion, instead of the living substance. We should hereupon not be deserted of the Divine Presence, which, we cannot but reckon, will retire when we entertain him but with insipid formalities. What became of the Christian interest in the world, when Christians had so sensibly diverted from minding the great things of religion to little minute circumstances, about which they affected to busy themselves, or to the pursuit of worldly advantages and delights?

(ii.) *More awful to men:* They who are tempted to despise the faint, languid appearances of an impotent, inefficacious, spiritless religion, discern a majesty in that which is visibly living, powerful, and productive of suitable fruits. Who that shall consider the state of the Christian church, and the gradual declining of religion for that three hundred years from Constantine's time to that of Phocas, but shall see cause at once to lament the sin and folly of men, and adore the righteous severity of God? For as Christians grew gradually to be loose, wanton, sensual; and their leaders, contentious, luxurious, covetous, proud, ambitious, affectors of domination; so was the Christian church gradually forsaken of the Divine Presence. Inasmuch as that at the same time when Boniface obtained from Phocas the title of "universal bishop," in defiance of the severe sentence of his predecessor Gregory the Great, sprang up the dreadful delusion of Mahomet;\* and so spread itself to this day, through Asia, Africa, and too considerable a part of Europe, that where Christians were twenty or thirty to one, there was now scarce one Christian to twenty or thirty Mahometans or grosser Pagans. And what between the Mahometan infatuation and the Popish tyranny,—good Lord, what is Christendom become! when, by the one, the very name is lost; and, by the other, little else left but the name.

(4.) *Hereby we shall be enabled most resolvedly to suffer, being called*

\* BREWEROOD'S "Inquiries."

to it.—When it is for the great things of the gospel, “the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,” clearly and with assurance understood and acknowledged. Such a faith will not be without its pleasant relishes. It is an uncomfortable thing to suffer either for the mere spiritless, uncertain, inoperative notions and opinions, or for the unenlivened outward forms of religion, that we never felt to do us good, in which we never tasted sweetness or felt power, that we were really nothing ever the better for. But who will hesitate at suffering for so great things as the substantial of the gospel, which he hath clearly understood, whereof he is fully assured, and which he hath practically acknowledged and embraced, so as to feel the energy and power of them, and relish their delicious sweetness in his soul? And though by such suffering he himself perish from off this earth, his religion lives, is spread the more in the present age, and propagated to after-ages: so seminal and fruitful a thing is the blood of martyrs, as hath always been observed.

And as such a faith of the mystery of the gospel appears to have this tendency to the best, firmest, and most lasting union among Christians, and the consequent preservation of the Christian interest, this mystery being more *generally* considered only; so this tendency of it would be more distinctly seen, if we should consider the more eminent and remarkable *parts* of it. *The mystery of the Redeemer’s person*: the Emmanuel, God uniting himself with the nature of man. *His office*: a reconciler of God and man to each other. *His death*: as a propitiatory sacrifice to “slay all enmity.” *His victory and conquest over it*: wherein is founded his universal empire over all. *His triumphant entrance into heaven*: whither he is to collect all that ever loved, trusted, and obeyed him; to dwell and be conversant together in his eternal love and praises. How directly do all these tend to endear and bind the hearts and souls of Christians to God, and Him, and one another, in everlasting bonds!

Thus, then, we have the answer to our question in the two parts of the text: the former pointing out to us the subjects of our union, with the uniting principle by which they are to be combined with one another; the other, the centre of it, with the uniting principle whereby they are all to be united in that centre.

#### USE.

And what now remains but that we lament the decay of these two principles, and, to our uttermost, endeavour the revival of them?

1. *We have great cause to lament their decay.*—For how visible is it, and how destructive to the common truly Christian interest! It was once the usual cognizance of those of this holy profession, “See how these Christians *love* one another, and even refuse not to die for each other!” Now it may be, “How do they hate, and are like to die and perish by the hands of, one another!” Our Lord himself gave it them to be their distinguishing character: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Good Lord, what are they now to be known by?

And what a cloudy, wavering, uncertain, lank, spiritless thing is the *faith* of Christians in this age become! How little are the ascertaining grounds of it understood, or endeavoured to be understood! Most content themselves to profess it only as the religion of their country, and which was delivered to them by their forefathers; and so are Christians but upon the same terms as other nations are Mahometans or more gross Pagans, as a worthy writer some time since took notice.\* How few make it their business to see things with their own eyes, to "believe and be sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!" How far are we from "the riches of the full assurance of understanding!" How little practical and governing is the faith of the most! How little doth it import of an "acknowledgment of the mystery of God," namely, "of the Father, and of Christ!" How little effectual is it! which it can be but in proportion to the grounds upon which it rests. When the gospel is "received, not as the word of man, but of God, it works effectually in" them that so believe it. (1 Thess. ii. 13.)

2. *Let us endeavour the revival of these principles.*—This is that in reference whereto we need no human laws. We need not edicts of princes to be our warrant for this practice, loving one another, and cleaving with a more grounded, lively faith to God and his Christ. Here is no place for scruple of conscience in this matter. And as to this *mutual* love: what, if others will not do their parts to make it so? What! shall we only love them that love us, and be fair to them that are fair to us, salute them that salute us? "Do not even the publicans the same? What then do we more than others?" as was the just expostulation of our Saviour upon this supposition. (Matt. v. 47.)

And let us endeavour the more thorough, deep radication of our faith, that it may be more lively and fruitful; which this apostle, you see, not forgetting his scope and aim, further presses in the following verses, testifying his joy for what he understood there was of it among these Christians: "Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ;" (Col. ii. 5;) and exhorting them to pursue the same course: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." (Verses 6, 7.)

And what, also, must we suspend the exercise and improvement of our faith in the great mysteries of the gospel, till all others will agree upon the same thing? Let us do our own part, so as we may be able to say, *Per me non stetit*, "It was not my fault but Christians had been combined and entirely one with each other, but they had been more thoroughly Christian and more entirely united with God in Christ, that Christianity had been a more lively, powerful, awful, amiable thing. If the Christian community moulder, decay, be

\* PINK'S "Trial of a Christian's Love to Christ."

enfeebled, broken, dispirited, ruined in great part, this ruin shall not rest under my hand." We shall have abundant consolation in our own souls, if we can acquit ourselves that, as to these two things, we lamented the decay and loss, and endeavoured the restitution of them, and therein, as much as in us was, of the Christian interest.

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## SERMON V.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM JENKIN, A.M.

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HOW OUGHT WE TO BEWAIL THE SINS OF THE PLACES WHERE WE LIVE?

*And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.)—2 Peter ii. 7, 8.*

SECTION I. The apostle (verse 6) recollects the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha, as the ensamples of the punishment that should befall those impure seducers against whom he wrote. By occasion whereof, he mentions God's delivering care of Lot; whose holy carriage being so contrary to the unholy practices of the Sodomites, God made his condition happily different from theirs also; for so saith the text: "He delivered just Lot, vexed," &c.

SECT. II. In the words there are these two distinct parts:—

1. *God's happy delivering of Lot*: He "delivered just Lot."
2. *Lot's holy severity to himself*: for he *was* not only vexed, but he vexed himself; he "vexed his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds."

The second part is the subject of my ensuing discourse, which presents us with this doctrinal observation:—

### DOCTRINE.

*It is the disposition and duty of the righteous, to be deeply afflicted with the sins of the places where they live.*

In the discussing of which divine and seasonable truth, I shall,

- I. Produce those obvious *scripture-examples* that clearly agree with it.
- II. Principally show *after what manner* the righteous ought to mourn for the sins of others.
- III. Show the *reasons* why it is the disposition and duty of the righteous to be so afflicted and mournful for the sins of others.



IV. Lastly. I shall endeavour to improve the whole by *application*.

SECT. III. I. For the obvious *scripture-examples*.—Our Lord Jesus shall be the first, whose pattern herein amounts to a precept. Christ, saith the text, (Mark iii. 5,) was “grieved for the hardness of their hearts,” namely, in opposing his holy and saving doctrines. David professeth that “rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because men kept not God’s law;” and that when he “beheld the transgressors, he was grieved; because they kept not His word.” (Psalm cxix. 136, 158.) The next example shall be Ezra’s, who, hearing of the sins of the people in marrying with Heathens, in token of bitter grief for it, “rent his garment and his mantle, and plucked off the hair of his beard and of his head, and sat down astonished;” (Ezra ix. 3;) and he did neither “eat bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.” (Ezra x. 6.) To these I might add the example of Jeremiah, who tells the wicked, that “if they would not hear, his soul should weep in secret places for their pride; and his eyes should weep sore, and run down with tears.” (Jer. xiii. 17.) I shall conclude this with that expression of holy Paul: “Many walk, of whom I tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.” (Phil. iii. 18.)

SECT. IV. II. *The manner* how this duty of mourning for the sins of others is to be performed. This I shall consider in three branches:—

(I.) How we should mourn in respect of *God, before whom we mourn.*

(II.) How we should mourn in respect of *the wicked, for whom we mourn.*

(III.) How we should mourn in respect of *ourselves, who are the mourners.*

(I.) For the first branch, as our mourning respects *God*: it is to be performed with advancing of those perfections of his that relate to those great sins and sinners for which and for whom we mourn. And in our mourning for the sins of others in respect of God, we must advance,

1. His great and unparalleled *patience and long-suffering*, extended toward those whose sins we mourn and lament over. This was evident in Nehemiah’s confessing and bewailing the sins of the sinful Jews. (Neh. ix. 30.) At large he confesseth their sins in that chapter; but, verses 30, 31, he adds the admiration and acknowledgment of God’s forbearing goodness toward them. “Yet,” saith he, “didst thou forbear them;” or, (as it is in the Hebrew, *וַיִּשְׁמַח*) “protract, defer, prolong over them;” Ezek. xii. 25, 28;) yea, “many years didst thou forbear them;” (Neh. ix. 30;) and when the Jews were in their enemies’ hands for their sins, yet, “nevertheless,” saith he, “for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them.” (Verse 31.) When we mourn for the sins of our places, we should much admire God’s forbearing goodness, that he defers to punish those sins and sinners which we must not defer to mourn for. We should lay man low, but at the same time set-up God high, and

in nothing more than in his patience toward sinners; patience, I say, infinitely exceeding any ever exercised by man. (1.) All the sins we mourn for are most clearly seen by God and known to him. He sees sin wherever it is, and infinitely more plainly understands all the odious circumstances and aggravations of sin, than we can do *that* mourn for them, or than *they* can *that* did commit them. And, (2.) As he sees sin in all its odiousness, so he infinitely more hates it than all the saints and angels in heaven can do, as being the only object of his hatred, all the streams whereof are collected in this one channel; sin being also against his very nature and being, a destroying him in the desire of the sinner, and that which should He in the least measure love, or less than infinitely hate, he would cease to be God. Further admire his patience, (3.) In sparing those that are perfectly in his power to destroy, rebels that are under his feet; yea, lastly, whom in all their rebellions he invites to repentance, yea, feeds, supplies, maintains, daily and richly. Say, then, in thy mourning for the abominations of others, "How patient art thou in forbearing to punish those sins, which it is my duty with a holy impatience to see and hear!"

2. In mourning for the sins of the wicked, advance God in the acknowledgment of his *justice and spotless righteousness*, should he with utmost severity take vengeance upon offenders. This we shall find also to be the temper of holy Nehemiah in the fore-mentioned chapter ix., verse 33, where, mourning for the sins of the people, he clears and acquits God from any injustice in executing his heaviest severities upon sinners. "Howbeit," saith he, "thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." (So Ezra ix. 15; Psalm li.) Say, "Lord, I wonder not at the evils that do, but those that do not, befall us. Were the fire of thy wrath proportioned to the fuel of our sins, we should be utterly consumed. It is thy mercy, Lord, [that] we are not so: thou wouldest be infinitely just and to be justified if we were so." And,

3. In spreading before God the wickednesses of great sinners, admire his infinite *power*, that can not only stop the worst of men in, but turn them from, their course of opposing God by their rebellions. We are not so to mourn for, as to despair of the conversion of, the worst. They are as much within the converting reach, as the destructive reach, of God's hand. Say, "This great sinner whose impieties I bewail, can easily, by thy irresistible grace, which no hard heart can reject, (as was Saul,) be made not only—of a wolf—a sheep, but even a shepherd too. I censure his way, but I dare not determine his end. Thou hast made white paper of as black and filthy dunghill-rags: what cannot the infinite power of God accomplish for the conversion of the greatest sinner? I now bewail him, Lord; but thou canst also make him more to bewail himself, and make him as zealous in setting-up, as now he is in destroying, thy people. God can make straight timber of a crooked piece: God can take his garden out of Satan's waste. O, how glorious would pardoning grace and converting power appear in causing such a change!"

4. In mourning admire that *grace* and power that hath kept thee from their excesses and extravagancies. It should more comfort thee that thou sinnest not with them, than trouble thee that thou sufferest from them.

SECT. v. (II.) The second branch of the manner how we must bewail the sins of others, is as it respects *those for whom and for whose sins we lament and mourn*. You may take-up this in several particulars:—

1. *We must bewail the sins of our bitterest enemies, as well as of our most beloved relations.*—A rare and seldom-practised duty I fear that this will be found. I suppose there is no godly man but bitterly mourns for the impieties of his dear yoke-fellow or child; but to mourn because a cruel enemy either dishonours God or damns his own soul,—I doubt, there are very few that are conscientious therein. Nothing is more common than to rail at our enemies for their impieties, and to expose them to obloquy and public hatred; but I fear there is nothing more unusual than to bewail their soul—their self-destroying sins, before God in secret. The former, pride and self-love will easily put us upon; the latter only flows from Christian charity and holy, sanctified zeal and compassion. (Jer. xiii. 17.) To embrace the former and neglect the latter, is to exchange a duty for a sin: a miserable exchange! The holy temper of Christ, and Paul, acted by his Spirit, discovered their bewailings and shedding tears for those that desired to shed their blood. (Luke xix. 41.) Doubtless, such a mourning as this would, if not prevail for the conversion of enemies, yet be a comfortable evidence to our consciences of the truth, yea, the strength, of grace in us, and of pardoning grace bestowed upon us, who discover so high a degree of forgiving our enemies. It is a thousand times more eligible that mine enemies' sins should suffer shipwreck in a sea of my tears, than [that] their persons should be borne down by the stream of my power.

SECT. VI. 2. *We ought to bewail the sins of our near and dear relations in a greater measure than those of mere strangers.*—Natural affection, sanctified, is the strongest. As nature puts forth itself to nearest relations in strong affection, so grace engageth to a proportionable degree of spiritualizing that affection. How earnest and desirous was holy Paul for his “kinsmen in the flesh,” that “they might be saved!” (Rom. x. 1.) Never did a godly man in the world, never durst he, neglect the duty of bewailing the sins of his children. Job offered sacrifices and prayers and tears too, no doubt, for very fear his children might offend God. (Job i. 5.) There is in the saints a spiritual *στοργή*, a “natural affection” spiritualized: no godly man knows how to spare any one child of his for the devil; it must needs trouble him to fear that they who are so near in this, should be so distant in the next, life. His soul desires especially soul-mercies for his children. To see them poor in the world, will not so much afflict him as to fear they will never be rich to God. Besides, the sins of those that are nearly related are most frequently presented to our eyes and ears; they cry nearest us, and therefore they should cry

loudest to us. They are most committed to our care ; and therefore their miscarriages should be the greatest objects of our fear. Near relations may also probably more endanger the residue of those that belong to our family : sin in one or two, though in a large family, may endanger and infect the whole. We most strive to quench those flames that destroy houses near us ; we are more fearful of them than of those at a greater distance. A snake in one's bed is more formidable, and a toad there more odious and ugly, than in my field or garden.

SECT. VII. 3. *They that mourn for others' sins, especially the sins of those they most love, must mourn more for their sins than their afflictions and outward troubles.*—They must be more troubled for the poisonous root of sin, than for the branches and fruits of sufferings that spring from the root. We must more mourn for the sin of a child, than for the sickness of a child ; more lay to heart what our children have done, than what they have undergone ; more for their impiety than for their poverty ; more because they have left God, than because their trades or estates have left them ; more for fear [that] they died in sin, than because they died. The troubles of the outward man must not so afflict us, as the unrenewedness of their hearts and natures. To be afflicted for the death of thy child's body, and not for his soul-death in sin, is as if a fond parent should, when his child is drowned, only lament the loss of the child's coat and garment, and not for the loss of the child's person.

SECT. VIII. 4. *We ought to bewail the sins of others according to the proportion of the sins of the times and places where we live.*—When sin grows impudent, and hath a brasen brow ; when it is “ declared as Sodom, and not hidden ;” (Isai. iii. 9 ;) when men are ashamed of nothing but not being impudent in sinning ; (Jer. iii. 3 ;) when sinners cannot “ blush,” have lost the very colour of modesty ; (Jer. viii. 6, 12 ;) then is a fit season for God's people, with Ezra, to say, “ We are ashamed and blush to lift-up our faces to thee, our God ;” (Ezra ix. 6 ;) to bewail and blush before God for those sins of which sinners are not ashamed, and for which they have not a tear to shed. Further : when the sinners of the times are obstinate and inflexible in impiety, “ harden their necks, refuse to obey, are disobedient, and rebel, cast the law behind their backs, withdraw the shoulder, and will not hear ;” (Neh. ix. 16, 17, 26, 29 ;) when they make their face “ as an adamant stone ;” when the wicked say, (as Jer. xlv. 16, 17,) “ As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth ;” then is the time for the godly to have broken and melted hearts, when the wicked are so obstinate and obdurate. Next : when sin becomes universal ; when governors and governed, “ from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head,” are all profane and impious ; (Isai. i. 6 ;) when a man cannot be found in the streets of Jerusalem, that will stand up for God and his interest ; (Jer. v. 1 ;) when, as in [the] days of Noah, “ all flesh hath corrupted itself ;” then is the time for all God's people to

mourn before God, and to oppose a holy universality to a profane. Lastly: when not ordinary, but the most horrid and gross, impieties are committed; as murder, sodomy, perjury, broad-faced adultery; when these mountainous wickednesses are acted, then is the time for the godly to endeavour to overtop these high-towering abominations with a flood of tears.

SECT. IX. 5. *We ought to mourn for the sins of others advantageously to those for whom we mourn, with the using of all due means to reclaim and reduce them.*

(1.) By prayer for their conversion, and God's pardoning them. "My heart's desire and prayer to God," saith Paul, "is, that Israel might be saved." (Rom. x. 1.) He tells, Rom. ix. 1, how he bewailed them,—that he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart" for them; but here, we see, he mingled his tears with prayers for them. We cannot mourn for those for whom we cannot pray; for, every evil that makes us grieve because of its continuance, we must needs desire may be removed. Though Moses, when he was with the people, maintained the cause of God with the sword; yet when he was with God, he endeavoured the preservation of the people with prayer. (Exod. xxxii. 11, 27.)

(2.) We must endeavour to follow the mourning for sinners with *restraining* them from sin (if we have it) by power. We must not hate sinners, and suffer them to sin: we destroy those whom we suffer to sin, if we can hinder them. None may permit sin in another, if he can restrain it, but he that can produce a greater good out of it, than the permission is an evil. Restraining of inferiors is as great a duty as prayer for superiors. See it in the case of Eli's negligence to restrain his sons from their impieties.

(3.) We must mourn for sinners with *advantaging* them by *example*, that they may never be able to tax us with those sins for which we would be thought sorrowful. Examples sometimes have a louder voice than precepts: tears will not in secret drown those sins which public examples encourage; we confute our tears and prayers before God by an unsuitable example before the offender. The blots of others cannot be wiped off with blurred fingers.

(4.) We must follow our mourning for others' sins, with *labouring* to advantage them by holy *reproof* for the sins we mourn for. If our place and opportunities allow us, we must not only "sigh for" their sins, but "cry" against them. (Ezek. ix. 4.) Lot was not only a mourner for the Sodomites' sins, but a reproof. I know not whether it be a greater sign of a godly man, to give a reproof duly, or to take a reproof thankfully. (i.) But be sure [that] reproofs be given with *zeal for God's glory*: not either out of hatred to the person reproofed, or out of desire to promote thine own reputation and interest by the reproof. The apostles reproofed idolaters; but zeal for God purely put them upon it. "Paul and Barnabas rent their clothes," as well as reproofed idolaters; (Acts xiv. 14;) and Paul's "spirit was stirred" with inward zeal, before his tongue stirred against the Athenians. (Acts xvii. 16.) (ii.) Let reproofs be mingled

with *meeckness* : passion is seldom prevalent with a sinner. Sweep not God's house with the devil's besom. Let the sinner see thee kind to himself, when thou art most unkind to his sin. (iii.) Let reproofs be qualified with *prudence* : by observing the nature and degree of the offence, and the temper of the offender. A small offence, like a fly on the forehead, is not to be killed with a beetle ; \* nor is a Venice-glass (and so tender are some tempers) to be scoured with as much strength as we scour an iron pot with. Prudence is also to be observed in reproofs, by care to preserve our own safety, and not to expose ourselves by indiscreet and lavish expressions to the malice of those whom we reprehend. (iv.) Reprove sinners with *patience* : knock twice, nay, thrice, at the door of a sinner's conscience. Importunity may prevail with a sinner for his own soul, if with the unjust judge for another. Wait, if peradventure God may give the sinner repentance.

(5.) With expressing that *commiseration* toward a sinner in private, which thou expressest for him before God in secret. A profane person going once to hear a play, and telling of a godly man whom he met, whither he was going ; this good man entreated him to forbear, and not to go to so wicked a meeting, that might easily endanger his soul. But the man was obstinate ; and notwithstanding all the arguments [that] the good man could use to hinder him from going, he told him he was resolved to go to the play-house. With that the good man shed abundance of tears upon the beholding [of] his obstinacy. They part one from the other : the one, the resolute person, goes toward the play-house ; but just as he was entering into it, the remembrance of the tears shed by the godly dissuader so wrought upon him that he durst not adventure to go into that hurtful place, but returned from it without incurring the danger of that temptation.

SECT. x. 6. *We must mourn for those sins of others that are in appearance advantageous to ourselves.*—Though a sin may bring us profit or honour, yet it must bring us no pleasure, if it bring God dishonour, and the sinner destruction. It is very observable in Paul and Barnabas, that they “rent their clothes” (the usual sign of mourning) for a sin that did cast the greatest honour imaginable upon them, that attributed a divinity to them, by doing sacrifice to them. (Acts xiv. 13, 14.) We must never endure the advancement of our interest by the diminution of God's glory through sin. As God will not give his glory to another, so, God not giving it, we must not dare to take it. That he may be advanced, we must be willing to be debased and depressed. We should not desire any glory that promotes not his, nor should we shun any disgrace that sets up his honour. All our glory and gain are unprofitable to us, that further not the end why we had our beings. Nothing done to a tree is profitable to it, which makes it not more fruitful. Though its leaves be gilded, though its branches should have pearls and diamonds hung thick upon them, though the body be adorned with satins and cloth

\* Sometimes written *boyle* ; “a very large wooden mallet,” used for driving-in wedges and piles ; and, in times more modern, “a sledge-hammer.”—EDIT.

of gold, yet this makes not the tree better as a fruit-tree. It would be better for the tree, to dung it, than to adorn it; to cut its bark, than to beautify its body. We should embrace the vilest debasements, and the most torn and poor condition, if they conduce to our end,—the glorifying of God; rather than, by any one's sin, to shine and be advanced in the world. It was an excellent option of that ingenious writer Nierembergius to this purpose: "I had rather, Lord, could it be without sin, that all should hate me, than that they should love me for myself: for if all should hate me, I should have but what is mine; if they should love me for myself, I should usurp what is thine."\* Besides, we purchase any temporal benefit at too dear a rate, if it be with the loss of an eternal soul, that sins to obtain it for us. If David "poured out the water unto the Lord, and would not drink thereof," because it was brought with the "jeopardy of the lives" of the bringers; (2 Sam. xxiii. 16, 17;) how far should we be from delighting in those gains that are obtained by endangering the souls of those that procure them for us! A factor, an apprentice, by whose sin thou gainest, should more grieve thee, than if by his weakness thou hadst been never so great a loser.

SECT. XI. (III.) I shall consider how we should mourn for the sins of others, in respect of *ourselves*.

1. *They whom God hath set in any place or station of superiority over others, either more public or in families, should be the most eminent mourners for the sins of those committed to their charge.*—Persons who have public relations, must have public affections. They have greater opportunities and authority to advance God's glory and benefit souls, than their inferiors have: to them "much is given, and of them much shall be required." They are more responsible to God for public abuses than the common people: the heads of places and people are more concerned to reform than private members. If they lay not the sins of inferiors to their hearts, they shall be laid to their charge. One great, if not the greatest, reason why England is so full of ungodliness, is because it is so full of Gallios, who regard "none of those things." (Acts xviii. 17.) Now they who resent † no sin, will reform no sinners. All must give account for their idle words, and governors, especially magistrates and ministers, for their idle silence. Superiors will not reform those sinners publicly, for whom they do not mourn privately. How abominable is it for base bribery or face-fearing to deter governors from reforming! It is as cruel to spare all as to spare none. Solomon's throne was not held up by apes, but by lions. *Tenuisse silentia clerum*: it is the basest tenure in the world, "for a minister to hold his living by holding of his peace." Luther once said, that sinful silence in a minister was *peccatum irremissibile*, "an unpardonable fault." That blessed man, Mr. Samuel Hieron, ‡ mourned upon his death-bed for his defectiveness in the duty of private reproof; though, blessed saint! he knew upon whom to lay that and his other sins. I do not doubt but God makes the world so

\* *De Adoratione*, lib. iv. cap. 11.

† In the meaning of "feeling acutely on account of." See the note in vol. i. p. 483.—EDIT.

‡ See his *Life in his Works*.

bitter to us by sufferings, because we make their sins no bitterer to them by reproofs. A minister and magistrate in love and Christian condescension ought to be *flexibiliores arundine*, but in opposing of sin *duriores adamante*; in the former "as flexible as a reed," in the latter "harder than an adamant." (Joel ii. 17; 2 Cor. xi. 29; Heb. xiii. 17.)

SECT. XII. 2. *Those who, now converted, have been the most open sinners in their unconverted state, should more lay to heart the sins of the openly wicked, than those who have lived more civilly and without scandal.*—The greatest sinners, converted, should have the greatest compassion: they who have obtained most, should show most, mercy. "Ye know," saith God, "the heart of a stranger;" (Exod. xxiii. 9;) and therefore they are enjoined to be kind to strangers. Great sinners, converted, know the addictedness of an unconverted man's heart to his corruptions. They have tasted most of the bitterness of sin, and of the sweetness of pardoning mercy. They know most of "the terror of the Lord," and therefore they should be most in persuading of and sorrowing for sinners. (2 Cor. v. 11.) Paul, so eminent in sin, was as famous for compassion to sinners: the "overtaken in a fault," he wills, should be gently set in joint with "the spirit of meekness." (Gal. vi. 1.) He could not speak of sinners without weeping: (Phil. iii. 18:) he had "great heaviness and sorrow of heart" for his unconverted brethren. (Rom. ix. 2.) "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" (2 Cor. xi. 29.) He commends meekness toward sinners upon this very ground: "For we," saith he, "ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." (Titus iii. 3.)

SECT. XIII. 3. *They that mourn for others' sins must more mourn because those sins are offensive and dishonourable to God and hurtful to sinners, than because they are injurious to themselves that mourn over them.*—To mourn for sins of the times because hurtful to us, is not zeal for God or charity to sinners, but self-love. Godly sorrow is, when we sorrow for sin as against God: all sorrow for ourselves and our worldly interest is but worldly sorrow; and *dedolendus est iste dolor*, "it is to be repented of," when it puts the other out of place. We frequently mourn for the miscarriages of the times, but more as they are afflictive than sinful,—because *we* suffer, rather than because God's honour or souls suffer. If we were not ourselves concerned in the suffering of our worldly interest, few would hear of our mourning. The complaint of, "What wilt thou do to thy great Name?" is much rarer than, "What shall become of my family, my estate?" The precious water of our tears is not to be cast upon such dunghills, into such sinks: sin brought-in tears, and they should be principally shed for sin. It is observed by some, that God, who in times of public mourning for sin commands baldness, forbids it for worldly troubles. (Isai. xxii. 12; Lev. xxi. 5.)

SECT. XIV. 4. *They that mourn for others' sins, should mourn more in secret than in open complaining.*—Thus Jeremy: "I will mourn in secret places for your pride." (Jer. xiii. 17.) "Our



Father," saith Christ, "seeth in secret, though he recompenseth openly." (Matt. vi. 18.) Public exercises of religion may gain most applause, and be most advantageous to observers; but they testify not so much sincerity to the conscience, as those in secret. He mourns most truly that hath no other witness thereof but the all-seeing God. Fasting, and so mourning, is feasting and rejoicing to one that eyes only the eye of man in these services, when men observe them. Our Saviour forbids "appearing unto men to fast," by putting on a wreathed,\* grim, sour countenance, a louring look; (Matt. vi. 16;) not that he forbids open expressions of sorrow used by saints of old, but the counterfeit semblance of sorrow, to make an ostentation of sanctimony to be noted by men. Nor doth Christ here tax mourners for seeming to fast, when they did not; but for desiring to be known abroad to fast, when they fasted in private. It is a Jehu's zeal which may be "seen" only, and desires to be so. (2 Kings x. 16.)

SECT. xv. 5. They that mourn for others' sins, must mourn to a high degree, who have been the occasions, furtherers, and promoters of their sins.—Either by neglecting to reprove them for, restraining them from, or giving them examples of, sinning. This sanctified conscience will make one of the bitterest ingredients into sorrow for the sins of others. It was the trouble of David, that he had occasioned the death of the priests by receiving relief from Ahimelech. "I have occasioned the death," said David to Abiathar, "of all the persons of thy father's house." (1 Sam. xxii. 22.) I doubt not but some whom God hath converted may say, "Lord, I have, some way or other, furthered the sins of this or that great offender." If so, what canst thou do less than drop the balsam of thy tears into his wounds of sin? Though God hath pardoned the sin to thee, and lays it not to thy charge, holy compassion should put thee upon laying it to thy heart: this undoubtedly is a due piece of spiritual restitution of what thou hast wronged him of. Canst thou do less than beg with tears and sobs, that God would be more merciful to his soul than thou hast been? Canst thou do less than with a holy ingenuity endeavour to bring him home to that God from whom thou taughtest him to wander?

SECT. xvi. 6. They that mourn for the sins of others, must mourn with a holy reflection upon themselves.—And that in these three particulars:—

(1.) They must reflect upon themselves with sorrow, because they have the same impure natures that the most-to-be-lamented sinner in the world hath. The holiest in the world may say, "Lord, this most extravagant sinner speaks but the sense of my nature. My nature answers his, as face answers face in the glass." But of this before.

(2.) With a reflection of examination.

(i.) Whether you have not some way or other furthered this sinner in his much-to-be-lamented impieties.—Either by not endeavouring to

\* This word seems to be used here in the signification of "wrinkled," or, according to Horne Tooke, as "writhed." But if regarded as an offshoot from *wrath*, derived from *wrede*, it will then mean "an irritated countenance."—EDIT.

hinder him from sin so much as you might, or by prompting him to it more than you ought. If so, how deeply this is to be resented, you heard before.

(ii.) *Whether the same open sins that are acted by him—the noted offender, or sins almost or altogether as bad, are not acted and entertained by thee in secret places, or at least in thy heart.*—“Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?” (2 Chron. xxviii. 10.) If so, doubtless it is thy duty to cast the first stone at thyself; and, as Christ said to the daughters of Jerusalem, to weep first under the sense of thy own unholiness; and to remember, though thy sins are not so infamous as those of a public sinner, yet, by being secret, they may be sins of greater danger. And that, First, By occasioning hypocrisy, in contenting thyself with visible appearances of holiness, and freedom from open impieties. Secondly. Thy secret sins may be more dangerous, in regard [that] by their secrecy thou shalt not be so happy as to meet a reprov-er.\* The loudly snorting sinner every one will be ready to jog with a reprehension; whilst thou that sinnest silently in secret, shalt be freed from any wholesome molestation by holy reprehension. He that would be watchful wants either a severe censurer or a faithful reprov-er. Thirdly. Thy secret sins are not so likely to trouble and awaken thy drowsy conscience, the sins of public offenders having oft been the occasion to make people both ashamed of sin and afraid of vengeance.

(3.) *With a reflection of care and watchfulness.*—That thou mayest never dare to fall into the sins that thou bewailest in another; and that thou mayest never admit a temptation to a sin in thyself, which is the object of thy lamentation in another; that thou who labourest to quench the fire that hath seized upon thy neighbour's house, mayest be careful to preserve thine from being set on fire also: to conclude; that thou mayest not dare to do that which doth or should grieve thee to see another do.

SECT. XVII. III. To show *why* this holy mourning is, 1. *The disposition* and, 2. *Duty* of the righteous, I shall express the reasons of both distinctly.

1. It is their *disposition*; and that under a threefold qualification:—

(1.) Because they are a *knowing* people.—They know what tears and heart-breakings sin hath stood them in; they know that sin will cost the wicked either tears of repentance, or damnation; they know that sin is but gilded destruction, and fire and brimstone in a disguise. “Knowing the terror of the Lord,” saith Paul, “we persuade men.” (2 Cor. v. 11.) It is as true, we mourn for men that will not be persuaded. In one word: the godly know that, when the wicked sin, “they know not what they do.” The word, threatening sin, makes woe as present to a knowing saint's faith, as the evil threatened can in its execution be present to a sinner's sense. To

\* *Facile accedit tentator, ubi non timetur reprehensor.* “Where no fear of a reprov-er is entertained, there the tempter has ready access.”—EDIT.

a saint's eye, sinning is but the seed's time of wrath, and eternal vengeance in the root. But principally the godly know what sin hath cost Christ; not tears of water only, but great and many drops of blood.

SECT. XVIII. (2.) As to a saint's disposition: he is *compassionate and tender-hearted*.—If sinners mourn, he mourns *with* them; if not, he mourns *for* them. The wicked are more the objects of his pity than anger. The saints only have "bowels," (Col. iii. 12,) and "Christ's bowels." (Phil. i. 8.) The wicked, as the high priests were to Judas, are hard-hearted in drawing to sin, and in leaving those whom they have drawn into it. Good men are full of tears: see it in David, Ezra, Joseph, Josiah, Jeremiah. *Quantò quisque sanctor, tantò fletus uberior*: "The more holy, the more plentiful are our tears." Saints have received, and return, compassion: grace kills not, but only cleanseth, affection.

SECT. XIX. (3.) The righteous are a *purified, sanctified people*.—A saint, as such, hates nothing but sin. Grace ever conflicts with sin where it sees it; either in a man's own soul, or in the life of another: holiness contends with sin, where it cannot conquer it. Now, where an object is truly hated, it ever causeth sorrow till it be removed. Further: every sanctified soul labours to keep itself holy. Now sorrow for sin puts us upon "carefulness" to avoid it; (2 Cor. vii. 11;) all take heed of that which occasions their grief.

SECT. XX. 2. It is the *duty* as well as the disposition of the righteous, to mourn for the sins of others; and that as they are considerable in a threefold relation:—

(1.) In their relation to *God*: they are his "sons." As "the sons of God," they are commanded to be "blameless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." (Phil. ii. 15.) This relation of sonship doth as truly make us mourn for the sins of others, as it engageth us to avoid sin in ourselves. It suffers us not to put up [with] dishonour offered to God our Father with sinful patience: it makes us quietly to bear our private troubles, but not quietly to suffer the sufferings of God's name. Though Moses, when with God, prayed for the people; yet, when with the people, he vindicated the honour of God with the sword. (Exod. xxxii. 11, 27.) Though Job, when a sufferer from God, was holily patient; yet, when a hearer of the counsel of his wife to curse God, he was as holily impatient. (Job ii. 10.) A son of God cannot bear the abuses offered to his Father: saints can no more endure the dishonour done to their heavenly Father, according to that measure of grace given unto them, than the angels who are in heaven do according unto theirs. "Jesus wept" for Lazarus's death, because his friend; and should not we much more weep for God's dishonour, because our Father? God's glory should be dearer to us than our lives: he that toucheth it, should touch the apple of our eye; and that soon makes it water.

SECT. XXI. (2.) Their relation to *the Mediator*, the Lord Christ. Here I shall mention only a double relation between Christ and saints, that engageth them to mourn for the sins of others.

(i.) The first is his relation to us as a *suffering Surety*, in respect whereof he sustained and paid the debt of penalty which we owed to God's justice; for it was sin in man that made Christ "a man of sorrows." Saints have but one Friend, and He but one enemy; how then is it possible that that enemy, when seen, should not be the object of sorrow? Sin drew not from our dear Lord Jesus's eyes only tears of water, but from his sacred face great drops of blood; it was sin that pierced not his feet, hands, and side only, but his soul. Who can look upon the bloody knife that stabbed Christ, without some sorrow?

(ii.) There is a second relation between Christ and saints, that should make them mourn for the sins of the wicked; and that is the relation of *Teacher and Instructor*. We are his disciples and scholars; and it is our duty as much to make him our Example, as to expect he should obtain our pardon. Christ never had a pollution, but oft a commotion, of affection; Christ never wept but for sin or its effects. How full of zeal was he for his Father, when he saw his glory blemished, his house defiled! Did it not, after a sort, "eat him up," and consume him? (John ii. 17.) "The reproaches of them that reproached God fell upon Christ." (Rom. xv. 3.) It is observable, [that] though Christ in his own cause gave Pilate no answer, but stood silent; yet when he heard Pilate arrogate to himself the power of life and death over Christ, he could not forbear to show Pilate his sin, by telling him of a higher power than his, from whence his was derived. (John xix. 9—11.) How full of grief was Christ, seeing the hardness of the Jews' hearts to their own destruction! (Mark iii. 5.) In his approach to Jerusalem, filled with enemies to God and him, he "wept over it" for their blindness and impieties and approaching destruction: (Luke xix. 41:) he bewailed the sins of those that rejoiced in them, and shed his tears for those that thirsted to shed his blood. Either resemble Christ, or lay-off the name of Christian.

SECT. XXII. (3.) Their relation to *the wicked*, for whose sins they should mourn.

(i.) The saints are men with the worst; they have the relation of *human nature* to the greatest sinners upon earth: they are *ex eodem luto formati* ["formed of the same clay"]; "in the body," as the apostle expresseth it. (Heb. xiii. 3.) It is a wickedness to hide ourselves from our own flesh. (Isai. lviii. 7.) Humanity in respect of common nature, should cause humanity in regard of affection. To see man's nature so depraved, that was once so beautiful; so like the devil, that once so much resembled God; so swiftly running to hell, that was once a heir of heaven;—should draw forth pity, unless our hearts be flint and marble. A man's beast deserves thy pity, much more his soul.

SECT. XXIII. (ii.) The righteous are the same with the wicked in respect of *corrupt, depraved nature*; born in sin as much as they, with a principle of inclination to all their impieties. (Eph. ii. 3.) Saints by nature grew upon the same root, flowed from the same fountain, were stones digged out of the same quarry. Should it not,

then, make thee mourn, to consider, by the wickedness of others, thine own inbred depravation? what thou hadst done thyself, if God had not either renewed or restrained thee? yea, what thou wouldest do, if God should leave thee, and withdraw his grace from thee? What are all the visible impieties in the world, but comments and expositions upon thy depraved nature? "This drunkard, adulterer, sodomite, murderer, and I," say, "Lord, were both cut off from the same piece, and only free grace came between us." If it have made thee white paper, thou wert by nature as very a dunghill-rag as the filthiest sinner.

SECT. xxiv. (iii.) Perhaps the holiest men have been, some way or other, *furtherers of the sins* of the wicked among whom they live; perhaps by their former sinful example, when they lived in the same sins themselves which now the wicked wallow in. It is very possible that one that shall be saved, may have been the cause of another's damnation. Shouldest not thou, then, mourn for killing that soul which God so severely punisheth, though free grace hath pardoned thee? Should we not quench that fire with our tears, which we have blown-up with our bellows of encouragement? Saints that are to mourn for others' sins, possibly have suffered sin in others, when they might have restrained them. We destroy all those whom we suffer to sin and perish, when we can prevent it. May there not be some Elis among godly men, who have too negligently reprov'd and animadverted upon the sins of those under their charge? It is possible to be a good man, and yet a bad magistrate, minister, parent, by not restraining the sins of those committed to us. Cold reprovers cause bold sinners: an idle silence may sometimes be more pernicious than idle, yea, profane, words.

SECT. xxv. (iv.) In this relation of saints to sinners that should put them upon mourning for them, it is very considerable, that the godly and the wicked make-up *one community, or political body*, in the places where they live. In which respect, the sins of some particular offender or offenders may pull down judgments upon the whole body or lump of persons that abide where those offenders live. So that every one had need do his utmost, by mourning, and in whatever other way he can, to redress the sins, and so to prevent the plagues, of the place where he lives. It is very evident, from Deut. xxi. 1—9, [that] the blood of one man murdered defiles the whole bordering land, and provokes the Lord's displeasure against a people, even all the place, where one notorious wickedness is committed. The sin of making the golden calf, though it was not the sin of all, yet it endangered all. The altar built by the two tribes and a half, which the rest of the tribes thought had been built for sacrifice, was thought by Phinehas to be so great a provocation, as that for it the Lord would "be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel." (Joshua xxii. 18.) For the villany by some of the inhabitants of Gibeah committed, in abusing the Levite's concubine, the vengeance came not only upon the city where it was committed, but upon all the tribe of Benjamin. (Judges xx. 46.) Achan's sin troubled all Israel: (Joshua vii. 12 :) there

came a famine upon Israel for three years together, for the sin of Saul in killing the Gibeonites contrary to his fidelity. (2 Sam. xxi. 1.) This was the chief cause of the custom, which was at the public fasts in Israel, for the finding out of notorious offenders and offences, to have vengeance taken on them openly. Hence was the pretence of Jezebel for the killing of Naboth, under a show of execution of justice against a blasphemer, to pacify God's anger. (1 Kings xxi. 9, 10.) By all this it is evident, what just cause the godly have to mourn for all the abominations committed among them, which else may pull down divine vengeance upon them.

SECT. XXVI. IV. *Application.*

USE I. OF INFORMATION in sundry branches.

1. *Godliness is uniform in all times, places, and companies.*—Saints, in the worst of these, keep-up their integrity, and are so far from joining with sinners in their sins, that they, by lamenting their sins before the Lord, enter their protestation against them. A righteous man is not, as the swine in a meadow, clean only in clean places; he will maintain opposition to sin in the midst of inducements to sin. Lot did so in Sodom. *His* goodness may justly be suspected that only shows itself in good places, companies, and times.

SECT. XXVII. 2. *The greatest sinners cannot constrain us to sin.*—They cannot extort our consent to sin. Sodom could not, though never so filthy, make Lot so. No external inducement can take from a godly man either his peace or purity. Men may constrain thee to be poor, not impure: the worst creatures either among men or devils cannot take away what is best. The greatest temptation is no plea for committing the least sin: if we give not away, none can take away, our holiness.

SECT. XXVIII. 3. *One cause may produce contrary effects.*—Others' sins draw the wicked to follow them; but they put the saints upon bewailing them. The coming of the angels into Sodom stirs-up in Lot a desire to exercise hospitality in the entertaining [of] them; but it stirs-up in the impure Sodomites the heat of lust and the most horrid uncleanness. That which sets the graces of saints on work, puts the wicked upon acts of impiety: a godly man is drawn nearer to God by that very thing that drives the wicked farther from God. It is the disposition of the person that makes what befalls him good or bad. David's beautiful house of cedar puts him upon setting-up God's house: Nebuchadnezzar's palace puts him upon thoughts of haughtiness and proud self-admiration.

SECT. XXIX. 4. *It is our duty to rejoice in the holiness, if to mourn for the sins, of others.*—Love to God's house in others was David's gladness. (Psalm cxxii. 1.) It was the greatest joy of holy John that his spiritual "children walked in the truth." (3 John 4.) Holy ones were Paul's "joy, crown, and glory." (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.) This rejoicing in the grace of others must be, though their grace outshines and eclipseth ours: they who have but a little grace themselves, must rejoice that others have and act more than they. The preaching

of Christ by those that envied, made Paul joyful: (Phil. i. 18 :) it should please us, though another can do more service to God than ourselves.

SECT. XXX. 5. *Christianity abolisheth not affection, but rectifies it.*—It dries not up the streams of sorrow, joy, hatred, &c., but only turns them into the right channel; it removes not away their being, but their ill-being. Religion *non mactat, sed sanctificat*; it “slays not, but sanctifies,” affections; it doth not unman a man, but only undevel him. Grace is like the percolation or draining of salt water through the earth; it only takes away the brackishness and unsavouriness of our affections and faculties. It kills not Isaac, but the ram: it doth not break, but only tune, the string of nature. *Non tollit, sed attollit*: “It destroys not, but advanceth,” nature. When you are godly, you have more innocent humanity than ever: you may exercise human affections and actions as much as you can desire, only not to damn yourselves. You may eat, though not be gluttons; drink, though not be drunk; buy and sell, so as you make not sale of a good conscience. Grace gives leave to every thing beside damning your souls.

SECT. XXXI. 6. *Every thing betters a saint.*—Not only ordinances, word, sacraments, holy society, but even sinners and their very sinning. Even these draw forth their graces into exercise, and put them upon godly, broken-hearted mourning. A saint sails with every wind: as the wicked are hurt by the best things, so the godly are bettered by the worst. Because “they have made void thy law, therefore do I love thy commandments.” (Psalm cxix. 126, 127.) Holiness is the more owned by the godly, the more the world despiseth it. The most eminent saints were those of Cæsar’s (Nero’s) house: (Phil. iv. 22 :) they who kept God’s name, were they that lived where Satan’s throne was. (Rev. ii. 13.) Zeal for God grows the hotter by opposition; and thereby the godly most labour to give the glory of God reparation. Lime, by casting water upon it, grows inflamed; and opposition confirms the upright Christian in holiness; winds make the trees more firmly rooted. It was said of old, *Grave bonum a Nerone damnari*: “The best action saints account that which is opposed by the worst men.” Elijah’s jealousy for religion was the more kindled by its being opposed by idolaters: (1 Kings xix. 14 :) Lot showed himself a better man in Sodom than in the cave. (Gen. xix. 30.)

SECT. XXXII. 7. *The great misery [that] sin hath brought into the world, to make sorrow and mourning necessary.*—Could we live so holily (as we cannot) as not to see cause of trouble from ourselves, we must be troubled by observing others: ever since the coming-in of sin, sorrow is become a duty. What is [it] to live long in the world, but to be mournful and afflicted long? It should make us long for a better world, where that which is here our duty to practise, shall for ever be our privilege to be freed from. And,

SECT. XXXIII. 8. *There must needs remain a better state for the saints.*—Surely, though here sorrow, yea, because sorrow is here their

duty, it must not always last, here and hereafter too, in both worlds ; for then their condition in this regard would be worse than that of the wicked, who have their "good things" here.

SECT. XXXIV. 9. *How ought sinners to mourn for their own sins!*—The nearer the enemy is, the more dreadful he is. Nothing more dismal than to see a sinner to go, not swiftly only, but merrily, to eternal mourning. *Maximè gemendus, qui non gemit*: "He that hath no tears for himself, should be helped by ours."

SECT. XXXV. USE II. The second use is OF REPREHENSION ; and that to sundry sorts:—

1. *To those that reproach the holy mourning of saints for others' sins.*—They count it at the best but melancholy mopishness. First they cause them to mourn, and then they deride them for mourning ; like some that beat a person till he cries, and then they beat him for crying. It is better to be a mourner for sin, than a mocker for mourning. Some account mourning for public sins a sign of disaffection to the public government ; as Jeremy, who mourned for the sins of his time, was charged to be an enemy to the state. *They* are not to be accounted the troublers of Israel, *who* are the only persons troubled for the cause of Israel's troubles. *They* are falsely esteemed the incendiaries in a state, *whose* great study is to quench God's burning wrath. If sinners kindle the fire, let saints quench it.

SECT. XXXVI. 2. This doctrine of mourning for the sins of others, speaks reproof to *those that take pleasure in the sins of others.* (Rom. i. 32.)—I fear there are many who would be glad were sin more common, that there might be none to make them ashamed of sin ; that "delight in the frowardness of the wicked ;" (Prov. ii. 14 ; ) that recreate themselves with others' sins ; that say of sinners, as the Philistines of blind Samson, "Let them come and make us sport by sinning ;" that cannot be merry, unless a sinner be in their company : "Fools make a mock at sin." (Prov. xiv. 9.) Some have observed, that, among all Solomon's delights, he never had a fool to make him merry. Of all fools, sinners are the greatest, but especially they that are delighted with the sinful follies of others. To be delighted with the holiness of others, is a good sign ; but to be delighted with the sins of others, is a black mark. Holy David was of a contrary temper : "Depart," saith he, "from me, all ye workers of iniquity." (Psalm vi. 8 ; cxix. 115.) No wicked man's company is to be desired, unless to do him good. We should not be with the wicked as companions, but physicians. The wicked's good-fellowship will have a bad conclusion.

SECT. XXXVII. 3. This doctrine reproves *those that mourn for the holiness of others.*—Who are troubled when they see a child or yoke-fellow holier than themselves. These are most afraid where no fear is,—that a man can be too fearful of sin ! It is sad, that a precise Turk or Papist should be honoured for their silly, self-contrived preciseness and fopperies, and that a saint should be derided for real sanctity. I have known some parents that have greatly desired [that] their children should be good husbands, to get and increase their estates ; but then have been very fearful lest they should be too godly :



and it hath been the righteous judgment of God, that their children proved spendthrifts; neither godly, nor good husbands. It is often seen that, as gardeners with their shears snip off the tops of the tallest sprigs, so men most labour to discountenance the tallest in Christianity.

SECT. XXXVIII. 4. This doctrine reproves *those that put others upon sin*.—So far are they from mourning for their sins. Poor souls! have they not sins enough of their own to answer for? Must they needs contract to themselves the guilt of others' sins also? How many, instead of being burning coals to inflame others with love to God, are blacking coals to defile others with sin! They are not willing to go to hell alone. It is little enough to be a leader to heaven, but too much to be a follower to hell; what, then, to be a leader!

SECT. XXXIX. USE III. OF EXHORTATION, to mourn for the sins of the wicked among whom we live.

1. *If we mourn not for others' sins, theirs become ours*.—We are justly to be accounted approvers of others' sins, if we enter not this protestation of mourning against them. If sin be not laid to thy heart, thou knowing it, it will in some degree be laid to thy charge. When the Corinthians mourned for the sin committed among them, the apostle pronounced them "clear in this matter." (2 Cor. vii. 11.) Their hatred of it did not clear them, till followed with mourning for it.

SECT. XL. 2. *Mourning for others' sins is the way to awaken thy conscience for thine own former sins*.—It will mind thee what thou hast done in thy former unconverted state. It will bring to remembrance (as Paul speaks, Titus iii. 3) what thou didst in times past, and cause a fresh bleeding in thy soul for sin.

SECT. XLI. 3. *Without mourning for sinners, you will never seek the reformation of sinners*.—The greatest mourners have been the greatest reformers: see it in Nchemiah, Ezra, David. (Nch. ix. 16; Ezra ix. 7; x. 6.) We only seek to redress what is burdensome. If reformation be our joy, sin to be reformed will be our sorrow: all mourners will desire to remove the cause of their mourning. Private sorrow increaseth public care.

SECT. XLII. 4. *This mourning for others' sins will make us more fearful to admit sin into ourselves*.—It will keep us at a greater distance from temptation to sin,—the best way to keep us from infection by sin. Who will dare to do that which he grieves to see another do? He that is afraid of a plague-sore upon another, will fear it should come upon himself.

SECT. XLIII. 5. *Mourning for others' sins speaks thee a man of public usefulness to thy country*.—That thou hast a holy care of it; that thou art to be reckoned among the chariots and horsemen of it, and a pillar of thy nation, a defender of it, and one that stands in the gap to prevent the incursion of what would destroy it; that in a public conflagration thou hadst rather bring thy bucket of tears, than take thy sleep. A public spirit is only truly noble.

SECT. XLIV. 6. *Mourning for others' sins makes the sins of others beneficial to thee.*—Instead of infecting thee by sinful example, it stirs up thy graces of zeal, compassion, and holy charity. It speaks thee like to Christ, who had a commotion, without pollution, of affection; that thou hast a heart like a garden of roses, or a well of rose-water, which, the more blown upon and stirred, smell the more delightfully. For this,

SECT. XLV. 7. *Holy commotion of soul for others' sins sends forth a most acceptable and fragrant savour into the nostrils of God.*—It speaks thee marked out for mercy. God bottles thy tears: he likes it that thou art good in bad times, and highly approves our mourning for them. He will shortly wipe all these tears from thine eyes; and bring thee to that state, where thou shalt have neither sin in thy soul, nor sinner in thy society; where thou shalt be freed from the power and presence of both; in one word, where thou shalt find that thou, who didst contend in secret, hast prevailed openly.

SECT. XLVI. USE IV. I shall add, though but name, one use more; and that is DIRECTION to the means of practising this duty of holy mourning for others' sins: 1. *Look not upon this duty with self-exemption.*—As if it belonged only to the highest in the practice of religion, or persons in office. The whole church of Corinth were bound to mourn for that great sin among them. (1 Cor. v. 2.) All desire to be marked, and therefore should be mourners. (Ezek. ix. 4.) 2. *Look upon mourning for sin to be no legal practice, but an evangelical duty.*—The gospel-grace makes tears sweeter, not fewer. 3. *Preserve tenderness of conscience in respect of thine own sins.* 4. *Strengthen faith in divine threatenings against sin.* 5. *Be holily, not curiously, inquisitive into the state of the times.* 6. *Lastly. Take heed of being drowned in sensual delights.*

## SERMON VI.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM COOPER, A. M.

HOW A CHILD OF GOD IS TO KEEP HIMSELF IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

*Keep yourselves in the love of God.\*—Jude 21.*

THIS is the scripture upon which we ground this solemn case and question; and a weighty one it is to every soul that pretends to the love of God and the happy privileges of it. Now the sum of this short epistle, which is but one chapter, is this; I say, the design of the Spirit of God by the apostle is in two things:—

1. To confirm true believers in the faith of Christ.

2. To caution them against the enemies of it. These enemies are described in four things:—

(1.) *By their qualities*: they “turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Verse 4.) Such were the Carpocratians and Gnostics: this they did both in doctrine and manners.

(2.) *In their entrance into the church*: Παρεισεδυσαν, [They “crept in unawares,”] subtilely and secretly; as foxes into the fold, or like wolves in sheep’s clothing,—the proper mark of false teachers.

(3.) *By their end*: which is “condemnation,” whereunto they are appointed. (Verse 4.)

(4.) *By their parallel of the evil angels, the old world, Sodom and Gomorrha*: (verses 6, 7:) such were foretold by Enoch and the apostles. (Verses 14—19.)

Of these the apostle Jude warns the saints, and withal shows how they should quit themselves, principally in two things:—

1. *As to themselves.*

2. *As to others.*

1. The first consists in four things:—

(1.) “Building up” ourselves in the “holy faith.”

(2.) “Praying in the Holy Ghost.” (Verse 20.)

(3.) Keeping of ourselves “in the love of God.”

(4.) “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” (Verse 21.)

2. The second,—*what they must do to others.*

(1.) They must put “a difference” between them that are fallen off, and them that are falling, as being of different complexions; “having compassion of some” with the spirit of meekness; others

\* The Syriac hath it thus: “Let us keep ourselves in the love of God.” But the Greek, Arabic, and Ethiopic have it as we read it.

treating with some quickness, "pulling them out of the fire." (Verses 22, 23.)

(2.) They must hate the appearance of evil: "Even the garment spotted by the flesh."

(3.) Pray for them, that God would "keep them from falling." (Verses 20, 24.) For the grace of Christ,—by which we alone stand, without which neither they nor we can do any thing,—he both can and will do it faithfully.

(4.) Praise the Lord, who hath made such provision for our preservation and salvation. (Verses 24, 25.)

Now that which I shall confine myself to, is in verse 21, the first clause: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." And then the case and question is this:—

*What we must do to keep ourselves in the love of God:*—A solemn and weighty question, and wherein every soul of us is nearly concerned.

There are three things that require some explication.

QUESTION I. "What is meant by 'yourselves?'"

ANSWER. Every one, himself; and every one, each other, so far as he can.

QUESTION II. "What is meant by the action which each is to see put forth?"

ANSWER. *Τηρησατε*, "to keep, to observe, to preserve," firmly, safely, constantly. *Τετηρηκα*, "I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. iv. 7.) Thus we "keep," and thus God "keeps" us, James i. 27; 1 John iii. 22; Rev. xii. 17; John xvii. 11, 15: in all which places the word is the same in the text, "to keep fast and safe and faithfully," with all care and diligence and conscience; as we would keep a thing for our life: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23.)

#### OBSERVATION.

From all which, thus explained, ariseth this proposition:—

*It is the duty of every child of God to keep themselves in the love of God.*

This proposition is grounded upon a threefold supposition:—

1. That some men are in the love of God, really and eternally.
2. That this love, wherewith God loveth his chosen, is a special love, a peculiar and distinguishing love. (Rom. v. 8, 11—13.)
3. That it is a duty, as well as a privilege, to keep ourselves in the love of God,—our activity, as well as God's act: which will be hereafter more explained.

Before we come to the main question, we will answer this question: *How love can be said to be in God.* For love is a passion in the creature; and passions are imperfections, which are contrary to God's perfection.

ANSWER. It is true, nothing of imperfection is in God; but love is in God as a perfection: because love is in God in the abstract,

that is, essentially; for abstracts speak essences: "God is love." (1 John iv. 8.)

The love of God is either *natural* or *voluntary*; thus divines distinguish, and that well.

1. The *natural* love of God is that wherewith God loves himself; that is, the reciprocal love whereby the three Persons love each other. (Matt. iii. 17; John iii. 35; v. 20; xvii. 24.) This essential, natural love of God is therefore necessary; God cannot but love himself.

2. The love of God is *voluntary*: thus he loves his creatures with a general love.

(1.) Because he made them, and made them good, (Gen. i. 31,) therefore he preserves them: for though sin be really evil, and none of God's making, but contrary to God, and hated of God; yet God loves the creatures as his creatures, although sinful, with a *general* love. (Matt. v. 44, 45.)

(2.) He loves some creatures with a *special* love; and by this he loves Jesus Christ as Mediator.

(i.) This love of God to *Christ as Mediator* is the foundation of God's love to his elect. (John iii. 35; Eph. i. 6; 1 John iv. 9; Rom. viii. 39.)

(ii.) By a special love God loves his *elect*: (John xiii. 1:) of this love it is said that it is inseparable. Now this is the peculiar love which God bears to some above others; not because they were more lovely than others, nor because God foresaw they would believe and love him; but because God loved them first antecedently to all those things; (Eph. i. 3—5;) and because he loved them, therefore Christ shall come and die, and therefore they shall believe in him and love him. (Deut. vii. 6—8.) The sum is this: our love to God is the effect, and not the cause, of God's love to us; yea, Christ himself as Mediator is the effect of God's eternal love. (Eph. ii. 3—10.) This is primitive doctrine: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John vi. 37, 44.) "He first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) "I was found of them that sought me not." (Rom. x. 20.) "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners and enemies, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8, 10.) Upon which I would have old and new Donatists, who make God to love all alike in order to their salvation, and that there is no special grace,—let them read St. Augustine, tom. ix. *Tract.* cii. on John; tom. vii. *Liber contra Donatistas post Collat. Carthag.*, p. 403, also p. 402; likewise in *Breviculus Collat. cum Donatistis*, p. 387, *Collat. tertii diei*; *item*, tom. ix. *Tract.* lxxxvii. on John; *item*, tom. ii. *Epist.* 48, p. 118; and many more places. I have therefore named all these, because there is a sort of men risen up among us, corrupters and perverters of the word and ways of God, (Gal. i. 6, 7,) who raise up Donatism and Pelagianism from the death.

I know, some make this "love of God" in the text to be meant not of God's love to us at all, but of our love to God only. Con-

trary, I judge it spoken principally of God's love to us, not excluding our love to God, but comprehending it, as a great sign that God loves us, when we truly love God. According to this sense I shall proceed to speak to the present case ; which is a practical question :

## QUESTION.

“ How Christians shall do, to keep themselves in the love of God ? ”

ANSWER I. *In general : one whom God loves and favours, must do as the favourite of a prince useth to do, to keep himself in his prince's love and favour.*—He will study what the will of his prince is, and will do all that he can to please him. He will set himself wholly to promote his prince's interest and honour, and to gratify his desires ; yea, he will be infinitely shy of displeasing him. So will a child of God carry himself toward God, to keep himself in the favour and love of God. This is a great art to study,—to know what is the will and pleasure of God, (Eph. v. 17,) and to conform to it. The reason whereof is this :—

1. *Because the will of God is the sovereign will to all the world, therefore to thine and mine : there is no controlling of it. Who can say unto God, “ What doest thou ? ”* When any man's will comes in competition with God's will, thou knowest what thou hast to answer, and what thou hast to do. (Dan. iii. 16—18 ; Acts iv. 19.) But if man's commanding will be agreeable to God's revealed will, (which is the standard,) then we please and not displease God, in submitting to man, because subordinate things do not clash.

2. *Because the will of God is a holy will ; and we can never keep ourselves in the love of God, but by what is agreeable to his holiness : and that is, when we ourselves are holy ; (1 Peter i. 15, 16 ;)* because this is not only the will of God, but the image of God : “ Created after God.” (Eph. iv. 24.) Now God loves children that are most like him ; for likeness is the cause of love. Thus much in general.

ANSWER II. *But now more particularly :*

I. *He that will keep himself in the love of God, must he himself love God.*—For love deserveth love, and love begetteth love : God's love worketh thus toward us, and therefore our love must work toward God. Our love to God is but the reflection of the beams of God's love upon us. Love wisdom, and she shall love thee : “ I love them that love me.” (Prov. iv. 6 ; viii. 17.) And thus the beams are doubled, and the love of God to the soul, and the soul's love to God, increaseth the heat between both ; as it is with the sun shining on the earth.

II. *He that loves God loving him, is drawn to God by the attractive beams of divine love.\**—These are called the “ bands of love.” (Hosea xi. 4.) He that loves God loving him, is inflamed with God's love ; as it is in a burning-glass. This is a heavenly fire, kindled from heaven, and not easily quenched. (Canticles viii. 7.) He that loves God loving him, finds the strongest obligation upon him to love

\* *Magnes amoris amor.* “ Love is the loadstone of love.”—EDIT.

God, as "constrained" to it; (2 Cor. v. 14;) and God endears him to love God from his heart; for love ravisheth the heart beyond all things in the world. The Lord and his spouse "ravish" one another. (Canticles iv. 9.)

III. *He that will keep himself in the love of God, must mind and meditate on four attributes and properties of God's love, which will have great influence upon his heart and love.*

1. On the *eternity* of God's love to him.—Which hath been ever of old, time out of mind. Yea, before all time he hath been "thine own friend and thy father's friend;" therefore forget him not. (Prov. xxvii. 10.) Because election, which is the effect of God's eternal love, is eternal; (Eph. i. 4;) and because he is love essentially; (1 John iv. 8;) therefore his love is eternal as himself.

2. On the *freeness* of God's love. (Hosea xiv. 4.)—All the arguments of his love are drawn out of his own breast; therefore this free love of God is called "grace," which is no grace unless it be gratuitous and free. "Not according to our works," saith the apostle, the great champion of free grace, which Bradwardin calls "the cause of God;" "but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.) And again: "There is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 5, 6.) O, meditate on this! How should the consideration of this keep us in the love of God! Mark and mind this well: free grace and love sent Jesus Christ into the world, and all the train of spiritual blessings. (John iii. 16; 1 John iv. 9.)

(1.) The free love of God was the cause of *election*. (Rom. xi. 5.)

(2.) The free love of God is the cause of *our effectual vocation*. (Gal. i. 6, 15.)

(3.) The free grace and love of God is the cause of *our adoption*. (Eph. i. 5, 6.)

(4.) The free love and grace of God is the cause of *our justification*. (Rom. iii. 24.)

(5.) The free love and grace of God is the cause of *the pardon of sin*. (Rom. v. 20.)

(6.) The free grace and love of God is the cause of *true and thorough conversion*. (1 Cor. xv. 10.)

(7.) The free grace and love of God is the cause of *true faith*. (Acts xviii. 27.)

(8.) The free grace and love of God is the cause of *Christ's suffering for us*. (Heb. ii. 9.)

(9.) The free grace and love of God is the cause of that inestimable jewel and blessing, *the word of God*. (Acts xiv. 3.)

(10.) The free grace and love of God is the cause of *our salvation*. (Eph. ii. 5, 8.)

O, meditate and mind the infinite, free love of God in all the sweet streams of it, and dwell upon the meditation of it, and be ravished with it, and give the God of grace and love the glory of it for ever!

3. Mind the *immensity* of God's love.—This is so vast an ocean, that thou wilt find neither bounds nor bottom in it. Hear the apostle upon it: "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;" (Eph. iii. 17—19;) to know it to pass all knowledge.

The consideration of this alone hath so amazed some devout souls, that they have been in an ecstasy, above and beside themselves with it.

4. Mind and meditate on the *unchangeableness* of God's love.—This is grounded upon "two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie." (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) This, O, this gives sure anchor-hold and comfort to a true believer in a storm. (Verse 19.) This assurance God hath given his people of old: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." (Jer. xxxi. 3.) It is an inseparable love: (Rom. viii. 39:) it is a *final* love, but not a *finite* love; it is "to the end," and without end. (John xiii. 1.) It is invincible love: (Canticles viii. 6:) it is an unquenchable love. (Verse 7.)

OBJECTION. "If this be so, what need, then, of the apostle's exhortation to keep ourselves in the love of God?"

ANSWER I. Because God's promises and believers' privileges do not exclude, but include, the use of means. For instance: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. i. 4.) In 2 Peter i. 4—10, he tells them, God hath given them "exceeding great and precious promises;" yet bids them to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure," by adding grace to grace. In Eph. ii. 8, he saith, We "are saved by grace through faith, which is the gift of God;" without works: and yet he saith, "We are created unto good works, that we should walk in them;" and this "God hath ordained." (Verses 9, 10.) In 1 Thess. v., after he had exhorted them to many duties, he adds this: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Mark our text, and compare it with the context after: when he bids us "keep ourselves in the love of God," he saith, God "is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)

ANSWER II. God, who prevents us with his grace, and works upon us and in us unto conversion and regeneration, hereby puts into us an active principle, and helps and recruits it continually by auxiliary grace. Our habits of grace cease acting, if God suspends the influence of grace: as we see in Peter's case; both upon the waters, when he began to sink, till the Lord gave him a hand; and [when he] went on denying his Master, till the Lord looked upon him, and melted him into tears. (Luke xxii. 61, 62.) God will ever have us beholden to him, and lean upon him: and we are made up of nothing else but dependency and frailty. (John xv. 4, 5.) Now this active principle is chiefly



faith and love: "Faith which worketh by love." (Gal. v. 6.) Faith gives us union to Christ, and maintains that union. Now as we are kept by faith, so we and our faith are kept *both* "by the power of God unto salvation." Our inheritance is kept in heaven for us, and we are kept in earth for it, till we possess it in heaven. (1 Peter i. 4, 5.) *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* \* We should be poorly and miserably kept, if the Lord were not our keeper. How did Adam keep his estate, and the angels theirs, and Esau his birth-right, and the prodigal his portion, when all was trusted in their own hands? One lost all for an apple, and another for a mess of dainty broth, and another for his carnal pleasures: but happy [are] believers, whose all is in better trustees' hands, even the hand of a faithful God! (1 Peter iv. 19.)

IV. *He that will keep himself in the love of God, must keep himself free from the love of the world.*—Because the love of this world is contrary to the love of God, and therefore inconsistent with it. (1 John ii. 15, 16.)

1. Because the love of the world and its trinity, or threefold lust, is a *dangerous heart-thief*.—It steals away the heart from God, as Absalom stole away the hearts of the people from David by his kisses and flatteries. (2 Sam. xv. 5, 6.) What the prophet speaks of wine and whoredom, is true of all other worldly things. (Hosea iv. 11.)

2. The love of the world *makes God jealous, because worldlings make an idol of it*.—And it is the worst idolatry, being that of the first commandment. So is covetousness and mammon; when the heart is inordinate upon creatures,—silver, gold, relations; that is our treasure. (Matt. vi. 24; Luke xii. 34; Col. iii. 5.)

Therefore saith the Lord, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness:" (Luke xii. 15:) a double caution; all little enough. And of this nature is luxury, and epicurism also, drunkenness, the love of pleasure more than God; belly-gods. *Ὁν ὁ Θεός ἡ κοιλία* ["Whose God is their belly"]. (Phil. iii. 18—20.)

Nay, thus it is likewise in the inordinate love of children; which is soon done; and they become idols, and God in his jealousy breaks them, or breaks us for them, as he did old Eli, honouring his sons above God. (1 Sam. ii. 29; iii. 18.) And, "He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me," saith Christ. (Matt. x. 37.)

3. Because the love of the world is a *choke-pear to all that is truly good*.—As is clear in the thorny ground. (Matt. xiii. 7, 22.) Experience teacheth this universally, and the nature of the things, being contrary one to the other, and killing one of another: † one being spiritual and heavenly; the other, carnal, sensual, and destructive: yea, both are destroyers of each other. Do not we see what mortal enemies worldly men are to divine things? The word saith, "The world lieth in wickedness;" the devil is the prince of the wicked

\* "But who shall keep the keepers themselves?"—EDIT. † Like the torment of Mezentius,—putting the living to the dead, which corrupts and kills the living. Rom. vii. 24: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

world, and "ruleth in the children of disobedience;" it feeds the flesh, and nourisheth the carnal part, and "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) Yea, it is a deadly thing to the soul; and such deadly things are these two lovers, that is, these two lusts, that they hunt for the life of each other, fighting against each other to the death; and the quarrel always ends in the death of one or the other: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.) See the scriptures in the margin. (Rom. vi. 6; Gal. v. 17, 24; vi. 14; ii. 20.)

4. The love of the world *hath sorcery and witchcraft in it*.—When once men drink of the world's cup, they are intoxicated. We read of Simon Magus, how he "bewitched the people." (Acts viii. 9.) We read of Jezebel's witchcrafts, (2 Kings ix. 22,) and Babylon's sorceries and witchcrafts; (Nahum iii. 4; Rev. xvii. 2, 4;) and it is joined with "the works of the flesh," sixteen in number. (Gal. v. 17—21; Rev. xxii. 15.) *Maxima totius orbis venefica*: "The greatest witch in the world" is the world. Her honours are bewitching honours; her delights and pleasures are bewitching; her riches and profits are bewitching.\* How, then, is the love of the world consistent with God's love? Therefore, for the love of God, love not the world.

5. The love of the world *makes men apostates from Christ*.—So it made Demas; (2 Tim. iv. 10;) and so it hath made thousands more, and thee among the rest, if thou lookest not well to thyself.

6. Because the love of the world *makes men take up their heaven on this side heaven*. (Psalm xvii. 14.)—Of those men the apostle could not speak without weeping. (Phil. iii. 18—20.) This is like the prodigal, that preferred a tavern and a brothel-house before his father's house. (Luke xv. 13.)

V. *He that will love God, and keep himself in the love of God, must not be a self-lover*.—There is no greater enemy to the love of God than to love ourselves. Mark the place,—2 Tim. iii. 2; for it is a remarkable place. He tells you of "perilous times" a-coming, and there gives nineteen marks of such men as make the times perilous: of all which "lovers of themselves" lead the van; for where once this principle prevails, it opens a flood-gate to all sin, and shuts the door upon all holy motions. If self be beloved, admired, and idolized, it is the worst idol in the world; this is an idol in a secret place, continually adored; this is Dagon, set above the ark, and a man above God, and provokes to jealousy; this perverts the course of nature and God's order, who is one God, and uppermost, and only to be adored. And men set up themselves in God's throne, and un-god him by deifying themselves; and for one God, they set up millions of gods,—as many gods as creatures. This is man's misery by losing the integrity wherein God made him, and seeking out many inventions. And when the Lord Christ came into the world, he bespeaks our love, and woos us for it, and commands self-denial as the first lesson to be

\* *Falsus et fallax est mundus, exterius aureus, interius luteus*.—N. N. "The world is false and deceitful; outwardly golden, but muddy within."—EDIT.

learned in his school, (Matt. xvi. 24, 25 ; x. 37, 38,) whereby the great stumbling-block to God's love is taken away.

VI. *If ye would keep yourselves in the love of God, be very shy of sin, both in the risings of it, and as to the temptations to it.*—For the love of God and the love of sin are more contrary to each other than heaven and hell ; because they are morally contrary.

1. *Sin is "enmity against God" in the abstract.* (Rom. viii. 7.)

2. *Sin is hateful to God.*—Therefore inconsistent with the love of God : "These six things doth the Lord hate : yea, seven, which his soul hateth." (Prov. vi. 16.) Therefore, "ye that love the Lord, hate evil." (Psalm xcvi. 10.) These are two masters whom we cannot hate and love both. (Matt. vi. 24.)

3. *Sin separates from God.*—Therefore we cannot keep ourselves in the love of sin, and in the love of God. Sin makes us to depart from God, and God to depart from us. Therefore conversion reconciles God to us, because it mortifies sin in us, by virtue of Christ's death for us.

VII. *He that will keep himself in the love of God, must clear-up his interest and union to Jesus Christ.*

1. Because Jesus Christ was sent us as the greatest instance and the greatest token of God's love in the world. (1 John iv. 9.)

2. Because the Lord Jesus purchased the love of God to us, when we were the greatest enemies to each other. (Rom. v. 8—10.)

3. Because Jesus Christ is the soul's love. (Canticles iii. 1.)

4. Because Jesus Christ is "all loves." (Canticles v. 16.)

5. Because this was the end of Christ's coming into the world,—to save us from our sins, the sole cause of God's hatred to sinners. (Matt. i. 21.)

6. Because the Father loveth whom Christ loveth, and he loveth them that love Christ. (John xvi. 27.)

7. Because our interest in Christ puts a soul out of all danger. (Rom. viii. 1 ; v. 1 ; vii. 24, 25.)

8. Because the Lord Jesus makes the Father's love to him the measure of his love to us : "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you : continue in my love :" (John xv. 9 :) that is, "By this ye keep in God's love."

9. Because the Lord Jesus teacheth us the way how to keep in his love. (John xv. 10.)

Consider all this, and how cogently they prove this head,—of clearing up our interest and union unto Christ, to keep ourselves in the love of God.

VIII. *An eighth way of keeping ourselves in the love of God, is by keeping God's commandments.*—I do not mean as to a covenant of works, but upon a gospel-account : "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love ; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John xv. 10, 14.) O, mind that ! Again, mark this : "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,

and I will love him, and we will make our abode with him." (John xiv. 21, 23.) This "love is the fulfilling of the" whole "law," and the gospel too. There be many that will compliment a love to God, but will do nothing for him. The greatness of Abraham's love to God, and of David's love, and of Peter's love, and of Mary's love, of Paul's love, and of the martyrs' love, was in doing and in dying for him. And is not the greatness of God's love and of Christ's love to us in doing and suffering? (John xv. 13.) We read of "labour of love;" because true love is laborious, as it was in Jacob's love for Rachel.

There is nothing God hates more than pretending to love; therefore the Lord hates hypocrites: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.) As God saith: "This people have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!" (Deut. v. 28, 29;) so I say of professors and great pretenders, that show much kindness with their mouth, but their heart is not right with God: "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would make conscience to do the will of God!" If the Lord loved the young man that was in a fair way of keeping the commandments of God, and was not perfect and thorough-paced; how much more will he have a love for them that have a "respect to all the commandments" of God! (Psalm cxix. 6.)

IX. *The way to keep ourselves in the love of God, is to walk closely with God in ways of strict holiness.*—This is a commendation and character upon record of God's chiefest favourites. Thus it was with Abraham; (Gen. xvii. 1;) thus it was with Enoch; (Gen. v. 22;) thus it was with Noah; (Gen. vi. 9;) thus it was with Caleb; (Num. xiv. 24;) and thus David. (Psalm lxxiii. 28.) Now we shall see how such an one is to God, who desires to keep in the love of God: "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 16.) O sweet dwelling!

You shall find that the holiest persons were always the highest favourites of God. Witness those before-mentioned, and these following instances:—

**JOB:** how did God bless him, and praise him, and try him, and reward him for his eminent holiness! (Job i. 1; ii. 3.)

**ZACHARIAS** and **ELISABETH:** how singularly did they shine in holiness and in the favour of God; to whom God gave a son in their old age,—the harbinger of Christ! (Luke i. 6, 7.)

**MARY,** the mother of Christ: how was she for her holiness pronounced *κεχαριτωμενη*, "highly favoured!" (Luke i. 28.)

And **SIMEON,** (Luke ii. 25—35,) and **ANNA.** (Verses 36—38.)

Holiness and purity bring us to 'the sight of God, which is called "beatifical;" which is the soul's highest happiness, and ultimate end, (Matt. v. 8; Psalm xxiv. 3, 4; Heb. xii. 14,) and therefore is pronounced "blessed." (Psalm cxix. 1, 2.)

X. *They keep themselves in the love of God, who do not waver or*

*abate their profession and practice of godliness in evil times, and do not balk the ways of God under severe providences and sharp trials.*—This was eminent in all Christ's worthies :—

Thus DAVID: Psalm xlv. 17—22 : mind that place : though they were "sore broken," and smitten into "the place of dragons, and covered as with the shadow of death ; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither declined from thy way," &c.

Thus JOB: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job xiii. 15.)

Thus HABAKKUK: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom ; the vine, olive, and fields shall fail" of their fruit ; and not any flocks or herds [be] left ; "yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength." (Hab. iii. 17—19.)

And thus all the champions of God : let PAUL be one instance more. (Rom. viii. 35—39.)

REASON 1. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for" the day of "adversity." (Prov. xvii. 17.)

2. They know, the Lord's chastenings are in love. (Prov. iii. 11, 12 ; Heb. xii. 6 ; Rev. iii. 19.)

3. They know that all the Lord's severities are for good, many ways :—to drive them to ordinances and duties, to sweeten them, and to teach them to profit by them, to know more of the will of God by them ; and to give us a better relish of the word by the rod ; (Psalm cxix. 67, 71, 72 ;) as shepherds let loose their dogs to hunt the straggling sheep into their bounds ; as parents use bugbears to make their children run into their arms,—all in love, and to keep them in it by keeping them from excursions.

XI. *Another means to keep ourselves in the love of God, is to keep in our hearts a quick sense of the pardon of sin ; of the wonderful love of the Lord to a poor sinful soul, to pardon great and many sins.*—This puts such an obligation upon a sinner, that he cannot choose but express his great love to the Lord for it. See a famous instance of this in Mary Magdalene, who, having received this great mercy from the Lord, came where he was in Simon the Pharisee's house, kneeled down at her dear Saviour's feet, and, instead of water, her eyes were ewers, and she wept tears upon the feet of Christ, and washed his feet with them ; so abundant were they ! And then, instead of a towel, she wiped his washen feet with the hair of her head ; and not only so, but kissed his feet : \* (Luke vii. 38 :) all which, though the envious Pharisee blamed, yet the Lord Jesus allowed and highly praised, with tart reflection upon the proud Pharisee, who omitted those civilities which that humble, loving convert performed.† Moreover, the Lord, that knew her heart, testifies for her, she did it all in much love to him, for the forgiveness

\* Φίλημα απο του φιλειν. "The word used in the original for 'kiss' is derived from a verb signifying 'to love.'"—EDIT. † Φίλημα μοι ουκ εδωκας αδη δε, αφ' ης εισηλθον, ου διελιπε καταφιλουσα μου τους ποδας ["Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet." (Luke vii. 45.)]

of her many sins : 'Οτι αγαπησε πολυ' ["For she loved much."] (Luke vii. 47.)

1. Because forgiveness of sin is an act of the greatest grace, condescension, and kindness of God to a poor soul ; because by the guilt of sin a soul is bound over to eternal death and wrath in hell, there to make satisfaction, which will be ever a-doing, and never done. Pardon of sin looseth the sinner from that by Christ's satisfaction for him.

2. Because every one thus pardoned is made truly sensible of the kindness of God to him in it, and by converting grace hath an "ingenuous and noble spirit" created in his heart, that will never suffer him to forget it, nor think he can ever sufficiently prize or express it : "Uphold me," וְרוּחַ נְדִיבָה "with thy ingenuous," or "generous," "spirit." (Psalm li. 12.)

XII. *A further means to keep ourselves in the love of God, is not only to love the Lord, but to keep-up our love to him to the height.*—Such a love as the bride and bridegroom have to each other, which is brisk and highest then. "I remember," saith the Lord, "the love of thine espousals." (Jer. ii. 2.) And again : "I have somewhat against thee, because thou art fallen from thy first love. Repent, and do the first works." (Rev. ii. 4, 5.) The Lord commands our love toward him in the most intense degree of affection : "With all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," כָּל מְאֹדֶךָ *cum omni valde tuo*, "with all thy utmost power." (Deut. vi. 5 ; xi. 1, 13, 22 ; xix. 9.) "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath" this "male in his flock," this masculine love, and yet giveth God the lame and the lean. (Mal. i. 14.) The highest love of the soul is a present for the greatest King in the world : therefore labour to keep-up thy love to the height toward God. Thou canst never be excessive in thy love to God ; to the creature thou mayest, and commonly art. But, behold the perverseness of man in this affection ! We stint our love to God, where it should know no bounds nor measures ; and we are boundless in our love to creatures, which always ought to be bounded.

XIII. *If we will keep ourselves in the love of God, let us labour to grow in grace, and to carry-on the work of it in our souls to the highest perfection.*—This is grounded upon the verse immediately before the text ; namely : "Ye, beloved, building-up yourselves in your most holy faith ;" where the participle "building" agrees with the verb in the text : "Keep yourselves in the love of God ;" noting this growth in grace and knowledge to be an effectual means to keep ourselves in the love of God ; whether we understand this clause, "building-up yourselves in your most holy faith," to be understood of the doctrine of faith or the grace of faith, or of both ; for we cannot well sunder them, they being helps to each other ; according to that of Peter, who puts them both together,—to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ;" and this is a sovereign remedy against falling away. (2 Peter iii. 17, 18.) Now there is good reason why our growth in grace, and particularly in faith, is a principal means to keep ourselves in the love of God :—

1. Because "the power of God" goes with faith, to keep us firm "unto salvation:" (1 Peter i. 5:) *Εν δυναμει Θεου φρουρουμενοι* we are "kept" thereby as with a strong guard.

2. Because, by building-up ourselves in our most holy faith, we please God; without faith we cannot do that: and we gain upon his love; for we are in the way of God, and doing his will: "This is the will of God, even our sanctification." (1 Thess. iv. 3.) "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him." (John xiv. 21.) "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (John xv. 9, 10.)

XIV. *A great means of keeping ourselves in the love of God is this, to "pray in the Holy Ghost."* (Verse 20, the verse before my text.)—Now we shall see how forcible and cogent this means is. Consider,

1. All good things come from God: (James i. 17:) prayer is the key of God's closet and treasury. We are mere beggars, and have nothing of our own, but are fain to beg our daily bread of God, who keeps us from hand to mouth: God will have it so, because he will have us know to whom we are beholden for all. Moreover, he loves to see our face, and hear our voice; and the oftener, the more welcome. And this he doeth as tender fathers use to do with their children, who know what they need, but will have them come to them for all, with bended knees for their father's blessing; nor shall they come in vain:—

(1.) For the Lord commands it, and approves it. (Matt. vi. 9.)

(2.) He hath annexed great promises to prayer:

(3.) Even the Holy Spirit. (Rom. viii. 15, 26, 27.)

(4.) And hath given us a Mediator to intercede and plead for us by office; and this is the great office of his high-priesthood. (Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 15, 16.) By all which we see, how seasonably the duty of prayer and the privilege of prayer is here annexed, to "keep ourselves in the love of God." (Jude 20.)

2. How can friends maintain their amity, without frequent converse? Abraham was called "the Friend of God;" (James ii. 23;) and ye see what power he had with God in prayer for wicked Sodom. God communicated his secrets to him, as one friend to another: and Abraham made intercession to Him, as favourites of princes for malefactors; so did he for Sodom; and ye know how far he prevailed. (Gen. xviii. 17—33.) For he was a righteous man; and such a man's "prayer availeth much." (James v. 16.) And what was Abraham's righteousness? Even "the righteousness of faith" by imputation; and this faith living and working. (Rom. iv.)

XV. *We keep ourselves in the love of God, when we declare a public spirit for the cause of God in his church against the enemies of it, by being zealous for his glory and valiant for his truth in our station.*—This is lively asserted in the song of Deborah and Barak; (Judges v. ;)

who, after she had praised some for their appearing, and others for not appearing in this cause dispraised; the Lord she praised above all for his presence with his people, and for that spirit of love he poured-out upon them, in these words: "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." (Verse 31.)

Now the reason why this public spirit in the cause of God is expressed by our love to God, is this:—because God is so much concerned in it,

1. As to his *honour*: to defend and deliver his people from his and their enemies, as the Midianites were.

2. As to his *power*: in reducing thirty thousand to three hundred, as in Gideon's case,—all "that lapped:" he, as a poor barley-cake, tumbled all the enemies down, and by a small company. (Judges vii.) And a woman, in Deborah's case, that is, by herself and Jael, (Judges iv. 21,) destroyed Jabin and Sisera's mighty host: to omit many other instances of public hearts, in this case signally owned by God, because they signally appeared for God. Thus Moses; (Exod. ii. 11—14;) this was their love. Thus saith Deborah: "My heart is toward the governors of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the Lord. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death, in the high places of the field." And thus did Issachar: but Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, Dan, and Asher, are branded for their cowardice. (Judges v. 9, 15—18.) I say, all this, appearing in the defence of all that was dear to God and them, is called "love to God." Therefore we may in no wise exclude this noble public spirit in the cause of God and his people from the love of God; for there is no principle in the world like to the love of God, to animate and inflame the soul to do great things for God. This spirit was marvellous in David, whose very name, דָּוִד was from "love." Therefore it is the duty of every child of God to pray for the Spirit of God, who only sheds all divine love abroad in the heart, (Rom. v. 5,) which God inspires as he pleaseth. (John iii. 8.)

XVI. *A great means of keeping ourselves in the love of God is, to be sincere and sound in the worship of God.*—Mark this well; for herein lies the love, or hatred of God, as appears plainly in the second commandment: \* "That love me, and keep my commandments." † (Exod. xx. 6.) Therefore idols and idolaters are called our "lovers," Hosea ii. 5, 7; Jer. iii. 1: They "kissed the calves." (Hosea xiii. 2.) Therefore our hankering and embracing of a false worship provoke God to jealousy: therefore the Lord deals with superstition and idolatry in his people after the law of harlots and adulterers; the scrip-

\* *Deum odisse in sacris literis peculiariter illi dicuntur, qui falsos deos colunt.*—MAIMONIDES. "In holy writ they especially are said to hate God, who worship false gods."—EDIT. † *Illa præcipue quæ ad arcendas pravæ superstitiones pertinent.*—GROTIUS. "Those commandments in particular which relate to the prohibition of wicked superstitions."—EDIT. *Hinc θεοσεβεις et כַּסִּיּוֹת פִּי דִּיעִי הֵנּוּ.* "Hence, in the scriptures, the pious are designated 'God-reverers' in the Greek, and 'well-doers' in the Hebrew."—EDIT.



ture is full of this language. (Ezek. xvi. 33, 36, 37; xxiii. 5.) There is no higher act of love in God, than to espouse a people to be his own, and to give them a rule of worship of his own institution, and to hold them to it, as he did Israel: "I remember the love of thine espousals." (Jer. ii. 2.) And when a people follows God, and serves God according to his own appointments, there are no higher acts of love toward Him in God's account. God is enamoured with such a people; he calls them his "Hephzibah" and his "Beulah." (Isai. lxii. 4.)

We see it, also, in the instance of good kings: how the Lord prized and praised them for this very thing,—for reforming and setting up the true worship of God: as David, Asa, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah. How the Lord prospered them, because their hearts were right and perfect with God in this thing. On the other side: how he hath branded and blasted all those that were false herein.\* For this was David, "a man after God's own heart,"—"fulfilling all his will;" (Acts xiii. 22;) which is chiefly meant in the point of God's worship. As for the wills of men in the worship of God, by their inventions, traditions, and commandments, he tells you he hates them, and they are abomination to him. (Mark vii. 7; Col. ii. 22; Matt. xv. 2, 3, 6.) And no wonder: for what intrencheth more upon the honour of God's wisdom and sovereignty, than this,—that he doth not know best how to appoint his own worship, but must be fain to be beholden to man for his devices and dictates in the case? This, though it seems very gay, is whorish and poisonous; this golden dress and cup is intoxicating. (Rev. xvii. 4, 5.)

XVII. *A great means of keeping in the love of God, is keeping up the communion of saints in all the parts and duties of it.*—What this is, we shall see according to scripture. "The communion of saints" is our participation of all the good things of God in common; whereunto all the saints, and only they, have right; consisting in our union to God, as our chiefest Good. This is with God as a Father, with the Son, and Holy Spirit. (1 John i. 3; 2 Cor. xiii. 13, 14.)

1. We have communion with *the Father* as children; and all in the greatest love. (1 John iii. 1; Rom. viii. 16, 17.) This is procured by Christ, (1 John ii. 23,) only obtained by believing, (John i. 12,) and maintained by the Spirit; (Rom. viii. 14;) who walk not in darkness, but in light. (1 John i. 6, 7.)

2. We have communion with *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God; by which we are made partakers of him, of his nature, and of his grace, and of his glory. All which is done by faith, that uniting and marrying grace: and this works such conjugal love between Christ and his church, as makes them spiritually bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh. (Eph. v. 25—33.) We maintain our

\* God in his highest acts of jealousy was enraged against his idolatrous people. (Psalm lxxviii. 59.) They kissed their idols, giving them all the tokens of love and homage. (1 Kings xix. 18; Job xxxi. 27.) They burned their children to them as the costliest sacrifice: as Abraham would [have burnt] his Isaac in love to God; but God only tried him by it.

communion with Christ not only by eating *with* him, but also by eating *of* him. (John vi. 53—57.) God the Father calls us into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is said to “dwell in our hearts by faith,” (Eph. iii. 17,) and by his Spirit also; for he that hath “not the Spirit of Christ, is none of his.” (Rom. viii. 9.) This our fellowship and communion with Christ is evidenced by our perseverance in grace firmly “unto the end.” (Heb. iii. 14.) This our fellowship with Jesus Christ is confirmed by the sacraments:—

(1.) He that is *baptized* into Christ hath “put on Christ.” (Gal. iii. 27.)

(2.) By the *supper*; which is therefore called “the communion,” because the saints gather together in that, as the highest act of their fellowship with the Lord and with one another: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. x. 16.) The children of God, “walking in the light, have thereby fellowship” with Christ, and “one with another.” (1 John i. 7.) As Christ is God and man in one person, so we have fellowship with him in *both natures*:—

(1.) In his *divine* nature. (2 Peter i. 4.)

(2.) In his *human* nature: partaking with him in the same flesh and blood. (Heb. ii. 14.)

*In the Spirit*: “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” (1 Cor. vi. 17; Rom. viii. 11.) “There is one body, and one Spirit.” (Eph. iv. 4.)

*In afflictions*: “That I may know the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” (Phil. iii. 10.)

We have communion with Christ *in glory*: “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. viii. 17, 18.) “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” (Phil. iii. 21.) So, John xvii. 21—24.)

*In all good things*: “wisdom, righteousness, redemption,” faith, repentance, regeneration, adoption, justification, “sanctification,” and spiritual liberty. (1 Cor. i. 30.) All these are benefits and high blessings, communicated from the Father, by the Spirit, through the purchase and merit of Jesus Christ. See that place,—2 Cor. v. 16, 17: it is very pregnant and apposite. (1.) He tells you, “We know Christ no more after the flesh:” because that dispensation is over; we are now under the dispensation of the Spirit. (2.) “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” (3.) Our communion with Christ is not hereby lost, but advanced higher: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” “In Christ” still, and “a new creature” by Christ’s Spirit working in us all new things, and working out all old. (4.) All this is the work of God in us and for us, by the Son reconciling us, and the Spirit perfecting us in “the ministry of reconciliation.” (Verses 18, 19.) (5.) All this arose from love, (verse 14,) the root of the communion of saints with the blessed

Trinity; (6.) As ye have heard, founded in union, expressed in a communication of all good things by Christ, our Head and Husband; with reciprocation and returns of love on our part, in all the acts of it, by entire and sincere obedience; also in mutual interchanges of duties, respecting our fellow-members of the same body. This is so fully set forth by the apostle Paul, "according to the grace of God given unto" him, that I need say no more about it, but commend the reading of that whole chapter to you, 1 Cor. xii., from verse 4 to the end. I fear, this relation and fellowship is little minded, with the duties of it, by many, that yet think themselves in the body, and presume of the privileges of it. Mark these few things for your help:—

(1.) The differences of gifts and administrations, offices and services, in the body spiritual, as in the body natural. (Verses 4, 12.)

(2.) All these coming from "one Spirit," and one Head Jesus Christ, the Fountain-Head of all. (Verse 13.)

(3.) That all these gifts and graces are divided to every member as the Lord pleaseth, for the same use and end, "to profit withal;" without "schism," without a conceit of self-sufficiency and unconcernedness for others. (Verses 7, 11, 25.)

(4.) All this called "Christ," to show the near and blessed communion of saints. (Verse 12.)

XVIII. The last means I shall name to you is in the words immediately following my text, in the same verse: ["Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life:"] (Jude 21:) which, doubtless, the Holy Ghost points us to, as an effectual means to "keep ourselves in the love of God:"—

REASON 1. Because it is the highest act of God's love to us,—to bestow eternal life on us.

2. The Lord, that hath provided eternal life for us, will have us always walk in expectation of it. (Gen. xlix. 18; Titus ii. 13.)

3. We have no ground at all to expect eternal life from God, without keeping ourselves in the love of God. (Rom. viii. 23, compared with verse 39.)

4. We keep ourselves in God's love, by being found in such a state and in such a way as leads to life; which is chiefly faith and obedience.

5. Such as are found out of this way and state are not children, but strangers and enemies; therefore have no reason to expect an inheritance; they have no title nor right to it. Now a son that is heir-apparent by adoption in Christ to such an estate of eternal life in heaven,—he will not only be always in expectation of it, but will judge himself bound to study all the ways he can possibly do to please God, to keep in his love and favour; and withal fear and take heed of forfeiting the love of God:—

(1.) Because it is an act of mercy and free grace: it is not a debt, or any thing thou canst challenge; the Lord Jesus is sole purchaser. Text: "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 23.)

(2.) If we look for all as an act of mercy, it will keep the soul humble and thankful. Such a frame of soul the Lord loves and favours. (Micah vi. 8; James iv. 6; 1 Peter v. 5.)

(3.) The prospect of eternal life will keep us from being much enamoured with this life, which is vain and sinful and sorrowful and transient. (2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 1.)

(4.) The prospect of a better life will make us prepare for it, and lay hold on it: (2 Peter iii. 11—14; 1 Tim. vi. 12; Rev. xxi. 2; Phil. iii. 12—14;) by watchfulness, as the wise virgins; (Matt. xxv. 4, 10;) by constancy in our course and race; (1 Tim. vi. 19;) by casting away every clog. (Heb. xii. 1, 2.)

(5.) Because all creatures wait for this glory, and are in "earnest expectation" of it. (Rom. viii. 19.)

(6.) Because all saints have ever lived up to it: this is the haven of their rest; (Heb. iv. 1, 9;) here they cast anchor; (Heb. vi. 19, 20;) with this they comfort themselves; (1 Thess. iv. 18;) for this they groan.

Now let me propound a few incentives to blow and stir up the dying embers of divine love in our souls.

1. No man can love God truly, unless he *know God truly*.—"If any man love God, the same is known of him." (1 Cor. viii. 3.) Therefore examine what knowledge thou hast of God, especially what practical knowledge. It is clear, practical, gospel-knowledge,—to "know God" in Christ,—this is saving, and brings "life eternal." (John xvii. 3.) This is knowledge that transforms; (2 Cor. iii. 18;) this is a sanctifying knowledge; (Eph. iv. 21, 22;) this is a justifying knowledge, or the knowledge of faith. (Isai. liii. 11; Phil. iii. 8—10.) This light and knowledge comes into the soul by the illumination of the Spirit of God, turning our darkness into light, and is the teaching of God, and "the anointing" of God, "teaching all things." (John xiv. 26; 1 John ii. 20, 27.) This principally teacheth us these two things:—

(1.) The love of God in Christ to us.

(2.) The loveliness of Christ, to inflame our love to him, by his beauty and excellency. Now when we clearly see and duly consider this, our hearts are marvellously drawn out in love to the Lord: and without this knowledge of God we can never truly love him. O, pray for it, and attend, and improve the means of it! This is that which the apostle points at, (1 Cor. ii. 9—16,) as the most transcendent of all other in the world, which carnal hearts are no ways capable of without the work of God's Spirit in the soul. Read and mind that scripture well. There are some things which we can never see in their excellences without the help of telescopes and perspective-glasses, by reason of the weakness and dimness of our sight: in like manner, we can never see the amiableness of God in Christ, without the help of God's Spirit. This sets the soul upon the top of a high mountain, as Moses upon the top of Pisgah, whereby he gains a prospect of the heavenly Canaan; or as Christ and his disciples, upon Tabor in the transfiguration, from that "excellent glory;" (2 Peter

i. 17, 18;) or such a sight as Paul had in his rapture. (2 Cor. xii. 2—4.)

2. A second means and motive to blow up the flame of divine love in us, is to consider that the Lord is incomparably the most lovely object in the world, being the chief of all good and goodness. (Psalm cxix. 68.)—For which reason our Saviour saith, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.” (Matt. xix. 16, 17.) If we love a drop of good in the creature, how should we be ravished with an ocean, many oceans, in God! Happy he that enjoys the Fountain of good; for with him “is the well of life,” &c. (Psalm xxxvi. 7—10.) “God is purely good without mixture, infinitely good without measure, absolutely good without dependency, communicably good without failure, eternally good without end,” say the Schools; “therefore most amiable.” O consider this! And, “This Good, this God, is ours for ever and ever,” may every believer say. O, let this inflame our love to this Good!

3. *Examine thy faith in the truth of it, and labour for the growth of it, and observe the working of it.*—For true “faith works by love;” (Gal. v. 6;) and the stronger thy faith is, the stronger thy love is. The apostle Peter showing the excellency of faith, and of a tried faith, that it is “more precious than gold,” he saith, [that] by it we love Jesus Christ, though we never saw him with our bodily eyes; and we love him by believing, and rejoice in it “with unspeakable, glorious joy.” (1 Peter i. 7, 8.) Faith is the first principle and chief root of all operation in the soul; \* and it is therefore a vain thing to talk of loving God, without believing: for “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” God doth not put the oil of his mercy but into the vessel of faith.† “We believe, and therefore speak,” saith the apostle: we believe, therefore we love. What made the saints not value worldly treasures and delights? What made them love not their lives to the death? What made them so wonderful in their active and passive obedience for Christ, but their faith, by “seeing Him who is invisible?” (Heb. xi. 24—27.) For there is not such an eye on earth, that sees spiritual things in their spirituality, and notwithstanding their remotest distance: such a faith doth break forth in the flames of love to God, that thereby the heart, where it is, is ravished by it; the Lord saith, his heart is also “ravished with” that eye. (Canticles iv. 9.)

4. *Consider, that God best deserves thy love.*—All the world cannot vie with God in loving us, therefore are not worthy to be rivals with him: it is a horrid and an amazing thing, how the glorious God should so far be provoked by such rivals, and bear so long. Of this he complained severely in his people of old: read the prophets, and that one chapter, for instance, Jer. ii. 5, 11—13, 31, 32. And this is true of the greatest part of the world; one silly idol or other courts all of them: yet they never did any man any good, nor can [do] it, but hurt. By loving them, they cannot love us again; they cannot save us in our trouble; (Jer. ii. 28;) they cannot

\* AUGUSTINI *Tractatus* vii. in 1 Joh.

† BERNARDUS.

hear us when we cry, no more than Baal did his priests. (1 Kings xviii. 26.) Our love is lost upon them; they distress us, but help us not; like summer-brooks that are dry when we most need them. (Job vi. 15—18.)

What say you, doth not the Lord best deserve your love? What is there that he hath not done for you? You owe him, not only for your blessings, but for your being; you stand indebted to him for "all things pertaining to life and godliness," for all in hand and hope. And how many grow fat and wanton under the mercies of God! yea, Jeshurun, kicking at his bowels, and beating the breasts that feed them! (Deut. xxxii. 15.) Strange, degenerate brats! so far that the Lord cries out to heaven and earth to be astonished at it; (Isai. i. 2, 3;) yet for all this continues loving them still, and, like a good shepherd, seeks after straying sheep, that of themselves would never return without fetching. (Jer. iii. 1.) Will any creature in the world whom thou idolizest do this for thee? Is this after the manner of men? No; it is the peculiar kindness of God only; think on it.

5. Consider: *if thou love the Lord truly, and keep thyself in his love, thy heart will cease to love any thing else in the world, and be dead to creatures, and they will be dead to thee.* (Gal. vi. 14.)—*Si cor amore Christi inardescit, omnis creatura vilescit*: "All things are contemptible to one that truly loves God." (Phil. iii. 8.) When the sun shines, the stars vanish; and when it shines upon a fire, it puts the fire out. So doth the love of God in the soul extinguish all worldly love: and this is an infallible sign of the love of God in the soul; for they two are contrary, and mortal enemies one to the other, and seek the destruction of each other. (Gal. v. 17.) The reason is plain:—

(1.) They differ in their *rise and offspring*: one is heaven-born, the other is earthly.

(2.) They differ in their *quality*: one hates what the other loves.

(3.) They differ in their *objects*: one loves God, the other loves the creature.

(4.) They differ in the means of their *attainments*: one minds the will and word of God, to follow that only; the other minds "the wills and lusts of the flesh," to "fulfil" them, (Eph. ii. 3,) and to "make provision for" them. (Rom. xiii. 14.)

(5.) They differ in their *end*: the love of creatures is disappointed and lost; the love of God enjoys him for ever, and rests satisfied in that enjoyment, and not before. (Psalm xlii. 1, 2.)

6. Consider: *thou canst never keep thyself in the love of God, if thou art not quit and utterly disengaged from the love of the world, in the lusts and vanities of it, by thy inordinate desires and hankerings after it.*—God never comes into the soul till the world go out; and then the soul moves nobly, when it moves to its principle.\* This makes the circular motion of the heavens to be most noble,—because it returns *always* to the same point where it began. Thus Noah's dove found no rest out of the ark, but returned to it after

\* TAULERUS.

long fluttering about, because it found no food among the carrion; but the raven did, and therefore abode by it. A bird, as long as it flies aloft in the air, is free from the fowler's gin; but when it lights down on the ground, and falls a-picking in the earth, then is nearest unto danger: thus it fares with men of the earth. "O poor soul," saith St. Augustine, "how dost thou debase thyself! thou lovest earthly things, and thou art better than them; thou admirest the sun, and thou art more beautiful and excellent than the sun: only God is above thee, and thou wert made to love him only." A child of heaven and a son of the earth differ in this as much as heaven and earth. (Phil. iii. 18—20.) The ground is cursed, and this world shall be burnt up; (2 Peter iii. 10;) why art thou enamoured with it? Therefore the Lord embitters the world's breasts to his children, that they may be weaned, and no longer suck of them; and then, when the world begins to be bitter to us, the Lord begins to be sweeter to us. When Peter had found some sweetness on Mount Tabor, he was loath to come down, and would dwell there above the world in that heavenly company. (Matt. xvii. 4.) That wife never truly loved her husband that loves her jewels above him. Did not Israel do so, when they made a calf of the jewels [which] God gave them, and a god of that calf, and themselves beasts in worshipping of it? What abominable idolatry, what apostasy, what ingratitude is here!

## USES.

I. All that hath hitherto been said of this great duty of keeping ourselves in the love of God, is practical, and carries application with it, containing true signs of such as keep themselves in God's love. What is that, but a great **USE OF EXAMINATION** of our state and of our practice? 1. *Whether we are "in the love of God?"* 2. *Whether we do indeed walk so as to "keep" ourselves in it?* Be not deceived; compare your state, heart, and life with these rules; be serious and solemn in it.

II. You have had, by way of contrary, sufficiently hinted, the cross practice of the greatest part of the world herein, who keep themselves out of God's love, by keeping in an evil state of enmity between God and them; and though God hath long beseeched them by his ambassadors to "be reconciled to God," (2 Cor. v. 20,) yet they will not, but stand out in open defiance against God, and "desire not the knowledge of his ways." (Job xxi. 14.) They prefer the love of men before the love of God; they prefer the love of money and carnal delights before the love of God. (Luke viii. 14; 2 Tim. iii. 4.) They hate the knowledge of God, they hate the people of God, they hate the ways of God; they love those that hate God, and whom God hates. Can these think themselves in the love of God? Can they "keep" themselves in the love of God, before they are come into it? And this carries in it a **USE OF REPREHENSION, CONVICTION, DISCRIMINATION, AND LAMENTATION**, all of them respectively. O, mind and consider it well!

III. We have a USE OF EXHORTATION. The text is properly such a use: it contains a duty to be practised all your life. Perform the duties of that state; study what doth please God; take heed of that which doth offend God; shun all that is inconsistent with the love of God. Meditate on the happy privilege of such a state: \* thou art a candidate of heaven, a favourite of God. Such are out of the reach of danger; they have a sweet calm and sunshine in their conscience; they have a pleasant spring of singing of birds, and like the fragrant smell of a garden of spices, and the fill of divine flagons in Christ's "banqueting-house." (Canticles i. 2, 3; ii. 4—6, 12, 13; iv. 16; v. 1.)

IV. *If thou keep thyself in the love of God, thou needest not to fear the hatred of men.*—This is to be feared of all that are not in the love of God. Those that are in God's love, have no cause in the world to fear worldly men's hate; they have the strongest security against it:—

1. From the *power of God*: which is omnipotent. (Gen. xv. 1; Rom. viii. 31—39.)

2. From the *promise of God*: which is faithful, and never fails.

3. From the *eternity of Christ*: "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. xiii. 5, 6, 8.) Read Deut. xxxiii. 26—29. God "will be a wall of fire round about" those that are in his love. (Zech. ii. 5.) Read Deut. xxxii. 9—14. What higher expressions can be uttered, to set forth the tender love of God to his people, while they are under his wing? Will ye have more? Consider that of the prophet Isaiah, in chap. lvi. 13, 14: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb."

V. If ye mind this duty aright, to "keep yourselves in the love of God," First, *You must labour to understand the love of God to his elect truly, and then meditate duly on it, and then walk worthy of it.*—Now this love of God I cannot more compendiously declare, than by that of the apostle: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," &c. (Eph. i. 3—5.) In which ye are to observe six remarkable things in God's blessing of us, for which we are to bless him:—

1. That God the Father of Christ is the author of all our blessings, especially of spiritual blessings; election, redemption, and all that flow from thence, are given us upon the account of Christ, by whom God becomes our Father, that is, by adoption; by which we have the right of inheritance, that is, salvation.

\* *Qui in amore Dei se custodiunt suaviter habitant, instar apum in alvearibus, in favis mellis; ut sponsa in sinu sponsi.* "They who 'keep themselves in the love of God' dwell sweetly, like bees in their hives, in the honey-combs; or as the bride in the bosom of her husband."—EDIT.



2. That by the word "blessings," he includes all things pertaining to salvation; because he saith, "with all spiritual blessings;" alluding to God's promise made to Abraham in Christ, saying, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." And therefore he will give the consummation of this blessing at the day of judgment to his elect, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," (Matt. xxv. 34,) that is, from his everlasting love. (Eph. i. 6.)

3. That the Father loves and blesseth "us," that is, his "chosen" ones, and none else; who declare themselves such by their faith and holiness and love. (Verses 4, 5.)

4. That these blessings are principally "spiritual blessings," such as the elect only receive, in a peculiar and distinguishing way; and that under two considerations:—

(1.) They are not *carnal* blessings; though the Father denies not these to his children, for which his child must bless him; but here they are called "spiritual," because chiefly such.

(2.) They are not *common spiritual* blessings neither. Such are temporary faith, a great degree of knowledge even in spiritual things, yea, a taste also of the Holy Ghost, and the beginning of a pious life, &c. (Heb. vi. 1—5; 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.) But only saving grace and eternal glory, the fruit of eternal election, (for all other spiritual blessings follow and flow from that; as, the true knowledge of God, a living faith, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, a Christian life, love to the saints, and life eternal,) *this* the apostle calls *πασα ευλογία*, "all blessing," as containing and comprehending all fully and perfectly.

5. But there is one thing more to be noted from that word, "In heavenly places:" for as carnal blessings have their beginning in the earth, and there they end; so heavenly blessings come from heaven, and terminate there in glory without end. Therefore we render it, "in heavenly places," because it notes the place of it, which is heaven, where Christ is exalted in glory as our Head, to communicate and accumulate all spiritual blessings on his elected and redeemed members. There it is said, "In heavenly places in Christ;" all this is amplified in this first, (Eph. i. 19—23,) and more particularized in the second, where he saith, "He hath quickened us together, and raised us up together, and made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places." (Eph. ii. 4—6.) All this is a high act of divine love toward us: by which three things here and in heaven, all grace and glory is meant, and that saints do partake of them with and by Christ. And this leads to,

6. A Sixth thing, wherein the love of God to us is declared in the place afore-cited, (Eph. i. 3—5,) namely, "in Christ;" by which is assigned the material cause of all spiritual blessings, namely, Christ as Mediator and High Priest.

(1.) We are blessed "in Christ," that is, for Christ's sake and upon his account.

(2.) "In Christ," by the merits of Christ, by his obedience, passion, and death.

(3.) "In Christ," as our Head;—from whom, as such, all our blessings flow in our souls and bodies: therefore is he called "the Lord our Righteousness;" (Jer. xxiii. 6; 1 Cor. i. 30;)—that is, in the person of Christ. We are "raised" with him, and "sit in heaven" with him; that is, we are counted raised and sitting there by his dignity and glory, as our Head. By this imputation, the Papists' justification by inherent righteousness is fully confuted. Also we have infinite privilege and comfort, that the Lord Jesus is made to us, his members, righteousness and holiness, which can never be had any other way, either within us or without us, but in Christ our Head only; and there only it is perfect and sure: and all this in love. For the Father hath demonstrated his love to Christ for this his undertaking; and his love to us, because he appointed him for us, and accepts us in him. (Eph. i. 3—6.)

This is THE FIRST BRANCH of the fifth use,—of studying the love of God to us in Christ in all the causes of it and in all the parts of it: for this is a strong motive to "keep" us in this love,—to understand it, and to believe it, and to walk up to it.

THE SECOND BRANCH: *To understand and practise our love to the Lord, answering his love to us.*

Understand what love that is wherewith we are to love the Lord, and whereby we keep ourselves in his love to us. In order unto this, ye are to know, that the whole worship of God consists in the love of God. (Matt. xxii. 36, 37.) Hence Ambrose saith, "The love of God is the form of all virtue, yea, the head and foundation of all true religion." "The end of the law is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." (1 Tim. i. 5.)

There are three things that are in true love:—

1. To be *affected* with a desirable object, upon our knowledge of it to be good.

2. To be carried out strongly in our *desires* after it, that we may be united with it.

3. When we enjoy it, to *rejoice* in it, and to rest in it, as in our end and centre of our desires. This the word signifies in the original Hebrew and Greek: *רַחַץ אַהֲבָה*, *αγαπην, αγαπωνων*, "to rest greatly in the enjoyment of" the thing beloved; as etymologists have it, Phavorinus, &c.

So true love contains in it affection, desire, joy, as the beginning, progress, and end of it; and this will be perfect in heaven, and our perfection and happiness. In this, love outvies all other grace. (1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13.) We have an excellent saying of St. Augustine to this purpose: "This is then the rest of the soul, when it is fixed by the love of God as to its desire, nor desires any thing or object besides; but, having got possession of that which it desires, is wholly taken up with the delight of it, and is happy in the secure enjoyment of

it."\* Whence we are to learn wherein the true nature of our love of God stands,—that the heart rest in the enjoyment of what it desires, which it can do in nothing else ; and only our love to God is true and perfect love, because our souls find rest in God only.

St. Bernard makes four degrees of our love to God :—

1. When a man loves *himself for himself* : but herein he can have no rest nor content ; for it is not to be found in him.

2. When he loves *God for himself, and not for God* ; when he would have God make him happy.

3. When he loves *God for God himself*, as judging him most worthy of all love.

4. When he loves *himself and all things else for God only*, and is therein satisfied, desiring nothing more.

This is indeed to love God, when we love him for himself, and ourselves and all other things subordinately unto God, in him and for him only. Our soul, as Noah's dove, hath no rest, till it return to this ark. This enjoyment satisfies : (Psalm xvii. 15 :) ye "shall be abundantly satisfied," because it is the water "of life," (Psalm xxxvi. 8, 9,) which, being once drunk of, quencheth thirst for ever.

I conclude all with this,—that, considering the circumstances into which we are cast, it is our duty, wisdom, and privilege to keep ourselves in the love of God, from the transcendent advantages we have by it above the love and favour of men, which is hard to get, and yet not worth the pains when gotten ; yea, when gotten, it is as hard to keep, and yet not worth the keeping ; yea, it is easily lost, and better lost than kept. Therefore never labour to keep thyself in the love of men, by which thou mayest lose the love of God ; but keep yourselves in the love of God, and that will keep you safe here and for ever. The Lord gives it as a reason why he would not cast off his people, though he threatened them as if he would do it : "Because," saith he, "I am God, and not man." (Hosea xi. 8, 9.) It is not after the manner of men to be constant in their love ; but [He] is like Himself, and never breaks-off or keeps-in his love.

The Lord will be called "Husband" of his people ; and is he not the best and dearest in the world ? Doth he take any people or soul to wife for rare beauty or rich dowry ? Alas ! there is none. Did he not find us in our gore-blood, and yet loved us when such ? (Ezek. xvi. 5—8.) Now, whom he loves, he cleaves to. (Gen. ii. 24 ; Eph. v. 31.) Thus "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit : " (1 Cor. vi. 17 :) the word is *προσκολλημενος*, "glued," to show the close union of divine love. Pray, then, to God for the Holy Ghost, whom he hath promised to give to them that ask, that he may "shed abroad the love of God in your hearts ;" (Rom. v. 5 ; 2 Thess. iii. 5 ;) for hereby you will "keep yourselves in the love of God."

\* Tom. iv., *Libro de Substantiâ Dilectionis*, cap. 6.

## SERMON VII. .

BY THE REV. THOMAS LYE, A.M.

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WHAT MAY GRACIOUS PARENTS BEST DO FOR THE CONVERSION OF THOSE CHILDREN WHOSE WICKEDNESS IS OCCASIONED BY THEIR SINFUL SEVERITY OR INDULGENCE ?

*He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.*—Malachi iv. 6.

THIS intricate text, proposed to me, (on which I preached,) speaking but indirectly and by consequence only (as I then said) to the question proposed ; upon mature deliberation, I have thought good to adjoin another, which, I conceive, looks with a more direct aspect on both the parts of our bipartite question ; namely,

*Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath : but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*—Ephesians vi. 4.

As malapertness, frowardness, sauciness, self-will, stubbornness, sullenness, disobedience, yea, contempt and scorning of parents, specially the more indulgent and weak, are vices too common with children and youth ; so, on the other side, parents, unless modelled and conformed by the word and Spirit of God, are very prone to fall into one of these two extremes,—either immoderate severity and rigid abuse of the parental authority, or fond indulgence and sinful neglect of just and discreet discipline.

Against both these extremes our apostle doth here arm and fortify gracious parents, by instructing them how equally to hold the balance, and discreetly to manage the reins and rudder, of their parental power and discipline ; so as they may not provoke their children to a just disgust and wrath, on the one side ; nor expose themselves to a base contempt and scorn, on the other. And this he doth,

1. *By forbidding a vice* : “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath,” Μη ὑπαρρογίζετε, *Ad iram, ad iræ exuberantiam, ne provocate, ne irritate.* As if he had said, “Fathers, I know, your children are apt to be vain, rash, foolish, disobedient, stubborn, able to roil\* the most sedate spirit, to try the patience of a Job ; and it is fit, yea, necessary, that you admonish, reprove, rebuke, chastise them : but yet take heed, that though they provoke you to a just displeasure, you do not, by an unjust abuse of your just authority, in a too strict, rigid, immoderate severity against them, give your offending children any just occasion of, or urgent temptation to, any sinful

\* “To ruffle, derange.”—EDIT.

anger or inveterate wrath against you. Whilst you are correcting for one sin, do not provoke them to commit another. Whilst you are plucking them out of a gulf, do not dash them against a rock. 'Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.'

But observe we here the apostle's prudence. Having (verses 1—3) allotted to children their share, namely, obedience: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord;" and backed it both with divine precept and promise; the just consequence seems to require, that he should have invested the parents with command and government for their portion: but he fairly waves that, and, as supposing [that] he had sufficiently fixed the parents' authority by putting their children under the yoke of obedience, he now consults the child's interest, or rather the mutual comfort both of parent and child, by advising parents to use the power that God had given them moderately and tenderly. On the one hand, he sweetens the obedience of the child; on the other, tempers the authority of the parent. That the precept of obedience may not fright the child, nor the prerogative of power swell the parent, let them both know,—the *child*, that he is in subjection and must obey; but then it is his father, who either doth or should love him:—and the *father*, that he hath authority, and may command; but whom? It is his child, whom he must govern with that tenderness as not in the least to "provoke." Thus by forbidding a vice.

2. *By enjoining them the contrary grace or duty*: "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Children, as they must not be "provoked to wrath," so they must not be indulged in folly; as they must not be discouraged, so they may not be cockered. Our children naturally are too, too like the wild horse or ass's colt, who, if they once begin to know their strength, and get the bit between their teeth, will first cast their rider, and then run in a full career to their own destruction. And therefore take heed; do not indulge them in their foolish humours; "but bring them up," &c.

Having thus fixed our corner-stones, now to our building. In the case before us, I find TWO TRUTHS SUPPOSED, and ONE QUESTION IN form, but really bipartite, PROPOSED.

I. THE TWO TRUTHS, and those sad ones, *supposed*.

1. *That it hath been, is, and may be, the lot of gracious parents to have unconverted, wicked children.*

2. *That this wickedness of these unconverted children hath been and is too, too often occasioned by their gracious parents' sinful, (1.) Severity, (2.) Indulgence.*

II. THE QUESTION, or case of conscience to be resolved; which is bipartite:

*What may gracious parents best do toward the conversion of those their children, whose wickedness is occasioned by their sinful, 1. Severity? 2. Indulgence?*

I. OF THE FIRST TRUTH.

(I.) The first truth supposed; namely, *that it hath been, is, and may be, the lot of gracious parents to have unconverted, wicked children:*

let me add, of the best of parents to be afflicted with very wicked, yea, the worst of children.

Had not Adam an envious, murderous Cain? (Gen. iv. 8—11.) The first branch of the universal root wholly rotten! [Had not] Noah a cursed Ham? (Gen. ix. 22;) Abraham a mocking, persecuting Ishmael? (Gen. xxi. 9; Gal. iv. 29;) Lot a Moab and Ammon, the sons of incest, and the fathers of an idolatrous brood, that to the death hated God's chosen Israel? (Gen. xix. 37, 38;) Isaac a profane Esau? (Gen. xxv. 25; Heb. xii. 16.) [Had not] Eli two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, both "sons of Belial," prodigies of lust and wickedness? (1 Sam. ii. 12—17, 22;) David an ambitious Adonijah, (1 Kings i. 5; ii. 13—25,) an incestuous Amnon, (2 Sam. xiii. 14,) a murderous, traitorous, rebellious Absalom? (2 Sam. xiii. 28, 29; xv. 10.) [Had not] Jehoshaphat a bloody, idolatrous Jehoram? (2 Chron. xxi. 4, 6, 11, 13;) Josiah a wicked Jehoiakim, and another as bad, if not worse,—a wretched, false, perjured, covenant-breaking Zedekiah? (2 Chron. xxxvi. 5, 12, 13; Ezek. xvii. 15, 18.) But enough of this; sigh even to the breaking of your hearts, when you think of many, very many others, in former ages and in our own days and city, that might be added to fill-up this black catalogue.

(II.) *This wickedness of these unconverted children hath been and is too, too often occasioned, yea, advanced, by the sinful severity or indulgence of their unwary, though gracious, parents.*—This head divides itself into two branches; namely, parents' sinful severity and indulgence.

First. *Sinful severity*: and of this, 1. *What it is not.* 2. *What it is.*

1. *What it is not.*

(1.) *A grave, wise, holy, strict demeanour toward our children.*—Such a carriage as whereby we may procure glory to God, honour to ourselves, and so to preserve and keep up that authority which God hath stamped upon us, is not sinful severity. To carry it so, and so to keep our distance, as to give our children no occasion to undervalue or "despise" us; (1 Tim. iv. 12; Titus ii. 15;) so as that they may see and own the wisdom of God shining in us; that our children may pay us that reverence and respect that God requires of them; (1 Kings iii. 28;) this is not to be accounted sinful severity, but behaving ourselves "worthily in Ephratah." (Ruth iv. 11.)

(2.) *All just anger, or the rising up of the heart in a holy displeasure against sin in our children,* is not sinful severity. Parents may "be angry, and yet not sin." (Eph. iv. 26.) Nay, parents would certainly sin, if, on just occasion given by their children, they should not be angry; but with these provisos:—

(i.) *That the cause for which they are angry be good and warrantable.*—Such as we can give a good account of to God; an anger like that of our Saviour, who "looked round about on" his malicious observers "with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;" (Mark iii. 5;) when our anger is accompanied with grief, because God is dishonoured by our children's offending against truth,

piety, justice, humanity; because we see them neglect their duty, hurt their own or others' souls or bodies.

(ii.) *That the object of this anger be right.*—That is, when that which we are angry at is not so much the persons of our children that offend, as their offence itself, their sin, fault, disobedience; not so much the patient, as the disease.

(iii.) *That the end be right.*—Namely, that the fault [which] we are offended at may be amended by our children, and that they for the future may be warned not to offend in the like again.

(iv.) *That a due decorum may be observed both as to the measure and duration of our anger.*—When it is neither too hot, nor too long; when it is a rational, holy, temperate displeasure, a moderate anger; when right reason and scripture sit in the box, and guide the chariot, saying, as the Lord to the sea, "Thus much, thus long, and no more, no longer:"—thus far no sinful severity.

(3.) *Grave counselling and admonishing our children in and to that which is truly good.* (Eph. vi. 4.)—All serious discountenancing of and severe frowning on them, when in an evil way; nay, sharp reproofs and rebukes; (Titus i. 13;) yea, being so far a terror to them as to let them know, we bear not the stamp of God's authority "in vain;" (Rom. xiii. 3, 4;) nay, farther, smart chastising of them, proportionable to their age and offence; (Prov. xxix. 15;) provided we express fatherly love and tenderness in all, out of a true desire of their repentance and reformation:—all this is not to be looked upon as sinful severity, but as the faithful discharge of a necessary parental duty; which is by so much the more excellent, because it is so much neglected, and so hard to be performed in a right manner.

2. *What sinful severity is, or wherein it discovers itself.*—Sinful severity betrays itself in and by the *irregular passions, austere looks, bitter words, and rigid actions* of those parents who abuse their parental power.

*That the wickedness of unconverted children is oftentimes occasioned by the sinful severity of their parents.*—They are provoked, and that to sin,

1. *By irregular passions, specially that of an inordinate and immoderate anger.*

(1.) *Rash anger:* When parents are soon angry with their children, when they will not give leave to their judgments to consider before they are angry.\* (James i. 19.) The wise man tells us, "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger," and that "it is his glory to pass over a transgression;" (Prov. xix. 11;) but brands rash anger with the mark of folly: "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly." (Prov. xiv. 17.) It was grave advice to one, not to be angry at any time, till he had first repeated the Greek alphabet. To be angry without any cause, or upon every trivial, slight occasion; for any thing

\* *Multos absolvemus, si prius cœperimus judicare quàm irasci.*—SENECA *De Irâ.*  
"We should forgive many their offences, if, before we were angry with them, we allowed ourselves time for forming a cool judgment."—EDIT.

that is not material in itself or in its consequent ; for mere involuntary and casual offences and slips in our children, such as without great care could not have been prevented ; and for these to be so far exasperated as to begin to hate or more remissly to love them ;—is for a father to fire the beacon of his soul for the landing of a cockboat. It is *that* that exposes the father to his child's contempt, and God's judgment. (Matt. v. 22.)

(2.) When a parent's anger is *too frequent, too hot, or too long*.—Anger must be used, as a medicine, only now and then, and that only on a just occasion ; otherwise it loseth its efficacy, or hurts the patient. Again : anger, when too hot, vehement, excessive, provokes. It is true, it must be serious ; there must be some life and warmth in it ; the potion must be warmed, that it may operate the more vigorously toward the reformation of offending children : but then when it swells into an excess and transport of passion, it provokes.\* Such an excess of anger, like a ball of wildfire, is very apt to inflame the child's breast, and to provoke him into a sinful return of wrath and strife. (Prov. xv. 18.) Lastly : anger, when too long, when it lies soaking in the breast, is apt to putrify. If the sun arises and sets on a man in his wrath, the text tells us who is like to be his bedfellow. (Eph. iv. 26, 27.) "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools." (Eccles. vii. 9.) And well may it provoke a child, though criminal, to see his father's bosom, where once he lay, to be now become anger's couch and Satan's pillow.

Thus you see that irregular passions in severe parents are no little provocations and spurs to sin and wrath in their disobedient children : they are like those smart cantharides or Spanish flies,—the most speedy and effectual means to raise blisters.

2. *By an austere look, grim, sour, lowering, frowning countenance*.—When a man seems to carry revenge, daggers, death in his face ; when a man usually looks on his child, as Cain did on his brother, (Gen. iv. 5, 6,) as one highly displeased, that bears ill-will, and owes him a grudge, and will be sure to pay it in due time ; when the child observes his ancestors' crest portrayed on his father's forehead, and, instead of smiles, can see nothing there but cruel lions, bears, tigers :—this must needs highly provoke ; and it is not to be wondered at, if the child, in a fright and dreadful indignation, cries out, roaring, "I do well to be angry, even to the death. Better to be killed outright, than buried alive ! No grave so dark, so dismal, as those deep furrows in my frowning, constantly frowning, father's forehead."

3. *By bitter, hasty, biting, testy, disdainful, reproachful, railing, taunting, menacing, threatening words*.—Words steeped in the venom of asps. O, these pierce deep, like the tails of scorpions, and do highly provoke. More particularly,

(1.) *Hard words* : soft words and hard arguments work powerfully : "A soft tongue breaketh the bone," (Prov. xxv. 15,) or one that is

\* *Ira sic dicta quasi hominem facit ex se ire, et non esse apud se.* "The Latin word for 'anger' seems to have had its derivation, from denoting that it makes a man go out of himself, and not to be in his right senses."—EDIT.



stiff and hard. Abigail found it true in her address to David, when he was in his rough.\* (1 Sam. xxv. 4—42.) But a hard tongue hardens the heart: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir-up anger." (Prov. xv. 1.)

OBJECTION. "But what do you speak of words, which are but wind?"

SOLUTION. True; but this wind many times kindles a dreadful fire, and increases it when once kindled: "As coals to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife." (Prov. xxvi. 21; James iii. 5, 6.)

(2.) *Contumacious, reproachful, disgraceful words*: these are far remote from fatherly love and respect. Aristotle, in his Rhetoric, tells us, that the grand scope, drift, design, of contumely is, that a man may rejoice and triumph in the disgrace of him whom he reproacheth. How barbarous is it, then, to rejoice in the disgrace and infamy of a child of a man's own bowels! This cannot but "provoke." That is a thunder-clap in the ears of testy, reproachful parents: "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." (Matt. v. 22.) Reproachful words are no less than sharp darts and keen swords: nay, they carry with them no less than stings and poison; so that even the wisest and best of men can hardly bear the dint of them. Thus Saul to the height provokes his son, when he foams at the mouth, and breaks out into that nasty drivel: "Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman;" and why not, in our English dialect, "Thou son of a whore?" and so lasheth his son on his wife's back. (1 Sam. xx. 30.) What could have been spoken more sharply to provoke?

(3.) *Menacing, threatening words*: and that, it may be, for little trips or slips of youth, nay, though there be no resolution to execute what they threaten. Suppose it only *brutum fulmen*, "a flash without a bolt or bullet;" the very wind and noise is enough to sink the trembling child into a swoon. If masters must not threaten servants, much less may parents threaten children. (Eph. vi. 9.)

4. *By rigid actions*.—When parents, utterly un mindful of their parental relation, bowels, duty, prove tyrants, and use, or rather abuse, their children as servants, or indeed as slaves and vassals; these should know that the great God never commissioned them to be more than tender governors, not domineering tyrants or Egyptian task-masters. This tyranny is exercised divers ways:—

(1.) *When parents either deny to, or take from, their children those things which either belong to their necessities or their just comforts in that rank and relation in which their heavenly Father by birth hath placed them*.—When they deny them that education, that provision, that encouragement, which is just and equal; that food, raiment, portion, that becomes the children of such a father; this is to act beneath an infidel, (1 Tim. v. 8,) nay, more, even beneath the brute beasts, who by a natural instinct diligently nourish and cherish their

\* More frequently written *ruff*. But each of these words sufficiently indicates the meaning intended, *the height or first effervescence of any strong passion*;—*rough*, before the man becomes smooth and calm; *ruff*, he being suddenly ruffled or excited.—EDIT.

young ones ; and cannot but provoke. Even a horse, when too strait-reined, will rise up and fling. When the cockered idol, though a younger brother or sister, and, it may be, less deserving, shall be called to the table, closet, bosom, and there treated at the height of sweetness ; whereas the poor, neglected, discountenanced, despised, elder [brother] must stand without, and either blow his fingers, or employ his hands in some base, sordid, servile, commanded drudgery, which would better become a slave than a son : \* this, this goes near the heart of an ingenuous and observant child. † This must needs create in him an enraged jealousy and envy against his equals or inferiors, and—without a vast stock of love, humility, patience—a boiling, rancorous disdain and wrath against his superiors. ‡

(2.) *When parents load their children with unjust commands.*—This is to ape that wretched Saul, who commanded Jonathan to surprise his innocent, dearest friend and brother, David, the upright, valiant David, that had so well deserved of the whole kingdom, one designed by God himself to succeed in the throne of Israel ; yea, and, against his solemn oath sworn unto him, to bring him to him, that he might be murdered. (1 Sam. xx. 31.) This both grieved and provoked Jonathan. (Verse 34.) Or, with that incestuous, bloody creature, Herodias, who commands her dancing daughter to ask of Herod more than half his kingdom, namely, “John Baptist’s head.” (Matt. xiv. 8.)

(3.) *When parents, merely to gratify their humour, self-will, lusts, passions, fury, chastise, beat, and almost kill their children with unjust and immoderate lashes, stripes, punishments.*

(i.) *Unjust* : when the parent hath no lawful cause or reason so to do. What just plea could that unnatural Saul make for casting his javelin, to smite his innocent son Jonathan ? (1 Sam. xx. 33.) After he had spit-out the poison of his heart in his words, he fills-up the measure of his wickedness in this bloody deed, suitable to his murderous heart.

(ii.) *Immoderate* : when the sharpness of the punishment exceeds the greatness of the crime. Here the Lord, the righteous Judge, takes care, by his supreme authority, that those that have authority over others should not, according to their own lusts, will, and pleasure, rage and vent their fury and passion on criminals. (Deut. xxv. 2, 3.) Now if justice oblige us to keep our mind free and composed, in punishing the greatest strangers and most heinous malefactors, that we may exactly proportion the penalty to their fault ; how much more should a father, whose name breathes nothing but benignity and sweetness, observe the same moderation, when his business is to chastise the child of his own bowels ! And if not, instead of reforming, he doth but provoke, his child.

Thus much concerning sinful severity, what it is, and how far provoking ; in all which I neither have nor could bring one instance,

\* Μη φορτικα και δουλους ωρεποντα επιτασσετε. “Do not command your children to perform offices that are mean, and fit only for servants or slaves.”—EDIT. † Even a worm thus trod on would turn again. ‡ Favours unequally distributed highly provoke.

either father or mother, in the whole scripture, that had the character of a godly person, that is charged with the crimson guilt of a sinfully-severe parent.

II. *What may godly parents best do for the conversion of those children whose wickedness is occasioned by their sinful SEVERITY?*—To this I answer,

First. *More generally.*—“Physician, heal thyself:” to cleanse the polluted stream, let us begin at the puddled fountain.

1. *As much as may be, cease your complaints to men of finding so much cause of grief and sorrow in your untoward children, instead of joy and comfort.*—That they are pungent thorns instead of refreshing roses, stabs instead of staffs [staves]. Exclaim no more, at least not morosely or in passion, against the pride, levity, vanity, frowardness, obstinacy, debauchery, incorrigibility, of your wretched children, especially in the hearing of those children. It is too probable they will be apt to lay their own bastards at their father’s door, and impute all their gross miscarriages to their rigid father’s harshness, contempt, and want of love: “Had not I been unhappy in so stiff a father, he might have been happy in a more complaisant son. Had my father treated me with more bowels, it is possible I should have readily answered his tenderness with a melting heart, bended knee, and sincere obedience.”

2. *Instead of opening your mouths to men, go immediately, and in sincerity unbosom your whole souls, to God.*—Cast yourselves at his foot, humbly acknowledge your great defects and failings in the management of that authority that God, the supreme Father, hath stamped upon you. Humble yourself deeply before the Lord for all your former irregular and exorbitant passions, stabbing looks, hard speeches, morose behaviour, partial demeanour, dreadful omens and forejudgings of the sad fate of your at present disobedient child. Weep (I say not, not so much, but) not only for your child, but for yourself. Had the root been sound as it ought, the branch had not been so rotten as it is. Had the father been more a fig-tree, the son had not been so much a thistle. If the vine hath the least taint of Sodom, no wonder if the wine hath an ugly tang of Gomorrha. Weep, I say, and pray; pray and weep; and, instead of a bead, drop a tear at the close of every petition for the full and free pardon of these thy relational sins, in and through the blood of that Son that never offended his and thy Father: beg, and beg earnestly, for grace, strength, wisdom, which is “first pure, then peaceable,” that thou mayest be kept from the like misdemeanour for the future.

3. *Act toward your children in all things as a father.*—Keep your relation in your eye.

(1.) *Love your children as a father.*—A man would think this advice were needless: “As touching love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love.” (1 Thess. iv. 9.) It seems all one as if I should persuade the sun to shine, the fire to burn, nay, a man to be a man. This law of love to children is

written by the finger, drawn by the pencil, stamped and engraven by the deepest impress, of nature on the hearts and bowels of all parents. (Isai. xlix. 15.) Indeed I have spent more than a few minutes in searching the scriptures on this account; and, though I find many express texts that oblige us to love God, Christ, our neighbour, the brotherhood, our wives, yea, our enemies, yet I can light but on one that doth in express terms command parents to love their children; namely, Titus ii. 4, where we find [that] the young women are to be taught "to love their children." For which the best reason that I can give for the present is, the same that he gave why the Romans, among all their laws, had enacted none against the horrid sin of parricide; namely, because the Romans either could or would not suppose men to be such monsters as to be guilty of so black a crime. The scripture supposes that, while we retain the nature of men, or own the name of fathers, we cannot but love our children. Well, then, love your children; but love them as fathers. *Fathers!* this very single word contains an Iliad of arguments. Were I at leisure, it were easy to draw out all the rhetoricians' topics of persuasion out of its bowels. *Father!* the very name is an ointment poured forth; it sends forth nothing but the perfume of love, meekness, tenderness.\* Do but sincerely love your children as fathers, and then be sinfully severe if you can! Love your children, not so much for their lovely countenance, their pleasing grace and sweetness, which, how charming soever, is but a fading flower, a skin-deep vanity; but principally, as those that are bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, to whom you have communicated your blood and very nature. And let not this love be like a dead picture or idol in your breast, without life or action; but a living, active principle, a spring that may vigorously and effectually influence all the powers of your soul for the procuring of all that which is truly good to your poor children.

. OBJECTION. "But how can I possibly love such naughty, such provoking children?"

SOLUTION I. *Doth your duty of loving your children admit of that exception?—Love them, that is, if they are, or while they are, free from all fault.*—Did not the Lord that enjoins this duty, know full well that no mortal man is without his spots, imperfections, failings? In vain is that precept that is limited to a condition which [it] is impossible to fulfil.

SOL. II. *Look inward, and then look upward.*—Are not you naughty? † (James iii. 2.) Have not you often, and do not you daily, hourly provoke your heavenly Father? And yet would you not desire that he should love you? Let your own prayers and tears be witnesses in the case. Had a man laid his ear close to your closet, might he not have heard you, Ephraim-like, bemoaning yourself thus?—"Heavenly Father, I am vile, I have done iniquity; I have not only touched upon the verge of vice, but entered the circle: nay, my

\* Πάτηρ δ' ὡς ἡπίος γεν.—HOMERI *Odys.* v. 12. "He was gentle as a father."—EDIT.

† *Tangut memoriam communis fragilitas.* "Bear in mind the frailty common to mankind."—EDIT.

sins are aggravated by perverseness in ill-doing, and by resisting counsel. I cannot, dare not clear myself by a just defence, nor, being rightly deprived of thy love and favour, seek for any other mediators, but thy Christ and free grace, for my relief. And therefore give me leave to hope, that a Father's bowels are as potent orators as a son's misery; and that, while my transgressions dam up the way to favour, fatherly compassion will not forget to be merciful: he that bears the name of a Father, cannot forget the tears of a child." Tell me, severe parents, is not this a true echo of some of your most pathetic prayers? But what answer have you expected, and your heavenly Father returned?

SOL. III. *Possibly, while you have been speaking, God hath answered, as he did, Jer. xxxi. 20: "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?" "No, no; he is naught, he is a prodigal." "True! but yet he is a repenting, a returning prodigal; though not 'a pleasant' son, yet a son, 'a child:' and therefore, 'since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.'"* Read, consider, and often pray over those pertinent texts, Deut. xxxii. 36; Isai. lxiii. 15, 16; Hosea xi. 7—9; Luke xv. 19, 20. "All this is true to a repenting Ephraim; but my child lies stinking in his filth."

SOL. IV. But, I pray, *in what case and posture did your heavenly Father find you, when he first manifested his love unto you?*—"When I saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." Behold, this time was the time of thy God's love. (Ezek. xvi. 6, 8.) God the Father commended his love toward you, "in that, while you were yet sinners, Christ died for you." (Rom. v. 8.)

(2.) *Govern your children as a father.*—And so remember, that your parental power is not absolute or despotical, but regulated and circumscribed within due bounds and limits. Parents may not think they may do what they list, according to their own will and pleasure, with their children. *Stat pro ratione voluntas,\** is the language of a tyrant, not of a father. And here,

(i.) Beware of secret pride, of inordinate self-exalting, of magnifying your office, and overvaluing yourselves, and of esteeming yourselves to be greater than indeed you are, and an eager desire that your children should so think of you, and so treat you.

(ii.) Beware of thinking more of the dignity of your place, than of your duty you owe to God and your children, in that station wherein God hath fixed you.

(iii.) Beware of being excessively hard and difficult to be pleased, and of being too rigid an exactor of observance and respect from your child, and of slighting, undervaluing, vilifying of him, when he hath done his utmost; of discontent and murmuring, if you have not all [that] you desire in your child.

\* JUVENAL. *Sat. vi. 222.* "My will is a sufficient reason for my commands."—EDIT.

(iv.) Beware that you respect not your child more for the seeming regard he shows to you, than for any real worth that is in him.

All these are dangerous rocks, to which your secret pride exposes you, enough to destroy pilot and vessel.

(3.) *Be angry with your child; but "be angry, and sin not."* (Eph. iv. 26.)—Be angry; but then let it be the anger of a displeased father against an offending child, not the anger of a bloody enemy against an irreconcilable foe: be angry as your heavenly Father is said to be angry. Of this before.

(4.) *Exhort, admonish, reprove, rebuke, chastise, offending children; but then still remember whose deputy you are, whom you represent.*—Even your heavenly Father. Fury is not in him; judgment is his "strange work:" but he "delights in mercy." When he is, as it were, forced to put forth his anger, he then makes use of a father's rod, not an executioner's axe. (2 Sam. vii. 14.) He will neither break his children's bones, nor his own covenant. (Psalm lxxxix. 30—35.) He lashes in love, (Heb. xii. 6; Rev. iii. 19,) in measure, in pity, and compassion. "In all their affliction" he "is afflicted;" every stroke on his child's back recoils on his own bowels: and if the member be gangrened, and there is an absolute necessity to cut it off, to save the life, the soul of his child; then, like a surgeon who is the father of the patient, he makes use of the saw, not forgetting that he is now cutting off his own flesh, and would never do it but for the child's good. (Rom. viii. 28.) Go you, and do likewise.

(5.) *In all you do, take heed you do not provoke them on the one hand, nor discourage them on the other.*

(i.) *Not provoke them:* of this somewhat before. Let me add, When children find themselves, contrary to their hopes and, it may be, their deserts, to be hardly and sharply dealt withal; and that nothing which they attempt or perform finds acceptance with their morose and rigid parents; especially if of fiercer spirits, in the heat and bitterness of their enraged souls, they are apt to throw off all reverence, to "break their bands asunder, and to cast away their cords from" them; like wild and untamed colts, to kick and winch and harden their necks, foreheads, hearts, against all admonitions and threatenings, against all words and blows. Their father hates them, say they; sink they must, and sink they will; but not alone: if possible, they will draw their cruel father's heart and peace into the same gulf with them. O dreadful! take heed, therefore; do not provoke.

(ii.) *Not to discourage, dishearten, dispirit them:* "Fathers, provoke not your children," *ἵνα μὴ ἀθυμώσιν, ne animum despondeant,* "lest they be discouraged." (Col. iii. 21.) There is nothing that doth more deject and sink the heart of a poor child, (specially if ingenuous and of a softer and more meek temper,) than the severe rigour and roughness of a father. It quite unsouls the poor child, when, in the countenance and deportment of his father, to whom of all men in the world he should in reason be dearest, he sees nothing but anger and aversation. It intimidates the child, destroys his mettle and courage for any honest or honourable undertaking, smothers, yea, extinguishes,

all his fire and vivacity, transforms him into a mere sot, mope, dullard, block, utterly unfit for use and service; nay, more, it often throws him into the deepest gulf of grief and melancholy, sickness, death; and then it may be, when too late, the unhappy parent will see cause to relent, and abhor himself for his unjust severity.

(6.) *Parents, remember they are children, and but children.*—Their age may be some apology for them. *Their* heads are green; *yours* are grey. More years may teach them better manners. They are your children, your own flesh, blood, bowels; το ιδιον αγαπητον,\* saith Aristotle; *your* children. If the stream be corrupt, it derives it from yourselves, the fountain: (Psalm li. 5:) the young serpent came from the old cockatrice.

(7.) *Since severity will not do the feat, see what sweetness, mildness, gentleness, holy tenderness and indulgence will do.*—

*Pax majora decet: peragit tranquilla potestas*

*Quod violenta nequit.*†—CLAUDIANSI Panegyris de Consul. F. Mallii Theodori, 240.

The pillow may help to break the flint which the hammer and anvil cannot: it prevailed with flinty Saul. (1 Sam. xxiv. 16.) The cordial may prevail, where the corrosive cannot. The sight of the pardon more commands the heart of the desperate traitor, than that of the axe or gibbet.

(8.) *To all these, add scriptural admonition, fervent supplication, patient waiting on, and humble submission to, the will of God.* (Micah vii. 7—9.)

Thus much concerning sinful severity. We proceed to the Second, and that is **SINFUL INDULGENCE**. Our apostle, knowing right well how apt parents are to swerve from the golden mean of parental discipline, and, whilst they labour to avoid the rock of sinful severity, how prone they are to plunge themselves into the gulf of sinful indulgence, doth in the same text prescribe a sovereign antidote against that fatal pleurisy of fond affection, in these words: “But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Whilst the severe parent is breathing a vein in his distempered child, he cautions him to take care [that] he doth not pierce an artery: “Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath.” But, on the other hand, if the child labours under an imposthume, and needs the lancet, our apostle doth here command the discreet use of it, and will by no means permit that the sinking child should be soothed or stroked and demulced into certain ruin. Children must be “nurtured,” though they may not be “provoked.” Parents must not be cruel ostriches, and leave and expose their young ones to harm and danger; nor yet must they be such fond apes, who are said to hug their cubs so closely as that they kill them with their embraces. And that on this account,—because,

Secondly, *The wickedness of unconverted children is too, too often*

\* “Your own peculiar object of love.”—EDIT.

† “The greatest rivers roll with quiet mien:

In peace the height of majesty is seen.

By gentle means has often been obtain'd

What overbearing force would ne'er have gain'd.”—HAWKINS'S Translation.

*occasioned, yea, and advanced, by the sinful indulgence of their godly parents.*—Sinful severity, with Saul, hath slain its thousands; sinful indulgence, with David, its ten thousands. Poor cockered children, when it is too late, find the little finger of a fond mother to weigh far heavier, and to sink the soul far deeper, than the weighty loins of a severe father; and at a long run will find more of sting in a rod of roses, than in a scourge of scorpions. In the stating of this case, I shall proceed as before, and show you,

1. *What sinful indulgence is not.*

And so, *natural, ordinate, moderate, parental love, and such as is mixed with the most yearning bowels, most deep and tender compassions, is not sinful indulgence.*—Nay, to be without these natural affections, is not only wretched stoicism, but sinful, cursed, and more than brutish astorgy: [“want of natural affection.”] (Rom. i. 31.) Even the storks and sea-monsters will teach us to love our offspring. Love my children I may and must,

(1.) *With all the sorts and kinds of love.*—Of desire of union and communion with them, of the sweet enjoyment of them; of benevolence and good-will, willing, ready, and prepared to desire and wish them all good; of beneficence and bounty, actually endeavouring to do them all good possible, both as to their souls and bodies. (Titus ii. 4; Gen. xxi. 19; 1 Kings iii. 25, 26; xvii. 10, 12, 18, 19; 1 Tim. v. 8.) All our spiritual gifts must be for the profit of their souls, for their direction, consolation, salvation; and as for their bodies, their backs must be our wardrobes, their bellies our barns, and their hands our treasuries. And with a love of complacency and delight. Our children may and ought to be the joy and rejoicing of our hearts: “no greater joy than to” see our children like olive-plants round about our table, specially if we see and find them “walking in the truth.” (2 John 4; 3 John 4.)

(2.) *With all the properties of parental love.*—Namely, sincere and unfeigned; a love, not in word and tongue only, but from the heart, in deed and in truth: a forward, cheerful love, not drawn or driven, but flowing as from a fountain: an expansive, open-handed as well as open-hearted, love: a fruitful love, producing not only fair leaves, buds, and blossoms of pleasing smiles and large promises, but the mature fruits of beneficial performances: a holy, just, fervent, constant love: a most gentle, dear, tender, compassionate love, whereby we are ready to sympathize with them, and forward to succour them, in their misery; to regard them, when they neither regard us nor themselves; to take in good part the desires of their souls, when they find not to perform; to accept of a sigh in regard of a service, a mite instead of a talent, a groan instead of a duty, the very stammering of my child above the eloquence of a beggar; (Mal. iii. 17;) looking on a returning prodigal as a son, and pitying as a father, not punishing as a judge; remembering their frame, and knowing that both they and we are poor dust. (Psalm ciii. 13, 14.) All this and much more is not sinful indulgence. To carry them in our bosoms, as Moses did the Israelites; (Num. xi. 12;) or so in our hearts as to be



willing to impart our very souls unto them in and for God, because they are dear unto us, as Paul; (1 Thess. ii. 7, 8, 11;) to bless them in God's name, faith, fear, as Jacob did; (Gen. xlix. 28;) to countenance and encourage them in, and reward them for, well-doing; (1 Peter ii. 14; Esther vi. 3;) to love those most that love God most; to give such Benjamins five messes, a double, treble portion, an Isaac's inheritance;—this is not sinful indulgence.

2. *What sinful indulgence is.*

It stands in *the excess and exuberancy of our love and affections, and in too much slacking and remitting the reins of government.*—When we do, as it were, abandon and give up our minds and studies, to coax and please and gratify the humours, yea, satisfy the lusts, of our foolish children; when we make their wills our laws, our rules; when the doting parent is led by the heart—shall I say? or nose?—by his audacious child, and must be at his beck, at his command; when the child may and must speak or do what he pleases, and the parent either may or dare not say, “What doest thou?” let him act what and when and how he pleases, he must not be displeased, disturbed, contradicted in the least; when the child, grown insolent and intolerable, is too gently treated and borne withal; when a forced frown or a gentle, soft whisper is looked upon as a smart rebuke, and the lash of a rod no less than the wound of a sword; when, it may be, we mildly snip the unthrifty darling, and at the same time that we pretend to chide, do fondly add fuel to his excess:—this, O, this is sinful indulgence,—a sin of a crimson dye and dreadful consequence. More particularly,

(1.) *When our extravagant love prevails with us, in too mild and gentle a manner, to bear with our wicked children in contemning of or rebellion against God's laws, or our own lawful commands and counsels.* (Isai. iii. 5; 1 Sam. iii. 13; 2 Sam. xv. 1—12.)

(2.) *When our inordinate love to them causes us to counsel them to, or encourage them in, that which is evil.* (Matt. xiv. 8.)—This was a deep blot, and indeed the only one I find, in that godly mother's, good Rebekah's, escutcheon. It is said, that “Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.” (Gen. xxv. 28.) Isaac, being old, was too much held by the teeth, and too fond of Esau for his venison's sake; but Rebekah herself was not a little in fault. Her Jacob by his red pottage had got the birthright; and now she is resolved that he should have the blessing too. On this account she furnishes him with a lie in his mouth, and skins on his neck and hands; and so, in her great love, exposes her dressed Jacob, instead of a blessing, to his father's curse and his own damnation. (Gen. xxvii. 6—17.) It is true, he narrowly escaped, and ran away with the blessing; but both mother and son had both their bellies full of the sauce in which the mother's indulgence had sinfully soaked it. It was this chiefly that made poor Jacob go halting to his grave.

(3.) *When parents will not endure to see that natural fierceness, pride, self-will, impatience, that peeps out in their children, to be severely checked, and grubbed up by the roots.*—When children must

not be nurtured in truth, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, courtesy, obedience, diligence;—"No, no; this is harshness;"—but, even whilst little children, scarce out of the shell, shall be taught and encouraged to brasen their foreheads, to throw off all humble shamefacedness, all respect of superiors, to talk and strut and swagger: "Their tongue is their own; and who is Lord over them?" O, intolerable! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon!"

(4.) *When we feed our children with more dainty fare, trick them up with more gorgeous apparel, and even loosen and break the nerves of their souls and bodies with too soft and delicate an education, no way suitable either to our own estates or their condition.*—Which was the serious complaint of Quinctilian of old, and is the sin and shame of this present age. This, this is that sinful indulgence here intended: this is *that* that too often occasions, yea, inflames and heightens, our children's daring wickedness, and prepares them, makes them fit vessels, for temporal and eternal ruin. Now concerning this I shall give you my thoughts under these two generals.

I shall lay before you plain instances of this sinful indulgence in three parents, all of them fathers; for, after a most exact search throughout the whole scriptures, I cannot find one, no, not one of all the godly mothers in Israel guilty of, or charged with, this sin, Rebekah only excepted. Two of these fathers were, beyond all contradiction, truly, yea, eminently, godly; the third *probably* so, by the tender respect he showed the Levite. We begin with him.

1. *That the indulgence of parents is the bane of children, a pander of their wickedness, the asylum of their vanity.*—How easily is the thief induced to steal, when he knows his receiver! When the looseness of youth knows where to find pity and toleration, what mischief can it forbear? See this in the Levite's concubine or wife. (Judges xix. 1, 2.) This concubine plays the whore against the Levite, whom she owned at least as a husband. Her guilt makes her fly; but whither shall she cause her shame to go? Whither, indeed, but to her own dear father's house? She that had deserved to be abhorred by her loving and faithful husband, doubts not to find shelter from her fond and indulgent father: his heart and house and bosom, she knew, would all be open to her. Well, home she speeds to her father at Bethlehem-Ephratah. But doth her good old father receive her? What! doth he suffer his house to become a brothel-house, to be defiled with an adulteress, though she sprang out of his own loins? Methinks I hear him in a just indignation thus accosting her: "Why, how now, impudence? what makest thou here? Dost thou think to find my house a shelter for thy sins? The stews are a fitter receptacle for thee. Whilst thou wert a faithful wife to thy husband, thou wert a beloved daughter to me: but now thou art neither. Thou art not mine; I gave thee to thine husband. Thou art not thy husband's; thou hast betrayed his bed. Thy filthiness hath made thee thine own and thine adulterer's; go, seek thine entertainment where thou hast lost thine honesty. Thy lewdness hath brought a necessity of shame upon thy abettors. How can

I countenance thy person, and abandon thy sin? I had rather be a just man than a sinfully-kind father. Get thee home, therefore, to thy husband; crave his forgiveness upon thy knees; redeem his love with thy modesty and obedience. When his heart is once open to thee, my doors shall not be shut. In the mean time, before thou art humbled both before God and man, know, I can be no father to a harlot." Thus methinks I should have heard him say; but, lo, fond father that he was! he treats and caresses her at another rate, and seems to bespeak her, as Jael did Sisera, (Judges iv. 18,) "Turn in, my dear child, turn in to me." He brings her into his house; covers her with a mantle; instead of water, gives her "a bottle of milk;" yea, he "brings forth butter in a lordly dish;" treats her at the kindest rate, and that for four whole months. And now let the most indulgent parent judge, whether this was a just dealing with this strumpet, whose crime God had long before sentenced with death. (Lev. xx. 10.) But yet, remember, that this courting Jael proved a most fatal executioner: the vile Sisera "bowed and fell at her feet." (Judges iv. 21; v. 25—27.) For aught I know, had her father been more severe, he might have prevented her farther defiling and murder by the filthy Gibeathites. (Judges xix. 25—28.) Indulgence is a syren, that first sings and then slays; worse than Jael: *her* hammer and nail destroy only the body; but *this* destroys the soul, and that even by its lullabies, when the unhappy fondling sleeps and snores in the parent's bosom.

2. *Indulgent parents are really cruel to themselves, their posterity, and the church of God.*—For this, we have two such instances in two stars of the greatest magnitude that ever shone in the church's horizon, such indeed as are not to be mentioned without the greatest dread and trembling with respect to their plunge into this deep pit of gross indulgence,—ELI and DAVID. Nay, startle not; these are the men, even good Eli and better David: *the best of men*, and, I had almost said, *the worst of parents*; and then no wonder, if plagued with the worst of children.

First. ELI: his tragical story we find, 1 Sam. ii. 12, to iv. 22.

1. *He had two sons*: "sons of Belial," a brace of hell-hounds, Hophni and Phinehas, whose names do almost stain the sacred writ: wretches that were as desperately lewd as himself was eminently holy. And this appears on these accounts:—

(1.) If the goodness of example, precept, education, profession, could have been antidotes against the extremity of sin, these sons of so holy a father had not been so hellishly wicked. But now neither parentage nor education nor priesthood could restrain the sons of Eli from degenerating into the "sons of Belial;" yea, their wickedness was most desperately improved, boiled up, and fermented to the highest paroxysm.

(2.) Had they not been the sons of Eli a priest, yet, being themselves by office priests of the most high and holy God, who would not have thought, hoped, concluded, that their very calling and function should have at least dictated, if not infused, some holiness

into them? But, O dreadful! even their white and clean ephods are but cloaks of their fouler sins: nay, though they serve at the altar, yet, degenerating from their duty, their wickedness is so far from being extenuated and made less, that it rises so much above others', as their place and station is holier than others'. A wicked priest is the worst, the vilest creature on God's earth,—devils in masquerade. Who are devils now but they that were once angels of light? The worst of dung comes from the best of meat, the most deadly poison out of the sweetest mineral.

(3.) That God, who had promised to be the Levites' portion, had set forth the fair portion of these Levites; and God will not only feed them, but feast them too, and that at his own table, at his own altar. They shall eat of his own morsel, and drink of his own cup. The breast and the right shoulder of the peace-offering were their allowed commons. (Lev. vii. 14, 15, 31—34.) "Well, they are satisfied, they are thankful; are they not?" No such matter. These bold and saucy priests will rather have their flesh-hook their arbiter, than God, and whatever their trident fastens-on shall be for their dainty tooth. They were weary of one or two joints; their delicacy affects more variety: God is not worthy to carve for these men, but their own hands. And thus they do not receive, but take or snatch violently, audaciously, unseasonably, sacrilegiously. It had been but fit that God should have first been served; but their presumption will not stay God's leisure. Ere the fat be burnt, ere the flesh be boiled, they must and will snatch their share from the altar; as if the God of heaven should wait on their curious palate; as if the Jews had come thither, not so much to sacrifice to the Lord Jehovah, as to these priests' bellies. (1 Sam. ii. 13—17.) But, beyond all this,

(4.) Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; and be astonished with all those that bear the name, guilt, and shame of such debauched priests of the altar! Even then and there, at the very altar, the most holy God's throne on earth,—even there, they are no sooner fed, but, like cursed stallions, they neighed after the modest mothers of Israel. Holy women "assemble at the door of the tabernacle;" and these varlets, blackest miscreants,—worse by far than Zimri and Cozbi, all circumstances considered; (Num. xxv. 6;) and well it had been, if that other Phinehas had been nigh them with his avengeful javelin,—tempt, if not force, *them* to adultery *that* came thither for devotion. These wretches had wives of their own; yet their unbridled desires rove after strange flesh, and fear not to pollute even that holy place with abominable filthiness. O, sins too shameful for common men, much more for the spiritual guides of Israel! That ark, which expiated other men's sins, dreadfully added to the sins of these sacrificers. (Jer. ii. 8; Ezek. xxiii. 38; Rom. ii. 17—25.) Thus far as to the sin and wickedness of these miscreants, the children and sons of Eli.

2. *As to old Eli*: did he know all this? It is true especially of great men, that they usually are the very last that are informed of the evil of their own house; but yet as to Eli,

(1.) It could not probably be but, when all Israel rang of the lewdness of his sons, he only should be ignorant of it. But,

(2.) Or if he knew it not, can his ignorance be excused? it being not an ignorance *meræ privationis*, but *pravæ dispositionis*: \* for where should Eli have been but in the temple, either for action or oversight? The very presence of the priest keeps God's house in order. It was his grand duty carefully to inspect them, at least diligently to inquire after the due administration of God's ordinances; and a just and seasonable rebuke and restraint might have happily prevented this extremity and height of prodigious debauchery. Nothing but age can plead and apologize for Eli, that he was not the first accuser of these—his sons, will you call them? or—monsters. But,

(3.) Now, when their enormities come to be the cry of the multitude, when it thunders, and he must perforce hear it, and this loud clap must of necessity pierce, not his ears only, but his heart, bowels, conscience: but with what holy fervour, zeal, justice, indignation? †

(i.) Was it,—as with Judah, when it was told him, “Tamar thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot:” “Bring her forth, and let her be burnt?” (Gen. xxxviii. 24:)—“These my sons are adulterers.”

(ii.) Or, [did he,] as the parents of the “stubborn and rebellious son,” lay hold of them and carry them forth to the elders of the city, and say to the elders of the city?—“These my sons are stubborn and rebellious; they have not, will not obey my voice: let them be stoned to death.” So God commanded, Deut. xxi. 18—22. Thus, even thus, should Eli, who was not only the chief priest, but the supreme judge, of Israel, impartially have judged his own corrupted flesh; and never could he have offered a more pleasing sacrifice than the corrupt gore-blood of so wicked sons.

(i.) Doubtless Eli knew full well that it was in vain to rebuke those sins abroad which we tolerate at home; that that man makes himself a ridicule, that leaves his own house on fire, and runs to quench his neighbour's; and, quitting his own family infected with the plague, hastens to the cure of his neighbour.

(ii.) We find, this good Eli, as old as he was, could be tart and sharp enough to another,—to godly, mourning, praying Hannah, when he “*thought*” only “she had been drunken” before the Lord, upon but the bare suspicion of a sin: “How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee!” (1 Sam. i. 13, 14.) It is true, his reproof arose from misprision, but that misprision sprang from zeal.

(iii.) But what now? In the case before us, you cannot but expect to find him screwed-up to a note beyond E-la, † inflamed *ad octo*; the zeal, the fire, the furnace heated seven times more than usually; the

\* “It being not an ignorance of mere privation, but one proceeding from a depraved disposition.”—EDIT.

† To make the sense complete, the addition of some clause similar to this seems to be required: “But with what holy fervour, &c. does he begin to perform his painful duty?”—EDIT.

‡ On this subject see a note in vol. 1. p. 373.

burning zeal of his God's house must needs consume him. For satisfaction, read I Sam. ii. 22—26: "Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And he said unto them:"—"To shame, to torment, to hell with them! To the worm that dies not, to the fire that never shall be quenched!" Was this his sentence? No, no. But, to amazement, hear what he says:—

(iv.) "He said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" (Verses 24, 25.) See here indulgence, to a prodigy, to the notorious crimes of his wicked sons!

(i.) How soon do we find the case altered! To Hannah he spake as a holy priest, a just judge; to these, as a fond, indulgent father. If corrupt nature be allowed to speak in judgment, and to make difference, not of crimes, but criminals; not of sins, but offenders; the scales will not be equal.

(ii.) Had these wretches but a little slacked their duty, or heedlessly omitted some rites of the sacrifices, this censure had not been so unbecoming.

(iii.) But, to punish the thefts, rapines, sacrileges, adulteries of his sons with a mere, "Why do you so?" was no other than to shave that head that deserved the axe. As it is with ill humours,—a weak dose doth but irritate and anger them, not purge them out; so it fares with habituated sins, and so it did here: "They hearkened not unto the voice of their father." (Verse 25.) An easy reproof doth but encourage wickedness, and makes it think itself so slight as that censure imports. Nay, a vehement reproof—if no more—to a capital evil is, at most, but like a smart shower to a ripe field, which only lays that corn which is worthy of a sickle. It is a breach of justice, not to proportion the punishment to the offence. To whip a man for murder; to punish the purse only for incest; to burn treason in the hand; to award the stocks to burglary; to lay-on the verge, [rod,] where the axe or gibbet are deserved;—is to patronize evil, instead of avenging it.

Thus we have seen the children's wickedness, and the father's indulgence. But is there not a *melius inquirendum*\* in the case? Yes, yes; from a fond and partial bar, to a strict and impartial tribunal.

3. *God himself, and the greatest party concerned and the most injured, interposes.*—Poor Eli could not have devised or studied a

\* "A further and more particular inquiry;" thus described by Phillips and Kersey: "A writ directed to the escheator for a second inquiring of what lands and tenements a man died possessed, when there is any suspicion of partiality in an inquiry made upon a previous writ."—EDIT.

more compendious and effectual way to have plagued himself, his house, his posterity, than by this his sinful kindness to his children's sins.

(1.) What variety of judgments doth he now hear of, from the messenger of God! (1 Sam. ii. 27—36.) Because he had now doted in his old age, there should "not be an old man left of his house for ever." Because it vexed him not enough to see his sons enemies to God, he shall see his own enemies in the habitation of the Lord. (Verse 32.) Because himself forbore to take vengeance of his sons, and esteemed their lives above the glory of his God and Master; therefore God himself will take the sword into his own hand, and kill them both in one day. (Verse 34; chap. iv. 11.) Because he abused his authority, and connived at sin, and honoured his sons before God; therefore his house shall be stripped of his honour, and it should be translated to another. (Verses 30—32, 35.) Because he suffered his sons to please their wanton appetites, in taking meat from off God's trencher; therefore those who remain of his house shall come to his successors, and beg a picce of silver to buy a morsel of bread. (Verse 36.) Because he was fond and partial to his sons, God will execute all this and more on him and them, severely and impartially. (1 Sam. iii. 11—14.)

(2.) Observe, I beseech you, observe, indulgent citizens, we do not read of any sin that Eli was charged with, but with that which is epidemical, I fear, among you, and looked upon as a peccadillo, and if a sin, at most but venial. What were these dreadful menaces against Eli, but premonitions to us? these murdering cannons to him, but our warning-pieces? God says, yea, God swears, that he "will judge Eli's house," and that with beggary, with death, with desolation; and "that the wickedness of his house should not be purged with sacrifices nor offerings for ever." (1 Sam. iii. 11—14.) Do not your ears tingle at the mention of these things? Do you not wonder, that the neck and heart, both, of poor Eli were not broken at the report of them?

(3.) We have heard the sentence; and, (notwithstanding Eli's repentance and the saving of his soul, yet,) for the necessary vindication of God's honour, holiness, justice, here below see the dreadful execution.

(i.) The Philistines and Israel join in battle: Israel is "smitten, and fled: there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken." (1 Sam. iv. 10, 11.) (ii.) The two caitiffs, that had lived before to bring God's ark into contempt, and had now lived to carry it into captivity, [were] both slain by the Philistines. (iii.) Eli, now ninety-eight years old, at the news of this, falls backward from his seat, and breaks his neck. (iv.) To make the tragedy complete, the wife of that cursed Phinehas, as not minding father, husband, self, child, with her last breath pants-out a doleful epitaph on the captive ark, and stamps it on her child's forehead: "Call it **ICHABOD**: for the ark of God is taken." (Verses 21, 22.)

Before we proceed, let us cast our eye back, and but glance on the sin that was the grand cause of this *strages* ["slaughter"]. Because he "honoured his sons above me;" (1 Sam. ii. 29;) "for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." (1 Sam. iii. 13.) *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.*\* O cruel indulgence! the jury hath sat upon thee, and given-in this as their just and unanimous verdict,—that thou art guilty of the death of father and children, of priests and people; or of the captivity of the ark at least, if not the destruction of religion. By this time, I suppose, your ears and hearts may be full, if not loaden. If not, take the third and last; and that, who is [it,] but

DAVID? who was no less unhappy in, than indulgent to, three of his children: *Adonijah, Amnon, Absalom.*

1. *Adonijah* is much made of, greatly cockered, his father's darling and delight: from his infancy "his father" David "had not displeased him at any time," do he what he would; no, not in so much as "saying, Why hast thou done so?" (1 Kings i. 6.) And well might the cockered youngster think, since he had got the throne of his father's heart, it would not be so high a leap to usurp the throne of his father's kingdom, (verses 5—25,) and *that* whilst his father was yet living; specially since his elder brother Absalom was now dead; (but yet he might have remembered how that Phaëton fell;) nay, more, though he knew that his father, according to God's special appointment, had declared Solomon to be the heir-apparent of his crown and kingdom. For all this, David did, or durst, not reprove him. No; his treason is no such great matter, but a light thing, and to be looked upon only as the brisk effort of a vain, if not a gallant, spirit. For all this, yet not such a word from David as, "Why hast thou done so, Adonijah?" Well, if the fond father will not, the wise son shall and will make this vain fondling know himself, especially when his subtle ambition so far discovered itself, in asking Abishag the Shunammite, David's concubine; by creeping into his father's bed, to make his way to his brother's throne. *This* Solomon was well aware of, and commands him to be put to death, as a just reward of his old-practised and new-intended treason. (1 Kings ii. 25.) There is *Adonijah's exit.*

2. The next is *Amnon*, guilty of incest with his own sister, yea, and this incest committed with rape; (2 Sam. xiii. 14;) Amnon, a person to be anathematized by the whole congregation, (Deut. xxvii. 22,) and to be punished with death. (Lev. xx. 17.) But what doth David do in the case? The text saith: "When king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth." (2 Sam. xiii. 21.)

(1.) But was that all? Alas! what was that, but a great flash and noise without a bullet? And *this* Absalom, that ravished virgin's own brother, deeply resents, and is resolved upon a just revenge. (Verse 22.) Certainly the incestuous son might justly have expected

\* TERENTII *Audria*, act. i. scen. i. 99. "Hence were those tears."—COLMAN'S Translation.



more than a sudden aguish fit of hot displeasure of a father; namely, the danger of the law, the indignation of a brother, the shame and outcry of the world.

(2.) What a stab in the heart, a sword in the bowels, must this needs be to Tamar's father, David, whose command, out of love to Amnon, had cast his dearest daughter into the den and jaws of this lion! (Verse 7.) What an insolent affront must he needs construe this to be offered by a son to a father,—that the father shall be made, as it were, a pander of his own daughter to his own son!

(3.) David, that tender father, that lay upon the ground, and would eat no bread, for the sickness of a child; (which yet was but the spawn of an adulterous bed;) how vexed, enraged, inflamed must he needs be with the villany of his son, with the ravishment of his daughter, both of them more deeply wounding than many deaths! What revenge can he think of for so heinous a crime less than death, and that in its most bloody dress?

(4.) And yet what less than death is it to this indulgent father to think of a due revenge? Rape was by the law of God capital; (Deut. xxii. 25;) how much more, when seconded with incest! Anger, though never so hot and eager, is not punishment enough for so high, so complicated an offence. Such mild injustice is no less provoking to Heaven and perilous to a commonwealth than the fiercest cruelty. For aught I know, the blood of souls murdered by foolish pity cries as loud in the ears of Divine Justice, as the blood of bodies slain by cruel severity. And yet this is all we hear of from so indulgent a father; unless, perhaps, he makes up the rest with sorrow, and so punishes his son's miscarriage on himself. (2 Sam. xiii. 37.) But,

(5.) If David, perhaps out of the consciousness to himself of his late adultery and murder, will not punish this horrid fact, his son Absalom shall; and that, not so much out of any zeal or of justice, as desire of revenge. (2 Sam. xiii. 28, 29.) See Amnon there weltering in his blood, murdered by Absalom's command, when he was drunk; and so, for aught we know, soul and body sunk at once, and that eternally. One act of injustice draws on another: the injustice of indulgent David in not punishing the rape of Tamar, procures the injustice of Absalom in punishing Amnon with murder. That which the father should have justly revenged and did not, the son revengeth unjustly. However, in all this the Lord, the supreme Judge, is righteous; to reckon for those sins which human partiality or negligence had omitted; and whilst he punisheth sin with sin, to punish sin with death. Had David called Amnon to a severe account for this unpardonable villany, the revenge had not been so desperate. Thus, to David's horror, fell Amnon. The third and last, that brings up the rear of those serpents that lay so warm in David's bosom, was that great gallant, the glistening minion of the court,

3. *Absalom*: Absalom *the murderer*, Absalom *the rebel*, and yet, for all that, Absalom *the beloved*.

(1.) Absalom *the murderer*, and that of his own brother Amnon, as

we have heard; that for two full years had sat close, brooding the deepest revenge. Having dispatched his brother *εἰς ᾅδου*, ["to hades,"] away he flies to Geshur, and for three years hides and shelters himself in his grandfather's court. (2 Sam. xiii. 34, 37, 38; iii. 3.) But doth not David post his ambassadors after and demand him thence, to be returned and delivered up as a sacrifice, to stop the cry of his brother's blood, that roared for vengeance? at least in three years' time? No; not a word of that. But see and be amazed at the quite contrary workings of his distempered heart: verse 39: "The soul of king David longed," or "was even consumed," "to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead." The three years' absence seemed not so much a banishment to the son as a punishment to the father. It is true, David, out of his wisdom, so inclines to favour as that he conceals it; and yet so conceals it as that Joab, who could see light through the smallest chink by his piercing eye, could clearly discover it. Joab reads David's heart in his countenance, and knows how to humour and serve him in that which he would, and yet seemed [as if] he would not, have accomplished; and, by that cunning fetch of the woman of Tekoah, brings into the light that birth of desire whereof he knew David was both big and ashamed. (2 Sam. xiv. 21.) See here the mask of royal indulgence. It is not David that recalls Absalom; not he: he only does it to answer the humble petition of an importunate subject, and to follow the advice of Joab, a discreet counsellor: "The king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing" that ye desire: "go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again." But, stay; another fetch: "Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face," (verse 24,) for fear the people should cry "Shame!" on this unjust indulgence.

(2.) Absalom *the rebel*, Absalom *the traitor*: having prepared the people for a rebellion by a wicked insinuation of his father's unjust government, he sets up as king in Hebron; "and the conspiracy was strong." (2 Sam. xv. 10, 12.) His eye is on the metropolis: his first march must be to Jerusalem. To make room for the young rebel, the poor old father must pack up, and be gone, (verse 14,) with a heavy heart, weeping eye, covered head, and bare feet, as it were. Never did he with more joy come up to this city, than [he] now left it with sorrow: and how could he do otherwise, when the insurrection of his dearly beloved son drove him out from his chief city and throne, yea, from the ark of God?

(i.) *His first prank* was a sufficient earnest of what was like to ensue; an act of the highest incestuous uncleanness that ever the sun saw: "They spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel." (2 Sam. xvi. 21—23.) The practice was like the counsel, (verse 21,) as deep as hell itself, an act incapable of forgiveness. Beside the usurping [of] the throne, to violate the bed, of his father,—unto his treason to add incest,—is no less unnatural. That the world might see that Absalom neither hoped nor cared for the reconciliation

of a father, and as if the villany could not have been shameful enough in secret, he sets up his tent in the top of the house, and lets all Israel be witness of his own sin and his father's shame. Ordinary sins are for vulgar offenders; but Absalom sins like himself,—eminently, transcendently; and doeth that which may make the world at once to blush and wonder. The filthiness of the sin is not more great than the impudence of the matter.

(ii.) *His pursuit.* (2 Sam. xv. 14.)—Absalom is now in his high march, ready to make his onset. David rallies up all the forces he could make, not so much to assault his son as to defend himself. But see his charge: 2 Sam. xviii. 5: “The king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai,” his three generals, “saying,”—“Fight neither against small nor great; for they, poor deluded souls, are come forth in the simplicity of their hearts, are merely drawn in, and know not any thing: (2 Sam. xv. 11:) but against the head and ringleader of these rebels, that son, or traitor rather, that ‘came forth of my bowels, and seeks my life.’” (2 Sam. xvi. 11.) Is not this David's charge? No; not such a syllable in their commission: but thus, which is not to be mentioned without a blush:—“Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom.” (2 Sam. xviii. 5.) But, stay; what do I hear? Is this the voice of David? What! that David that formerly was forced to employ his arms for his defence against a tyrannous father-in-law, and is now forced to buckle them on against an unnatural son? What! he that has mustered his men, commissioned his generals, marshalled his troops? What! is this his charge and word and signal for the battle? Doth he at once seem to encourage them by his eye, and restrain them with his tongue? O David, what means this ill-placed love? this unjust, cruel mercy? “Deal gently with” a traitor! of all traitors, with a son! of all sons, with an Absalom! the graceless, murderous, incestuous, traitorous son of so good, so tender a father! And all this “for my sake,” whose crown, kingdom, blood, he hunts after? For whose sake must this wretch be pursued, if he must be forborne for thine? He was still courteous, though hypocritically, to thy followers, affable to suitors, plausible to all Israel, that so he might be perfectly cruel to thee. Wherefore are these arms, if the sole cause of the quarrel must be the attractive, persuasive motive of mercy? Yet thou sayest, “Deal gently.” We see, even in the holiest parents on earth, corrupt nature may be guilty of most unjust tenderness, of bloody indulgence. But let us advance a step farther.

(iii.) *The battle is joined.*—The God of justice takes part with justice; lets Israel, foolish Israel, feel, what it is to take part with, and to bear arms for, a traitorous usurper. The sword devours twenty thousand of them; and the “wood devoured more than the sword.” Among the rest, the loyal oak singles out the ringleader of this horrible conspiracy, and by one of his spreading arms becomes at once his gaol and gibbet! (2 Sam. xviii. 6—9.) The justice of God twists a halter of his locks: and no marvel if his own hair turned traitor to him, who durst rise up against his father. Joab is informed

that the beast is noosed, comes and sees him hanging, makes no demur, but immediately thrust three darts through the heart of the bloody traitor. What the poor soldier forbore to do in obedience, (verses 12, 13,) that the general doeth in zeal; (verse 14;) not fearing to prefer his sovereign's safety before and beyond all little respects whatever, as being more tender of the life of his prince and the peace of his people, than the weak or strong affections of a misguided father. (Verses 14, 15.)

(iv.) Now for *the catastrophe*, the last scene.—The battle is ended: David hears the trumpets sound a retreat. "What news?" Our care is wont to be where our love is. "How fares the army? Joab, Abishai, Ittai, my generals,—how is it with them? My crown,—does it stand more firm and fixed? or is it fallen? Speak, Ahimaaz; say, Cush." None of this in the least; but, to the everlasting reproach of fond parents, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" (Verse 29.) Ahimaaz prudently answers, "The Lord hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king." (Verses 28, 29.) Ahimaaz, "turn thou aside, and stand thou here." Behold, here comes Cush, with a joyful heart and open mouth: "Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." (Verse 31.) But these are not the tidings that David so much pants after. Cush, thou must learn to distinguish betwixt the king and the father, and tell him plainly, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" "That murderous, incestuous traitor, whom thou callest 'the young man,' is dead, O king; and let the enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is." (Verse 32.)

(v.) *And what says king David to this?*—Methinks I hear him say, "Come, my dear people; come, and let us 'sing aloud unto God our strength, and make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery. Blow up the trumpet' as 'in the new moon,' as on a 'solemn feast-day.' Let this be 'a statute for Israel:' (Psalm lxxxi. 1—4:) for 'this is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and triumph in it.' (Psalm cxviii. 24.) 'The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!' (Psalm xxi. 1.) 'The Lord is known by the judgment which he hath executed: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.'" (Psalm ix. 16.) Is this the *Io triumphe*, ["shout of triumph,"] wherewith he makes the earth to ring again? No; but, on the contrary, the poor father, being as it were thunder-struck with the words of his blackamoor, forgets that he was a king and father of his country, looks like Jephthah when he met his devoted daughter, and, as if bereaved of all comfort, breaks out into a flood of tears, and into such an indecent lamentation as no records either sacred or human can parallel: "The king was much moved, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son. Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. xviii. 33.) My just indigna-

tion at this more than womanish transport forbids me to descant on it. I shall barely lay before you Joab's smart repartee, whereby he endeavoured to stop this deluge: "Joab said to the king, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; in that thou lovest thine enemies and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well." (2 Sam. xix. 5, 6.)

And thus we have seen the malady: turn we now to the remedy. The plague-sore has been opened; now for the bunch of figs.

II. *What may gracious parents best do for the conversion of those their children, whose wickedness has been occasioned by their own sinful INDULGENCE?*

1. *Reflect seriously on your heart and ways.*—Beg, and beg sincerely, earnestly, believingly, constantly, of the Lord, effectually to convince you of the great sinfulness and mischief of your indulgence, and to humble you deeply for it. O, cast yourselves at the foot of God; lament it, weep over it; mourn as doves before the Lord, when you see (if indeed you can see, and fondness hath not quite put out your eyes) pride, stubbornness, profaneness, averseness from God, all sorts and degrees of sins and corruptions, break forth in your children's lives. And that,

(1.) *With respect to your children.*—And this,

(i.) *Not only as the natural roots from whom all this their lewdness springs.*—They drew it from the womb and breast: they were poisoned in the very spring. (Psalm li. 5; Job xiv. 1; xv. 14; xxv. 4.) This consideration only, if no more,—to see your children rotting, sinking, dying with a loathsome disease, which they drew from your loins,—were enough to rend your hearts and caul. But,

(ii.) *By your wretched indulgence,* you have added much fuel to this flame; you have heated your furnace seven times hotter. Your indulgence hath fomented, yea, inflamed, their wickedness. You have heightened their fever into a plague; and that worse a thousand times than that of the body, which ends in a temporal death; but this is of their souls, and is like to sink them for ever into a gulf of fire and brimstone.

(2.) *With respect to God.*—The Lord was wroth with the serpent, and cursed him for ever, because but an instrument used by Satan for corrupting our first parents, though no cause at all of it. (Gen. iii. 14.) May not the Lord be much more angry with us, and cause his wrath to smoke against us, that have not only been instruments really to convey this poison and corruption of nature into our children's bosoms, but the principal occasions of their superadded wickedness? You see, on both these accounts, matter of deep humiliation.

2. *Love your children.*—Hearken, indulgent parents; I say it again, Love your children. Yea, love them—I say not, more, but—

better than ever yet you loved them. You can never love them *too well*: you may and have loved them *too much*. One saith well, "None is to be loved much, but He only whom we can never love too much." Love them with all the kinds, degrees, properties of love before-mentioned.

(1.) *Love them so as to be tender of their bodies, their outward man.*—Let that want nothing that is necessary, convenient, comfortable, suitable to their age or quality: but, *above all, love their souls, their inward man.* The cabinet must not be neglected; but the jewel is to be most regarded. The ring is to be duly esteemed; but the diamond in it most highly to be prized.

The love of our children's souls is the very soul and spirit and elixir of true parental love. If we truly love their souls, we shall unfeignedly desire and vigorously endeavour their spiritual and eternal salvation. If you love their souls indeed, your heart's desire and prayer to God for them will be, "that they may be saved." (Rom. x. 1.) You will put forth your utmost affections and strength to lift them up out of that pit of sin and misery in which they lie, and to raise them into and fix them in a state of grace. If we do not really grieve to see our children lie weltering in their sins of ignorance, unbelief, folly, profaneness, and so under the power and paw of Satan; if we do not faithfully labour to preserve them from perishing, but "suffer sin upon" them; pretend what we will, let us show never so much love with our mouth, God says, we really hate them in our hearts. (Lev. xix. 17.) See how Solomon's parents expressed their love to him: "I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thy heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live." (Prov. iv. 3, 4.) If you love them in deed and in truth, you will, you can "have no greater joy, than to" see your "children walking in the truth." (3 John 4.) That foolish son who is now a "heaviness to his mother," being made truly wise, will "make a glad father." (Prov. x. 1.) O, what a lovely sight, what a soul-ravishing object in a godly parent's eye, is a hopeful Timothy, an obedient, godly Joseph! (Prov. xxiii. 24, 25.) Well, then, love your children, and in the first place their precious souls. If you find [that] your love and care goes out more for their bodies than souls, so far mistrust your love; it is carnal.

(2.) *Love your children truly, tenderly; but yet take heed that you do not over-love them.*—"But when is that?" Certainly, when you love them more than you love God and Christ, you over-love them. "But who does so?" I shall not charge you; but give me leave to ask you a question or two. Tell me, (i.) When your God's glory and your child's good are nearly concerned, for which doth your zeal most hotly glow? Are not your affections most fiery where they should be most cool? and where they should burn, there they freeze? Doth not your heart make you believe [that] it loves God, and gives him pledges of your affection, while it secretly dotes chiefly on the dandled child? like some false strumpet, that entertains her husband

with her eyes, and in the mean time treads on the toe of her paramour. (ii.) Do you not often think [that] you love God *enough*? and when [you love] your child most, yet [do you not think that you love it] *but enough*, nay, *never enough*? Your head, heart, hand, purse, mandrakes, five messes, breasts, bowels,—all [are] but little enough, too little, for your child, your idol: is it so as to your God? So to love our child as thereby to lessen our love to God, yea, or to equalize it with our love to God, is not only indulgence, but idolatry; and an idol of flesh and blood is to be abhorred as well as that of wood or stone. Assuredly, the best way to quench this exorbitant love to children on earth, is to set your hearts and affections more on your Father in heaven; on God, his Christ, Spirit, word, ways, rewards. (Luke xii. 30; Isai. xxxiii. 6; 1 Peter i. 24, 25.) Look but directly on that sun, and thine eyes will quickly be dazzled to these glittering glow-worms here below. Make that invaluable pearl but thy treasure, and thou wilt lightly esteem these Bristol-stones. Take but Christ fully and wholly into thy heart and bosom, and thou wilt quickly yield; thy child's proper place is but thy foot or knee. In a word: if God in Christ be thy God indeed, thou wilt abhor the thought and practice of making thy child his cor-rival.

(3.) *Love your children, but love them wisely.*—Give them your hearts into their bosoms, but not the reins on their necks. When you do so, at the same time, mount them on your fiercest beast, furnish them with switch and spur, but without bit or bridle; and then do but pause and think soberly of the period of their full career. Love them, I say; but still be careful to maintain that just authority and pre-eminence that God hath given you over them. A parent that hath lost his authority, is as salt that hath lost its savour: like the log sent from Jupiter, every frog in the family [is] apt to leap upon him. And remember it, fond parents, there is nothing in the world that renders you more vile, cheap, contemptible in the eyes even of your children themselves, when they begin to put forth the first buds of reason,—nothing that lays your authority more in the dust, and exposes you to the foot and spurn of your child,—than sinful indulgence. “A foolish man despiseth his mother.” (Prov. xv. 20.) His mother's folly made him a fool; of a foolish child he at length grows up into a man, but “a foolish man;” and this “foolish man despises his mother.” If you are fathers, then, take care of your honour; if mothers, be sure to carry it so, as to preserve in your children that awful respect and reverence which they owe you. (Mal. i. 6; Heb. xii. 9.)

(4.) *Love your children, but love them in God and for God.*—Love his image in them, more than your own. In a word: let God's Spirit be the principle, God's word the rule, God's example the pattern, and his glory the end, of your dearest love to your dearest children. Love them as God loves his children. “But how?”

(i.) *God so loves his children's persons, as that he infinitely hates their sins.*—Nay, because he loves their persons, for that very reason he hates their sins. Because I love my child, therefore I hate

the toad that I see crawling on his bosom. God doth infinitely love his people; and yet in this life he shows more hatred against the sins of his own people, than he doth against the sins of any other men in the world.

(First.) Here he afflicts all his own people for sin, one way or other,—every mother's son of them; (Heb. xii. 6—8; Job x. 14; Isai. xxx. 20; xlvi. 10;) but is patient toward the wicked, lets them run riot without control. (Psalm l. 21; xi. 5; xiii. 4; 2 Peter ii. 9.)

(Secondly.) When he intends to bring a general judgment on a nation, he uses to begin with his own people. (Isai. xxviii. 18; 1 Peter iv. 17; Jer. xxv. 17, 18; Luke xxi. 10—12.)

(Thirdly.) When he makes any an example unto others of his hatred against sin, [he] makes choice of his own people before wicked men. (Isai. viii. 18; 1 Cor. iv. 9; 1 Kings xiii. 24—32.)

(Fourthly.) [His] judgments [are] more sharp on his own people than others. (Psalm lxxxviii. 7; Lam. i. 12; Dan. ix. 12.)

(ii.) *All this he doeth out of the purest eternal and unchangeable love that he bears [to] his children.*—God chastens and corrects his children, that he may keep them from sinning as others do and as themselves have done, and from perishing for ever in their sins as others shall. He meddles not with thorns and briars; but prunes his vines, that they may no more yield such sour grapes. He casts his children as gold into a furnace here, to refine and purify them, that he may not be forced to cast them as stubble into an eternal flaming oven hereafter; and this in love. (Exod. iv. 24; Job vii. 17—19; Psalm cxix. 71, 75; lxxxix. 30—38; Jer. l. 7; Lam. iii. 33; Hosea iv. 14; Amos iii. 2; Heb. xii. 6, 7; Rev. iii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 30, 32.) And now, parents, as you have seen your heavenly Father do, do you. In his strength follow his example.

(i.) *Love your children's persons; and because you love them, hate their sins.*—The sins of those most, whom you love most. You see, your God doeth so. Be not so blinded as that you can see no fault in them; nor so madly doting as to delight in their blemishes, to kiss their plague-sores; nor so indulgent as to be loath to grieve or displease them, when grossly criminal. Especially,

(ii.) *Let your holy strictness show itself against those whom you most affect.*—Tell them, “Child, I love you; and therefore I cannot, will not behold the least iniquity in you.” (Hab. i. 13.) So Christ acted toward his beloved disciples. (Matt. xv. 16, 17; xvii. 17.) Tell them, you cannot, will not pardon them. (Exod. xxiii. 21.) Let them know that you can be angry; and if words will not do, the rod shall; and that you can make that rod smart. (Exod. iv. 24.) Tell them, though they may presume to provoke you to bewail them, you will not suffer them to provoke God to hate them; (Isai. lxiii. 10; Psalm lxxviii. 58, 59;) and that you had rather hear them cry, and see them bleed, yea, and die here, than hear them howl, and see them burned and damned hereafter. Correct them, therefore, but in love, wisdom, measure, season.



**OBJECTION.** But I hear the bleatings of fond parents: "O, forbear, good sir, forbear! These are hard sayings: the land, the city, is not able to bear them. It is nothing but love that makes us to bear with our children. Alas! who could find in their hearts to beat so sweet a child?"

**SOLUTION.** "Nothing but love?" That is not so; the Holy Ghost gives thee the lie: it is not love, but real hatred, not to correct offending children. (Prov. xiii. 24; xxii. 15; xxix. 15, 17.)

**OBJECT.** "But they are little; and time enough hereafter."

**SOL.** Betimes: "While there is hope." (Prov. xix. 18.) Nip them in the bud; small hopes afterward, if neglected now.

**OBJECT.** "I cannot endure to hear him cry."

**SOL.** "Let not thy soul spare for his crying." It is strange to see how the Holy Ghost meets with these fond parents at every turning.

**OBJECT.** "But would you have me cruel to my own child?"

**SOL.** No; and therefore correct him. Thou art unmerciful and cruel to thy child, if thou dost not correct him: he will die and perish, if thou correct him not. (Prov. xxiii. 13.) His arm is gangrened; he dies if thou dost not cut it off. He is in an apoplexy; cup him, lance him, scarify him; or he is gone, and that for ever.

**OBJECT.** "Alas! children's faults are nothing."

**SOL.** What! is their stubbornness, pride, lying, disobedience,—it may be cursing, swearing,—nothing? These all lead to hell, from whence thy rod is ordained and sanctified by God to deliver him. (Prov. xxiii. 14.)

**OBJECT.** "But this is the way to make my child hate me; yea, to make him a dullard, a sot; so that I shall never have any comfort in him."

**SOL.** Better that thy child should hate thee for doing thy duty, than thy God for committing sin, yea, a comprehensive, complicated sin; all the sins [which] thy child commits upon thy neglect of correction are thine own. But read and believe Solomon: "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." (Prov. xxix. 17.)

(iii.) *Whenever you correct, be sure you admonish your child.*—So, in the text, *παιδεία* ["discipline"] and *νουθεσία* ["admonition"] are joined. Thus, David saith, thy heavenly Father doeth: he "chasteneth" first, and then "teacheth." (Psalm xciv. 12.) Lay God's law, and his sin against that law, before him. I have known a man that, when he corrected his child, would bring his Bible forth, cause his child to read such a scripture as spake home to the case; and this hath pierced deeper than the rod. Not beat with rigour, nor yet with silence; nor give strokes without words, which may possibly cause the child to see his fault, and come to an amendment. In public justice there goes eviction of the fact before the sentence, and a word of admonition before execution. If our child heedlessly fall into the dirt, we do not let him lie, and beat him; but first help him up, settle all

things well about him; after that correct him; but close all with charging him to look better to his feet.

(iv.) *To correction and admonition add faithful, fervent, constant supplications.*—Without this all other means are ineffectual. It is thy heavenly Father that must do the feat at last: it is he alone [that] must work effectually in thy poor child both to will and do. Bring him to Bethesda, put him in there; beg thy God to stir the waters, and to make them healing. With the woman of Canaan, carry thy child to Christ. (Matt. xv. 22.) Remember Job: he “sent and sanctified” his children. (Job i. 5.) Wouldst thou have thy child a Samuel, a Solomon, an Austin? Be thou a Hannah, a Bathsheba, a Monica. Let thy child be the child of thy prayers, vows, tears; (1 Sam. i. 12—20; Prov. xxxi. 2;) and that is the way to make him a child of thy praises, joys, and triumphs, with the father in the parable. (Luke xv. 32.)

(v.) *For a close of all, add a good example.*—Cause it to appear to thy child’s conscience, that thou hast begun to mend first, to repent of thy darling-sin of indulgence. That done, thou mayest fairly hope that this loadstone may draw him to repentance: parents’ examples are high magnetics. (2 Kings xiv. 3; xv. 3, 34.)

**OBJECTION.** Say both severe and indulgent parents, “These things have we done, and that faithfully; and yet our children remain wicked.”

**SOLUTION 1.** However, none have more cause to expect and with patience to wait for God’s blessing on use of means, because your children are certainly under God’s faithful promise. (Gen. xvii. 7; Isai. xlv. 3.) **2.** You have delivered your own souls. (Ezek. iii. 19.) **3.** Your endeavours [are] graciously accepted. (Isai. xlix. 4; 2 Cor. viii. 12.) **4.** Your prayers shall return into your own bosom. (Psalm xxxv. 13.)

## SERMON VIII.

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HOW MAY WE BEST CURE THE LOVE OF BEING FLATTERED ?

*A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it ; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.*—Proverbs xxvi. 28.

It was the Psalmist's complaint of that age [which] he lived in, that "there was no faithfulness in their mouth ;" that while "they flattered with their tongue, their throat was an open sepulchre," (Psalm v. 9, 10,) equally devouring and insatiable. In these words we may take-up as mournful a complaint of our own age, or in the words of the Psalmist, xii. 1 : "The faithful fail from among the children of men ;" whilst lying tongues first afflict the innocent, and then hate those [whom] they afflict ; which is the method that opener enemies do observe, and is the subject of the former part of the verse. Among these men truth and justice have no place, nor bear sway ; but is it any whit better among pretended friendships ? "Flattering mouths work ruin ;" such smooth and oily tongues do more sily, and yet not less surely, undo us. The former ruin us by others ; the latter ruin us by ourselves : and these [are] the more dangerous and cruel, because they do destroy under the covert of abused friendship, making that which should be sacred among men, a means to effect the most barbarous tragedies. Of this the latter part of the verse speaketh, which doth present us with a picture that in different positions sets forth the counterfeit of the greatest and most amiable beauty. The counterfeit of friendship appears in the face and at first view ; but if you change your place, and view it at nearer distance, it presents to your view a secret, dangerous, and destructive enemy,—one that "worketh ruin." With this I must entertain you who either hear or read me, and make it, as I suppose Solomon designed it, a preservative against the ruin which loved and affected flattery draws upon men. There are few—I think, none—but have been, some time or other, more or less wounded with the sting of this scorpion : I beg you will patiently suffer me to bruise the head on the wound [which] the sting hath made ; that you may be healed,—at least, the deadliness of the venom may be prevented. This I am to endeavour while I state this case, *How may we best cure the love of being flattered ?*

Solomon in our text tells us what the flatterer is, and what he does ; and leaves us to conclude what ought to be our deportment and affection toward him : whether our heart should be toward him that hath no heart for us, but is all mouth ; or whether we should love

his flattery which designs and effects our ruin; or whether we ought not to hate his flattery with perfect hatred, and fly from it as from a hellish fiend; if I may allude to that of the poet:—

Εχθρος γὰρ μοι κείνος ὄμιος αἶδασ ἠγυλῆσιν,  
 Ὅς ἄ ἕτερον μὲν κευθεῖ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ βαζει.—HOMERI *Iliad.* ix. 312.\*

The case put into my hand, and the text assigned for the foundation of this discourse, do fairly offer an occasion to me to acquaint you with these following remarks, which will, as clear the reason, so justify the choice, of the method I observe in my discourse. The text tells you what flattery is, what it doeth: and the case proposed doth take it for granted, that love of this flattery is a disease [which] if not cured, will kill; that there is some cure [that] may be had; and hereupon inquires what is the best way of curing this love of being flattered. In compliance with both text and case, I shall cast my discourse into this method:—

#### THE GENERAL METHOD OF THE DISCOURSE.

- I. *Inquire what flattery is, which we ought not [to] love.*
- II. *Love of it is a malady, a disease of the soul.*
- III. *Where not cured, it is pernicious and destroys.*
- IV. *What the best method for our cure in this case.*

#### WHAT FLATTERY IS.

I. To begin, then, with the first, *what flattery is.*—Might we guess at it by the signification of the words used to express it, we should not much err in our notion of it. Solomon, in the text, calls it פֶּה חֲלָק “a mouth, that flatters.” All that comes from the flatterer is complaisant, as softness to the touch, sweetness to the taste, prettiness to the eye, and harmony to the ear; only heartiness and sincerity are wanting: and the whole is framed in hypocrisy,† and designed to ensnare or deceive,‡ (as Psalm v. 9,) by glozing, alluring, tickling, delighting, and lulling asleep the mind and affections of the persons flattered. All that appears is “a fair semblance,” yet very falsehood; as it is expressed, Psalm lxxviii. 36,§ and is elegantly and fully comprised in the character and deportment of a “strange woman,”|| (Prov. ii. 16,) who, Delilah-like, dandles Samson, that she may make him think how much, and ere long know how little, she loved him. For all these sugared words do cover sublimated poison, which “worketh ruin:” מְרַחֵם מְרַחֵם it will certainly end in the fall or dangerous stumbling of the deceived: so the word implieth. One thing more I may add to this,—that the actor in this tragedy never forgets himself

\* “Who dares think one thing, and another tell,  
 My heart detests him as the gates of hell.”—POPE'S Translation.

† As פֶּה חֲלָק notes in Isaiah and Jeremiah. ‡ *Amadouer.*—Gallic. § *Ils fuissent beau semblance de leur bouche.* “They made a fair appearance with their mouth.”—EDIT. ¶ *Qui mignarde de ses paroles.* “Who fondles with her words.”—EDIT. ¶ *Impulit, depulit, expulit, evertit.* “To impel, cast down, expel, or overthrow.”—EDIT.

and his own advantage, stripping the novice he hath coaxed, and living on him whom he deceived. So that the blunt Schoolman spake not amiss, describing flattery to be "a sin wherein any one, in word or deeds, for obtaining some advantage, doth study to please in their ordinary converse by praises above the desert of virtue."\* It is certainly a specious, but deceitful, praise,† laid as a train to ensnare and hurt the unwary, and to profit him who laid the train: like a concealed robber, [who] first promiseth to be a convoy and defence; then persuades the unthinking traveller to appear like himself,—rich and splendid, in his richest attire; which shall be the robber's prey in convenient time and place, when and where none can relieve him.

It is the basest counterfeit of friendship and justice. It seems to do you right as justice binds, but it is with design to injure you. It seems to do it with love and endeared affection, but as the crocodile which weeps over the skull of the man [whom] he hath devoured. If you will consult the scriptures, you will find it variously expressed, but ever in a character that includes its notorious falsehood and mischievous tendency. (Psalm lii. 1—4.) While the flatterer "croucheth and humbleth himself," it is that you might fall a prey to him as to a lion. (Psalm x. 9, 10.) David describeth him, Psalm xii., as one who "speaketh vanity with his neighbour, with flattering lips and with a double heart," purposing by such words to "prevail:" and the next you hear is, the poor [are] oppressed, the needy sigh; both are in danger. (Verses 2—5.) Which words of the prophet contain the definition that the Schoolman gives of flattery, and superadd the mischievous consequents of it; whose foundation is in a formed lie; whose aim is to please, for an advantage by, a "neighbour," one [whom] we ordinarily converse with, whose good is unduly magnified, whose vice or defects are unduly lessened. In brief: it is the greatest cheat that wit, dissimulation, and covetousness can put on mankind; a false glass, that represents every thing untruly, much fitter to be broken in pieces and trod under foot, than to be kept by any. If you will know it in its particular branches, there is,

#### THE KINDS OF FLATTERY.

1. *A self-flattery*: "I am not as other men." (Luke xviii. 11.) "I am rich, and increased in substance." (Rev. iii. 17.) "They shall find none iniquity in me." (Hosea xii. 8.) So "they flatter themselves in their own eyes." (Psalm xxxvi. 2.)

2. *A flattery from others*: who represent our good or evil very untruly, by making the good seem better than it is, and making the evil seem less than it is, and deceiving in both for advantage; as the false prophets, false teachers, Romish priests, covetous clergymen, seducing heretics, factious dividers, hungry courtiers, and sneaking

\* *Peccatum quo quis supra debitum virtutis verbis vel factis in communi conversatione, alicujus commodi consequendi intentione, alium delectare studet.*—THOMAS AQUINAS, *Secunda Secunda*, ix. 115. † Ἠδίστον ἀκούσμα εἶπαι. "No sound is sweeter than praise."—EDIT.

parasites. If you look to the qualities of flattery, and would range it according to these, you will find:—

#### THE QUALITIES OF FLATTERY.

1. *A hellish flattery*: that tends to an ensnaring us in sin. Such are the enticings of sinners; (Prov. i. 10;) such was that of Jonadab to Amnon. (2 Sam. xiii. 5.) Such was that of Satan: "Ye shall be like God," אֱלֹהִים כְּמִצְחָה (Gen. iii. 5;) which ruined our protoplasts: such was that of Satan to Christ: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee," &c. (Matt. iv. 6.)

2. *A revengeful flattery*: kisses of an enemy; the treaty of Simeon and Levi with the Shechemites, and Joab's embraces of Abner or Amasa. Such flattery entertains you with milk in a lordly dish first; but, when you sleep, there is the nail and hammer to be feared.

3. *A servile, hungry flattery*: when the flatterer "croucheth for a morsel of bread," (as 1 Sam. ii. 36,) and magnifieth the gift of a meal's meat to the skies; such, as in Rom. xvi. 18, is "serving the belly by fair words."

4. *A cowardly flattery*: when men dare not tell what is, and what they think, the truth concerning the virtues or vices of men.

5. *A covetous flattery*: which aims at gain and increasing our wealth by advantage on the flattered.

6. *An emulous and envious flattery*: wherein the good, virtuous, praiseworthy qualities or practices of any one of our own party are extolled and magnified above all measure. So the old heretics; so the present dividing parties in the world exclude others from the number of virtuous, wise, learned, pious, and loyal. This is a kind of flattery which prevails at this day; loved too much by all, and dangerous to all. Were that true which such factious flattery suggests, how very small a remnant should escape with their life! In all these there is an officiousness, or pretence of kindness, honour, and zeal for your good, your credit, your advantage and right; which draws your affection and love to these undue courses, and which is the disease to be cured. And what this is, we are to inquire in the second place.

#### WHAT LOVE TO BE FLATTERED IS.

II. *Love to be flattered, a disease of human nature*, I would rather call, "a love to be praised in good, or excused in evil, more than justly may be." I cannot conceive [that] any one, who understands the falsehood of a flatterer and his foul designs, can love the flattery; but yet we all are prone to love the praises and apologies [which] are made on our behalf by those that indeed do flatter, and unduly praise or excuse. So that, in the general, an affecting and liking of men's praises and apologies above the nature and circumstances of our good and evil, is the "love to be flattered" in our case. I will present it to you in its distinct parts. It is,

## IN IMMODERATE DESIRE OF PRAISE.

1. *An immoderate desire that our best and worst might be represented in fairer colours than those that are native.*—That, where good, we may seem better,—where evil, we may seem less evil,—than we are. As other species of love first appear in our desire, so here,—a great weakness and distemper of our nature thus to desire the forbidden fruit. When this desire prevaleth, we,

## IN BLIND CREDENCE OF ALL THAT IS SAID FOR US.

2. *Believe what the flatterer saith.*—Though he believeth not himself, in the praise or apology he makes for us. A blind, secure, unsearching credence and belief of what is glosingly and deceitfully said by this deceiver, makes a part of this love. As other love, so is this credulous and in a high degree confident; [it] believes a stranger's mouth in bar to our own eyes, and in affront to our own senses [will] credit a lying elogy. And then,

## IN VALUING OURSELVES BY THEM.

3. *Set the value on ourselves by what such affirm of us.*—The valuation and love [that] mankind hath for any thing, are inseparable: indeed love is an appreciating affection. And so it is here: when the false coiner hath been suffered to stamp the base alloyed metal of our imperfect virtues with the impress of divine perfection, we, deceived mortals, prize and love them as if they really were what they seem to be. So did Alexander of Macedon think [that] his extract was divine, and valued himself on his supposed divinity. So did Herod the Great, when he believed their flattery: "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." (Acts xii. 22.)

## AFFECTING OCCASIONS TO SET FORTH OUR PRAISE.

4. Another branch of love to be flattered, is *an affected seeking to ourselves, or giving unto others, unnecessary occasions of setting forth the worth of our persons, actions, and qualifications, according to the standard of flatterers.*—He loves flattery, who loves to search out his own praise. We know, *he* dotes on the person *who* unseasonably breaks out into their commendation, and would have every mouth, as he\* fancied every wood did, "echo the praises of his love."

## ACQUIESCENCE IN WHAT IS GIVEN AS OUR PRAISE.

5. *A well-pleas'dness to hear the great and good things by dissembling flatterers ascribed to us, which either we never did, or did in manner much below what they report them.*—It is a disease of the mind that thus is pleased with vanity, with a lying vanity; yet sick of this disease are the besotted cullies. How sick were the pigmy's mind who should be persuaded to think his stature and strength equal to Goliath's, and his feats against the cranes equal to the great

\* VIRGILIUS, *Ecl. i. 5*:—*Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida sylvas.*

achievements of David, the Maccabees, or those mighty captains who purchased to themselves the surname of "Great!"

CHOICE OF SUCH FOR OUR COMPANY.

6. *A choice of such for our intimate and inseparable companions, with licence given them without control to lie for us.*—He is deeply in love, who cannot live without what is loved. Many thousands among great ones and rich ones cannot live without such extravagant applauders of their persons and *manages* [conduct]: and we justly wonder how they bear with patience the extravagant, notorious, and incredible falsities of these parasites. This I have made the last part of this culpable love of flattery, which, as other love, discovers itself by its choice. Summarily: every part of this love is a particular weakness and distemper of the mind wherein it is, and the whole is much more its disease. This love of being flattered is a very immoderate affection, longing after, and delighting in, ungrounded praises; a feeding upon lies; the effect of a secreter disease,—self-love; and cause of many culpable distempers in our life. It is, to conclude this point, originally, formally, and effectively a malady of mankind, and, unless cured, proves pernicious and destructive; \* which is the thing proposed.

LOVE TO UNDUE PRAISE IS PERNICIOUS.

III. Solomon tells you in our text, that it "*worketh ruin;*" and beside the unaccountable multitudes of those who have perished by it already, the scriptures assure us that where it is not cured, it doth kill. Where "there is no faithfulness in the mouth," that is, where flattery and glozings are, "the inward part is wickednesses," destroying wickednesses. "An open sepulchre" and a flattering "tongue" are inseparable. (Psalm v. 9.) If the glutton diggeth his own grave with his teeth, the designing flatterer digs other men's with his tongue. In Psalm xii. 1, 2, 5, you find ruin attending on prevailing flattery: the poor [are] oppressed, the needy sigh, when such unfaithful tongues are successful.

Words that "drop as a honey-comb, and mouth smoother than oil:" (Prov. v. 3:) which is an accurate description of the visible part of flattery; but what is concealed from our eye is bitterness and wounds. (Verse 4.) And though this place speak of the flattery of "a strange woman," whose flattery in some cases may be more dangerous and deadly; yet the flatteries of others, "strange" sons, is dangerous and destructive also: "The words of" such are "smoother than butter, but war is in their heart; softer than oil, yet drawn swords;" (Psalm lv. 21;) wherewith "others are first slain, and which doth first or last enter their own bowels."† God doth in his own season send forth commissioned officers to destroy "a hypocritical nation;" as Isai. x. 6. In a word: wheresoever you find flattery

\* *Nullum animalium genus assentatoribus perniciosius.*—LUDOVICUS GRANATENSIS.  
 "No kind of living creatures is more hurtful than that of flatterers."—EDIT. † *Perniciem atis ac postremo sibi inveniunt.*—TACITI *Annales*, lib. i.



predominant and culminating, it presages an approaching ruin, whether in kingdoms and states or in church, in families or particular persons. Flattering and fawning counsellors ruin princes and principalities; flattering clergy ruin the church; flattering captains, their general; lawyers, their clients; physicians, their patients; and flattering companions destroy those that keep them company. For fuller declaration of this, I will tell what is ruined by that flattery which becomes predominant by our love to it under the notion of praise and friendship due to our virtues. Uncured love of such praise and smoothing us, is pernicious,

#### AFFECTION TO UNDUE PRAISE DESTROYS, I. VIRTUOUS PRINCIPLES.

1. *To good moral principles and virtuous habits, implanted by the care and wisdom of such as had the educating of us.*—So we may observe men and women too often degenerate, and wear out the impressions of virtuous habits, and imbibe the quite contrary vices:—of modest, become impudent; of chaste, become unclean, adulterers and adulteresses, &c. How many in our age have by the help of flatterers conquered their virtuous education, and triumphed over it in a debauched bravery, which is to “glory in their shame!”

#### II. NATURAL INCLINATIONS TO GOOD.

2. *To all the remainders of any tolerable, innate, and congenite capacity of receiving good advice, examples, and helps for their recovery.*—“The very stock is corrupted, [so] that no graft of virtue can be planted on them: they become “reprobate to every good work.” There is in many from the birth a promising receptivity; we look on them as more susceptible of virtue than others: now, love to vicious flatterers, and hearkening to them very frequently, overthrow these very foundations on which we might build, [so] that the person remains for ever a cage of unclean birds, and leave such hopeless.

#### III. ESTATES.

3. *To their wealth and estates.*—So many an imprudent and unexperienced heir is gulled out of his estate and inheritance. The flatterer by his wiles derives the substance and labours of the deceased father, from the children, to himself and his. Solomon notes this as the consequence of love to be flattered: “Strangers are filled with the wealth” of such. (Prov. v. 10.)

#### IV. REPUTATION.

4. *To their honour and reputation.*—A vicious seducer hearkened to, and his flatteries yielded to, will blast all the credit of those that are seduced, how great soever their reputation might have been before their turning aside. Solomon proposeth this as [an] argument to dissuade us from hearkening to flatteries. (Prov. v. 9.)

## V. SAFETY AND LIFE.

5. *To the safety, peace, and life of the imprudent lover of flattery.*—When nothing else remains, nor surviveth the wasting and consumptive mouth of a flatterer, but the disgraced, impoverished, and miserable life of the deceived, this is made a prey too; and the unthankful, unsatiate, and unmerciful seducer hunts for the precious life also.

## VI. SOUL AND ITS HAPPINESS.

6. *To the soul and its happiness.*—The flatterer is too powerful and too successful an instrument in promoting sin and ruining of souls; he draws into sin, into remissness and neglect of good. Such seduced ones call evil good, and then do it; think great evil little, and repent not of it; are persuaded [that] their good is great enough already, and are surprised in a sinful and impenitent state.

Thus pernicious is flattery loved. A dangerous disease, you see; yet curable, if proper means be applied. And,

IV. *What those means are which may best effect this cure, is the last, but chiefest, of our inquiry.* These, in the fourth place, we must speak of. And here I propose that,

## ILL NAME OF FLATTERY.

1. You would *impartially consider the bad name that flattery hath ever had, and still hath, and ever will have, among all sorts of men.*—How all condemn it as unworthy of the least degree of their love, as worthy of their utmost hatred and abhorrence. It is “sugared poison, a bewitching cup;” \* the “greatest plague in societies,” and the most barbarous torturers; † for they pick out the eyes, and flay off the flesh, of the living: worse than hungry crows, as Antisthenes observed; like corroding worms, which eat out the substance, verdure, and life of the root [that] they were bred in. That very man who too soon was perverted by flattery to think himself greater than to be Philip’s son, yet in soberer temper judged a flatterer “worthy to be thrown into that river in which” his flattering history was cast and drowned. ‡ Though, as Sigismund the emperor observed, we affect pleasant, flattering companions, yet he professed he hated them like as he hated the plague. § Would you look on the flatterer as condemned and most worthy to be cut off from human society, you would neither over-love him nor his flatteries. It is but rarely that a foolish virgin falls in love, begs the life, and chooseth the most intimate converse, of a condemned felon: let us look on this condemned vice as most do on the handsomest condemned felon and murderer; a fair and goodly outside, but not worthy to live.

\* *Mellitum venenum, Circes pocula.*  
*assentatio, &c.*  
*De Dictis Sigismundi.*

† *Nulla in amicitiis pestis est major quam*  
*§ ÆNEAS SYLVIUS,*

‡ *Dignior eras qui eodem precipitareris.*

## [LOVE OF PRAISE] ILL BECOMES OTHER MEN.

2. *Look how ill an uncured love of praise becomes another.*—See how great a blemish and stain it is to them, how it lessens all other commendable qualities. It is to dote on our own shadow, and perish in the love of it, as the mythologists report of Narcissus. Such [an] one is the most unfit of all men for human society, whether in a converse of friendship, service, or command; a most untractable and useless piece: not fit to rule others, who wants a prudence to rule himself; nor fit to receive commands, while he admires himself, and dotes on his own contrivance; not fit to be a friend, since all his love runs waste on himself. The emblem of such persons is ingeniously drawn from the ape, the ugliest, as the Lord Bacon observes, of creatures, the most mischievous in his pranks, useless, and saucy: and are such worthy to be loved? How comely a sight do you think [that] an ill-shaped ape, grinning on his own features in a flattering glass, would be? Such is the man that loves to see himself in flattery's mirror. How glorious was Alexander of Macedon while he rejected fawners! how lovely! But how eclipsed, how despicable, when he believed and loved them! which the Athenians did generously enough witness, when they fined their envoy ten talents for calling him a "god," and put to death Evagoras for adoring him. There was more than ordinary in Herod, which gave him the name of "Great;" but when he over-loved the praise of men, God left him a monument and warning to all posterity, giving up so contemptible a slave of his own vain-glory to the most contemptible, loathsome, and shameful death. Lice, bred in his own bowels, destroy his body, as the vermin of self-love and self-admiring reflections had destroyed his mind. Look first on the deformity of a self-admirer, next on the beauty of a self-denying humility; and this will cure this distemper. As the sight of the putrid carcass once cured the fond desire of friends, who doted on their own fancy for his picture whilst living; or as the sight of the loathsomeness in Serapis's temple cured the superstitious Egyptians; so the sight of the deformity of our love of the undue praise of men would cure this disease. But,

## DEPLORABLE MISERIES OF IT.

3. Thou who lovest to be unduly praised, come with me, *view the many, great, deplorable miseries [which] it hath filled the world with.*—Read the tragedies [that] it hath acted, and all these mostly upon its friends. As it would cure the excessive praises men bestow on the great commanders of conquering armies, if they would recount with themselves how many fair and goodly countries they laid desolate, how many cities they razed, how many millions of souls innocent and peaceable they sacrificed to their ambition; so here, the bloody paws of the disguised lion would cure us of our dotage on the fox's skin. It hath ever proved "a mortal and deadly cup."\* If you

\* *Θανασιμον μελικρατον.* "A honied, but fatal draught."—EDIT.

travel through waste and desolate kingdoms, and inquire who ruined them, you will find the flatterers about prince and court : so true is that known observation of the historian, "Flatterers do more frequently overthrow a kingdom than open enemies."\*

But did flatterers find such great ones' ears stopped, and their minds fortified against, or alienated from, their flatteries, the danger were not considerable. The flatterer can but attempt; our love to the flattery gives the success: the head and shaft of the arrow cannot fly to endanger the eagle; it was his own feathers that contributed to his wound and death. Scarce a city, family, or person whose calamities were fit to be noted in the world, but you may find some parasites, some close undermining flatterers, charged as a great occasion of those calamities; and the love, affection, and delight [which] those flatterers found, much more the cause of those fatal calamities. Ahab fell more by his own love of flattery, than by the artifices of the son of Chenaanah and his accomplices. (1 Kings xxii. 1—36.) So, in the parable, (Ezek. xiii. 10—16,) the wall fell; for the builders built it "with untempered mortar," and the people loved to see the building thus go forward; [there] was scarce one that disliked it, as Ezekiel observeth: (Ezek. xxii. 28—30 :) the consequence of which is: "I," saith the Lord, "have poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath," &c. (Verse 31.) When "prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. v. 31.) In a word: can you love that flattery which never had extorted a tear, a sigh, a grief, or complaint from you, if you had hated it; which hath filled you or yours, whole families, cities, kingdoms, yea, the whole world in all ages, with the complaints and sorrows which treachery, loved and trusted, could bring upon those that were so much over-seen? We show you the scattered bones about the den's mouth, and desire to ask whether you think fit to love the couching lion which lurks in it.

4. Would you be cured of immoderate love of an undue praise? Then, so often as you perceive any one soothing you therewith, *suspect there may be [some design], and search wha tlikeliest is the design such have, upon you.*—We may with good manners question the integrity of his purpose who doth, on our knowledge, transgress the rules of truth in the words we hear from him: such men lie for advantage. The discovery of this designing, wheedling projector will, if you have any spirit of a man in you, take off your love, yea, turn it into hatred. No man can love to be imposed upon: be assured there is a snare hid; search after it, keep a watchful eye upon it; in time you will discover what you prevented, and never love what endangered you. "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird:" and there is much in that of Diogenes to a flatterer.†

\* *Regnum sapinus ab assentatoribus quàm ab hostibus everti solet.*—QUINTUS CURTIUS *De Rebus gestis Alexandri Magni.* † *Nihil proficis cum te intelligam.*—SENECA in *Epist.* "Since I completely understand thy verbiage, its effect on me is unavailing."—EDIT.

It is the great care of these lurkers to lie concealed, and to hide their purposes, and to blindfold those [whom] they lead ; for it is but one labour to expose them to our view and to our hatred. Could weeping parents give their seduced children eyes to see the seducing projects of corrupt flatterers, they need be no further solicitous ; their children would find hearts to hate them. There is nothing truly amiable in flattery, and none that know it approve or love it. Solomon, therefore, takes so much pains for discovery of the designs of a flattering mouth, and then counselleth us to decline and reject it. (Prov. v. 3—14.) The monster in the dark doth not, but in the light he will, make us recoil with abhorrence.\* Find him out, then ; view him exactly ; and, I know, it will do much toward your cure.

5. If you would be cured, you must *resolutely and peremptorily reject the friendship of the man who turns due praises into flattery.*—Let such know, they please least when they praise most ; and that you make their first offence an opportunity to inform them, that the second offence in this kind is and shall be unpardonably punished with loss of your friendship. I know not any reason why I may not interpret that of flatterers, which David speaks of liars : “He that telleth lies shall not come into my house.” (Psalm ci. 7.) This, he did know, was the way to prevent love of flatteries and flatterers,—to keep them out of his presence. This tympany is never cured, while sycophants are suffered to blow-up weak minds with conceits of worth greater than is due to their persons. It is not unfitly resembled to those distempers which increase on us by our indulgence. It is an itching humour [that] runs in our blood, as Sigismund the emperor observed ; and when it breaks out, the tickling flatterer doth increase it : if you would cure, you must let none such have the stroking of it. It is a tetter that is never cured with sweet and pleasing applications ; a sharp and drying medicine is best : so the angry countenance of a resolved hater of flattery is both a good preservative and a good healing receipt against this disease. You lose nothing, if you part with such ; you get a dangerous disease, if you retain them.

6. *Look on flattery and your love to it in their diametrical opposition and irreconcilableness to God in the truth of all his word, and in the righteousness of all his judicial sentence on men and things.*—To call evil good, or to make those seem consummate which are defective, are an “abomination” to God : “A just balance is his delight,” and he abhors the false balance. (Prov. xi. 1.) When a parasite, extols thy good or extenuates thy evil, he weighs thee in a false balance ; when thou art pleased with this, thou weighest thyself in the same false balance ; and God, who stands by, abhorreth both of you. Now, methinks, this should affect your hearts : dare you love what God hateth ? Will you not henceforward cease to love the undue praises of men, lest you fall under the dreadful, but just, abhorrence of God ?

\* *Adulatio periculosa est quæ latet.* “That flattery which lies concealed is very dangerous.”—EDIT.

He will never lessen truth, to magnify any; he will never intrench on justice, to gratify any; he is a God of truth and righteousness; what your good or evil is, he will impartially declare, and abhorreth such who love a lie and unrighteousness in their valuing of themselves and actions: will it be "good that God should search you out?" "Truth is divine; whence, as from a fountain, all good, divine and human, flows: so that the flatterer appears an enemy to God." \* This was the philosopher's argument long since; and it is not less cogent because so very ancient. None so hateful to God as these deep, ravening, and insatiable impostors; nothing is more contrary to Him who is all truth and goodness. Let flatterers and besotted lovers of flattery read well that, Psalm lii. 2—4: "Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness," &c. Here is the black character of the flatterer; and his miserable end you have, verse 5: "God shall destroy thee for ever," &c. The "sharp arrows of the mighty, and the coals of juniper," are prepared for the "lying lips and false tongue." (Psalm cxx. 2—4.) Since this is one of the things [which] God hateth, (Prov. vi. 16—19,) let it not be one of the things [that] you love.

7. *Get such a prevailing degree of generous and pure love to all that is good, and such a degree of hatred unto evil, that you may want neither the good word of men to be a spur to doing good, nor the sharp reproofs of men to restrain from evil.*—[He] who hateth evil, will not need [that] any one should put a colour on it, to lessen the apparent evil: we are glad that what we hate appears so evil that it justifies our hatred. Get an antipathy to all that is vice, or looks like it; and then you cannot but dislike all that would commend it to your choice, or excuse it to your judgment. Get that frame of heart [which] David had: "I hate every false way;" (Psalm cxix. 104, 128;) and then you are safe from this disease. And, to make the cure complete, add that pure, generous, universal, and divine love of good, for its own sake, that will account it a rich recompence and praise enough to have done it: there will be little need of man's just praises. Where our love to doing good is set on it for its own sake, there will need none of the undue praises of any. None need praise the person of Rachel to Jacob; he would have scorned the flatteries of any who should have lessened her real loveliness by false colours. How should we disdain the labour, and condemn the folly, of a madman that would persuade us [that] he could add loveliness to the light of a glorious morning! Open your eyes, ye lovers of virtue; look on all her daughters; they are "all glorious:" if any are veiled, it is because you cannot bear the lustre of their excellency. Awake, ye dreaming mortals; you will see enough in naked virtue to fall in love with it; as all would, if they saw it, according to Plato's judgment. *They are weak stomachs that must be allured by superadded*

\* *Quòd si divina quædam res sit veritas, ex quâ, cœu fonte, diis pariter ac hominibus omnia bona proficiscuntur; videndum ne adulator diis omnibus sit hostis, &c.*—*Ex Plutarcho LUDOVICUS GRANATENSIS.*

saucers to eat of good viands ; there is no need of them, where food is loved, and the appetite in right order : so here, when you love good for the goodness that is in it, you will desire flatterers to forbear their labour, lest they mar what you love by adding of their own, which you hate and suspect. When God would put us in a sure way of keeping his commandments and persevering in a praiseworthy life, he does not direct us to encourage ourselves by the large praises of men, but commands [that] we should love his law with all our heart : this will cure indeed.

8. *Get and keep that humble frame of heart, which, being ever sensible of its present condition, seeth so great defects in all its good, that it dares not think there is a sufficient ground for any praise beyond the ordinary laudable temper.*—"The good that I would I do not." (Rom. vii. 19.) And as to what may be culpable, let no man's flattery pervert your judgment ; but humbly acknowledge, you better know your own inclinations than any glozing, fawning hypocrite in the world : and so long as you can maintain such an humble sense of your imperfections, your humility will be your antidote against the infection and danger of this disease. The flies blow, when the sun is warm and gotten high ; so, when we are high in our own opinions of ourselves, these flesh-flies—base colloquers [flatterers]—blow us. In a cold season, and [when] the sun—that is, our opinions—[is] low, and in the brumal solstice,—when we have colder thoughts of our own goodness,—these flies are numbed and impotent, &c. It is our own pride that gives these creatures an opportunity to hurt us. Whilst Alexander of Macedon kept a sense of his human original, he kept himself from this disease : as pride grew on him, he opened his ears to seducing flatteries, and at last fell into the highest frenzy ; in the height whereof he dreams of a divine original, and will be better than a man, whilst he is lower than a beast. I know no better prophylactic to "keep from" [being], nor better therapeutic to "cure" us if, tainted, than that of Christ :—if we had "done all," yet *δουλοι αχρειοι εσμεν* ["we are unprofitable servants"]. (Luke xvii. 10.) When you have done good, and it is praised, remember what humility would say both of the praise and the praiser : "Did the praiser know you as you know yourselves, he had never spent so many words, and put you to the blush : and since the praise is but a mistake, you may not account it to your gain ; for it must be discounted, when the reckoning is stated aright." Whoso owns [that] it is candour in our neighbour, and grace in our God, that covers the faults we are guilty of, and accepts the good we are doers of and humbly acknowledgeth, is in great measure cured of this loathsome disease.

9. *Remember, what degree of this love you permit, whether greater or lesser, the more you abate of your future reward.*—And he that pays you more respect than is due for your good done, and you accept it,—this man makes you spend on, and lessens your future reward ; as, Matt. vi. 1 : "Ye have no reward of your Father."

10. It will contribute to your cure, if you will remember, that *this love of the praise of men is a sacrilegious robbery of God.*—It is not

possible to love this flattery, but you will, with Herod, take to yourselves the whole or part of that glory [which] is due to God; and who knows what the danger of such sacrilege will be? Remember Herod's fault and punishment, and have it often before your eyes, that they may not look for,—much less dote on,—but abhor, the undue praises of men. It is scarce possible [that] you should affect an overgrown praise, and keep yourselves from robbery against God. As, therefore, you would abhor open and notorious sacrilege, because of the greatness of the sin; so, watch against the secret sacrilege which God so remarkably revenged on Herod, thereby telling us, it was no little sin that received so great a punishment.

To conclude: you that heard me, you that read these lines, think not [that] you are little concerned in these counsels: they give you those directions which will, if well followed, deliver you from the paths of the destroyer. You who are, more than others, in danger of this disease,—such are superiors, rich, unexperienced, haughty ones, and self-lovers, and if there be any other such-like,—take more heed to these cures prescribed, and at least keep some of them by you as antidotes against this poison. In the use of these prescribed, because they are our duty as well as means, forget not this word [which] I close with: 1. Your great Exemplar, Christ Jesus, refused great praises: “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one.” (Matt. xix. 17.) 2. The scriptures condemn and threaten flatterers, and such as love them. 3. Pray for the Spirit of wisdom, holiness, humility, and self-denial; that wisdom received may discover the snare, holy principles may set you above vain praises, and humble self-denial may content you without them. And, 4. Then a gracious providence will deliver from them.



## SERMON IX.

BY THE REV. ROBERT TRAIL, A.M.

BY WHAT MEANS MAY MINISTERS BEST WIN SOULS?

*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.*—1 Timothy iv. 16.

THE words are a substantial part of the good counsel and direction [which] the apostle giveth unto Timothy, and in him unto all the ministers of the gospel. In them are two things:—

I. *A three-fold duty laid on gospel-ministers:* “Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them.”

II. *A double advantage consequent upon the discharge of this duty:* “For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

I. *Ministers' duty is in three things here:*—

1. *Take heed unto thyself.*—Thou art set in a high office, in a dangerous place; take good and narrow heed, look well to thyself, thy heart and way.

2. *Take heed unto thy doctrine.*—Though thou be never so well-gifted and approved both of God and men; though thou be an extraordinary officer, as Timothy was; yet “take heed unto thy doctrine.” These two we pass at present, because we shall resume them at greater length, when we take their help to the resolving of this question.

3. *Continue in them.*—This hath relation, it appears, unto verses 12 and 15, as well as unto the preceding part of this verse. I shall dismiss this part of the verse with these:—

(1.) *Continue in thy work.*—Thou who art a minister, it is a work for thy life-time, and not to be taken up and laid down again, according as it may best suit a man's carnal inclinations and outward conveniences. The apostles, that laboured with their hands, have by that example set the conscience of a minister at liberty to provide for the necessities of this life by other employments, when he cannot live of the gospel; yet certainly no man that is called of God to this work, can with a safe conscience abandon it wholly. Paul, for example rather than necessity, both preached and wrought in a handicraft. As preaching doth not make working unlawful, so neither should any other business of a minister make preaching to cease.

(2.) *Continue in endeavours after greater fitness for thy work.*—No attainments in fitness and qualifications for this work can free a man of the obligation that lies on him to increase and grow therein more and more. It is not enough that a man study and be painful, ere he

enter into the ministry; but he must labour still to be more fit for his great work.

(3.) *Continue in thy vigour and painfulness and diligence.*—Young ministers that are sound and sincere before God, are usually warm and diligent in the first years of their ministry; and many do decline afterward, and become more cold and remiss. This exhortation is a check thereunto: “Continue in them.”

II. The second thing in the words is *the double advantage proposed to encourage ministers to this hard duty.*

1. *Thou shalt save thyself.*—Thy own salvation shall be promoted and secured thereby. How becoming is it for a minister to mind his own salvation! and to mind it so heartily as to be animated, from the hopes of it, unto the greater diligence in his ministry!

“But how doth faithfulness in the ministry of the gospel further the minister’s salvation?”

(1.) Faithfulness in a man’s generation-work *is of great use and advantage to salvation.*—“Well done, good and faithful servant,” from the Lord’s own mouth, is a great security; and diligence and faithfulness in improving the talents [which] we are intrusted with, through grace, procure that testimony.

(2.) *Thou shalt save thyself from the guilt of other men’s sins and ruin,* if thou be faithful in the ministry.—“Thou hast delivered,” or “saved,” “thy soul,” saith the Lord to the prophet in the case of unsuccessful faithfulness. (Ezek. xxxiii. 9.) So Paul: “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean:” (Acts xviii. 6:) and, “I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” (Acts xx. 26, 27.) Every minister pledgeth his soul to God, that he shall be a faithful servant; and he that is such, may freely take up his stake, whatever his success on others be.

(3.) Faithfulness and painfulness in the ministry of the gospel *promote a man’s own salvation, in so far as the work of Christianity is woven-in with the right discharge of the office of the ministry.*—Many ministers can say, that if they had not been ministers, they had in all appearance lost their souls. The subject of the minister’s work is the same with that of a Christian’s; and above all men should he be careful of his heart and intentions, that all be pure and spiritual. No man in any work [that] he is called to, is under so strict a necessity of dependence on the influence and assistance of the Holy Ghost, both for gifts and grace. And are not all these great helps unto our own salvation?

2. The second advantage is, *Thou shalt save them that hear thee.*—There is little hope of that man’s being useful to save others, that minds not his own salvation: and therefore the apostle puts them in this order,—“thyself,” and then, “them that hear thee.” This description of the people—“them that hear thee”—saith, that the principal work of a minister is preaching; and the principal benefit [which] people have by them, is to hear the Lord’s word from them; though there be a “seeing” (that is, of their holy conversation) that

is also useful. (Phil. iv. 9.) But the apostle knew no such ministers as were only to be seen in worldly pomp and grandeur, and seldom or never heard preaching.

*Thou shalt save them*—The great end of both preaching and hearing is salvation; and if salvation were more designed by preachers and hearers, it would be more frequently the effect of the action.

*Thou shalt save them*—Thou shalt, by the Lord's blessing on thy ministry, be successful in converting sinners, and in building up of saints in holiness and faith unto salvation. Not that ministers are of themselves able by all their endeavours to carry on this great end; they are only God's tools and instruments. (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.) Concerning this,

(1.) We find that *the Lord hath appointed this great ordinance of the gospel-ministry for this end,—the saving of men.* (Eph. iv. 11—13.)—It is “through their word” that men believe; (John xvii. 20;) and divine appointment of the means declares both it to be useful and the end to be hopeful.

(2.) *He hath also given many promises of his presence, blessing, and success, to follow and attend them whom he sends on this great errand.*—Christ's first calling of the apostles had this promise in it: “I will make you fishers of men;” (Matt. iv. 19;) which not only declared what that employment was [which] he called them unto, but it assured them of success in it. At his leaving of them, he promised to be with them “unto the end of the world;” (Matt. xxviii. 20;) and this promise is as good to us as it was to them.

(3.) *He hath also revealed much of his mind about ministers' duty in order to this end of saving men.*—This also makes the end more hopeful.

(4.) We find that *the Lord doth qualify and fit them whom he makes successful.*—He makes men “able ministers of the New Testament,” the word of life. (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.) And still, according to the success [which] the Lord hath a mind to bless a man with, gifts and qualifications and assistance are proportionably given. The apostles, that had the greatest harvest to gather in, were made the strongest labourers; and, though in a far inferior degree, the same method is observed by the Lord in dealing with and by ordinary ministers. It is true, that always the most able and learned ministers are not most successful; yet generally the most skilful labourers are most blessed: neither are the most learned and able men for parts most fit and skilful in dealing with souls at all times.

Now having opened the words, we shall return to the question to be resolved, *By what means may ministers best win souls?* In speaking to which, I shall first show,

I. *What this text saith unto this purpose;*

II. *And then give some further account thereof from other scriptures;*

III. *And apply it both to ministers and people.*

I. *What this text speaks about this matter.*

It looks two ways upon this question. 1. *It gives a direct answer unto it, and points forth duty.* 2. *It gives an encouraging promise of*

*the good effect and fruit of the discharge of the duty.* I shall carry on both together.

1. *Take heed unto thyself.*—Wouldst thou be a saved and successful minister, “take heed unto thyself.” Such warnings imply always a case of difficulty and danger wherein he is that gets them. “Take heed unto thyself” in these things:—

(1.) *Take heed that thou be a sound and sincere believer.*—The importance of sincere godliness in a minister is written in the deep wounds that the church of Christ hath received by the hands of ungodly ministers. It hath been made a question, “Whether an ungodly man can be a minister;” but it is none, that such men are in a most desperate condition. “Depart from me,” not because you run unsent, or preached error instead of truth, or preached poorly and meanly, (all great sins in themselves,) but because you “work iniquity,”—the usual expression of entire ungodliness. (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) What use the Lord may make of the gifts (for great gifts he gives to the worst of men) of ungodly men, even in the ministry of the gospel, is one of his deep paths. But no man can reasonably imagine, that a walker in the way to hell can be a fit and useful guide to them that mind to go to heaven. If a man would have peace in his conscience, and success in his work of the ministry, let him take good heed to this,—that he be a sound Christian. There is a special difficulty for a minister to know his grace: gifts and grace have deceived many with their likeness; although the difference be great both in itself and to an enlightened eye.

(2.) *Take heed to thyself, that thou be a called and sent minister.*—This is of great importance as to success. He that can say, “Lord, thou hast sent me,” may boldly add, “Lord, go with me, and bless me.” It is good, when a man is serious in this inquiry. It is to be feared that many run, and never ask this question; so is it seen in their speed and success. “I sent them not, nor commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,”—is a standing rule to this day. (Jer. xxiii. 32.) These things, if found, may serve to satisfy a minister’s conscience, that Jesus Christ hath sent him:—

(i.) *If the heart be filled with a single desire after the great end of the ministry,—the glory of God in the salvation of men.*—Every work that God calls a man to, he makes the end of it amiable. This desire sometimes attends men’s first conversion: Paul was called to be a saint and an apostle at once; (Acts ix. ;) and so have many been called to be saints and ministers together. If it be not so, yet this is found with him that Christ calls,—that when he is most spiritual and serious, when his heart is most under the impressions of holiness, and he is nearest to God in communion with him; then are such desires after the serving of Jesus Christ in the ministry most powerful. And the sincerity of his desire is also to be examined; and when it is found, it adds greatly to a man’s peace; when his heart bears him witness, that it is neither riches, nor honour, nor ease, nor the applause of men, that he seeks after, but singly Christ’s honour in the saving of men.

(ii.) It helps to clear a man's call, that there hath been a *conscientious diligence in all the means of attaining fitness for this great work*.—That love to the end that doth not direct and determine unto the use of the appointed means, may justly be suspected as irregular, and not flowing from the Holy Ghost. Even extraordinary officers seem not to have been above the use of ordinary means: old dying Paul sends for his books and papers. (2 Tim. iv. 13.)

(iii.) *A competent fitness for the work of the ministry* is another proof of a man's call to it.—The Lord calls no man to a work, for which he doth not qualify. Though a sincere, humble man, as all ministers should be, may and should think little of any measure [that] he hath, whether compared with the greater measures of others, or considered with regard unto the weight and worth of the work; yet there must be some confidence as to his competency, for clearing a man's call. (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.) What this competency is, is not easy at all times to determine: singular necessities of the church may extend or intend this matter of competent fitness. But in general there must be, First, *a competent knowledge of gospel-mysteries*; Secondly, *a competent ability of utterance to the edifying of others*. This is "aptness to teach," required of the apostle in 1 Tim. iii. 2; and that a minister "be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus i. 9.)

(iv.) *The savour of a man's ministry on the hearts and consciences of others, both ministers and people*, helps much to clear a man's call.—So that indeed ordinarily a man can never be so well confirmed in the faith of his being called of God, until he make some essay in this work. Deacons must "first be proved;" (1 Tim. iii. 10;) much more, ministers. A single testimony given by ministers and Christians, that the word dispensed by the man is savoury, and hath effect on the conscience, is a great confirmation; especially if sound conversion of some follow his labours: that is indeed a seal of his ministry. (2 Cor. iii. 3; 1 Cor. ix. 2.)

(3.) Take heed unto thyself, *that thou be a lively, thriving Christian*.—See that all thy religion run not in the channel of thy employment. It is found by experience, that as it fares with a minister in the frame of his heart and thriving of the work of God in his soul, so doth it fare with his ministry both in its vigour and effects. A carnal frame, a dead heart, and a loose walk, make cold and unprofitable preaching. And how common is it for ministers to neglect their own vineyard! When we read the word, we read it as ministers,—to know what we should teach, rather than what we should learn as Christians. Unless there be great heed taken, it will be found that our ministry and labour therein may eat-out the life of our Christianity; not that there is any discord betwixt them, but rather a friendly harmony, when each hath its place and respect. The honest believer meditates, that he may excite his grace; and ministers too often meditate only to increase their gifts. When we preach, the sincere hearer drinks-in the word; and, it may be, we seldom mix faith with it, to "grow thereby." O, how hard is it to be

a minister and a Christian in some of these acts! We are still conversant about the things of God; it is our study all the week long: this is our great advantage. But "take heed to thyself," lest ordinary meddling with divine things bring on an ordinary and indifferent impression of them; and then their fruit to thee, and thy benefit by them, are almost gone and hardly recovered.

(4.) Take heed unto thyself *in reference to all the trials and temptations [which] thou mayest meet with.*—Be on your guard; "watch in all things." (2 Tim. iv. 5.) No men are shot at more by Satan than ministers; and he triumphs not more over the foils of any than theirs: and Christ is liberal in his warnings of dangers, and in his promises of help in them.

2. The second word in the text to this purpose of directing ministers how to be useful to others, is, *Take heed unto thy doctrine.*—Art thou a minister? thou must be a preacher; an unpreaching minister is a sort of contradiction. Yea, every sort of preaching is not enough; thou must "take heed unto thy doctrine," what it is. Here is warrant for studying what we are to teach, and what we have taught, people: but the great matter is to "take heed," or study aright. Students commonly need little direction about ordinary study: but concerning "the doctrine," I shall entreat to "take heed unto" it in these things:—

(1.) Take heed unto thy doctrine, *that it be a divine truth.*—"Let a man speak as the oracles of God." (1 Peter iv. 11.) And therefore it is needful that ministers be well acquainted with the holy scriptures. [It is] a bad token of the temper of that man that relishes any book more than the word of God. The world is full of books written on pretence and design to explain the scriptures, and men's studies are full of them; there is also a blessing in them, and good use to be made of them. But also a bad use is made of them; many ministers have found that they have preached better and to more profit to the people when they got their sermon by meditation on the word and prayer, than by turning over many authors. From this neglect of the word also come a great many doctrines, that are learned by man and borrowed from philosophy; which though they may have some truth in them, yet since it is divine truth that a minister should bring forth to the people, he should not rest on such low things.

(2.) Take heed unto thy doctrine, *that it be plain, and suited to the capacity of the hearers.*—"Learned preaching," as it is called, is a vanity, pleasing principally to such as neither design nor desire edification. True godly learning consists in preaching plainly; and therein is no small difficulty. Two things would help to plain preaching: (i.) *Clearness of knowledge.*—The alleged depth of our doctrine often proceeds from our own darkness. (ii.) *Humility and self-denial.*—We must not seek ourselves nor the applause of men, but God's glory and men's salvation. It is found that the holiest ministers preach most plainly, and the plainest preachers are most successful.

(3.) Take heed unto thy doctrine, *that it be grave and solid and weighty*.—"Sound speech, that cannot be condemned." (Titus ii. 8.) Deep and weighty impressions of the things of God upon a man's own heart would greatly advance this. A minister's spirit is known in the gravity or lightness of his doctrine.

II. But now we come to the second thing proposed,—*to give some answer to this question from other things in the word*. And I shall, (I.) *Show some things that must be laid to heart about the end*,—*the saving of souls*; (II.) *And then shall give some advice about the means*.

(I.) *About the end,—the winning of souls*.—This is, to bring them to God. It is not, to win them to us, or to engage them into a party or to the espousal of some opinions and practices, supposing them to be never so right and consonant to the word of God; but the winning of them is, to bring them out of nature into a state of grace, that they may be fitted for, and in due time admitted into, everlasting glory. Concerning which great end, these few things should be laid deeply to heart by all that would serve the Lord in being instrumental in reaching it:—

1. *The exceeding height and excellency of this end is to be laid to heart*.—It is a wonder of condescendence, that the Lord will make use of men in promoting it: to be workers together with God in so great a business, is no small honour. The great value of men's souls, the greatness of the misery they are delivered from and of the happiness they are advanced to, with the manifold glory of God shining in all, make the work of saving men great and excellent. Preaching the gospel, and suffering for it, are services that angels are not employed in. Mean and low thoughts of the great end of the ministry, as they are dissonant from truth, are also great hinderances of due endeavours after the attaining [of] the end.

2. *The great difficulty of saving souls must be laid to heart*.—The difficulty is undoubted: to attempt it, is to offer violence to men's corrupt natures, and a storming of hell itself, whose captives all sinners are. Unless this difficulty be laid to heart, ministers will be confident of their own strength, and so miscarry and be unfruitful. Whoever prospers in winning souls, is first convinced that it is the arm of Jehovah only [which] can do the work.

3. *The duty of winning souls must be laid to heart by ministers*.—That it is their principal work, and they are under many commands to endeavour it. It is a fault to look on fruit only as a reward of endeavours; so it is, indeed, and a gracious one: but it should be so minded as the end [that] we would strive for; (Col. i. 28;) which, when attained, is still to His praise; yet most commonly, when it is missing, it is to our reproach and danger, when it is—as, alas! it is often—through our default.

4. *The great advantage there is to the labourer by his success is to be pondered*.—Great is the gain by one soul: "He that winneth souls is" happy as well as "wise." (Prov. xi. 30; Dan. xii. 3.) Won souls are a minister's "crown and glory and joy." (Phil. iv. 1; 1 Thess.

ii. 20.) How far is this account above all others that a man can give of his ministry! These things, fixed upon the heart, would enliven us in all endeavours to attain this excellent end.

(II.) *For advice about the means*, I shall add these few, beside what hath been said:—

1. Let ministers, if they would win souls, *procure and retain amongst the people a persuasion of their being sent of God*.—That they are “Christ’s ministers.” (1 Cor. iv. 1.) It is not confident asserting of it, nor justifying the lawfulness of our ecclesiastical calling, (though there be some use of these things at some times,)—but it is ability, painfulness, faithfulness, humility, and self-denial, and, in a word, conformity to our Lord Jesus in his ministry,—that will constrain people to say and think that we are sent of God. Nicodemus comes with this impression of Christ: “A teacher come from God.” (John iii. 2.) It is certain that these thoughts in people further the reception of the gospel: “Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.” (Gal. iv. 14.)

2. Let ministers, if they would win souls, *purchase and maintain the people’s love to their persons*.—And this is best done by loving of them, and dealing lovingly and patiently with them. There should be no striving with them, especially about worldly things; yea, “meekness to them that oppose themselves.” (2 Tim. ii. 24—26.) It is of great advantage to have their love: how carefully doth Paul sue for it in several epistles, and condescend to entreat and make apologies, when indeed he had not wronged them, but they only did imagine [that] he had wronged them! (2 Cor. xi., xii.)

3. It would further the winning of souls, to *deal particularly and personally with them*.—Not always nor altogether in public. (Col. i. 28; Acts xx. 20, 21.) Great fruit hath constantly followed the conscientious discharge of this duty: the setting of it up in Geneva did produce incredible fruits of piety, as Calvin reports; when the ministers and some of the elders went from house to house, and dealt particularly with the people’s consciences. And we are not without many instances of the fruit of this mean in our own time and in these nations. Blessed be the Lord for the labourers and their success!

4. Ministers must *pray much*, if they would be successful.—The apostles spent their time this way. (Acts vi. 4.) Yea, our Lord Jesus preached all day, and continued all night alone in prayer to God. Ministers should be much in prayer. They use to reckon how many hours they spend in reading and study; it were far better both with ourselves and the church of God, if more time were spent in prayer. Luther’s spending three hours daily in secret prayer, Bradford’s studying on his knees, and other instances of men in our time, are talked of, rather than imitated. Ministers should pray much for themselves; for they have corruptions like other men, and have temptations that none but ministers are assaulted with. They should pray for their message: how sweet and easy is it for a minister (and likely it is to be the more profitable to the people) to bring forth that



scripture as food to the souls of his people, that he hath got opened to his own heart by the power of the Holy Ghost in the exercise of faith and love in prayer. A minister should pray for the blessing on the word; and he should be much in seeking God particularly for the people. It may be, this may be the reason why some ministers of meaner gifts and parts are more successful than some that are far above them in abilities:—not because they preach better, so much as because they pray more. Many good sermons are lost for lack of much prayer in study.

But because the ministry of the word is the main instrument for winning souls, I shall therefore add somewhat more particularly concerning this; and that both as to *the matter* and *manner of preaching*.

1. For *the subject-matter* of gospel-preaching, it is determined by the apostle expressly to be “Christ crucified.” (1 Cor. ii. 2.) Two things ministers have to do about Him in preaching Him to them that are without: (1.) *To set him forth* to people; (Gal. iii. 1;) to paint him in his love, excellency, and ability to save. (2.) *To offer him* unto them freely, fully, without any limitation as to sinners or their sinful state. And then Christ’s laws, or will, [are] to be published to them that receive him and are his, for the rule of their walk; and his promises, for the measure and foundation of all their hopes and expectations; and his grace and fulness, for their supply in every case, till they be brought to heaven. This was the simplicity of the gospel, that remained but a little while in the Christian church; for ceremonies amongst the Jews, and sinful mixtures of vain philosophy amongst the Gentiles, did by degrees so corrupt the gospel, that “the mystery of iniquity” ripened in the production of antichrist. (Col. ii.) It was a sad observation of the fourth century,—that it became a matter of learning and ingenuity to be a Christian. The meaning was, that too much weight was laid on notions and matter of opinion, and less regard had unto the soundness of the heart and holiness of the life. In the beginning of the Reformation from Popery, the worthies whom God raised up in several countries did excellently in retrieving the simplicity of the gospel from the Popish mixtures; but that good work took a stand quickly, and is on the declining greatly. How little of Jesus Christ is there in some pulpits! It is seen, as to success, that whatever the law doeth in alarming sinners, it is still the gospel-voice that is the key that opens the heart to Jesus Christ. Would ministers win souls? let them have more of Jesus Christ in their dealing with men, and less of other things that never profit them that are exercised therein.

2. As for *the manner* of successful preaching, I shall give it in a negative and positive from these two places:—1 Cor. i. 17; and ii. 1—4.

(1.) What this *negative* disowns, is our inquiry: the words are full: “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” Again: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came

not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." Again: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom." These are the words of the Holy Ghost concerning a way of preaching that is unprofitable; a way that, [it] seems, was in use and respect with the Corinthians; and honest Paul was despised by them for his simple and plain way, different from theirs. I shall only instance in things that this scriptural negative doth check and reprove in the way of preaching.

(i.) *The establishing and advancing of divine truth upon the foundation of human reason.*—As if there were some weakness and insufficiency in those methods and arguments of working on men's consciences, that the Holy Ghost prescribes. The great foundation of all [that] a minister hath to say is, "Thus saith the Lord;" and a grave "declaring of the testimony of God" in this matter is ministers' duty, (1 Cor. ii. 1,) and will have more authority on men's consciences than many human reasons. There is a "rational preaching," as it is called, wherein men do not satisfy themselves to make use of reason as a tool and instrument, (and then its use is excellent,) but will establish it as a judge and dictator in all divine matters and truth; and so in effect turn all their preaching into little better things than the lectures of the philosophers of old; save that the poor Pagans were more sincere in their morals, and serious in delivering their opinions. Let a minister, therefore, still think with himself, that a plain scripture-testimony is his main argument; and accordingly let him use it. When he teacheth philosophy, and when he teacheth men the will of God about salvation, he is in distinct provinces; and his management of his work therein should be very different.

(ii.) It is to preach "with excellency of speech" and "words of man's wisdom," *when men think to reach the gospel-end on sinners by force of even spiritual reason and persuasion.*—This corrupt thought riseth in some from an imagination that moral suasion is all that is needful for converting a sinner: and in some this thought rises on a better account; the light of the glory of God in the gospel shines so brightly in upon their own hearts, that they fall into this conceit,—that no man can stand before that light which they can hold forth; Melancthon's mistake at first, till experience made him wiser. Hast thou a clear knowledge of gospel-mysteries, and the word of exhortation is with thee also, so that thou art qualified to urge, beseech, and plead warmly with sinners on Christ's behalf? Take heed of this snare, lest thou think that thy wisdom and gifts can promote and carry on the gospel-design on men.

(iii.) This also is checked in the apostle's words,—*the setting forth the beauty of the gospel by human art.*—The truth of the gospel shines best in its bare proposal, and its beauty in its simple and naked discovery. We may observe, from church-history, that still, as soundness of doctrine and the power of godliness decayed in the church, the vanity of an affected way of speaking and writing of

divine things came in. Quotations from the fathers, Latin and languages, are pitiful ornaments unto preaching, if a man design conversion and soul-edification. And yet more despicable are all playing on words, jinglings, and cadences; which things are, in all the rules of true eloquence, justly exploded; and yet some men reckon much on them. But would any man think his friend in earnest with him, that would accost him in any affair with such sort of language and gesture?

(2.) *The positive* is: "In demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Cor. ii. 4.)

(i.) *Paul preached so, as gave a demonstration that the Holy Ghost was in him, sanctifying him.*—This is a plain and blessed thing: happy is the minister that manageth his work so, that if the hearers get not a demonstration of great parts and learning, yet they have a demonstration of the sanctifying Spirit of God in the minister.

(ii.) *Paul preached so, as gave a demonstration that the Spirit of God was with him, assisting and helping him in his work.*—Even when he was amongst them "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." (Verse 3.) Happy is the minister that can preach this way; he must be a dependor upon assistance from the Holy Ghost.

(iii.) *Paul preached so, as [that] a demonstration of the power of the Holy Ghost was given to the hearts of the hearers.*—The Spirit of God so wrought on them by his power in and by Paul's preaching: "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." (2 Cor. iv. 2.) This is the principal thing to be aimed at, and it is the proper source of all profitable preaching.

III. To conclude: you that are *ministers*, suffer a word of *exhortation*.

Men, brethren, and fathers, you are called to a high and holy calling: your work is full of danger, full of duty, and full of mercy. You are called to the winning of souls; an employment near akin unto our Lord's work,—the saving of souls; and the nearer your spirits be in conformity to his holy temper and frame, the fitter you are for, and the more fruitful you shall be in, your work. None of you are ignorant of the begun departure of our glory, and the daily advance of its departure, and the sad appearances of the Lord's being about to leave us utterly. Should not these signs of the times rouse up ministers unto greater seriousness? What can be the reason of this sad observation,—that, when formerly a few lights, raised up in the nation, did shine so as to scatter and dispel the darkness of Popery in a little time; yet now, when there are more and more learned men amongst us, yet the darkness comes on apace? Is it not because they were men "filled with the Holy Ghost and with power," and many of us are only filled with light and knowledge and inefficacious notions of God's truth? Doth not always the spirit of the ministers propagate itself amongst the people? A lively ministry, and lively Christians. Therefore be serious at heart; believe, and so

speak ; feel, and so speak ; and as you teach, so do : and then people will feel what you say, and obey the word of God.

And, lastly, for *people*. It is not unfit that you should hear of ministers' work and duty and difficulties : you see that all is of your concernment ; "all things are" for your sakes, as the apostle in another case. Then only I entreat you,

1. *Pity us*.—We are not angels, but men of like passions with yourselves. Be fuller of charity than of censure. We have all that you have to do about the saving of our own souls, and a great work besides about the saving of yours. We have all your difficulties as Christians, and some that you are not acquainted with, that are only ministers' temptations and trials.

2. *Help us in our work*.—If you can do any thing, help us in the work of winning souls. "What can we do?" say you? O, a great deal : be but won to Christ, and we are made. Make haste to heaven, that you and we may meet joyfully before the throne of God and the Lamb.

3. *Pray for us*.—How often and how earnestly doth Paul beg the prayers of the churches ! And if *he* did so, much more should *we* beg them, and you grant them ; for our necessities and weaknesses are greater than his : "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you : and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men : for all men have not faith." (2 Thess. iii. 1, 2.)

THE CHAMBER OF IMAGERY IN THE CHURCH  
OF ROME LAID OPEN :

OR,

AN ANTIDOTE AGAINST POPERY.

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SERMON X.

BY THE REV. JOHN OWEN, D.D.

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HOW IS THE PRACTICAL LOVE OF TRUTH THE BEST PRESER-  
VATIVE AGAINST POPERY ?

*If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*—1 Peter ii. 3.

WHEN false worship had prevailed in the church of old unto its ruin, God showed and represented it unto his prophet, under the name and appearance of "a chamber of imagery." (Ezek. viii. 11, 12.) For therein were portrayed all the abominations wherewith the worship of God was defiled, and religion corrupted.

Things relating unto divine truth and worship have had again the same event in the world, especially in the church of Rome. And my present design is to take a view of "the chambers of their imagery," and to show what was the occasion, and what were the means, of their erection; and in them we shall see all the abomination wherewith the divine worship of the gospel hath been corrupted, and Christian religion ruined.

Unto this end it will be necessary to lay down some such principles of sacred truth, as will demonstrate and evince the grounds and causes of that transformation of the substance and power of religion into a lifeless image, which shall be proved to have fallen out amongst them. And because I intend *their* benefit principally *who* resolve all their persuasion in religion into the word of God, I shall deduce these principles from that passage of it in the first Epistle of the apostle Peter, the second chapter, and the three first verses.

The first verse contains *an exhortation unto* or *an injunction of universal holiness*, by the laying aside or casting out whatever is contrary thereunto: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings;" the rule whereof extends unto all other vicious habits of mind whatever.

And in the second there is a profession of *the means* whereby this end may be attained ;—namely, how any one may be so strengthened in grace, as to cast out all such sinful inclinations and practices as are contrary unto the holiness required of us ;—which is the divine word ; compared therefore unto food, which is the means of preserving natural life, and of increasing its strength : “As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

Hereon the apostle proceeds to declare *the condition* whereon our profiting, growing, and thriving by the word do depend ; and this is an experience of its power, as it is the instrument of God, whereby he conveys his grace unto us : “If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” See 1 Thess. i. 5. Therein lies the first and chief principle of our ensuing demonstration ; and it is this :—

*All the benefit and advantage which any men do or may receive by the word, or the truths of the gospel, depend on an experience of its power and efficacy, in communicating the grace of God unto their souls.*

This principle is evident in itself, and not to be questioned by any but such as never had the least real sense of religion on their own minds. Besides, it is evidently contained in the testimony of the apostle before laid down.

Hereunto three other principles, of equal evidence with itself, are supposed, and virtually contained in it :—

1. *There is a power and efficacy in the word, and the preaching of it.*—“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation.” (Rom. i. 16.) It hath a divine power ; “the power of God” accompanying it, and put forth in it, unto its proper ends : “For the word of God is quick and powerful.” (Heb. iv. 12.)

2. *The power that is in the word of God consists in its efficacy to communicate grace of God unto the souls of men.*—In and by it they “taste that the Lord is gracious ;” that is its efficacy unto its proper ends. These are salvation, with all things requisite thereunto ; such as the illumination of our minds, and the renovation of our natures, the justification of our persons, the life of God in holy worship and obedience,—all leading unto our eternal enjoyment of him. These are the ends whereunto the gospel is designed in the wisdom of God, whereunto its efficacy is confined.

3. *There is an experience to be obtained of the power and efficacy of the word.*—In that place of the apostle it is expressed by “tasting.” But there is something antecedent unto their “tasting,” specially so called ; and something consequent unto it ; both inseparable from it, and therefore belonging unto the experience whereof we speak.

(1.) *Wherefore*—The first thing required hereunto is light ; that is, a spiritual, supernatural light, enabling us to discern the wisdom, will, and mind of God in the word, in a spiritual manner ; without which, we can have no experience of its power. Hence the gospel is hid unto them that perish, though it be outwardly declared unto them. (2 Cor. iv. 3.) This is the only means which lets into the

mind and conscience a sense of this efficacy. This, in the increases of it, the apostle prays for on the behalf of believers, that they may have this experience; Eph. i. 16—19; iii. 16—19; and declares the nature of it, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(2.) The taste intended follows hereon; wherein consists the life and substance of the experience pleaded. And this taste is a spiritual sense of the goodness, power, and efficacy of the word, and the things contained in it, in the conveyance of the grace of God unto our souls, in the instances mentioned, and others of a like nature: for, in a taste, there is a sweetness unto the palate, and a satisfaction unto the appetite. By the one, in this taste, our minds are refreshed; and by the other our souls are nourished: of both, believers have an experience. And this is let into the mind by spiritual light, without which nothing of it is attainable. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

(3.) To complete the experience intended, there follows hereon a conformity in the whole soul and conversation unto the truth of the word, or the mind of God in it, wrought in us by its power and efficacy. So the apostle expresses it, Eph. iv. 20—24: "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Hereupon follows our last principle, which is the immediate foundation of the ensuing discourse, or that which is to be confirmed; and it is this:—

*The loss of an experience of the power of religion hath been the cause of the loss of the truth of religion; or it hath been the cause of rejecting its substance, and setting-up a shadow or image in the room of it.*

This transformation of all things in religion began and proceeded on these grounds. Those who had the conduct of it were always possessed of the general notions of truth, which they could not forget without a total renunciation of the gospel itself. But having lost all experience of this power in themselves, they wrested them unto things quite of another nature, destructive to the truth, as well as devoid of its power. Hereon it came to pass that there was a dead image made and set-up of religion in all the parts of it, called by the name of that which was true and living, but utterly lost. All experience, I say, of the power and efficacy of the mystery of the gospel, and the truths of it, in communicating the grace of God unto the souls of men, being lost, retaining the general notion of it, they contrived and framed an outward image or representation of them, suited unto their ignorance and superstition.

Thus was the truth of religion once almost totally lost in the world, as we shall see; neither will it ever be lost any other way, or by any

other means. When churches or nations are possessed of the truth and the profession of it, it is not laws, nor fines, nor imprisonments, nor gibbets, nor fires, that shall ever dispossess them or deprive them of it.

Whilst an experience of the power of religion continued in the primitive times, all the bloody rage and cruelty of the world, all the craft of Satan, and the subtilty of seducers, who abounded, did utterly fail in attempting to deprive Christians of the truth and the profession of it. But when this began to decay and be lost amongst them, they were quickly deceived, and drawn off "from the simplicity of the gospel."

Upon the Reformation of religion in these parts of the world, when the truth was received in the love and power of it, and multitudes had experience of the spiritual benefit and advantage which they received thereby, in liberty, holiness, and peace; all the prisons, tortures, swords, and fires, that were applied unto its extirpation, did nothing but diffuse the profession of it, and root it more firmly in the minds of men. It cannot be lost but by another way, and other means.

The Jesuits and their associates have been, for a hundred years, contriving methods and arts for the dispossessing [of] nations and churches of the truth which they have received, and the introducing [of] the Romish superstition. They have written books about it, and practised according to their principles in every kingdom and state of Europe, who own the Protestant religion. But the folly of most of their pretended arts and devices unto this end hath been ridiculous and successful; and what they have added hereunto of force hath been divinely defeated.

There is but one way, one effectual engine, to deprive any people of the profession of the truth which they have once received; and that is, by leading them into such profaneness and ignorance, as whereby they may lose all experience of its power and efficacy in communicating the grace of God unto their souls, and therein of all sense of the advantage which they might have had by it. When this is done, men will as easily lay aside the profession of religion, as burdensome clothes in summer.

There is much talk of a plot and conspiracy to destroy the Protestant religion, and introduce Popery again amongst us: *they* may do well to take care thereof *who* are concerned in public affairs. But, as unto the event, there is but one conspiracy that is greatly to be feared in this matter, and that is between Satan and the lusts of men: if they can prevail to deprive the generality of men of an experience, in their own minds, of the power and efficacy of the truth, with the spiritual advantage which they may have thereby, they will give them up to be an easy prey unto the other designers. And there are two engines that are applied unto this purpose; the one is *ignorance*, the other is *profaneness* or sensuality of life. Whenever either of these prevails, the experience intended must necessarily be lost and excluded: and the means of their prevailing are *want of due instruction* by those who are the leaders of the people, and *the encouragement of sensuality* by impunity and great examples.



This is the only formidable conspiracy against the profession of the truth in this nation; without whose aid, all power and force will be frustrate in the issue. And as there is a great appearance in Divine Permission of such a state of things at present amongst us, so if they be managed by counsel also, and that those ways of ignorance and sensuality are countenanced and promoted for this very end,—that, the power of truth being lost, the profession of it may be given-up on easy terms,—there is nothing but sovereign grace that can prevent the design; for the principle which we have laid down is uncontrollable in reason and experience; namely, that “the loss of an experience of the power of religion will issue, one way or other, in the loss of the truth of religion, and the profession of it.”

Whence is it that so many corrupt opinions have made such an inroad on Protestant religion, and the profession of it? Is it not from hence, that many have lost an experience of the power and efficacy of the truth, and so have parted with it? Whence is it that profaneness and sensuality of life, with all manner of corrupt lusts of the flesh, have grown up, unto the shame of profession? Is it not from the same cause, as the apostle expressly declares it comes by? (2 Tim. iv. 2—5.) One way or other, the loss of experience of the power of truth will end in the loss of the profession of it.

But I proceed unto the instance which I do design in the church of Rome. For the religion of it at this day is nothing but a dead image of the gospel, erected in the loss of an experience of its spiritual power, overthrowing its use, with all its ends, being suited to the taste of men, carnal, ignorant, and superstitious.

This I shall make evident by all sorts of instances *in things relating to the person and offices of Christ; the state, order, and worship of the church; with the graces and duties of obedience required in the gospel.* And in all, my principal design is to demonstrate what is the only way and means of securing our own souls, any church or nation, from being ensnared with, or prevailed against by, Popery.

#### I. THINGS RELATING TO THE PERSON AND OFFICES OF CHRIST.

SECTION 1. It is a general notion of truth, that *the Lord Christ, in his person and grace, is to be proposed and represented unto men as the principal object of their faith and love.*—He himself, in his Divine Person, is absolutely invisible to us, and, as unto his human nature, absent from us. For “the heaven must receive him until the time of the restitution of all things.” (Acts iii. 21.) There must therefore an image or representation of him be made unto our minds, or he cannot be the proper object of our faith, trust, love, and delight. This is done in the gospel, and the preaching of it; for therein he is “evidently set forth before our eyes as crucified amongst us.” (Gal. iii. 1.) So also are all the other concerns of his person and offices therein clearly proposed unto us: yea, this is the principal end of the gospel, namely, to make a due representation of the person, offices,

grace, and glory of Christ, unto the souls of men, that they may believe in him, and, believing, have eternal life. (John xx. 31.)

Upon this representation made of Christ and his glory in the gospel, and the preaching of it, believers have an experience of the power and efficacy of the divine truth contained therein, in the way before-mentioned; as the apostle declares: For "we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Having a spiritual light to discern and behold the glory of Christ, as represented in the glass of the gospel, they have experience of its transforming power and efficacy, changing them into the likeness of the image represented unto them, that is, of Christ himself; which is the saving effect of gospel-power.

But this spiritual light was lost among men, through the efficacy of their darkness and unbelief; they were not able to discover the glory of Christ, as revealed and proposed in the gospel, so as to make him the present object of their faith and love. And this light being lost, they could have no experience of the power of divine truth concerning him, changing them into his image. They could make no affecting discovery of him in the scripture. All things therein were dark and confused, or at least seemed an inaccessible mystery, which they could not reduce to practice. Hence those who had got the public conduct of religion, drove the people from reading the scripture, as that which was of no use, but rather dangerous unto them.

What shall these men then betake themselves unto? Shall they reject the notion in general, that there ought to be such a representation made of Christ unto the minds of men, as to inflame their devotion, to excite their faith, and stir-up their affection to him? This cannot be done without an open renunciation of him, and of the gospel as a fable.

Wherefore they will find out another way for it, another means unto the same end; and this is, by making images of him of wood and stone, or gold and silver, or painting on them. Hereby they supposed he would be made present unto his worshippers; that he would be so represented unto them, as that they should be immediately stirred up unto the embraces of faith and love. And herein they found sensible effects unto their great satisfaction: for, their minds being dark, carnal, and prone to superstition, as are the minds of all men by nature, they would see nothing in the spiritual representation of him in the gospel, that had any power on them, or did in any measure affect them. In these images, by the means of sight and imagination, they found that which did really work upon their affections, and, as they thought, did excite them unto the love of Christ.

And this was the true original of all the imagery in the church of Rome; as something of the same nature in general was, of all the image-worship in the world. So the Israelites in the wilderness, when they made the golden calf, did it to have a representation of a deity near unto them, in such a visible manner as that their

souls might be affected with it ; so they expressed themselves, Exod. xxxii. 1.

Wherefore in this state, under a loss of spiritual light and experience, men of superstitious minds found themselves entangled. They knew it necessary that there should be such a representation made of Christ as might render him a present object of faith and love, where-with they might be immediately affected. How this was done in the gospel, they could not understand, nor obtain any experience of the power and efficacy of it unto this end. Yet the principle itself must be retained, as that without which there could be no religion. Wherefore, to explicate [extricate] themselves out of this difficulty, they brake through all God's commands to the contrary, and betook themselves to the making [of] images of Christ, and their adoration. And from small beginnings, according as darkness and superstition increased in the minds of men, there was a progress in this practice, until these images took the whole work of representing Christ and his glory out of the hands, as it were, of the gospel, and appropriated it unto themselves.

For I do not speak of them now so much as they are images of Christ or objects of adoration, as of their being dead images of the gospel ; that is, somewhat set up in the room of the gospel and for the ends of it, as means of teaching and instruction. They shall do the work which the gospel was designed of God to do : for, as unto this end of the representation of Christ as the present object of the faith and love of man, with an efficacy to work upon their affections, there is in the church of Rome a thousand times more ascribed unto them, than unto the gospel itself.

The whole matter is stated by the apostle : " But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven ? (that is, to bring Christ down from above : ) or, Who shall descend into the deep ? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is, the word of faith which we preach." (Rom. x. 6—8.) The inquiry is, how we may be made partakers of Christ, and righteousness by him ; or how we may have an interest in him, or have him present with us. This, saith the apostle, is done by *the word of the gospel* which is preached, which " is nigh unto us, in our mouths, and in our hearts." " No," say these men, " we cannot understand how it should be so ; we do not find that it is so ; that Christ is made ' nigh unto us,' present with us, by this word. Wherefore we will ' ascend into heaven, to bring down Christ from above ; ' for we will make images of him in his glorious state in heaven, and thereby he will be present with us, or ' nigh unto us.' And we will ' descend into the deep, to bring up Christ again from the dead ; ' and we will do it, by making first crucifixes, and then images of his glorious resurrection, bringing him again unto us from the dead. This shall be in the place and room of *that word of the gospel* which you pretend to be alone useful and effectual unto these ends."

This therefore is evident,—that the introduction of this abomination in principle and practice, destructive unto the souls of men, took its rise from the loss of an experience of the representation of Christ in the gospel, and the transforming power in the minds of men, which it is accompanied with in them that believe. “Make us gods,” say the Israelites, to “go before us; for as for this man Moses,” (who represented God unto us,) “we know not what is become of him.” (Exod. xxxii. 1.) “What would you have men do? Would you have them live without all sense of the presence of Christ with them, or being nigh unto them? Shall they have no representation of him? No, no! ‘Make us gods, that may go before us;’ let us have images unto this end: for how else it may be done, we cannot understand.”

And this is the reason of their obstinacy in this practice against all means of conviction: yea, they live hereon in a perpetual contradiction unto themselves. Their temples are full of graven images; like the house of Micah, “houses of gods;” (Judges xvii. 5;) and yet in them are the scriptures, though in a tongue unknown to the people, wherein that practice is utterly condemned, [so] that a man would think them distracted to hear *what their book says*, and to see *what they do*, in the same place. But nothing will reach unto their conviction, until the veil of blindness and ignorance be taken from their minds. Until they have a spiritual light, enabling them to discern the glory of Christ as represented in the gospel, and to let-in an experience of the transforming power and efficacy of that revelation in their own souls, they will never part with that means for the same end, which they are sensible of to be useful unto it, and which is suited unto their inclination. Whatever be the issue, though it cost them their souls, they will not part with what they find (as they suppose) so useful unto their great end of making Christ nigh unto them, for that wherein they can see nothing of it, and of whose power they can have no experience.

But the principal design of this discourse is, to warn others of these abominations, and to direct unto their avoidance: for if they should be outwardly pressed unto the practice of this idolatry, whatever is of carnal affection, of blind devotion, or superstition in them, will quickly be won over unto a conspiracy against their convictions. Nothing will then secure them but an experience of the efficacy of that representation which is made of Christ in the gospel. It is therefore the wisdom and duty of all those who desire a stability in the profession of the truth, continually to endeavour after this experience, and an increase in it. He who lives in the exercise of faith and love in the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed in the gospel, “as evidently crucified,” and evidently exalted therein, and finds the fruit of his so doing in his own soul, will be preserved in the time of trial. Without this, men will at last begin to think that it is better to have a false Christ than none at all; they will suppose that something is to be found in an image, when they can find nothing in the gospel.

SECT. II. It is a prevalent notion of truth, that *the worship of God ought to be beautiful and glorious*.—The very light of nature seems to

direct unto conceptions hereof. What is not so, may be justly rejected, as unbecoming the Divine Majesty ; and therefore the more holy and heavenly any religion pretends to be, the more glorious is the worship prescribed in it, or ought so to be. Yea, the true worship of God is the height and excellency of all glory in this world ; it is inferior unto nothing, but that which is in heaven, which it is the beginning of, the way unto, and the best preparation for. Accordingly even that worship is declared to be "glorious," and that in an eminent manner, above all,—the outward worship of the Old Testament in the tabernacle and temple, whose glory was great, and, as unto external pomp, inimitable. To this purpose the apostle disputes at large : " Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament ; not of the letter, but of the spirit : for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance ; which glory was to be done away : how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious ? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." (2 Cor. iii. 6—10.) This therefore is agreed,—that there ought to be beauty and glory in divine worship, and that they are most eminently in that which is directed and required in the gospel. But withal the apostle declares in the same place, that this glory is spiritual, and not carnal : so did our Lord Jesus Christ foretell that it should be, and that, unto that end, all distinction of places, with all outward advantages and ornaments belonging unto them, should be taken away : " Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what : we know what we worship : for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 20—24.)

It belongs therefore unto our present design, to give a brief account of its glory, and wherein it excels all other ways of divine worship that ever were in the world ; even that under the Old Testament, which was of divine institution, wherein all things were ordered for beauty and glory. And it may be given in the instances that ensue :—

1. *The express object of it is God, not as absolutely considered, but as existing in three persons, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*—This is the principal glory of Christian religion and its worship. Under the Old Testament, the conceptions of the church about the existence of the divine nature in distinct persons were very dark and obscure ; for the full revelation of it was not to be made, but in *the distinct actings*

of each person in the works of redemption and salvation of the church; that is, in the incarnation of the Son, and mission of the Spirit, after he was glorified. (John vii. 39.) And in all the ways of natural worship, there was never the least shadow of any respect hereunto. But this is the foundation of all the glory of evangelical worship. The object of it, in the faith of the worshipper, is the Holy Trinity; and it consists in an ascription of divine glory unto each person in the same individual nature, by the same act of the mind: where this is not, there is no glory in religious worship.

2. *Its glory consists in that constant respect which it hath unto each divine person, as unto their peculiar work and actings for the salvation of the church.*—So it is described, Eph. ii. 18: “Through him,” that is, the Son as Mediator, “we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” This is the immediate glory of evangelical worship, comprehensive of all the graces and privileges of the gospel. And to suppose that the glory of it doth consist in any thing but the light, graces, and privileges which it doth itself exhibit, is a vain imagination. It will not borrow glory from the invention of men. We shall therefore a little consider it as it is here represented by the apostle:—

(1.) *The ultimate object of it, under this consideration, is God as THE FATHER; we have an access therein unto the Father.*—And this consideration in our worship of God as a Father, relating unto the whole dispensation of his love and grace, by Christ Jesus, as he is God and our God, his Father and our Father, is peculiar unto gospel-worship, and contains a signal part of its glory. We do not only worship God as a Father; so the very Heathens had a notion that he was a Father of all things: but we worship Him “who is the Father;” and as he is so, both in relation to the eternal generation of the Son, and the communication of grace by him unto us, as our Father; so “no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John i. 18.) This access in our worship unto the person of the Father, as in heaven, the holy place above, as on a throne of grace, is the glory of the gospel. See Matt. vi. 9; Heb. iv. 16; x. 19—21.

(2.) *THE SON is here considered as Mediator; through him we have this access unto the Father.*—This is the glory that was hidden from former ages, but brought to light and displayed by the gospel. So speaks our blessed Saviour himself unto his disciples: “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” (John xvi. 23, 24.) To ask God expressly in the name of the Son, as Mediator, belongs unto the glory of the gospel-worship.

The chief of them may be reduced to these three heads:—

(i.) *It is he who makes both the persons of the worshippers and their duties accepted of God.*—See Heb. ii. 17, 18; iv. 16; x. 19.

(ii.) *He is the administrator of all the worship of the church in the*

*holy place above, as its great High Priest over the house of God.* (Heb. viii. 2 ; Rev. viii. 3.)

(iii.) *His presence with and among gospel-worshippers in their worship, gives it glory.*—This he declares and promises : “ If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. xviii. 19, 20.) All success of the prayers of the church dependeth on and ariseth from the presence of Christ amongst them : he is so present for their assistance, and for their consolation. This presence of *a living Christ, and not a dead crucifix, gives glory to divine worship.* He who sees not the glory of this worship, from its relation unto Christ, is a stranger unto the gospel, with all the light, graces, and privileges of it.

(3.) *It is in ONE SPIRIT that we have access unto God in his worship.*—And in his administration doth the apostle place the glory of it, in opposition unto all the glory of the Old Testament ; as doth our Lord Jesus Christ also in the place before referred unto ; for,

(i.) *The whole ability for the observance and performance of it according to the mind of God, is from Him alone.*—His communication of grace and gifts unto the church, is that alone which makes it to give glory to God in his divine service : if this should cease, all acceptable worship would cease in the world. To think to observe the worship of the gospel, without the aid and assistance of the Spirit of the gospel, is a lewd imagination. But where He is, there is liberty and glory. “ Now the Lord is that Spirit : and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.)

(ii.) *By Him the sanctified minds of believers are made temples of God.*—And so the principal seal of evangelical worship. (1 Cor. iii. 16 ; vi. 11, 19.) This temple, being of God’s own framing, and of his own adorning by his Spirit, is a much more glorious fabric than any that the hands of men can erect.

(iii.) *By Him is the church led into internal communion and converse with God in Christ in light, love, and delight, with holy boldness.*—The glory whereof is expressed by the apostle, Heb. x. 19, 21, 22.

In these things, I say, doth the true glory of evangelical worship consist ; and if it doth not, it hath no glory in comparison of that which did excel in the old legal worship. For the wit of man was never yet able to set it off with half the outward beauty and glory that was in the worship of the temple. But herein it is that it not only leaves no glory thereunto in comparison, but doth unspeakably excel whatever the wit and wealth of men can extend unto.

But there is a spiritual light required that we may discern the glory of this worship, and have thereby an experience of its power and efficacy in reference unto the ends of its appointment. This the church of believers hath. They see it, as it is a blessed means of

giving glory unto God, and of receiving gracious communications from him ; which are the ends of all the divine institutions of worship ; and they have therein such an experience of its efficacy, as gives rest, and peace, and satisfaction unto their souls. For they find, that as their worship directs them unto a blessed view, by faith, of God in his ineffable existence, with the glorious actings of each person in the dispensation of grace, which fills their hearts with joy unspeakable ; so also that all graces are exercised, increased, and strengthened, in the observance of it, with love and delight.

But all light into, all perceptions of, this glory, all experience of its power, were, amongst the most, lost in the world. I intend, in all these instances, the time of the Papal apostasy. Those who had the conduct of religion could discern no glory in these things, nor obtain any experience of their power. Be the worship what it will, they can see no glory in it, nor did it give any satisfaction to their minds ; for, having no light to discern its glory, they could have no experience of its power and efficacy. What then shall they do ? The notion must be retained, that divine worship is to be beautiful and glorious. But in the spiritual worship of the gospel they could see nothing thereof ; wherefore they thought necessary to make a glory for it, or to dismiss it out of the world, and set up such an image of it as might appear beautiful unto their fleshly minds, and give them satisfaction. To this end they set their inventions on work, to find out ceremonies, vestments, gestures, ornaments, music, altars, images, paintings, with prescriptions of great bodily veneration. This pageantry they call "the beauty, the order, the glory of divine worship." This is that which they see and feel, and which, as they judge, doth dispose their minds unto devotion ; without it they know not how to pay any reverence unto God himself ; and when it is wanting, whatever be the life, the power, the spirituality of the worship in the worshippers, whatever be its efficacy unto all the proper ends of it, however it be ordered according unto the prescription of the word, it is unto them empty, indecent ; they can see neither beauty nor glory in it.

This light and experience being lost, the introduction of "beggarly elements" and carnal ceremonies in the worship of the church, with attempts to render it decorous and beautiful, by superstitious rites and observances, wherewith it hath been defiled and corrupted, as it was and is in the church of Rome, was nothing but the setting-up of a deformed image in the room of it ; and this they are pleased withal. The beauty and glory which carving, and painting, and embroidered vestures, and musical incantations, and postures of veneration, do give unto divine service, they can see and feel ; and, in their own imagination, are sensibly excited unto devotion by them.

But hereby, instead of representing the true glory of the worship of the gospel, wherein it excels that under the Old Testament, they have rendered it altogether inglorious in comparison of it ; for all the ceremonies and ornaments which they have invented for that end, come unspeakably short, for beauty, order, and glory, of what was



appointed by God himself in the temple, scarce equalling what was among the Pagans.

It will be said, that "the things whereunto we assign the glory of this worship are spiritual and invisible. Now this is not that which is inquired after; but that whose beauty we may behold, and be affected with." And this may consist in the things which we decry, at least in some of them: though I must say, if there be glory in any of them, the more they are multiplied, the better it must needs be. But this is that which we plead: Men, being not able, by the light of faith, to discern the glory of things spiritual and invisible, do make images of them unto themselves, as gods that may go before them, and these they are affected withal; but the worship of the church is spiritual, and the glory of it is invisible unto eyes of flesh. So both our Saviour and the apostles do testify in the celebration of it: "We are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." (Heb. xii. 22—24.) The glory of this assembly, though certainly above that of organs, and pipes, and crucifixes, and vestments, yet doth not appear unto the sense or imaginations of men.

That which I design here, is to obviate the meretricious allurements of the Roman worship, and the pretences of its efficacy to excite devotion and veneration by its beauty and decency. The whole of it is but a deformed image of that glory which they cannot behold. To obtain and preserve in our hearts an experience of the power and efficacy of that worship of God which is "in spirit and truth," as unto all the real ends of divine worship, is that alone which will secure us. Whilst we do retain right notions of the proper object of gospel-worship, and of our immediate approach by it thereunto, of the way and manner of that approach through the mediation of Christ, and assistance of the Spirit; whilst we keep up faith and love unto their due exercise in it, wherein on our part the life of it doth consist, preserving an experience of the spiritual benefit and advantage which we receive thereby; we shall not easily be inveigled to relinquish them all, and to give up ourselves unto the embraces of this lifeless image.

SECT. III. It is an universal unimpeachable persuasion amongst all Christians, that *there is a near, intimate communion with Christ, and participation of him, in the supper of the Lord.*—He is no Christian who is otherwise-minded. Hence, from the beginning, this was always esteemed the principal mystery in the *agenda* of the church, and that deservedly; for this persuasion is built on infallible divine testimonies. The communication of Christ herein, and our participation of him, are expressed in such a manner as to demonstrate them to be peculiar; such as are not to be obtained in any other way or divine ordinance whatever; not in praying, not in preaching, not in

any other exercise of faith on the word or promises. There is in it an eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ, with a spiritual incorporation thence ensuing, which are peculiar unto this ordinance. But,

This especial and peculiar communion with Christ, and participation of him, is spiritual and mystical, by faith; not carnal or fleshly. To imagine any other participation of Christ in this life but by faith, is to overthrow the gospel. To signify the real communication of himself and the benefits of his mediation unto them that believe, whereby they should become the food of their souls, nourishing them unto eternal life, in the very beginning of his ministry, he himself expresseth it by eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John vi. 53.) But hereon many were offended, as supposing that he had intended an oral, carnal eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, and so would have taught them to be cannibals. Wherefore, to instruct his disciples aright in this mystery, he gives an eternal rule of the interpretation of such expressions: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John vi. 63.) To look for any other communication of Christ, or of his flesh and blood, but what is spiritual, is to contradict him in the interpretation which he gives of his own words.

Wherefore this especial communion with Christ, and participation of him, is by faith. If it were not, unbelievers ought all to partake of Christ as well as those that believe; which is a contradiction. For, to believe in Christ, and to be made partakers of him, are one and the same. We must therefore find this peculiar participating of Christ in the special actings of faith with respect unto the especial and peculiar exhibition of Christ unto us in this ordinance. And these actings of faith are diverse and many, but may be referred unto four heads:—

1. *It acts itself by obedience unto the authority of Christ in this institution.*—This is the foundation of all communion with Christ, or participation of him, in any ordinance of divine worship whatever, that is peculiarly of his own sovereign appointment, and that in and with such circumstances, as unto the time, or season, and manner of it, as require especial actings of faith with respect thereunto. For the institution of this ordinance was in the close of his ministry or prophetic office on the earth, and in the entrance of the exercise of his priestly office in offering himself a sacrifice unto God for the sins of the church: between them both, and to render them both effectual unto us, he interposed an act of his kingly office in the institution of this ordinance. And it was in "the same night in which he was betrayed;" when his holy heart was in the highest exercise of zeal for the glory of God, and compassion for the souls of sinners. Faith hath herein an especial regard unto all these things. It doth not only act itself by a subjection of soul and conscience unto the authority of Christ in the institution, but respects also the exerting of

his authority in the close of his prophetic, and entrance of the exercise of his sacerdotal, office on the earth; with all those other circumstances of it, which recommend it unto the souls and consciences of believers.

This is peculiar unto this ordinance, and unto this way of the participation of Christ; and herein faith, in its due exercise, gives the soul an intimate converse with Christ.

2. *There is in this divine ordinance a peculiar representation of the love and grace of Christ in his death and sufferings, with the way and manner of our reconciliation unto God thereby.*—The principal design of the gospel is to declare unto us the love and grace of Christ, and our reconciliation unto God by his blood. Howbeit herein there is such an eminent representation of them, as cannot be made by words alone. It is a spiritual image of Christ proposed unto us, intimately affecting our whole souls. These things—namely, the ineffable love and grace of Christ, the bitterness of his sufferings and death in our stead, the sacrifice that he offered by his blood unto God, with the effect of it in atonement and reconciliation—being herein contracted into one entire proposal unto our souls, faith is exercised thereon in a peculiar manner, and so as it is not in any divine ordinance or way of the proposal of the same things unto us.

All these things are indeed distinctly, and in parts, set before us in the scripture for our instruction and edification. But as the light which was first made and diffused unto the whole creation, did suffice to enlighten it in a general way, yet was far more useful, glorious, and conspicuous, when it was reduced and contracted into the body of the sun: so the truths concerning Christ, as they are diffused through the scripture, are sufficient for the illumination and instruction of the church; but when, by divine wisdom and institution, they are contracted into this ordinance, their taste and efficacy is more eminent and communicative unto the eyes of our understandings, that is, our faith, than as merely proposed by parts and parcels in the word.

Hereby faith leads the soul into a peculiar communion with Christ, which is thereon made partaker of him in an especial manner.

3. *Faith herein respects the peculiar way of the communication and exhibition of Christ unto us, by symbols, or sensible outward signs of bread and wine.*—It finds the divine wisdom and sovereignty of Christ in the choice of them, having no other foundation in reason or the light of nature; and the representation that is made herein of Him, with the benefits of his death and oblation, is suited unto faith only, without any aid of sense or imagination. For although the symbols are visible, yet their relation unto the things signified is not discernible unto any sense or reason. Had he chosen for this end an image or a crucifix, or any such actions as did, by a kind of natural and sensible resemblance, show forth his passion, and what he did and suffered, there had been no need of faith in this matter. And therefore, as we shall see, such things are found out unto this end, by such as have lost the use and exercise of faith herein. Besides, it is

faith alone that apprehends the sacramental union that is between the outward signs and the things signified by virtue of divine institution : and hereby the one, that is, the body and blood of Christ, are really exhibited and communicated unto the souls of believers, as the outward signs are unto their bodily senses ; the signs becoming thereby *sacramentally* unto us what the things signified are in themselves, and are therefore called by their names. Herein there is a peculiar exercise of faith, and a peculiar participation of Christ, such as are in no other ordinance whatever. Yea, the actings of faith with respect unto the sacramental union and relation between the signs and things signified, by virtue of divine institution and promise, is the principal use and exercise of it herein.

4. *There is a peculiar exercise of faith in the reception of Christ, as his body and blood are tendered and exhibited unto us in the outward signs of them.*—For though they do not contain carnally the flesh and blood of Christ in them, nor are turned into them, yet they really exhibit Christ unto them that believe in the participation of them. Faith is the grace that makes the soul to receive Christ, and whereby it doth actually receive him. “To as many as received him, gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many that believe on his name.” (John i. 12.) And it receives him according as he is proposed and exhibited unto us in the declaration and promise of the gospel, wherein he is proposed. It receives him by the gracious assent of the mind unto this truth, *the choice of him*, cleaving and trusting unto him with the will, heart, and affection, for all the ends of his person and offices, as the Mediator between God and man, and in the sacramental, mysterious proposal of him, his body and blood, that is, in the efficacy of his death and sacrifice : in this ordinance of worship, faith acts the whole soul in the reception of him unto all the especial ends for which he is exhibited unto us, in this way and manner. What these ends are which give force and efficacy unto the actings of faith herein, this is not a proper place to declare.

I have mentioned these things, because it is the great plea of the Papists at this day in behalf of their transubstantiation, that *if we reject their oral or carnal manducation of the flesh of Christ, and drinking of his blood, there cannot be assigned a way of the participation of Christ in the receiving of him in this sacrament, distinct from that which is done in the preaching of the word.* But hereby, as we shall see, they only declare their ignorance of this heavenly mystery.

But of this blessed intimate communion with Christ, and participation of him in the divine institution of worship, believers have experience unto their satisfaction and ineffable joy. They find him to be the spiritual food of their souls, by which they are nourished unto eternal life, by a spiritual incorporation with him. They discern the truth of this mystery, and have experience of its power. Howbeit, men growing carnal, and being destitute of spiritual light, with the wisdom of faith, utterly lost all experience of any communion with Christ, and participation of him in this sacrament, on the principles of gospel-truth. They could find nothing in it, no power, no

efficacy, nothing that should answer the great and glorious things spoken of it; nor was it possible they should. For indeed there is nothing in it, but unto faith; as the light of the sun is nothing to them that have no eyes: a dog and a staff are of more use to a blind man, than the sun; nor is the most melodious music any thing to them that are deaf. Yet, notwithstanding this loss of spiritual experience, they retained the notion of truth, that there must be a peculiar participation of Christ in this sacrament, distinct from all other ways and means of the same grace.

Here the wits of men were hard put to it to find out an image of this spiritual communion, whereof in their minds they could have no experience. Yet they fashioned one by degrees, and after they had greatedened the mystery in words and expressions, (whereof they knew nothing in its power,) to answer unto what was to be set up in the room of it, until they brought forth the horrid monster of *transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass*. For hereby they provided that all those things which are spiritual in this communion, should be turned into and acted in things carnal: bread shall be the body of Christ carnally; the mouth shall be faith; the teeth shall be the exercise; the belly shall be the heart; and the priest shall offer Christ unto God. A viler image was never invented; and there is nothing of faith required herein: it is all but a fortifying of imagination against all sense and reason.

Because there is a singular mystery in the sacramental union that is between the external signs and the things signified, whence the one is called by the name of the other, as the bread is called "the body of Christ," which faith discerns in the exhibition and receiving of it, they have invented, for a representation hereof, such a prodigious imagination of the real conversion or transubstantiation of the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, as overthrows all faith, reason, and sense also.

And, in the room of that holy reverence of Christ himself in his institution of this ordinance, in the mystical exhibition of himself unto the souls of believers, in the demonstration of his love, grace, and sufferings for them, they have set-up a wretched image of an idolatrous adoration and worship of "the host," as they call it, to the ruin of the souls of men.

And whereas the Lord Jesus Christ "by one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified," appointing this ordinance for the remembrance of it; having lost that spiritual light whereby they might discern the efficacy of that "one offering" so long since accomplished, in the application of it by this ordinance unto the actual perfecting of the church, they have erected a new image of it, in a pretended daily repetition of the same sacrifice, wherein they profess to offer Christ again for the sins of the living and the dead, unto the overthrow of the principal foundation of faith and religion.

All these abominations arose from the loss of an experience of that spiritual communion with Christ, and the participation of him by

faith, which there is in this ordinance by divine institution. This cast the thoughts of men on invention of these images, to suit the general notion of truth unto the superstition of their carnal minds. Nor is it ordinarily possible to retrieve them from these infatuations, unless God be pleased to communicate unto them that spiritual light whereby they may discern the glory of this heavenly mystery, and have an experience of the exhibition of Christ unto the souls of believers therein, without these. From innumerable prejudices, and inflamed affections toward their idols, they will not only abide in their darkness against all means of conviction, but endeavour the temporal and eternal destruction of all that are otherwise-minded.

This image, like that of Nebuchadnezzar, was once set up in this nation, with a law, that whoever would not bow down to it, and worship it, should be cast into the fiery furnace. God grant it to be so no more! But if it should, there is no preservation against the influence of force and fires, but a real experience of an efficacious communication of Christ unto our souls in this holy ordinance, administered according to his appointment.

This therefore is that [which] we ought with all diligence to endeavour; and this not only as the only way and means of our edification in this ordinance, by an exercise in grace, the strengthening of our faith, and present consolation, but as the effectual means of our preservation in the profession of the truth, and our deliverance from the snares of our adversaries. For whereas it is undeniable, that this peculiar institution, distinct from all other, doth intend and design a distinct communication and exhibition of Christ; if it be pressed on us, that these must be done by transubstantiation and oral manducation thereon, and can be no otherwise; nothing but an experience of the power and efficacy of the mystical communion with Christ in this ordinance, before described, will preserve us from being ensnared by their pretences. There is not therefore, on all accounts of grace and truth, any one thing of more concernment unto believers, than the due exercise of spiritual light and faith, unto a satisfactory experience of a peculiar participation of Christ in this holy institution.

The same is fallen out amongst them with reference unto the church, and all the principal concerns of it; having lost or renounced the things which belong unto its primitive constitution, they have erected a deformed image in their stead, as I shall manifest in some instances.

## II. THINGS RELATING TO THE STATE, ORDER, AND WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH.

SECT. IV. It is an unquestionable principle of truth, that *the church of Christ is in itself a body, such a body as hath a Head whereon it depends, and without which it would immediately be dissolved.*—A body without a head is but a carcass, or part of a carcass; and this head must be always present with it. A head distant from the body, separated from it, not united unto it by such ways and means as are proper unto their nature, is of no use. See Eph. iv. 15, 16; Col. ii. 19.

But there is a double notion of a head, as there is of a body also; for they both of them are either natural or political. There is a natural body, and there is a political body; and in each sense it must have a head of the same kind. A natural body must have a head of vital influence, and a political body must have a head of rule and government. The church is called "a body;" compared to it, is a body in both senses, or in both parts of the comparison; and in both must have a head. As it is a spiritually living body, compared to the natural, it must have a head of vital influence, without which it cannot subsist; and, as it is an orderly society for the common ends of its institution, compared unto a political body, it must have a head of rule and government, without which neither its being nor its use can be preserved.

But these are only distinct considerations of the church, which is every way one and the same. It is not two bodies, for then it must have two heads; but it is one body under two distinct considerations, which divide not its essence, but declare its different respects unto its Head.

And in general all who are called Christians are thus far agreed: Nothing is of the church, nothing belongs unto it, which is not dependent on, which is not united to, the Head. That which "holds the Head," is the true church; that which doth not so, is no church at all.

Herein we agree with our adversaries; namely, that all the privileges of the church, all the right and title of men thereunto, depend wholly on their due relation to the Head of it, according to the distinct considerations of it, be that Head who or what it will; that which is not united unto the Head, which depends not on it, which is separated from it, belongs not to the church.

This Head of the church is Christ Jesus alone; for the church is but one, although on various considerations it be likened unto two sorts of bodies. The catholic church is considered either as believing, or as professing; but the believing church is not one, and the professing another. If you suppose another catholic church, beside this one, whoso will may be the head of it, we are not concerned therein; but unto this church Christ is the only Head. He only answers all the properties and ends of such a head to the church: this the scripture doth so positively and frequently affirm, without the least intimation either directly or by consequence of any other head, that it is wonderful how the imagination of it should befall the minds of any, who thought it not meet at the same time to cast away their Bibles.

But whereas a head is to be present with the body, or it cannot subsist, the inquiry is, how the Lord Christ is so present with his church. And the scripture hath left no pretence for any hesitation herein; for he is so by his Spirit and his word, by which he communicateth all the powers and virtues of a head unto it continually. His promises of this way and manner of his presence unto the church are multiplied; and thereon do the being, life, use, and continuance of the church depend. Where Christ is not present by his Spirit and

word, there is no church ; and those who pretend so to be, are “ the synagogues of Satan : ” and they are inseparable and conjunct in their operation, as he is the Head of influence unto the church, as also as he is a Head of rule ; for in the former sense the Spirit worketh by the word, and, in the latter, the word is made effectual by the Spirit.

But the sense and apprehension hereof were for a long time lost in the world, amongst them that called themselves “ the church. ” A head, they did acknowledge, the church must always have, without which it cannot subsist ; and they would confess, that, in some sense, he was a head of influence unto it : they know not how to have an image thereof ; though, by many other pernicious doctrines, they overthrew the efficacy and benefit of it. But how he should be the only Head of rule unto the church, they could not understand ; they saw not how he could act the wisdom and authority of such a head, and without which the church must be headless. They said, he was absent and invisible ; they must have one that they could see, and have access unto. He is in heaven, and they know not how to make address to him, as occasion did require ; all things would go to disorder, notwithstanding such a headship. The church is visible ; and it must, they thought, have a visible head. It was meet also that this head should have some such grandeur and pomp in the world as became the head of so great and glorious a society as the church is. How to apply these things unto Christ, and his presence with the church by his word and Spirit, they knew not.

Shall they then forego the principle,—that the church is to have such a head and supreme ruler ? That must not be done, but be sacredly retained ; not only because to deny it in general, is to renounce the gospel, but because they had found out a way to turn it unto their own advantage. They would therefore make an image of Christ, as this Head of the church, to possess the place, and act all the powers of such a head ; for the church, they say, is visible, and must have a visible head,—as though the catholic church, as such, were any other way visible but as the head of it is, that is, by faith. That there must be a head and centre of union, wherein all the members of the church may agree and be united, notwithstanding all their distinct capacities and circumstances, and how this should be Christ himself, they know not ; that without a supreme head present in the church to compose all differences, and determine all controversies, even those concerning himself, which they vainly pretend unto, they expressly affirm, that there was never a society so foolishly ordered as that of the church. And hereon they conclude the insufficiency of Christ to be this sole Head of the church ; another they must have for these ends.

And this was their Pope, such an image as is one of the worst of idols that ever were in the world. Unto him they give all the titles of Christ which relate unto the church ; and ascribe all the powers of Christ in and over it, as unto its rule, to him also. But here they fell into a mistake ; for when they thought to give him the power of



Christ, they gave him the power of the dragon to use against Christ, and those that are his. And when they thought to make an image of Christ, they made an image of "the first beast," set up by the dragon, which "had two horns like a lamb," but "spake as a dragon;" whose character and employ are at large described, Rev. xiii. 11—17: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he caused all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

This is the sum of what I shall offer on this head: Those who called themselves "the church" had lost all spiritual light, enabling them to discern the beauty and glory of the rule of Christ over the church as its Head; and hereon their minds became destitute of all experience of the power and efficacy of his Spirit and word, continually to order the affairs thereof, in the ways, and through the use of means, by himself appointed; they knew not how to acquiesce in these things, nor how the church could be maintained by them. Wherefore, in this case, "they helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil." (Isai. xli. 6, 7.) They set themselves, in their several capacities, to frame this idol, and set him up in the place and stead of Christ, so fixing him "in the temple of God," that he might "show himself" from thence to be "as God." (2 Thess. ii. 4.)

Neither will this idol be ever cast out of the church until the generality of Christians become spiritually sensible of the authority of Christ, exerting itself in the rule of the church, by his Spirit and his word, unto all the ends of unity, order, peace, and edification; until that be done, a Pope, or something like him, will be thought necessary unto these ends.

But never was there a more horrid, deformed image made of so beautiful and glorious a head. All the craft of Satan, all the wits of men, cannot invent any thing more unlike Christ, as the Head of the church, than this Pope is. A worse figure and representation of him cannot possibly be made.

This is he of whom nothing not great, nothing common, nothing not exceeding the ordinary state of mankind, on the one hand or the other, is thought or spoken. Some say, "He is the head and husband of the church," "the vicar of Christ over the whole world," "God's vicegerent, a vice-god," "Peter's successor," "the head and centre of unity unto the whole catholic church," "endued with a plenitude of power," with other ascriptions of the same nature innumerable; whereon it is necessary unto every soul, under pain of damnation, to be subject unto him. Others aver, that he is "anti-christ," "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the beast that came out of the earth with two horns like a lamb, and a voice like the dragon," "the false prophet," "the idol shepherd," "the evil servant that beateth his fellow-servants," "the adulterer of a meretricious and false church." And there is no mean betwixt these: he is undoubtedly the one or the other. The Lord Jesus Christ, who hath determined this controversy already in his word, will ere long give it its ultimate issue in his own glorious person, and by the brightness of his coming.

And this is an eminent idol in the chamber of imagery in the Roman church. But at present it is evident wherein lies the preservation of believers from being inveigled to bow down to this image, and to worship it. A due sense of the sole authority of Christ in and over his church, with an experience of the power of his word and Spirit unto all the ends of its rule and order, will keep them unto the truth herein; and nothing else will so do. And if once they decline from this in any instances, seem they never so small, so as to admit of any thing in the church or its worship which doth not derive immediately from his authority, they will be disposed to admit of another guide and head in all other things also.

SECT. v. Again: it is a notion of truth, that *the church of Christ is beautiful and glorious*.—There are many prophecies and predictions concerning it, that so it should be; and there are sundry descriptions given of it as such. Its relation unto Christ, with his love unto it and valuation of it, doth require that it should be so glorious; yea, his great design toward it was, to make it so to be. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 25—27.) This therefore all do agree in who profess Christian religion. But what that glory is, and wherein it doth consist, whence it is and is said to be glorious, is not agreed upon.

The scripture indeed plainly declares this glory to be spiritual and internal, that it consists in its union unto Christ, his presence with it, the communication of his quickening Spirit unto it, the clothing of it with his righteousness, in its sanctification and purification from the defilement of sin, with its fruitfulness in obedience unto the praise of

God. Add hereunto the celebration of divine worship in it, with its rule and order, according to the commandments of Christ, and we have the substance of this glory.

And this glory believers do discern, so as to be satisfied with its excellency. They know that all the glories of the world are no way to be compared to it; for it consists in and arises from such things as they do value and prefer infinitely above all that this world can afford. They are a reflection of the glory of God, or of Christ himself, upon the church; yea, a communication of it thereunto. This they value in the whole, and in every member of it; neither the nature, use, nor end of the church will admit that its glory should consist in things of any other nature.

But the generality of mankind had lost that spiritual light, wherein alone this glory might be discerned. They could see no form or beauty in the spouse of Christ, as only adorned with his graces. To talk of a glorious state of men, whilst they are poor and destitute, it may be, clothed with rags, and haled unto prisons or stakes, (as hath been the lot of the church in most ages,) was in their judgment a thing absurd and foolish. Wherefore, seeing it is certain that the church of Christ is very glorious and illustrious in the sight of God, holy angels, and good men, a way must be found out to make it so, and so to appear in the world. Wherefore they agreed on a lying image of this glory; namely, the dignity, promotion, wealth, dominion, power, and splendour of them that had got the rule of the church. And although it be evident unto all, that these things belong unto the glories of this world, which the glory of the church is not only distinguished from, but opposed unto, yet it must be looked on as that wherein it is glorious; and it is so, though it have not one saving grace in it, as they expressly affirm. When these things are attained, then are all the predictions of its glory accomplished, and the description of it answered.

This corrupt image of the true spiritual glory of the church, arising from an ignorance of it, and want of a real experience of the worth and excellency of things internal, spiritual, and heavenly, hath been attended with pernicious consequents in the world. Many have been infatuated by it, and enamoured of it, unto their own perdition. For, as a teacher of lies, it is suited only to divert the minds of men from a comprehension and valuation of that real glory, wherein if they have not an interest they must perish for ever.

Look into foreign parts, as Italy and France, where these men pretend their church is in its greatest glory: what is it, but the wealth and pomp and power of men, for the most part openly ambitious, sensual, and worldly? Is this the glory of the church of Christ? Do these things belong unto his kingdom? [No.] But, by the setting-up of this image, by the advancement of this notion, all the true glory of the church hath been lost and despised. Yet these things, being suited unto the designs of the carnal minds of men, and satisfactory unto all their lusts, (having got this paint and gilding on them, that they render the church of Christ glorious,) have been the means of

filling this world with darkness, blood, and confusion. For this is that glory of the church which is contended for with rage and violence. And not a few do yet dote on these images, who are not sharers in the advantage [which] it brings unto its principal worshippers; whose infatuation is to be bewailed.

The means of our preservation from the adoration of these images also are obvious, from the principles we proceed upon. It will not be done without light to discern the glory of things spiritual and invisible; wherein alone the church is glorious. And, in the light of faith, they appear to be what indeed they are in themselves, of the same nature with the glory that is above. The present glory of the church, I say, is its imitation unto the glory of heaven, and in general of the same nature with it. *Here* it is in its dawns and entrances; *there*, in its fulness and perfection. To look for any thing that should be cognate, or of near alliance, unto the glory of heaven, or any near resemblance of it, in the outward glories of this world, is a fond imagination. And when the mind is enabled to discern the true beauty and glory of spiritual things, with their alliance unto that which is above, it will be secured from seeking after the glory of the church in things of this world, or putting any value on them unto that end.

That self-denial also which is indispensably prescribed in the gospel unto all the disciples of Christ, is requisite hereunto; for the power and practice of it are utterly inconsistent with an apprehension, that secular power, riches, and domination, do contribute any thing unto the church's glory. The mind being hereby crucified unto a value and estimation of these things, it can never apprehend them as any part of that raiment of the church wherein it is glorious. But where the minds of men, through their native darkness, are disenabled to discern the glory of spiritual things, and, through their carnal, unmortified affection, do cleave unto and have the highest esteem of worldly grandeur, it is no wonder if they suppose the beauty and glory of the church to consist in them.

SECT. VI. I shall add one instance more with reference unto the state of the church, and that is in *its rule and discipline*.—Here also hath been as fatal a miscarriage as ever fell out in Christian religion. For the truth herein being lost, as unto any sense and experience of its efficacy or power, a bloody image destructive to the lives and souls of men was set up in the stead thereof; and this also shall be briefly declared. There are certain principles of truth, with respect hereunto, that are acknowledged by all: as,

1. *That the Lord Christ hath appointed a rule and discipline in his church, for its good and preservation*.—No society can subsist without the power and exercise of some rule in itself. For rule is nothing but the preservation of order, without which there is nothing but confusion. The church is the most perfect society in the earth, as being united and compacted by the best and highest bonds which our nature is capable of. (Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19.) It must therefore have a rule and discipline in itself, which, from the wisdom and authority of

Him by whom it was instituted, must be supposed to be the most perfect.

2. *That this discipline is powerful and effectual unto all its proper ends.*—It must be so esteemed, from the wisdom of Him by whom it is appointed; and it is so accordingly. To suppose that the Lord Christ should ordain a rule and discipline in his church, that, in itself and by its just administration, should not attain its ends, is to reflect the greatest dishonour upon him. Yea, if any church or society of professed Christians be fallen into that state and condition wherein the discipline appointed by Christ cannot be effectual unto its proper ends, Christ hath forsaken that church or society. Besides, the Holy Ghost affirms, that the ministry of the church, in the administration of it, is “mighty through God” unto all its ends. (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.)

3. *The ends of this discipline are the order, peace, purity, and holiness of the church, with a representation of the love, care, and watchfulness of Christ over it, and a testimony unto his future judgment.*—An imagination of any other ends of it hath been its ruin.

And thus far all who profess themselves Christians are agreed, at least in words. None dare deny any of these principles,—no, not to secure their abuse of them, which is the interest of many.

4. But unto them all we must also add, and that with the same uncontrollable evidence of truth, *that the power and efficacy of this discipline which it hath from the institution of Christ, is spiritual only, and hath all its effects on the souls and consciences of those who profess subjection unto him, with respect unto the ends before mentioned.*—So the apostle expressly describes it: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor. x. 4, 5.) These are the ends, as of preaching of the gospel, so of the discipline of the church; and these are the ways and means of its efficacy. It is spiritually mighty through God unto all these ends; and others it hath none.

But we shall immediately see the total reverse of this order, in an image substituted in the room of it.

5. *Of the power and efficacy of this spiritual discipline unto its proper end, the primitive Christians, at least, had experience.*—For three hundred years, the church had no other way or means for the preservation of its order, peace, purity, and holiness, but the spiritual efficacy of this discipline on the souls and consciences of professed Christians. Neither did it fail therein; nor were the churches any longer preserved in peace and purity than whilst they had this discipline alone for their preservation, without the least contribution of assistance from secular power, or any thing that should operate on the outward concerns of mankind. And there can be no other reason given why it should not be of the same use and efficacy still unto all churches, but only the loss of all those internal graces which are

necessary to make any gospel-institution effectual ; wherefore, all sense and experience hereof, of the spiritual power and efficacy of this discipline, were utterly lost, amongst the most of them that are called Christians. Neither those who had assumed a pretence of the administration of it, nor those toward whom it was administered, could find any thing in it that did affect the consciences of men, with respect unto its proper ends. They found it a thing altogether useless in the church, wherein none of any sort would be concerned.

What shall they now do? What course shall they take? Shall they renounce all those principles of truth concerning it, which we have laid down, and exclude it (both name and thing) out of the church? This probably would have been the end of it, had they not found out a way to wrest the pretence of it unto their unspeakable advantage. Wherefore they contrived and made a horrid image of the holy, spiritual rule and discipline of the gospel: an image it was, consisting in outward force and tyranny over the persons, liberties, and lives of men; exercised with weapons, mighty through the devil to cast men into prison, and to destroy them. Hereby that which was appointed for the peace and edification of the church being lost, an engine was framed, under its name and pretence, unto its ruin and destruction; and so it continues unto this day.

It had never entered into the hearts of men, to set up a discipline in the church of Christ, by law, courts, fines, mulcts, imprisonments, and burnings, but that they had utterly lost in themselves, and suffered to be lost in others concerned, all experience of the power and efficacy of the discipline of Christ toward the souls and consciences of men.

But herein they laid it aside, as an useless tool, that might do some service in the hands of the apostles and the primitive churches, whilst there was spiritual life and sense left amongst Christians; but, as unto them and what they aimed at, it was of no use at all.

The deformity of this image in the several parts of it, its universal dissimilitude unto that whose name it bears, and which it pretends to be, the several degrees whereby it was forged, framed, and erected, with the occasions and advantages taken for its exaltation, would take up much time to declare. For it was subtly interwoven with other abominations in the whole "mystery of iniquity," until it became the very life or animating principle of antichristianism.

For, however men may set light by the rule and discipline of Christ in his church, and its spiritual power or efficacy toward the souls and consciences of men, the rejection of it, and the setting up of a horrid image of worldly power, domination, and force, in the room of it and under its name, is that which began, carried on, and yet maintains the fatal apostasy in the church of Rome.

I shall instance only in one particular: On the change of this rule of Christ, and, together with it, the setting up of *Mauzzim*, or "an image, or god of forces," in the stead of it, they were compelled to change all the ends of that discipline, and to make an image of them also. For this new instrument of outward force was of no use with

respect unto them ; for they are, as was declared, the spiritual peace, purity, love, and edification of the church. Outward force is no way meet to attain any of these ends. Wherefore they must make an image of these also, or substitute some dead form in their room ; and this was an universal subjection unto the pope, according unto all the rules, orders, and canons which they should invent. Uniformity herein and canonical obedience is all the end which they will allow unto their church-discipline ; and these things hang well together, for nothing but outward force by law and penalties is fit to attain this end. So was there an image composed and erected of the holy discipline of Christ, and its blessed ends, consisting of these two parts,—outward force and feigned subjection. For, hardly can an instance be given in the world of any man who ever bowed down to this image, or submitted unto any ecclesiastical censure, out of a conscientious respect unto it. Force and fear rule all.

This is that discipline, in whose execution the blood of an innumerable company of holy martyrs hath been shed ; that wherein all the vital spirits of the Papacy do act themselves, and whereby it doth subsist ; and although it be “the image of jealousy,” or the image of “the first beast,” set-up by the dragon, yet it cannot be denied but that it is very wisely accommodated unto the present state of the generality of them that are called Christians amongst them. For, being both blind and carnal, and having thereby lost all sense and experience of the spiritual power of the rule of Christ in their consciences, they are become a herd not fit to be governed or ruled any other way. Under the bondage of it therefore they must abide, till the veil of blindness be taken away, and they are turned unto God by his word and Spirit ; for “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there,” and there alone, “is liberty.” (2 Cor. iii. 17.)

SECT. VII. Unto the foregoing particular instances with respect unto the church, I shall yet add one more general, which is indeed comprehensive of them all, or the root from whence they spring ; a root bearing gall and wormwood. And this is concerning *the catholic church*.

What belongs unto this catholic church ? What is comprised in its communion ? The apostle declares, Heb. xii. 22—24. It is the recapitulation of all things in heaven and earth in Christ Jesus ; (Eph. i. 10 ;) his body ; his spouse or bride ; the Lamb’s wife ; the glorious temple, wherein God doth dwell by his Spirit ; a holy mystical society, purchased and purified by the blood of Christ, and united unto him by his Spirit, or the inhabitation of the same Spirit in him and those whereof it doth consist. Hence they with him, as the body with its head, are mystically called “Christ,” 1 Cor. xii. 12. And there are two parts of it ; the one whereof is already perfected in heaven as unto their spirits, and the other yet continued in the way of faith and obedience in this world. Both these constitute one family in heaven and earth, (Eph. iii. 15,) in conjunction with the holy angels ; one mystical body, one catholic church. And although there is a great difference, in their present state and condition between these two

branches of the same family, yet are they both equally purchased by Christ, and united unto him as their Head; having both of them, effectually, the same principle of the life of God in them. Of a third part of this church, neither in heaven nor in earth, in a temporary state participant somewhat of heaven and somewhat of hell, called "purgatory," the scripture knoweth nothing at all; neither is it consistent with the analogy of faith, nor the promises of God unto them that do believe, as we shall see immediately.

This church, even as unto that part of it which is in this world, as it is adorned with all the graces of the Holy Spirit, is the most beautiful and glorious effect, next unto the forming and production of its Head in the incarnation of the Son of God, which divine wisdom, power, and grace will extend themselves unto, here below; but these things,—the glory of this state is visible only unto the eye of faith; yea, it is perfectly seen and known only to Christ himself. We see it obscurely in the light of faith and revelation, and are sensible of it, according unto our participating of the graces and privileges wherein it doth consist.

But that spiritual light which is necessary to the discerning of this glory, was lost among those of whom we treat. They could see no reality nor beauty in these things, nor any thing that should be of advantage unto them. For, upon their principle, of the utter uncertainty of men's spiritual estate and condition in this world, it is evident that they could have no satisfactory persuasion of any concernment in it.

But they had possessed themselves of the notion of a catholic church, which with mysterious artifices they have turned unto their own incredible secular advantage. This is that whereof they boast, appropriating it unto themselves, and making it a pretence of destroying others, what lies in them, both temporally and eternally. Unto this end they have formed the most deformed and detestable image of it, that ever the world beheld. For the catholic church which they own, and which they boast that they are, instead of that of Christ, is a company or society of men, unto whom, in order unto the constitution of that whole society, there is no one real Christian grace required, nor spiritual union unto Christ the Head, but only an outside profession of these things, as they expressly contend; a society united unto the Pope of Rome, as its head, by a subjection unto him and his rule, according to the laws and canons whereby he will grant them. This is the formal reason and cause constituting that catholic church which they are, which is compacted in itself by horrid bonds and ligaments, for the ends of ambition, worldly domination, and avarice; a catholic church openly wicked, in the generality of its rulers and them that are ruled; and, in its state, cruel, oppressive, and dyed with the blood of saints and martyrs innumerable.

This, I say, is that image of the holy catholic church, the spouse of Christ, which they have set-up. And it hath been as the image of Moloch, that hath devoured and consumed the children of the church, whose cries, when their cruel step-mother pitied them not, and



when their pretended ghostly fathers cast them into the flames, came up unto "the ears of the Lord of hosts;" and their blood still cries for vengeance on this idolatrous generation.

Yet is this pretence of the catholic church pressed, in the minds of many, with so many sophistical artifices, through "the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" (Eph. iv. 14;) proposed with the allurements of so many secular advantages, and imposed oft-times on Christians with so much force and cruelty; that nothing can secure us from the admission of it, unto the utter overthrow of religion, but the means before insisted on. A spiritual light is necessary hereunto, to discern the internal spiritual beauty and glory of the true catholic church of Christ. Where this is in its power, all the paintings and dresses of their deformed image will fall off from it, and its abominable filth will be made to appear. And this will be accompanied with an effectual experience of the glory and excellency of that grace in the souls of those that believe, derived from Christ the sole Head of this church, whereby they "are changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) The power, life, and sweetness hereof will give satisfaction unto their souls, to the contempt of the pretended order of dependence on the Pope as a head. By these means the true catholic church, which is the body of Christ, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all," (Eph. i. 23,) "growing-up into him in all things, who is the Head," (iv. 15,) despiseth this image; and Dagon will fall to the ground when this ark is brought in, yea, though it be in his own temple.

### III. THINGS RELATING TO THE GRACES AND DUTIES OF OBEDIENCE REQUIRED IN THE GOSPEL.

SECT. VIII. In the farther opening of this chamber of imagery, we shall yet, if it be possible, see greater abominations. At least, that which doth next ensue, is scarce inferior unto any of them that went before.

It is a principle in Christian religion, an acknowledged verity, that *it is the duty of the disciples of Christ, especially as united in churches, to propagate the faith of the gospel, and to make the doctrine of it known unto all, as they have opportunity.*—Yea, this is one principal end of the constitution of churches, and officers in them. (Matt. v. 13—16; 1 Tim. iii. 15.)

This our Lord Jesus Christ gave in special charge unto his apostles at the beginning. (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15, 16.) Hereby they were obliged unto the work of propagating the faith of the gospel, and the knowledge of him therein, in all places; and were justified in their so doing. And this they did with that efficacy and success, that in a short time, like the light of the sun, "their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world;" (Rom. x. 18;) and the gospel was said to be "preached unto every creature which is under heaven." (Col. i. 23.)

The way therefore, whereby they propagated the faith, was by

diligent, laborious preaching of the doctrine of the gospel unto all persons, in all places, with patience and magnanimity in undergoing all sorts of sufferings on the account of it, and a declaration of its power in all those virtues and graces which are useful and exemplary unto mankind.

It is true, their office, and the discharge of it, are long since ceased. Howbeit it cannot be denied but that the work itself is incumbent in a way of duty on all churches, yea, on all believers, as they have providential calls unto it, and opportunities for it. For it is the principal way whereby they may glorify God, and benefit men in their chiefest good, which without doubt they are obliged unto. This notion of truth is retained in the church of Rome; and the work itself is appropriated by them unto themselves alone. Unto them, and them only, as they suppose, it belongs to take care of the propagation of the faith of the gospel, with the conversion of infidels and heretics. Whatever is done unto this purpose by others, they condemn and abhor.

What do they think of the primitive way of doing it, by personal preaching, sufferings, and holiness? Will the pope, his cardinals, and bishops, undertake this work or way of the discharge of it? Christ hath appointed no other; the apostles and their successors knew no other; no other becomes the gospel, nor ever had success.—No; they abhor and detest this way of it.

What then is to be done? Shall the truth be denied? Shall the work be wholly and avowedly laid aside?—Neither will this please them, because it is not suited unto their honour; wherefore they have erected a dismal image of it, unto the horrible reproach of Christian religion.

They have indeed provided a double painting for the image which they have set-up. The first is the constant consult of some persons at Rome, which they call *Congregatio de propagandâ Fide*, “a Council for the Propagation of the Faith,” under the effect of whose consultations Christendom hath long grieved. And the other is, the sending of “missionaries,” as they call them, or a surcharge of friars, from their over-numerous fraternities, upon their errands into remote nations. But the real image itself consists of these three parts:—

1. The sword.
2. The Inquisition.
3. Plots and conspiracies.

By these it is that they design to propagate the faith and promote Christian religion. And if hell itself can invent a more deformed image and representation of the sacred truth and work which it is a counterfeit of, I am much mistaken.

1. Thus have they, in the first way, carried Christian religion into the Indies, especially the western parts of the world, so called.—First: the Pope, out of the plenitude of his power, gives unto the Spaniard all those countries, and the inhabitants of them, that they may be made Christians. But Christ dealt not so with his apostles, though he were Lord of all, when he sent them to teach and baptize all nations. He dispossessed none of them of their temporal rights or enjoyments; nor gave to his apostles a foot-breadth of inheritance

among them. But, upon this grant, the Spanish Catholics propagated the faith, and brought-in Christian religion amongst them. And they did it by killing and murdering many millions of innocent persons, as some of themselves say, more than are alive in Europe in any one age. And this savage cruelty hath made the name of Christians detestable amongst all that remained of them, that had any exercise of reason; some few slavish brutes being brought by force to submit unto this new kind of idolatry. And this we must think to be done in obedience unto that command of Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) This is the deformed image, which they have set-up, of obedience unto his holy commands; whereunto they apply that voice to Peter, with respect unto the eating of all sorts of creatures: "Arise, Peter, slay and eat." (Acts xi. 7.) So have they dealt with those poor nations whom they have devoured.

But blood, murder, and unjust war, (as all war is, for the propagation of religion,) with persecution, began in Cain, who derived it from the devil, that "murderer from the beginning;" (John viii. 44;) for he "was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." (1 John iii. 12.) Jesus Christ, "the Son of God, was manifested for this purpose, that he might destroy these works of the devil." (Verse 8.) And he doth it in the world by his word and doctrine, judging and condemning them. And he does it in his disciples by his Spirit, extirpating them out of their minds, hearts, and ways; so as that there is not a more assured character of a derivation from the evil spirit, than force and blood in religion for the propagating of it.

2. The next part of this image, the next way used by them for the propagating of the faith, and the conversion of them whom they call "heretics," is *the Inquisition*.—So much hath been declared and is known thereof, that it is needless here to give a portraiture of it. It may suffice, that it hath been long since opened, like Cacus's den, and discovered to be the greatest arsenal of cruelty, the most dreadful shambles of blood and slaughter, that ever was in the world.

This is that engine which hath supplied the scarlet whore with the blood of saints, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, until she was drunk with it. And this is the second way or means whereby they propagate the faith of the gospel, and endeavour, as they say, the conversion of the souls of men. This is the second part of that image which they have set up, instead of the holy appointment of Jesus Christ.

3. The third way they insist on unto this purpose, the third part of this image, consists in *plots and contrivances* to murder princes, to embroil nations in blood, to stir-up sedition unto their ruin, inveigling and alluring all sorts of vicious, indigent, ambitious persons, into an association with them, so to introduce the Catholic religion in the places which they design to subvert.—This engine for

the propagation of the faith hath been plied with various successes in many nations of Europe, and is still at work unto the same purpose. And hereunto belong all the arts which they use for the infatuation of the minds of princes and great men, all the baits [which] they lay for others of all sorts, to work them over unto a compliance with their designs.

Of these parts, I say, is that dreadful image made up and composed, which they set up, embrace, and adore, in the room of the holy way for the propagation of the gospel appointed by Jesus Christ. In his way they can see no beauty, they can expect no success; they cannot believe that ever the world will be converted by it, or be brought in subjection unto the Pope, and therefore betake themselves unto their own. Faith, prayer, holiness, preaching, suffering, all in expectation of the promised presence and assistance of Christ, are no ways for efficacy, success, and advantage, to be compared unto *the sword, the Inquisition, and under-hand designings*.

And this also is that which they call "zeal for the glory of God, and the honour of Christ;" another deformed image which they have brought into religion. For whereas that grace consists principally in postponing self, and all self-concerns, with an undervaluation of them, unto the glory of God, and the special duties whereby it may be promoted; this impious design to destroy mankind by all ways of subtilty and cruelty, unto their own advantage, is set up in the room of it.

But the consideration of the nature and spirit, of the use and end, of the gospel, of the design of Christ in it and by it, is sufficient to preserve the souls of men not utterly infatuated, in an abhorrency of this image of its propagation. It is that wherein "the god of this world," by the help of their blindness and lusts, hath put a cheat on mankind, and prevailed with them, under a pretence of doing Christ honour, to make the vilest representation of him to the world that can be conceived. If he hath appointed this way for the propagating of the gospel, he cannot well be distinguished from Mahomet. But there is nothing more contrary unto him, nothing that his holy soul doth more abhor. And had not men lost all spiritual sense of the nature and ends of the gospel, they could never have given up themselves unto these abominations. For any to suppose that the faith of the gospel is to be propagated by such cruelty and blood, by art and subtilty, by plots, conspiracies, and contrivances, any way but by "the foolishness of preaching," which, unto that end, is "the power and wisdom of God," is to declare his own ignorance of it, and inconcernment in it. And had not men conceived and embraced another religion than what is taught therein, or abused a pretence thereof unto ends and advantages of their own, this imagination of the propagation of it had never taken place in their minds, it is so diametrically opposite unto the whole nature and all the ends of it.

SECT. IX. There is yet amongst them another image of a general principle, no less horrid than that before mentioned, and that with respect unto religious obedience. It is the great foundation of all

religion, and in especial of Christian religion, that *God in all things is to be obeyed absolutely and universally*.—Of all our obedience, there is no other reason, but that it is his will, and is known unto us so to be. This follows necessarily from the infinite perfections of the divine nature. As the first Essential Verity, he is to be believed in what he reveals, above and against all contradiction from pretended reasons, or any imaginations whatever; and as he is the only absolute Independent Being, Essential Goodness, and the Sovereign Lord of all things, he is, without further reason, motive, or inducement, to be absolutely obeyed in all his commands. An instance whereof we have in Abraham offering his only son without dispute or hesitation, in compliance with a divine revelation and command.

It will seem very difficult to frame an image hereof amongst men, with whom there is not the least shadow of these divine perfections; namely, Essential Verity and Absolute Sovereignty, in conjunction with Infinite Wisdom and Goodness, which alone render such an obedience lawful, useful, or suitable unto the principles of our rational natures. But these of whom we speak have not been wanting unto themselves herein, especially the principal craftsmen of this image-trade. The order of the Jesuits have made a bold attempt for the framing of it. Their “vow of blind obedience,” as they call it, unto their superiors, whereto they resign the whole conduct of their souls, in all the concernments of religion, in all duties toward God and man, unto their guidance and disposal, is a cursed image of this absolute obedience unto the commands of God, which he requireth of us. Hence the founder of their order was not ashamed, in his epistle *ad Fratres Lusitanos*, to urge and press this blind obedience from the example of Abraham yielding obedience unto God, without debate or consideration; as if the superiors of the order were good and not evil and sinful men.

Whilst this honour was reserved unto God, whilst this was judged to be his prerogative alone, namely, that his commands are to be obeyed in all things, without reasonings and examinations as unto the matter, justice, and equity of them, merely because they are his, which absolutely and infallibly concludes them good, holy, and just; the righteous government of the world, and the security of men in all their rights, were safely provided for; for he neither will nor can command any thing but what is holy, just, and good. But since the ascription of such a godlike authority unto men, as to secure blind obedience unto all their commands, innumerable evils in murders, seditions, and perjuries, have openly ensued thereon.

But beside those particular evils in matter of fact, which have proceeded from this corrupt fountain, this persuasion at once takes away all grounds of peace and security from mankind; for who knows what a crew or sort of men, called “the Jesuits’ superiors,” known only by their restless ambition and evil practices in the world, may command their vassals, who are sworn to execute whatever they command, without any consideration whether it be right or wrong, good or evil?

Let princes and other great men flatter themselves whilst they please, that, on one consideration or other, they shall be the objects only of their kindness; if these men, according to their profession, be obliged in conscience to execute whatever their superiors shall command them, no less than Abraham was to sacrifice his son on the command of God; they hold their lives at the mercy, and on the good-nature, of these superiors, who are always safe out of the reach of revenge.

It is marvellous that mankind doth not agree to demolish this cursed image, or the ascription of a godlike power unto men, to require blind obedience unto their commands, especially considering what effects it hath produced in the world. All men know by whose device it was first set up and erected; by whom, what means, and unto what end it was confirmed and consecrated; and at this day it is maintained by a society of men, of an uncertain extract and original, like that of the Janizaries in the Turkish empire, their rise being generally out of obscurity, among the meanest and lowest of the people. Such they are, who, by the rules of their education, are taught to renounce all respect unto their native countries, and alliances therein, but so as to make them only the way and matter for the advancement of the interest of this new society. And this sort of men being nourished, from their very first entrances into the conduct of the society, unto hopes and expectations of wealth, honour, power, interest in the disposal of all public affairs of mankind, and the regulation of the consciences of men, it is no wonder if, with the utmost of their arts and industry, they endeavour to set up and preserve this image which they have erected, from whence they expect all the advantage which they do design. But hercof I may treat more fully, when I come to speak of "the image of jealousy" itself.

SECT. X. From these generals, I shall proceed unto more particular instances; and those for the most part in important principles of religion, wherein Christian faith and practice are most concerned. And I shall begin with that which is of signal advantage unto the framers of these images,—as the other also are in their degree; for by this craft they have their livelihood and wealth,—and most pernicious to the souls of other men.

It is a principle of truth, such as that wherein the whole course of Christian obedience is concerned, that *there is a spiritual defilement in sin*.—This the scripture every where declares, representing the very nature of it by spiritual uncleanness. And this uncleanness is its contrariety unto the holiness of the Divine Nature, as represented unto us in the law. This defilement is in all men equally by nature; all are alike born in sin, and the pollution of it. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job xiv. 4.) And it is in all personally, in various degrees; some are more polluted with actual sins than others, but all are so in their degree and measure. •

This pollution of sin must be purged and taken away before our entrance into heaven; for no unclean thing shall enter into the kingdom of God. Sin must be destroyed in its nature, practice, power,

and effects, or we are not saved from it. This purification of sin is wrought in us initially and gradually in this life, and accomplished in death, when "the spirits of just men" are "made perfect." In a compliance with this work of God's grace toward them, whereby they purify themselves, consists one principal part of the obedience of believers in this world, and of the exercise of their faith.

The principal, internal, immediate, efficient cause of this purification of sins, is the blood of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all our sins." (1 John i. 7.) "The blood of Christ purgeth our consciences from dead works." (Heb. ix. 14.) "He washeth us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. i. 5.) And there is an external helping cause thereof; which is trials and afflictions, made effectual by the word, and accomplished in death.

But this way of purging sins by the blood of Christ is mysterious. There is no discerning of its glory but by spiritual light; no experience of its power but by faith. Hence it is despised and neglected by the most that yet outwardly profess the doctrine of the gospel. Men generally think, there are a thousand better ways for the purging of sin, than this by the blood of Christ, which they cannot understand. See Micah vi. 6, 7. It is mysterious in the application of it unto the souls and consciences of believers by the Holy Ghost. It is so in the spring of its efficacy, which is the oblation of it for a propitiation; and in its relation unto the new covenant, which first it establisheth, and then makes effectual unto this end. The work of it is gradual and unperceptible unto any thing but the eyes of faith, and diligent spiritual experience.

Again: it is so ordered by Divine Wisdom as strictly to require, to begin, excite, and encourage the utmost diligence of believers in a compliance with its efficacy unto the same end. What Christ did *for us*, he did without us, without our aid or concurrence. As God made us without ourselves, so Christ redeemed us; but what he doeth *in us*, he doeth also *by us*; what he works in a way of *grace*, we work in a way of *duty*. And our duty herein consists, as in the continual exercise of all gracious habits, renewing, changing, and transforming the soul into the likeness of Christ, (for he which hopes to see Him "purifieth himself as He is pure,") so also in universal, permanent, uninterrupted mortification unto the end, whereof we shall speak afterwards. This also renders the work more mysterious and difficult. The improvement of afflictions unto the same end is a principal part of the wisdom of faith; without which they can be of no spiritual use unto the souls of men.

This notion of the defilement of sin, and that of the necessity of its purification, were retained in the church of Rome; for they could not be lost, without not only a rejection of the scripture, but the stifling of natural conceptions about them, which are indelibly fixed in the consciences of men. But spiritual light into the glory of the thing itself, or the mystical purification of sin, with an experience of the power and efficacy of the blood of Christ, as applied unto the consciences of believers unto that end, by the Holy Ghost, were lost

amongst them. In vain shall we seek for any thing of this nature, either in their doctrine or their practice.

Wherefore, having lost the substance of this truth, and all experience of its power, to retain the use of its name, they have made sundry little images of it, creeping things, whereunto they ascribe the power of purging sin; such as holy water, pilgrimages, disciplines, masses, and various commutations. But they quickly found by experience, that these things would neither purify the heart nor pacify the consciences of sinners, any more than the blood of bulls or goats could do it under the law; yea, any more than the lustrations and expiations of sin amongst the Heathen could effect it. Wherefore they have at length formed a more stated and specious image of it, to serve all the turns of convinced sinners; and this is a purgatory after this life; that is, a subterraneous place and various means, where and whereby the souls of men are purged from all their sins, and made meet for heaven, when the Lord Christ thinks meet to send for them, or the Pope judges it fit to send them to him. Hereunto, let them pretend what they please, the people under their conduct do trust a thousand times more for the purging of their sins, than unto the blood of Christ. But it is only a cursed image of the virtue of it, set-up to draw-off the minds of poor sinners from seeking an interest in a participation of the efficacy of that blood for that end, which is to be obtained by faith alone. (Rom. iii. 25.)

Only they have placed this image behind the curtain of mortality, that the cheat of it might not be discovered. None who find themselves deceived by it, can come back to complain, or warn others to take care of themselves; and it was in an especial manner suited unto *their* delusion *who* lived in pleasures, or in the pursuit of unjust gain, without exercise of afflictions in this world. From these two sorts of persons, by this engine, they raised a revenue unto themselves, beyond that of kings or princes; for all the endowments of their religious houses and societies were but commutations for the abatement of the fire of this purgatory.

But whereas, in itself, it was a rotten post, that could not stand or subsist, they were forced to prop it with many other imaginations; for unto this end, to secure work for this purgatory, they joined the distinction of sins into *mortal and venial*; not as unto *their end* with respect unto faith and repentance, not as unto *the degrees of sin* with respect unto the aggravations, but as unto *the nature of them*; some of them being such,—namely, those that are *venial*,—as were capable a purging expiation after this life, though men die without any repentance of them. And when this was done, they have cast almost all the sins that can be named under this order: and hereon this image is become an engine to disappoint the whole doctrine of the gospel, and to precipitate secure sinners into eternal ruin. And, to strengthen this deceiving security, they have added another invention of a certain “storehouse of ecclesiastical merits;” the keys whereof are committed to the Pope, to make application of them, as he sees good, unto the ease and relief of them that are in this purgatory.



For whereas many of their church and communion have, as they say, done more good works than were needful for their salvation, (which they have received upon a due balance of commutative justice,) the surplusage is committed to the Pope, to commute with it for the punishment of their sins who are sent into purgatory to suffer for them ; than which they could have found out no engine more powerful to evacuate the efficacy of the blood of Christ, both as offered and as sprinkled, and therewith the doctrine of the gospel concerning faith and repentance.

Moreover, to give it farther countenance, (as one lie must be thatched with another, or it will quickly rain through,) they have fancied a separation to be made between guilt and punishment, so as that when the guilt is fully remitted and pardoned, yet there may punishment remain on the account of sin. For this is the case of them in purgatory : their sins are pardoned, so as that the guilt of them shall not bind them over to eternal damnation, though "the wages of sin is death ;" yet they must be variously punished for the sins that are forgiven. But as this is contradictory in itself, it being utterly impossible there should be any punishment, properly so called, but where there is guilt as the cause of it, so it is highly injurious both to the grace of God and blood of Christ, in procuring and giving out such a lame pardon of sins as should leave room for punishment next to that which is eternal.

These are some of the rotten props, which they have fixed on the minds of persons credulous and superstitious, terrified with guilt and darkness, to support this tottering deformed image, set-up in the room of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, to purge the souls and consciences of believers from sin.

But that whereby it is principally established and set-up, is the darkness, ignorance, guilt, fear, terror of conscience, accompanied with a love of sin, that the most among them are subject and obnoxious unto. Being disquieted, perplexed, and tormented with these things, and utterly ignorant of the true and only way of their removal and deliverance from them, they greedily embrace this sorry provision for their present ease and relief, [it] being accommodated unto the utmost that human or diabolical craft can extend unto, to abate their fear, ease their torments, and to give security unto their superstitious minds. And hereby it is become to be the life and soul of their religion, diffusing itself into all the parts and concerns of it, more trusted unto than either God, or Christ, or the gospel.

Spiritual light and experience, with the consequents of them in "peace with God," will safeguard the minds of believers from bowing down to this horrid image, though the acknowledgments of its divinity should be imposed on them with craft and force ; otherwise it will not be done : for, without this there will a strong inclination and disposition, arising from a mixture of superstitious fear and love of sin, possess the minds of men to close with this pretended relief and satisfaction. The foundation of our preservation herein lies in spiritual light, or an ability of mind, from supernatural illumination, to discern

the beauty, glory, and efficacy of the purging of our sins by the blood of Christ. When the glory of the wisdom and grace of God, of the love and grace of Christ, of the power of the Holy Ghost herein, is made manifest unto us, we shall despise all the paintings of this invention, Dagon will fall before the ark; and all these things do gloriously shine forth and manifest themselves unto believers in this mysterious way of purging all our sins by the blood of Christ.

Herein will ensue an experience of the efficacy of this heavenly truth, in our own souls. There is no man whose heart and ways are cleansed by the blood of Christ, through the effectual application of it by the Holy Spirit, in the ordinance of the gospel, but he hath or may have a refreshing experience of it in his own soul; and, by the power which is communicated therewith, he is stirred up unto all that exercise of faith, and all those duties of obedience, whereby the work of purifying and cleansing the whole person may be carried on toward perfection. See 2 Cor. vii. 1; 1 Thess. v. 23; 1 John iii. 3. And he who is constantly engaged in that work with success, will see the folly and vanity of any other pretended way for the purging of sins here or hereafter.

The consequent of these things is "peace with God;" for they are assured pledges of our justification and acceptance with him; and, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God:" (Rom. v. 1 :) and where this is attained by the gospel, the whole fabric of purgatory falls to the ground; for it is built on these foundations,—that no assurance of the love of God or of a justified state can be obtained in this life; for if it may be so, there can be no use of purgatory. This then will assuredly keep the souls of believers in a contempt of that which is nothing but a false relief for sinners, under disquietment of mind for want of peace with God.

SECT. XI. Some other instances of the same abomination I shall yet mention, but with more brevity; and sundry others must at present be passed over without a discovery.

It is granted among all Christians, that *all our helps, our relief, our deliverance from sin, Satan, and the world, are from Christ alone.*—This is included in all his relations unto the church, in all his offices and the discharge of them, and is the express doctrine of the gospel. It is no less generally acknowledged, at least the scripture is no less clear and positive in it, that *we receive and derive all our supplies of relief from Christ by faith.*—Other ways of the participation of any thing from him, the scripture knoweth not. Wherefore it is our duty on all occasions to apply ourselves unto him, by faith, for all supplies, reliefs, and deliverances. But these men can find no life nor power herein; at least, if they grant that somewhat might be done this way, yet they know not how to do it, being ignorant of the life of faith and the due exercise of it. They must have a way more ready and easy, exposed to the capacities and abilities of all sorts of persons, good and bad, yea, that will serve the turn of the worst of men unto this end. An image therefore must be set up for common use, instead of this spiritual application unto Christ for relief; and

this is the making of the sign of the cross. Let a man but make the sign of the cross on his forehead, his breast, or the like, (which he may as easily do as take up or cast away a straw,) and there is no more required to engage Christ unto his assistance at any time. And the virtues which they ascribe hereunto are innumerable; but this also is an idol, a teacher of lies, invented and set up for no other end, but to satisfy the carnal minds of men with a presumptuous supposition, in the neglect of the spiritually-laborious exercise of faith. An experience of the work of faith in the derivation of all supplies of spiritual life, grace, and strength, with deliverance and supplies, from Jesus Christ, will secure believers from giving heed unto this trifling deceit.

SECT. XII. One thing more, amongst many others of the same sort, may be mentioned; it is a notion of truth which derives from the light of nature, that *those who approach unto God in divine worship, should be careful that they be pure and clean, without any offensive defilements.*—This the Heathen themselves give testimony unto, and God confirmed it in the institutions of the law. But what are these defilements and pollutions which make us unmeet to approach unto the presence of God, how and by what means we may be purified and cleansed from them, the gospel alone declares. And it doth, in opposition unto all other ways and means of it, plainly reveal, that it is by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon our consciences, so to purge them from “dead works, that we may serve the living God.” See Heb. ix. 14; x. 19—22. But this is a thing mysterious; nothing but spiritual light and saving faith can direct us herein. Men destitute of them could never attain an experience of purification in the way. Wherefore they retained the notion of truth itself, but made an image of it for their use, with a neglect of the thing itself. And this was the most ludicrous that could be imagined, namely, the sprinkling of themselves and others with what they call *holy water*, when they go into the places of sacred worship; which yet also they borrowed from the Pagans. So stupid and sottish are the minds of men, so dark and ignorant of heavenly things, that they have suffered their souls to be deceived and ruined by such vain, superstitious trifles!

This discourse hath already proceeded unto a greater length than was at first intended; and would be so much more, should we look into all parts of this “chamber of imagery,” and expose to view all the abominations in it. I shall therefore put a close unto it, in one or two instances, wherein the church of Rome doth boast itself as retaining the truth and power of the gospel in a peculiar manner; whereas, in very deed, they have destroyed them, and set up corrupt images of their own, in their stead.

SECT. XIII. The first of these is *the doctrine and grace of mortification.*—That this is not only an important evangelical duty, but also of indispensable necessity unto salvation, all who have any thing of Christian religion in themselves must acknowledge.

It is also clearly determined in the scripture, both what is the

nature of it, with its causes, and in what acts and duties it doth consist. For it is frequently declared to be the crucifying of the body of sin, with all the lusts thereof. For mortification must be the bringing of something to death; and this is sin: and the dying of sin consists in the casting out of all vicious habits and inclinations arising from the original depravation of nature. It is the weakening and graduate extirpation or destruction of them, in their roots, principles, and operations; whereby the soul is set at liberty to act universally from the contrary principle of spiritual life and grace.

The means, on the part of Christ, whereby this is wrought and effected in believers, is the communication of his Spirit unto them, to make an effectual application of the virtue of his death, unto the death of sin; for it is by his Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the flesh, and the flesh itself, and that as we are implanted by him into the likeness of the death of Christ. By virtue thereof, we are crucified, and made dead unto sin; in the declaration of which things the scripture doth abound.

The means of it, on the part of believers, is the exercise of faith in Christ, as crucified; whereby they derive virtue from him for the crucifying of the body of death. And this exercise of faith is always accompanied with diligence and perseverance in all holy duties of prayer, with fasting, godly sorrow, daily-renewed repentance, with a continual watch against all the advantages of sin.

Herein consists principally that spiritual warfare and conflict that believers are called unto; this is all *the killing work* which the gospel requires. That of *killing other men for religion* is of a later date, and another original. And there is nothing in the way of their obedience, wherein they have more experience of the necessity, power, and efficacy of the graces of the gospel.

This principle of truth concerning the necessity of mortification is retained in the church of Rome; yea, she pretends highly unto it, above any other Christian society. The mortification of their devotionists is one of the principal arguments which they plead to draw unwary souls over unto their superstition. Yet, in the height of their pretences unto it, they have lost all experience of its nature, with the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ therein, and have therefore framed an image of it unto themselves. For,

1. They place the eminency and height of it in *a monastical life, and pretended retirement from the world*.—But this may be, hath been, in all or the most, without the least real work of mortification in their souls. For there is nothing required in the strictest rules of these monastic votaries, but may be complied withal, without the least effectual operation of the Holy Spirit in their minds, in the application of the virtue of the death of Christ unto them. Besides, the whole course of life, which they commend under this name, is neither appointed in, nor approved by, the gospel. And some of those who have been most renowned for their severities therein, were men of blood, promoting the cruel slaughter of multitudes of Christians upon the account of their profession of the gospel, in whom

there could be no one evangelical grace ; for “no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” (1 John iii. 15.)

2. The ways and means which they prescribe and use for the attaining of it, are such as are no way directed unto by the divine wisdom of Christ in the scripture ; such as *multiplied confessions to priests, irregular, ridiculous fastings, penances, self-macerations of the body, unlawful vows, self-devised rules of discipline and habits, with the like trinkets innumerable.*—Hence, whatever their design be, they may say of it in the issue, what Aaron said of his idol, “I cast the gold into the fire, and there came out this calf ;” (Exod. xxxii. 24 ; ) they have brought forth only an image of mortification, diverting the minds of men from seeking after that which is really and spiritually so. And under this pretence they have formed a state and condition of life, that hath filled the world with all manner of sins and wickedness ; and many of those who have attained unto some of the highest degrees of this mortification, on their principles, and by the means designed unto that end, have been made ready thereby for all sorts of wickedness.

Wherefore the mortification which they retain, and whereof they boast, is nothing but a wretched image of that which is truly so, substituted in its room, and embraced by such as had never attained any experience of the nature or power of gospel-grace in the real mortification of sin.

SECT. XIV. The same is to be said concerning *good works* ; the second evangelical duty whereof they boast.—The necessity of these good works unto salvation, according unto men’s opportunities and abilities, is acknowledged by all ; and the glory of our profession in this world consisteth in our abounding in them. But their principle, their nature, their motives, their use, their ends, are all declared and limited in the scripture, whereby they are distinguished from what may seem materially the same in those which may be wrought by unbelievers.

In brief : they are the acts and duties of true believers only ; and they are in them effects of divine grace, or the operation of the Holy Ghost ; for “they are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that they should walk in them.” (Eph. ii. 10.) But the principal mystery of their glory, which the scripture insists upon, is, that although they are necessary, *as a means unto the salvation of believers*, yet are they utterly *excluded from any influence unto the justification of sinners* ; so there was never any work evangelically good, performed by any, who were not before freely justified.

Unto these good works, those with whom we have to do lay a vehement claim, as though *they* were the only patrons of them, and pleaders for them. But they have also excluded them out of Christian religion, and set up a deformed image of them, in defiance of God, of Christ, and the gospel. For the works they plead for, are such as so far proceed from their own free-will, as to render them meritorious in the sight of God. They have confined them partly unto acts of

superstitious devotion, partly unto those of charity, and principally unto those that are not so ; such are the building of monasteries, nunneries, and such pretended religious houses, for the maintenance of swarms of monks and friars, filling the world with superstition and debauchery. They make them meritorious, satisfactory, (yea, some of them, which they call of *supererogation*, “above all that God requireth of us,”) and the causes of our justification before God. They ascribe unto them a condignity of the heavenly reward, making it of works, and so not of grace, with many other defiling imaginations ; but whatever is done from these principles, and for these ends, is utterly foreign unto those good works which the gospel enjoineth, as a part of our new or evangelical obedience. But having, as in other cases, lost all sense and experience of the power and efficacy of the grace of Christ, in working believers unto this duty of obedience, unto the glory of God, and benefit of mankind, they have set up the image of them, in defiance of Christ, his grace, and his gospel.

These are some of the abominations which are portrayed on the walls of “the chamber of imagery” in the church of Rome ; and more will be added in the consideration of the “image of jealousy” itself, which, God willing, shall ensue in another way.

These are the shadows which they betake themselves unto, in the loss of spiritual light to discern the truth and glory of the mystery of the gospel, and the want of an experience of their power and efficacy unto all the ends of the life of God in their own minds and souls. And although they are all of them expressly condemned in the letter of the scripture, which is sufficient to secure the minds of true believers from the admission of them ; yet their establishment, against all pleas, pretences, and force, for a compliance with them, depends on their experience of the power of every gospel-truth unto its proper end, in communicating unto us the grace of God, and transforming our minds into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.

THE CURE OF MELANCHOLY AND OVERMUCH  
SORROW

BY

FAITH AND PHYSIC.

SERMON XI.

BY THE REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PRESERVATIVES AGAINST MELANCHOLY  
AND OVERMUCH SORROW ?

*Lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch  
sorrow.*—2 Corinthians ii. 7.

THE brevity of a sermon not allowing me time for any unnecessary work, I shall not stay to open the context, nor to inquire whether the person here spoken of be the same that is condemned for incest in 1 Cor. v., or some other; nor whether Chrysostom had good tradition for it, that it was a doctor of the church, or made such after his sin; nor whether the late expositor\* be in the right, who thence gathers that he was one of the bishops of Achaia, and that it was a synod of bishops that were to excommunicate him; who yet held that every congregation then had a bishop, and that he was to be excommunicated in the congregation, and that the people should not have followed or favoured such a teacher; it would have been no schism or sinful separation to have forsaken him. All that I now intend, is to open this last clause of the verse, which gives the reason why the censured sinner, being penitent, should be forgiven and comforted, namely, “lest he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow;” as it includeth these three doctrines which I shall handle all together; namely,—

I. *That sorrow, even for sin, may be overmuch.*

II. *That overmuch sorrow swalloweth one up.*

III. *Therefore it must be resisted and assuaged by necessary comfort, both by others, and by ourselves.*

In handling these, I shall observe this order: I. I shall show you *when sorrow is overmuch.* II. *How overmuch sorrow doth swallow a man up.* III. *What are the causes of it.* IV. *What is the cure.*

I. It is too notorious that *overmuch sorrow for sin* is not the ordinary case of the world. A stupid, blockish disposition is the common cause of men’s perdition. The plague of a hard heart and seared

\* DR. HAMMOND.

conscience keeps most from all due sense of sin, or danger, or misery, and of all the great and everlasting concerns of their guilty souls. A dead sleep in sin doth deprive most of the use of sense and understanding. They do some of the outward acts of religion, as in a dream; they are vowed to God in baptism by others, and they profess to stand to it themselves; they go to church, and say over the words of the Creed, and Lord's Prayer, and Commandments; they receive the Lord's supper; and all as in a dream! They take on them to believe, that sin is the most hateful thing to God and hurtful to man, and yet they live in it with delight and obstinacy; they dream that they repent of it, when no persuasion will draw them to forsake it, and while they hate them that would cure them, and will not be as bad and mad as they who feel in them any effectual sorrow for what is past, or effectual sense of their present badness, or effectual resolution for a new and holy life. They dream that there is a judgment, a heaven, and a hell; but would they not be more affected with things of such unspeakable consequence, if they were awake? Would they be wholly taken up with the matters of the flesh and world, and scarce have a serious thought or word of eternity, if they were awake? O how sleepily and senselessly do they think, and talk, and hear of the great work of man's redemption by Christ, and of the need of justifying and sanctifying grace, and of the joys and miseries of the next life! and yet they say that they believe them! When we preach or talk to them of the greatest things, with the greatest evidence, and plainness, and earnestness that we can, we speak as to the dead, or to men asleep: they have ears, and hear not; nothing goeth to their hearts. One would think that a man that reads in scripture, and believes the everlasting glory offered, and the dreadful punishment threatened, and the necessity of holiness to salvation, and of a Saviour to deliver us from sin and hell, and how sure and near such a passage into the unseen world is to us all, should have much ado to moderate and bear the sense of such overwhelming things. But most men so little regard or feel them, that they have neither time nor heart to think of them as their concern, but hear of them as of some foreign land, where they have no interest, and which they never think to see. Yea, one would think, by their senseless neglect of preparation, and their worldly minds and lives, that they were asleep or in jest, when they confess that they must die; and that, when they lay their friends in the grave, and see the skulls and bones cast up, they were but all this while in a dream, or did not believe that their turn is near. Could we tell how to waken sinners, they would come to themselves, and have other thoughts of these great things, and show it quickly by another kind of life: awakened reason could never be so befuddled and besotted as we see the wicked world to be. But God hath an awakening day for all, and he will make the most senseless soul to feel, by grace or punishment.

And because a hardened heart is so great a part of the malady and misery of the unregenerate, and a soft and tender heart is much of the new nature promised by Christ, many awakened souls under the



work of conversion think they can never have sorrow enough, and that their danger lies in hard-heartedness, and they never fear overmuch sorrow till it hath swallowed them up; yea, though there be too much of other causes in it, yet if any of it be for sin, they then cherish it as a necessary duty, or at least perceive not the danger of excess; and some think those to be the best Christians who are most in doubts, and fears, and sorrows, and speak almost nothing but uncomfortable complaints; but this is a great mistake.

1. *Sorrow is overmuch when it is fed by a mistaken cause.*—All is too much where none is due; and great sorrow is too much when the cause requireth but less.

If a man thinketh that somewhat is a duty which is no duty, and then sorrow for omitting it, such sorrow is all too much, because it is undue, and caused by error. Many I have known that have been greatly troubled, because they could not bring themselves to that length or order of meditation, for which they have neither ability nor time; and many, because they could not reprove sin in others, when prudent instruction and intimation was more suitable than reproof. And many are troubled because, in their shops and callings, they think of any thing but God,—as if our outward business must have no thoughts.

Superstition always breeds such sorrows, when men make themselves religious duties which God never made them, and then come short in the performance of them. Many dark souls are assaulted by the erroneous, and told that they are in a wrong way, and they must take-up some error as a necessary truth; and so are cast into perplexing difficulties, and perhaps repent of the truth which they before owned. Many fearful Christians are troubled about every meal that they eat, about their clothes, their thoughts and words, thinking or fearing that all is sinful which is lawful, and that unavoidable infirmities are heinous sins. All such as these are troubles and sorrows without cause, and therefore overmuch.

2. *Sorrow is overmuch when it hurteth and overwhelmeth nature itself, and destroyeth bodily health or understanding.*—Grace is the due qualification of nature, and duty is the right employment of it; but neither of them must destroy it. As civil, and ecclesiastic, and domestic government are for edification, and not for destruction, so also is personal self-government. God will have mercy, and not sacrifice; and he that would not have us kill or hurt our neighbour on pretence of religion, would not have us destroy or hurt ourselves; being bound to love our neighbour but as ourselves. As fasting is a duty no further than it tendeth to some good, as to express or exercise true humiliation, or to mortify some fleshly lust, &c., so is it with sorrow for sin; it is too much when it doth more hurt than good: but of this next.

II. When *sorrow swalloweth-up the sinner*, it is overmuch, and to be restrained: as,

1. *The passions of grief and trouble of mind do oft overthrow the sober and sound use of reason.*—So that a man's judgment is corrupted

and perverted by it, and is not in that case to be trusted; as a man in raging anger, so one in fear or great trouble of mind, thinks not of things as they are, but as his passion represents them. About God and religion, and about his own soul and his actions, or about his friends or enemies, his judgment is perverted, and usually false; and, like an inflamed eye, thinks all things of the colour which is like itself. When it perverteth reason, it is overmuch.

2. *Overmuch sorrow disableth a man to govern his thoughts; and ungoverned thoughts must needs be both sinful and very troublesome.*—Grief carrieth them away as in a torrent: you may almost as easily keep the leaves of trees in quietness and order in a blustering wind, as the thoughts of one in troubling passions. If reason would stop them from perplexing subjects, or turn them to better and sweeter things, it cannot do it; it hath no power against the stream of troubling passions.

3. *Overmuch sorrow would swallow-up faith itself, and greatly hindereth its exercise.*—They are matters of unspeakable joy which the gospel calleth us to believe; and it is wonderful hard for a grieved, troubled soul to believe any thing that is matter of joy; much less, of so great joy as pardon and salvation are. Though it dare not flatly give God the lie, it hardly believes his free and full promises, and the expressions of his readiness to receive all penitent, returning sinners. Passionate grief serveth to feel somewhat contrary to the grace and promises of the gospel; and that feeling hinders faith.

4. *Overmuch sorrow yet more hindereth hope.*—When men think that they do believe God's word, and that his promises are all true to others, yet cannot they hope for the promised blessings to themselves. Hope is that grace by which a soul that believeth the gospel to be true, doth comfortably expect that the benefits promised shall be its own; it is an applying act. The first act of faith saith, "The gospel is true, which promiseth grace and glory through Christ." The next act of faith saith, "I will trust my soul and all upon it, and take Christ for my Saviour and Help." And then hope saith, "I hope for this salvation by him." But melancholy, overwhelming sorrow and trouble, is as great an adversary to this hope, as water is to fire, or snow to heat. Despair is its very pulse and breath. Fain such would have hope, but they cannot. All their thoughts are suspicious and misgiving, and they can see nothing but danger and misery, and a helpless state. And when hope, which is the anchor of the soul, is gone, what wonder if they be continually tossed with storms?

5. *Overmuch sorrow swalloweth-up all comfortable sense of the infinite goodness and love of God, and thereby hindereth the soul from loving him.*—And in this it is an adversary to the very life of holiness. It is exceeding hard for such a troubled soul to apprehend the goodness of God at all; but much harder to judge that he is good and amiable to him. But as a man that in the deserts of Libya is scorched with the violent heats of the sun, and is ready to die with drought and faintness, may confess that the sun is the life of the earth, and a blessing to mankind, but it is misery and death to him;

even so these souls, overwhelmed with grief, may say that God is good to others, but he seems an enemy to them, and to seek their destruction. They think he hateth them, and hath forsaken them; and how can they love such a God, who, they think, doth hate them, and resolve to damn them, and hath decreed them to it from eternity, and brought them into the world for no other end? They that can hardly love an enemy that doth but defame them, or oppress and wrong them, will more hardly love a God that, they believe, will damn them, and hath remedilessly appointed them thereto.

6. And then it must needs follow, that *this distemper is a false and injurious judge of all the word and works of God, and of all his mercies and corrections.*—Whatever such an one reads or hears, he thinks it all makes against him: every sad word and threatening in scripture, he thinks, meaneth him, as if it named him. But the promises and comforts he hath no part in, as if he had been by name excepted. All God's mercies are extenuated and taken for no mercies, as if God intended them all but to make his sin the greater, and to increase his heavy reckoning and further his damnation. He thinks God doth but sugar-over poison to him, and give him all in hatred, and not in any love, with a design to sink him the deeper in hell. And if God correct him, he supposeth that it is but the beginning of his misery, and God doth torment him before the time.

7. And by this you see that *it is an enemy to thankfulness.*—It rather reproacheth God for his mercies, as if they were injuries, than giveth him any hearty thanks.

8. And by this you may see, that *this distemper is quite contrary to the joy in the Holy Ghost.*—Yea, and the peace in which God's kingdom much consisteth. Nothing seemeth joyful unto such distressed souls. Delighting in God, and in his word and ways, is the flower and life of true religion. But these that I speak of can delight in nothing,—neither in God, nor in his word, nor any duty. They do it, as a sick man eateth his meat,—for mere necessity, and with some loathing and averseness.

9. And all this showeth us, that *this disease is much contrary to the very tenor of the gospel.*—Christ came as a Deliverer of the captives, a Saviour to reconcile us to God, and bring us glad tidings of pardon and everlasting joy. Where the gospel was received, it was great rejoicing, and so proclaimed by angels and by men. But all that Christ hath done, and purchased, and offered, and promised, seems nothing but matter of doubt and sadness to this disease.

10. Yea, *it is a distemper which greatly advantageth Satan to cast-in blasphemous thoughts of God, as if he were bad, and a hater and destroyer even of such as fain would please him.*—The design of the devil is to describe God to us as like himself, who is a malicious enemy, and delighteth to do hurt. And if all men hate the devil for his hurtfulness, would he not draw men to hate and blaspheme God, if he could make men believe that he is more hurtful? The worshipping [of] God, as represented by an image, is odious to him, because it seems to make him like such a creature as that image representeth:

how much more blasphemous is it to feign him to be like the malicious devils! Diminutive, low thoughts of his goodness, as well as of his greatness, is a sin which greatly injureth God, as if you should think that he is no better or trustier than a father or a friend; much more, to think him such as distempered souls imagine him. You would wrong his ministers, if you should describe them, as Christ doth the false prophets, as hurtful thorns, and thistles, and wolves: and is it not worse to think far worse than this of God?

11. *This overmuch sorrow doth unfit men for all profitable meditation.*—It confounds their thoughts, and turneth them to hurtful distractions and temptations; and the more they muse, the more they are overwhelmed. And it turneth prayer into mere complaint, instead of child-like, believing supplications.

It quite undisposeth the soul to God's masses; \* and especially to a comfortable sacramental communion, and fetcheth greater terror from it, lest unworthy receiving will but hasten and increase their damnation.

And it rendereth preaching and counsel too oft unprofitable. Say what you will that is never so convincing, either it doth not change them, or is presently lost.

12. *And it is a distemper which maketh all sufferings more heavy.*—As falling upon a poor diseased soul, and having no comfort to set against it; and it maketh death exceeding terrible, because they think it will be the gate of hell: so that life seemeth burdensome to them, and death terrible. They are a-weary of living, and afraid of dying. Thus overmuch sorrow swalloweth up.

III. QUESTION. "What are the *causes* and *cure* of it?"

ANSWER I. With very many there is a great part of the CAUSE in distemper, weakness, and diseasedness of the body; and by it the soul is greatly disabled to any comfortable sense. But the more it ariseth from such natural necessity, it is the less sinful and less dangerous to the soul; but never the less troublesome, but the more.

Three diseases cause overmuch sorrow:—

1. Those that consist in such violent pain as natural strength is unable to bear. But this, being usually not very long, is not now to be chiefly spoken of.

2. A natural passionateness, and weakness of that reason that should quiet passion. It is too frequent a case with aged persons that are much debilitated, to be very apt to offence and passion; and children cannot choose but cry when they are hurt. But it is most troublesome and hurtful in too many women, (and some men,) who are so easily troubled and hardly quieted, that they have very little power on themselves. Even many that fear God, and that have very sound understandings and quick wits, have almost no more power against troubling passions, anger and grief, but especially fear, than they have of any other persons.

Their very natural temper is a strong disease, of troubling sorrow, fear, and displeas'dness. They that are not melancholy, are yet of so childish, and sick, and impatient a temper, that one thing or other is

\* Though this word is capable of a good meaning, yet it may be a misprint for *mercies*.—EDIT.

still either discontenting, grieving, or affrighting them. They are like an aspen leaf, still shaking with the least motion of the air. The wisest and most patient man cannot please and justify such an one: a word, yea, or a look, offendeth them; every sad story or news or noise affrighteth them: and as children must have all that they cry for before they will be quiet, so is it with too many such. The case is very sad to those about them, but much more to themselves. To dwell with the sick in the house of mourning, is less uncomfortable. But yet, while reason is not overthrown, the case is not remediless nor wholly excusable.

3. But when the brain and imagination are crazed, and reason partly overthrown, by the disease called "melancholy," this maketh the cure yet more difficult; for commonly it is the foresaid persons, whose natural temper is timorous and passionate, and apt to discontent and grief, who fall into crazedness and melancholy: and the conjunction of both, the natural temper and the disease, doth increase the misery.

The signs of such diseasing melancholy, I have often elsewhere described. As,

1. The trouble and disquiet of the mind doth then become a settled habit. They can see nothing but matter of fear and trouble. All that they hear or do, doth feed it; danger is still before their eyes. All that they read and hear makes against them; they can delight in nothing. Fearful dreams trouble them when they sleep, and distracted thoughts do keep them long waking. It offends them to see another laugh or be merry. They think that every beggar's case is happier than theirs. They will hardly believe, that any one else is in their case; when some two or three in a week, or a day, come to me in the same case, so like that you would think it were the same person's case which they all express. They have no pleasure in relations, friends, estate, or any thing. They think that God hath forsaken them, and that the day of grace is past, and that there is no more hope. They say, they cannot pray; but howl and groan, and God will not hear them. They will not believe that they have any sincerity and grace. They say, they cannot repent, they cannot believe, but that their hearts are utterly hardened. Usually they are afraid lest they have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. In a word, fears, and troubles, and almost despair, are the constant temper of their minds.

2. If you convince them, that they have some evidences of sincerity, and that their fears are causeless and injurious to themselves and unto God, and they have nothing to say against it; yet either it takes off none of their trouble, or else it returneth the next day: for the cause remaineth in their bodily disease; quiet them a hundred times, and their fears a hundred times return.

3. Their misery is, that what they think they cannot choose but think. You may almost as well persuade a man not to shake in an ague, or not to feel when he is pained, as persuade them to cast away their self-troubling thoughts, or not to think all the enormous con-

founding thoughts, as they do. They cannot get them out of their heads, night or day. Tell them that they must forbear long musings, which disturb them; and they cannot. Tell them that they must cast out false imaginations out of their minds, when Satan casts them in, and must turn their thoughts to something else; and they cannot do it. Their thoughts, and troubles, and fears are gone out of their power; and the more, by how much the more melancholy and crazed they are.

4. And, when they are grown to this, usually they seem to feel something beside themselves, as it were, speaking in them, and saying this and that to them, and bidding them do this or that; and they will tell you, "Now it saith this or that," and tell you when and what it hath said to them; and they will hardly believe how much of it is the disease of their own imagination.

5. In this case they are exceeding prone to think they have revelations; and whatever comes into their minds, they think some revelation brought it thither. They use to say, "This text of scripture at such a time was set upon my mind, and that text at another time was set on my mind;" when oft the sense that they took them in was false, or a false application of it made to themselves; and perhaps several texts applied to contrary conclusions, as if one gave them hope, and another contradicted it.

And some of them hereupon are very prone to prophecies, and verily believe that God hath foretold them this or that, till they see that it cometh not to pass; and then they are ashamed.

And many of them turn heretics, and take up errors in religion, believing verily that God believed \* them, and set such things upon their minds: and some of them that were long troubled, get quietness and joy by such changes of their opinions, thinking that now they are in God's way, which they were out of all this while, and therefore it was that they had no comfort. Of these I have known divers persons comforted, that have fallen into the clean contrary opinions: some have turned Papists and superstitious, and some have run too far from Papists; and some have had comfort by turning Anabaptists, some Antinomians, some contrarily called Arminians, some Perfectionists, some Quakers; and some have turned from Christianity itself to infidelity, and denied the life to come, and have lived in licentious uncleanness. But these melancholy heretics and apostates usually, by this, cast off their sadness, and are not the sort that I have now to deal with.

6. But the sadder, better sort, feeling this talk and stir within them, are oft apt to be confident that they are possessed by the devil, or at least bewitched, of which I will say more anon.

7. And most of them are violently haunted with blasphemous injections, at which they tremble; and yet cannot keep them out of their minds. Either they are tempted and haunted to doubt of the scripture, or Christianity, or the life to come, or to think some ill of

\* Should not this word be "delivered?"—EDIT.

God; and oft-times they are strangely urged, as by something in them, to speak some blasphemous word of God, or to renounce him; and they tremble at the suggestion, and yet it still followeth them; and some poor souls yield to it, and say some bad word against God; and then, as soon as it is spoken, somewhat within them saith, "Now thy damnation is sealed! thou hast sinned against the Holy Ghost! there is no hope."

8. When it is far gone, they are tempted to lay some law upon themselves,—never to speak more, or not to eat; and some of them have famished themselves to death.

9. And when it is far gone, they oft think that they have apparitions; and this and that likeness appeareth to them, especially lights in the night about their beds: and sometimes they are confident that they hear voices, and feel something touch or hurt them.

10. They fly from company, and can do nothing but sit alone and muse.

11. They cast off all business, and will not be brought to any diligent labour in their callings.

12. And when it cometh to extremity, they are weary of their lives, and strongly followed with temptations to make away [with] themselves; as if something within them were either urging them either to drown themselves, or cut their own throats, or hang themselves, or cast themselves headlong, which, alas! too many have done.

13. And if they escape this when it is ripe, they become quite distracted.

These are the doleful symptoms and effects of melancholy: and therefore how desirable is it to prevent them, or to be cured while it is but beginning, before they fall into so sad a state!

And here it is necessary that I answer the doubt, whether such persons be possessed with the devil or not, and how much of all this aforesaid is from him.

And I must tell the melancholy person that is sincere, that the knowledge of the devil's agency in his case may be more to his comfort than to his despair.

And, first, we must know what is meant by Satan's "possession" either of the body or the soul. It is not merely his local presence and abode in a man that is called his "possession;" for we know little of that, how far he is more present with a bad man than a good. But it is his exercising power on a man by such a stated effectual operation. As the Spirit of God is present with the worst, and maketh many holy motions to the souls of the impenitent; but he is a settled powerful agent in the soul of a believer, and so is said to dwell in such, and to possess them, by the habit of holiness and love: even so Satan maketh too frequent motions to the faithful; but he possesseth only the souls of the ungodly by predominant habits of unbelief and sensuality.

And so also he is permitted by God to inflict persecutions, and crosses, and ordinary diseases on the just; but when he is God's executioner of extraordinary plagues, especially on the head, depriving

men of sense and understanding, and working above the bare nature of the disease, this is called his "possession."

And as most evil motions on the soul have Satan for their father, and our own hearts as the mothers, so most or many bodily diseases are by Satan, permitted by God, though there be causes of them also in the body itself. And when our own miscarriages, and humours, and the season, weather, and accidents may be causes, yet Satan may by these be a superior cause.

And when his operations are such as we call a "possession," yet he may work by means and bodily dispositions; and sometimes he worketh quite above the power of the disease itself, as when the unlearned speak in strange languages, and when bewitched persons vomit iron, glass, &c. And sometimes he doth only work by the disease itself, as in epilepsies, madness, &c.

From all this it is easy to gather:—

1. That for Satan to possess the body is no certain sign of a graceless state; nor will this condemn the soul of any, if the soul itself be not possessed. Nay, there are few of God's children but, it is likely, are sometimes afflicted by Satan, as the executioner of God's correcting them, and sometimes of God's trials, as in the case of Job. Whatever some say to the contrary, it is likely that the prick in the flesh, which was Satan's messenger to buffet Paul, was some such pain as the stone, which yet was not removed (that we find) after thrice praying; but only he had a promise of "sufficient grace."

2. Satan's possession of an ungodly soul is the miserable case which is a thousand times worse than his possessing of the body. But every corruption or sin is not such a possession; for no man is perfect, without sin.

3. No sin proveth Satan's damnable possession of a man, but that which he loveth more than he hateth it, and which he had rather keep than leave, and wilfully keepeth.

4. And this is matter of great comfort to such melancholy honest souls, if they have but understanding to receive it,—that of all men none love their sin which they groan under so little as they; yea, it is the heavy burden of their souls. Do you love your unbelief, your fears, your distracted thoughts, your temptations to blasphemy? Had you rather keep them, than be delivered from them? The proud man, the ambitious, the fornicator, the drunkard, the gamester, the time-wasting gallants, that sit-out hours at cards and plays and idle chats, the gluttonous pleasers of the appetite: all these love their sins, and would not leave them; as Esau sold his birthright for one morsel, they will venture the loss of God, of Christ, and soul, and heaven, rather than leave a swinish sin. But is this your case? Do you so love your sad condition? You are weary of it, and heavy laden, and therefore are called to come to Christ for ease. (Matt. xi. 28, 29.)

5. And it is the devil's way, if he can, to haunt *those* with troubling temptations *whom* he cannot overcome with alluring and damning temptations. As he raiseth storms of persecution against them with-



out, as soon as they are escaping from his deceits ; so doth he trouble them within, as far as God permitteth him.

We deny not but Satan hath a great hand in the case of such melancholy persons ; for,

(1.) His temptations caused the sin which God corrects them for.

(2.) His execution usually is a cause of the distemper of the body.

(3.) And as a tempter, he is the cause of the sinful and troublesome thoughts, and doubts, and fears, and passions which the melancholy causeth. The devil cannot do what he will with us, but what we give him advantage to do. He cannot break open our doors, but he can enter if we leave them open. He can easily tempt a heavy phlegmatic body to sloth, a weak and choleric person to anger, a strong and sanguine man to lust, and one of a strong appetite to gluttony or to drunkenness, and vain sportful youth to idle plays, and gaming, and voluptuousness, when to others such temptations would have small strength. And so if he can cast you into melancholy, he can easily tempt you to overmuch sorrow and fear, and to distracting doubts and thoughts, and to murmur against God, and to despair, and still think that you are undone, undone ; and even to blasphemous thoughts of God ; or if it take not this way, then to fanatic conceits of revelation and a prophesying spirit.

6. But I add, that God will not impute his mere temptations to you, but to himself, be they never so bad, as long as you receive them not by the will, but hate them. Nor will he condemn you for those ill effects which are unavoidable from the power of a bodily disease, any more than he will condemn a man for raving thoughts or words in a fever, frenzy, or utter madness. But so far as reason yet hath power, and the will can govern passions, it is your fault if you use not the power, though the difficulty make the fault the less.

ANSWER II. But usually other causes go before this disease of melancholy, except in some bodies naturally prone to it ; and therefore, before I speak of the cure of it, I will briefly touch them.

And one of the most common causes is sinful impatience, discontents and cares proceeding from a sinful love of some bodily interest, and from a want of sufficient submission to the will of God, and trust in him, and taking heaven for a satisfying portion.

I must necessarily use all these words to show the true nature of this complicate disease of souls. The names tell you that it is a conjunction of many sins, which in themselves are of no small malignity ; and were they the predominant bent and habit of heart and life, they would be the signs of a graceless state. But while they are hated, and overcome not grace, but our heavenly portion is more esteemed, and chosen, and sought, than earthly prosperity, the mercy of God through Christ doth pardon it, and will at last deliver us from all. But yet it bescemeth even a pardoned sinner to know the greatness of his sin, that he may not favour it, nor be unthankful for forgiveness.

I will therefore distinctly open the parts of this sin, which bringeth many into dismal melancholy.

It is presupposed that God trieth his servants in this life with manifold afflictions; and Christ will have us bear the cross, and follow him in submissive patience. Some are tried with painful diseases, and some with wrong by enemies, and some with the unkindness of friends, and some with froward, provoking relatives and company, and some with slanders, and some with persecution, and many with losses, disappointments, and poverty.

1. And here impatience is the beginning of the working of the sinful malady. Our natures are all too regardful of the interest of the flesh, and too weak in bearing heavy burdens; and poverty hath those trials which full and wealthy persons, that feel them not, too little pity; especially in two cases:—

(1.) When men have not themselves only, but wives and children in want, to quiet.

(2.) And when they are in debt to others; which is a heavy burden to an ingenuous mind, though thievish borrowers make too light of it. In these straits and trials, men are apt to be too sensible and impatient. When they and their families want food, and raiment, and fire, and other necessaries to the body, and know not which way to get supply; when landlords, and butchers, and bakers, and other creditors, are calling for their debts, and they have it not to pay them; it is hard to keep all this from going too near the heart, and hard to bear it with obedient, quiet submission to God; especially for women, whose nature is weak, and liable to too much passion.

2. And this impatience turneth to a settled discontent and unquietness of spirit, which affecteth the body itself, and lieth all day as a load or continual trouble at the heart.

3. And impatience and discontent do set the thoughts on the rack with grief and continual cares, how to be eased of the troubling cause. They can scarce think of any thing else; and these cares do even feed upon the heart, and are to the mind as a consuming fever to the body.

4. And the secret root or cause of all this is the worst part of the sin, which is, too much love to the body and this world. Were nothing overloved, it would have no power to torment us. If ease and health were not overloved, pain and sickness would be the more tolerable. If children and friends were not overloved, the death of them would not overwhelm us with inordinate sorrow. If the body were not overloved, and worldly wealth and prosperity overvalued, it were easy to endure hard fare, and labour, and want, not only of superfluities and conveniences, but even of that which is necessary to health, yea, or life itself, if God will have it so; at least, to avoid vexations, discontents, and cares, and inordinate grief and trouble of mind.

5. There is yet more sin in the root of all, and that is, it showeth that our wills are yet too selfish, and not subdued to a due submission to the will of God, but we would be as gods to ourselves, and be at our own choosing, and must needs have what the flesh desireth. We want a due resignation of ourselves and all our concerns to God, and

live not as children, in due dependence on him for our daily bread, but must needs be the keepers of our own provision.

6. And this showeth that we be not sufficiently humbled for our sin; or else we should be thankful for the lowest state, as being much better than that which we deserved.

7. And there is apparently much distrust of God and unbelief in these troubling discontents and cares. Could we trust God as well as ourselves, or as we could trust a faithful friend, or as a child can trust his father, how quiet would our minds be in the sense of his wisdom, all-sufficiency, and love!

8. And this unbelief yet hath a worse effect than worldly trouble; it showeth that men take not the love of God and the heavenly glory for their sufficient portion. Unless they may have what they want or would have for the body,—this world; unless they may be free from poverty, and crosses, and provocations, and injuries, and pains; all that God hath promised them here or hereafter, even everlasting glory, will not satisfy them: and when God, and Christ, and heaven are not enough to quiet a man's mind, he is in great want of faith, hope, and love, which are far greater matters than food and raiment.

ANSWER III. Another great cause of such trouble of mind is the guilt of some great and wilful sin; when conscience is convinced, and yet the soul is not converted, sin is beloved and yet feared. God's wrath doth terrify them; and yet not enough to overcome their sin. Some live in secret fraud and robbery, and many in drunkenness, in secret fleshly lusts, either self-pollution or fornication; and they know that for such things "the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:" and yet the rage of appetite and of lust prevaleth, and they despair and sin; and while the sparks of hell fall on their consciences, it changeth neither heart nor life. There is some more hope of the recovery of these, than of dead-hearted or unbelieving sinners, who work uncleanness with greediness, as being past feeling, and blinded to defend their sins, and plead against holy obedience to God. Brutishness is not so bad as diabolism and malignity. But none of these are the persons spoken of in my text: their sorrow is *not overmuch* but *too little*, as long as it will not restrain them from their sin.

But yet if God convert these persons, the sins which they now live in may possibly hereafter plunge their souls into such depths of sorrow, in the review, as may swallow them up.

And when men truly converted yet dally with the bait, and renew the wounds of their consciences by their lapses, it is no wonder if their sorrows and terrors are renewed. Grievous sins have fastened so on the consciences of many, as have cast them into incurable melancholy and distraction.

ANSWER IV. But among people fearing God, there is yet another cause of melancholy, and of sorrowing overmuch; and that is ignorance and mistakes in matters which their peace and comforts are concerned in. I will name some particulars:—

1. One is ignorance of the tenor of the gospel or covenant of

grace: as some libertines, called Antimonians, more dangerously mistake it, who tell men that Christ hath repented and believed for them; and that they must no more question their faith and repentance, than they must question the righteousness of Christ: so many better Christians understand not, that the gospel is tidings of unspeakable joy to all that will believe it; and that Christ and life are offered freely to them that will accept him; and that no sins, how great or many soever, are excepted from pardon, to the soul that unfeignedly turneth to God by faith in Christ; that whoever will may freely take the water of life, and all that are weary and athirst are invited to come to him for ease and rest.

And they seem not to understand the condition of forgiveness, which is but true consent to the pardoning, saving (baptismal) covenant.

2. And many of them are mistaken about the use of sorrow for sin, and about the nature of hardness of heart. They think that if their sorrow be not so passionate as to bring forth tears and greatly to afflict them, they are not capable of pardon, though they should consent to all the pardoning covenant; and they consider not that it is not our sorrow for itself that God delighteth in, but it is the taking down of pride, and that so-much humbling sense of sin, danger, and misery, as may make us feel the need of Christ and mercy, and bring us unfeignedly to consent to be his disciples, and to be saved upon his covenant-terms. Be sorrow much or little, if it do this much, the sinner shall be saved.

And as to the length of God's sorrow, some think that the pangs of the new-birth must be a long-continued state; whereas we read in the scripture, that, by the penitent sinners, the gospel was still received speedily with joy, as being the gift of Christ, and pardon, and everlasting life. Humility and self-loathing must continue and increase; but our first great sorrows may be swallowed up with holy thankfulness and joy.

And as for hardness of heart, in scripture it is taken for such a stiff rebellious obstinacy, as will not be moved from their sins to obedience by any of God's commands or threats, and is called oft "an iron sinew," "a stiff neck," &c. But it is never taken from the mere want of tears or passionate sorrow in a man that is willing to obey. The hard-hearted are the rebellious. Sorrow even for sin may be overmuch, and a passionate woman or man may easily grieve and weep for the sin which they will not leave; but obedience cannot be too much.

3. And abundance are cast down by ignorance of themselves, not knowing the sincerity which God hath given them. Grace is weak in the best of us here; and little and weak grace is not very easily perceived, for it acteth weakly and unconstantly, and it is known but by its acts; and weak grace is always joined with too strong corruption; and all sin in heart and life is contrary to grace, and doth obscure it; and such persons usually have too little knowledge, and are too strange at home, and unskilful in examining and watching their hearts, and

keeping its accounts. And how can any, under all these hinderances, yet keep any full assurance of their own sincerity? If with much ado they get some assurances, neglect of duty or coldness in it, or yielding to temptation, or unconstancy in close obedience, will make them question all again, and ready to say it was all but hypocrisy: and a sad and melancholy frame of mind is always apt to conclude the worse, and hardly brought to see any thing that is good and tends to comfort.

4. And, in such a case, there are too few that know how to fetch comfort from bare probabilities, when they get not certainty; much less, from the mere offers of grace and salvation, even when they cannot deny but they are willing to accept them; and if none should have comfort but those that have assurance of their sincerity and salvation, despair would swallow up the souls of most, even of true believers.

5. And ignorance of other men increaseth the fears and sorrows of some. They think, by our preaching and writing, that we are much better than we are. And then they think that they are graceless, because they come short of our supposed measures; whereas if they dwelt with us and saw our failings, or knew us but as well as we know ourselves, or saw all our sinful thoughts and vicious dispositions written in our foreheads, they would be cured of this error.

6. And unskilful teachers do cause the griefs and perplexities of very many. Some cannot open to them clearly the tenor of the covenant of grace; some are themselves unacquainted with any spiritual, heavenly consolations; and many have no experience of any inward holiness, and renewal by the Holy Ghost, and know not what sincerity is, nor wherein a saint doth differ from an ungodly sinner. As wicked deceivers make good and bad to differ but a little, if not the best to be taken for the worst; so some unskilful men do place sincerity in such things as are not so much as duty; as the Papists, in their manifold inventions and superstitions; and many sects, in their unsound opinions.

And some unskilfully and unsoundly describe the state of grace, and tell you how far a hypocrite may go, so as unjustly discourageth and confoundeth the weaker sort of Christians, and cannot amend the mis-expression of their books or teachers.\* And too many teachers lay men's comforts, if not salvation, on controversies which are past their reach, and pronounce heresy and damnation against that which they themselves understand not. Even the Christian world, these one thousand three hundred, or one thousand two hundred years, is divided into parties, by the teachers' unskilful quarrels about words, which they took in several senses. Is it any wonder if the hearers of such are distracted?

IV. I have told you *the causes* of distracted sorrows, I am now to tell you *what is THE CURE*. But, alas! it is not so soon done as told; and I shall begin where the disease beginneth, and tell you both

\* One of my hearers fell distracted with reading some passages in Mr. Shepherd's "Sincere Believer," which were not justifiable or sound.

what the patient himself must do, and what must be done by his friends and teachers.

*FIRST. Look not on the sinful part of your troubles, either as better or worse than indeed it is.*

1. Too many persons, in their sufferings and sorrows, think they are only to be pitied; and take little notice of the sin that caused them, or that they still continue to commit: and too many unskilful friends and ministers do only comfort them, when a round chiding and discovery of their sin should be the better part of the cure. And if they were more sensible how much sin there is in their over-valuing the world and not trusting God, and in their hard thoughts of him, and their poor, unholy thoughts of his goodness, and in their undervaluing the heavenly glory, which should satisfy them in the most afflicted state, and in their daily impatiences, cares, and discontents, and in denying the mercies or grace received; this would do more to cure some, than words of comfort. When they say, as Jonah, "I do well to be angry!" and think that all their denials of grace, and distracting sorrows, and wrangling against God's love and mercy, are their duties, it is time to make them know how great sinners they are.

2. And yet when, as foolishly, they think that all these sins are marks of a graceless state, and that God will take the devil's temptations for their sins, and condemn them for that which they abhor, and take their very disease of melancholy for a crime; this also needs confutation and reprehension, that they may not by error cherish their passions or distress.

*SECONDLY. Particularly, give not way to a habit of peevish impatience.*—Though it is carnal love to somewhat more than to God and glory which is the damning sin, yet impatience must not pass for innocence. Did you not reckon upon sufferings and of bearing the cross, when you first gave up yourselves to Christ? and do you think it strange? Look for it; and make it your daily study to prepare for any trial that God may bring you to, and then it will not surprise you and overwhelm you. Prepare for the loss of children and friends, for the loss of goods, and for poverty and want. Prepare for slanders, injuries, or poisons; for sickness, pain, and death. It is your unpreparedness that maketh it seem unsufferable.

And remember that it is but a vile body that suffereth, which, you always knew, must suffer death and rot to dust; and, whoever is the instrument of your sufferings, it is God that trieth you by it; and when you think that you are only displeased with men, you are not guiltless of murmuring against God, or else his over-ruling hand would persuade you to submissive patience.

Especially make conscience of a settled discontent of mind. Have you not yet much better than you deserve? And do you forget how many years you have enjoyed undeserved mercy? Discontent is a continued resistance of God's disposing will,—that I say not, some rebellion against it. Your own wills rise up against the will of God. It is atheistical to think, that your sufferings are not by his provi-

dence; and dare you repine against God, and continue in such repining? To whom else doth it belong to dispose of you and all the world?

And when you feel distracting cares for your deliverances, remember that this is not trusting God. Care for your own duty, and obey his command; but leave it to him what you shall have: tormenting cares do but add to your afflictions. It is a great mercy of God, that he forbiddeth you these cares, and promiseth to care for you. Your Saviour himself hath largely, though gently, reprehended them; (Matt. vi. 25—34;) and told you how sinful and unprofitable they are, and that your Father knoweth what you need: and if he deny it you, it is for just cause; and if it be to correct you, it is yet to profit you; and if you submit to him and accept his gift, he will give you much better than he taketh from you, even Christ and everlasting life.

*THIRDLY. Set yourselves, more diligently than ever, to overcome the inordinate love of the world.*—It will be a happy use of all your troubles, if you can follow them up to the fountain, and find out what it is that you cannot bear the want or loss of, and consequently what it is that you overlove. God is very jealous, even when he loveth, against every idol that is loved too much, and with any of that love which is due to him. And if He take them all away, and tear them out of our hands and hearts, it is merciful, as well as just. I speak not this to those that are troubled only for want of more faith, and holiness, and communion with God, and assurance of salvation: these troubles might give them much comfort, if they understood aright from whence they come, and what they signify. For as impatient trouble under worldly crosses doth prove that a man loveth the world too much; so impatient trouble for want of more holiness and communion with God doth show, that such are lovers of holiness and of God. Love goeth before desire and grief. That which men love they delight in, if they have it; and mourn for want of it, and desire to obtain it. The will is the love: and no man is troubled for want of that which he would not have.

But the commonest cause of passionate melancholy is, at first, some worldly discontent and care: either wants, or crosses, or the fear of suffering, or the unsuitableness and provocation of some related to them, or disgrace, or contempt, do cast them into passionate discontent; and [then] self-will cannot bear the denial of something which they would have. And then when the discontent hath muddled and diseased a man's mind, temptations about his soul do come-in afterwards; and that which began only with worldly crosses doth after seem to be all about religion, conscience, or merely for sin or want of grace.

Why could you not patiently bear the words, the wrongs, the losses, the crosses that did befall you? Why made you so great a matter of these bodily, transitory things? Is it not because you overlove them? Were you not in good earnest when you called them "vanity," and covenanted to leave them to the will of God? Would

you have God let you alone in so great a sin as the love of the world, or giving any of his due to creatures? If God should not teach you what to love and what to set light by, and cure you of so dangerous a disease as a fleshly, earthly mind, he should not sanctify you and fit you for heaven. Souls go not to heaven, as an arrow is shot upward, against their inclination; but as fire naturally tendeth upward, and earth downward, to their like, so, when holy men are dead, their souls have a natural inclination upward. And it is their love that is their inclination: they love God, and heaven, and holy company, and their old godly friends, and holy works, even mutual love and the joyful praises of Jehovah. And this spirit and love is as a fiery nature, which carrieth them heavenward; and angels convey them not thither by force, but conduct them as a bride to her marriage, who is carried all the way by love.

And, on the other side, the souls of wicked men are of a fleshly, worldly inclination, and love not heavenly works and company, and have nothing in them to carry them to God. But they love worldly trash, and sensual, bestial delights, though they cannot enjoy them; as poor men love riches, and are vexed for want of what they love. And therefore it is no wonder if wicked souls do dwell with devils in the lower regions, and that they make apparitions here when God permits them; and if holy souls be liable to no such descent. Love is the soul's poise and spring, and carrieth souls downward or upward accordingly.

Away then with the earthly, fleshly love! How long will you stay here? And what will earth and flesh do for you? So far as it may be helpful to holiness and heaven, God will not deny it to submissive children; but *to overlove* is to turn from God, and is the dangerous malady of souls, and the poise that sinks them down from heaven. Had you learnt better to forsake all for Christ, and to account all but as "loss" and "dung," as Paul did, (Phil. iii. 8.) you could more easily bear the want of it. When did you see any live in discontent, and distracted with melancholy, grief, and cares, for want of dung or of a bubble, a shadow or a merry dream? If you will not otherwise know the world, God will otherwise make you know it to your sorrow.

**FOURTHLY.** *If you are not satisfied that God alone, Christ alone, heaven alone, is enough for you, as matter of felicity and full content, go, study the case better, and you may be convinced.*—Go, learn better your Catechism, and the principles of religion; and then you will learn to lay up a treasure in heaven, and not on earth; and to know that it is best to be with Christ, and that death which blasteth all the glory of the world, and equalleth the rich and the poor, is the common door to heaven or hell. And then conscience will not ask you, whether you have lived in pleasure or in pain, in riches or in want; but whether you have lived to God, or to the flesh, for heaven or for earth, and what hath had the pre-eminence in your hearts and lives. If there be shame in heaven, you will be ashamed when you are there, that you whined and murmured for want of any thing that the



flesh desired upon earth; and went thither grieving, because your bodies suffered here. Study more to live by faith on hope, on the unseen promised glory with Christ, and you will patiently endure any sufferings in the way.

**FIFTHLY.** *And study better how great a sin it is, to set our own wills and desires in a discontented opposition to the wisdom, will, and providence of God; and to make our wills, instead of his, as gods to ourselves.*—Doth not a murmuring heart secretly accuse God? All accusation of God hath some degree of blasphemy in it: for the accuser supposeth that somewhat of God is to be blamed; and if you dare not open your mouths to accuse him, let not the repinings of your hearts accuse him. Know how much of religion and holiness consisteth in bringing this rebellious self-will to a full resignation, submission, and conformity to the will of God. Till you can rest in God's will, you will never have rest.

**SIXTHLY.** *And study well how great a duty it is wholly to trust God, and our blessed Redeemer, both with soul and body, and all we have.*—Is not infinite power, wisdom, and goodness to be trusted? Is not a Saviour that came from heaven into flesh, to save sinners by such incomprehensible ways of love, to be trusted with that which he hath so dearly bought? To whom else will you trust? Is it yourselves, or your friends? Who is it that hath kept you all your lives, and done all for you that is done? Who is it that hath saved all the souls that are now in heaven? What is our Christianity but a life of faith? And is this your faith, to distract yourselves with cares and troubles, if God do not fit all his providences to your wills? "Seek first His kingdom and righteousness," and he hath promised that "all other things shall be added to you:" (Matt. vi. 33:) and "not a hair of your head shall perish;" for they are all, as it were, numbered. A sparrow falls not to the ground without his providence; (x. 29, 30;) and doth he set less by those that fain would please him? Believe God, and trust him; and your cares and fears and griefs will vanish.

O that you knew what a mercy and comfort it is for God to make it your duty to trust him! If he had made you no promise, this is equal to a promise: if he do but bid you trust him, you may be sure he will not deceive your trust. If a faithful friend that is able to relieve you, do but bid you trust him for your relief, you will not think that he will deceive you. Alas! I have friends that durst trust me with their estates and lives and souls, if they were in my power, and would not fear that I would destroy or hurt them, that yet cannot trust the God of infinite goodness with them, though he both command them to trust him, and promise that he will never fail them nor forsake them. It is the refuge of my soul, that quieteth me in my fears, that God, my Father and Redeemer, hath commanded me to trust him with my body, my health, my liberty, my estate; and, when eternity seemeth strange and dreadful to me, that he bids me trust him with my departing soul! Heaven and earth are upheld and maintained by him: and shall I distrust him?

OBJECTION. "But it is none but his children that he will save."

ANSWER. True : and all are his children that are truly willing to obey and please him. If you are truly willing to be holy, and to obey *his commanding will*, in a godly, righteous, and sober life, you may boldly rest in *his disposing will*, and rejoice in *his rewarding and accepting will* : for he will pardon all our infirmities through the merits and intercession of Christ.

SEVENTHLY. *If you would not be swallowed up with sorrow, swallow not the baits of sinful pleasure.*—Passions, and dulness, and defective duties have their degrees of guilt ; but it is *pleasing sin* that is the dangerous and deep-wounding sin. O fly from the baits of lust, and pride, and ambition, and covetousness, and an unruly appetite to drink or meat, as you would fly from guilt, and grief, and terror ! The more pleasure you have in sin, usually the more sorrow it will bring you ; and the more you know it to be sin, and conscience tells you that God is against it, and yet you will go on, and bear down conscience, the sharper will conscience afterward afflict you, and the harder will it be quieted when it is awakened to repentance. Yea, when a humbled soul is pardoned by grace, and believeth that he is pardoned, he will not easily forgive himself. The remembrance of the wilfulness of sinning, and how poor a bait prevaileth with us, and what mercies and motives we bore down, will make us so displeased and angry with ourselves, and so to loathe such naughty hearts, as will not admit a speedy or easy reconciliation. Yea, when we remember that we sinned against knowledge, even when we remembered that God did see us, and that we offended him, it will keep-up long doubts of our sincerity in the soul, and make us afraid lest still we have the same hearts, and should again do the same if we had the same temptations. Never look for joy or peace as long as you live in wilful and beloved sin. This thorn must be taken out of your hearts before you will be eased of the pain ; unless God leave you to a senseless heart, and Satan give you a deceitful peace, which doth but prepare for greater sorrow.

EIGHTHLY. But if none of the forementioned sins cause your sorrows, but they come from the mere perplexities of your mind, about religion, or the state of your souls, as fearing God's wrath for your former sins, or doubting of your sincerity and salvation ; then these foregoing reproofs are not meant to such as you ; but I shall now lay you down your proper remedies ; and that is, *the cure of that ignorance and those errors which cause your troubles.*

(I.) *Many are perplexed about controversies in religion*, while every contending party is confident, and hath a great deal to say, which to the ignorant seemeth like to truth, and which the hearer cannot answer ; and when each party tells them that *their way* is the only way, and threateneth damnation to them if they turn not to them. The Papists say, "There is no salvation out of our church ;" that is, to none but the subjects of the bishop of Rome. The Greeks condemn *them*, and extol their church ; and every party extols their own. Yea, some will convert them with fire and sword, and say, "Be of

our church, or lie in gaol ;” or make their church itself a prison, by driving-in the uncapable and unwilling.

QUESTION. “Among all these, how shall the ignorant know what to choose ?”

ANSWER. The case is sad ; and yet not so sad as the case of the far greatest part of the world, who are quiet in Heathenism or infidelity, or never trouble themselves about religion, but follow the customs of their countries, and the prince’s laws, that they may not suffer. It is some sign of a regard to God and your salvation, that you are troubled about religion, and careful to know which is the right : even controversy is better than atheistical indifference, that will be on the upper side, be it what it will. If you cast acorns or pulse among them, swine will strive for it ; or if it be carrion, dogs will fight for it : but if it be gold or jewels, dogs and swine will never strive for them, but tread them in the dirt ; but cast them before men, and they will be all together by the ears for them. Lawyers contend about law, and princes about dominion, which others mind not ; and religious persons strive about religion : and what wonder is this ? It doth but show that they value their souls and religion, and that their understandings are yet imperfect.

But if you will follow these plain directions, controversies need not break your peace :

#### DIRECTIONS.

**DIRECTION I.** *See that you be true to the light and law of nature, which all mankind is obliged to observe.*—If you had no scripture nor Christianity, nature, that is, the works of God do tell you that “there is a God, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb. xi. 6.) It tells you, that God is absolutely perfect in power, knowledge, and goodness ; and that man is a reasonable free agent made by him, and therefore is his own, and at his will and government. It tells you, that a man’s actions are not indifferent, but some things we ought to do, and some things we ought not to do ; and that virtue and vice, moral good and evil, do greatly differ ; and therefore that there is some universal law which obligeth us to the good, and forbids the evil ; and that this can be none but *the law of the Universal Governor*, who is God. It tells all men, that they owe this God their absolute obedience, because he is their most wise and absolute Ruler ; and that they owe him their chiefest love, because he is not only the chief Benefactor, but also most perfectly amiable in himself. It tells us, that he hath made us all sociable members of one world, and that we owe love and helps to one another. It tells us, that all this obedience to God can never be in vain, nor to our loss ; and it tells us that we must all die, and that fleshly pleasures and this transitory world will quickly leave us.

There is no more cause to doubt of all or any of this, than whether man be man. Be true to this much, and it will be a great help to all the rest.

**DIRECT. II.** *And as to God’s supernatural revelation, hold to*  
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*God's word, the sacred Bible, written by the special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as the sufficient records of it.*—It is not divine faith, if it rest not on divine revelation; nor is it divine obedience, which is not given to divine government or command. Man's word is to be believed—but as it deserveth—with a human faith; and man's law must be obeyed, according to the measure of his authority, with a human obedience: but these are far different from a divine. There is no universal ruler of all the world or church, but God; no man is capable of it, nor any council of men. God's law is only in nature, and in the holy scripture; and that being the law by which he will judge us, it is the law which is the only divine rule of our faith or judgment, our hearts and lives. Though all in the scripture is not of equal clearness or necessity, but a man may be saved that understandeth not a thousand sentences therein, yet all that is necessary to salvation is plainly there contained; and God's law is perfect to its designed use, and needeth no supplement of man's. Hold close to scripture-sufficiency, or you will never know what to hold to. Councils and canons are far more uncertain; and there is no agreement among their subjects, which of them are obligatory, and which not; nor any possible way to come to an agreement.

**DIRECT. III.** *Yet use with thankfulness the help of men, for the understanding and obeying [of] the word of God.*—Though lawyers, as such, have none of the legislative power, you need their help to understand the use of the law aright: and though no men have power to make laws for the church universal, yet men must be our teachers to understand and use the laws of God. We are not born with faith or knowledge; we know nothing but what is taught us, except what sense or intuition perceiveth, or reason gathereth from thence.

If you ask, “Whom must we learn of?” I answer, Of those that know, and have learned themselves. No name, or title, or relation, or habit, will enable any man to teach you that which he knoweth not himself.

1. Children must learn of their parents and tutors.
2. People must learn of their able, faithful pastors and catechizers.
3. All Christians must be teachers, by charitable helps to one another.

But teaching and law-making are two things. To teach another, is but to show him that same scientific evidence of truth by which the teacher knoweth it himself, that the learner may know it as he doth. To say, “You shall believe *that* is true *which* I say is true, and that this is the meaning of it,” is not teaching, but law-giving; and to believe such an one, is not to learn or know; though some human belief of our teachers is necessary to learners.

**DIRECT. IV.** *Take nothing as necessary to the being of Christianity, and to salvation which is not recorded in the scripture, and hath not been held as necessary by all true Christians in every age and place.*—Not that we must know men first to be true Christians, that by them we may know what Christian truth is; but the plain

scripture tells all men what Christianity is, and by that we know whom to take for Christians. But if any thing be new, and risen since the apostles' writing of the scripture, that can be no point essential to Christianity; else Christianity must be a mutable thing, and not the same now as it was heretofore; or else there were no Christians before this novelty in the world. The church were not the church, nor were any man a Christian, if they wanted any essential part of faith or practice.

But here take heed of sophisters' deceit: though nothing is necessary to salvation but [what] all sound Christians have still believed, yet all is not necessary, or true, or good, which all good Christians have believed or done; much less all which the tempted worse part have held: for though the essence of Christianity have been ever and every where the same, yet the opinions of Christians, and their mistakes and faults, have been none of their imitable faith or practice. Human nature is essentially the same in Adam, and in all men; but the diseases of nature are another thing. If all men have sin and error, so have all churches; their Christianity is of God, but the corruptions and maladies of Christians are not. You must hold nothing but what Christians of old have held as received from God's word; but because they have all some faults and errors, you must not hold and do all those.

**DIRECT. v.** *Maintain the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, with all true Christians, as such, and live in love in the communion of saints.*—That is, with them that live in the belief, and in holy obedience to the Christian faith and law. By their fruits you shall know them. The societies of malignants, who suppress true practical knowledge and piety, and hate the best men, and cherish wickedness, and bloodily persecute those that in conscience obey not their usurpations and inventions, are not the communion of saints: wolves, thorns, and thistles, are not the sheep or vines of Christ.

**DIRECT. vi.** *Prefer not any odd or singular sect before the universal consent of the faithful, in your learning or communion, so far as the judgment of men is to be regarded.*—Though we take not our faith from the number of believers, and though the most be usually none of the best, and some few are much wiser than the most, and in a controversy a few men of much knowledge are to be believed before the multitude, of less knowledge; yet Christ is the Head of all true Christians, and not of an odd sect or party only; and he hath commanded them all to live, as brethren, in love and holy communion. And in all sciences, the greater number of agreeing men are likelier to be in the right, than some straggling persons, who show otherwise no more ability than they: at least, which side soever you like best in less necessary points, you must always be in unity with all true Christians, and not unnecessarily differ from them.

**DIRECT. vii.** *Never set a doubtful opinion against a certain truth or duty.*—Reduce not things certain to things uncertain; but, contrarily, uncertain things to certain. For instance: It is certain that you ought to live in love and peace with all that are true

Christians, and to do good to all, and wrong to none. Let not any doubtful difference make you violate this rule, and hate, and slander, and backbite, and hurt them for a doubtful, indifferent, or unnecessary thing. Set not your mint or cummin, tithes or ceremonies, against love and justice, and the great and certain things of the law. It is an ill sect or opinion that is against the nature and common duty of Christianity and humanity.

**DIRECT. VIII.** *Faithfully serve Christ as far as you have attained, and be true to all the truth that you know.*—Sin not by omission or practice against the knowledge which you have, lest God in justice give up your understanding to believe a lie.

**DIRECT. IX.** *Remember that all men on earth are ignorant, and know but as in a glass, and in part; and therefore the best have many errors.*—No man knoweth the smallest grass or worm with an adequate, perfect knowledge. And if God bear with multitudes of errors in us all, we must bear with such as are tolerable in each other. It is well if men be humble, and teachable, and willing to know. As we have seen few more imperfect than the sects that have asserted sinless perfection, so we see few so fallible and erroneous as the Roman sect, which pleadeth their infallibility. When they tell you, that you must believe their Popes and councils, that you may come to an end of controversy; ask them whether we may here hope for any end of ignorance, error, and sin; if not, what hope of ending all controversies before we come to heaven, where ignorance is ended? The controversies against the essentials of Christianity were ended with us all, when we became true and adult Christians; and the rest will be lessened as we grow in knowledge. Divinity is not less mysterious than law and physic, &c., where controversies abound.

**DIRECT. X.** *Yet stint not yourselves in knowledge, nor say, "We have learned enough;" but continue as Christ's scholars in learning more and more to the death.*—The wisest know little, and may still increase. There is a great difference in excellency, usefulness, and comfort between men of clear, digested knowledge, and confused, undigested apprehensions.

These ten Rules practised will save you from being perplexed with doubts and controversies of all pretenders in religion.

(II.) *But if your trouble be not about doctrinal controversies, but about your sins, or want of grace, and spiritual state, digest well these following truths and counsels, and it will cure you.*

#### COUNSELS.

1. God's goodness is equal to his greatness; even to that power that ruleth heaven and earth. His attributes are commensurate. And goodness will do good to capable receivers. He loved us when we were enemies; and he is essentially love itself.

2. Christ hath freely taken human nature, and made satisfaction for the sins of the world, as full as answereth his ends; and so full, that none shall perish for want of sufficiency in his sacrifice and merits.

3. Upon these merits Christ hath made a law, or covenant of grace, forgiving all sin, and giving freely everlasting life to all that will believingly accept it; so that all men's sins are conditionally pardoned by the tenor of this covenant.

4. The condition of pardon and life is not, that we sin no more, or that by any price we purchase it of God, or by our own works do benefit him, or buy his grace; but only that *we believe him, and willingly accept of the mercy which he freely giveth us*, according to the nature of the gift; that is, that we accept of Christ as Christ, to justify, sanctify, rule, and save us.

5. God hath commissioned his ministers to proclaim and offer this covenant and grace to all, and earnestly entreat them in his name to accept it, and be reconciled to him. He hath excepted none.

6. No man that hath this offer is damned, but only those that obstinately refuse it to the last breath.

7. The day of grace is never so past to any sinner but still he may have Christ and pardon, if he will; and if he have it not, it is because he will not. And the day of grace is so far from being past, that it is savingly come to all that are so willing; and grace is still offered urgently to all.

8. The will is the man in God's account; and what a man truly would be and have, he is and shall have. Consent to the baptismal covenant is true grace and conversion, and such have right to Christ and life.

9. The number and greatness of former sin, is no exception against the pardon of any penitent, converted sinner. God pardoneth great and small to such; "where sin aboundeth, grace superaboundeth;" and much is forgiven, that men may be thankful, and love much.

10. Repentance is true, though tears and passionate sorrow be defective, when a man had rather leave his sin than keep it, and sincerely, though imperfectly, endeavoureth fully to overcome it. No sin shall damn a man which he more hateth than loveth, and had truly rather leave than keep, and showeth this by true endeavour.

11. The best man hath much evil, and the worst have some good: but it is that which is preferred and predominant in the will, which differenceth the godly and the wicked. He that in estimation, choice, and life preferreth God, and heaven, and holiness, before the world and the pleasure of sin, is a truly godly man, and shall be saved.

12. The best have daily need of pardon, even for the faultiness of their holiest duties, and must daily live on Christ for pardon.

13. Even sins against knowledge and conscience are too oft committed by regenerate men; for they know more than others do, and their consciences are more active. Happy were they indeed if they could be as good as they know they should be, and love God as much as they know they should love him, and were clear from all the relics of passion and unbelief, which conscience tells them are their sins.

14. God will not take Satan's temptations to be our sins, but only our not resisting them. Christ himself was tempted to the most

heinous sin, even to fall down to the devil and worship him. God will charge Satan's blasphemous temptations on himself alone.

15. The thoughts, and fears, and troubles which melancholy and natural weakness and distemper irresistibly cause have much more of bodily disease than of sin, and therefore are of the least of sins; and indeed no more sins than to burn or be thirsty in a fever, further than as some sin did cause the disease that causeth it, or further than there is left some power in reason to resist them.

16. Certainty of our faith and sincerity is not necessary to salvation, but the sincerity of faith itself is necessary. He shall be saved that giveth up himself to Christ, though he know not that he is sincere in doing it. Christ knoweth his own grace, when they that have it know not that it is sound. It is but few true Christians that attain to certainty of salvation; for weak grace, clogged with much corruption, is hardly known, and usually joined with fear and doubting.

17. Probability of sincerity and trust in Christ may cause a man justly to live and die in peace and comfort, without proper certainty; else few Christians should live and die in peace; and yet we see by experience that many do so. The common opinion of most church-writers for four hundred years after Christ was, that the uncontinued sort of Christians might fall from a state of grace, in which had they continued they had been saved; and therefore that none but strong, confirmed Christians at most could be certain of salvation: and many Protestant churches still are of that mind, and yet they live not in despair or terror. No man is certain that he shall not fall as heinously as David and Peter did; and yet, while they have no cause to think it likely, they need not live in terror for the uncertainty. No wife or child is certain that the husband or father will not murder them; and yet they may live comfortably, and not fear it.

18. Though faith be so weak, as to be assaulted with doubts whether the gospel be true, and there be any life to come; and though our trust in Christ be not strong enough to banish our fears and troubles; yet if we see so much evidence of credibility in the gospel, and probability of a better life hereafter, as causeth us here to fix our hopes and choice, and to resolve, for those hopes, to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and let go all the world rather than sell those hopes, and live a holy life to obtain it, this faith will save us.

19. But God's love and promise through Christ is so sure a ground for faith and comfort, that it is the great duty and interest of all men confidently and quietly to trust him, and then to live in the joy of holy trust and hope.

20. If any man doubt of his salvation because of the greatness of his sins, the way to quietness is presently to be willing to forsake them. Either he that complaineth is willing to be holy and forsake his sins, or not. If you be not willing to leave them, but love them, and would keep them, why do you complain of them, and mourn for that which you so much love? If your child should cry and roar



because his apple is sour, and yet will not be persuaded to forbear to eat it, you would not pity him, but whip him as perverse. But if you are truly willing to leave it, you are already saved from its damning guilt.

21. If you are in doubt of the sincerity of your faith and other graces, and all your examination leaveth you uncertain, the way is presently to end your doubt by actual giving up yourself to Christ. Do you not know whether you have been hitherto a true believer? You may know, that Christ is now offered to you: consent but to the covenant, and accept the offer, and you may be sure that he is yours.

22. Bare examining is not always to be done for assurance; but labour to excite and exercise much the grace that you would be assured of. The way to be sure that you believe and love God is, to study the promises and goodness of God, till active faith assure you that you believe; and to love God and glory, till you are assured that you love them.

23. It is not by some extraordinary act, good or bad, that we may be sure what state the soul is in; but by the predominant bent and drift and tenor of heart and life.

24. Though we cry out that we cannot believe, and we cannot love God, and we cannot pray aright, Christ can help us. Without his grace we can do nothing; but his grace is sufficient for us; and he denieth not his further help when once he hath but made us willing; but hath bid us ask and have; and "if any lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not" with former folly, (James i. 5,) but "gives his Spirit to them that ask him." (Luke xi. 13.)

25. This sin, called "the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost," is the sin of no one that believeth Jesus to be the Christ, nor of any that fear it, no, nor of every infidel, but only of some few obstinate, unbelieving enemies; for it is only this: When men see such miracles of Christ and his Spirit as should or could convince them that he is of God, and when they have no other shift, they will rather maintain that he is a conjuror, and wrought them by the devil.

26. Though sinful fear is very troublesome, and not to be cherished, God often permitteth and useth it to good;—to keep us from being bold with sin, and from those sinful pleasures, and love of the world, and presumption, and security, which are far more dangerous; and to take-down pride, and keep us in a sensible, watchful state: for just fear is made to preserve us from the hurt and danger feared.

27. He that goeth fearing and trembling to heaven, will there quickly be past all fear, and doubts, and heaviness, for ever.

28. When Christ, for our sins, was in his agony, and when he cried out, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" he was then nevertheless beloved of his Father. And he was tempted, that he might succour them that are tempted; and suffered such derision, that he might be a compassionate High Priest to sufferers.

29. By how much the more the troubles, and blasphemous tempta-

tions, and doubts, and fears of a man are grievous, displeasing, and hateful to him, by so much the more he may be assured that they shall not condemn him, because they are not beloved sins.

30. All our troubles are over-ruled by God; and it is far better for us to be at his choice and disposal than our own, or our dearest friends'; and he hath promised that all things shall work together for our good. (Rom. viii. 28.)

31. A delight in God and goodness, and a joyful, praising frame of soul, from the belief of the love of God through Christ, is far more to be desired than grief and tears; which do but sweep away some dirt, that love, joy, and thankfulness may enter, which are the true evangelical Christian temper, and likest to the heavenly state.

Digest these truths, and they will cure you.

(III.) But if melancholy have got head already, there must be, beside what is said, some other and proper remedies used; and the difficulty is great, because the disease makes them self-conceited, unreasonable, wilful, and unruly, and they will hardly be persuaded that the disease is in their bodies, but only in their souls; and will not believe but they have reason for all what they think and do; or, if they confess the contrary, they plead disability, and say, "We can think and do no otherwise than we do."

But supposing that there is some use of reason left, I will give them yet some further counsel, (and what they cannot do, their friends must help them to their power,) which I shall add:—

1. Consider that it should be easy for you in your confounding, troubling thoughts, to perceive that your understandings are not now so sound and strong as other men's; and therefore be not wilful and self-conceited, and think not that your thoughts are righter than theirs; but believe wiser men, and be ruled by them.

Answer me this question: "Do you know any minister or friend that is wiser than yourself?" If you say, "No," how foolishly proud are you! If you say, "Yea," then ask the minister or friend what he thinketh of your condition, and believe him, and be ruled by him, rather than by your crazed self.

2. Do you find that your troubles do you more good or hurt? Do they make you fitter, or unfitter, to believe and love God, and rejoice in him, and praise him? If you feel that they are against all that is good, you may be sure that they are so far the devil's temptations, and are pleasing to him: and will you cherish or plead for the work of Satan, which you find is against yourselves and God?

3. Avoid your musings, and exercise not your thoughts now too deeply nor too much. Long meditation is a duty to some, but not to you; no more than it is a man's duty to go to church that hath his leg broken, or his foot out of joint: he must rest and ease it till it be set again and strengthened. You may live in the faith and fear of God, without setting yourself to deep, disturbing thoughts.

Those that will not obey this counsel, their friends must rouse them from their musings, and call them off to something else.

4. Therefore you must not be much alone, but always in some

pleasing, cheerful company; solitariness doth but cherish musings.

Nor must such be long in secret prayer, but more in public prayer with others.

5. Let those thoughts which you have be laid out on the most excellent things. Pore not all on yourselves, and on your distempered hearts: the best may find *there* much matter of trouble. As mill-stones wear themselves, if they go when they have no corn; so do the thoughts of such as think not of better things than their own hearts. If you have any power of your own thoughts, force them to think most of these four things:—

(1.) The infinite goodness of God, who is fuller of love than the sun is of light.

(2.) Of the unmeasurable love of Christ in man's redemption, and of the sufficiency of his sacrifice and merits.

(3.) Of the free covenant and offer of grace, which giveth pardon and life to all that do not prefer the pleasure of sin before it, and obstinately refuse it to the last.

(4.) Of the unconceivable glory and joy which all the blessed have with Christ, and which God hath promised, with his oath and seal, to all that consent to the covenant of grace, and are willing to be saved and ruled by Christ.

These thoughts will cure melancholy fears.

6. Use not yourselves to a complaining talk, but talk most of the great mercies of God which you have received. Dare you deny them? If not, are they not worthier of your discourse than your present sufferings? Let not all men know that you are in your troubles: complaining doth but feed them, and it discourageth others. Open them to none but your secret counsellors and friends. Use much to speak of the love of God, and the riches of grace; and it will divert and sweeten your sourer thoughts.

7. Especially, when you pray, resolve to spend most of your time in thanksgiving and praising God. If you cannot do it with the joy that you should, yet do it as you can. You have not the power of your comforts: but have you no power of your tongues? Say not, that you are unfit for thanks and praises unless you have a praising heart and were the children of God: for every man, good and bad, is bound to praise God, and to be thankful for all that he hath received, and to do it as well as he can, rather than leave it undone. And most Christians want assurance of their adoption; and must they therefore forbear all praise and thanksgiving to God? Doing it as you can is the way to be able to do it better. Thanksgiving stirreth up thankfulness in the heart. But, by your objection, you may perceive what the devil driveth at and gets by your melancholy: he would turn you off from all thankfulness to God, and from the very mention of his love and goodness in your praises.

8. When vexatious or blasphemous thoughts are thrust into your mind by Satan, neither give them entertainment nor yet be overmuch troubled at them.

(1.) Use that reason and power that is left you, resolutely to cast them out, and turn your thoughts to somewhat else : do not say, "I cannot." If you can no otherwise command and turn away your thoughts, rise up and go into some company or to some employment which will divert you and take them up. Tell me what you would do, if you heard a scold in the street reviling you, or heard an atheist there talk against God : would you stand still to hear them ? or would you talk it out again with them ? or rather go from them, and disdain to hear them or debate the case with such as they ? Do you, in your case, when Satan casts-in ugly or despairing or murmuring thoughts, go away from them to some other thoughts or business.

(2.) If you cannot do this of yourself, tell your friend when the temptation cometh ; and it is his duty who hath the care of you, to divert you with some other talk or works, or force you into diverting company.

(3.) Yet be not too much troubled at the temptation ; for trouble of mind doth keep the evil matter in your memory, and so increase it ; as pain of a sore draws the blood and spirits to the place. And this is the design of Satan, to give you troubling thoughts, and then to cause more by being troubled at those ; and so for one thought and trouble to cause another, and that another, and so on, as waves in the sea do follow each other. To be tempted is common to the best : I told you to what idolatry Christ was tempted. When you feel such thoughts, thank God that Satan cannot force you to love them, or consent.

9. Again : still remember what a comfortable evidence you carry about with you, that your sin is not damning, while you feel that you love it not, but hate it and are weary of it. Scarce any sort of sinners have so little pleasure in their sin as the melancholy, or so little desire to keep them ; and only beloved sins undo men.

Be sure that you live not idly, but in some constant business of a lawful calling, so far as you have bodily strength. Idleness is a constant sin, and labour is a duty. Idleness is but the devil's home for temptation, and for unprofitable, distracting musings. Labour profiteth others and ourselves ; both soul and body need it. Six days must you labour, and must not eat "the bread of idleness." (Prov. xxxi. 13—27.) God hath made it our duty, and will bless us in his appointed way. I have known grievous, despairing melancholy cured and turned into a life of godly cheerfulness, principally by setting upon constancy and diligence in the business of families and callings. It turns the thoughts from temptation, and leaveth the devil no opportunity. It pleaseth God, if done in obedience ; and it purifieth the distempered blood. Though thousands of poor people that live in want, and have wives and children that must also feel it, one would think, should be distracted with griefs and cares ; yet few of them fall into the disease of melancholy, because labour keepeth the body sound, and leaveth them no leisure for melancholy musings : whereas, in London and great towns, abundance of women that never sweat with bodily work, but live in idleness, (especially when from

fulness they fall into want,) are miserable objects, continually vexed and near distraction with discontent and a restless mind.

If you will not be persuaded to business, your friends, if they can, should force you to it.

And if the devil turn religious as an angel of light, and tell you that this is but turning away your thoughts from God, and that worldly thoughts and business are unholy, and fit for worldly men; tell him that Adam was, in innocency, to dress and keep his garden; and Noah, that had all the world, was to be husbandman; and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob kept sheep and cattle; and Paul was a tent-maker; and Christ himself is justly supposed to have worked at his supposed father's trade, as he went on fishing with his disciples. And Paul saith, idleness is "disorderly walking;" and, "He that will not work, let him not eat." (2 Thess. iii. 10, 11.) God made soul and body, and hath commanded work to both.

And if Satan would drive you unseasonably upon longer secret prayer than you can bear, remember that even sickness will excuse the sick from that sort of duty which they are unable for, and so will your disease: and the unutterable groans of the Spirit are accepted.

If you have privacy out of hearing, I would give you this advice, that, instead of long meditation or long secret prayer, you will sing a psalm of praise to God, such as the twenty-third, or the hundred and thirty-third, &c. This will excite your spirit to that sort of holy affection which is much more acceptable to God, and suitable to the hopes of a believer, than your repining troubles are.

(IV.) But yet I have not done with the duty of those that take care of distressed, melancholy persons; especially husbands to their wives, for it is much more frequently the disease of women than of men. When the disease disableth them to help themselves, the most of their helps, under God, must be from others. And this is of two sorts: 1. In prudent carriage to them. 2. In medicine and diet. A little of both.

#### I. IN PRUDENT CARRIAGE.

1. A great part of their cure lieth in pleasing them, and avoiding all displeasing things, as far as lawfully can be done. Displeas'dness is much of the disease; and a husband that hath such a wife is obliged to do his best to cure her, both in charity and by his relative bond, and for his own peace. It is a great weakness in some men, that if they have wives who, by natural passionate weakness, or by melancholy or crazedness, are wilful and will not yield to reason, they show their anger at them, to their further provocation. You took her, in marriage, "for better and for worse, for sickness and health." If you have chosen one that, as a child, must have every thing that she crieth for, and must be spoken fair, and, as it were, rocked in the cradle, or else it will be worse; you must condescend to do it, and so bear the burden which you have chosen as may not make it heavier to you. Your passion and sourness toward a person that cannot cure her own displeasing carriage, is a more unexcusable

fault and folly than hers, who hath not the power of reason, as you have.

If you know any lawful thing that will please them in speech, in company, in apparel, in rooms, in attendance, give it them. If you know at what they are displeased, remove it. I speak not of the distracted that must be mastered by forces, but of the sad and melancholy: could you devise how to put them in a pleased condition, you might cure them.

2. As much as you can, divert them from the thoughts which are their trouble. Keep them on some other talks and business. Break in upon them, and interrupt their musings; rouse them out of it, but with loving importunity. Suffer them not to be long alone; get fit company to them, or them to it; especially suffer them not to be idle, but drive or draw them to some pleasing works, which may stir the body and employ the thoughts. If they are addicted to reading, let it not be too long, nor any books that are unfit for them; and rather let another read to them than themselves. Dr. Sibbes's books, and some useful, pleasing history or chronicles, or news of great matters abroad in the world, may do somewhat to divert them.

3. Often set before them the great truths of the gospel which are fittest to comfort them; and read them informing, comforting books; and live in a loving, cheerful manner with them.

4. Choose for them a skilful, prudent minister of Christ, both for their secret counsel and public audience; one that is skilled in such cases, and one that is peaceable, and not contentious, erroneous, or fond of odd opinions; one that is rather judicious in his preaching and praying than passionate, except when he urgeth the gospel-doctrines of consolation, and then the more fervently the better; and one that they much esteem and reverence, and will regardfully hear.

5. Labour to convince them frequently how great a wrong it is to the God of infinite love and mercy, and to a Saviour who hath so wonderfully expressed his love, to think hardlier of Him than they would do of a friend, yea, or of a moderate enemy; and so hardly to be persuaded of that love which hath been manifested by the most stupendous miracle. Had they but a father, husband, or friend, that had ventured his life for them, and given them all that ever they had, were it not a shameful ingratitude and injury, to suspect still that they intended all against them, and designed mischief to them, and did not love them? How hath God and our Saviour deserved this? And many that say, it is *not God* that they suspect but *themselves*, do but hide their misery by this mistake, while they deny God's greatest mercies; and though they would fain have Christ and grace, will not believe that God who offereth it them will give it them; but think, He is one that will remedilessly damn a poor soul that desireth to please him, and had rather have his grace than all the sinful pleasures of the world.

6. Carry them oft abroad into strange company. Usually they reverence strangers; and strange faces do divert them; especially travelling into other parts, if they can bear the motion.

7. It is an useful way, if you can, to engage them in comforting others, that are deeper in distresses than they. For this will tell them, that their case is not singular; and they will speak to themselves, while they speak to others. One of the chief means which cured my fears of my soul's condition about forty-eight years ago, was oft comforting others that had the same doubts, whose lives persuaded me of their sincerity.

And it would be a pretty diversion to send to them some person that is in some error, which they are most against, to dispute it with them, that while they whet their wits to convince them and confute them, it may turn their thoughts from their own distress. Forestus tells us, that a melancholy patient of his, that was a Papist, was cured when the Reformation came into the country, by eager and oft disputing against it. A better cause may better do it.

8. If other means will not do, neglect not physic; and though they will be averse to it, as believing that the disease is only in the mind, they must be persuaded or forced to it. I have known the lady deep in melancholy, who a long time would neither speak nor take physic, nor endure her husband to go out of the room; and with the restraint and grief he died, and she was cured by physic put down her throat with a pipe by force.

If it were, as some of them fancy, a possession of the devil, it is possible physic might cast him out. For if you cure the melancholy, his bed is taken away, and the advantage gone by which he worketh. Cure the cholera, and the choleric operations of the devil cease. It is by means and humours in us that he worketh.

But choose a physician that is specially skilled in this disease, and hath cured many others. Meddle not with women and ignorant boasters, nor with young, unexperienced men, nor with hasty, busy, overdoing, venturous men, that cannot have time to study the patient's temper and disease; but choose experienced, cautelous men.

## II. IN MEDICINE AND DIET.

*Medicinal* remedies and *theological* use not to be given together by the same hand; but, in this case of perfect complication of the maladies of mind and body, I think it not unfit, if I do it not unskilfully. My advice is, that they that can have an ancient, skilful, experienced, honest, careful, cautelous physician, neglect not to use him, nor meddle with any of the medicines which I hereafter mention, nor with any other receipts whatever, but by their physician's advice; for there is so great diversity of bodily temperatures, age, and many accidents, and of the roots and causes of the same symptoms, as that the same medicine may cure one and hurt another, and may cure the same man at one time whom at another time it may hurt. Skill in managing of it doeth much of the cure, and not the medicine without it.

But yet, because there are multitudes of persons so very poor that they cannot give a shilling to a physician, and the dearness of

physicians and apothecaries so discourageth them who have not money, that they do not seek to any for helps, but some women that tell them of their receipts, and there are many in the countries that are quite out of the reach of a skilful physician; and because there are now so great a number of empirics and young, unexperienced physicians, that will rashly venture, before they thoroughly understand the body or the disease; and because overdoing and venturing rashly kill so many: for these reasons I will add a few safe and cheap medicines, which the poor may make themselves, and which will not cause much loathing to their stomachs. Though I venture on the censure of some physicians, I am none myself; but I see many score much younger than I that venture much farther, when they have got a licence, to the great cost of the purses and bodies of their patients.\*

The disease called "melancholy" is formally in the spirits, whose distemper unfits them for their office, in serving the imagination, understanding, memory, and affections; so by their distemper the thinking faculty is diseased, and becomes like an inflamed eye, or a foot that is sprained or out of joint, disabled for its proper work.

The matter which is the root and foundation is usually a depravation of the mass of blood, which is the vehicle of the spirits; and that is usually accompanied with some diseases of the stomach, spleen, liver, or other parts which are for the due concoction, motion, and purification of the blood: which diseases are so various, that they are seldom the same in many persons, and hardly known to the wisest physicians. The spleen is most commonly accused, and often guilty; and the stomach, pancreas, mesentery, omentum, liver, yea, and reins, not rarely are the root, sometimes by obstructing humours, and that of several qualities, and sometimes by stones, and sometimes by various sorts of humours, and sometime by vesicles. But obstructed, if not tumified, spleens are most suspected.

Such a black distinct humour called "melancholy," which hath old been accused, is rarely, if ever, found in any; unless you will call either blood or excrementitious humours by that name, which are grown black by mortification, for want of motion and spirits. But the blood itself may be called "melancholy blood," when it hath contracted that distemper and pravity by feculency, sluggishness, or adustion, which disposeth it to the melancholy effects.

But sometimes persons that are sound are suddenly cast into melancholy by a fright, or by the death of a friend, or by some great loss or cross, or some sad tidings, even in an hour; which shows that it cometh not always from any humour called "melancholy," nor from any foregoing disease at all.

But the very act of the mind doth suddenly disorder the passions, and perturb the spirits; and the disturbed spirits, in time, vitiate the blood which containeth them; and the vitiated blood doth, in time,

\* This sermon is said to have been *written* by Mr. Baxter, but not *preached*. Had any portion been delivered from the pulpit, it is highly probable that the conclusion, which prescribes medical treatment, would have been omitted.—EDIT.



vitiate the viscera and parts which it passeth through: and so the disease, beginning in the senses and soul, doth draw first the spirits, and then the humours, and then the parts, into the fellowship; and soul and body are sick together.

And it is of great use to the physician to know where the depravation did begin, whether in the mind or in the body; and, if in the body, whether in the blood or in the viscera; for the cure must be fitted accordingly.

And yet the melancholy brains may be eased, and the mental depravation much kept under, though an obstructed, yea, a scarrhified\* [scirrhou] spleen continue uncured many years.

And though the disease begin in the mind and spirits, and the body be yet sound, yet physick (even purging) often cureth it, though the patient say that physick cannot cure souls. For the soul and body are wonderfully co-partners in their diseases and cure; and if we know not how it doeth it, yet when experience telleth us that it doeth it, we have reason to use such means.

Right usage and diet are a great part of the cure: of the first I spake before. The patient must be pleased, delighted, dealt with as capable, kept from solitude and from musing, and from sad and troubling words and things, and their objections wisely answered, and their judgments in religion kept from troubling mistakes, by right information; especially, they must be kept in diverting business, and (if it could be) hard labour, even to good transpiration and sweat, to actuate, temperate, and purify the blood, and excite the igneous spirits, which are the instruments of the motion and purification of the blood, and of life itself. It would greatly help the cure. Especially such exercise twice a-day, before dinner and supper, an hour or two together, [would] dissipate and concoct indigested matter, excite natural heat, and expel excrements.

FIRST. *As to diet*: it must, as physick, be fitted to the case of the body.

The disease is sometimes in dry bodies, and sometimes in those that are moist and fat. It is sometimes in over-heated blood, and sometimes in that which is over-cold and sluggish: and these must have quite different cures. You may thus perceive the differences in the main: one sort of melancholy persons are only sad, misgiving, fearful of troubled thoughts, despairing as undone, and solitary musing, and cannot be satisfied and comforted, much silent, and dull to action, and will hardly stir, rather over-cold than hot, troubled with wind and ill digestion.

But there is another sort that have over-heated blood; that are fierce, talkative, bold, boasting, laughing; that have seeming visions and raptures; unruly, confident: and these must have another manner of remedy, and are almost mad already.

And those that have dry, lean bodies, must have a moister diet and medicine, than the cold, moist, and fat.

\* "Scirrhou," and not *scarified*, is that which the venerable author intended to express by this anomalous epithet.—EDIT.

For the most part, all of them [who] are merely melancholy, and not over-heated near to madness, should eat but sparingly, so as may not spoil digestion, though some of them have a greedy appetite. They should forbear cheese, and beef, and swine's flesh, and raw fruits, and, for other things, not be over-curious in the quality.

But those that have hot and dry bodies should avoid fasting, and eat as much as they can well digest, (but not more,) and should eat boiled borage and lettuce and stewed prunes, stewed or roasted apples, half an hour before meat, and raw apples, if experience of windiness or rheum forbid it not.

SECONDLY. *And for physic*: though the over-heated, talkative, confident sort be near to Bedlam, I shall briefly offer a little for prevention, if there be hope.

1. Be sure that they taste no brandy or hot waters, unless you would have them presently stark mad: no, nor any hot wines, strong liquors, or aromatic things; such as ginger, pepper, cloves, or any of the like; nor mustard, horse-radish, garlic, onions, or any biting thing.

2. Let them purge much with senna in whey:

Take three gallons of clarified whey, put in it two handfuls of balm, and as much fumatory, (if the time of the year serves,) and as much borage: boil it to two gallons, and put it into a stean pot of earth\* that hath a spigot at the bottom, (or a small barrel,) and put into it, in a thin canvass bag, two ounces of senna, an ounce of epithem, an ounce of bruised aniseed, and a handful of ground-ivy, (called ale-hoof,) bruised, and two gads of steel to sink it. When it hath stood two days or less, drink a pint every morning in bed, and lie an hour after it; and if it give not three stools, drink near a pint more at five o'clock. Continue this three weeks at least, every day, having another vessel ready when the first is done.

Or else boil all the same herbs in three pints of whey, to half the quantity. Strain it; and put in it three drams of senna, and a dram of bruised aniseed. Let it stand cold an hour and half, and after warm on gentle embers one hour. Drink it the next morning, and so on for three weeks.

3. Boil six sliced pippins or pearmains in three pints of whey, to a quart. Strain it, and drink a pint every morning in bed, (and, if you can, sleep an hour after it,) and the other pint at night, instead of other breakfast or supper. Do this many weeks when you take not the purging whey.

And if you drink the like instead of beer at dinner, to a hot dry body it is best.

4. But it is the ordinary colder, sad, despairing melancholy that I intend in these prescripts; and, for such, use these following means:—

(1.) If it be in the heat of summer, and they be not very cold, the foresaid purging whey is good for them: but otherwise, instead of it, use this following diet-drink, which is not very loathsome to the stomach:

\* This was a large earthen jar, of the kind still called "stone-ware."—EDIT.

(2.) Take pretty strong wort, and boil in five gallons, till it come to three; of the leaves of balm, borage, agrimony, scabious, and wild-marjoram, (or pot-marjoram, where the other cannot be got,) each two small handfuls; of the roots of dandelion and polypody, each two ounces. Use it as you do other beer; and when you turn it up, (casting out the herbs and roots before you put barm to it,) put in it this following bag to three gallons:—

Take of senna three ounces and a half; of wild-marjoram and sweet-marjoram, each a small handful; of liquorice scraped, and aniseed bruised, each an ounce; of chalk pund\* a pound, and three gads of steel. Put all in a thin canvass bag; and so hang it by a thread that the bottom only may touch the bottom of the vessel. When it hath stood two days, drink a pint every morning till it is done. A full body, that can bear more purging, may take another draught at five o'clock; and one that suspecteth a bilious liver and gall, may put but three ounces of senna, and one of rhubarb.

(3.) One that loveth the taste of wormwood to overcome the senna taste, and is in haste, may take this following, instead of the former:—

Take of good beer, ready to drink, three gallons. Put into a wooden or earthen vessel, as aforesaid; and hang in it a bag that hath of wormwood, agrimony, and wild-marjoram, each two handfuls; of centaury one handful; of senna three ounces; of liquorice and aniseed, of each an ounce; of steel three gads. At two days' end, drink it as before.

If it be a weak, thin body, he may take it with intermission as he is able, and forbear every third and fourth day.

(4.) These diet-drinks are not all so effectual as this that followeth, but easier to most stomachs: but the deeper-melancholy persons were better take the next:—

Take of senna an ounce; of liquorice scraped two scruples; of cinnamon bruised one scruple. Put all in forty-four spoonfuls of water. Let it stand in a pot stopped one hour and a half cold, and another hour and a half warm on the embers, but not boiling. Strain it, and let it stand, in a pot well-stopped, still two hours. Take of this twelve or fourteen spoonfuls; of syrup of vinegar an ounce; of *cremor-tartari* powder a dram. Dissolve it on the embers, and drink it warm in bed, and lie an hour after; but do not sleep or sweat. At four hours' end, drink a draught of broth made of veal or cock till it will jelly, which had boiled in it some epithem, polypody, balm, and a little rosemary, with a little nutmeg.

Take this potion in this manner three next days together, every week, for a body that can bear it, in ordinary melancholy, for seven weeks together: in old obstinate melancholy, for twelve or fourteen weeks. But if it be a body not full and strong enough to bear three days, take it the two next days every week. It gripeth more than the ordinary ways of using senna, but that need not be feared: for it never brings the bloody-flux, nor useth to weaken; and the griping

\* Pounded or pulverized chalk.—EDIT.

doeth good, by drawing down the troubling matter from the head into the common passages.

5. If it be a thin tender body, aged or weak, that hath sharp humours, and can bear none of the aforesaid more effectual purges, such an one may, either in chicken-broth, or in barley-water, or rather in whey or posset-drink boiled strong with pippins, infuse all night (or rather three hours) some senna in a cloth, and drink it in the morning as oft as he can bear it: that is, two drams for very weak persons, or three ordinarily, in near a pint of the liquor, putting a little cinnamon into it.

6. If the foresaid remedies do but begin the cure, use this next to perfect it; or this alone for tender and cold stomachs that cannot bear the other, which yet may much better go before this, and this come last:—

Take, for a hot body, white wine, for a cold body, sherry, two quarts. Put it in a great bottle; and put to it of senna an ounce; of cinnamon bruised two drachms; of saffron one drachm; of *cremor tartari* powdered half an ounce if it be sherry, or two drachms if it be white wine. Let it stand close-stopped three days, shaking it oft; then put it out into several bottles, to keep the better. Take of this three spoonfuls fasting every day. Two may serve when it is for prevention in a weak body, or four when you would purge more. If the taste seem the worse for the tartar to any, you may leave it out, and put, instead of it, half an ounce of epithem; and take a drachm of *cremor tartary* dissolved in a draught of good broth an hour or more after it.

This medicine is not loathsome or nauseous to the stomach, and is magnified by former and later physicians of the greatest experience and success in this disease. But all such things must be patiently, long continued, and no violent medicines used.

7. Chalybeate medicines also are usually profitable in this disease; but, because country people cannot themselves make them, I am loath to insert them. One I will prescribe for them that can have an apothecary to make it:—

Take of unprepared filings of steel six ounces. Make it red hot in an iron ladle; and quench it in five or six ounces of white wine: do this thrice; put then to the wine of wormwood-water and of scurvy-grass-water, each a pint; of *aqua mirabilis* two ounces; (or, instead of them all, a quart of compound radish-water;) of sugar six ounces; of senna an ounce and half; of *cremor tartary* three drachms; of saffron a drachm; of cinnamon a drachm. Let it stand in a warm place three days, oft shaking it. Take two ounces, four or five spoonfuls, fasting, many weeks together, and walk or labour after it.

Or, after sufficient purging, fresh succory roots, made into a conserve, and taken with a little prepared steel, for poor people that have obstructions, may do well: half an ounce of the conserve with half a scruple of steel.

8. If they be costive, so as to affect the head the more, else let them do as followeth:

(1.) Fast not, especially in the mornings, but take some light breakfast, and eat the less at dinner; either half a dish of panado, with four or five spoonfuls of white wine in it; (when they eat it;) or gruel, or broth made of veal or chicken, or an old cock with a sheep's head, boiled till it will jelly, and a little white wine put in at the eating; and the same at supper, unless the stomach be clogged with crudities; and then forbear supper or dinner.

(2.) Some find a little saffron in broth a cure of costiveness, and it is one of the truest cordials known in the world.

(3.) With some, a drachm of *cremor tartary* in broth will do it, in the morning.

(4.) Sit not down nor walk as soon as you rise in the morning, but stand still upright a quarter of an hour when you are dressed, and as long after dinner: it helpeth the excrements to descend. And if you feel the least possibility, go to stool, and make not too much haste away.

(5.) If you have no rheum or cold windiness of stomach, eat sometimes ten or twelve stewed prunes, and sometimes four or five roasted pippins, half an hour before dinner.

(6.) Take Chio turpentine, (or Venice turpentine, if that cannot be had,) wash it well, and make it into hard pills with powder of epithem, as much as you can get it to take up. Let the pills be small, and take a drachm, or more or less, as you are able to get them down all at a swallow, covered in a spoonful of syrup of apples, or of balm, or of mallows, a little before a late supper, to work the next morning; or turpentine with liquorice powder, or of itself, in an egg, or any way got down, may serve.

(7.) If more be needful, make the same turpentine into pills with rhubarb powdered, or senna powdered, or both together, and take it before supper. It goeth down easily in a spoonful of any pleasant syrup.

But use no more clysters nor purging things, when once the melancholy is overcome, than you needs must; for it disuseth\* nature as to its proper office.

(8.) Their drink is of great moment, that, unless in cold bodies, they take no strong wines nor claret, but either ale or good beer with a little white wine, or posset-drink made but with little milk, and some strong ale and white wine, or posset-drink made with cider, ale, and a little white wine.

Or take a quart of the juice of balm, with a little ground ivy, and put it into a vessel of good ale or beer, of about three or four gallons; and drink this at meat. Or sometimes some wormwood ale, but not long.

But cold dull bodies may drink good strong beer or ale, that is not hard; and fat cold persons may endure sack.

The devil hath another cure for the sad and melancholy than such as I have here prescribed, which is—to cast away all belief of the immortality of the soul, and the life to come, or at least not to think of

\* In the old meaning of its inducing a wrong use or habit.—EDIT.

it ; and for to take religion to be a superstitious, needless fancy ; and for to laugh at the threatenings of the scripture, and go to play-houses, and cards, and dice, and to drink and play away melancholy. Honest recreations are very good for melancholy persons, if we could get them to use it : but, alas ! this satanical cure is but like the witches' bargain with the devil, who promiseth them much, but payeth them with shame and utter misery. The end of that mirth is incurable sorrow, if timely repentance cure not the cause. The garrison of Satan in the hearts of sinners is strongly kept when they are in peace ; but, when they have fooled away time, and mercy, and hope, die they must, there is no remedy ; and to go merrily and unbelievably to hell, after all God's calls and warnings, will be no abatement of their torment. To go out of the world in the guilt of sin, and to end life before they would know the use of it, and to undergo God's justice for the mad contempt of Christ and grace, will put a sad end to all their mirth. For, "There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God." (Isai. xlvi. 22 ; lvii. 21.) But Christ saith to his mourners : "Blessed are you that mourn, for you shall be comforted." (Matt. v. 4.) And, "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice : and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (John xvi. 20.) And Solomon knew that "the house of mourning was better than the house of feasting ;" and that "the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools in the house of mirth." (Eccles. vii. 2—4.) But holy joy of faith and hope is best of all.

## SERMON XII.

BY THE REV. NATHANAEL VINCENT, A.M.

OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

HOW WE MAY GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

*And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—*  
2 Peter iii. 18.

THE apostle, when he wrote this epistle, looked upon himself as a dying man (the ministers of the gospel would preach with more life, if death were but more within their view). His death, which was violent, (for he ended his days upon a cross,\*) had been foretold by Christ himself; accordingly he was persuaded, that quickly he should be made to "put off his earthly tabernacle." But, like a good shepherd, before he departed, he expresses his care of the flock, which he was to leave behind him. He commends the gospel to them, as that which is of the highest authority, of the greatest certainty; that their faith might be firm, and that they might persevere in their obedience.

The apostle having looked as far as the grave, he looks farther: he beheld his own and likewise the world's dissolution; he plainly foresaw the end of all things; and tells them to whom he writes, that "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," and that "the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth and the works therein will be burned up:" and then most rationally infers: "Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Peter iii. 10, 11.)

He speaks of "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (Verse 13.) Interpreters conclude that this refers not to the substance of the world, which will remain; but to the qualities of it, which will be changed, and even at last quite purged out of it. Calvin thinks meet here to give a caution against curiosity, and too great inquisitiveness, which will be unprofitable, which may prove dangerous; and tells us that the scope of the apostle is mainly to be attended to, which is to awaken and exhort unto serious holiness.† Since this world must be purged by fire, all that are Christians should

\* *Petrus cruci affigitur, capite in terram verso, elevatisque in sublime pedibus.—* PLATINA in *Vita Petri*, p. 14. "Peter was transfixed to a cross, with his head turned down toward the earth, and his feet raised upwards."—EDIT. † *Mali sunt interpretes qui in argutis speculationibus multum consumunt operæ, cum apostolus totam hanc doctrinam ad pias exhortationes accommodet.—* CALVINUS ad locum. "They are incompetent interpreters who here bestow much labour on subtle and abstruse speculations, since the apostle accommodates the whole of this doctrine to pious exhortations."—EDIT.

endeavour after a greater measure of purity, and ought to be "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ," continually.

In the words we find :—

1. *A growth and increase* urged.—The word *αυξανετε* ["grow"] supposes imperfection ; but also that perfection ought to be aspired unto, and that the Christian's growth does make him truly great.

2. This growth must be *in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*.—The object, Christ, is high and large unto infiniteness ; his fulness, his riches [are] unsearchable. The knowledge of this object must not be merely notional. *Verbum notitie connotat affectum*.\* Light and heat, clearer views and dearer and stronger loves, must go together.

3. *The persons* who are to labour after a greater measure of knowledge.—And those *are real Christians*, who have attained to some degree of spiritual understanding. That light which is as "the light of the moon," should be increased, so as to equal "the light of the sun ;" and that which is as "the light of the sun," should be augmented so as to equal "the light of seven days," should grow more and more glorious.

4. *The arguments to persuade*.—And they are two : Christ is *their Lord*, Christ is *their Saviour*.

(1.) Christ is *their Lord*.—A Lord most great, most gracious. The more this is understood, the better will his service be liked, as honourable and advantageous ; and obedience will be yielded with greater cheerfulness and constancy.

(2.) Christ is *their Saviour*.—A Saviour *from* the greatest evils,—sin and the miserable effects of it, in time, in eternity. A Saviour *to* the greatest blessedness,—an everlasting kingdom and glory. A Saviour *of* that which is most precious,—the soul, which if safe, the whole man must needs be secured.

The text may be considered with a double reference, *to what goes before, to what follows after*.

1. *To what goes before*.—"Grow in grace and knowledge," *χαριτι και γνωσει* : and hence we may observe, that the way to increase in grace is to increase in the knowledge of Christ. The means of grace will be found inefficacious and empty, will convey nothing, if Christ be not *with* them and *in* them, if he be not understood by those that use them. "All that fulness" out of which the church is replenished from the beginning of the world to the very end of it, "it has pleased the Father should dwell in Christ." (Col. i. 19.)

If a man know where a vast treasure lies hid, he may quickly go and enrich himself. The way to have more grace is, to understand that Christ is the fountain from whence all grace is derived. He is "Head over all things to his church, which is his body," and is called to show the reality and plentifulness of communication, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 22, 23.)

2. *The text may be referred to what follows after*.—"To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." Hence observe, that the greater knowledge of Christ [which] we attain to, the more we shall

\* "The original word *knowledge* likewise denotes *affection* or *strong feeling*."—EDD.



honour, and see cause to honour and glorify, him. His Godhead is the same with the Father's; his glory and dominion equal and eternal. The church militant must now begin to glorify her Lord and Saviour; and when she comes to be triumphant, her praises will be vastly higher: and to magnify, to love, to admire, and to rejoice in him, will be her everlasting business.

But I shall wave the connexion; and from the words themselves raise this doctrine: *That it highly concerns all sincere Christians to grow and increase in the knowledge of Christ.*

The gospel which reveals Christ, is a mystery, which "the angels" themselves "desire to look into;" (1 Peter i. 12;) and, looking, they admire the manifold wisdom of God, the exceeding riches of his grace and love. And shall not *the saints* search further into this gospel? Shall they not look more unto and into Jesus, who "took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham?" (Heb. ii. 16.) The better Christ is understood, the better will they understand how happy he has made them; and that, Christ being theirs, all is theirs.

The question that in this exercise I am to answer is this: *How we may grow in the knowledge of Christ, and make use of and improve that knowledge.* Now, that the answer may be the more full, I shall do these four things:—

First. I shall tell you, *what it is to grow in the knowledge of Christ*; and the telling you this, will tend to the advancement of this growth.

Secondly. *What properties are required in this knowledge.*

Thirdly. *The directions you are to follow, that you may increase in the knowledge of him.*

Fourthly. *What use and improvement you are to make of this knowledge, or of Christ known.*

I. I begin with the first of these: *What it is to grow in the knowledge of Christ.*

Here several propositions are to be premised:—

1. *The knowledge of Christ is of the greatest excellency.*—The apostle calls this *ὑπερβολὴ τῆς γνώσεως*. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. iii. 8.) Other kind of knowledge is like light from the stars; this like beams from the sun. Christ is called "the Sun of Righteousness." (Mal. iv. 2.) He is called Wisdom in the abstract, (Prov. i. 20,) in the Hebrew it is חכמה "wisdoms;" in him is "the sum, the perfection of wisdom."\* To know him does assimilate and make us like him; and when we shall have a full view of him in glory, we shall, to our utmost capacity, fully resemble him. "To know him is life eternal;" and they that seek life any other way will find death, and themselves mistaken in the end. No wonder the apostle glories in this knowledge; and that an ancient Father said, he was glad he had something of value (he meant philosophy) to despise in comparison.

\* *Sapientia—Omnimoda sapientia.*

2. *This knowledge of Christ is of absolute necessity.\**—In scripture he is compared to those things, which are so needful that we cannot be without them, as meat, and drink, and raiment. Christ is the bread of life, (John vi. 35, 48,) the fountain of living water; (iv. 14;) we are to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ;” (Rom. xiii. 14;) his righteousness is the garment which must cover and secure us. To be totally ignorant of him must needs be death eternal; for “there is not salvation in any other.” (Acts iv. 12.)

3. *The knowledge of Christ is by supernatural revelation.*—Much of God may be read in the book of nature: his visible works do make the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Worker also visible. But Christ is a “mystery hid from ages and generations;” and would have remained hid still, if the gospel had not revealed him. (Col. i. 26.) Who could ever have thought of God’s being “manifested in the flesh,” and redeeming the church with his own blood, if this had not been brought to light by the gospel? (1 Tim. iii. 16; Rev. v. 9.) These are indeed “the deep things of God,” which the Spirit reveals; (1 Cor. ii. 10, 11;) and power to discern them, and believe them, is from the same Spirit.

4. *The knowledge of Christ was communicated in a degree under the Old Testament.*—The prophets spake of him; and if they had not, what they had said besides had been insignificant. “The law was a schoolmaster to bring Israel to Christ.” (Gal. iii. 24.) *The ceremonial law*, requiring the blood of so many sacrifices, showed plainly that the sacrificers themselves deserved to die, and therefore is said to be “against them.”† (Col. ii. 14.) But withal it did direct them to the Lord Jesus, who was “to appear, once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. ix. 26.) *The moral law* discovered their duty, convinced them of sin, and declared the necessity of a Mediator to make an atonement. The apostle, when he witnessed, “that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light to the people and to the Gentiles;” he sticks not to affirm, that he “said none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come.” (Acts xxvi. 22, 23.) Moses saw Christ and his cross; and “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.” (Heb. xi. 26.) “Abraham rejoiced to see his day: he saw it, and was glad.” (John viii. 56.) Nay, several thousands of years before the actual rising of this Sun of Righteousness, there was some light which caused a “day-break” presently after the fall. That promise, “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” shows that the first Adam was not altogether ignorant of the second.

5. *The revelation of Christ under the New Testament is more clear.*

\* *Stat inveniata hæc rupes, Ego sum Via et nullus alius: quicquid autem via hæc non fuerit, error et lubricum et tenebræ sunt.*—LUTHERUS, tom. ii. p. 507. “This stands as an impregnable rock: ‘I am the Way, and beside me is no other.’ Whatever else assumes to be this way, it is but error, deception, and darkness.”—EDIT. † *Χειρογραφον τοις δογμασιν ο ην υπεραντιον ημων.* [“The hand-writing of ordinances that was against us.”]

—Therefore to be ignorant of him is the more without apology. “The veil upon the face of Moses” did signify the obscurity of the Mosaic dispensation; but that “veil is done away in Christ;” and “we all” may now “with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord.” (2 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 18.) The New Testament helps us to understand the Old; and adds, *de novo*, a far more glorious light than ever shined before. God spake more by his Son, than he had done by his servants the prophets, that lived in the ages before his manifestation in the flesh. Such a clear discovery of things, which before were but darkly intimated, is a privilege which should be taken notice of, and thankfully improved. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear: for verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” (Matt. xiii. 16, 17.)

6. *All true believers in Christ have some knowledge of him.*—“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Rom. x. 14.) As it was in the first creation, “God said, Let there be light: and there was light;” so it is in the new creation: darkness overspreads the soul; but God does shine into the heart, and gives the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And Christ being thus revealed, the heart is taken with him, gladly opens and receives him, relies and believes in him to life everlasting. Let the church of Rome boast of the conveniences of ignorance, and the sufficiency of implicit faith; we shall show ourselves children of light by pleading for light; and it shall be our desire, that God would deliver us from the ignorance of the church of Rome, as well as from the tyranny of the bishop there.

7. *Those that know most of Christ know him but in part.*—Therefore are to be urged to grow in knowledge. The apostle Paul, who equalled James, Cephas, and John, for “in conference they added nothing to him;” (Gal. ii. 6;) who was “caught up to the third heaven,” and there had “abundance of revelations,” and “heard words which it was not lawful to utter;” (2 Cor. xii. 2, 4, 7;) yet humbly acknowledges, that “he knew in part, and prophesied in part,” and that “he saw but through a glass darkly.” (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12.) Knowledge in this world is imperfect, as well as holiness; and where both these are true, there will be an industrious longing that both may be still carried on toward perfection.

These things being premised, I shall tell you *what it is to grow in the knowledge of Christ* in these particulars:—

1. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *a fuller apprehension of his Godhead.*—Here is majesty, immensity, glory, that may presently amaze and overwhelm us. Alas! it is but a small portion of this that we can understand: but this must be known,—that the self-same perfections which are in the Father are likewise in the Son; for He and his Father are one: Christ is “the true God and eternal life.” (1 John v. 20.) It is a destructively heretical gloss, to say, He is styled God, only by a figure. He is affirmed to be “over all, God blessed for ever.” (Rom. ix. 5.) “By him were all things created

that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. i. 16, 17.) And those excellent creatures, "all the angels of God," are commanded to "worship him." (Heb. i. 6.)

This truth that "Christ is God" is more and more to be looked into. He that denies it loses his Christianity, according to Luther,\* and the prop and foundation of his faith. Here is the Rock upon which the church is built, so as "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi. 18.) The Godhead of Christ makes his blood a price of infinite value; full satisfaction has been made to divine justice, by the payment of it. The Godhead of Christ puts merit into his obedience and sufferings, so that believers cannot ask for more than he has deserved they should receive. The Godhead of Christ gives efficacy to ordinances, so that the dead are quickened, the blind are enlightened, the weak are strengthened and confirmed. The Godhead of Christ puts life and vigour into the Christian's faith. He may safely be trusted who is "God only wise," who is "the Lord Almighty," whose "mercy and faithfulness endure for ever."

2. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *a clearer sight of his humanity*.—How often is he called "the Son of man," as well as "the Son of God!" One of the fathers imagined that this was the fault and the fall of the reprobate angels: a proud enviousness at the forethought of the Son of God's advancing—by taking upon him—the human nature.† And Luther supposed this was the occasion upon which Satan suggested to Mahomet in his "Alcoran,"—that many of the good angels became devils, because they refused to worship Adam.‡ It is "a great mystery of godliness, that God is manifested in the flesh." (1 Tim. iii. 16.) "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," says the beloved disciple. (John i. 14.) He had a true body and "a reasonable soul;" which soul of Christ, considering its nearest union to the Divine Nature, and the light and joy and glory it must needs be full of, may be looked upon, by millions of degrees,

\* *Necessarium est credere et confiteri articulum de Divinitate Christi; quem ubi Arius negavit necesse fuit etiam negare articulum redemptionis: vincere enim peccatum mundi, mortem, maledictionem, et iram Dei in semetipso, non est ullius creatura, sed Divinae potentiae opus. Quare negantes Divinitatem Christi amittunt tandem totum Christianismum, fiuntque prorsus Gentiles.*—LUTHERUS, tom. iv. p. 92. b. "It is necessary to believe and profess the article concerning the Divinity of Christ. When this was denied by Arius, he perceived that he must likewise deny the article of redemption. For to overcome and, in his own person, triumph over the sin of the whole world, death, the curse, and the wrath of God, is not the work of any creature whatsoever, but solely the exertion of Divine Power. Wherefore, those who deny the Divinity of Christ, at length lose the essence of Christianity, and then become complete Heathens."—EDIT.

† *Diabolus lapsus est invidia illâ quâ invidit hominibus tantam dignitatem quod Deus futurus esset homo.*—BERNARDUS. "The devil fell through the indulgence of that envy by which he begrudged men the enjoyment of such a high dignity as that of God about to assume human nature."—EDIT. (Heb. ii. 16.) † *Videtur diabolus ipse auctori Alcorani suggestisse quod idrô demones facti essent ex bonis angelis, quia noluerint Adamum adorare. Hoc suum peccatum non potuit celare Satan.*—LUTHERUS, tom. iii. p. 82. b. "The devil himself seems to have suggested to the author of the Alcoran, that the good angels had been transformed into demons, in consequence of their refusal to render supreme adoration to Adam. Satan was incapable of concealing this his own peculiar offence."—EDIT.

as the highest of creatures, and "the chief of all the ways of God." (Job xl. 19.)

The Holy Ghost took care, in the conception of Christ, that his human nature should not be in the least defiled; and his whole life was perfectly free from sin: he "did no evil, neither was guile found in his mouth," and his heart was always pure. And having taken man's nature, God is well pleased with that nature in Christ: the man Christ Jesus always did those things which were pleasing to the Father. The sons of men may come with boldness to this Mediator, who "is bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh. He bears "good-will to men," as the angels sang aloud at his nativity. Man may be confident of a kind reception, since Christ is so near a kin to them, and was "in all things," excepting sinful infirmities, "made like unto them, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for their iniquities." (Heb. ii. 17.) Christ is man; and this man is God's greatest favourite, far greater than Joseph to Pharaoh, or Mordecai to Ahasuerus. He has the highest place in heaven, as well as in his Father's heart. Let saints search into this truth, and they will find matters of unspeakable encouragement. Here is the way to know the Father, to worship him acceptably, and to attain to fellowship with him, here and for ever.\*

3. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *a more plain discerning and full persuasion, that he was fore-ordained to be a Redeemer.*—Christ was the person pitched upon from eternity to be the Saviour of the elect of God: "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (1 Peter i. 20.) He is therefore called "the elect one" in whom God's soul delights. (Isai. xlii. 1.) There was a compact and agreement made between the Father and the Son. The Son agrees in fulness of time to be made of a woman, to take a body, to offer up himself without spot to God; and the Father promises eternal life and salvation, and that he should have a church given him out of the world, (though the world is fallen into wickedness,) upon which church this eternal life is to be bestowed. The prophet Zechariah tells us of a counsel of peace between the Lord of hosts and Christ, "whose name is The Branch." (Zech. vi. 12, 13.) And the apostle speaks of "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began." (Titus i. 2.) This promise may very well be conceived to be made to the Son, that he should give eternal life to all that were given him of the Father. And when the saints behold that Christ is the person from eternity designed to be a Saviour, they may conclude that

\* *Extra Christum oculos et aures claudatis. Ubi Jesus est, ibi est totus seu tota Divinitas, ibi Pater et Spiritus. Extra hunc Christum Deus nusquam invenitur. Deus in carne illa sic apparet, ut extra hanc carnem coli et cognosci non possit.*—LUTHERUS, tom. iv. p. 491, a. "Close your eyes and ears against every object but Christ. Wherever Jesus is, there is the whole Godhead or the entire Divinity; for there is likewise the presence of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Except in this Christ, God is nowhere to be found by mortals. God is become so manifest and resplendent in this flesh, as to render it impossible for him, when divested of it, to be known and worshipped."—EDIT.

God hath a love to them, a care of them, and a purpose of grace toward them from everlasting: and how securely and sweetly may they rest upon the blessed Jesus, not doubting but he is a person every way fit and sufficient to finish that work of redemption, which he undertook according to the appointment of his Father!

4. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies a *greater insight into his sufferings*.—It is not without reason that the history of these is so largely penned by all the four evangelists. Certainly there is much in his crucifixion which it concerns believers to pry into. The sufferings of Christ were great, and that both in his body and in his soul. His body was in a bloody sweat, and his soul was amazed sore, and full of heaviness and sorrow, and in an agony, before he was condemned and fastened to the cross: but then all the pain and shame which he did undergo! His death was violent and accursed, and, just before he breathed out his last, his Father hid his face, his sufferings were unconceivably increased by a dreadful desertion, which made him roar out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. xxvii. 46.)

When Christ died, the sins of the whole church were laid upon the Head of the church. How many stings then had the death of Christ! “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.” (Isai. liii. 6.) And if *all* were laid upon him, *none* shall be laid to the charge of them who believe in him. But how came it to pass that Christ did not sink under such a burden? The first sin of the first man was enough to sink all the world into hell: how could Christ bear up under all the sins of so great a multitude? The reason is, because he is God; the blood of Christ is the blood of God. How loud does it cry for pardon and salvation, and how easily does it drown the cry of sin for vengeance! The blood and sufferings of Christ, applied and relied on by faith, justify the sinner, silence Satan the accuser, purge the conscience from dead works, and open a way into the holiest of all. By the cross of Christ we are to climb up to the throne of glory. The more the death of Christ is studied, the spirit will be more contrite, the heart more clean, the conscience more calm and quiet. The death of Christ puts the sin to death, but delivers the sinner from it.

5. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies a *more fruitful eyeing of his resurrection and going to his Father*.—Hark to the apostle: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” (Phil. iii. 10, 11.) The justice of God had Christ under an arrest, and had cast him into the grave as into a prison; and if he had not fully paid the debt of those whose surety he became, it would have held him in prison to this hour. If Christ were not risen, faith would be vain, the guilt and power of sin would remain. But being risen, true believers are delivered from sin’s punishment and power: sin and death and Satan are triumphed over. Know that there is a very great

power and virtue to be derived from the resurrection of our Lord. (1.) A power to raise a drooping spirit. When Christ was risen, he sends this message to his disciples, that they might be well assured his God was theirs, his Father their Father: "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." (John xx. 17.) (2.) A power to spiritualize carnal affections. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. iii. 1, 2.) (3.) Finally, a power to confirm and establish the soul in grace. For "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him:" (Rom. vi. 9;) and they that are once really quickened by him, shall never more become "dead in sins and trespasses," but shall continue faithful to the death, and may confidently expect a joyful resurrection. Christ is risen as "the first-fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. xv. 20.) Therefore there will be a harvest at the end of the world, when all the bodies of the saints that "were sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; and that were sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory." (Verses 42, 43.)

6. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *greater satisfaction about his imputed righteousness*.—The apostle, having spoken of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, presently declares his desire to be "found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."\* (Phil. iii. 9.) This righteousness of Christ is called "the righteousness of God;" because it is that which God accepts, and upon the account of which he justifies the ungodly. Moreover, Christ himself is Jehovah, the true God; else his obedience and sufferings would not have been sufficient to have been our justifying righteousness. This righteousness is said to be imputed; and imputed by the Lord himself, and that without works;

\* *Cur, insane sophista, asseris dilectionem, spem, et alias virtutes? Scio has esse insignia Dei dona divinitus mandata per Spiritum Sanctum in nostris cordibus excitari et ali. Scio fidem sine his donis non existere. Sed nunc nobis questio est quid cuiusque proprium sit. Tenes manu varia semina: non autem quero quæ cum quibus conjuncta sint, sed quæ cuiusque propria virtus. Hic aperte dic quid faciat sola fides, non cum quibus virtutibus sit conjuncta. Sola fides apprehendit promissionem, credit promittenti Deo, Deo purrigenti admovet manum, et accipit: hoc proprium solius fidei opus est. Charitas, spes, et patientia habent alias materias circa quas versantur, habent alios limites intra quos consistunt; non enim complectuntur promissionem, sed mandata exequuntur.*—LUTHERUS, tom. ii. in *Gen.* p. 57, a. "Why, insane sophister, dost thou assert the existence of love, hope, and other virtues? I am aware that these are signal gifts of God, which are divinely commanded to be excited and nourished in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. I know that without these gifts faith itself cannot subsist. But now comes this question to be discussed between us: 'What is the property of each of these gifts?' Thou holdest in thy hand various seeds: I do not ask thee how they are intermixed with each other, but what is the peculiar virtue of each. Now then plainly declare to me the achievements of faith alone, not the virtues with which it is conjoined. Faith alone apprehends the promise, yields credence to God who promises, reaches out its hands to God who proffers his benefits, and gladly accepts them: all this is the proper work of faith alone. There are other matters about which *love, hope, and patience* are severally concerned, and each of them has particular limits within which it is exercised: for it is not their province to embrace the promise, but to execute what is commanded."

—EDIT.

and this doctrine was preached in the Old Testament by David, as well as in the New by the apostle Paul. (Rom. iv. 6.) Nay, as Christ is called "the Lord our Righteousness," (Jer. xxiii. 6,) so Jerusalem, the church, is called after her husband's name, "the Lord our Righteousness," (Jer. xxxiii. 16,) to show the reality of the imputation of this righteousness, and the real and blessed benefits that follow upon it. It is by this righteousness applied by faith, that we are justified from all our transgressions of the law, and from our sins against the gospel. That guilt which we have contracted by our impenitency and unbelief, which are sins against the gospel, can be removed out of God's sight only by the righteousness, by the blood and death, of his Son. All justification therefore before God, whether our sins have been against the first or the second covenant, is purely, merely by this righteousness of Jesus Christ: whereof faith is *medium applicationis*, "a means to apply." O the completeness and perfection of this righteousness of Christ! There is no need of any addition. He is called "the Sun of Righteousness;" (Mal. iv. 2;) and therefore, in the business of justification, all other righteousness should vanish, as the stars do at the sun-rising. Let Satan rage, let Rome deride and reproach; this article of imputed righteousness must stand, or the church will fall. And the better Christ is known, the more confidently shall we own his righteousness.

7. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *a more constant and fiducial eyeing of his intercession, and the pity and compassions of him that intercedes*.—Believers should better know this Friend and Advocate in the court of heaven, who always appears for them there. He presents to his Father what he did and suffered upon earth: and how effectual is this on the church's behalf! Though the Head be in heaven, yet he is mindful of his members on earth, and is ready to plead for them. Here is the ground of boldness in coming to the throne of grace; for "we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 14—16.) Here is the reason why the saints' prayers are so mighty and prevalent,—they are backed with the intercession of Christ. Nay, it is upon this that the apostle concludes believers' salvation to the uttermost: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.)

8. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *being better acquainted with his great power, and continual presence with his church which is so nearly related to him*.—Behold! "All power is given to him both in heaven and in earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) "At his name every knee does bow; and every tongue," if it will speak truth, must "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. ii. 10, 11.) He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the



King of kings, and Lord of lords." (1 Tim. vi. 15.) The mightiest monarchs are more under his power than their meanest slaves are under theirs. He has all the reprobate angels in a chain: the key of hell is in his hand, he commands all there. And in heaven the elect angels are his ministers to fulfil his pleasure. He is indeed exalted "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. i. 21.) Now this Lord, who is so powerful, has assured his church, which is his spouse, nay, his body, that "he will be with her always to the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) The church therefore, in spite of earth and hell, shall last while the world lasts. Let fear give way, and faith increase. Believers may contemn their proudest adversaries. See Zion's carriage toward Sennacherib, the great king of Assyria: "The virgin, the daughter of Sion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee." (Isai. xxxvii. 22.)

9. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *a better understanding [of] him as "Mediator of the new covenant."*—So he is called, Heb. xii. 24. On this covenant, pardoning mercy, renewing grace, and eternal glory are promised. Earth and heaven, the creature and the Creator himself, by himself, are made over to believers. Now you must know that all their "promises are *Yea and Amen* in Christ." (2 Cor. i. 20.) The covenant was made for his sake: it was ratified and confirmed by his death: his blood is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb. xiii. 20.) His blood being shed, the covenant stands good unto eternity. Here is vast encouragement to lay hold upon the promises. If you come to God, and ask: "Lord! hast thou not made promises of pardon to the penitent and believing? promises of grace to the humble? promises of satisfaction to the hungry souls? promises of joy and comfort to the mourners?" in his word, God answers, "*Yea.*" If you farther add: "Lord, let these promises be accomplished for thy Christ's sake;" the answer is, "*Amen*, it shall be so; they shall be all fulfilled."

10. Growing in the knowledge of Christ implies *a more earnest looking for his WORD appearing.*—The day of this appearing is appointed, it draws very near; being hastened by the prayers and sufferings of saints, by the sins and security of the world. "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.) If Christ were better known, this day would be more longed-for by the saints. Innocency will then be cleared, all enemies more than conquered, salvation will be perfected, the whole church of Christ with all its members glorified. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.) Thus you see what it is to grow in the knowledge of Christ; and the telling you this, is indeed a directing you how to grow in this knowledge.

II. In the second place I am to show you *what properties are required in this knowledge.*

1. This knowledge of Christ *should grow more and more certain.*—

The apostle speaks of "riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." (Col. ii. 2.) The truths of Christ are certain in themselves. The mind should "understand" them as most certain; there should be "an assurance" of their certainty, a "full assurance" of it. Such an assurance is a rich thing, a thing of great value; for it will have a great virtue and efficacy both upon the heart and life.

2. This knowledge of Christ *should more and more humble the Christian*.—When he sees the treasures of wisdom in Christ, he should be sensible of his own folly. When he views the robe of Christ's righteousness, he should be sensible that his own righteousnesses are but rags. When he studies Christ's fulness and power, he should be sensible of his own emptiness and weakness. Finally, he should see himself to be nothing, when he perceives that "Christ is all, and in all." (Col. iii. 11.)

3. This knowledge of Christ *should grow more spiritual*.—He is not to be known after a carnal manner; and therefore Popish images are very unfit representations of him. Not that his flesh is swallowed up of his Divinity, as Servetus dreamed; but his flesh is glorified; and as transcendently glorious we must now look upon him. We must also know him as the purchaser and bestower of all spiritual gifts and graces, that we may be further renewed by his Spirit. The apostle is thus to be understood when he says: "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Cor. v. 16, 17.)

4. This knowledge of Christ *should encourage to a more settled reliance upon him*.—When we see what a sure and everlasting foundation Christ is, here we should build higher and higher till the top reach heaven: there is no fear that the foundation will not bear the superstructure. We may safely depend upon Christ for a lasting peace with God, for perfecting the work of grace, and abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom. "He that believeth on him shall never be confounded." (1 Peter ii. 6.) Let not this reliance be called "a lolling faith;" but, without scoffing at her, let the church of Christ be permitted to "lean upon her Beloved," while she is so weak as she is in the wilderness of this world. (Canticles viii. 5.)

5. The knowledge of Christ *should raise him higher and higher in Christians' estimation*.—The more we know of him, new beauties will still be discovered in him. He is "greater than Jonas" a prophet, "greater than Solomon" a king, who was the most famous king of Israel. (Matt. xii. 41, 42.) "He is altogether lovely;" (Canticles v. 16;) nay, he is the angels' wonder, heaven's darling, "the brightness of his Father's glory." Here is no danger of an overvalue, of an excessive love. Therefore let the spark be blown up into a flame that may "not be quenched by many floods of water," that may be too strong for death and hell itself to conquer. (Canticles viii. 6, 7.)

6. The knowledge of Christ *should have a great aspect upon whatever else is revealed in the word of God*.—It is a great matter to know

“the truth as it is in Jesus.” (Eph. iv. 21.) The apostle tells us, that he desired to know nothing else but “Jesus Christ and him crucified;” (1 Cor. ii. 2;) which plainly intimates that he looked upon other things with a respect unto Christ: and, indeed, without such a respect, what knowledge can be profitable, what knowledge can be comfortable? Luther said, *In Christo crucifixo est vera theologia, et cognitio Dei*: “There cannot be a right knowledge of God, if there be an ignorance of Christ crucified.”

7. The knowledge of Christ,—it *should be operative still in a greater measure*.—It is inexcusable to be slothful, where the Master is so good, the promised assistance so great, the commands far from grievous, and the reward eternal. The better we know our Lord Jesus, we shall serve him with a more perfect heart, with a more willing mind. Obedience is reasonable, pleasant, necessary. We should be steadfast, and always abound herein. Labour shall not be in vain. (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

8. The knowledge of Christ *should cause great glorying and joy*.—Well may believers, who “have no confidence in the flesh,” who “worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iii. 3.) God in Christ is become their Father, and he will not disinherit any of his children whom he has adopted, but they shall abide in the house for ever. Nothing shall separate them from his love. (Rom. viii. 35—39.) The marriage-union between Christ and them shall never be dissolved. Mansions are preparing for them in heaven, where there is everlasting light and pleasantness; and they are fitting for these mansions, and shall not be long out of them. (John xiv. 2, 3.) Well may they love their Lord, and, “believing, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Peter i. 8.)

III. In the third place, the DIRECTIONS follow, *how you may increase and grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ*. The directions are these:—

1. *Be sensible of your remaining ignorance*.—And how great the hinderance is, how great the harm is, that is the effect of it. You that are “the children of light and of the day” have much of night and darkness in you. A perfect day you cannot indeed expect in this world. But then it is possible that your darkness may be much more dispelled; and it is your fault, if it be not. So far as darkness remains, the prince of darkness has power, the world has an advantage; and there is danger of being reduced\* to the works of darkness. The want of greater light is the cause of doubts and fears, disconsolateness and confusion. How little do you know of Christ in comparison of what you ought or might! Are you got beyond the surface of gospel-mysteries? how far from searching into the heart of them, and discerning the depths of wisdom, the height of love, in them? Hence it is, that your admiration and affection are no greater. You are engaged in a warfare. It is dangerous fighting in the dark, especially with an enemy that fights best there. You are travelling in

\* In the Latin signification of “brought back,” very usual among our old writers.—  
EDIT.

a very narrow way: the less of light is in you, you will find it the more difficult to keep this way. For shame! Be not babes in knowledge, "but in understanding be ye men." (1 Cor. xiv. 20.) Let it very much humble you to consider the small progress [which] you have made in knowledge, notwithstanding the great advantages you have had of improvement.

2. *Compare all other knowledge and this knowledge of Christ together, and see the vast difference in point of excellency.*—And this will stir you up to grow therein. The philosophers of old,—how restless were their minds, how endless their inquiries! The farther they went, the more they were puzzled; and, after long study, they came to understand that they fully understood nothing. That wise king of Israel, after he had diligently employed his large understanding about human knowledge—he cries out, as a man exceedingly vexed and disappointed: "In much wisdom there is much grief: and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow." (Eccles. i. 18.) But the knowledge of Christ is of another nature. He that rightly understands the Lord Jesus, understands how to have his guilt removed, his heart renewed, his conscience calmed, his soul secured, and that for ever. This knowledge is not a vexation, but a satisfaction, to the spirit; both because of its certainty, and because of the superabundant grace and fulness in Christ who is known. Here it may truly be said, *Intellectus est in quiete*: \* "The better Christ is understood, the more the soul that understands him is at rest."

3. *You must not lean to your own parts and understandings.*—Men of the greatest natural capacities have been men of the greatest mistakes and the foulest errors; and herein† they have embraced for the truths of Christ: and the reason is, because, their hearts being proud, God thwarted them, and their pride blinded them. In your ordinary, secular affairs, it is not safe to confide in your own wisdom; but even here you are to acknowledge God. Certainly then, when searching into the mysteries of the gospel, you must be sensible that the sharpest understanding has need of illumination from above. You must indeed "be fools, that you may be wise." (1 Cor. iii. 18.) A sight of your folly and weakness must make and keep you very humble. Such the Lord has promised to "guide in judgment, and to teach his way." (Psalm xxv. 9.)

4. *Heedfully attend to the word of the truth of the gospel.*—This is the great means to infuse and to increase the knowledge of Christ. It is called "the word of Christ:" "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;" (Col. iii. 16;) because Christ is the author of it, and the principal subject therein treated of. The gospel informs you of his natures, divine and human; of his offices, prophetic, priestly, kingly; of his benefits, justification, adoption, regeneration, strong consolation, and such-like. The gospel informs you what he did, what he suffered, and how he eyed his church's

\* "Here the understanding is at rest." The translation in the text is, like many others, an ingenious play upon this phrase.—EDIT. † This is an evident misprint for "these," or some other word, similar in signification.—EDIT.

good in both. It informs you where Christ is *gloriously* present,—in the highest heavens; where he is *graciously* present,—he “walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks,” (Rev. ii. 1,) and accompanies his own institutions with a mighty and gracious efficacy. O study this gospel more! take it in at *your eyes*, by reading it; at *your ears*, by hearing it; nay, receive it into *your very hearts*. The gospel is that which brings you to the knowledge of Christ, and so “makes you wise unto salvation.”\* (2 Tim. iii. 15.)

5. *Look unto Jesus himself.*—For “in Him are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. ii. 3.) The sun is seen by its own light; the knowledge of Christ is derived from himself. He is the greatest and best of prophets: who teacheth like him? He not only reveals the things of peace, but also gives the power of spiritual discerning. It is from him that we have the “eye-salve to make us see;” (Rev. iii. 18;) and the more [we have] of this eye-salve, we see the clearer. What kind of master would that be that were well skilled in all sorts of learning, and were able also to give parts and capacities to all his scholars, that they might be all excellent? Christ is such a master as can give subtlety to the simple, and reveal those things to babes, which are above the wise and prudent of the world. It is said of Jesus, that “he opened the disciples’ understandings, that they might understand the scriptures.” (Luke xxiv. 45.) There was good reason why the apostle should wish that “the Lord Jesus might be with Timothy’s spirit;” (2 Tim. iv. 22;) that he might be better instructed, and that he might be a better instructor.

6. *Cry for more knowledge, and eye the promise of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.*—The Psalmist, who was “wiser than his enemies,” that “understood more than his teachers,” that had “greater understanding than the ancients;” (Psalm cxix. 98—100;)—how often and how earnestly does he cry to be taught of God! “Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” (Verses 33, 34.) He that has the greatest measure of knowledge, has reason to beg for more. And that which is an encouragement to prayer, is the readiness of “the Father of lights” to give wisdom liberally, without upbraiding; (James i. 5, 17;) and likewise the promise [which] he has made of his Spirit; who is styled by the apostle, Πνευμα σοφιας και αποκαλυψεως, “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.” (Eph. i.

\* *Conarer in animos summâ vi inserere, infigere, infulcire amorem: amorem autem? Imò verò ardorem potius literarum verè sacrarum. Conarer ad legendum illis extimulare, ad perscrutandum animare, ad meditandum, nocturnâ versandâ manu, versandum diurnâ; ad insensendum, ad immoriendum denique, quantâ maximâ possem vehementiâ inflammare.*—MARTINUS DORPIUS *De Laudibus Pauli*, p. 6. “I would endeavour with all my might to introduce, infix, and force into their minds a love for that learning which is truly sacred. But why do I call it merely a love? I would attempt to infuse into them an irrepresible ardour. I would stimulate them to read; animate them deeply to search, to meditate, and to engage themselves, both by night and by day, in this delightful exercise. Nay, with the utmost vehemence of which I am capable, I would strive to inflame them with a determination to devote their latest hours to these holy studies, and even to be so intent upon them as to disregard life itself.”—EDIT.

17.) "The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God:" these are the truths of Christ in the gospel, and the Spirit reveals them; which also "could never have entered into the heart of men." (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.) Lay hold of the promise of the Spirit, which the Father is more forward to give than earthly parents bread to their hungry children. (Luke xi. 13.) Take heed of grieving this Holy Spirit; (Eph. iv. 30;) deliver up yourselves to his guidance, and "hear what he saith unto the churches;" (Rev. ii. 7;) and he will "lead you" farther "into all truth," and "glorify Christ," (John xvi. 13, 14,) by causing you to see more of his beauty, more of his glory.

7. *Take heed of seducing spirits.*—Hearken to the apostle John: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God;" (1 John iv. 1;) and the trial is to be made with reference to Christ. (Verse 2.) It is much to be observed, that Satan, the father of lies, in broaching of heresies has struck at our Lord Jesus in a special manner. Arius of old denied his Godhead; Eutyches, his manhood. Nestorius denied the union of his nature in one person; Pelagius opposed his grace; and antichrist would fain banish his gospel, and hinder him from being looked unto as "the only Mediator." (1 Tim. ii. 5.) You that are the sheep of Christ, hearken not to the voice of such strangers, but flee from them. (John x. 5.) Be not like "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," as you would become "perfect men in the knowledge of the Son of God," and attain to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv. 13, 14.)

8. *Abstain from worldly and fleshly lusts.*—These put out the soul's eye, and take away the heart. These lusts are called "deceitful and foolish lusts," for they make mere fools of those that make provision to fulfil them. The cleaner your hearts are from pride, envy, passion, malice, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, the clearer will the eyes of your understandings be to see the Lord Jesus. The apostle bids the Ephesians to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts:" and then adds, "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind." (Eph. iv. 22, 23.) So, Col. iii. 5, 10: "Mortify your members which are upon earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection," &c.; and then it follows, "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him."

9. *Associate yourselves with them who have a great measure of the knowledge of Christ.*—Solomon tells us, "He that walketh with the wise shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Prov. xiii. 20.) Value the communion of saints, and delight in them as the most excellent company; and like them best when they show the best of themselves, and most of all manifest that light and heat that is in them. O what an improvement might saints make one of another, as to wisdom, grace, and consolation, if they were not wanting one to another and to themselves also! The weaker Christians should learn of the stronger, especially of their teachers;

and teachers themselves, by imparting light to others, would find their own light increased; knowledge being like the widow's oil, which, the more it was drawn out, the more it was augmented.\*

10. *Let your end in desiring a greater degree of the knowledge of Christ be right.*—Not that you may be puffed-up in your own minds, or admired by men, but that Christ may be more admired and esteemed by you. “If knowledge puffs you up, you are not really great and grown, but only swelled and diseased,” as a father observes, *Superbia non est magnitudo sed tumor.*† More talents will be committed to your trust, if you ask more, that you may improve them. Let this be your design in desiring to grow in the knowledge of Christ,—that your faith may grow exceedingly, that your love may grow more ardent, and that “over all things” in your hearts “Christ may have the pre-eminence.” (Col. i. 18.) Long to know him better, that this knowledge may more perfectly cleanse both your hearts and conversations. “Follow on to know him,” (Hosea vi. 3,) that you may follow harder after him.

IV. In the fourth and last place, I am to tell you *what use and improvement you are to make of this knowledge of Christ, or of Christ known.*

1. And here I might speak largely, first of all, to *them that are without Christ.*—You that are in this state must needs be also “without hope, and without God in the world.” (Eph. ii. 12.) You that are such, pray consider what you have heard concerning the Lord Jesus; and seriously weigh with yourselves, whether you have reason still to slight him. Much good has been told you concerning him; and none but a lying spirit can suggest, and a foolish heart believe, that it is best still to keep at a distance from him. Christ calls after you to this day, though you have long rejected him. “Behold, he stands at the door and knocks,” (Rev. iii. 20,) waiting that he may be gracious. O that at length you would be prevailed-with to come to him! I shall only use these two arguments to persuade you:—

(1.) *Christ is willing to receive the very worst of you, upon your returning and believing.*—He will take you with all your faults, and obtain your full and free pardon. He will take you with all your debts, and cross your scores, cancel your bonds, though your debts amount to many thousand talents. He will take you with all your infirmities, though never so foul and loathsome; and heal and cleanse your souls by his blood and Spirit. The apostle Paul speaks of his being “apprehended of Christ Jesus:” (Phil. iii. 12:) and when our Lord Jesus apprehended him and graciously received him, whom did

\* *Ego ex eorum numero me esse profiteor, qui scribunt proficiendo, et scribendo proficiunt.*—AUGUSTINI *Epist.* 7. “I profess myself to be in the number of those who write for profit and improvement, and who are both profited and improved by writing.”—EDIT.

† *Apparet Christus humilis ad superbos. Est enim superbia non magnitudo sed tumor: quod autem tumet videtur magnum, sed non est sanum.*—AUGUSTINI *De Temp.* *Serm.* 27. “In the eyes of the proud, Christ appears mean and lowly. For pride is not itself of any real magnitude, but a little thing which swells and tumefies itself. That which is thus puffed up seems to be great; but it is only inflated, hollow, and unsound.”—EDIT.

he receive? It was "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious;" and yet he "obtained mercy." (1 Tim. i. 13.) If the apostle had ransacked all, he could hardly have found a worse crew, than those mentioned, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11: "Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners:" and yet these were "washed and sanctified" first, and saved afterwards. Here is a strong inducement to the very worst to come to this gracious, this mighty Saviour.

(2.) *Christ is willing to give himself to you.*—So that all that he is and has shall be yours. You are not only called, but wooed; you are solicited to give your consent to a marriage; and this is the greatest and the best match of all,—to be married to "the Prince of life" and "Lord of all." Be but willing to be his, he is much more willing to be yours. O wonder at his condescending love! wonder at your own madness in standing out! and presently yield yourselves to Jesus, saying, "Lord, we repent, we believe! help thou our unbelief, and heal the impenitency and hardness of our hearts!"

2. I shall say no more at present to the unbelievers, but *address myself to you that are saints, who have known Christ with a saving knowledge*; and shall show you how Christ and the knowledge of him may be used and improved.

(1.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to God himself.*—God out of Christ is very dreadful; thus considered, sinful man must look upon him as the devils do, "and tremble." (James ii. 19.) He has fury in his face, curses in his mouth, and a glittering sword in his hand; and what flesh can stand before him? But you that are believers are to look upon him as he is in Christ. Now his wrath is taken away, he is the God of love and peace, and grace and comfort. You may discern his bowels yearning toward you, his everlasting arm embracing you. His language is most sweet and full of kindness; nay, he swears he will bless you with all sorts of blessings, but especially with the best, namely, spiritual and everlasting. Under the Old Testament God was called "the Lord that brought Israel out of Egypt;" afterwards, "the Lord that brought Judah out of the land of the north." (Jer. xvi. 14, 15.) But under the New Testament, he is styled again, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. i. 3; 1 Peter i. 3.) Behold him in Christ, and you will see him to be a Father, a Guide, a Shield, an exceeding great Reward. You may abound in faith, and hope, and joy in the Lord; for he is the God of your salvation.

(2.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to the law of God.*—The law, considered in itself, since the fall of man, is the ministration of death. It condemns the transgressors, and concludes and leaves them under wrath; and it is so weak through the flesh, that it can give righteousness and life to none. But if this law be looked upon in the hand of Christ the Mediator, its curse is removed, its rigour abated. The believer may "delight in the law of God," (Psalm i. 2,) and prefer it before "thousands of gold and silver;" (Psalm cxix. 72;) and is to account it one of the choice new-covenant blessings,



to have this law written in his very heart. (Heb. viii. 10.) Christ heals the natural enmity against the law of God, which was in the hearts of believers; and strengthens them to yield obedience to it; and that promise is fulfilled: "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.)

(3.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to sin.*—Behold the Lord Jesus, "for sin condemning sin in the flesh;" (Rom. viii. 3;) that is, by being made a sin-offering, he condemned sin. Sin's cause falls; sin is, as it were, cast; and the sinner, believing in Jesus, is acquitted. If you are in Christ, sin,—though it has damned thousands, yet you are freed from its condemning power. "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) Behold this Lamb of God, who bare your sins himself, a load too heavy for you to bear! Are you afflicted with the remainders of lusts and corruptions? still look to Jesus. No lust so strong but he can easily mortify it. The death of Christ has a killing power in reference to sin; without this all means of mortification will be of little efficacy. The apostle speaks of *συμφυτοι γεγοναμεν τῷ ὁμοιωματι τοῦ θανάτου*, being "planted together in the likeness of his death." (Rom. vi. 5.) As the branch derives virtue from the vine, so the Christian mortifying power from Christ's death. When he, the Second Adam, was crucified, the old Adam was crucified with him; and truly the old man with his lusts and deeds must be mortified, by the improvement of Christ's crucifixion. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. vi. 6.)

(4.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ in reference to angels, and that both good and evil angels.*—The good ones have Christ to be their head; (Col. ii. 10;) and they, holding this Head, are confirmed and established. These good angels are said to ascend and descend upon Christ; (John i. 51;) which Luther refers to their contemplation of Christ's divinity and humanity: *Videre, in eadem personâ, summa et infima conjunctissima*.\* But Calvin refers it to the angels' ministrations.† Here is an allusion to Jacob's ladder. Christ is that ladder whereby we may ascend. It is through Him that heaven is open; and it is upon his account that the angels are ready to do offices of kindness to believers, and are so ready to be "ministering spirits, to

\* "They behold the very highest and lowest things strangely conjoined in the same person."—EDIT. † *Hoc beneficium Christo acceptum ferre convenit, quia sine ipso hostile potius angelis nobiscum discidium est quàm familiaris juvandi nostri cura. Idè super ipsum ascendere et descendere dicuntur, non quòd illi soli ministrent: sed quòd ejus respectu et in ejus honorem complectantur suâ curâ totum Ecclesiæ corpus.*—CALVINUS in Johan. cap. i. "It was proper to render this grateful service to Christ, as an honour due to him; because without him the separation subsisting between us and the angels would have assumed a hostile character rather than that of a familiar and kind solicitude to afford us needful assistance. They are therefore said to ascend and descend upon the Son of man, not because they minister solely to him, but because, in reference to him and for his honour, they embrace in their care the entire body of the church of Christ."—EDIT.

minister for them that are heirs of salvation." (Heb. i. 14.) And as from Christ you are to expect care from the good angels, so he can easily defend you from the bad ones. He stops the mouth of the devil, who is "the accuser of the brethren," by that full satisfaction which he has made to Divine Justice. He detects him as a liar, and discovers his wiles and devices. He opposes Satan as a murderer, and hinders him from devouring the least lamb of his flock. He is ready to arm you with the whole armour of God, and strengthens you both to combat and to conquer. He has tried Satan's strength in his own person, and has got the victory. "He has spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them." (Col. ii. 15.)

(5.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to this present world.*—Christ in the days of his flesh had little of the world, and in the hour of temptation he despised the offer of the whole. Surely, it is a thing of small value, and it usually proves a great snare; else Christians should have more of it. "They are enemies to the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things." (Phil. iii. 18, 19.) They are strangers to "the power of his resurrection," whose hearts and treasure are not in heaven. Look unto Jesus, and look off from the world, or look upon it with contempt. Be not so eager after that which Christ lost his life to deliver you from. "He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal. i. 4.)

(6.) *Improve this knowledge of Christ with reference to duties, grace, and perseverance in grace.*—Let all your duties "be done in his name;" (Col. iii. 17;) that is, in his strength; and with expectation of acceptance entirely upon the account of his mediation. Apply yourselves to him for "grace to help in every time of need;" (Heb. iv. 16;) for grace to do, for grace to suffer, for grace to persevere, and "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. iv. 12.)

The believer in Christ, notwithstanding all weaknesses and remainders of indwelling sin, is much safer than innocent Adam in Paradise; because Christ has engaged for believers, that they shall endure to the end; and that he will "give them eternal life," and "none shall pluck them out of his hand, and the hand of his Father." (John x. 28, 29.) In such hands they must needs be safe indeed.

(7.) *Improve this knowledge of Christ with reference to comfort.*—It is He that sends the Comforter who abides with the church for ever. (John xiv. 16.) The church and the church's comfort are built upon the same rock, Christ. Your consolation then will be strong, if you "fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you." (Heb. vi. 18.) You that are saints, well may you rejoice in Christ Jesus, since by him you have received the atonement. Peace he has left you for a legacy, a peace that will abide in the midst of the greatest outward troubles, a comfort that most abounds when sufferings are most abundant. (2 Cor. i. 5.) Consider the Lord Jesus, and be filled with "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." (2 Thess. ii. 16.) How strong is his hand, how tender his heart, how un-

changeable his kindness! "Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.)

(8.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to his church's enemies.*—He is above their match, and he will make them know it. They cannot hide their counsels from Him "who searcheth the reins and hearts." (Rev. ii. 23.) And they must needs at last be disappointed and worsted, for Christ will reign "till all his foes be made his footstool." (11eb. x. 13.) Julian the emperor wanted neither policy, nor valour, nor an armed power; and yet of a sudden he had a deadly wound given him; and cries out, *Vicisti, Galilæe!* "O Galilean!" so he called Christ, "thou hast overcome me!" This will be the end of the stoutest and proudest of the church's adversaries. Christians are as dear to Christ as "the apple of his eye." They are bold fellows that will venture to give Christ a blow on his very eye; this affront will not be borne long, and what a deadly stroke will this Judge of the world at last return!

(9.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to death.*—He has grappled with death, and has been too hard for it.\* He has taken away its sting, which was the worst thing in it; and is ready to "deliver from that bondage" which "the fear of death" causes. (Heb. ii. 15.) The apostle, having eyed Christ and the resurrection, insults over this last enemy: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. xv. 55.) Christ has sanctified the grave into a bed of rest; and, to use Luther's expression, *Mors est janua vitæ*, "Death is the gate to life and immortality." The dying Christian, when he lifts up his eyes to his Lord and Saviour,—he may say then with Laurentius, *Nox mea tenebras non habet*, "The night of death hath no darkness in it," but is an entrance into the light that is everlasting.

(10.) *Improve the knowledge of Christ with reference to eternity.*—So vast and endless a thing may well be of an amazing consideration; and when once in eternity, there is no correcting of mistakes. Look therefore unto Jesus to search and prove you; and to keep you sincere and without offence unto the last. And when time is just come to an end, behold your Lord entered into everlasting joy himself, and ready to receive you into the same. Christ is gone already, as "your forerunner," (Heb. vi. 20,) nay, as your representative, and has taken possession of the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance. Do you gladly follow him, as knowing that when your "earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, you have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.)

\* *Mirabili modo fit dum mors Christum devorat devoratur, dum occidit occiditur, dum vincit vincitur.*—LUTHER. tom. iv. p. 679. "By a process worthy of our highest admiration, it has been wisely ordered, that while Death is in the act of devouring Christ, he is himself devoured; while slaying another, he is himself slain; and before he can boast of his conquest, he is completely conquered."—EDIT.

## SERMON XIII.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL SLATER, A. M.

HOW MAY OUR BELIEF OF GOD'S GOVERNING THE WORLD  
SUPPORT US IN ALL WORLDLY DISTRACTIONS?

*The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—Psalm xcvi. 1, 2.*

THE state of affairs is oftentimes (and so it is at this day) so involved and confused, that we need not wonder if we see men of wisdom greatly perplexed in their spirits, and almost sunk into discouragement. The best of saints, whose hearts are most furnished and fortified with grace, would be of all others most subject to discomposure, were it not that they feel peace and comfort flowing into them from the remembrance and sweet consideration of a God above. What good man could possibly have any tolerable enjoyment of himself, or possess his soul in patience, while he observes the eccentric and irregular motions of things below?—the restlessness, tumblings, and tossings of the world; desirable comforts and delights blasted in a moment; afflictions and troubles breaking in with a sudden surprise; order quite subverted, laws violated, and the edge of them turned against those that are faithful and peaceable in a land, and all things indeed turned upside down; wickedness rampant, and religion oppressed; the spurious brood of Babylon clothed in scarlet, and prospering in the world, when at the same time the precious sons of Zion, comparable to the finest gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, yea, broken potsherds, and so thrown upon dunghills, or cast into prisons, and filled full “with the contempt of them that are at ease:” these things, I say, would soon break his heart,—did he not see Him who is invisible, and firmly believe a wheel within a wheel, an unseen hand, which steadily and prudently guides and directs all things, keeping up a beautiful order where reason can discern nothing but ataxy and confusion. Those that are conversant in the sacred scriptures do find, that the flourishing state of ungodly men, and the afflicted condition of gracious persons, have proved to some of the saints so hard a knot, as they have gone to God for the untying of it; and to others it hath been the occasion of so furious and violent temptations, as had almost tripped up their heels, and broken the neck of their religion. Upon that very score holy Asaph was almost ready to conclude, he had “in vain cleansed his heart, and washed his hands in innocency.” (Psalm lxxiii. 13.)

But if we will repair unto the sanctuary, and consult the divine oracles, and believe them when they tell us that the eternal God, our God, is the Rector and Governor of the world, it will revive our spirits, reduce our souls into their right frame, and preserve them in a due composure, when the scene of affairs is most ruffled. To entertain you with a discourse upon this choice and seasonable subject is the work allotted me at this time; and the question now to be discussed and answered is this :—

## QUESTION.

*How may our belief of God's governing the world support us in all worldly distractions ?*

The text which I have now read is the precious and sure foundation on which I am to build. In that we find these things observable :—

1. *A comfortable assertion* : “The Lord reigneth ;” that is, Jehovah, God, or, if you please, our Lord Jesus Christ, unto whom all power is given both in heaven and in earth ; for, that he is particularly intended in this psalm, may be gathered from verse 7 : “Con-founded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols : worship him, all ye gods.” Which last words relate to Christ, as the apostle Paul assures us : “When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” (Heb. i. 6.)

2. Here is *an exhortation to joy and gladness upon account of the Lord's reigning* : “Let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.” That is, Let all the world rejoice, at least all those that are the subjects of this mighty Lord, who have bowed to his sceptre, and submitted themselves to his government, as “a willing people in the day of his power.” Christ was “the desire of all nations,” and there is reason why he and his government should be the delight and satisfaction of all nations ; both those in “the earth,” by which some understand the continent ; and those in “the isles,” England, Scotland, and Ireland among the rest ; or, if you please, you may understand the Gentiles, because that passage of the prophet, “The isles shall wait for his law,” (Isai. xlii. 4,) is by the evangelist rendered thus : “In his name shall the Gentiles trust.” (Matt. xii. 21.)

3. We have here *the manner how the Lord administers his kingdoms, and manageth his government* : and that is laid down in two things :—

(1.) First. *With terrible majesty and mysteriousness.*—This you have in the former part of the second verse : “Clouds and darkness are round about him.” Which words do intimate to us the tremendous majesty of the Lord, which may well strike an awe upon his subjects and friends, and much more fill his enemies with dread and horror. He was terrible at his giving forth the fiery law upon Mount Sinai ; as we read, Deut. iv. 11 : “The mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.” So he is and

will be still in his present and future appearances and dispensations : "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal. iii. 2.) Well may that question be propounded; for his "fan in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. iii. 12.)

And as these clouds and darkness do signify the terrible majesty, so [do they signify] the mysteriousness of his proceedings. He often goeth so much out of our sight, that we are unable to give an account of what he doeth, or what he is about to do. Frequently the pillar of Divine Providence is dark throughout, to Israelites as well as Egyptians; so that his own people understand not the riddles, till he is pleased to be his own interpreter, and so lead them into his secrets. His "way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known," &c. (Psalm lxxvii. 19.)

(2.) The Lord manageth his kingdom and government *with perfect equity and unspotted justice*.—"Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." *Righteousness*, whereby he preserves, saves, and rewards the good; *judgment*, whereby he punishes, confounds, and destroys the wicked: these are *the habitation of his throne*, his tribunal, his seat of judicature. These are the basis or foundation, which give unto his throne *rectitudinem et stabilitatem*, "rectitude and establishment." His "throne is established in righteousness, and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre." Though there be clouds, yet no blemishes; though darkness, yet no deformities: "The Lord is upright: he is our Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." (Psalm xcii. 15.) The doctrine I shall speak to is this:—

#### DOCTRINE.

*In the midst of all outward distractions and confusions, God's governing the world may and should be the support and joy of his saints.*—In the handling thereof I shall observe this method:—

I. *Inquire what government is.*

II. *Prove that God doth govern the world.*

III. *Show why this should support and comfort his people.*

IV. *Improve the whole in a way of use.*

I. I begin with the first of these:—

QUESTION. *What is government?*

ANSWER. I answer, *Government is the exerting or putting forth of that power which any one is justly clothed with, for the ordering and directing of persons and things to their right and proper ends.*—In this description of government are three things to be considered and spoken to:—

1. *In all government there is an end fixed and aimed at.*—Thus it is in domestic or family-government, which parents have over their children by nature, and masters over their servants by virtue of contract. The end of that government is the good of the family, and every one that is a member thereof. The parent or master ought not

to be wholly addicted to himself, nor to aim solely at his own honour, pleasure, and advantage; but to desire, study, and, by all lawful means, to promote the good and welfare of the whole. And just so it is with political government, both in cities and provinces, and kingdoms or empires. When people did at first excogitate and constitute such or such a form of government, and place one or more at the helm, and submitted themselves to him or them, no rational man can doubt but it was for some wise end. Government and governors are not set up for nothing, but for an end; which end is either *supreme and ultimate*, or *inferior and subordinate*.

The *supreme and ultimate* end is, and ought and deserves to be, the glory of God, the exalting of his name, the preserving, securing, and enlarging of his interest, the maintaining and promoting of religion and godliness. None can shoot at a fairer mark, nor drive a nobler design; this is worthy of men, of the best and greatest men. It is the great end which God himself aims at in all the works of his hands: he both made all things for himself, and for himself likewise he doth uphold and order them. And unto this end all magistrates are in duty bound to have an eye, and direct their rule and all their actions: this is the great work of their place, the main and principal business of their office. The good Lord give them all a heart to consider it, and to act accordingly! As they rule *by* God, so they are obliged to rule *for* him: they ought not so much to design the lifting up of themselves, as the lifting up [of] the name of God and Christ in the world, especially in their own dominions. That magistrate who doth not make the glory of God his principal end, is himself degenerated into a beast.

The *inferior and subordinate* end is the good of the communities, the happiness and welfare of the whole country, the peace, comfort, and prosperity of all the people, over whom governors are set. The supreme magistrate is to his dominions what the head is to the body natural; and so influence belongs to him as well as pre-eminence: he is engaged to think, contrive, study, care, order, and provide for the comfort of the body and all the members of it. Paul saith, "He is the minister of God to thee for good:" (Rom. xiii. 4:) for a fourfold good, as learned Pareus saith:—

(1.) *In bonum naturale*, "for natural good:" that he may secure thy person and life from danger, and thy outward liberty, comforts, and enjoyments from the sons of violence.

(2.) *In bonum morale*, "for moral good:" that he may curb thy unruly passions and base lusts, and restrain or hinder them from breaking out into vicious and enormous practices.

(3.) *In bonum civile*, "for civil good:" that he may preserve public society, and keep up common honesty and justice.

(4.) *In bonum spirituale*, "for spiritual good:" that he may defend the true religion, that which is "pure and undefiled before God and the Father;" and keep up and encourage the worship of God, which is warranted by the scripture. And all this is according to the word, which doth direct and command that we should pray "for kings and

all that are in authority, that under them we might lead peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty." (1 Tim. ii. 2.) So that the end of government is the securing [of] peace and quietness, and the encouraging of honesty and godliness.

2. *In all government there is supposed a power sufficient for the ordering of things unto these ends.*—Not only natural power, but also moral authority, lawfully come-by; for, without that, there can be no just, right, and good government. Magistrates therefore are called *powers*: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom. xiii. 1.) Lawful governors are invested with authority and power; there are put into their hands the sceptre to rule, and the sword to protect and punish as there is cause. They have a legislative power, to make laws and issue out commands which shall oblige their subjects; they have a right to do this, so they use their power rightly; and obedience is due from their people, obedience to all their just and lawful commands. They ought to rule in the fear of God, and their subjects ought to obey in the fear of God: "Ye must needs be subject," and that "not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake;" (Rom. xiii. 5;) as knowing that "this is the will of God concerning you;" and when any wilfully fail herein, they contract guilt, and break their own peace. And as there is an authority to enact laws, so a power to suppress the rebellious, and animadvert on those that are refractory and stubborn; and also to defend, reward, and encourage all persons studious and careful of performing their duty. Where all this power is not, there is a miserable defect in the government, which will in time dwindle and come to nothing, and confusion and every evil work step up in its place.

3. *In government this power is reduced into act: there is a prudent, seasonable exerting and putting forth of the power in order to the attaining of these ends.*—This is the complement of all; for it is folly for any to make that his end which is quite out of his reach; and that power is in vain which always lies dormant. Power is not put into the ruler's hand merely for ornament, but for use: it is no other than a trust committed to him. Therefore, though he be a magistrate over men, yet he is a "minister of God," and is obliged to serve his great Lord according to the best of his skill, and to act toward the end formerly mentioned. As he is advanced to high and honourable places, so he is engaged to great and excellent work. He is not to "bear the sword in vain;" (Rom. xiii. 4;) and it may be said, "He weareth not the crown in vain; he holdeth not the sceptre in vain;" not for nothing, not for a mere show, an empty pageantry, but for a good end, for excellent and noble purposes. The crown and sceptre are not so glorious as that for which he is advanced: the sword committed to him must be drawn against the enemies of God and truth and holiness; he must be an avenger "to execute wrath," not upon the pious and peaceable,—that would be an abuse of his power,—but "upon them that do evil." Thus have I showed you



what government is; namely, using of lawful power for excellent ends.

II. The second thing propounded was to *prove and evidence to you that God doth govern the world.*—As he made it at first, so he doth still uphold and order it. In a nation, you know, there are many inferior magistrates and under-officers; yet it followeth not but the king is supreme, who authorizeth, influences, directs, and limits them by his laws. There are upon earth many governors, various forms of government; yea, the angels in heaven are “ministering spirits,” employed in special and weighty matters: but all of them are set up and set forth by God, and fulfil his pleasure. God himself sits at the helm, and steers the course; he over-rules and orders all, from the highest to the lowest. For the evidencing hereof take these following particulars:—

1. *The light of nature hath discovered this.*—And by the glimmering thereof, though it burn dimly as a candle in the socket, many among the Heathens have been led to the knowledge of it, and constrained to acknowledge it. It must be granted that they groped, and were exceedingly in the dark, differing much one from another in their sentiments about the Deity and his providence. Some plainly denied a God: some owned and asserted the being of a God, but denied the creating of the world; but that it was from everlasting, or rose up through a fortuitous concourse [concurrence] of atoms. Some granted that the world was of God, as of the First Cause; yet He did not see nor observe what is done in it among men. Some held [that] he doth indeed see all things that are and be done in the world, but he is only an insignificant, idle spectator, who minds and regards nothing. Some were of opinion, that God doth not attend to the meaner and inferior creatures, nor take any cognizance of small, inconsiderable matters, but only superintended the affairs and concernments of mankind: “Doth God take care for oxen?” Some did again assert, that God did look after and care for all things, yet he acted only in a way of common general influences and by second causes, doing nothing immediately and by himself. Others, again, on the contrary side, did affirm, that God doth immediately and by himself so work all in all, as that they left almost no place for second causes. Thus, poor creatures! were they divided among themselves, having their understandings miserably darkened. But many among the Heathens, yea, their most learned men, and of their most famous sects,—Platonists, Stoics, Pythagoreans,—did own the Divine Providence and government; and so did the poets also: and, for particular persons, the learned Plato, Seneca, Tully, with many others, subscribe thereunto. Hence it is that they call God “the Rector and Keeper of the world,” “the Soul and Spirit of the world,” and do expressly compare him to the soul in the body, and to the master in a ship, who doth command, rule, direct, steer, and turn it what way and to what port he himself thinks good. But so much may suffice for that: I pass on.

2. *The sacred scriptures do abound with testimonies which may*

*afford us full satisfaction in the point.*—When He was about to punish the world for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, and to sweep away the inhabitants of it with a flood, He took care that all mankind should not be destroyed; but Noah and his family were preserved, yea, and some of all the general species of animals too; that so seed might be continued upon earth, and *that* in the ordinary way of generation; which was a famous and eminent instance of Divine Providence, and its ordering and governing the world. Besides that, attend to these passages of scripture: God “doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: he giveth rain, sendeth waters, setteth up on high those that be low, disappointeth the devices of the crafty, taking them in their own craftiness, and carrying the counsel of the froward headlong.” (Job v. 9—13.) “I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.” (Isai. xlv. 5—7.) “The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.” (Psalm xxxiv. 16, 17.) He “worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.” (Eph. i. 11.) Not only *some* things,—those which are momentous and stupendous, such as strike men with wonder and amazement; but “*all* things,”—all is of God; and all, not according to the will and pleasure of others, but according to his own eternal counsel. His “dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,” who are counted as nothing: “and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. iv. 34, 35.) “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your” heavenly “Father.” (Matt. x. 29.) Scriptures to this purpose might be multiplied; I will add but one more: “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.” (Psalm ciii. 19.) But further consider,

3. *God hath a most unquestionable right to order and govern the world.*—It doth properly appertain unto him. The belief and acknowledgment hereof do necessarily follow upon the owning of a God; to own such a being as God, and yet to deny or question his right to govern, is a gross absurdity.

That Being which we call “God” is the first, highest, noblest, and incomparably the most excellent, Being of all, infinite and unchangeable in all perfections; and therefore he hath a right to order others that are not so. Man is endued with reason and understanding, and so is the most noble and excellent creature in this lower world; therefore it pleased his great Creator to put the lordship into his hand, and to give him dominion over the fish and fowl, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth. The Psalmist tells us, “He hath put all things under his feet.” (Psalm viii. 6.) How much more,

then, is an absolute and universal rule due to God, whose understanding is infinite, and in whom are all the inexhaustible, unfathomable treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Beside that, consider God as the Fountain of being, the First Cause and Original of all being. The world and all things in it are the works of his hands; he made them, and fashioned them: and seeing He made all, seeing by his power and for his pleasure all things are and were created, it is highly reasonable that all things should be ordered, directed, and disposed of according to his pleasure. Hath the potter power over the clay, so as to make of it a vessel of honour or dishonour? and hath not God much more power over his creatures? If a father hath an undoubted right to rule his own children, and a master to order his own family; it cannot rationally be questioned but God hath a right to rule all the persons and creatures in the world; for "we are all his offspring," and of him "the whole family both in heaven and earth is named;" of him it was made, and by him it doth consist. Who can be so impudent and brutish, so much sunk below man, and run so cross to the principles and dictates of right reason, as to deny him a right to give laws to *them* unto *whom* he gave life? It is highly decorous, every way fit, that He from whom all things had their being, and unto whose power and goodness they owe their continuance, should appoint them all their ends, and direct their steps, and cast their lines, and cut out their works, and over-rule all their actions.

4. *For God to govern the world is no dishonour to him.*—It doth not unhandsomely reflect upon his divine majesty, nor cause the least eclipse or diminution of his most excellent glory. It is true, as I before hinted unto you, though some men cheerfully acknowledged a governing and over-ruling Providence over human actions and affairs, yet they conceived [that] it extended not itself to more vile and contemptible creatures, or to minute and inconsiderable things. Jerome, though a learned and holy man, seemed to be of this opinion: for he grants a general order and disposal, how such an innumerable multitude of fishes should breed and live in the sea, and how brutes and creeping things should gender upon the earth, and with what they should be maintained; but he fancieth it a solecism to debase and bring down the majesty of the ever-blessed God so low, as to mind and order the breeding and death of gnats, or to concern himself about the number of flies and fleas that are upon the earth, or how many fishes swim in the sea and rivers, or which among the smaller ones should become a prey to the greater. For they did fancy this to be altogether unworthy and unbecoming of God: judging of him by earthly potentates, who take state upon them, and trouble not themselves with any but the more weighty and momentous affairs of their dominions, and leave things of smaller importance to their inferior officers.

But this is not the manner of the God of Jacob, nor doth he count his care of the meanest and most minute beings to be any reflection upon him, unless it be of honour and glory. Therefore he expressly

tells us in his word, that the young lions seek their meat of God; that he giveth to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens when they cry; he clothes the lilies; and sparrows are not forgotten by him; not one of them falls to the ground without him: the very hairs of our head are numbered: he knoweth our wanderings, counteth our steps, and puts our tears into his bottle. And what dishonour can all or any of this be to him? Is it possible, that his doing so should render him cheap to the children of men? Nay, is it not enough to commend him to all wise and thinking persons, that he is so great a God as that he can extend his care to so many millions of objects, and so graciously condescending as to look after the lowest of the works of his hands?

Surely, since it was not unworthy of his divine power to make the meanest creature, it cannot be unworthy of his goodness to maintain and order it. If "his eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen in the things that are made," then his goodness doth likewise display itself in providing for them, and his wisdom in governing and directing them. It is true, he humbles himself, when he beholds those things which are above; much more, when he regards those that are here below: but that humbling of himself is a glorifying of himself, and it doth deservedly commend and endear him to his people: "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness!" (Psalm xxxvi. 6, 7.)

5. Lastly. *Our God is abundant in mercy and goodness.*—He is "the Father of mercies, and a God of compassions;" and as that doth render him fit to govern the world, so it may work in us an assurance that he doth and will do it. Shall we fancy him like unto the ostrich? concerning which it is said, that she "leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers." (Job xxxix. 14—16.) Thus to do is utterly inconsistent with the divine goodness; to fancy such a thing of God would be to blaspheme him. He hath a love and kindness for the works of his hands, as such; and that will carry him out to a caring for them, and ordering of them. "The world will love its own;" and doth not God much more? A good prince, who is the father of his country, and deserves that name, will to the best of his skill guide and rule his kingdom, at the helm whereof Providence hath placed him, that his own honour and his people's welfare might be secured and promoted. That man deserves not the place nor name of a master, who neglects to make provision for his own family, and keep up order in it. That is an unnatural father, unworthy indeed to be called "man," who doth not, according to his best knowledge and ability, mind his children and govern them.

Now, *tam pius nemo, tam pater nemo*; "none is so good as God, none such a father as God;" no love comparable to his love. All that love which may be found in the creatures is but a drop from his ocean, a spark from his flame; and, as I have said, all the world is

his own, and all that is therein the works of his hands. He built this huge and stately fabric, and he furnished it with all its inhabitants, from the highest and most glorious angel to the meanest and most contemptible insect. And how can we possibly think otherwise, but that the pity and love which he hath for the works of his own hands, will draw out his wisdom and power and care for the ruling and directing of them? For any one to deny this care, nay, to hesitate about it, would be an unworthy, base disparagement, dishonour, and affront to Him.

III. The third thing we have to do is to *show how our belief of God's governing the world may support us in all worldly distractions.*

—This is a great question, very seasonable, and of singular use; and that we may draw out the sweetness of this truth, and fetch comfort from it, we must consider these following particulars:—

1. *God's accomplishment for the work.*
2. *The extent of his government.*
3. *The properties thereof.*
4. *Several things relating to the church and its living members.*

1. *First. God is most fit and accomplished for this great work.*—It is indeed a business too hard for a creature's hand to dispatch, and a burden too heavy for a created shoulder to bear up under. Some ambitious princes have been, and are said to be, aspiring after an universal monarchy, which they never did, nor ever shall, attain; it is bigger than their grasp, a thing too high and too hard for them. And indeed those princes who rule well, and mind their work and duty, find [that] the crowns which they have are lined with cares enough to make their heads ache, and their hearts too sometimes. But to govern the world is a thing utterly impossible to a created being; not only to the wisest man on earth, but also to the highest angel in heaven. None can govern the whole world, but He that did create it. Creation is peculiar to God: the greatest angel cannot create the smallest spire of grass, nor a contemptible flea, no, not the least atom. The most minute drop of being can proceed only from Him who is the Original and Fountain of all being. So the government of the whole world is peculiar to God, because there is so much contrariety in it, so many antipathies; things lie so cross. Men have unruly passions; they interfere in their several interests, and, while they are carrying them on, quarrel and jostle one another: and who but God can order all, and direct them to most noble and excellent ends? Who but God can take these several scattered shreds, and unite them together in one curious and amiable piece of workmanship? Who but God can take these jarring discords, and turn them into an admirable and delightful harmony? That God is perfectly accomplished for the work, so that he can not only do it, but the doing thereof will be no pain nor trouble to him, may thus appear:—

(1.) *He is an immense Being.*—"Heaven is" his "throne, and the earth" his "footstool." Those that have many irons in the fire,—business scattered up and down,—must needs suffer some of those irons to cool, some of that business to lie by neglected, because they

themselves are confined and limited creatures. Some things may be amiss and out of order under the government of the most prudent and pious prince, because he cannot be at once in all parts of his dominions; but God is omnipresent, filling heaven and earth: "If thou goest up to heaven, he is there: if thou makest thy bed in hell, behold, he is there. If thou dwellest in the uttermost parts of the sea, there shall his hand lead thee, and his right hand shall guide thee." (Psalm cxxxix. 8—10.) All things are within his reach; wheresoever any thing is doing or to be done, there God is, who is present in every place and with every person. He stands at our right hands, and so may well guide them; so to do, will cost him no travail nor trouble. "In him we live and move and have our being;" (Acts xvii. 28;) not "at a distance from him," not "out of him," but "in him."

(2.) God can easily govern the world, because of his *almighty power*.—He is stronger than all; his word is enough to accomplish all his will. The wisest of men are foolish creatures, and the strongest are weak. Kingdoms and nations have frequently proved ungovernable to potent princes: such breaches have been made as they could not heal, and such tempests have risen as they could not lay. Nay, that man is not found in the world, who hath power sufficient to govern himself. How often doth his will rebel against his reason!

*Video meliora, proboque:  
Deteriora sequor.\*—OVIDII Metamor. lib. vii. 20.*

His "judgment sees and votes for that which is good, but his will chooseth what is worse:" his sensual appetite longs for it; and that must be gratified, whatever the cost be. We sometimes see that wise men, gracious and holy men, cannot curb their own passions; but they take head, and hurry them into great and uncomely extravagancies. But now God is of infinite power: as he hath an arm long enough to reach, so strong enough to rule, all things. He binds the sea with a girdle, and stays its proud waves, saying, "Hither shall ye go, and no further." He makes "the wrath of man to praise him," though it be more boisterous than the sea; "and the remainder thereof he shall restrain." Job hath sundry passages to this purpose, worthy of our remark, in chap. xxvi. Take some of them thus: "He hangeth the earth upon nothing. He hath compassed the waters with bounds. He divideth the sea with his power. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof." (Verses 7, 10—12.) And then he closeth thus in verse 14: "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" The power of his thunder is great, which "discovereth the forest, and makes the hinds to calve;" what, then, is "the thunder of his power?" When God doth but whisper a rebuke into the ear of a man, *that* "maketh his beauty to consume like a moth;" what, then, can he do, nay, what can he not

\* "Affection *this*, discretion *that* persuades.  
I see the better, I approve it too:  
The worse I follow."—SANDYS'S Translation.

do, when he thunders from heaven? In short: his power is irresistible, and his will in all things efficacious. He can master all difficulties, and conquer all enemies, and overcome all opposition; when he hath a mind to work, who shall let him? He asks no leave, he needs no help, he knows no impediment; mountains in his way become plains: his "counsel shall stand for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." (Psalm xxxiii. 11.)

(3.) God is fit to govern the world upon the account of his *wisdom and knowledge*.—His "eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth." He observes all the motions and ways of men. He understands what hath been, is, and shall be. "Hell is naked before him;" (Job xxvi. 6;) how much more, earth! His eye is upon the conclave of Rome, the cabals of princes, and the closets of particular persons. Excellently doth David set forth the divine omniscience: "Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before." (Psalm cxxxix. 2—5.) He knows not only what is done by man, but also what is in man; all his goodness, and all his wickedness; all his contrivances, purposes, and designs. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.) Do you ask, "Who?" The answer is ready,—"Jehovah." He "searcheth the heart;" he "trieth and possesseth the reins." Those are dark places, far removed from the eyes of all the world: but God's "eyes are like a flame of fire;" they carry their own light with them, and discover those recesses, run through all the labyrinths of the heart; they look into each nook and corner of it, and see what lurks there, what is doing there. O, what manner of persons should we be! with what diligence should we keep our hearts, since God observes them with so much exactness! Men may take a view of the practices of others; but God sees their principles, and to what they do incline them. Yea, he knows how to order and command the heart; not only how to affright it with terrors, and to allure it with kindnesses, and persuade it with arguments, but likewise how to change and alter and mend it by his power. He can not only debilitate and enfeeble it, when set upon evil; but also confirm and fix and fortify it, when carried out to that which is good. "The hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord, and he turneth them as the rivers of water." (Prov. xxi. 1.)

(4.) God is fit to govern the world upon the score of his *long-suffering and forbearance*.—Those that have the reins of government put into their hands, had need be persons of excellent and cool spirits; for if they have a great deal of power, and but a small stock of patience, they will soon put all into a flame. That man who hath but a little family to manage, will in that meet with trials and exercises enough: how much more he that is set over a kingdom! and unspeakably more yet he that is to govern the world! especially considering the present state of the degenerate world, and how things

have been ever since sin made an entry into it. "The whole world" now "lieth in wickedness;" there is not a man in it, but doth every day offer a thousand affronts to God, and provokes him to his face. Angelical patience would soon tire and be spent, and turn into such fury as would quickly reduce all into a chaos. There is not an angel in heaven but, if there were a commission given him, he would do immediate execution, and sheathe the sword of vengeance in the bowels of malefactors. But now, to his glory be it spoken! God is infinite in patience, "slow to anger, and of great kindness." Though he be disobeyed, abused, grieved, vexed, pressed with the sins of men, even as a cart is pressed that is laden with sheaves; yet he spares and bears and waits. How loath is he to stir up all his wrath, and to pour out the vials thereof! He counts that his "strange work;" when he goeth about it, his bowels do often yearn, and his "repentings are kindled together." In Hosea xi. 8, 9, he seemed to stand with his hand stretched out, as one resolved to give a consuming blow; but he laid aside his weapons of indignation, and in the greatness of his compassion cried out, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." Thus we see, God is accomplished for the government of the world.

2. In the second place, let us inquire concerning *the extent of God's governing providence; how far and unto what it reaches.*—And take this in general: the whole world, and whatsoever is contained within the compass of heaven and earth, are ordered by him as his family; the church is regarded and cared for by him as his endeared spouse, and all the saints as his children. All men, even the worst and vilest, with all their actions, and all creatures, even the meanest, are ordered by God, and directed to their appointed ends. But we will descend to particulars.

(1.) The governing providence of God extends itself to *all creatures, whatsoever have being, both animate and inanimate, the greatest and the least.*—He rules the stars; "the influences of Pleiades and the bands of Orion" are from him. He causeth the sun to shine, sets him daily and annual journeys, and, when he pleaseth, stops him in his course, and turns him back, when he comes out of his chamber as a bridegroom, or a giant refreshed with wine. He makes small the drops of rain; and causeth them to fall upon one city, and not upon another. He feeds the fowls; and musters caterpillars, locusts, flies, as his armies. Angels are his servants, absolutely at his beck, ready to execute his will; and by him they are sent forth to minister unto his children, and to punish his enemies. He hath enraged devils in a chain, and both confines them and employs them as he himself thinks good. He suffered one to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. He permitted Satan to do much against Job, yet kept him from touching his life. He cast devils out of the possessed, and gave them leave to enter into a herd of swine. He governs men, too,



keeping Abimelech from violating Sarah's chastity; and Laban from touching Jacob's liberty or goods, and Esau from offering violence to his life. The meanest creatures are the objects of his care, and the noblest are over-ruled by his power.

(2.) The governing providence of God extends itself to *all motions and actions*.—"Without" him we "can do nothing." As a special assistance is necessary to gracious acts, so is a general concurrence [concurrency] to natural ones. Unless he support, we cannot stir a step, nor strike a stroke, nor speak a word, nor form a thought. God suspends the creatures' actions, when he pleaseth. Thus he kept the fire from burning the three children that were thrown into it, when put into its greatest rage. He stopped the mouths of lions, and kept them from preying upon Daniel, when hunger was feeding upon them. And it was he that taught and commanded the rapacious raven to forget itself, that it might carry food to a prophet. God orders and directs actions to ends never designed by the doer; yea, he makes the most vile and wicked actions subservient to most excellent and most noble ends. Adam's sin issued in the glorifying of God's name in a mixed way of justice and mercy. Pharaoh's cruelty made Israel multiply; so that, the more they were depressed, the more they flourished. Rome's persecutions have been Sion's enlargements, and "the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church." Joseph's brethren's selling him was a step to his preferment in the court of Pharaoh, and a sending him before to preserve the life of his father and of his family. The crucifying of our dear Jesus was the saving of believers; and by his most precious blood, which the Jews and Romans most wickedly spilt, were all the elect of God redeemed from hell and everlasting destruction. The king of Assyria thought of nothing else but to destroy and cut off nations not a few; but God sent him as an executioner of his justice to punish a hypocritical nation and the people of his wrath. Thus God doth not only uphold his creatures in their beings, and assist and strengthen them in their actions, but he doth also direct, order, and over-rule those actions, so that their product and issue shall be admirable. Wicked men have base and sordid ends in the commission of sin; but God hath holy ends in his permission thereof: while they gratify their lusts, he fulfils his pleasure: and while they act like devils, he acts like God, that is, like himself.

(3.) This governing and over-ruling providence of God extends itself to *all issues and results of things both good and evil*.—"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Prov. xvi. 33.) He is the fountain of all the good and comforts which we enjoy; for which we are under everlasting obligations to praise his name, and not to "sacrifice to our own net." That the house is built, we owe more to God than to the workmen; and in the preservation of the city, God is more to be thanked and acknowledged than the watchman. It is unquestionably men's duty to follow their callings, and mind their business, and study good husbandry; for the sluggard shall be clothed with rags, and the prodigal will be glad of husks: but if, after all endeavour and care, an estate comes in, it is

more of God's sending than of man's fetching. "The blessing of God makes rich," and not man's diligence without it. When you are sick, it is your wisdom and duty to send for the most able, skilful, and faithful physicians, and to follow the method and use the means which they prescribe; but when your distempers are removed, and your health is restored, you are beholden more to God than to men and means; for, notwithstanding them, your souls would "dwell in silence, if the Lord himself were not your help." (Psalm xciv. 17.) "The battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift;" (Eccles. ix. 11;) nor doth "promotion come from the east or the west; but the Lord putteth down one, and setteth up another." (Psalm lxxv. 6, 7.)

So, for evil things, we are too prone to rest in second causes, and care not to look so high as God; but whether we take notice of him or no, there is no rod under which we smart, but God's hand lays it on. Eliphaz tells us, "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;" (Job v. 6;) that is, they do not come by chance. Though many things be contingencies, yet all things have a cause; to us, indeed, they are casual, but to God they are certain. He himself foresaw and fore-appointed them: there is nothing of fortune, but all is of counsel. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6;) that is, any penal evil, any afflictive evil. There is not a sickness nor pain [that] thou groanest under, not a loss [which] thou meetest with, not a cross that pinches thee, but thou mayest write the name of God upon it. He "creates darkness," as well as "forms the light." (Isai. xlv. 7.) When things run cross to men's desires and interest and expectations, they grow tetchy [testy] and froward, and quarrel at this and that; but let this silence them, and work them to an humble and patient submission,—that all is of God. Israel rebelled against the house of David: thereupon Rehoboam armed Judah and Benjamin to bring the kingdom again to him. "Stay," said God; "'ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren,' the children of Israel: 'return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me.'" (2 Chron. xi. 4.) All good is of God; *that* obligeth us to thankfulness and grateful acknowledgments: all evil is of God; and *that* should teach us humbly, patiently, and silently to submit. "I was dumb," said David, "I opened not my mouth; because," Lord, "thou didst it." (Psalm xxxix. 9.)

3. In the third place we shall inquire after *the properties of God's government, or the manner how he orders and governs all things.*—Take that in these few particulars:—

(1.) God doth govern the world *mysteriously.*—So the text tells us: "Clouds and darkness are round about him." As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works, of God; *δυσνοητα*, "things hard to be understood," (2 Peter iii. 16,) many riddles, which nonpluss and puzzle men of the largest and most piercing intellects: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold

him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take." (Job xxiii. 8—10.) God knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all God's ways. His way is frequently in the sea, and his chariot in the clouds; so that he is invisible, not only in his essence, but also in the design and tendency of his operations. Those that behold him with an eye of faith, do not yet see him with an eye of understanding, so as to discern his way, and whither he is going. Paul assures us, "His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." (Rom. xi. 33.) Some of them, indeed, are obvious, plain, and easy; we may upon the first view give a satisfactory account of them; we may read righteousness, equity, mercy, goodness, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light as he that runs may read them. But others of God's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace God, may quickly lose himself. They are like that hand-writing upon the wall, which none of Belshazzar's wise men could read or give the interpretation of. (Dan. v. 8.) There are *arcana imperii*, "secrets of state and government," which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort:—though God doth not now give any account of his matters, nor is he obliged thereunto, yet he can give a very good and satisfactory account; and one day his people shall be led into the mystery; and, though many things which God doeth they know not now, yet they shall know them afterward; and when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things and the reason and the end. They shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providences, and see that all were worthy of God, and that in all he acted *θεοπρεπως*, "as did highly become himself."

(2.) God doth govern the world *wisely*.—He did indeed threaten it as a dreadful judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem, that He would "give children to be their princes, and babes should rule over them;" (Isai. iii. 4;) not meaning children in years, (for Josiah, a child, was one of the best of their kings,) but children in understanding; such as had no prudence nor skill nor conduct, knew not how to hold the rein, nor use the rod, nor direct the course. It is certainly fatal to the world, when a young, heady, and foolish Phaëton is got into the chariot of the sun. Whither will fiery steeds carry an ass and others with him, but into destruction? When an ignorant, unskilful pilot sits at helm, the passengers of the ship will soon be brought to their last prayers. But God is wise in heart, yea, infinite in wisdom: all the treasures of wisdom are in him; and no wisdom is to be found in angels or men but what came from him; and all *that*, were it united in one, would not be comparable to what is in him: "The" very "foolishness of God is wiser than men." (1 Cor. i. 25.)

There are two things of which wisdom consists; and both are in God most eminently:—knowledge of the nature of things, and prudence to dispose and order them. God knows all things perfectly, and orders them all exactly. "All things are naked and opened"

before him, (Heb. iv. 13,) and all most curiously and accurately managed by him. Men in place of authority and power do sometimes mistake and miscarry, doing many things amiss. David was so ingenuous as to acknowledge it: "I have sinned greatly in that I have done: I have done very foolishly." (2 Sam. xxiv. 10.) But in all things God acts very wisely: he is "not a man that he should" err or "repent." Ever since the creation, all things have been done with that unreprouable exactness, that if the world were to begin again, and the affairs of it to be acted over again, there should not be an alteration in a tittle. All hath been so well, that nothing can be mended. Those dark and obscure passages of Providence, at which good men are startled, and by which all men are posed, are most excellent and curious strokes, and as so many well-placed shades, which commend the work and admirably set off the beauty of Providence. That is a great scripture, most worthy of our very particular notices: He "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." (Eph. i. 11.) Which words plainly speak these two things: (i.) *The independency* of God in his operations: he asketh not leave of any, neither men nor angels. He is not beholden to them; he doth not advise with them; he cannot be forced nor hindered by them. He acts not according to their will, but his own, and fulfils all his pleasure. (ii.) *The wisdom* of God in his working: he doth all according to his counsel. He is "a God of judgment," a most judicious God; and all his works are done "in judgment,"—the whole plot was laid aforehand.

It is said of God, that he "is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (Isai. xxviii. 29.) This latter necessarily follows upon the former: he must needs be "excellent in working," because he is "wonderful in counsel." All that he doth is the result of a most admirable judgment and mature counsel. The holy prophet therefore was ravished in his spirit upon the consideration of God's works, both for their number and for their wisdom: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." (Psalm civ. 24.) They are very many, yet all very good. Notwithstanding their multitude and variety, God miscarried in none; there is an impress of wisdom upon them all.

(3.) God governs all things *powerfully*.—"Where the word of a king is," Solomon tells us, "there is power." (Eccles. viii. 4.) What power then doth the word of God carry along with it? He orders and rules, turns and overturns, things, as he thinks good. That is a notable and very comfortable place which we have, Psalm xxxiii. 11: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." The counsel of the Lord doth so stand, as that all things shall certainly fall before it that rise up in opposition to it. "The counsel of the Heathen," when contrary thereunto, is brought "to nought; and the devices of the people" are made "of none effect." (Verse 10.) As the rod of Moses prevailed against the rods of the magicians, so do the thoughts and counsels of God against all other thoughts and counsels that run

counter and bid defiance to them: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." (Psalm cxxxv. 6.) God's will obtains and hath the upper hand every where. Down man, down Pope, down devil; you must yield; things shall not be as you will, but as God will! We may well say, "Who hath resisted his will?" (Rom. ix. 19.) Many, indeed, disobey and sin against the will of his precept; but none ever did, none ever shall, frustrate or obstruct the will of his purpose; for he will do all his pleasure, and in his way mountains shall become a plain.

Many men think, and some say, they will do what they will; especially great men, who are advanced in place, and armed with power,—they love to be arbitrary; *stat pro ratione voluntas*, "their will is their own reason," and shall be other men's law. But to say, "I will have my will," is a speech too lofty for a creature. When they exalt their wills, God can bind their hands, and break their necks. How resolved was Pharaoh he would do this and that; ay, that he would! "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." (Exod. xv. 9.) But God was full-out as much resolved, that as high and great and proud as Pharaoh was, yet he should not have his will; and God was too hard for him: "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." (Verse 10.) "By the blast of God they perished, and by the breath of his nostrils were they consumed." (Job iv. 9.) God did easily scatter and consume them, as if they had been but dust or chaff; the breath of God's nostrils stopped the breath of their nostrils. Nay, God need not send forth a blast: when he did but give a look, the host of the Egyptians was troubled. When God hides his face from his people, he troubles them; and when he looks upon his enemies, he can trouble them.

Nay, more: God can not only bind the hands of men, but he likewise can bind their wills, yea, and turn their hearts, too, "as the rivers of water." He can make enemies to be at peace, and lions to lie down with lambs, and leopards with kids, and Egyptians to lend their jewels unto Israelites; yea, he can not only pacify them, but reconcile them, turning their enmity into friendship, and their hatred into love. Esau resolved to kill his brother Jacob; but he "embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." (Gen. xxxiii. 4.) Observe that passage, which plainly speaks God's power over the spirits and wills of men,—Exod. xxxiv. 23, 24. God's command there was this: "Thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." And his promise was this: "No man shall desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year." The Jews were envied with enemies, and those enemies might very well desire their land, because it was a good and pleasant land, flowing with milk and honey; and when all the males were gone up to Jerusalem, and so the borders of the country were left naked, that was a fit opportunity for an invasion. "But," saith God, "trouble

not yourselves: do your duty; go up when I bid you; and I will take care and over-rule in the case. Look you to your duty, and I will look to your borders: I will so order the spirits of your enemies, that not a man among them shall have any mind to give you a disturbance, or to make an inroad into your country." And this may afford strong consolation to us in the very worst of times, and when things are darkest,—that God, whom we own and serve, hath such a mighty and effectual influence upon the hearts and wills of men, even of those that are his people's most desperate and enraged enemies.

(4.) God doth govern the world *most righteously*.—So the text tells us: "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." It is true, many times affairs are so managed, and things at such a pass,—good men depressed so low, and wicked men advanced so high; vice encouraged, and virtue frowned upon; godliness trampled under foot, and profaneness rampant and triumphing,—that thereby some have been induced to question and deny a Providence, and even good men have been stumbled, as we may see in several precious and eminent saints,—Job, Jeremy, Habakkuk, Asaph,—whose names stand upon record in the sacred scripture. But it doth not become any of us to call the great and glorious God down to the bar of our reason, nor to measure his dealings with our line. It is not for us to be his counsellors nor his judges. Rather, where we cannot comprehend him, let us adore him, and give him the justification of faith; still resolving, with Jeremy, to hold fast this conclusion, "Righteous art thou, O Lord." (Jer. xii. 1.) And this is certain:—whatsoever advantages some wicked men may have as to temporal, outward enjoyments, yet even here good men have the better of them; their "lines are cast in" more "pleasant places," so that they have no cause of envy nor complaint.

Have wicked men at any time the smiles of the world, the favour of great ones, waters of a cup full wrung out to them? Do they ruffle in silks, and glisten with jewels, and abound with sensitive comforts? The saints, though they be poor and afflicted and despised, and counted the offscouring of the world, have the love of God's heart, which is most cordial, better than wine; and the graces of his Spirit, which do outworth the gold of Ophir; and oftentimes the light of his countenance and beams of his favour, which make the most lightsome and comfortable day. They are arrayed with the robe of righteousness and garment of salvation, which adorn them more than garments of wrought gold. Christ leads them into his banqueting-house, and there spreads over them the banner of his love, which affords the surest protection and the sweetest shade. Who but themselves are able to tell or conceive what unspeakable and glorious joy they have, what triumphs and exultings of soul, when their best-beloved Jesus kisseth them with the kisses of his lips, and by his own Spirit witnesseth with theirs that they are the children of God, and with his most ravishing consolations doth delight their souls? What are mines of gold and rocks of diamonds, what are

lordships and manors, what are crowns and sceptres, what kingdoms and empires, to one dram of grace, one smile from heaven, one whisper of divine love, one embrace of a Saviour? "Cursed," said noble Galeacius, "be that man, who counteth all the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ." And if one hour of communion be so precious, what, O, what is a life of communion?

But then, stay till the winding-up of the bottom; till that last and great day shall dawn, in which there will be a revelation of the righteous judgment of God, and of the marvellous goodness of God; wherein the wicked shall be stripped of all their honour and power, of all their riches and pleasures, and turned into hell, for the wrath of God and the worm of conscience eternally to feed upon them; and those who have believingly closed with Christ, and bowed to his sceptre, and walked closely with God, and studied the power of godliness and strictness of religion, shall enter into peace, and be clothed with glory, and sit upon thrones, possessed of a "fulness of joy," and sporting themselves in "rivers of pleasure," under the brightest and warmest beams of Divine Love, and in the most endearing embraces of the Lord Jesus, and in the plenary, uninterrupted enjoyment of those things "which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man," without any disquieting apprehensions or fears of being ejected out of that possession, or disturbed in it. Then all the world, the most stupid and unteachable part of it, will be thoroughly convinced, that "there is a reward for the righteous, a God that judgeth in the earth," and that true "godliness is profitable unto all things," both for "the life that now is, and for that which is to come;" (1 Tim. iv. 8;) and that, however things go now, yet it was not in vain to serve God. And therefore, in the mean time, though "clouds and darkness are round about the throne," yet let us rejoice in the firm belief of what the prophet tells us: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." (Psalm cxlv. 17.)

4. The last thing promised for the proof of the point,—that God's governing the world may well support us in the midst of all distractions,—is to present to your consideration *several things more particularly relating to the church and people of this God*. And they are these:—

(1.) *The nearness, dearness, and intimacy of that relation, in which the church and saints stand to God*.—What may not the wife and children of a loving and mighty king promise themselves from his government? Certainly, they may well be assured, so long as he keeps his throne and hath power in his hand, they shall want neither defence nor comfort. The church is God's vineyard; and will he not water it, and keep it every moment, lest any hurt it? She is the spouse of Christ; and will he not be tender over her and kind to her? He is a Father to his people; and will he not look after them, and afford them maintenance and necessary supplies? He is more than a mother to them; and will he not draw out his "breasts

of consolation," that they may suck and be satisfied, milk out and be delighted? Doubtless, they may believingly expect all good from him, all kindness, all comforts from him, who hath been graciously pleased to put himself into all relations unto them. In Psalm xxiii. 1, holy David looked with an eye of faith but to one relation in which God stood to him: "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and from thence he saw sufficient encouragement to conclude that he should "not want." What mayest thou, then, O believer, argue from *all* God's relations? "He is my God, my King, my Master, my Father, my Husband; therefore surely I shall not want." He "is a Sun and Shield;" a Sun for comfort, and a Shield for security. In his beams, then, his children shall rejoice, and in his shadow shall they sit safely; and "no good thing shall he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Jerusalem is "the city of the great King;" and if she be God's city, God will be her security. Never fear that, O saints; for he "is known," famously "known, in her palaces for a refuge." (Psalm xlviii. 2, 3.)

(2.) *The special interest which God hath in his church and people.*—They are his "portion and inheritance;" and no one will, if he can help it, lose his portion. Naboth would not part with his inheritance upon any terms,—neither sell nor change it; much less will Christ with his, who is so greatly taken with it, as to count "the lines fallen to him in a pleasant place," and that he hath "a goodly heritage." (Psalm xvi. 5, 6.) His people are his jewels; and will he suffer them to be lost? They are his treasure; and, what! shall his enemies rob him of that? No, no; "where" his "treasure is, there" his "heart is also;" and where his heart is, there shall his eye be watching, and his hand of power shall be stretched out, and his wings of protection shall be spread abroad, and "salvation" itself shall be "for walls and bulwarks." (Isai. xxvi. 1.) The interest which God hath in all the world is not comparable to that interest which God hath in the church. The rest are but his slaves; these are his children: the rest are but the rude wilderness, the devil's waste; these are his gardens enclosed. In others he sees his power, but in these his image and his Son: others are the work of his hands, but these are the workmanship of his Spirit.

(3.) *That most endearing and entire affection which he beareth unto his church and people.*—As he stands in all relations to them, so he hath all affections for them. You that understand what love is, do feel within yourselves what a noble, active, liberal principle it is, and what a mighty power and vigour there is in it. Now there is no love in the world comparable to the love of God. He hath a flame to our spark, an ocean to our drop. The dearest of God's love is placed upon Christ; and in and for Christ's sake the same love is placed upon the church and people of Christ: "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 23.) And what will not such love do? It will awaken care, and call forth power, and engage wisdom, and open the exchequer, and stick at no pains, no expense: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I



have loved thee : therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." (Isai. xliii. 4.) God "loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," and "the dwellings of Jacob" more than all the tents and palaces of wickedness, and more than all "the thrones of iniquity, which frame mischief by a law ;" for these shall have no "fellowship with" him. (Psalm lxxxvii. 2 ; xciv. 20.) He loves one saint more than he doth ten thousand ungodly wretches, (with whom he is "angry every day,") and his poor church more than all the world. Christ prefers his "little flock" before the huge herds and droves which the devil will have fall to his share. And since this God, who is so much your Friend, governs the world, sit down and think how much you may expect from him ; nay, what good is there which you may not expect ?

(4.) *God hath especially charged himself with his church and people.*—As a good king looks upon it as his duty to study and promote the weal and comfort of all his dominions and all his subjects, but in a more particular manner the happiness of his consort and children and favourites.

There is, as I have shown you, a general providence of God, which extends itself to the whole world, and for which all things fare the better ; but, beside that, there is a special providence, exercised about the saints, of whom he is as tender as the apple of his eye. Next to his own interest, that of his people lies closest to his heart, and doth most engage his thoughts. Others are under his eye, which "runs to and fro through the earth ;" but these are under his wing. "Doth God take care of oxen ?" Yes, that he doth ; and of asses too, and of young lions, and wolves and bears and tigers, and all the beasts of prey : but he takes another manner of care for his lambs, and his "dove in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs." (Canticles ii. 14.) You read, and rejoice when you read, that he is "the Saviour of all men," but "specially of those that believe." (1 Tim. iv. 10.) They are his "peculiar people," and so the objects of his peculiar care : whatsoever God doeth, he minds *them* : and whoever are neglected and left to shift for themselves, to be sure, *they* shall not. What ! Noah drowned in the waters of deluge, or Lot burnt with Sodom and Gomorrhah and the cities of the plain ! No, no ; it could not possibly be : Noah must be secured in the ark, before "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up ;" and Lot must be arrived at Zoar, the city of his refuge, before the storm of fire and brimstone could fall. Zion is "graven upon the palms of God's hand, and her walls are continually before him." (Isai. xlix. 16.)

(5.) *God hath already done great and marvellous things for his church and people.*—Not only being at charge upon them in the ordinary way of his common providence, but likewise putting forth extraordinary and magnificent acts, whensoever their case did call for them. Miracles have been nothing to him at such a time ; he hath not only wrought one or two, but multiplied them ; there hath been a series of them, as if he counted them cheap. His arm hath "awakened and

put *on* strength," and also put *forth* strength. No less than ten wonderful plagues did he send upon that proud king Pharaoh, Israel's cruel oppressor; and rather than he should not have let them go, I question not but he would have sent a thousand more. And if, after they were gone, Pharaoh would pursue them, God would make for Israel a way through the sea, and for Pharaoh and his host a grave in it. The course of nature was for a while stopped, and the sun made to "stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon," that his people might "avenge themselves upon their enemies." Clouds have showered down manna upon them; and flinty rocks, as hard and dry as they are, have poured out water. And though such kind of works have not been performed in the latter days, yet God in them hath not left himself without witness, neither is his arm shortened, nor hath he lost his old wont: miracles are as easy to him now as they were formerly; and if need were, he would do them. But, beside them, consider these three things which God hath done all along:—

(i.) *He hath in all times preserved and kept up a church in the world.*—Though Christ hath but a little flock, and that is encompassed with ravenous wolves, yet he hath always had a flock. When "all flesh had corrupted their way," there was a church in Noah's family. When Israel had generally perverted their way, and turned aside to abominable idolatry, there were still reserved seven thousand faithful worshippers, that had not bowed the knee to Baal. In the thickest darkness and most furious rage of Popery, there were those that owned and pleaded and suffered for the truths of the gospel. The four mighty monarchies of the world have been shaken down and broken into shivers; but "the kingdom of the Lord is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all generations." (Psalm cxlv. 13.) The church, indeed, hath not been always alike conspicuous, nor hath it always been in the same state of purity, peace, and prosperity; but it hath always had a being. Christ was never without some militant subjects, nor his truth without some faithful witnesses,—two, at least.

(ii.) *God hath employed angels for his church's comfort and advantage.*—Who, knowing it to be the will and pleasure of their great Creator, do most readily comply and cheerfully obey. As the gates of hell set themselves against it, so doth the host of heaven engage for it: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.) When the prophet Elisha was in some danger from envying enemies, the mountain was immediately garrisoned with horses and fiery chariots, that came in to be his guard. (2 Kings vi. 17.) They have it given them in express charge to bear the saints up in their hands, and to encamp round about them; and may not this be a singular comfort to believers? What, though they be the objects of hell's envy and earth's malice? yet they are God's darlings and angels' charge. And whatsoever work angels have to do for them, they not only dispatch it faithfully, but delight to do so.

(iii.) *God hath turned all things to the church's advantage, so that it hath not been a loser in the upshot.*—From what corner soever the wind hath blown, it hath done Christ's garden a real and sensible kindness: both the north and the south wind have made spices to flow forth. (Canticles iv. 16.) You know what Paul saith: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28.) Comforts and crosses too, mercies and judgments too, sunshine and storms, ordinances and afflictions, every thing, "all things" are employed, all busy, all at "work," and all at "work for good." Take a wicked man, and all things are against him. Take a child of God, and all things are for him; all are sent upon a gracious, excellent design, and shall prosper in it. More particularly: oppositions, persecutions, and fiery trials have issued in these three things, which are choice advantages:—

First. *By these things God makes a discrimination, and separates between the good and the bad, the precious and the vile.*—In those fields where there is care taken to sow the best and cleanest corn, the envious one will come and scatter tares. Churches do contract filth and corruption, as well as other bodies; and though they were very pure in their first erecting and constitution, yet afterward they do degenerate, and ill humours flow and abound in them. Some among them leave their first love and their first works, and are drawn aside from the simplicity of the gospel, and live not according to the rules of the gospel. Yea, there are not only decaying professors; but also false, hypocritical pretenders creep into churches. Afflictions, now, are the physic [which] God gives for the purging them out: these are the fan of Christ, with which he clears his floor: they are his fire, for the refining of his gold, and severing it from the dross. When storms arise, the rotten and unsound fruit falls off. When persecution ariseth, stony-ground hearers are offended: then away go formalists, hypocrites, and all such as were strangers to the power of godliness. And it is a good riddance; for God and his church need them not. What loss is it, when greedy wolves and filthy swine in sheep's clothing forsake the fold? They never did good in it, and never will.

Secondly. *By troubles and persecutions the good are bettered.*—In such times and by such means their corruptions are mortified, and their graces are brightened. The trees of righteousness which are planted in God's courts, do root the faster for being shaken with tempests, and flourish the more for their pruning. Their fierce trials do refine their souls, and heat them into a greater zeal for God and holiness. The very rage and malice of their enemies do strengthen their care, and raise their resolution; so that they grow stronger and stronger. Michal jeered and flouted at David for his zeal; but he plainly and bravely told her, [that] if that was to be vile, he would be yet more so. (2 Sam. vi. 20—22.) Upon these two accounts, when times are saddest and persecution hottest, whatever may be said of the actings of men, there is no cause to complain of mal-administration.

on God's part, so long as the church is made purer, and the saints are made better. But I will add this further:—

Thirdly. *By these persecutions the church is enlarged, and the number of her children is increased.*—The oppressing of the Israelites by hardened Pharaoh issued in their multiplying. When the church at Jerusalem was scattered, the kingdom of Christ was amplified the more by it. Those afflictions and bonds which happened to Paul, tended to and ended in “the furtherance of the gospel.” The blood of the martyrs hath all along been the seed of the church. Persecutors are fools as well as madmen: they lose what they do; Christ and the gospel gain. So doth God outshoot his enemies in their own bow, and makes their very wrath to praise him. And let trials and persecutions come to never so great a height, I know no reason why the joy of believers should not be increased, when the nation of saints is multiplied. Do you, all you that profess religion and godliness, look to it, that the number of Christians be not diminished and lessened through your wretched apostasy; and then it shall be augmented through your firmness and holy constancy. That is the fifth thing by which we may support and comfort ourselves, namely, the great things which God hath done for his people.

(6.) *There are very great and glorious things which God hath further to do.*—If all were accomplished which God hath in his heart and purpose to do for his church, none of us should be here: the world would have an end, and time would be no more. The world doth upon some account owe its continuance to the church. The world is but the stage upon which God is acting for his name and for his church; and when the act is finished, the stage shall be pulled down. When “wicked” and ungodly men are plotting against the church, and persecuting her children, they act indeed like “unreasonable men,” in digging up those very foundations on which themselves stand, and pulling down the pillars that uphold them. And as God continues the world for the sake of the church, so he hath great things yet in his purpose and promise, which must by no means fail for their accomplishment. Such as these:—the giving great peace to her children; the bringing down her proud and insulting enemies, especially that grand and implacable one,—Babylon; the bringing-in both “his ancient people the Jews,” and “the fulness of the Gentiles;” the making the place of his feet glorious, and setting-up “the mountain of his house in the top of the mountains,” and causing the kings of the earth to bring their glory and the honour of the nations into it.

(7.) *God hath laid upon himself strong obligations to do these and such-like things; and therefore we are on the surer hand.*—God hath bound himself by promise; and that is as good security as heart can desire. God's word is better than man's bond: it is settled in heaven; it is “Yea and Amen.” God can as soon cease to be, as falsify his word: whatsoever thou hast a promise for, O believer, thou mayest be as sure of, as if thou hadst the thing in thine own possession. And how dark soever and cross soever providences may seem to be, do not

you fear them; for there always is a sweet harmony and perfect agreement between providences and promises; yea, the great work and business of Providence is to give accomplishment to the promises. Divine Providence is the midwife of promise, and is to give birth to those blessed and admirable mercies which it travails with. And though sometimes Providence acts somewhat roughly, yet it always proceeds very safely, so that there never is a miscarriage.

(8.) *God is greatly concerned in the good and welfare of his church and people.*—He is more concerned than we are, and all the men in the world. It is very true, we are nearly concerned in the prosperity of the church and true religion; in the church's peace it is that we shall have peace. Our all is indeed embarked in this ship; if that should be cast away, we are ruined; you may reckon upon that. Let religion be lost, and we are lost; farewell, prosperity and all that you can call "good." And therefore none of us should be careless, or wanting to prayer or duty. But know, God is more concerned than we are. The church is much concerned in the present motions and commotions; antichrist and his Jesuits are fishing in these troubled waters: but let us be comforted; God is concerned in the church, and that more than we all are. Who should speak his glory, and live his praise, and load his altars, if the gates of hell and endeavours of Rome should prevail against the church? Would atheists, Papists, or profane persons exalt and advance his honour? As to this lower world, God's stock of glory lies in the hands of his church and people, and his revenue is brought-in by them; and will He not look after them? Let us not fear where no fear is; let us not fear in the midst of fears. We may be confident that God will wisely steer the course, and carry the ship of the church safe into its harbour, in which he hath his name and honour embarked. He will never "give his glory to another, neither his praise to graven images;" (Isai. xlii. 8;) and if not to graven images, then not to Papists. Suppose those cursed Philistines should take the ark; yet know assuredly, the captivated ark will be too hard for Dagon; graven images and all idolatry shall fall before it.

(9.) Lastly. Let us comfort ourselves with this,—that *the government is laid upon Christ's shoulder, and the sceptre put into his hand, and all power, both in heaven and earth, is committed to him.*—God the Father hath set him up for his King upon his holy hill of Zion; and hath so established and fixed his throne, that he looks with scorn and contempt upon all the attempts of his enemies. And all that power which he hath was committed to him, and is to be employed by him, for the continuance and comfort of his church. He is made "Head over all things to the church:" (Eph. i. 22:) whatsoever he hath as Head, is for the advantage of that his mystical body. And what may we not expect from such a Father as God, from such a King as Jesus? And with what peace and delight may we sit under his shadow! Well might the holy Psalmist say, "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." (Psalm cxlix. 2.) From what Christ hath done, we may strongly argue to

340 SERMON XIII. HOW THE BELIEF OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT that which he will do. He was incarnate for his church; he was made under the law for her; he became poor for her; he humbled himself for her; he laid down his life for her; he bare the rage of man and the wrath of God for her; he "endured the cross, and despised the shame," because it was for her: and therefore question not but he will rule and govern her. Read, and rejoice while you read, that account given of him, Isai. ix. 7: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." And that you may not in the least doubt hereof, it is added, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

USE.

IV. Having thus finished the doctrinal part, I come to the application; and I shall only speak to an USE OF EXHORTATION, in two particulars:—

1. First. I exhort and advise you that are the people of God, to *fetch support and consolation from this sweet and precious truth.*—The times in which we live are indeed very dark and tempestuous. God is shaking all nations: specially it is a day of perplexity and casting down in "the valley of vision," the church of God; after all our prayers and endeavours and hopeful expectations, things are come to a sad pass, and Israel is brought back to the Red Sea. We may now take up that complaint: "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind." (Isai. xxvi. 17, 18.) The people of the Most High in all places are in sore trouble; "a cup of trembling," full of "the wine of astonishment," is put into their hands; and God carries [it] as if he were resolved to give up the dearly beloved of his soul for a time into the hand of her enemies. The antichristian Popish party is rampant, and think they have the ball at their foot, and shall now carry all before them. But at such a time as this, let this support and quiet and comfort you,—that, however things go, God still governs the world. And, that this may be sweet to you, follow these directions:—

(1.) *Make sure that you be in the number of Christ's subjects.*—Such as have bowed to his sceptre, submitted to his government, and are devoted to his fear. If you have once "kissed the Son" with a kiss of love and homage, you shall not "perish in the way." *Then* you may rejoice at the thoughts of God's governing the world, *when* you feel and are assured of his ruling and governing in your hearts. *Then* may the remembrance and consideration of his universal kingdom be cordial to you, *when* you find that he hath erected a kingdom within you, and that you are members of the kingdom of his grace. This is firm ground of "strong consolation" and of "quietness and assurance for ever." If you have been made willing in the day of God's power, and are the loyal subjects of Christ's kingdom, then you

are the favourites of God's court, yea, the children of his family, and you may promise yourselves that he will carefully look after you, and graciously provide for you. He hath a peculiar respect to his "peculiar people:" for them he hath his "chambers," a strong tower, in which they shall be safe, when he "cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." (Isai. xxvi. 20, 21.) Judgment begins at the house of God; and that is to make way for mercy: those judgments prepare for deliverances here, and glory hereafter; for victories here, and triumphs hereafter. But, O the dreadful storms of wrath that shall fall upon the wicked and incorrigible of the world! What thunder-bolts will God assail them with, that shall strike them down into that lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and shall never be quenched! Come, Christians; make it out that you trust in the Lord, and have given up yourselves unto the Lord; and then you may be sure that when enemies threaten you, and dangers face you, and fear is on every side, even then mercy shall compass you about.

(2.) *Heedfully look to it, that you govern yourselves according to the will and law of God.*—Then may you take the comfort of God's governing the world, when you are a well-governed people. When you wisely rule your own spirits, and order your own affections and your lives and conversations, there is a promise, that unto such God "will show his salvation." (Psalm l. 23.) The laws of a land protect the subjects, so long as they keep them: a transgression of the law is the endangering of a subject. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." (Psalm xci. 11.) Their commission, as large as it is, reaches no further: when you leave that, you lose your guard; but while you keep your way, angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate or your liberty or your lives, as losing your way, and leaving your way: fear that more than any thing; nothing but sin exposeth you to misery. So long as you keep your way, you shall keep other things; or if you lose any of them, you shall get that which is better: though you may be sufferers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and walked with God;" (Gen. vi. 9;) and he was secured in the ark, before the world was drowned with the flood. Let the worst come that can, it is not so bad as carnal reason represents it: if a good man should be deprived of his temporal comforts, it will commend spiritual ones the more to him, so that he shall the better relish and taste them. God's voice is never so sweet, as when he speaks comfortably in a wilderness. If a child of God should be cut off by a violent stroke, he is thereby brought the sooner to his Father; such a death is the shortest way home. If enraged persecutors add to his sufferings, in so doing they add to his crown; and by making his burden heavy, they make his "glory the more exceeding weighty." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

(3.) *Let God's governing the world be the matter of your faith.*—No truth will be a staff of support, unless you carry it in a believing hand: precepts will not prevail, threatenings will not awe you, and

promises will not comfort you, and the most precious scripture-revelations will not cheer you, any farther than as they are believed. Let a minister of the gospel present you with never so precious a cordial, made up of the most choice and excellent ingredients; it will do you no good, unless it be mingled by you with faith. Therefore, believe that the management and ordering of all things is in the hand of God, and pray that you may have a well-confirmed and improved faith hereof. When the faith is weak, it affords but weak comfort; do you strengthen your faith, and that will greaten your peace, and raise your joy.

To this end, be careful of this,—that you do nothing to the prejudice of your faith. Do not you weaken that which must support you. What a madness was it for Samson to let his locks be cut, when he knew he should lose his strength together with them! Now, there is nothing in the world so prejudicial to faith as sin is. A guilty conscience doth always make a palsy-hand, which is tremulous and shaking, whensoever it goes about to lay hold upon God and Christ and the covenant or any promise. Rebukes of conscience are severe checks to faith. “O,” saith the poor soul, when snibbed from within, “What! shall I look upon God as my God? Alas! I have disobeyed and dishonoured him. Shall I trust in Christ as my Saviour? I have crucified him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Shall I rejoice in the covenant? I have broken it, and dealt falsely in it. Shall I delight in the promise, and live upon it? Where is the condition? I cannot find it in myself.” Such reflections as these produce inward troubles and disquiets and fears; so that the very sweetmeats of the gospel are embittered to such an one. He cannot relish them, because he questions his interest in them. What is all God to one that cannot say, “My God?” Guilt makes faith and comfort run low: whereas, “great peace have they which love the law: and nothing shall offend them.” (Psalm cxix. 165.) They have peace in trouble, joy in sorrow, calms in storms, inward sedateness in the midst of outward commotions. “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God;” (1 John iii. 21;) and if so, then comfort comes in from every prospect which we have of God. Let us then look upon him which way we will, we shall see smiles and delights: that very appearance which is dark to others, will give light to us.

(4.) Lastly. *Be very serious and frequent in your meditations upon God's governing the world.*—Transient and fleeting thoughts make either none, or but little and slight and short impressions. The burning-glass will not fire any combustible matter, unless it be held some considerable time with a steady hand in the beams of the sun: so it is here. Dwell, therefore, in your thoughts upon this subject; consider it, and return to consider; repeat the work again and again. “Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord;” that is, often and often, at all times, and upon all occasions. Was he in straits? he looked to God. Was he in danger? he looked to God. Was he in fears? he still looked to God. And that supported him, as you



may gather from the next words: "He shall pluck my feet out of the net." (Psalm xxv. 15.) "Though mine enemies have got me in their net, and I am so entangled in it, that I cannot make my own escape; yet God shall pluck me out; from him I shall have my deliverance and a song." And in such cases and conditions we should specially look to God, under the notion of Supreme Rector and Governor of the world. Are there confusions and distresses up and down in the world? are foundations out of course? Yet comfort yourselves with this,—that God sits at the helm, and he "is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." (Psalm xlv. 1.) You will find, serious reiterated meditation will be exceeding influential upon you. David remembered God upon his bed, and meditated upon him in the night-watches, and called to mind his former mercies,—how he had been his help; and this greatly supported and comforted him. "Therefore," saith he, "in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." (Psalm lxiii. 6, 7.) He would both hide under it and rejoice; God's shadow should be both his shelter and his Paradise: and so it may well be; for his name is not only "a strong tower," but likewise an "ointment poured forth," having in it strength and sweetness.

2. In the second use, I exhort and beseech you to *evidence it unto the world, that your belief of God's governing the world doth really support and cheer you in the midst of the present distractions, when many men's hearts are failing for fear of those things which may come to pass.*—The truth is, the day in which Providence hath cast us is a day of distraction: the world is stark mad; wicked men are mad upon sin and vanity, and superstition and idolatry, and mad against religion and godliness. Well, Christians, if they will be mad, let them be so: God knows how to tame them, and how to chain and fetter them, too; he hath hooks for their noses, and bridles for their jaws. (Isai. xxxvii. 29.) Only, be you sober, and "in patience possess your souls." (Luke xxi. 19.) O that, when it may be said, "Here is the cursed, hellish rage and Bedlam, frantic fury of atheists and Papists," it may also be said, "Here is the patience and faith of the saints!" (Rev. xiii. 10.)

When there are those that make it their design and business to destroy and confound all things, do you rejoice in this,—that God governs all wisely, powerfully, graciously; so that those things which have the most frightful aspect, the most amazing passages which we hear of or meet with, are the products of an eternal counsel, and shall at last (it may be, ere long) issue in a happy close. However affairs go now, God hath bid us, "Say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him." (Isai. iii. 10.) Do you evidence the powerful and comfortable influence that God's government hath upon your spirits, by these three things:—

(1.) First. *By the keeping up your spirits.*—Ye "have need of patience." (Heb. x. 36.) Ye may find, a little will not serve your turn: lay up, therefore, good store of it; and then fetch out of that store; and "let patience have her perfect work." (James i. 4.) But withal "cast not away your confidence;" for it "hath great recom-

pence of reward." (Heb. x. 35.) "We will not fear," saith the church, "though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Psalm xli. 2.) Let "the wicked fear where no fear is;" but let the saints be fearless in the midst of fears. "Why are ye fearful?" said Christ to his disciples, when the ship was almost covered with waves. (Matt. viii. 26.) *He* sets men above God in his thoughts, *whose* fear of man prevails against his faith in God: that man either is altogether forgetful of God, or his thoughts of him are low and unbecoming; for certain, he doth not sanctify the Lord of hosts in his heart. Let your faith be preserved in vigour and exercise. What, though the beast have seven heads and ten horns, great subtilty and no less power? Yet the Lamb shall overcome.

(2.) Evidence it *by your perseverance in godliness*.—Hold on your way; make not use of any sinful means, neglect not any part of your duty, to secure yourselves and avoid danger. Do not offend God; be not beholden to the devil for your liberty and peace. What, though there be lions in the way? Go on, and proceed boldly, so long as it is the way of God. You may live by faith, while you walk by rule; you may walk believably and cheerfully, while you walk regularly. The wound that a man gets by sin, will put him to far greater smart and pain, than all his sufferings for God and godliness would have done. He that purchases the favour of men with the frowns of conscience, will find he hath made a very hard bargain. Every step from God is a step to ruin: "If any man draw back," God's "soul will have no pleasure in him." (Heb. x. 38.) Whereas he that walks uprightly, walketh safely.

(3.) Make it to appear *by the raisedness of your expectations*.—So the church did in her low condition: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." (Micah vii.-8.) At midnight she looked for the dawning of a glorious day; and so do you. That is a very sweet place which you have in Joel ii. 20, 21; where the prophet, speaking of the northern army, saith: "His stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things." And then he adds: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things." And so we may say at this day: "God will do great things, such as shall outdo all that his enemies have done." God's last works in the world will be his greatest works, and by them he will get himself a glorious name; and I hope he will speed it. "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.) Therefore "encourage yourselves in the Lord your God;" do your duty, and quietly wait; for your "expectation shall not be cut off." (Prov. xxiii. 18.)

## SERMON XIV.

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WHAT ARE THE HINDERANCES AND HELPS TO A GOOD MEMORY  
IN SPIRITUAL THINGS?*By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*—1 Corinthians xv. 2.

THERE is no complaint more common among religious persons, than the weakness of their memories ; thinking, perhaps, *that defect doth imply least guilt ; or, it may be, mistaking their carelessness for forgetfulness ; or else there is really some special frailty in that faculty,—to heal which, is the design of this discourse.*

For the occasion and coherence of these words in the text, it is evident that the apostle Paul in the verse foregoing begins to recite and prove the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, which he doth there declare to be a great point of that gospel which he had preached unto them, which also they had received, and wherein they did stand. And then he adds here, “By which” gospel “also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

In which words we have a discovery,

1. *Of men's utmost happiness.*—Namely, salvation : “Ye are saved ;” that is, not only rescued out of your pagan state, nor only that ye stand fair for salvation ; but “ye are saved” already. For heaven doth really begin upon earth, and every true saint is at present a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem.

2. *Of the only means for the attaining of it.*—Namely, the gospel : “By which ye are saved.” For that reveals the object ; that directs lost man, which way to arrive at it ; that assures us that a passage is opened into heaven ; that encourages and inclines us seriously to endeavour after it.

3. *Of the special grace necessary in respect of this gospel.*—Namely, believing : “Unless ye have believed in vain.” For hereby we credit what is revealed, we embrace what is offered, and we rely on what is promised ; without which acts of faith, the gospel signifies nothing to us. And hearing, by which faith comes, is included in it ; for so the apostle joins them : “Then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” (Verse 14.)

4. *Of the particular faculty that is requisite for this end.*—Namely, the memory : “If ye keep in memory what I preached unto you.”

For though the main thing hereby intended be to keep in the heart a constant and effectual belief of the gospel, and particularly of this article of the resurrection ; yet, to keep in memory “the form of sound words,” is also necessary in order thereunto ; and therefore it is said in the text,—that “ye retain with what words, or reasons, I preached unto you.”\*

5. *The relation or influence which this last (of keeping in memory) hath upon all the rest.*—And this expressed, (1.) By way of *condition*, in the beginning of the verse : “Ye are saved, if ye keep in memory.” Our salvation in some sort depends upon it : for, without the gospel, no salvation ; without faith, no benefit by the gospel ; and without hearing and retaining what we hear, no saving faith. (2.) By way of *exception*, in the end of the verse : “Unless ye have believed in vain.” Your hearing is in vain, and your believing is in vain, if ye do not steadfastly cleave to the gospel, and to this material doctrine of it,—the resurrection, and “keep in memory what I have preached unto you” concerning it.

The lesson, then, that we may learn from hence is this ; namely,

#### DOCTRINE.

*If men would be saved by the gospel, they must keep in memory what is preached unto them.*

And under this proposition I am to handle the causes and cure of a bad memory, or the hinderances and helps of a good memory in spiritual things. And in order hereunto I shall show,

I. *What the memory is.*

II. *The excellency of this faculty, especially in its primitive state.*

III. *The corruption of it.*

IV. *The restoration or sanctification of it.*

V. *The ordinary impediments thereof.*

VI. *The proper helps unto it.*

VII. *Answer some cavils of the wilful, and some of the doubts of the weak, about it.* And,

VIII. *Make application of all.*

And the good Lord help us all now to remember what is preached to us !

I. *What the memory is.*—It is that faculty of the soul wherein are reserved the things [which] we know. Though it belong to the sensitive soul, and so is in some measure common to brutes with men, yet I shall handle [it] as it is seated in the rational soul, where it is the store-house not only of whatsoever is brought in by the eye and ear,—which are the two senses of discipline,—but also of what is imparted by the understanding. For the memory † is nearly allied to

\* *Τῶν λόγων.* *Quibusdam verbis.*—TREMELLIUS. [“With whatsoever words.”] *Quo sermone.*—BEZA, et *Versio Arab.* [“With what discourse.”] *Quâ ratione.*—*Vers. Syr., et Fulg.* [“With what reasoning.”] † *Memoria est animus. Dicimus enim, Vide ut illud in animo habeas : et cum obliviscimur, dicimus, Non fuit in animo.*—AUGUSTINI *Confessiones*, lib. x. cap. 14. “The memory is the mind. For we say, ‘See that you keep that in mind :’ and when we forget any thing, we say, ‘It was not in my mind.’”—EDIT. *Non est in homine memoria distincta ab intellectu.*—CAJETANUS. “In man the memory is not distinct from the understanding.”—EDIT.

the understanding, if it be not the same, as many think. Its office, however, is,

1. *To receive such things as are presented to it.*—Wherein it is fitly enough compared to soft wax, which is prepared to receive any impression made upon it.

2. *To retain and preserve what is laid up therein.*—Wherefore it is oft called by the ancients, *venter animæ*, “the belly of the soul.”\* There is a little kingdom in the soul of man. The king, or rather vice-roy, is the will, the privy-council is the understanding, the judge is the conscience, and the great treasurer is the memory.

3. *To recall or recover what was out of mind.*†—And this is proper to mankind, and is not in brutes: for it proceeds from the motion of the images of things in the brain by the activity of reason, which, considering the time, place, persons, and such-like circumstances of things, by degrees recovers what was out of the way; for, as things themselves, so the phantasms of things, are connected together, and by one we recover another. And this intellectual memory is inseparable from the rational soul; in that the soul undoubtedly remembers, when it is quite separate from the body: “But Abraham said,” (to the rich man in torments,) “Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.” (Luke xvi. 25.)

II. *The excellence of this faculty.*—The soul of man is a subject of wonder; ‡ and nothing more wonderful in it than the memory,—that such innumerable images of things should be lodged in a finite faculty, and that what seems to be utterly lost in it, should be fully recovered; wherefore it is justly deemed by the learned a miraculous mercy.§ It hath power to make things that are in themselves absent and past, to be present.¶ By the help of memory, we retain what we have read in books, and what we have heard in sermons or other discourse, the examples of God’s mercies and judgments for our encouragement and warning. All these, and ten thousand things more, are laid up in the memory, which is the soul’s treasury, so that the soul would be a poor soul without the memory.¶¶ We may see the worth of this faculty by those that are deprived of the use of it, that can remember nobody, nor the last question that they did ask. Thus we read of Messala Corvinus, an orator, that forgat even his own name; \*\* and of Atticus, the son of Herod the sophist, that could never remember the names of the letters of the alphabet, till his

\* AUGUSTINI Opera, tom. i. p. 509.

† *Quorum arcè recordamur, eorum est memoria: quorum penitus obliiti sumus, eorum oblivio: quorum partim meminimus, partim obliiti sumus, eorum est reminiscencia.*—ZANCHII Opera, tom. iii. lib. ii. cap. 5. “We are said to remember those things which we carefully bear in mind; to forget those of which we have lost all cognizance; and to recollect those things which we partly remember, and have partly forgotten.”—EDIT.

‡ *Quicquid sit, jurarem esse divinum.*—CICERO. “Whatever it be, I could swear that it is divine.”—EDIT. § ZANCHIUS.

¶ *Memoria nobis est surdorum auditio et visio cæcorum.*—PLUTARCHUS. “Memory is to us, what hearing is to the deaf and sight to the blind.”—EDIT. ¶¶ *Omnium rerum thesaurus et custos est memoria; nec enarrari potest, tam grandis est ejus perplexitas; et anima ipsa est.*—AUGUSTINI Liber de Spiritu et Anima. “The memory is the treasury and guardian of all things; nor can it be explained, so great is its obscurity: it is even the soul itself.”—EDIT.

\*\* PLINII Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 24.

father was fain to name four-and-twenty boys by the names of the several letters, that he might retain them.\* All a man's past life would be lost, if his memory were lost; so are the comforts of the soul lost, so far as they are forgotten. So that the soul would be poor in knowledge, poor in gifts, poor in comfort, without the memory.† Especially this faculty was happy in its primitive state; for then its reception was easy, the impressions firm, the recovery (if any use of it) ready. Then it was like a clear crystal glass, wherein all that was contained in it was easily seen; now it is cracked and muddy: then it was like an iron chest; now [it is] like a bag with holes. It had the neighbourhood of a clear understanding and of a holy will; and Adam could not but "remember his Creator in those days of his youth."

III. *The corruption or depravation of this faculty.*—For, by the fall of Adam, each faculty of the soul was wofully depraved. When a curious watch falls to the ground, though it be sorely maimed, yet some wheel or pin may have received no hurt; but here it is otherwise. Our fall was like that of some rare glass, which thereby is shattered all to pieces: there remain all the materials of it;—so doth reason and memory with the soul;—but they must be melted and cast anew, before they be good for any thing. The corruption of the memory stands,

1. *In remembering those things which we should forget.*—As,

(1.) *Things unprofitable.*—There are a thousand needless and useless matters that fill the memory, and keep out better things; like as if one should crowd waste paper, rags, and broken pitchers into a cabinet, which should be stored with things of value. There is, in all actions and accidents, two things considerable: (i.) *The action*: for example: "Such a text was handled, such a charitable action done, such a man brake his leg, was drunk," or the like. (ii.) *The inference or observation to be gathered from thence*: for all events, whether good or bad, are intended by the wise God for man's instruction. Now the memory lays up the former, and can retain it a long time; but the lesson which we should learn from it,—*that* is neglected, *that* is forgotten.

(2.) *Things hurtful to us.*—To wit, injuries: these usually stick in the memory, when better things slip out. If any body hath spoken or done evil to us, the memory is trusty enough about these. As one says, "We can remember *old songs* and *old wrongs* long enough;" yea, those whom we profess to forgive, yet we declare that we cannot forget them. Not but that a man may have a natural remembrance of an injury, so that he have not an angry remembrance of it. As our heavenly Father himself remembers all a believer's sins, but puts away his anger; so we may rationally remember them, but we must spiritually forget them; for, else, the remembrance of them generally doeth us a great deal of hurt, but no good at all. It cools our love,

\* CÆLII RHODIGINI *Antiquæ Lectiones*, lib. ii. cap. 8. † *Tantum scimus quantum memoriâ tenemus.*—ERASMUS, "We can be said to know only so much as we retain in our memory."—EDIT.

weakens our trust, and prepares us for revenge; as [it] did Amnon toward Absalom. (2 Sam. xiii. 32.)\*

(3.) *Things sinful.*—Thus we can remember a filthy story seven years, when we do forget a saving sermon in seven hours. And herein the memory is the great nurse of contemplative wickedness, and represents to the idle and sinful heart all the sins it wots of with renewed delight; and so strengthens the impression, and doubles the guilt: “She multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.” (Ezek. xxiii. 19.) The depraved memory is herein fitly compared to a sieve, that lets the good corn fall through, and reserves only the chaff; by which it is plain that the faculty is not lost, but poisoned. So that in this respect we may say, as Themistocles did to Simonides, when he offered to teach him the art of memory: “Rather,” says he, “teach me the art of forgetfulness: for the things which I would not, I remember; and cannot forget the things I would.”

2. The corruption of the memory stands in *forgetting those things which we should remember.*—But these things being so exceeding many, great, and useful, though I cannot enumerate them, yet I shall comprise the chief of them in these following general heads:—

(1.) *Our Creator, and what he hath done, and what he hath done FOR US.*—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” (Eccles. xii. 1.) And yet whom do we more forget? “Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.” (Jer. ii. 32.) And our forgetfulness here is most inexcusable; because we may see, taste, and feel him every moment; forasmuch as he is “not far from every one of us,” seeing “in him we live, and move, and have our being:” (Acts xvii. 27, 28 :) and yet we can make shift to forget him; which shows the great craze † [that] we had by the fall. And then, the great things which he hath done,—to wit, in the works of creation and providence, especially for his church,—these we easily forget, but should remember: “I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old:” (Psalm lxxvii. 11 :) and particularly what he hath done *for us*; the many and great mercies and deliverances, especially the most remarkable of them, which every good Christian should have a catalogue of, in his mind or in his book: “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness,” &c. (Deut. viii. 2.)

(2.) *Our Redeemer, and what he hath suffered for us.*—Never was there such an instance of free and transcendent love in the world, as that the Eternal Son of God should give himself to be a sacrifice to expiate our sin: and yet we—that can profess, of far less kindnesses from men, that we shall never forget them—can forget this; else he had never instituted the Lord’s supper on purpose to keep up the solemn and useful remembrance thereof; which remembrance sets a-work all our graces,—our faith, love, repentance, thankfulness, &c.

\* The sense seems to require this transposition of the clause: “as [it] did Absalom toward Amnon.”—EDIT. † The *crack* or *crash*.—EDIT.

And without the frequent use of this ordinance, where it may be had, a defect will be found in these graces; for the greatest things wear off with time, and holy David himself found cause to charge it upon his soul, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," &c. (Psalm ciii. 2.)

(3.) *The truths of religion, especially the most weighty.*—"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." (Mal. iv. 4.) And of these the apostle Peter saith [that] he would "put" the Christians "in remembrance, though they knew them," that they might "be established in the present truth." Yea, he would "stir them up by putting them in remembrance" as long as he lived. (2 Peter i. 12—15.) The doctrine of God, of Christ, of the creation, of the fall, of the covenant of grace, of faith, repentance, the resurrection, (as in my text,) and judgment to come;—these things should be so engrafted into the hearts of Christians, that they should know and remember [them] as well as their own names or the rooms of their houses: and yet it is a shame to find how easily and almost utterly these things are forgotten by too many. How few do we find, that have been long hearers of God's word, that can give any tolerable account of the nature of that faith by which the soul lives!

(4.) *The duties of religion.*—The scripture, that so often requires us to remember them, plainly implies that we are apt to forget them. What is the meaning of that,—“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,” (Exod. xx. 8,) but that we easily forget it, we are surprised by it, it returns ere we are aware? So, that, Heb. xiii., which is called by some, “a chapter of remembrance:” “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers. Remember them that are in bonds. To do good and to communicate forget not.” (Verses 2, 3, 16.) All which, as they show our duty, so do they imply our defectiveness herein; though to forget those and such-like, is as absurd as if we did forget to eat or sleep: for, as Christians, we “live by faith,” and breathe by prayer; so, to forget to repent, to believe, to pray, and to discharge the duties of our relation, callings, and all other duties toward God and toward men, is to forget Christianity itself.

(5.) *Our sins.*—As there is a culpable, so there is an useful and necessary, remembrance of them. When we remember sin to renew our love to it,—that is damnable; but when we remember it to loathe it, and to loathe ourselves for it,—that is saving: “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.” (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) How much of his wickedness doth the profane sinner forget! Lies, oaths, rotten language, slander, iniquities,—all forgotten, till God in mercy or in wrath awaken their consciences; and then all is set in order before them, either to their conversion or confusion. Hence that emphatical charge: “Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness,” &c. (Deut. ix. 7.)

(6.) *Our vows and obligations to God.*—The corruption of our memories appears plainly in this. There is, first, our great vow in



baptism, that we would sincerely “renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil,” and pay unto our Lord and Redeemer unfeigned obedience to all his commandments. This is seldom *actually* remembered by any of us, too seldom *virtually*, especially by such as do directly run counter to it in the usual scope of their lives. And then our sickness-vows: when our lives or the comforts of our lives have been in hazard, what serious and fair promises did we make! What was our frame *then*? and what is it *now*? Either *then* thou wast a great hypocrite, or else *now* thou art a great apostate. But “be not deceived; God is not mocked.” He hath divers ways to whet\* up such memories.

And our obligations to others, which should stick in our memories, [are] as soon worn off; whether they are formal, by promises; or virtual, by kindnesses received: neither whereof signify any thing with a false or unthankful man; of whom we usually say, that “they have ill memories.” But against these will rise in judgment, not only God, his word, their own consciences, and the Heathens, but even the brute creatures themselves; one of whom, even a lion, is credibly reported to have spared and cherished one Androclus, that was thrown to be devoured, having remembered that that very man had formerly pulled a thorn out of his foot in his den.†

(7.) *The church of God.*—The whole catholic church doth every day implicitly beg of us, “O, remember me in your prayers.” And holy David said, “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.” (Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.) And there is not a more genuine token of our adoption, than a feeling and constant remembrance of God’s Jerusalem; and especially in this juncture of time, wherein the Christian church is almost every where so sorely distressed, that, were it not for the scripture and former experience, we might fear to hear her last groans. And yet, if the secret and family prayers of very many were well searched, it is to be doubted that their memories were ~~very~~ bad here also.

(8.) *Our latter end.*—This *should be* much, and this *is* little, remembered by most men; as the prophet said to the people of his time: “Thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.” (Isai. xlvi. 7.) And the other laments it: “She remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully.” (Lam. i. 9.) And so *they* are like to do, *that* remember not their end. It is true, in propriety of speech, remembrance is only of things past, or at least of a thing which now is not first known; yet in the phrase of scripture we are required to remember death, resurrection, judgment, hell, and heaven; partly because these are foretold, and chiefly because it behoves us to meditate and consider of them, which cannot be done without the memory. But there are no death’s-heads so effectual to mind us of this, as a firm persuasion that we are but strangers here, and that our

\* In the list of *errata*, Dr. Annesley gives *rub up* as a substitute for this word, which was printed *wet up*.—EDIT.

† AULUS GELLIUS, lib. v. cap. 41.

true country is in the world to come; a heart mortified to the world, sick of sin; and a heavenly frame of soul, which, being restless here, will of its own accord groan to have "mortality swallowed up of life." And so much may be sufficient to explain and demonstrate the corruption of the memory, which is the third point.

IV. *The sanctification of the memory.*—Which is the restoring [of] this faculty to its former integrity and to its proper objects. For when a man's corrupt nature is changed, all the faculties are renewed, there is a new creation of him. This is done,

1. *By purging the faculty.*—And so conversion is said to begin here: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord." (Psalm xxii. 27.) For he that remembers what man's estate was by creation, must needs find that there is a sad change, and, consequently, that there is need of restoration. The same method is prescribed after second falls: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent." (Rev. ii. 5.) And, without doubt, as the Holy Spirit of God burns up the dross of the powers of the soul, so of this with the rest, and razeth out of it many sinful impressions which were there.

2. *By strengthening it.*—For, as sin weakens, so grace strengthens, the faculty. This effect it hath upon the understanding and will; and so it hath upon the memory. It is apparent that many, who, before their conversion to God, would forget whole chapters and sermons, yet, after their new birth, would carry away a great deal of them. God's Spirit then helps them, and, according to our Saviour's promise, "brings all things to our remembrance." (John xiv. 26.) Grace stops the leaks in that vessel, which sin hath made.

3. *By reconciling it to good things, and setting it against evil.*—Before regeneration, as the heart, so the memory, nauseates good things, as a foul stomach doth wholesome meat, and delights in trash; it can hold nothing that is good: so is it with our vitiated memories; they cannot hold savoury and pious things. These things are like a spark of fire in green wood,—it soon goes out: but when grace comes and changes the whole frame of the heart, this faculty begins to relish and make room for spiritual things. When the heart begins to delight in them, the mind retains them: "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will" never "forget thy word." (Psalm cxix. 16.) So, on the other side, those sins which the memory delighted to keep in mind, to review them, and in a sort to repeat them over and over; when God hath been at his new creation within, then the remembrance of those sins is bitter. Then the poor creature can say, as the church did in another case: "My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me." (Lam. iii. 20.)

4. *By filling it with good things.*—For when the new creature is once born again, no new-born child doth more desire and long for milk, than the soul doth for knowledge and wisdom; and then the memory consequently is stored with scripture-truths, promises, rules, and helps. Then the substance of all that is apprehended by the sanctified understanding is conveyed to the memory, and lodged

there: and then, as it is, Matt. xii. 35, the "good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things;" and you may commonly know what treasure is within, by what is brought out. As, if you go among vain or worldly men, their foolish, carnal, and worldly discourse plainly shows what treasure they have within; so the wise, religious, and godly communication that good men entertain you with, doth evidence what is laid up in their memories: as he that hath nothing but farthings in his pocket, can produce nothing from thence but brass; but he that hath all guineas there, brings forth gold.

5. *By fitting things laid up in memory for use and practice.*—Which is plainly the work of God by his grace. For, a notional memory is of little use without a practical; as treasure in a chest is no way so useful, though there be much of it, as a penny in the purse, when there is occasion for it. The fringes that were appointed to the children of Israel, were to this end: "That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." (Num. xv. 39, 40.) And that "everlasting mercy" of God is promised "to those that remember his commandments to do them." (Psalm ciii. 17, 18.) And certainly they who commit things to their memories on this design to practise them, shall be able to remember them, when they have need of them, in the course of their practice. And thus the memory is by sanctifying grace restored; which is the fourth point.

V. I come, in the fifth place, to show *the ordinary impediments of a good memory, or the causes of a bad one.*—Which, as ever you desire better memories, you must beware and seriously strive against. And they are these:—

1. *A weak or dark understanding.*—Such, indeed, may have a great sensitive memory, as we see in children, yea, in some brute creatures; but a sound rational memory they cannot have; for, except a thing be clearly known, it can never be clearly remembered. If reason be weak, and the mind be poor, what can the memory be stored with, but from the senses? And you shall observe that your ignorant people commonly have the worst memories, especially of spiritual matters: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." (Matt. xiii. 19.) Words will be remembered to little purpose, when things are not understood; and therefore labour for more knowledge and a clearer understanding. Beg it of God, and according to your capacities use all means to increase it.

2. *A carnal, careless heart.*—That is mindless of good things; for, those things which we little heed, we never remember. "According to the impression on the heart, is the retention in the memory." \* Such a heart as this can retain abundance of a play or a song, but of a chapter or sermon next to nothing; for every thing keeps what is

\* *Ut impressio fortior, ita memoria tenacior.*—HOLDSWORTH, *Prælectiones Theologicae*, p. 231.

connatural to itself. Nay, a good man's memory, in a remiss, negligent frame, quite differs from what it was in a religious frame; and some scriptures, which were utterly insignificant to him at one time, —read and heard and forgotten,—have been quite new to him at another, when his heart hath been rightly disposed. As, you know, wax, when it is hard, receives no impression while it is so; but softens the same wax, and then it receives it. And nothing can be retained in the memory, if it be not first received *by* the memory. And therefore many of you that complain of your bad memories, have more reason to lament your old, dead, and hard hearts, and to be restless till they be renewed.

3. *A darling sin.*—Any bosom-sin, as it fills and employs every faculty, so it debauches, monopolizes, and disorders them all. Grace, though it rule every faculty, yet ruffles none; it composes the mind, and employs the memory in a rational manner; it rules, like a just king, orderly: but the serving of any lust breeds a civil war between one faculty and another; and that distracts the whole soul, whereby every power thereof is weakened; and, particularly, the memory, being pressed to serve the stronger side, is so stuffed with the concerns of that tyrant-lust, that it cannot intend any spiritual matter. And therefore, whatever “right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee,” (Matt. v. 29,) or else thy memory will never be cured. A table-book that is written and blotted all over, must be wiped before you can write any new matter upon it; and so must the lines of thy darling sin be effaced by real mortification, before any good things will abide legible in thy memory.

4. *Excess of worldly cares* is destructive to the memory.—Our Saviour hath plainly told us, that “no man can serve God and mammon.” (Matt. vi. 24.) The memory is but finite, though capacious; and a superabundance of worldly thoughts within must needs shoulder out better things that should be there. Especially, these thoughts, being more natural to our depraved hearts, and arising from sensible things, will so stuff the memory, that there is no room for spiritual matters. Hereupon we find that young persons, that have few worldly cares, have better memories than others, as some of the ancients observe.\* More especially, when such cares and thoughts crowd-in just after we have been reading or hearing God's word: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” (Matt. xiii. 22.) And therefore, if you would heal your memories, moderate your cares; considering that immoderate care or labour is justly blasted or cursed of God, so that it doeth no man any real good. You would not overload a beast; why will you overload your own spirits? Particularly be sure that, if possibly you can, you settle and digest your spiritual

\* *Qui magis reminiscerentur quàm pueruli, ut recentiores animæ, et nondum immersæ domesticis et publicis curis?*—TERTULLIANUS *De Animâ*, cap. 24. “Who can remember more than little boys, as having fresher souls, and being not yet immersed in domestic and public cares?”—EDIT.

matters in your minds after reading and hearing, before they be disordered and confounded with worldly cares.

5. *Surfeiting and drunkenness* are great enemies to the memory.—These do each of them infallibly disorder the brain, and disable it from its functions. Excess of meat doth this, more insensibly, but yet really; a full belly seldom hath a clear head: but that of drink is most evident: “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:” (that is, in excess :) “lest they drink, and forget the law.” (Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.) It is plain that a drunken man forgets what he said and did; and too many sad instances are apparent of many that have drunk away, not only their estates, their health, their credit, but their very souls and brains and all, and are grown very sots; for, “whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.” (Hosea iv. 11.) And therefore keep a strict watch over yourselves; and if you loathe those Christian rules to which you are sworn, yet do not abhor morality, do not renounce humanity.

6. *Violent passions* spoil the memory.—Such as of anger, grief, love, fear. Passions we must have; but constitution and education allay them in some, reason moderates them in others, and grace regulates them in the godly. Where these bridles are wanting, they shake all the faculties, as an earthquake doth a country. For example: anger, when it rages, manifestly alters and inflames the blood, and consequently the spirits, and melts off the impressions in the brain, just as the fire melts the wax and the impressions that by the seal were fixed upon it; so excessive grief, fear, and love: you cannot but perceive in yourselves and others, how your poor memories have suffered by some or all of them. And therefore labour to mortify your passions; and, to that end, endeavour for strength of grace. Strong passions had need of strong grace; as, you know, a heady horse had need of a strong bridle: for you will find, that as there is much guilt in them, so much harm comes by them. Where, by the way, you may see the excellency of our blessed religion, which tends to the health and quieting, as well as to the saving, of the soul.

7. *A multitude of indigested notions*.—If a man have a stock of methodical and digested knowledge, it is admirable how much the memory will contain; as you know how many images may be discerned at once in a glass: but when these notions are heaped incoherently in the memory, without order or dependence, they confound and overthrow the memory. As a scholar that has read abundance, but digested nothing,—he knows not where to find any thing; it breaks his memory. As excess of meat cloyes the stomach, so an unreasonable, an unmeasurable heaping of things in the memory confounds it. Thus many read or hear much, very much, too much perhaps for their capacities; they have not stowage for it: and so they are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,” like them, 2 Tim. iii. 7. Therefore, look that ye understand and digest things by meditation; run not on too fast; he that

rides post, can never draw maps of the country.\* When one is impatient to stay on things, they leave but a shallow impression; as greediness of the appetite hinders digestion. When a thing is well studied and clearly apprehended, it will be much better remembered.† And thus I have showed the hinderances of the memory, or what be the common causes of a bad memory, which is the fifth point.

VI. The sixth thing to be handled is, *the proper helps to it*.—And they may be ranked under three heads: 1. *Natural helps*; 2. *Artificial*; 3. *Spiritual*. Of these in order.

1. As to *natural helps*: as I must not invade the province of the learned physician, so I would omit nothing that is in general necessary for this purpose. And so it is observed that, as too much coldness and moistness of the brain is a great cause of forgetfulness, so, on the other side, a convenient heat and dryness of it is a great help to the memory. For the heat thereof disposeth it sooner to receive, and the dryness of it to retain, the impression; as the wax, you know, being warmed, receives—and then, being dry, preserves—the prints of the wax. Hence some think that זָכַר “to remember,” signifies “the male kind,” which hath more heat in its constitution; and אָשַׁח [is] used for “the female,” which implies “forgetfulness,” that sex being colder: another reason being also given of that etymology; to wit, because the remembrance of the former endures, whereas the woman, being incorporated into another family, is sooner forgotten. Two things I would here recommend:—

(1.) *A sober diet*.—For if excesses in meat and drink do disturb the brain, and consequently weaken the memory, then certainly a sparing and temperate diet does preserve the blood and spirits in order; and so, by consequence, together with a good air, where it may be had, is a certain (though not so sensible) help to the memory.‡ And therefore “take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so” you quite forget “that day” that “comes upon” men “unawares.” (Luke xxi. 34.) The Heathens went far in this moderation: how far then should Christians go before them! and what a base thing it is to destroy our reason by gratifying our appetite!

(2.) *A quiet mind*.—For, if all passions that are violent weaken, then a sedate and quiet mind greatly strengthens, the memory. It is true, “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward;” (Job v. 7;) and if we subject our minds unto them, our souls will be, like the raging sea, in perpetual agitation; and then the memory [will be] shattered. As, in a pool of water, when it is clear, you may see the fishes and every thing easily in it; but when it is troubled, every thing disappears: so is it with our reason and memory. As long as the mind is quiet, we may tell where to find any thing in the

\* *Omnis festinatio cæca*.—SENECA. “All haste is blind.”—EDIT. † *Rectius illi, qui nullis non multa legenda censent, si memorie consulendum*.—MAGIRUS. “They judge more rightly who think that most persons should not read many books, if the profit of the memory be consulted.”—EDIT. ‡ PLATO, in *Timæo*.

memory; but when it is distracted, every thing is hid from us. Let faith, therefore, ply its business upon Almighty God and his promises, and then, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isai. xxvi. 3.)

2. *Artificial or outward helps* are,—

(1.) *The repetition of those things which we would remember.*—Revolving them in the mind,—that makes the impression deeper;\* and then the audible repeating of them greatly fixes them there: "Ye shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. xi. 18, 19.) Upon this account, some great orators have used to pronounce their harangues in their studies, to fix them the better on their memories. And it is recorded of Pythagoras, that he appointed his scholars to recollect, every night before they went to bed, what they had heard or done all that day. How much more should you, on the Lord's-day, at night, revive what you have heard, confer of it with others, repeat it to your family! by all which you will relieve the weakness of this faculty.

(2.) *Writing what we would remember* is a merciful help to the memory.†—Socrates, indeed, held that letters proved the ruin of the memory, because, before the invention of letters, people committed worthy matters to memory, but afterward to books; but certainly both memory and books are little enough to preserve those things that should be remembered. The Holy Ghost teaches better: "And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." (Deut. xi. 20.) Yea, the king himself was to "write him a copy of the law in a book," that he might remember it the better. (Deut. xvii. 18.) The very writing of any thing fixes it deeper in the mind. And therefore I should still recommend the writing of sermons, not only as a help to the memory, but also as a good preservative from sleeping under God's ordinance, as also from gazing about, to the great distraction of the thoughts at that sacred employment. For, alas! how many excellent doctrines, directions, and marks have you heard, that are quite forgotten, which a discreet use of writing might have preserved unto you! ‡

(3.) *Custom or using your memories* is an excellent way of improving them.—Thus, many wise persons charge their memories at the present, and thereby strengthen them; and then commit what they have remembered to writing, when they come home, that no time may wear it away; for every faculty is improved and strengthened by employing it. We say, "Use legs, and have legs;" and so, Use the memory, and thou wilt have a memory. So, if you oblige your chil-

\* *Sæpe recordari medicamine fortius omni.* "Frequent acts of recollection produce better effects than any charm or medication whatever."—EDIT. † *E Phœnicid mare literas, memoriæ adversus oblivionem remedium, acciuit.*—PLUTARCHUS. "From Phœnicia the sea brought letters,—a remedy for the forgetfulness of the memory."—EDIT. ‡ I have seen a large common-place book of famous Mr. Bruen, filled with choice sentences out of good authors, and digested under fit heads, for his own use, being a private gentleman.

dren and your servants to bring you away an account of a sermon, or so much of a catechism, you will see that use and custom will make that easy which before they thought impossible. I have seen some of an old man's girdle, who could not read a word ; yet by the only help of a girdle which he wore, which was hung about with some knotted points, he could bring home every particular of a sermon. And therefore charge your memories with those things that are fit to be remembered ; and doubt not but use will make you perfect. I purposely avoid discoursing of that which is called "an artificial memory," both because the inconveniences thereof are great, and the handling of it unfit for a sermon.

3. The *spiritual* helps for memory are these :—

(1.) *Bewail your forgetfulness.*—There reformation and amendment, when it is sound, begins. The Jews say, that when Adam looked toward Paradise, he wept in the remembrance of his fall : I am sure, we have cause to mourn and weep, and weep again, at the remembrance of it,—to consider not only the great guilt, but the sad fruit, of that apostasy ; and that, as in other particulars, so in respect of our memories, which have borne their share in that convulsion. And we have cause to mourn also for all such excesses and follies which have concurred to make them worse ; wherein no man is guiltless ; so that though you may reckon a sorry memory but a small fault, yet you will find that it is both the effect and the sign and the cause of much evil ; insomuch that idolatry and the worst sins are in scripture styled "the forgetting of God." (Psalm ix. 17, &c.) Few of us would reckon it a small fault, to have a servant frequently neglect his business and run into errors, and still to excuse all by saying, "I quite forgot it ;" for, generally, such forgetfulness is the effect of supine negligence : and therefore we have the more cause to be humbled seriously for this sin.

(2.) *Prayer* is a second help.—For "every good gift and every perfect gift," whereof this is one, "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights ;" (James i. 17 ;) and therefore is to be sought by frequent and earnest prayer, which is the golden key to unlock the treasures of heaven to the needy soul. O, beg it, then, of Him, that as he sanctifies the soul, he would sanctify this with the rest. And you have a ground for your prayer in that, John xiv. 26, where our Saviour hath said, that "the Father will send the Holy Ghost, to teach us all things, and to bring all things to our remembrance." And this Spirit you may have for asking : "Your Heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." (Luke xi. 13.) Understand, that God will grant your prayer herein, there being joined with the same a due use of all other means, on which earnest prayer brings a blessing. And you must not only crave this in your solemn prayers ; but also, when you are reading or hearing, you should dart up a holy ejaculation, or short desire, "Lord, write this truth in my heart, and bless it to me !" This is like the clinching of a nail. And when you have heard a sermon, lock the chest with David's prayer : "O Lord, keep this for ever in the imagination of



the thoughts of my heart." (1 Chron. xxix. 18.) And be assured that God will hear the breathings of his own Spirit, and give thee a memory to serve thy turn.

(3.) *Diligent attention.*—If the mind wander in hearing, the memory will be weak in remembering. Confine, therefore, your thoughts to the holy work [which] you are about, and fetch-in your straggling fancies with a hearty sigh. Remember that Almighty God speaks to you by every good book or sermon that you read or hear: every chapter and sermon is a letter from the God of heaven, and directed in particular to you; and, you know, we read with attention the meanest letter that is directed to us, and we observe every period of it. The gospel is our Saviour's Will and Testament; and how carefully doth every child attend to every clause in his father's will! Now the more diligent your attention is, the better you will remember; as, you know, the greater weight we lay on the seal, the deeper impression it doth make. Holy David could say, "I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me." (Psalm cxix. 93.) The scripture, the sentence, that hath "quickened" us, we shall not easily forget; when all the heart is engaged, then all the head is employed also. And it is no marvel that divers remember so little, when they are so palpably careless in hearing, and their wandering eyes do plainly discover their wandering minds.

(4.) *Due estimation.*—The more we love and admire any thing, the better we remember it. This is the reason given of children's remembering things so well,—because they admire every thing, as being new to them. And of old people, the saying is known,—that they remember all such things as they care for: for when we esteem and affect any thing, the affections work upon the spirits, which are the instruments of the memory, and so seal things upon it. Why is it that a woman cannot forget her sucking child? Because she doth vehemently love it; and the like affection in us to good things would keep us from forgetting them. And to this accords that saying of Mr. Greenham,\* that "the best Art of Memory is, to be humbled at God's threatenings, and comforted at his promises; for great griefs and joys leave great impressions on us." And therefore apprehend spiritual things to be very excellent, and also "receive the truth in the love of it," and you will remember it better; but when we have a mean and low opinion of heavenly truths, or only a common kindness for them, they are then easily forgotten. "I will delight myself in thy statutes:" and what then? Why, "I will not forget thy word." (Psalm cxix. 16.)

(5.) *Serious meditation* is the last help I shall mention.—When people read or hear, and presently plunge themselves in foreign business, then generally all is lost: "For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into" (the word signifies "to penetrate into a thing with his eye") "the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein," that is, so considering, "he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the

work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James i. 24, 25.) By which is not meant a speculative and fruitless meditation, but that which is practical; that is, which digests the things we read or hear for use or practice: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." (Psalm cxix. 11.) Here is a truth, or a duty, or promise, for such a time or case. Such rolling [of] good things in our thoughts doth habituate and familiarize them to the soul, and they abide the longer. This is clear in other cases: for, if one hath received an injurious or unkind word, if it go out at one ear as it came in at the other, it leaves no great impression; but if you set yourself to ruminare upon it, and to aggravate it, then it is a long time ere you forget it. And so in some measure it would be in good things: give them a little heart-room, bestow some second thoughts upon them, shut the book when you have read a little, and think of it; and it will abide. It is the soaking rain that enters deepest into the earth, when a sudden shower slides away. Hence, what one evangelist calls "remembering the word of Jesus," that is spoken of Peter, (Matt. xxvi. 75,) the other calls it "thinking:" "When he thought thereon, he wept." (Mark xiv. 72.) But herein our ordinary hearers are strangely negligent: they read, they hear, they forget; for they never think nor meditate of it. They turn down leaves in their Bibles in the congregation, but they seldom turn them up again in reflecting upon what they heard; and so their labour is lost, and ours also. And so much for the helps to a better memory; which is the sixth point.

VII. I come in the next place to *answer some cavils of the wilful, and also some doubts of the weak.*—The former use to object and say,

OBJECTION I. "Why, the scripture tells us, that, to 'fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man:' what need, then, is there of such remembering?"

ANSWER. Why, this which you mention doth plainly require remembering. Must *he* not remember the commandments *that* will keep them? and not the mere words only, but the true extent of them; or else how can he possibly keep them? There are ten commandments, but there are ten hundred duties commanded and sins forbidden; and how shall those be performed, and these avoided, unless we remember them? And is there nothing but commandments to be remembered? Are not the promises of the covenant, are not the doctrines of life and salvation, to be remembered also? Surely this apostle was of this mind, when he tells in the text, that if the Corinthians kept not in memory what was preached unto them concerning that only doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, they would believe in vain, and their salvation was in danger.

OBJECT. II. "Ay, but it is impossible to remember so many scriptures, so many doctrines, so many uses, as we have heard; what man in the world can do it?"

ANSWER. It is true, that perfection in this faculty is not attainable in this life; but it is as true, that every Christian ought to endeavour to reach as far as he can. We cannot keep all the command-

ments perfectly in this life; yet we should strive to do what we can; and then our heavenly Father will accept and assist us. But it is plain sloth, to be urging impossibilities in opposition to duty. I say, carnality and sloth; for these same men can readily remember a thousand vain matters, and there is no difficulty in it. But ye were best\* to beware of that curse: "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing." (Mal. i. 14.) If you have a masculine, strong memory for other things, and only a corrupt, cracked memory for God and godliness, ye are "nigh unto cursing."

OBJECT. III. "O, but we have as good hearts as the best, though we have not such strong memories; and an honest heart is worth all."

ANSWER 1. This is a proud boasting; for no humble, modest man will thus vaunt himself.

2. This is mere shuffling; for, when you are reprov'd for the defectiveness of your faculties or the immoralities of your lives, then you plead the honesty and goodness of your hearts; and when you are convinced and urg'd concerning the newness and holiness of your hearts, then you boast of the innocence and orderliness of your lives. But you cannot mock God thus; he beholds the unregeneracy of your hearts, and is witness to all the evil of your lives. But if you have as good hearts [as the best], how is it that you have not as good memories? For the honest heart is good all over; and though ye cannot remember *as much*, yet ye will remember *as well*, as they. Do not deceive yourselves; do not imagine that ye are spiritually rich, when ye are "poor and miserable and blind and naked." If many of your memories were dissected, I am afraid they would be found to be stuffed like that Roman legate's sumpter, that was gorgeous enough without, but, being broken up by a fall in the street, was filled with nothing but old boots and shoes, and such-like worthless trash.

But I must turn now to the other branch of this point; which is, to answer the doubts of the weak Christian in this case about the memory.

DOUBT I. "If no faith nor salvation without remembering spiritual things, then," cries the poor soul, "to be sure, I have no grace; for I can remember little or nothing. I hear and love to hear, and so I read; but nothing abides with me: I shall believe in vain."

ANSWER. There is an historical memory, and there is a practical memory. The former is either a great natural faculty, or a particular gift. Now, though this be a great help to grace, yet it is not absolutely necessary. What advantage is it to a man's salvation, if he could do as it is reported of Cyrus and of Scipio,—that they could repeat two thousand names in order, or as Seneca, that could do the like, and also repeat two hundred verses, beginning at the last,†—if the same person cannot remember those directions and promises which conduce to his practice and comfort? But now a practical memory is a sanctified faculty, wherein good things are received, perhaps not so

\* An old phrase tantamount to, "You would do well."—EDIT.

† CÆLII

RMODIGINI *Antiquæ Lectiones*, p. 525.

distinctly, yet safely, sweetly, readily for use. As an ill husband\* may have more tools in his shop, but, seldom working with them, he scarce knows where to find them; whereas a good workman, though he hath fewer, yet he knows where to find them, and how to work better with them: so thy memory may serve thy turn, if thou canst “remember his commandments to do them;” if thou canst remember the antidote, when in danger of the poison,—the cordial, when thy spirits are fainting; if thou canst then hear the voice “behind thee, saying, This is the way,” when thou art ready to turn aside on the right hand or on the left. (Isai. xxx. 21.) A rich miser may have great sums in his chests or in his papers; but, in respect of use, the poor woman’s leathern purse by her side shall be readier. Be not dismayed at thy shallow memory, if thou canst remember what is necessary for thee in time of need.

DOUBT II. “My misery,” saith a poor soul, “is this,—that one thing puts out another: when I am secure of one notion, and grasping for another, I lose them both.”

ANSWER. Memory may be said to be present and actual, or future and potential. Many things may slip out of a present and actual memory, that yet may stick in the memory potentially; like things that are mislaid, but not lost. In this case, endeavours are construed by our Heavenly Father for attainments; and all [that] you grasp for, is counted by him your own. As a covetous oppressor, that would devour every fair house or estate he sees, is guilty, though he obtain them not; so every blessed truth [which] thou reachest after, shall be reckoned thine own, though some of them be stolen from thee. But here the former direction hath place; namely, to send up a holy ejaculation, when you lock up any thing, that God would secure it and produce it in due time. Many things poor Christians have thought that they had quite forgot, till the time of need came. For example: Christ had said that “the Son of man should be betrayed, killed, and rise again the third day;” (Matt. xvii. 22, 23;) which at the present they understood not; but, in Luke xxiv. 8, it is said then, that “they remembered his words.” And so through God’s grace it will be with you.

DOUBT III. “But,” saith another, “my memory is quite gone, I can remember just nothing; I would, I fain would, but I cannot.”

ANSWER. Perhaps thy natural faculty is decayed: for, so far as it is organical or sensitive, it may decay, even as your eyesight doth; for, as the natural spirits abate, so these decay: and you may know that, by your forgetting of other things. As you forget texts, so you forget faces; as you forget spiritual doctrines, so you do temporal business. Yet you ought to grieve for this; because this decay is the fruit of sin, not only of original, but very likely of thine actual, sins,—either of thy intemperance, or violent passions, or excessive cares. And as ye ought to mourn for it, so for the same reason ye ought to prop it up, to succour it, and to improve it, as well as you can; and especially to practise what you do remember; for there are many that

\* In the old sense of “a bad manager.”—EDIT.

complain they can remember little, while others complain that these very people practise a great deal less. But, for you that make this unfeigned complaint, you should not be quite discouraged. Labour to remember at least the scope and drift of all; and, though much be lost, yet your labour is not quite lost. A sieve, or riddle, in a pond of water, seems to be top-full; but take it out of the pond,—it is presently emptied; true, but yet it is washed hereby: even so a poor Christian, while he is reading or hearing, feels himself full of heavenly notions; but, when he ceaseth, finds his heart quite empty again; O, but the heart is washed for all that, and made more holy. It is said of one Cassius Severus, that when the Roman senate doomed his books to be burned, “Yes,” says he; “but you must next burn me too; for I have them written in my mind.” O, if the book of our memory be much effaced, yet if we can have the will of God written in our heart, God will accept the soundness of our hearts and the sincerity of our endeavours, though our memories be shattered.

VIII. And so I come to the eighth and last thing; which is, *some short application of all.*

1. *Magnify God for your memories.*—Especially you that have good memories; be not proud of them, but be very thankful. I have somewhere read of Simon Thurvey, a Cornishman, that would so boast of his skill in philosophy and divinity, that he could, on the sudden, answer any problem that was proposed unto him: and the historian says, that his parts and memory were so smitten, that he could not repeat the Lord’s Prayer, nor remember his ABC. Alas! a little crack spoils them. O, give God the glory of this faculty, and say, “Fearfully and wonderfully am I made!” (Psalm cxxxix. 14.) And if your memories have some strength and faithfulness in them, praise him the more; for you have a great advantage beyond others; you have a treasure which others want. Many a poor Christian would be content to forget all his earthly concerns, so that he could but remember the things of eternal life. Be sure, then, that ye be truly thankful.

2. *Let all God’s ministers that preach, or that write, labour to consult people’s memories, and to that end observe some proper method in their books and sermons.*—A confused or cryptical method confounds the memory, and a multitude of naked heads overpresseth it; but a clear connexion and a proper method greatly assist it.\* The Holy Ghost himself hath in several places particularly stooped down to us herein: in divers of the Psalms, in one chapter of the Proverbs, in the whole book of Lamentations, he hath proceeded alphabetically, for the relief of the memory. That matter, manner, and method surely should be used by us, which is most proper, not only to inform people’s understandings, but to prevail with their wills, to awaken their consciences; and also which may best stick with them, when they are parted from us; for the work of conviction, conversion, and comfort is generally perfected by after-thoughts. And therefore,

\* *Adjuvatur memoria intellectu, ordine, curâ.*—ERASMUS. “The memory is assisted by reason, order, and care.”—EDIT.

seeing people's memories are so weak, let us do what we can to relieve and help them.

3. *Labour to improve your memories, to have them cured and strengthened.*—Content not yourselves with such treacherous memories; satisfy not yourselves with fruitless complaints of them; but proceed to a vigorous endeavour to amend them. Consider,

(1.) *This is possible.*—And this is proved by experience: many have come, by the help of God, to remember more and better than they did before. And why should not you increase the number of such proficient? It is not fit for a Christian to despond in any such case, but to “be up and doing.” When a ship leaks, it is not presently cast away: “For,” says the master, “this vessel may yet do me service.” You have leaking memories; ay, but, being careened, they may be much more servicable than ever they were.

OBJECTION. “O, but I shall never attain any memory.”

ANSWER. I tell you, despondency spoils all endeavours: neither do you sit thus down in other cases. If your body or brain be weak, you will try experiments; you will go to one physician after another, as long as you have a penny left. Be not, then, more careless of your noblest parts. The cure is possible, at least, in some good measure.

(2.) *It is reasonable that your memories, which have been sinks of sin, should become helps to heaven.*—All our faculties are given us for this end; and is it not highly reasonable that they should be so applied? It is apparent that our memories have been grievously perverted; and therefore, “as we have yielded our members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so” we should “now yield our members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” (Rom. vi. 19.) Seeing God hath given us a noble faculty, should we neglect or abuse it? Can others remember the world and their lusts? and shall not we remember the holy things that refer to a better world? Nay, can we remember a thousand unprofitable, hurtful, and sinful matters? and not those things that do most nearly and highly concern us? It is intolerable.

(3.) *This is necessary.*—It is an unquestionable duty. That fundamental law, propounded in the Old Testament, (Deut. vi. 5,) and confirmed in the New, (Matt. xxii. 37,)—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,”—doth oblige us to strain every faculty to the utmost in God's behalf. One end, also, of Christ's coming into the world was to repair our depraved faculties; and shall we suffer him to die in vain? The text [which] I am upon shows how necessary it is, as a means of faith and salvation. We find by experience that this faculty is miserably corrupted: and therefore it is undoubtedly necessary that it be renewed.

OBJECTION. “We can do but what we can, let it be never so necessary.”

ANSWER. And, I pray, how far have your endeavours travelled in this business? Have you carefully used the fore-mentioned means,

and continued in the use of them? No, no; your impotency is wilful; you cannot, because ye mind it not; or else, certainly, if inherent grace were weak, assistant grace would be ready at your service.

(4.) *A good memory is very helpful and useful.*—It is not a vain thing that is thus pressed upon you. For,

(i.) It is a great means of *knowledge*.—For what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing? It is not eating or drinking, but digesting your food, that keeps you alive; and so it is in this case: “My son,” not only “attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings:” but “keep them in the midst of thine heart.” Then “are they life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.” (Prov. iv. 20—22.)

(ii.) It is a means of *faith*.—As is plain in my text: “Unless ye have believed in vain.” For, though faith doth rest purely on the word of God, yet when the word and works of God are forgotten, faith will stagger. Hence our Saviour saith, “O ye of little faith, do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand?” &c. (Matt. xvi. 8, 9.) “The word of God is the sword of the Spirit,” (Eph. vi. 17,) whereby Satan is foiled: but if this sword be out of the way by reason of forgetfulness, how shall we conflict with this enemy?

(iii.) It is a means of *comfort*.—If a poor Christian in distress could remember God’s promises, they would inspire him with new life; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink. Our way to heaven lies over hills and vales: when we are on the hill, we think we shall never be in our dumps again; and so, when we are in the valley, we fear we shall never have comfort again. But now, a faithful memory is a great help: “And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.” (Psalm lxxvii. 10, 11.) So also, Psalm cxix. 52: “I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.”

(iv.) It is a means of *thankfulness*.—We are all wanting in this duty of thankfulness; and one cause thereof is forgetfulness of the mercies of God. Hence ungrateful men are said to have bad memories. What abundant matter of thanksgiving would a sanctified memory suggest to every Christian! Hence holy David calls upon himself, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” (Psalm ciii. 2.) By which forgetfulness and such other means it comes to pass, that praise and thanksgiving have so little, which should have so much, room in our daily devotions.

(v.) It is a means of *hope*.—For “experience worketh hope,” (Rom. v. 4,) and the memory is the storehouse of experience; therein we lay up all the instances of God’s goodness to us heretofore: “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.” (Lam. iii. 21.) Hence they who do not trust in God are said, in scripture-phrase, to “forget” him. And one reason of men’s impatience and

dejectedness in trouble is assigned by the apostle: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." (Heb. xii. 5.)

(vi.) It is a means of *repentance*.—For, how can we repent or mourn for what we have quite forgotten? As, therefore, there is a culpable remembrance of sin, when we remember it in kindness; so there is a laudable remembrance of sin, when we remember it with displeasure: "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame." (Ezek. xvi. 63.) But, alas! we write our sins in the sand, and foolishly imagine that the eternal God forgets them just as soon as we; though in such cases he hath said and sworn, "Surely I will never forget any of their works." (Amos viii. 7.)

(vii.) It is a means of *usefulness*.—No man should, nor indeed can, be singly religious. When one spark of grace is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also. So for counsel: we are born, we are new-born, to be helpful unto others. Herein a good memory is exceeding useful; out of which, as out of a storehouse, a wise Christian may "bring forth matters both new and old." (Matt. xiii. 52.) Such may say, "We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us," this and that observation. (Psalm xlv. 1.) And likewise, "As we have heard, so have we seen," what may be very useful to many a soul. (Psalm xlviii. 8.) So that, you see, a good memory is useful many ways.

(5.) *The want of memory is a great defect and loss*.—When we cannot remember what we read or hear,—why, time is lost; I will not say, quite lost; but it is not improved: the chapter is lost. I hope you do not read only to pass the time. When God's word is remembered, then, "when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." (Prov. vi. 22.) But a broken memory hath heard of God's famous acts of providence, but forgotten them; hath read rare examples of God's mercy, justice, power, and goodness, but they are slipped and lost. In a word: so far as thy memory fails, so far will meditation fail, delectation fail, and practice in a great measure fail. And therefore set yourselves, in the use of the means prescribed, and all other good means, to heal and strengthen your memories; and "give the more earnest heed to the things which ye have heard, lest at any time ye let them slip." (Heb. ii. 1.) And so far in the third use.

4. The fourth exhortation is to young people,—to *store your memories in the time of youth*.—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." (Eccles. xii. 1.) Now your memories are fresh and strong; hereafter they will be shattered with cares and business. A new ship, or any vessel that is new, is free from leaks; but time and travel will batter it. So will it be with you; care will batter you, grief will batter you: and therefore now store yourselves. Now, a dozen chapters, a good catechism, a collection of useful texts



and doctrines, will take no room, nor make you go the heavier, nor sleep the worse. And therefore it concerns parents, both to have such things in their hearts, and to teach them diligently to their children. Perhaps they may not understand the sense of them at the present; but these will be ready in their minds till grace and understanding come, and then they will help them exceedingly; as we lay some sticks or fagots ready in the chimney, which, when fire comes, signify something. Yet a measure must be observed both with old and young: a ship may be laden, but must not be overcharged, lest all the cargo be sunk and lost. A just discretion will best determine the measure herein, according to the capacities of the subjects.

5. *Let us all labour for more holiness.*—For that raiseth all the faculties, and reduces them to their right frame and proper objects. The more grace we have, the better we shall remember, and especially better things. “Grace,” saith excellent Dr. Harris, “strengthens the memory always for practice, though it serve not always for discourse. Some,” says he, “have such memories that they can repeat vastly; but when they should advance to practice, they are nobody: when others are more confused in their memories, but very clear in their practice.” A grain of grace is worth an ounce of parts. For thereby we love truths and duties better, and it is easy to remember that which we love; and therefore let it be our daily prayer, that “the God of peace would sanctify us wholly,—spirit, soul, body,” all. (1 Thess. v. 23.) It is not for Christians to inquire just how little grace will serve our turn for salvation, but rather how much may be attained and improved to the glory of God.

6. Lastly. *Reduce into practice that which you do remember.*—The end of all true knowledge is practice: \* “Remember his commandments to do them.” (Psalm ciii. 18.) If it be a doctrinal truth which you read or hear, consider what influence it hath upon the heart. If it be a duty which is set before you, immediately set about it. If a sin be exposed, presently root it out. If sincerity or hypocrisy be deciphered, try thy spiritual state thereby without delay. For, as a treasure in the chest is in danger of the robber; but when it is laid out on a good purchase, here it is safe from starting: so, while spiritual notions swim only in the memory, you may easily lose them; but they are safe, when they are once incorporated into your real practice. But, alas! there are too many that are like those whiffling chapmen, who come to the shop, and lay-by a great many rich wares; but when all is done, they buy few or none: so these cheapen and bid for the pearl, but will not buy it; they will talk over all the points of religion, before they will seriously practise any one of them. Then you “remember the sabbath” aright, when you so remember it before it comes, that when it comes, you “keep it holy.” (Exod. xx. 8.) Then you remember God truly, when you fear and love and trust in him. Then you remember your neighbour as you ought, when you remember “to do good, and to communi-

\* *Christus Magister vitæ, non scholæ.* “Christ is the Master of the life, and not of a school.”—EDIT.

cate." (Heb. xiii. 16.) Then you remember yourselves best, when you remember "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." (Acts xxiv. 16.) In a word: then you remember your latter end rightly, when you keep your oil ready in your lamps and in your vessels, that your Master may find you so doing.

But I conclude. It is worth observing, that holy David, among all the rest of his blessed psalms, hath one (which is the thirty-eighth psalm) which he styles, "A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance." His memory, it seems, had need of help, as well as ours. Now the Lord grant that this sermon may, by the blessing of God upon it, be herein at least useful; namely, to preserve better sermons in your mind! So shall I have my end, God the glory, and you the comfort. Amen.

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## SERMON XV.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BATES, D.D.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS WHEREBY WE KNOW  
THAT WE LOVE THE CHILDREN OF GOD?

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.—1 John v. 2.*

OF all the marks that are useful in the trial of our spiritual state in reference to eternity, there is none [that] affords a more clear and comfortable assurance of God's special and saving mercy, than love to the saints. This has often resolved the doubts, and quieted the fears, of afflicted, inquiring souls, when other graces have not been so apprehensible in their operations. But there is no mark which the deceitful heart does more securely rest upon, through the mistake of natural, human love for that which is spiritual and divine. It is therefore most worthy our serious thoughts, the deceit being so easy and infinitely dangerous, to show what is the unfeigned, genuine love of the brethren to which salvation is annexed; to confirm the humble, sincere Christian, and undeceive presuming hypocrites.

The great design of St. John in this epistle is to excite and inflame in Christians the love of God and of their brethren,—the two comprehensive duties and sum of the law, our principal perfections in heaven and earth. These he recommends by the most affectionate and obliging, the most warming, melting persuasives,—the superlative love of God to us, and our communion with the saints in nature and grace.

In the former verse the apostle argues *for the reality of the effect, as an evidence of the cause*: "Whosoever believes that Jesus is the

Christ," that is, the Saviour of the world, foretold to the prophets, and expresses the truth of that faith in a suitable conversation, "is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." Grace is not less powerful in producing tender reciprocal affections between the offspring of the same heavenly Father, than the subordinate endearments of nature. The pretence is vain of love to God, without loving his regenerate children. And in the text he argues *from the knowledge of the cause, to the discovering of the sincerity of the effect*: "By this we know that we love the children of God," with a holy affection, "when we love God, and keep his commandments."

There is but one difficulty to be removed, that the force of the apostle's reasoning may appear: it is this:—a medium to prove a thing must be of clearer evidence than what is concluded by it. Now though a demonstration from the cause be more noble and scientific, yet that which is drawn from the effect is more near to sense and more discernible. And this is verified in the instance before us; for the love of God, who is absolutely spiritual in his being and excellences, doth not with that sensible fervour affect and passionately transport us, as love to his children, with whom we visibly converse, and who are receptive of the most sensible testimonies of our affection. Accordingly the apostle argues, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20.) "As the motives to love our brethren, from our conjunction in nature and familiar conversation, are more capable to allure our affections, and more sensibly strike the heart, than the invisible Deity, who is infinitely above us; by the same reason we may more easily judge of the truth of our love to them, than of our love to God." To this the answer is clear: the apostle doth not speak of the love of God as a still, silent, contemplative affection, confined to the superior faculty of the soul; but as a burning, shining, affection, like fire, "active and declarative of itself in those effects that necessarily flow from it,"\* that is, voluntary obedience to his commands; and thus it becomes manifest to the renewed conscience, and is a most convincing proof of the sincerity of our love to the saints.

The text, being cleared, affords this doctrine:—

DOCTRINE.

*The sincerity of our love to the children of God is certainly discovered by our love to God and obedience to his commands.*

For the illustration and proof of the point, I will briefly show,

I. *Who are described by this title,—“the children of God.”*

II. *What is included in our love to them.*

III. *What the love of God is, and the obedience that flows from it.*

IV. *How, from love to God and willing obedience to his commands, we may convincingly know the sincerity of our love to his children.*

\* *Lamine qui semper proditur ipse suo.*

I. To explain the first, we must consider that *this title, "the children of God," is given upon several accounts* :—

1. By *creation* the angels are called "the sons of God," and men his "offspring." The reason of the title is,

(1.) *The manner of their production by his immediate power.*— Thus he is styled "the Father of spirits," in distinction from "the fathers of the flesh." For though the conception and forming of the body be the work of his secret providence, yet it is by the hand of nature, the parents concurring as the second causes of it: but the production of the soul is to be entirely ascribed to his power, without the intervention of any creature.

(2.) *In their spiritual, immortal nature, and the intellectual operations flowing from it, there is an image and resemblance of God.*— From whence this title is common to all reasonable creatures, and peculiar to them: for though the matter may be ordered and fashioned by the hand of God into a figure of admirable beauty, yet it is not capable of his likeness and image; so that neither the lights of heaven, nor the beasts and plants of the earth, are called his "children."

2. By *external calling and covenant* some are denominated his "children;" for by this evangelical constitution God is pleased to receive believers into a filial relation. Indeed, where there is not a cordial consent and subjection to the terms of the covenant, visible profession and the receiving the external seals of it will be of no advantage; but the public serious owning of the gospel entitles a person to be of the society of Christians; and *filius* ["a son"] and *federatus* ["one in covenant"] are all one.

3. There is a sonship that arises from *supernatural regeneration*; that is, the communicating [of] a new nature to man, whereby there is a holy and blessed change in the directive and commanding faculties,—the understanding and will, and in the affections, and consequently in the whole life. This is wrought by the efficacy of the Word and Spirit, and is called by our Saviour "regeneration," because it is not our original carnal birth, but a second and celestial. It is with the new man in grace, as with an infant in nature, that has the essential parts that compose a man,—a soul endowed with all its faculties, a body with all its organs and parts,—but not in the vigour of mature age. Thus, renewed holiness in a Christian is complete and entire in its parts, but not in perfection of degrees; there is an universal inclination to all that is holy, just, and good, and an universal aversion from sin, though the executive power be not equal. And regenerate Christians are truly called "the children of God:" for as in natural generation there is communicated a principle of life and suitable operations, from whence the title and relation of "a father" arises; so in regeneration there are derived such holy and heavenly qualities to the soul as constitute a divine nature in man, whereby he is partaker of the life and likeness of God himself. From hence he is "a child of God," and has an interest and propriety [property] in his favour, power, and promises,

and all the good that flows from them, and a title to the eternal inheritance.

II. Secondly. I will show *what is included in our love to the children of God.*

1. *The principle of this love is divine.*—The soul is “purified through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” (1 Peter i. 22.) Naturally the judgment is corrupted and the will depraved, [so] that carnal respects, either of profit or pleasure, are the quick and sensible incitements of love; and till the soul be cured of the sensual contagion, the inclination can never be directed and the desires fastened on the supernatural image of God in his saints. As holiness in the creature is a ray derived from the infinite beauty of God's holiness, so the love of holiness is a spark from the sacred fire of his love. St. John exhorts Christians, “Let us love one another: for love is of God.” (1 John iv. 7.) Natural love among men is by his general providence; but a gracious love to the saints is by his special influence. The natural affection must be “baptized with the Holy Ghost,” as “with fire,” to refine it to a divine purity. (Matt. iii. 11.)

2. *The qualifications of this love are as follows:—*

(1.) It is *sincere and cordial.*—It does not appear only in expressions from the tongue and countenance, but springs from the integrity of the heart. It is styled “unfeigned love of the brethren;” (1 Peter i. 22;) it is a “love not in word and tongue” only, “but in deed and in truth.” (1 John iii. 18.) A counterfeit, formal affection, set-off with artificial colours, is so far from being pleasing to God, the Searcher and Judge of hearts, that it is infinitely provoking to him.

(2.) It is *pure.*—The attractive cause of it is the image of God appearing in them. Our Saviour assures us, *that* love shall be gloriously rewarded that respects a disciple upon that account—as a disciple, and a righteous man as a righteous man. (Matt. x. 41, 42.) The holy love commanded in the gospel, is to Christians for their divine relation, as the children of God, as the members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost.

(3.) From hence it is *universal, extended to all the saints.*—The church is composed of Christians that are different in their gifts and graces, and in their external order. Some excel in knowledge and zeal and love,—in active graces; others, in humility, meekness, and patience, that sustain and adorn them in sufferings. Some are in a higher rank; others are in humble circumstances; as, in the visible world, things are placed suitably to their natures,—the stars in the heavens, flowers in the earth. And our special respects are due to those whom the favour of God has dignified above others, and in whom the brightness and power of grace shine more clearly; for, according as there are more reasons that make a person deserving love, the degrees of love should rise in proportion. But a dear affection is due even to the lowest saints; for all have communion in the same holy nature, and are equally instated in the same blessed alliance.

(4.) It must be *ferrent*.—Not only in truth, but in a degree of eminency. St. Peter joins the two qualifications: "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." (1 Peter i. 22.) Our Saviour sets before us his own pattern, as a pillar of fire, to direct and inflame us: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John xv. 12.) *As I have loved you!* Admirable example! His love was singular and superlative; a love that saves and astonishes us at once: for he willingly gave his precious life for our ransom. This we should endeavour to resemble; though our highest expressions of love and compassion to the saints are but a weak and imperfect imitation of his divine perfection.

(5.) I shall add farther, This love *includes all kinds of love*.

(i.) The love of *esteem*, correspondent to the real worth and special goodness of the saints.—It is one character of a citizen of heaven, that in his "eyes a vile person is contemned," however set off by the glory of the world and the ornaments of the present state, that, as a false mask, conceal their foul deformity to carnal persons; "but he honoureth them that fear the Lord," (Psalm xv. 4,) though disfigured by calumnies, though obscured and depressed by afflictions, and made like their blessed Head, in whom there was "no form nor comeliness" in the judgment of fools. (Isai. liii. 2.) In our valuation divine grace should turn the scales against all the natural or acquired perfections of body or mind,—beauty, strength, wit, eloquence, human wisdom; against all the external advantages of this life,—nobility, riches, power, and whatever is admired by a carnal eye. The judgment and love of God should regulate ours. A saint is more valued by God, than the highest princes; nay, than the angels themselves, considered only with respect to their spiritual nature. He calls them his "peculiar treasure," his "jewels," "the first-fruits of the creatures," sacred for his use and glory; in comparison of whom, the rest of the world are but dregs, a corrupt mass. They are styled his "sons," being partakers of that life of which he is the Author and Pattern: and what are all the titles on earth, compared with so divine a dignity?

(ii.) The love of *desire*, of their present and future happiness.—The perfection of love consists more in the desire than in the effects; and the continued fervent prayers that the saints present to God for one another, are the expressions of their love.

(iii.) The love of *delight*, in spiritual communion with them.—All the attractives of human conversation—wit, mirth, sweetness of behaviour, and wise discourse—cannot make any society so dear and pleasant to one that is a lover of holiness, as the communion of saints. David, whose breast was very sensible of the tender affections of love and joy, tells us, that "the saints in the earth, the excellent," were the chief objects of his "delight." (Psalm xvi. 3.) And consequent to this, there is a cordial sympathy with them in their joys and sorrows; being members of the same body, and having an interest in all their good or evil. It is observable, when the Holy Spirit describes the sweetest human comforts that are the present reward of the godly

man,—the enjoyment of his estate in the dear society of his wife and children,—there is a promise annexed that sweetens all the rest,—that he “shall see the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel.” (Psalm cxxviii. 5, 6.) Without this all temporal comforts are mixed with bitter displeasure to him. There is an eminent instance of this in Nehemiah, whom all the pleasures of the Persian court could not satisfy whilst Jerusalem was desolately miserable. (Neh. ii. 3.)

(iv.) The love of *service and beneficence*, that declares itself in all outward offices and acts for the good of the saints.—And these are various. Some are of a sublimer nature, and concern their souls; as spiritual counsel and instruction, compassionate admonition and consolation, the confirming them in good, and the fortifying them against evil, the doing whatever may preserve and advance the life and vigour of the inward man. Others respect their bodies and temporal condition; directing them in their affairs, protecting them from injuries, supplying their wants, and universally assisting them for their tolerable passage through the world. And all these acts are to be cheerfully performed; there is more joy in conferring than receiving a benefit, because love is more exercised in the one than the other. In short, the highest effect of love, that comprises all the rest, is to die for the brethren; and this we ought to do, when the honour of God and welfare of the church require it: “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 John iii. 16.) If Christians thus loved one another, the church on earth would be a lively image of the blessed society above.

III. Thirdly. *The love of God, and obedience to his commands, the product of it*,—are to be considered.

1. *The love of God* has its rise from the consideration of his amiable excellences, that render him infinitely worthy of the highest affection; and from the blessed benefits of creation, preservation, redemption, and glorification, that we expect from his pure goodness and mercy. This is the most clear and essential character of a child of God, and most peculiarly distinguishes him from unrenewed men, however accomplished by civil virtues.

Now the internal exercise of love to God, in the valuation of his favour, as that which is “better than life,” in earnest desires of communion with him, in ravishing joy in the testimonies and assurance of his love, in mourning for what is displeasing to him, is in the secret of the soul; but with this there is inseparably joined a true and visible declaration of our love in obedience to him: “This is the love of God,” the most real and undeceitful expression of it, “that we keep his commandments.” (1 John v. 3.)

2. *The obedience that springs from love* is,

(1.) *Uniform and universal*.—For that two principal and necessary effects of love are, an ardent desire to please God, and an equal care not to displease him in any thing. Now the law of God is the signification of his sovereign and holy will, and the doing of it is very pleasing to him, both upon account of the subjection of the creature to

his authority, and conformity to his purity: he declares that obedience "is better than" the most costly "sacrifice." (1 Sam. xv. 22.) There is an absolute, peremptory repugnance between love to him, and despising his commands. And from thence it follows, that love inclines the soul to obey *all* God's precepts; not only those of easy observation, but the most difficult and distasteful to the carnal appetites: for the authority of God runs through all, and his holiness shines in all. Servile fear is a partial principle, and causes an unequal respect to the divine law. It restrains from sins of greater guilt, from such disorderly and dissolute actions at which conscience takes fire; but others are indulged: it excites to good works of some kind, but neglects others that are equally necessary. But love regards the whole law in all its injunctions and prohibitions; not merely to please ourselves,—that we may not feel the stings of an accusing conscience,—but to please the Lawgiver.

(2.) The obedience of love is *accurate*.—And this is a natural consequence of the former. The divine law is a rule, not only for our outward conversation, but of our thoughts and affections, of all the interior workings of the soul, that are open before God. Thus it requires religious service, not only in the external performance, but those reverent, holy affections, those pure aims, wherein the life and beauty, the spirit and true value, of divine worship consist. Thus it commands the duties of equity, charity, and sobriety, all civil and natural duties, for divine ends,—to "please" and glorify God. (Heb. xiii. 16; 1 Cor. x. 31.) It forbids all kinds and degrees of sin; not only gross acts, but the inward lustings that have a tendency to them. Now the love of God is the principle of spiritual perfection. It is called "the fulfilling of the law," (Rom. xiii. 10,) not only as it is a comprehensive grace, but in that it draws forth all the active powers of the soul to obey it in an exact manner. This causes a tender sense of our failings, and a severe circumspection over our ways, that nothing be allowed that is displeasing to the divine eyes. Since the most excellent saints are God's chiefest favourites, love makes the holy soul to strive to be like him in all possible degrees of purity. Thus St. Paul, in whom the love of Christ was the imperial, commanding affection, declares, it his zealous endeavour to be "conformable unto the death of Christ," in dying to sin as Christ died for sin; and that he "might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,"—that perfection of holiness that is in the immortal state. (Phil. iii. 10, 11.)

(3.) The obedience of love is *chosen and pleasant*.—"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John v. 3.) Those that are strangers to this heavenly affection, imagine that a solicitous, diligent respect to all God's precepts is a melancholy task; but it is delightful to the saints: for obedience is the continual exercise of love to God,—the Paradise of holy souls. The mortification of the carnal appetites, and the restraint from such objects as powerfully insinuate and engage carnal hearts, is with a freer complacency to a saint, than a



sensual fruition of them. The sharpest sufferings for religion are allayed, nay, sweetened, to a saint from the love of God, that is then most sincerely, strongly, and purely acted. The apostle more rejoiced in sharp tribulations "for Christ's sake," than in divine revelations. (2 Cor. xii. 10.)

(4.) The love of God produces *persevering* obedience.—Servile compliance is inconstant. A slave hates the duties [which] he performs, and loves the sins [that] he dares not commit: therefore, as soon as he is released from his chain and his fear, his obedience ceases. But a son is perfectly pleased with his father's will, and the tenor of his life is correspondent to it. He that is pressed by fear to serve in an army, will desert his colours [at] the first opportunity; but a volunteer, that for the love of valour and of his country lists himself, will continue in the service. The motion that is caused by outward poises, will cease when the weights are down; but that which proceeds from an inward principle of life, is continual. And such is the love of God planted in the breast of a Christian.

IV. Fourthly. We are to prove, that, *from the love of God, and willing obedience to his commands, we may convincingly know the sincerity of our love to his children.*

There is an inseparable union between these two graces, and the one arises out of the other. "Godliness" and "brotherly kindness" are joined by the apostle. (2 Peter i. 7.) And it will be evident, that where this affection of love to the saints is sincere and gracious, there will be an entire and joyful respect to the law of God, by considering the reasons and motives of it.

1. *The divine command* requires this love.—"These things I command you," saith our Saviour, "that ye love one another." (John xv. 17.) This precept, so often repeated and powerfully re-enforced by him, made so deep an impression on the first Christians, that they had "one heart and one soul," and their estates were "common" between them. (Acts iv. 32.) And in the next-succeeding ages, this fraternal love was so conspicuous in the professors of his sacred discipline, that their enemies observed it as a rare and remarkable thing: "See, how the Christians love one another! See, how ready they are to die for one another!"\* Now the same gracious principle that inclines us to do one command, will make us universally willing to observe all; for sincere obedience primarily respects the authority of the Lawgiver, which binds the whole law upon the conscience. And as he that breaks the law wilfully "in one point is guilty of all," (James ii. 10,) because the violation of a single precept proceeds from the same cause that induces men to transgress all, that is, contempt of the divine Majesty; so he that sincerely obeys one command, does with consent of heart and serious endeavours obey all. And from hence it is clear, that without a religious and unreserved regard to the divine commands, it is impossible there should be in any person a gracious affection to the saints: that is the product of

\* TERTULLIANI *Apologeticus*, cap. 39.

obedience to God ; and consequently the observance of his precepts is the certain proof of our love to his children.

2. *Spiritual love to the saints arises from the sight of the divine image appearing in their conversation.*—Now if the beauty of holiness be the attractive of our love, it will be fastened on the law of God in the most intense degree. The most excellent saints on earth have some mixtures of corruption ; their holiness is like the morning-light, that is chequered with the shadows and obscurity of the night : and it is our wisdom not to love their infirmities, but to preserve an unstained affection to them. But the law of God is the fairest transcript of his nature, wherein his glorious holiness is most resplendent : “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul : the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” (Psalm xix. 7, 8.) This ravished the heart of David with an inexpressible affection : “O how love I thy law ! it is my meditation all the day.” (Psalm cxix. 97.) And he repeats the declaration of his love to it with new fervour upon this ground : “Thy word is very pure : therefore thy servant loveth it.” (Verse 140.) Now, love to the commands of God will transcribe them in our hearts and lives. As affectionate expressions to the children of God, without the real supply of their wants, are but the shadows of love ; so words of esteem and respect to the law of God, without unfeigned and universal obedience, are but an empty pretence.

3. *The divine relation of the saints to God as their Father* is the motive of spiritual love to them.—And this is consequent to the former ; for, by partaking of his holiness, they partake of his life and likeness. And from hence they are the dearest objects of his love ; his eye and heart are always upon them. Now, if this consideration excites love to the children of God, it will be as powerful to incline us to keep his commands ; for the law of God, that is the copy of his sacred will, is most near to his nature, and he is infinitely tender of it. Our Saviour tells us, that “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass” away, “than for one tittle of the law to fail.” (Luke xvi. 17.) If the entire world, and all the inhabitants of it, were destroyed, there would be no loss to God ; but if the law lose its authority and obligation, the divine holiness would suffer a blemish.

#### USE.

The **USE** of the doctrine is, *to try our love to the children of God, to which all pretend, by this infallible rule,—our obedience to his commands.*—This is absolutely necessary, because the deceit is so easy and so dangerous : and it will be most comfortable, if, upon this trial, our love be found to be spiritual and divine.

The deceit is *easy*, because acts of love may be expressed to the saints from other principles than the love of God. Some for vain-glory are bountiful ; and when their charity seems so visibly divine that men admire it, there is the worm of vanity at the root, that corrupts and makes it odious to God. The Pharisees are charged with this by our Saviour : (Matt. vi. 2 :) their alms were not the effect of charity, but ostentation ; and whilst they endeavoured to make their

vices virtuous, they made their virtues vicious. There is a natural love among persons united by consanguinity, that remains so entire since the ruin of mankind by the fall, and is rather from the force of nature than the virtue of the will; and this in all kind offices may be expressed to the saints. There is a sweetness of temper in some that inclines them to wish well to all, and such tender affections that are easily moved and melted at the sight of others' miseries; and such may be beneficent and compassionate to the saints in their afflictions: but the spring of this love is good-nature, not divine grace. There are human respects that incline others to kindness to the saints, as they are united by interest,—fellow-citizens and neighbours,—and as they receive advantage by commerce with them, or as obliged by their benefits: but civil amity and gratitude are not that holy affection that is an assurance of our spiritual state. There are other motives of love to the saints, that are not so low nor mercenary. In the thickest darkness of Paganism, the light of reason discovered the amiable excellence of virtue, as becoming the human nature, and useful for the tranquillity and welfare of mankind; and the moral goodness that adorns the saints—the innocence, purity, meekness, justice, clemency, benignity, that are visible in their conversations—may draw respects from others, who are strangers to the love of God, and careless of his commandments.

And as the mistake of this affection is easy, so it is *infinitely dangerous*; for he that builds his hope of heaven upon a sandy foundation, upon false grounds, will fall ruinously from his hopes and felicity at last. How fearful will be the disappointment of one that has been a favourer of the saints, that has defended their cause, protected their persons, relieved their necessities; and presumed for this, that his condition is safe as to eternity, though he lives in the known neglect of other duties, and the indulgent practice of some sin!

But if we find that our love to the children of God flows from our love to God, that sways the soul to an entire compliance to his commands, and makes us observant of them in the course of our lives; what a blessed hope arises from this reflection! We need not have the book of the divine decrees opened, and the secrets of election unveiled; for “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” (1 John iii. 14.) This is an infallible effect and sign of the spiritual life, and the seed and evidence of eternal life.

## 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 *carнал 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*, μεμψιμοιστοι.—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 αμαρτωλος*, "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.)

## SERMON XVII.

BY THE REV. JOHN OAKES.

WHEREIN IS A MIDDLE WORLDLY CONDITION MOST ELIGIBLE ?

*Remove far from me vanity and lies : give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me : lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.—Proverbs xxx. 8, 9.*

My text presents you with a short, yet very pithy, prayer of Agur, concerning whom we have no other account than what the Holy Ghost gives in verse 1 : “The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy : the man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal.” The Jewish rabbins would make each of these names to import some great mysteries ; an account of which I do not think to be of such importance, as to trouble myself or you to search after ; but will content myself with the most vulgar interpretation ; namely, that this Agur was a person contemporary with Solomon, one eminent for his wisdom ; and that the other two before-mentioned were his disciples, to whom in the following instructions he applies himself.

In the second and third verses, you have his humble acknowledgment of the meanness of his own natural abilities ; and that whatever wisdom he had attained to, it was not the product of his own industry, but *donum desuper*, “a gift from above :” “Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the Holy.”

In the following verses you have a short, yet very significant, confession of his faith ; and that with respect to God, and Christ the Son of God ; displaying some of his most glorious perfections, by which he [is] infinitely exalted above, as well as distinguished from, all his creatures : “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended ? who hath gathered the wind in his fists ? who hath bound the waters in a garment ? who hath established all the ends of the earth ? what is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell ?” (Verse 4.) Next followeth an excellent encomium of God’s word, that transcript of the divine will, which, saith the apostle, is able to make us “wise unto salvation :” (2 Tim. iii. 15 :) “Every word of God is pure : he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.” (Prov. xxx. 5.)

The application of these instructions you have in verse 6 : “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” Thus have I given you a brief account of this excellent sermon. I have not now leisure to acquaint you either with the

importance of the matter, or the method here used ; but shall proceed to the prayer that followeth this sermon.

In the verse before my text, you have, first, the preface : “ Two things have I required of thee ; deny me them not before I die.” (Verse 7.) In which you have,

1. *The sum of his requests* : “ Two things.” David goes to God with his single request : “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after.” (Psalm xxvii. 4.) Not but that David, and Agur too, doubtless, had many things to ask of God, upon whom they depended for whatever they had in hand or in hope ; but that “ one,” or these “ two” requests, must either be supposed to lie uppermost upon their hearts at this time, or else that they were such petitions as were comprehensive of all things substantially good and necessary. What these two requests are, and how large and extensive, might appear, if I had time to give you an account of them in their due latitude.

2. You may observe *the object to whom he directs his prayer*,—namely, to God : “ Two things have I required of thee ;” who, for our encouragement in our addresses to him, hath ascribed to himself that title,—to be a God “ hearing prayer.” (Psalm lxxv. 2.)

3. You have *the manner of his address*.—Expressive both of his *faith* and *fergency*,—two necessary ingredients to an acceptable prayer.

(1.) “ Two things have I required of thee :” there is his *faith*. To “ require” is more than barely to request ; it imports a looking and a longing for a thing with expectation of receiving what is asked. This is the language of faith, and the freedom that Christ hath purchased for his people in their approaches to the throne of grace : “ In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.” (Eph. iii. 12.)

(2.) His *fergency* : “ Deny me not ;” importing that holy courage,—laying hold on God, as not willing to let him go without a blessing.

4. You have *his constancy and perseverance in this duty* : “ Deny me not before I die.” As if he had said, “ I intend not to give over calling upon thy name whilst I have breath ; I will give thee no rest ; I will never take thy seeming delays for denials.”

Here are many profitable instructions that might hence be collected, did not the present design of this exercise hasten me to step forward to the words of my text ; where you have these two more general parts :—

I. *The requests,—the things pleaded for at the hands of God.*

II. *The arguments for the enforcing [of] these requests.*

I. *The things pleaded for*.—Their *number* you heard in the foregoing words : “ Two things.” Here we are acquainted with their *nature* :—

1. “ Remove far from me vanity and lies.” This petition did primarily respect his inward man, the concerns of his soul. Whenever we are sending dispatches to heaven, spiritual and eternal things should always have the pre-eminence. The things [which] he depre-

cates are "vanity and lies;" by which (as is conceived) we are to understand those sinful soul-maladies under which he groaned, and unto which by nature we are wholly addicted and enslaved.\* This, then, in short, is expressive of the breathings of his soul after a freedom from the damning and domineering power of his indwelling lusts; that his sins might be pardoned, that his conscience might be purged, that all might be removed far from him that kept him at a distance from, and interrupted him in his communion with, God. But,

2. That request in which I am at present concerned especially to give you an account of, is the next; which doth more immediately respect his outward man, and the temporal enjoyments of this transitory life. These are also the gifts of God; and though they are the blessings of the footstool, mercies of an inferior rank, yet, as our Saviour tells us, such things as, during our abode in this lower world, our "heavenly Father knows that we have need of." (Matt. vi. 32.) The request is this: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:" which, though made up of several sentences, yet is it but one single request.

According to the order observed in my text, we must consider,

(1.) *Somewhat that he deprecates and declines*: namely, poverty and riches.

(2.) *Something for which he supplicates*: namely, "Feed me with food convenient for me."

(1.) *The things [which] he deprecates* are the two extremes of a worldly condition;—*poverty* on the left hand, *riches* on the right.

(i.) *Poverty*.—I suppose you all know, at least in the notion, what that means; namely, a negation or privation of such things as God in the ordinary course of his providence hath made necessary for the support of our outward man, or for our comfortable subsistence in this world and in that station in which God hath set us. Such as are destitute of necessary supplies for the satisfying of the cravings of nature, these we reckon to be truly poor. Such as want clothes to cover their nakedness, bread to satisfy their hunger, that are reduced to an absolute dependence, under God, upon the charity of others for their daily bread,—see how they are described: "They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, they have no covering in the cold. They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter:" (Job xxiv. 7, 8:)—these are poor indeed, that have not a bed to lie on, nor a house to hide their heads in. This is poverty in the lowest degree; and yet thus low did our blessed Saviour stoop; of whom it is said, "He became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Matt. viii. 20.) Those stars also of the first magnitude, "of whom the world was not worthy," were "destitute, afflicted, tormented." (Heb. xi. 37, 38.) Thus you see

\* *Peccata omnia complectitur sub nominibus vanitatis et mendacii.*—JUNIUS. "He includes all sins under the names of 'vanity and lies.'"—EDIT.

what this poverty is; and had this good man made a full period here, "Give me not poverty," I question not but every one in this assembly would readily have subjoined his hearty "Amen."

(ii.) The other extreme is *riches*: "Neither poverty nor riches." Now as "poverty" speaketh penury and scarcity, so "riches" speak plenty and superfluity, when God causes "waters of a full cup to be wrung out to" us. (Psalm lxxiii. 10.) It is remarkable what you find by way of encouragement to a cheerful communicating to the necessities of the indigent: "Give, and it shall be given unto you." You shall be no losers by your charity. That is somewhat agreeable with that of Solomon: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days." (Eccles. xi. 1.) But that is not all; there is an insurance of great advantage; namely, "Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." (Luke vi. 38.) Giving is one of the best ways for thriving. But that which I quote this place for is, to decipher out to you what is meant by "riches," namely, a plentiful portion of these worldly accommodations; not only enough for necessity, but for superfluity: though, as I shall show you, this must be considered with a distinction; that which may denominate one man rich, may be but a mean or poor estate for another. He would be but a poor prince that should have no larger a revenue than a rich peasant.

Thus you see what this good man declines: he would not have poverty nor riches, if left to his choice; he would not lie so low as the poor, nor yet sit so high as the rich; he would not go naked, or be clad with rags, nor yet so sumptuous as to go in robes.

(2.) Next follows *the positive part of his request*.—He would neither have poverty nor riches. What, then? Why, says he, "Feed me with food convenient for me." Which request is not to be restrained, as if it were only a petition for a supply for the belly; but as including all temporal and worldly necessities, as that request in the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matt. vi. 11.) But it is not the quality or particular kind of temporal blessings that we are so much concerned to inquire after, as the quantity,—how much he begs of the things of this world. Now the consideration of what hath been said of the two extremes, poverty and riches, both which he declines, will be a sure guide to lead us into the true meaning of his request; which must certainly be this:—"Neither poverty nor riches!" what, then?" Why, a middle portion; such a condition allotted him by Divine Providence, that might fall between both those extremes: "food convenient," (so we translate it,) a competent or convenient allowance; so much of this world as might raise him above contempt, and yet not so much but that he might still be kept below envy; statute-bread,—so much as the law of nature, necessity, and conveniency allows for the enabling him to discharge his duty in the place wherein God hath set him: *quicquid ad victum et vitam fovendam et tuendam est necessarium.\**

II. We should next consider *the arguments upon which he grounds this choice*: "Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the

\* "Whatever is necessary to subsistence and to cherish and preserve life."—EDIT.

Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

These reasons, though they differ in their nature and manner of expression, yet they centre in one and the same thing. Why not poverty nor riches? Why a middle condition between both? The reason is, *because such a condition is in itself most subservient to God's glory, and our own spiritual and eternal welfare.*—It is possible a poor estate may be best for some, and a plentiful estate for others. These may be the conditions in which some may bring most honour to God, and most promote the welfare of their better part; but this is accidentally: otherwise, in itself a middle estate is the most suitable to the carrying-on these high and noble ends.

I should now give a more particular account of the several arguments here specified: I will be brief.

1. Let us a little examine his plea *against riches*; which he declines upon a double account:—

(1.) "Not riches! why?" "Lest I be full, and deny thee." As if he had said, "Being filled and every way furnished with variety of creature-enjoyments, swimming in a sea of plenty, and swelled with a fond conceit of my own self-sufficiency and independency upon any on earth, I should also be induced to disown my dependency on the God of heaven." This, one would think, is a strange consequence, highly irrational,—that a multitude of benefits should be a means to make us unmindful of, and disrespectful to, our great Benefactor; but so it happeneth through the depravity of our nature, that the better and more bountiful God is to us, the worse and more forgetful are we prone to be of God; according to that of the prophet: "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me."\* (Hosea xiii. 6.) Nothing is more ordinary than to lose a sense of God in a crowd of creature-enjoyments; as appears by those cautions of old: "When thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." (Deut. vi. 11, 12; viii. 10—14.) Here is the first evil consequence,—*atheism in heart.*

(2.) Next follow *irreligion and profaneness in life*: "And say, Who is the Lord?" *Quid mihi cum illo?* "What have I to do with God?" † It is below great men, it suits not with their honours, to be found upon their knees to God in prayer: "Through the pride of their countenance they will not seek after God." (Psalm x. 4.)

2. His argument *against poverty*: "Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Here also is a double evil that attends poverty:—

(1.) *A temptation to theft.*—"Necessity," according to the proverb, "hath no law;" but doubtless it holds not in this. "Better

\* *Deum irritant confidenter ob summam felicitatem quam largitur iis.*—MERCERUS. "They presumptuously provoke God on account of the supreme felicity which he bestows upon them."—EDIT. † *Quorsum orarem, aut sacra frequentarem?*—MERCERUS. "To what purpose should I pray, or offer repeated sacrifices?"—EDIT.



starve than steal," better undergo the greatest suffering than commit the least sin. God hath said, "Thou shalt not steal;" (Exod. xx. 15;) the obligation of which precept extends itself to poor as well as rich. This "stealing" does include all injurious defrauding of others, either more openly or clandestinely.

(2.) The second evil is, *taking the name of God in vain*.—Which, in the letter, is a plain violation of the third command, and is of large extent. Here, as is conceived, is mainly intended the sin of perjury, or swearing falsely; to which sin poverty exposes those that are necessitous; either for the purging of themselves, when accused for their theft, or as hired by others for the condemning of the innocent.

—*Quid non mortalia pectora cogis,  
Auri sacra fames?*—VIRGILII *Æneis*, iii. 56.\*

Having thus given you a short account of the word, namely, the requests, and the several arguments with which they are backed,—you may readily conclude [that] they would afford many useful instructions. But that which is most agreeable to the scope of the whole, and best suits with my present purpose and the design of this exercise, I shall give you in this single proposition :

## OBSERVATION.

*That a middle estate or condition in the world, upon rational and religious grounds, is most eligible for a man, as such, with respect to this life; or for a Christian, as such, designing the happiness of another life*

Before I come to a particular discussion and resolution of the case propounded, I shall premise a few particulars for the better opening this petition of Agur, and the main matter in hand.

## PROPOSITIONS.

**PROPOSITION I.** *That God hath the absolute disposal of all men as to their estates and conditions in the world.*—"The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all." (Prov. xxii. 2.) He is not only the Creator of their persons, but the Orderer and Framer of their conditions. Agur's prayer was bottomed upon this faith,—that poverty was God's gift as well as riches. This lesson Job had well learned, which was one great means by which he attained that equanimity in his different state, and learned so well how to abound and how to be in want: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i. 21.) Though both poverty and riches may be handed to us by various means, yet still all things come under a divine disposure. Creatures do good or evil as ministers of God's will, and not as merely acted by their own. (Isai. xli. 23.) Riches, as truly as grace and glory, are the gifts of God, without whose blessing all our endeavours after them will be to no purpose. (Prov. x. 22.) Poverty, also, is the gift of God; by what visible ways soever it overtakes us, God is the principal agent; and his hand is to be acknowledged

\* "O sacred hunger of pernicious gold,  
What bands of faith can impious lucre hold?"—DRYDEN'S Translation.

in taking from us, as well as in giving to us. Admit, that wicked men, the sons of violence, are let loose upon us to the spoiling [of] our goods; yet God is to be eyed: "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?" (Isai. xlii. 24.) Nay, when men's estates become a sacrifice to their own lusts, their pride and prodigality, their profuseness and debauchery; yet even here God is to be owned, who in a way of righteous judgment gives up men to be devoured by their own corruptions.

PROP. II. *God, in his various dispensations of the good and evil things of this world, acts not only as an absolute Sovereign, but according to the rules of his own most infinite wisdom, and as best suits, and may be most subservient to, his own purpose,—what may most conduce to his own glory, and the good and weal of his own people.*—"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all:" (Psalm civ. 24:) which works of God are not to be limited to those of creation, but also of providence. Hence we are not to understand Agur's prayer as if he did take upon himself, or by his example [did] encourage us, to direct or dictate to God, how he should order out his condition for him in the world absolutely: that had been high presumption. No; it must therefore be understood with submission to divine wisdom and good pleasure.

PROP. III. *No outward condition in the world that men can be brought into, hath any influence upon God, so as to render us more or less acceptable to him.*—Are we never so poor and low, "as poor as Job," as we proverbially speak? This may lessen our respect amongst men, who in this respect are too prone to judge of things according to outward appearance,—a crime severely censured by the apostle: "If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" (James ii. 2—4.) Hospinian reports [of] the dogs that kept Vulcan's temple, (the same which others say of the Bohemian curs,) that they would fawn upon one in fine clothes, but fly upon one in rags. But whatever influence these things may have upon men, they have none upon God: "Will he esteem thy riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength." (Job xxxvi. 19.) It is not titles of honour, nor bags of gold, that will bribe Him who is the Judge of all the earth: none of these will avail "in the day of wrath." (Prov. xi. 4.) And as riches will not help, so neither will our poverty hinder, our acceptance with, or our finding favour from, God.

PROP. IV. *One and the same condition in the world is not alike desirable or eligible to all men under all circumstances, nor to the same men at several times, or as placed by God in several stations.*—A poor and mean condition may be best and most desirable for some men under some circumstances. Some are naturally so addicted to pride, to be puffed up by a confluence of creature-enjoyments; or

are so prone to malice and revenge, to tread and trample upon all over whom they can get advantage; that it is even best for them, and others too, when such "cursed cows have short horns." Solomon tells us, "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." (Eccles. v. 13.) Many men have an estate thrown in upon them, that they had better have been without, proving to the hurt of themselves and others. It had been well for Hazaël, Benhadad's servant, if he had kept his station, and never ascended the throne of his master; as the prophet intimated to him. (2 Kings viii. 12, 13.) Those venomous lusts might have been so far stifled in the embryo, as never to have come abroad to have done so much mischief in the world, nor brought that ruin at last upon himself, had they not been cherished by the warm sunshine and hot gleams of those prosperous advancements to which he was exalted by his being king of Syria.

On the other hand, a rich, plentiful, and prosperous condition may be best for some; those whose hearts are enlarged with spiritual endowments, and so well poised and balanced by grace, that they thereby are not only able to manage a prosperous gale with humility and without the hazard of being overset with self-conceit of themselves, but be very helpful and beneficial thereby unto others, "making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," (Luke xvi. 9,) and as God's stewards distributing the talents with which they are entrusted according to the will of their Lord, to whom they are shortly to give up their account. When greatness and goodness meet together in the same person, it carries much of the resemblance of God, who is *Optimus Maximus*.\*

But, further, one and the same condition is not always best for one and the same person; as he may stand in a different station, or be under different circumstances. Hence that of the apostle: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: but the rich, in that he is made low." (James i. 9, 10.) Poverty and riches come both from God; and I question not but some men who have been rich, have had more cause to bless God that, of rich, they have been made poor, than others have, who, of poor, have become rich. O, how many have cried out, *Perissem nisi perissem!* †

These things being premised, I will come more directly to the observation; which, with these fore-mentioned provisoes, stands firm:—*that a middle worldly condition* (that which, you have heard, lies between those two extremes,—poverty and riches,—expressed here by "food convenient") *is in itself, upon rational and religious grounds, most eligible to a man, as such, as respecting this life; or a Christian, as such, with respect to the happiness of another life.*

In the handling of this point, I shall speak to two things briefly:—

I. Somewhat a little more particularly, *for the explication of the subject of this proposition; namely, what this middle worldly condition is, or wherein it consists.*

\* "Of all beings the Best and Greatest."—EDIT. † "I myself should have been eternally lost, had not all my property perished."—EDIT.

II. I shall then show you *wherein, or upon what ground, this may be adjudged the most eligible and desirable estate, both for a man, as such, or for a Christian, as such.*

III. And so conclude the whole with a little *application.*

I. *For the determination of the subject of this proposition.*—Where, indeed, the greatest difficulty lies. This “food convenient,” which, as you have heard, is of the same importance with “daily bread,” denoting a competency of outward good things,—this middle state between poverty and riches must be considered with a threefold respect.

1. With respect to a man's *personal and private capacity*; as a single person.

2. With respect unto a man's *relative capacity*; as he may be concerned to take care for others, as well as make provision for himself.

3. With respect unto a man's *being placed in a higher or more public station*; as magistracy or ministry.

Now that proportion of these outward things which may be looked upon as a competency for one, will not be so esteemed for all, under these various considerations:—

1. Consider a man in his *private and personal capacity.*—And so a lesser quantity of the things of this life may be looked upon as a competency; so much as will afford him food and raiment. This was that which Jacob did desire of God; upon the account of which, he did more strictly oblige himself to the Lord in a way of gratitude: “Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God.” (Gen. xxviii. 20, 21.)

This “if” is not to be understood as importing his diffidence, or any distrust in God's providence. This could not be, when he had so lately received a gracious promise of divine protection and provision: “Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest,” &c. (Verse 15.) Much less is it to be looked upon as a condition, as if he would indent with God upon these terms, or otherwise that he would quit his interest in God, and throw off his service. No such matter; but only a note of order or inference, whereby, from the consideration of God's care to be taken of him, he should thence bind himself more firmly to him in ways of faith and obedience. But that which I make use of this place for, is to illustrate this competency that he had in his eye as to worldly matters: “food and raiment.” He tells us not what kind of food; he speaks not a word of delicacies or varieties, to please his palate. So raiment; not gorgeous apparel, no silks nor satins. Only “food and raiment,” such as might be wholesome and convenient for the cravings of nature, and that might cover his nakedness, and secure him from the injuries of the weather. And truly a little of this world will serve here: grace and nature will be contented with a little. With this the apostle consents: “Having food and raiment,

let us be therewith content." (1 Tim. vi. 8.) *Τροφήν, ου τροφήν · σκεπασματα, ου κοσμηματα*, as Isidore speaks: "'Food,' not sweetmeats; 'raiment,' though without ornament." And, indeed, food and raiment is all upon the matter [that] this world affords:\* other things are but superfluous, tending more to delight than necessity; which, without spiritual wisdom, prove great hinderances, rather than helps, to a happy eternity. Now, wherein a competency lies here, is obvious to every capacity.

2. We will consider a man with respect to his *relative* capacity; one whom the law of God and nature hath obliged to take care of, and make provision for, himself and others too.—Thus parents, masters, and heads of families, and these of different sizes, call for a distinct consideration as to the stating of a competency for them. The apostle hath put a black brand upon those who are *αστοργοι*, "without natural affection."† (Rom. i. 31.) And elsewhere it is represented as monstrous: "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8.) In this case a larger quantity of worldly accommodations is requisite to constitute a mediocrity, than there is for a single person; so much as is necessary for the present comfortable subsistence of a man and his house, nay, so much as is convenient for a future necessary provision for children that may survive their parents, whereby they may be preserved from a necessary dependence upon the charity of others. (2 Cor. xii. 14.)

3. Lastly. We must consider a man as placed by God in a *public* capacity, whether of magistracy or ministry.—And in this case, also, more is requisite to constitute a middle state, than for those whom Providence hath set in a lower orb. The rule by which a mediocrity in such a capacity must be determined is, so much as may be necessary to discharge those offices and great trusts to which they are called. Magistrates, especially chief magistrates, such as have the care of kingdoms and commonwealths upon them,—it is supposed, a liberal share is necessary for them; and that for the keeping up [of] that external grandeur that belongs to their places, and to defray the charges of that great work incumbent upon them; which cannot be done but by many hands, which must be not only employed, but rewarded by them. And for ministers, whom God hath called to that honourable work of winning souls, in order to which they are enjoined to "give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," and "to meditate upon these things, and give themselves wholly to them, that their profiting may appear to all;" (1 Tim. iv. 13, 15;) so much is supposed to be necessary for a competency for them, as may free them from worldly distractions, and that they be not necessitated to "serve tables." (Acts vi. 2, 4.)

Yet doth not this either justify magistrates in the unreasonable exactions or oppressions of their people, peeling and polling them, for

\* *Cibus et potus sunt divitiæ Christianorum.*—HIERONYMUS. "Meat and drink are the only earthly riches that Christians seek."—EDIT. † *Erperites charitatis vel nativæ pietatis.*—SCULTETUS. "Devoid of love or natural piety."—EDIT.

the maintaining of their pride and luxury, contrary both to divine precept and pattern. The *precept* you have, Deut. xvii. 16, 17: "He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to the end that he should multiply horses. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." And for a *pattern*, take good Nehemiah: "The former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God." (Neh. v. 15.)

Neither will this vindicate ministers, by what titles soever they are dignified or distinguished, to be "greedy of filthy lucre, or covetous;"\* not grasping at worldly wealth, exalting themselves with external pomp and grandeur, who are to be examples of humility, meekness, and lowliness to the flocks over which God hath made them overseers. Thus to "lord it over God's heritage," (1 Peter v. 3.) with high-swelling titles and a train of attendants, may suit well enough with the ministers of antichrist, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped;" (2 Thess. ii. 4;) but is very unbecoming those who profess themselves to be the servants of a meek and a lowly Jesus.

II. Having thus showed you in what respects we are to judge of a mediocrity, or middle worldly condition, I proceed to show you *wherein this condition is the most eligible and desirable, and this both upon rational and religious grounds.*—Only one thing remember,—that when I am recommending a middle state in the world, it must be supposed that there is no worldly condition that can be proposed as so desirable but what hath its adherent vanities: as hath excellently been declared in this Morning Exercise from another subject: "Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?"† (Eccles. vi. 11, 12.)

To which let me add further, Neither is there any condition so formidable, but what may, by the grace of God influencing the heart, be improved for holy and happy purposes. And yet, so far as seems suitable to sound reason, as also scripture-revelation, a middle worldly estate is most eligible; and that,

1. For a man, considered as such, *with respect to his short passage through this world.*—Still this is to be understood with submission to divine pleasure. Let us look upon man as a creature placed by God to act a part upon the stage of this world for a few years, and then to have his *exit*; and thus think upon him abstracted from all considerations of a future state. Could it be supposed that those expressions of Solomon were to be construed in the epicure's or atheist's sense,—that "that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all

\* 1 Tim. iii. 3: *Αφιλαργυρον*, "Not a lover of silver."

† See Sermon I. in this volume.—EDIT.

is vanity. All go unto one place ; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again ;" (Eccles. iii. 19, 20 ;)—this were good news to those wretches that spend their precious time in the contempt of God and neglect of their souls, if the words were to be understood without a limitation. But the following verse spoils all their mirth : " Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth ? " (verse 21 :) a clear testimony of the immortality and surviving of the soul in a future state. But suppose man as making a short thoroughfare from the womb to the tomb ; and so a middle condition is most eligible ; and that,

(1.) With respect to his *mind*.

(2.) With respect to his *body*.

(1.) With respect to the *mind*, a middle state is most eligible, as tending to a greater sedateness and tranquillity, and freeing it from many distractions, and manifold anxieties, that are the natural concomitants of both the fore-mentioned extremes of poverty and riches.

(i.) As for *poverty*, it is obvious to every eye, especially if it be extreme. O, what daily tortures and racking thoughts, what solicitous cares, the mind of man under such circumstances is exposed to ! and that for the getting of such provision as is necessary to satisfy the cravings of nature, whose cries and clamours are loud and troublesome, impatient and querulous. Not a day, nor scarce an hour, but the mind is put upon the contriving an answer to those repeated queries, " What shall I eat ? and what shall I drink ? and wherewith shall I be clothed ? "

Nor, (ii.) Is the mind ever a whit the more at ease, by being brought into the other extreme of *riches*, as, through our folly, we are apt to imagine. " O," says the poor man, " could I but compass such an estate, could I get such a bank of money into my coffers, then I should be satisfied." But, alas ! this is a grand mistake ; for though riches stop the mouth and satisfy the cravings of nature, yet do they open the mouths and enlarge the cravings of so many devouring lusts, that the rich man, where his heart is not renewed by grace, is less at quiet and fuller of disturbance than the poor. Sometimes his pride, sometimes his pleasure, sometimes his covetousness, and sometimes a whole kernel of lusts, are let loose upon him, that eat-out all that comfort and sweetness which otherwise might result from his plentiful enjoyments ; whereas a middle condition in the world, though it is far from giving any true rest to the mind of man, (that being the peculiar property of God, and an interest in him to do,) yet does it free a man much from those disquiets before-mentioned. For though a man in this estate may be supposed to have the same disturbing and devouring lusts, yet are they kept much under a restraint, not having that fuel to feed them which riches afford, and which are of that nature, that the more they are used, the more insatiable they are in their cravings.

(2.) A middle worldly estate to a man, as such, is better than either of the extremes, with respect to the *body* ; and that as it is a condition that hath a greater tendency to its health, and preventing manifold diseases and infirmities to which it is liable whilst in this lower

world. It is true, all sicknesses and bodily distempers, that are either afflictive or destructive to man's body, are at the dispose of God, in whose hands are all our times. (Psalm xxxi. 15.) "He kills, and he makes alive; he wounds, and he heals." (Deut. xxxii. 39.) He says to them, as the centurion to his servants, "Go," and they go; "Come," and they come; "Do this," and they do it. (Matt. viii. 9.) So that our lives and healths have no absolute dependence upon secondary causes. Yet it must be acknowledged, in the ordinary way of his providence, he dispenses the weal or woe of the body by external means.

Now, (i.) As to *poverty*: how many visible hazards do those that are poor run as to their health! and how many ways do bodily infirmities beset them! sometimes through the want of these creature-accommodations that God, in the ordinary way of his providence, hath made necessary for the upholding of the fabric of nature, and repairing its dilapidations, to which it is incident for want of supplies. Little do *you* think, *who* sit down at your well-spread tables, how many of your poor brethren would be glad of your fragments, whose lamp of life dwindles away sometimes for want of oil to feed it; beside excessive heats and colds, contracted by their labours and pains that they are at to fill their bellies, and cover their nakedness; as also unwholesome diet, and many times not enough of that, neither.

(ii.) As to *riches*: these are so far from preventing these bodily infirmities, that commonly they hasten and heighten them, proving temptations, to those who are destitute of God's grace, to sloth and idleness; upon the account of which, the body,—like a standing pool, contracts filth and mud,—so the body gross humours, to its great prejudice. Especially hereby is occasioned intemperance and excess in eating and drinking, which proves not only pernicious to the soul, but also destructive to the health of the body; as Erasmus, speaking of the epicures of his days, makes this remark, *Dum invitant ad cœnam, efferrunt ad sepulchrum*.\* How many fresh instances might be produced, wherein it might appear that many have so long drunk healths to others, that they have drunk away their own! whilst a middle worldly condition tends to the preventing many of those evils by which the body, as well as the soul, suffers. But I hasten to the second head of arguments.

2. A middle worldly condition is most eligible to a man as a Christian, and *as designing the happiness of the other world*.—As it is most subservient to the living to God here, and living *with* God hereafter. This, my brethren, if we be in our right minds, is and ought to be the main scope and business of our lives. Hence that worldly condition that may rationally be judged most conducing to that end, is doubtless the most eligible. Now, that a middle state (considering our present circumstances, namely, those internal depravities with which we are infected) is the most desirable, I shall endeavour to evince.

This world, and the time allotted for our abode here, is the time for

\* "While they are invited to a sumptuous entertainment, they are borne onward to their graves."—EDIT.



our acquainting ourselves with God, that we may "be at peace," and that all good may come unto us; (Job xxii. 21;) all the good that God hath promised, and that Christ hath purchased. Now, that condition that may afford most helps and fewest hinderances to this great business, is certainly the most eligible condition. I have only this to premise by way of caution,—that there is no condition in the world so well circumstantiated, that can be so dispositive of us to our future happiness, but that, without the almighty and out-stretched arm of Sovereign Grace, we shall still be left in a lost and perishing condition. Yet we do affirm, there are some conditions in the world, that though they are not in the least auxiliary to God,—“who worketh in us both to will and to do,” and that “of his good pleasure,” (Phil. ii. 13.)—yet are they, if wisely managed, advantageous unto us, for our improving those helps by which God is pleased to communicate his grace to us. In this respect, the apostle prefers a single, before a married, condition: “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife,” &c. (1 Cor. vii. 32—34.) By which the apostle shows the advantage in some respects that the single person hath, beyond those who are married, in the service of God. So also a middle condition seems to have the advantage of both the fore-mentioned extremes; and this will be more evident, if we consider that there are three things pre-requisite, and necessarily to be minded by us, in order to our future happiness:—

(1.) *A right and orderly entering into the way of salvation by the door of sound regeneration and conversion.*

(2.) *A progress in that way, by a holy and heavenly conversation.*

(3.) *A perseverance in that way of faith and holiness to the end, against all internal or external opposition.*

Now a middle worldly condition appears, both from rational and scripture accounts, to be the most subservient unto all these.

(1.) Such as ever truly design to enter into heaven when they die, must get into the way that leads thither whilst they live. Now every way hath an entrance that leads to it. (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) *The entrance into this way is by the door of regeneration.*—So our blessed Saviour plainly tells us: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John iii. 3.) And what this new birth imports, you may find in verse 5: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” To which I might add many parallel places: “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. xviii. 3.) No conversion, no salvation. Now, that condition in the world from whence results the fewest hinderances and the most helps for our entrance in at this strait gate, is doubtless the most eligible; and this a middle state doth.

Beloved, conversion and regeneration is a mighty work, whatever the world think of it. The mind must be enlightened, the conscience

must be awakened, the will must be inclined, the affections must be spiritualized; and the grace by which all these operations must be effected, as it comes from God, so is it ordinarily conveyed to us through those outward means which he hath instituted for that end, on which God requires our constant and conscientious attendance; such as, prayer, reading, and hearing the word read and preached. These are "the posts" of wisdom's gates, where we are bound to wait. (Prov. viii. 34.) These are the healing waters at which we must lie, if ever we expect the cure of our soul-maladies. In a word, these are the ordinary means by which God conveys his Spirit, that unites the soul to Christ, and thence communicateth the first formations of spiritual life. (Gal. iii. 2.)

Now, a middle worldly estate is the most subservient (considering our corrupt state) both as to our attendance upon, and diligent improvement of, these external helps, in order to God's conveying his grace to us.

(i.) Take a man under that extreme of *poverty*; one that is forced either to beg or earn his daily bread, before he eateth it: and withal consider him as in his natural state, dead in sins and trespasses, and without any serious sense of the inestimable worth of his soul, or weight of eternity. Alas! how easily are such, from the sense of their poverty, drawn either to a total neglect of the means of grace, or to a careless, superficial attendance upon it! Does not experience tell us, that the pinching necessities of the body easily induce them to conclude, that they must have bread for themselves and families? "What!" say they, "we must live; we must not starve;" but consider not in the mean time, that there is a far greater "must" for their souls; that they *must* have their sins pardoned, that God *must* be reconciled, that they *must* have Christ and his grace, and that their natures *must* be changed, and their sins subdued; or else verily they *must* to hell, where they will not be allowed so much as a drop of water to cool their tongues; (Luke xvi. 24;) and, in order to this, that they *must* find time to pray, read and hear God's word; and they *must* meditate, and take pains to acquaint themselves with the matters of their souls. But, alas! the feelings of their bodily wants have got a prepossession, and stand as a strong guard to keep out every such serious thought from entering into their minds; and, if at any time they thrust in upon them, how quickly are they ejected! And the poor man is apt to think, (if he doth not speak it out,) that whatever may be the duty of his "betters," as he calls them, yet he presumes *he* may be excused, and that he hath a sufficient apology to live without minding such matters, having so many worldly cares and concerns upon him. These and such-like are too frequently the prevailing suggestions of those who are under that extreme of poverty.

Well, but then, (ii.) Let us consider the other extreme, and look to the *rich*: and here let me use the words of the prophet: "Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will get

me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God." But, alas! see what return is made upon this inquest: why, he tells you, "These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds." (Jer. v. 4, 5.)

Poverty hath many hinderances, but riches, through the horrible sensuality of man's heart, have more; as our Saviour intimates: "Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Matt. xix. 23, 24.) Not that riches in themselves are any impediment to true and serious godliness; but only by reason of the depravity of our natures, that cleave so fast and are so closely wedded to, and lifted up with, things here below; "pride being the worm that naturally breedeth in riches."\* It is a hard matter to be high and humble. Great and rich men are easily drawn to a neglect and contempt of the means of grace, and to imagine that it is beneath their grandeur to have the worship of God in their families, or, at best, that it is more proper for their chaplains to manage than themselves. These are too great to be dealt plainly with about the concerns of their souls, and are apt to think [that] Nathan was a little too bold, when he said to king David, "Thou art the man." (2 Sam. xii. 7.) I must profess, when my thoughts have been taken up with such objects, they have been so far from being envied by me, that, of all conditions of men in the world, I have looked upon them as the objects of the greatest pity; I mean, such great and rich ones, whose wealth and honour are employed as a shield to defend them against the faithful monitions of such as are lovers of, and well-wishers to, immortal souls. Hereby their lusts are secured, and their souls exposed to imminent danger.† Besides, how open do they lie to such soul-destroying opinions! namely, that there neither is, nor need [be], any other than an external baptismal regeneration; and that we are all Christians good enough by our natural, and no necessity of any new, birth; and that a little outward reformation will secure us, though we never mind heart-renovation. And if men will not preach and prophesy such smooth things, they shall not by their consent prophesy at all; like those of old, "which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." (Isai. xxx. 10.) In a word: when a sinner is converted, and brought home to God, the heart must be searched and ransacked; his false hopes, and sandy foundations, upon which they are built, must be battered down; pride and self-confidence must be brought low; and a man must become as a little child. (Matt. xviii. 3.) Now, though our hearts are all of us opposite to this work, and nothing short of

\* *Vermis divitiarum est superbia.*—AUGUSTINUS. † *Difficile est ut presentibus bonis quis fruatur et futuris, ut de deliciis ad delicias transeat.*—HIERONYMUS. "It is difficult for a man to enjoy both present and future bliss,—to pass from earthly to heavenly pleasures."—EDIT.

Omnipotent Grace can thus bring the heart to stoop, that it may enter in at this strait gate that leads to life; yet greatness and riches in the world, through the corruption of man's nature, do much magnify the opposition that is made against God on this account. But now a middle state in the world is exempted from these additional hinderances; neither hath the flesh nor the devil that advantage to obstruct this work of regeneration, that either of the other extremes has.

(2.) Another requisite to our eternal happiness is *a progress in this way of life, by maintaining a holy and heavenly conversation.*—God hath said, (let who will or dare contradict it,) “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb. xii. 14.) This holiness of heart and life consists in our fiducial dependence upon God's promises, and in a sincere and hearty respect to all God's precepts; in the making the word of God our rule, and the glory of God, with the salvation of our souls, our main and ultimate end; and this in the whole course of our lives and conversations. This is that trade of godliness in which we must be exercising ourselves whilst we live, if we design to be really happy when we die. Now, a middle worldly condition, considering our present case, is the most advantageous, and hath the fewest hinderances, for our driving on with success this trade.

(i.) [Suppose] a man under the extreme of *poverty*, destitute of necessary provisions for the supply of this life; and yet suppose him a godly man: such a supposition may be made; though David tells us, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” (Psalm xxxvii. 25.) From whence some (though, I judge, upon a mistake) would conclude, that extreme poverty, so as to be reduced to beggary, is a condition that God never exposes his children to. But thus to say, would doubtless be a condemning of the generation of the righteous; (one thing which God abhors;) some of whom in all ages have been brought to such great straits, that they have been necessitated to beg or starve. And we read of some that were *ὑστερουμένοι*, “destitute, afflicted, tormented, of whom” yet “the world was not worthy.” (Heb. xi. 37, 38.) So that I rather approve of that sense of the foregoing text, which confines it either to David's experience in his time, or rather to lay the emphasis of the matter upon the word “forsaken.” When Paul gives us a catalogue of his distresses, he puts in this as an alleviation of his troubles: “Persecuted, but not forsaken;” (2 Cor. iv. 9;) which sense also suits best with the context: “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.” (Psalm xxxvii. 24.)

Now, supposing a child of God under the extreme of poverty, though *de jure* this ought not [to], yet *de facto*\* it does, prove very prejudicial to this trade of godliness; and this many times several ways: sometimes it does necessitate them to absent themselves from those outward means and those soul-quickening opportunities which others

\* “Though of right this ought not, yet it actually does.”—ΕΔΙΤ.

enjoy, whereby their hearts might be kept up warm and lively for God. Are there not many at this day, (whilst you can spare so much time as to come hither in a morning, to gather up this heavenly manna that falls at your doors,) who are forced (poor hearts!) to be hard at their labours, and that to get necessaries for themselves and families? Sometimes (though that is sad, I confess) are they overpowered by temptations to use indirect means for the relieving [of] their wants; which, upon a review, make sad work in their consciences, and set them many degrees back in the way of holiness. Sometimes they are so dispirited with the weight of their burdens, that they are almost totally incapable of doing any thing in their general or particular callings, not knowing how to pray, nor how to work. O the temptations that such poor souls are under to distrust, to murmuring and repining, to unthankfulness and discontent! every [one] of which is very prejudicial to the life of holiness.

(ii.) Consider the other extreme,—*riches*: suppose a man to be great, and, in the main, good and godly too;—a rarity, but withal a singular blessing to the ages and places in which they live;—alas! how difficult is it for such to thrive in godliness, when they are under the bright rays of worldly prosperity! Do we not too often find, that riches prove to a godly man, what the ivy doth to the oak? which, indeed, may seem to adorn it, and set it forth more speciously to the eye of the beholder; but sucks out that sap and nourishment that should feed and nourish the tree, and, if not timely looked to, may endanger its life. Few, if any, have been the better for their being rich; but too many have been the worse. What temptations are such daily encountering with, to carnal pleasure and sensuality, to sloth and fleshly ease, to pride and ambition! all which, so far as they are indulged, prove to the detriment of serious religion. How apt are such to be flattered! nay, even by good men to be cried-up as none-such in their age, if they speak but now and then a few good words, and show a little countenance to religion! when, upon a strict view, it may be, they have very little (if any thing at all) of the power of godliness: who have given occasion to that unhappy saying, that “a little religion goes a great way with great men;” whereas, in truth, that which might pass for great religion in persons of an inferior condition, should be esteemed but little in those whom God hath fixed in a higher orb, and so are under greater obligations from God, and in a greater capacity of bringing more honour unto God.

(3.) Another requisite to our eternal felicity is, not only a progress, but a *perseverance in the way of faith and holiness to the end, and that against all temptations and oppositions from within or from without.*\*—“He that endureth to the end shall be saved;” (Matt. x. 22;) and, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. ii. 10.) Again: “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” (Heb. x. 38.) From all which, you may conclude the necessity of perseverance to salvation. Now, though a security from final and total apostasy is the undoubted

\* *Finis coronat opus.* “The desired result crowns the labour.”—EDIT.

privilege of God's elect and truly called ones,—such shall be “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ;” (1 Peter i. 5;) yet such may, and many times do, in an hour of temptation, (such an hour as this is in which God hath cast our lot,) fall foully, to the great dishonour of God and discredit of their profession, to the hardening [of] the wicked in their sin, and wounding of their own souls, and to the interrupting [of] their peace and comfortable communion with God. Many Christians may and do fall to the breaking of their bones, and like Eutychus, who “fell from the third loft, and was taken up” for “dead ;” though Paul told them, “Trouble not yourselves ; for his life is in him :” (Acts xx. 9, 10 :) but they shall never fall as Eli did ; of whom it is said, “He fell backward” to the breaking of his neck, and the loss of his life. (1 Sam. iv. 18.) Now a middle condition in the world affords fewer temptations to apostasy than either of the extremes.

As, (i.) *Poverty* : suppose a person truly godly in a poor and low condition in the world, and thence, by consequence, having a necessary dependence upon others for his livelihood. If, now, Providence so ordereth it, that those persons on whom he thus depends prove enemies to God and the power and life of religion, (O that there were no reason for such suppositions!) what temptations are those poor ones under to abate their zeal for God, and first to conceal their profession, and possibly afterwards to deny and disown those ways which, conscience tells them, are the ways of God! and this in compliance with their masters, fearing else the loss of their favour and worldly advantages enjoyed from them. “I must,” say such poor ones, “if I do not alter my course, expect no more relief ; and then my work will be gone ; I shall have no more credit : and so I had even as good shut up my shop, and shut up my mouth too. Nay, I may fear not only a suspension of what kindness I have received ; but, of a friend, he will become my enemy ; and then how easily may I and mine be crushed!” O my friends ! how cogent such arguments have been of late with many,—to do things contrary to their judgments, and to go against the plain dictates of their own consciences ; to decline their professions, and so to make work for repentance,—may easily be imagined, but not readily, sufficiently be lamented.

(ii.) Let us consider the other extreme,—*riches* : and one would think, at first blush, that these should be a mighty bulwark, and a strong preservative against apostasy ; but constant experience teacheth the contrary. Wealth and honour have been a mighty snare even to the people of God themselves in an hour of temptation. It is a great self, my beloved, that great men are called sometimes to deny for the sake of Christ and his gospel ; and O, how hard is this to be done ! How apt are such to study distinctions, to evade their duty, and palliate their sin, when the performance of the one, and forbearance of the other, may hazard the loss of a great estate ! But now a middle condition in the world does not so violently drive men upon those rocks and quicksands, upon which both the poor and the rich are liable so often to “make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.”

III. And thus have I given you a brief resolution of the case to be discussed this day; and having spoken what my time would allow me in the doctrinal part, it remains that I should make a little *application*.

## USE.

The first *USE* shall be *by way of caution*.—You have heard [that] a middle *worldly* condition is most desirable, and this upon several rational considerations: have a care that this be not applied by any of you so as to be a rule as to your *spiritual* state and condition in the world. You know, there are two sorts of riches:—there are *earthly* riches; such as the Holy Ghost calls, “this world’s good:” (1 John iii. 17:) and there are *heavenly* riches; such as will be of use in the other world,—a being “rich toward God.” (Luke xii. 21.) Now, my brethren, though a middle estate, as to the world and as to worldly accommodations, be most desirable; yet you are miserably mistaken, if you think a middle condition as to spiritual things to be so. I confess, the language of many men’s lives, nay, of the lives of professors, speaks to this purpose. I know few, if any, that live as if they were afraid [that] they should be too rich; but, alas! how many live as if they were afraid that they should be too godly; afraid of being “righteous overmuch,” of being too zealous for God! O sirs, have a care of this; lay your hands upon your hearts; inquire into the temper of your souls about this matter. May be, some of you, even in this sense, would not be so miserably poor, but you would willingly have a little grace, a little godliness, if it were only to give you some hopes that you should not go to hell when you die; and hence are very inquisitive and industrious to find out some marks and signs, and what may be the discoveries of the *least* degree of saving grace; whilst, in the mean time, they are not (as may be feared) so industrious how to increase their grace, and how to be adding to their spiritual stock, according to that counsel given us: “Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,” &c. (2 Peter i. 5.) Are you not afraid [that] you may have too much grace, and be too holy? Do you not sometimes blame, and at least show a dislike against, those who outstrip you? and think they are more nice than wise, and too exact and curious in their conversation; and that a more lax and indifferent carriage would be better; and that moderation and a middle way would be more commendable? O, have a care of this lukewarmness,—a being “neither cold nor hot.” (Rev. iii. 15, 16.) Remember, he that thinks he hath grace enough, it is much to be feared [that] he hath none at all. Be you copying out the example of the holy apostle: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. iii. 13, 14.) If you say, “What is this to my subject in hand?” I answer, It is no matter, so [that] it may prove an advantage to thy soul.

But now, then, to make some more pertinent use of what you have heard, I shall direct my application to three sorts of persons; or to

persons with respect to that threefold condition in the world that my text mentions, and that my discourse has pointed at all along; namely, the poor, the rich, and those of you that are in a middle estate between both; and this by way of counsel and advice to you all.

1. *One word to the poor.*

2. *Two words to the rich.*

3. *Three words to you that are in a middle condition betwixt both.*

1. *One word to the poor.*—And this shall be a counselling, comforting, encouraging word. I will not now inquire, how poverty came upon you; whether it be the gift of God,—I mean, whether it came more immediately from the hand of Divine Providence,—or whether it be the effect and result of your own lusts,—of your profuseness and prodigality, of your sloth and idleness, of your gluttony and drunkenness. I will not inquire this at present, but leave it to yourselves to consider; only take it for granted, that poor, very poor you are, and, may be, upon this account despicable in the eyes of others, and miserable in your own. Now, my friends, that which I have to say to you in short is this: Be persuaded that the greatest misery of your present condition is, not (as possibly some of you may be apt to imagine,) that this your condition is pinching hard, and puffs heavy upon your fleshly part, and that, by reason of your poverty, you are the objects of scorn and derision in the world; but, indeed, the greatness of your misery, and the sadness of your condition, lies in this,—that it lays you open (without preventing grace) to many strong temptations to dishonour and neglect God and Christ and your souls, and so makes way for your being miserable in both worlds. May you but obtain wisdom from God to hearken to his calls, to close with his counsels, and accept of the gracious proffers of Christ and salvation by and through him, which proffers are made as freely to you as to any in the world! And then, admit your poverty [to be] continued, nay, increased upon you; yet it will be but for a very little while; and thou, who with Lazarus art forced to lie at the rich man's gate, and glad when thou caust get but the crumbs and fragments that come from his table, shalt be taken into Abraham's bosom, (Luke xvi. 20—22,) and sit down at the right hand of God, where are "rivers of pleasures for evermore;" (Psalm xvi. 11; xxxvi. 8;) and thou shalt "hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on thee, nor any heat;" but "the Lamb shall feed you, and shall lead you unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes." (Rev. vii. 16, 17.) For the Lord's sake, think of this. Things here below are but *προσκαιρα*, "for a little season," (2 Cor. iv. 18,) whether they be good or evil; and therefore not worth the minding, in comparison with those eternal things which are just before you.

2. *Two words to you that are rich.*—And,

(1.) The first shall be that which you find, 1 Tim. vi. 17: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." You have little reason to set a higher



estimate upon yourselves, because God by the bounty of his providence hath lifted you up above your brethren; either if you consider who it is that hath "made you to differ," and that you have nothing but what you have received, as the apostle upon another account expreseth it; (1 Cor. vii. 4;) and received it, not as an absolute proprietor, to do with what you have what you list; but, as God's steward, to be laid out in the service of your Lord, who will shortly call you to a strict account, and will say, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward;" (Luke xvi. 2;) and that, the more you have, the greater is your debt, and the greater account you have to make. But that is not all: your riches and honours, which you are so apt to admire and dote upon, if God give you not great wisdom in the management of them, will be sad riches, as they will be temptations to you to forget both God and yourselves, and render your salvation more hazardous, as you have heard. And if they should in this sense be for your hurt, you will shortly wish you had rather have been amongst the number of those that beg their bread at your door, than thus, as you do, coach it up and down, and lie upon your beds of ivory, and drink wine in bowls, and health and carouse it with your huffing companions. Read James v. 1—3: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." You that "trust" and pride yourselves in your "uncertain riches," and live in the neglect of God and your souls, apply this to yourselves; for it belongs to you.

(2.) A second word to you that are rich shall be that of Solomon: "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." (Prov. iii. 9.) Let it not offend your worships, that I become a humble monitor to you on this account. It is true, I have pointed at some of the inconveniences and evils that do attend, and are incident unto, your high condition; and upon an impartial view, I question not but you will find many more: but yet I must tell you that these are not inseparable concomitants. If God gives you his grace, and once brings you to submit to the conduct of his Spirit, (without which you are undone,) your riches may be so far from being hinderances, that they may become excellent helps and advantages in your way heavenward. O, if God gives you but hearts, how many opportunities may you enjoy for the good of your souls, that others cannot! Nay, how much good may you be instrumental to do to the souls and bodies of others! What influence may your examples of piety have upon others in the places where you live! How may you, even by your riches and greatness, be "a terror unto evil-doers," and a "praise to them that do well!" (Rom. xiii. 3; 1 Peter ii. 14.) Rich and great men, if they be good and gracious, and lay out themselves for God and the good of others, are great blessings of the age. The Lord increase them!

3. Lastly. I have *three words to you that are in a middle worldly condition.*—You have heard that your condition upon many accounts is the most eligible. Then I infer:—

(1.) *See what interpretation you are to make of those providences that have put a check to your endeavours and graspings at great things in the world, and that you have greater reason to take this more kindly from the hand of God than you are aware of.*—My beloved, I have known some that, through an overvaluing of things here below, have been reaching after great matters; and God, in the way of his providence, hath seemed to concur with their ambitious desires, placing them under such circumstances, giving them such a commodious seat, such a promising trade, that they have had a prospect of huge matters in the world, and have reckoned themselves, and said, “Well, in a few years I question not but I shall be a man,” as they sometimes phrase it: but, all on a sudden, some accident or other happens, that blasts all their hopes, and makes them take down their wide sails, that stood ready spread to receive a prosperous gale; and they are fixed, possibly, in a middle state,—neither very poor, nor ever likely to be very rich. And, O how hardly are such disappointments borne! much ado to comport with patience with such providences. Now do but consider what you have heard, and you will find that God was kinder to you than you were to yourselves. Are you sure that if you had not been stopped in your pursuit, it might not have been much, very much to your spiritual and eternal detriment?

(2.) *Hence learn to be wiser for the time to come; moderate your affections to the things of this world.*—“*Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.*” (Jer. xlv. 5.) If God, in the way of thy calling and honest industry, bless thee in “thy basket and thy store,” bless God for it; and, as you but now heard, labour to honour God with what thou hast; but covet not inordinately these things: “Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. xiii. 5.)

(3.) *Seeing Providence hath placed you in that condition which is truly most eligible, labour to answer it, and evidence it to be so, by your proficiency and progress in holiness and godliness.*—I suppose thee at present to be in the way of life: if you be not, whatever your condition is, whether in a poor, rich, or middle estate, let me say to thee, as the angel said to Lot, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain,” the Rock Christ Jesus, “lest thou be consumed.” (Gen. xix. 17.) But if thou art got into Christ, then let me say, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” (Col. ii. 6, 7.) And remember, thou in thy condition hast fewer hinderances and temptations, and more helps and advantages, from the very worldly condition that God hath set thee in. Up, and be doing; and the Lord be with thee!

## SERMON XVIII.

BY THE REV. STEPHEN LOBB.

HOW MAY WE GRACIOUSLY IMPROVE THOSE DOCTRINES AND PROVIDENCES WHICH TRANSCEND OUR UNDERSTANDINGS?

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*—Romans xi. 33.

IN this chapter the apostle, discoursing about the great point of election and reprobation, comes to an instance in God's wonderful providence toward Jew and Gentile. The Jews, who were formerly God's people, are now under unbelief; and the Gentile, a stranger to his covenant, hath "now obtained mercy." This doctrine and providence of God, both together, do fill the apostle with admiration; and this admiration breaks out into these words: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

In this text, therefore, we have exemplified our subject in hand, thus: *There are doctrines and providences which transcend our understandings.* Wherefore I shall first offer some demonstrations, by proposing to you some of those DOCTRINES, and some of those PROVIDENCES; and then shall come to *show how they may be graciously improved.* I will begin with the doctrines.

I. That there are some DOCTRINES contained in the sacred scripture which transcend the largest created capacity, will with much conviction appear to any that will with any intension of mind fix their thoughts on those doctrines which I single out and insist on. It is true, there are some doctrines so plainly revealed in scripture that he that runs may read them, especially such as do principally concern salvation; but even these contain in them somewhat extraordinary and surprising. There are some necessary points so plainly revealed in holy writ, that to be acquainted with and believe the scriptures, and yet not believe the truth of these, is impossible; but then, there are also other points which, as they are not very clearly revealed, so they are so deep and profound, that the framing distinct conceptions of them is beyond our reach. Though we may be satisfied that it is a truth, yet we cannot comprehend *how* it should be; there is somewhat that lies deep, out of our view, which, after the utmost study, cannot be found out. Not that gospel-truths contradict our soundest reasonings, but do transcend them.

There is a great difference between these two, namely, a contradicting and a transcending our reason. What *contradicts* our reason

is not, it cannot be, received by us; but what *transcends* may, yea, in many cases must, be entertained and embraced. That what contradicts our reason is not to be received, nor can it be a part of true religion, is manifest; in that, whatever is so has nothing of reason in it; it is unreasonable, and rather suited unto the nature of brutes, than unto that of men, which is rational. True religion is designed for the regulation of the rational powers in their actings and exercises; and therefore must be somewhat agreeable unto reason, and not what is contrary unto it. What is contrary unto reason must be rejected, and by no means embraced as a part thereof. In like manner, all contradictions must be exploded as unreasonable. God lays no man under the obligation of believing what cannot possibly be true; and our soundest reason assures us, that to believe contradictions is to believe what cannot be true. But though what is contrary to reason must not be received as an article of our creed, yet what transcends it may. What is above our capacities may be true and from God; though what is contrary unto our reason is not true, nor can be from God.

On this distinction I do the rather insist, as well to obviate what is suggested by Papists and others,—who receive for articles of their faith what is contrary unto right reason,—as to anticipate the Socinians' objections, who will believe nothing that transcends our scanty and narrow capacities.

(1.) That this may be the more plain and convincing, before I proceed to show what are some of those mysterious doctrines which transcend our intellects, I will acquaint the reader with *some notions received by many, which, being contrary unto our clearest and surest reasonings, are not to be improved, but rejected.*

I will mention but some: 1. *Transubstantiation*; 2. *Merit quoad justitiam commutativam*; [*“as to commutative justice;”*] and, 3. *A physical transition of sins actually inherent in us, from us unto Christ; and of Christ's righteousness unto us*: all which are to be rejected as notions contrary to our reason.

1. *Transubstantiation.*—A doctrine asserted by the Papists to be contained in holy writ, but really not so. By “transubstantiation” is meant, the turning of the elements in the Lord's supper into the very substance of Christ's body. Though the accidents which are proper unto bread and wine, distinguishing them from every other being, be there; yet the substance of bread and wine, the only subject of the proper accidents, is not there. That is,

(1.) The proper accidents of bread and wine are common unto these subjects and a human body; which is a contradiction.

(2.) These accidents,—namely, the colour and taste of bread, &c.,—whose whole existence is in-existence in a subject, do exist even when they do not in-exist; namely, when they pass from the bread unto Christ's body.

Moreover, the body of Christ is asserted to be bodily under these accidents, even when there is not any one accident proper unto a human body.

These and many other contradictions must be received as true, if you will, with the Papists, put the doctrine of transubstantiation into your creed. But as this conceit of theirs has not the least countenance of scripture, so it is contrary unto our reason, as well as common sense, and to be rejected as unsound and false, as well as absurd and unreasonable.

2. *Merit quoad justitiam commutativam* [*as to commutative justice*].—There are among the Papists a considerable number who assert that there may be a meriting somewhat of God according to the rules of commutative justice. That there may be a meriting somewhat of God according to the rule of justice, we grant; for Jesus Christ merited much of God: but this merit was not according to the rule of *commutative* justice, but of *distributive* justice.

Merit as to *commutative* justice does necessarily include in it the passing of somewhat over unto God, unto which God had no right antecedent unto this transaction. But God is an absolute Lord and Sovereign, who has a right unto all things: Jesus Christ himself, as man, is God's propriety [property]; and all that Jesus Christ could give, must be considered as Christ's, either as he is God, or as he is man. Whatever belongs to him as God, is God's; and as he is man, whatever he has, it is God's: for which reason, Jesus Christ himself is not excepted, when it is said by the apostle, "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" (Rom. xi. 35.) "Who?" As if it had been said, "There is none, no, not one, not Jesus Christ himself, [who] could give first unto God, could give that unto God unto which God had not, antecedently to that gift, a right; that is, so to give unto God, as to pass-over a new right unto God, for which God should be under the obligation of recompensing it. Commutative righteousness is inconsistent with the absolute sovereignty and dominion of God: whence it must be acknowledged, that either God is not the absolute Sovereign and Lord of the universe,—which if not, he is not God,—or there is no such thing as commutative righteousness in God, and that Christ himself, much less man, could not merit of God any thing according to the rule of commutative righteousness.

That Christ merited according to *distributive* justice, is asserted by all sound Protestants, and by Vasquez and other Papists; yea, and that Adam in innocency, according to the tenor of that law there given him, might, by rendering the required perfect obedience, have merited the promised reward,—that is, the merit would have been of such efficacy, that God could not have remained just, and not have given unto the reward of life,—is also granted.

But a merit as to *commutative* justice contains in it an implication, when spoken of God; for in plain English it is to say, that the absolute Sovereign is not absolute Sovereign. However, this notion is embraced by some Papists, who do not only say, that commutative justice is in God, but that, according to the rule of commutative justice, man may merit of God: the which is the more absurd, as it supposes that man can give that unto God which is of a value

proportionable to eternal life ; although eternal life, as it is to endure infinitely, includes in it somewhat of an infinite excellency. Such is the nature of commutative justice as to stick to an arithmetical proportion in adjusting the value of things commuted, which cannot be by man in this case, unless there were somewhat of infinity in what he gives unto God. However, notwithstanding the ridiculousness, as well as falseness, of the notion, there are many among the Papists (if we may believe Arriaga) who assert it. It is true, Vasquez explodes it, with an essay to evince that the Papists generally reject it ; but Arriaga, a later Jesuit, freely rebukes Vasquez, affirming that commutative righteousness is in God, and may be found to be between God and man, and that this is generally received in the church of Rome. "For," says he, "this is the opinion of Suarez, Valentia, Granadus, (who introduces Medina and Alvarez, to agree with him in this point,) Hurtado de Mendoza, Ragusa, Tannerus, and Albertinus, and Molina also ; who, though he expresses himself with caution in one place, yet elsewhere doth freely enough own it. Besides, Capreolus and the Thomists generally," says Arriaga, "do agree with him in this ;" and that therefore Vasquez is greatly to be blamed for affirming that so many were of the contrary opinion ; whereas this about merit *quoad justitiam commutativam*, ["as to commutative justice,"] has many more authorities than Vasquez could produce for his sense of it. In fine, Arriaga corrects Vasquez's mistake, in saying that Hosius and Sotus were against commutative righteousness, and then proceeds to an attempt of demonstrating the truth of this doctrine.

By this it is apparent that, if we may believe Arriaga, the Papists generally assert merit according to commutative justice ; in which sense it is mostly oppugned by the Protestant writers, as a ridiculous doctrine : the which, from what has been already suggested, has been manifested. But seeing this doctrine contradicts our reason, our endeavours must not be how to improve it ; we must immediately reject it as false and unreasonable.

3. There are some who call themselves Protestants, and who seem to be zealous assertors of imputed righteousness, who, being ignorant of the gospel-notion, do assert *that those very sins which actually inhered in the elect, did pass from them unto Christ ; and that the righteousness of Christ which actually inhered in him, passes from him unto the elect.* But this is a notion as contrary unto our reasons as that of transubstantiation ; it being as impossible that our sins or Christ's righteousness, which are accidents inhering in subjects, should pass from us to Christ or from Christ to us, as [that] the accidents of bread and wine should pass from the substance of bread and wine, and inhere in Christ's body. These notions, then, I reject as false, and contrary unto reason.

(II.) But there are *other doctrines revealed in scripture, which transcend our largest capacities.*—There are, I must acknowledge, many momentous and important points, which, though clearly enough revealed, and in themselves not very hard to be understood, yet,

because either obscurely or after a perplexed manner handled, by some are listed among the *δυσνοητα*, ["things hard to be understood,"] of which the apostle Peter makes some mention, (2 Peter iii. 16,) which by the "unlearned" are abused to their own hurt, even when by the more judicious they are clearly understood and readily embraced. However, it is as certain that there are other doctrines which, bearing the characters of infinite wisdom on them, are so grand and august, that they transcend the most enlarged understandings. Of the truth of these doctrines we may be fully assured, but yet cannot fully comprehend the whole of them: we may know enough to raise our admiration, but cannot frame any adequate conceptions of them.

These doctrines are many, and may be distinctly considered, either as they have reference more immediately unto the nature and being of God, his acts, both immanent and transient, and, consequently, the modes of operation; or as they have a special aspect on those profound and mysterious transactions about the carrying on [of] fallen man's salvation in a way adjusted to the glory of all the Divine perfections.

1. *The many doctrines which more immediately respect the nature of God, his acts and modes of operation.*

(1.) More generally: they are such as represent somewhat of Him, who in all perfections is infinite, and infinitely above us. God is a Spirit, infinite,—infinite in his essence,—or immense,—infinite in his existence, or eternal. There is, according to the conceptions we must form of God,—at least, *quoad nos*, ["in reference to us,"] a difference between immensity and eternity. "Immensity" denotes the essence of God to be more large and comprehensive than can be measured; but the import of "eternity" is to be considered with regard to the duration of the Divine Essence. Whence, although we must assert the essence and existence of God to be so much the same that necessary existence is included in the very essence of God, yet we may look on the Divine Existence to be a *pressior conceptus* ["a more concise conception"] to that of the Divine Essence: for "essence" includes somewhat more than mere "existence," namely, other perfections of the Divine Nature; which when considered as it fills heaven and earth, and is infinitely beyond all, without all bounds or limits, it is said to be "immense;" but considered as enduring from everlasting to everlasting, it is "eternal." The like of the other attributes.

Thus our finite capacities may form some partial and inadequate conceptions of these things; but comprehend them we cannot. If we look into any particular attribute of God, we are swallowed up as in a bottomless ocean. For there is not any one Divine Perfection that includes not in it infinity, the which is so far above us, that we cannot reach unto it. We cannot know Him "unto perfection," nor "by searching find him out." He is "higher than the heavens, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea:" (Job xi. 7—9:) we cannot comprehend him. His nature, his attri-

butes, all his glorious perfections, being infinite, are infinitely above us; and seeing the revelations made of God do, after a sort, represent somewhat of his glorious nature, they are not fully comprehended by us: they point unto somewhat that is beyond us. But, to be more particular:—

(2.) God, who is a Spirit infinite, is absolutely and simply *One*,—he is a pure act,—but yet *three*; *one* absolutely and simply,—*one* God; and yet *three*,—three Persons. None can be more concerned in asserting the Oneness or Unity of the Godhead than the Christian. How vehement soever the Mahometan, Jew, or Socinian may be in asserting the simplicity and Oneness of the Divine Nature, they cannot be more so than we are. But yet a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead we must also affirm, or our religion is lost.

Whoever will but seriously acquaint himself with the essentials of the Christian religion, will find that the believing a Trinity is as necessary to the being of our religion, as the believing the existence of God is to any religion. The Spirit of God has not only here and there expressly asserted the doctrine of the Trinity; but every momentous doctrine of our religion which is appropriate unto it, as it is Christian, supposes it.

There are three fundamentals of our faith, all which, conjunctly considered, suppose a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead; even God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. There is the fall of man, his redemption, and sanctification. God at first made man upright, and gave him a holy, just, and good law, which was sanctioned with the promise of a glorious reward, and with the severe threat of Divine wrath and indignation: “Do this, and live;” but “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. ii. 17.) Man transgresses this law, and is obnoxious unto the threatening; he must die: for God, who is infinite in all perfections, is a God of truth, and must accomplish his word. He is essentially just and righteous, and must proportion the punishment to the nature of the crime. An infinite God is offended, his law is violated; and this by man, by Adam, the head of human nature: and therefore it is impossible that any escape infinite (which is, on finite worms, eternal) wrath, unless the justice of God be satisfied by proportionable sufferings in that nature that sinned. But if there had been but one Person, as there is but one God, there could not be an infinite Person to undertake for us. That one Person who was offended would be alone able to satisfy his own justice: but he is angry, he demands satisfaction from another; and should he enter into judgment with us, we should not be able to stand. (Psalm cxxx. 3; cxl. 2.) He demands satisfaction, and is ready to consume us, unless an infinite Person interposes on our behalf. Should he himself begin to capitulate with us singly, he would be so far from offering himself to satisfy himself for us, that he would immediately let out all his wrath.

Thus we see that the doctrines about man’s fall and redemption do necessarily infer that there is *God the Father*, who gave us a righ-



teous law, and who is highly provoked by the violation of it, and, as a righteous Judge, proceeds to condemn us, unless satisfaction be made unto his justice; and that there [is] *God the Son*, a person distinct from the Father, who is also God, sent by the Father, and who assumed human nature, in which he suffered, and satisfied the justice of the Father, whereby fallen man is in a way of recovery. Thus man's fall and his recovery suppose two Persons.

But whoever will more closely attend unto this point, will find that God, being as holy as he is just and righteous, is as much concerned for the vindication of the honour of his holiness as that of his justice; whence our sanctification becomes as necessary an antecedent unto our salvation as our justification. Though justification and sanctification are in their own natures formally and really distinct, yet are [they] ever in one and the same subject: you may and must distinguish them from each other, but cannot separate them. And the reason is, because God is as holy as he is righteous, and as much concerned for the glory of his holiness as for the glory of his justice; and therefore the holy as well as the righteous will of God must be satisfied. But such are the corruptions of our nature, so strong and powerful, and we so weak and feeble, that unless some one almighty be our help, we shall remain under the power of sin, unsanctified, and no way advantaged by the redemption of Christ's death.

It is true, Christ has died; but not to save us in, but from, our sins. It was never the design of Christ that men should receive any special blessings as the fruit of his death, while they continue under the power of sin, enemies unto him. He has made a purchase of heaven's glories, but will give it to none but such as submit themselves unto him. He will that we humble ourselves before him, and be holy; or continue in the state of condemnation in which we are all by nature. But holy we cannot be without the help of an omnipotent Spirit, which only is able to enlighten our minds, and turn our hearts from the power of Satan unto God. All which supposes the third Person of the Trinity,—*the Holy Ghost*.

By this it is very manifest, that such is the frame of the Christian religion, such the great fundamentals thereof, that, without the supposing the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, the Christian religion is gone, it is lost. And how to comprehend this mystery is impossible. There is no contradiction in this doctrine, nothing in it contrary to our reason: for it is not said, that three Gods are one; but three Persons are one, one God. But how to fathom the mystery, we are at a loss; it is certainly beyond us.

So much concerning the *nature and Persons of the Godhead*.

(3.) Those doctrines that have regard unto the *acts of God*, are also very profound and mysterious.

(i.) There are the *immanent acts* of God, which do not terminate on any objects *ad extra*, "off from" God; such as divine knowledge, and the decree, whether of election or reprobation.

(ii.) *Transient acts*; such as terminate on an object off from God; namely, the works of creation and providence.

(i.) In my discoursing about the *immanent acts* of God, I might be very distinct in considering what is very much insisted on by the Schoolmen with reference to the knowledge of God, and acquaint the reader with the many distinctions that are used by that sort of men ; but if I do so, I shall exceed the bounds allotted me. I will, therefore, pass-by the doctrine of prescience, (which, whatever may be said of it by some, has such difficulties in it as admit not of our solution,) and make some search into these profound doctrines about the decrees of election and reprobation.

That God has decreed the salvation of some particular persons, is evident enough to any that will deliberately consult the word of God ; and that it is the unchangeable determination of God that such as die in their sins shall be eternally damned, is as manifest. The eternal decree of election is so clearly, so fully and distinctly, revealed in scripture, that few or none presume wholly to deny it. And such is the known nature of election, that it is not easy to believe the doctrine of election, but withal we must take-in the other of reprobation : for election is but of some ; and if but some are taken, the other are left ; they are not chosen, they are refused, they are reprobated. But how this doctrine of God's leaving or reprobating any from all eternity is reconcilable to these other that concern the glory of Divine Goodness and Righteousness, is above us.

The sublapsarians have done very much toward the clearing up of this, by supposing all in their lapsed estate under the guilt and pollution of sin, and God from all eternity concerned for his own glory to elect some, who, by being interested in the blood of Christ, should through the sanctification of the Spirit obtain salvation with eternal glory ; but left others to themselves, who, continuing in sin, are determined to die. Hereby the glorious grace of God, in the eternal purpose of calling, justifying, sanctifying some, and thereby preparing them for heaven, is excellently displayed ; and the purposing from eternity to leave others to themselves in their sins, for which, after much long-suffering, they shall be eternally damned, is no way inconsistent with that goodness that is so infinitely extended to the "vessels of mercy," (Rom. ix. 23,) but does most fully illustrate how just and righteous God is in condemning them for their sins and transgressions. Besides, it is obvious enough that the decrees are but internal purposes "which have no influence on the thing decreed :"  
*Decreta nil ponunt in esse.* Though there is a certainty of the event, yet neither the sin nor destruction of the reprobate is an effect of the decree.

What is here said toward the clearing up [of] the difficulties that attend this doctrine, is very well urged by the Synod of Dort ; and it is no more than what has great countenance from the holy scriptures, which suppose all in a lapsed and fallen estate, and therefore represent the elect as "chosen in Christ, and predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ :"  
(Eph. i. 4, 5 :) "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit," &c. (1 Peter i. 2.) All which expressions seem to suppose

the elect in a fallen estate, standing in need both of a Redeemer and Sanctifier; even as the reprobates are said to have been "before of old ordained to condemnation;" (Jude 4;) which "condemnation" does presuppose a judicial procedure, and the sentence passed against them for their sin; which sufficiently suggests that they were considered to have been in a sinful, a fallen state. Nevertheless it must be acknowledged, that this does not remove the difficulty; it only supposes it to be insuperable, and therefore to be passed over in silence.

The great difficulty is,—how the absolute decree of reprobation is consistent either with the goodness or righteousness of God, or those other methods which are taken for the salvation of all men. What of goodness is there in destinating men to eternal misery? or what of justice, in purposing to punish them for ever without any regard to their sin, even before any evil done? Or how can the unalterable secret decree for their damnation accord with the sincerity of God in the many offers which are made of future glory? It is true [that], supposing the consideration of their fallen state as antecedent to the decree, it is goodness enough that any are chosen out of the sinful mass, and it would have been a righteous thing for God to have proceeded against all to a sentence of condemnation: and seeing Christ has died, and thereby satisfied justice, and the Spirit strives, and that common grace, which is sufficient to enable men to do more toward their salvation than they do, is offered them, and that it is their sin which is the only proper cause of their denying due subjection unto Christ, these things seem to be cleared up. Only the greatest difficulty remains; to wit,—how it is supposable that such who came pure out of the hand of God can be considered as fallen, without some respect unto the antecedent decree of God. What! is their fall, on the supposition of which depend all the discoveries of the glorious perfections of God made unto us in the scriptures, a mere casual hit? One would as soon think, that this curious and beautiful fabric, the world, was owing only unto the casual concourse of Epicurean atoms for its being so, as that the glory and beauty, the wisdom and harmony, that shine forth most illustriously in the Christian religion, should be only the product of casualty or chance. But if the fall or sin of man must be considered to be decreed by that God, the purity and holiness of whose nature is infinite, we are as much at a plunge. So that, on the whole, we see in the decree of reprobation somewhat mysterious and profound: there is in this doctrine somewhat that may raise our greatest admiration, but can never be by vain mortals comprehended. For what of goodness [is there] in destinating those who were in a state of holiness and innocency unto sin and guilt? or what of righteousness, in the giving the innocent a law, and making them, contrary to their innate holy propensions, transgressors of that law? Or how does the sincerity of God appear in the offers of eternal life to Adam on his obedience, even when his disobedience was determined and inevitable? This shows that there is somewhat above us in this doctrine, and that, although there is nothing in this

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(ii.) The doctrine about the *transient acts* of God, whereby the execution of the decree is compassed, falls next under consideration. The decree, which is but an immanent act in God, does not put the thing decreed into being; that is done long after by some transient acts. The decree is from eternity, the execution only in time. The decree is but an internal purpose about what God will do in time; which decree in the time appointed being executed, the thing decreed is then put into being; the which cannot be done without the physical influence of God.

This is true of every decree, whether that of the world's creation, its being destroyed by the flood, or by the last conflagration. The decree of all this was eternal, but the execution in time. The world is first created; then, after some hundred years, [comes] the deluge; and although some thousand years have past, yet [the world is] not burnt. The same of the decree that some shall be glorified; which does necessarily presuppose that they must be first in being, before the decree of their glorification can be accomplished. It is naturally impossible, that what is not actually in being, should be actually the subject of glory or any thing else. Moreover, if we will believe what the Spirit says, (Rom. viii. 30,) they must be first effectually "called," and then "justified," and so, through the sanctification of the Spirit, be prepared for the glory. There is an order to be found in the execution of the decree, which is but according to the eternal counsels of the Divine Will.

An illustration of this we have in man, who may purpose to do many things in time: his internal purpose to do the thing may be long before the time appointed. And there is an order to be observed in his purposes; he purposes that one thing shall be first done, and after that another, as is best discovered by what he does. The which being so, we cannot argue that, such a man purposing to give his child an estate when he arrives unto the age of one-and-twenty, therefore it was actually given some years before. The like as to the point of election. God determined the justification, sanctification, and glory of some: God's purpose was from eternity; but he did then but purpose that this should be in time, and that sanctification should as necessarily precede the glory, as justification be *ordine naturæ* ["in the order of nature"] before his sanctification. And therefore it is absurd to argue: "God decreed their justification from eternity: therefore they were justified from eternity." God decreed that they should be first called, and then justified: and therefore, as sanctification must be before glory, and justification before sanctification, even so effectual vocation must be before their being justified; so that, although Paul be an elect vessel, yet he is not actually justified before he is effectually called.

These things are plain truths; but yet how to comprehend the ways of God in bringing these things to pass, is beyond our capacity: and that this is so, I will evince.

Among the learned there are great contests about the modes of Divine operation. All grant that the decrees would have remained unexecuted, had not God by some transient acts put the decree in being; and that this must be considered to be done by some physical efficiency of God, is acknowledged by all. It is true, the showing *how* this physical efficiency doth contribute toward the execution of the decree, is difficult; especially as to the causing such acts as are clothed with vicious modifications, where what is physical in that action is acknowledged to be from the efficiency of God. But whether the divine efficiency be mediate or immediate, is controverted between the Durandists on the one part, and all the rest of the Schoolmen generally on the other: but if immediate, whether *antecedenter*, *concomitanter*, or *consequenter*, is warmly debated by the rigid Dominicans, Scotists, and Molinists; each of these three factions differing from each other, and casting in one another's way insoluble difficulties.

It is true, the moderate Dominicans, such as Medina, Dominicus a Soto, and some others, do in my opinion give the best satisfaction in the stating these controversies. For they assert, that we must distinguish between what is natural and what is moral in a sinful action; and that the subject-matter of the vitiosity of a sinful action is somewhat natural; that all the undue modifications of it are moral, and included in the formality. Whence they proceed to conclude, that what is merely natural in a sinful action, is from God; (a notion no one will deny;) but what is moral and vicious in it, or that undueness that is the foundation of the sinful relation, (considering sin with reference to the law, whereof it is a transgression,) is from man.

This seems to be clear enough: only there still remains somewhat insoluble; for, whoever looks well into this controversy, will find that in the sinfulness of some actions there is somewhat positive. What else is the conversion or termination of a natural act on an undue object, or the undue determination of this act on a due object? It must be acknowledged, that sin does not only result when the act is about an undue object, but also when about a due object, if unduly conversant about it. For example: in the hatred of God, the object of this act is undue; but as for inordinate love to father or mother, the object of love in this case is not undue, but from the intension\* of the act doth the sinfulness result. Which intension is somewhat positive; but whether it must be considered as somewhat natural, or as somewhat merely moral, or mixed, partly natural and partly moral, is beyond me. But if not merely moral, it must be from God: and so God must be either the author of sin, or the foundation of this relation must not be considered to be included in the formality of sin; that is, the intension of the act, though inordinate and undue, is not sinful. By which it is manifest that, if we consider the controversy, there is somewhat above us in the fairest stating [of] it; much more so in the other accounts that are given. For as the rigid Dominicans do certainly make God the cause of sin, (whether culpable or not culpable,

\* Mr. Lobb has better observed the distinction between *intension* as signifying "intensity," and *intention* or "purpose," than any other author in this collection.—EDIT.

is not the question,) even so do the Scotists and Molinists: for they both include in the matter of sin somewhat more than what is merely natural, even somewhat that is morally vicious; and yet assert that this matter is the immediate effect of God's causality. Only the one says, that God does, as it were, take man by the hand, and lead him to sin; the other, that man determines the efficiency of God; and the Scotist says, that the first and second cause do walk hand-in-hand to the sin. But whether I lead another to the sin, and help him to commit it; or whether I am taken by the sinner, and determined to help him to produce what is sinful in the act; or whether I walk with him; still I am at least a con-causer of what is sinful in the act. So that neither the Scotist nor the Molinist give me any satisfaction in this matter. The result, therefore, of my thoughts is as follows:—I am sure that no natural being ever has been, is, or can be, without the efficiency of God, the First Cause; and yet I am as confident that no moral evil is in any sense the effect of the physical efficiency of God. The moral undueness that is considered as that which is the foundation of sin, cannot be from God. But yet how satisfactorily to reconcile these things, or how to comprehend the modes of divine operation, is above us; we cannot reach unto it; it transcends our understandings.

2. *There are also several doctrines, which have a special aspect on those transactions that are about the carrying on [of] fallen man's salvation to the illustrating [of] the glory of the Divine Perfections, which are very profound.*—The doctrines of the fall of man; the transition of original sin from Adam to his posterity; the methods taken for the recovery of the elect; the covenant of reconciliation between the Father and the Son from all eternity; the incarnation of the Son of God, and the many surprising doctrines with reference thereunto; even about his several offices as Mediator, and, in special, that of his being “a Priest after the order of Melchisedec;” his suretiship; how our sins were imputed to him, and his righteousness made ours; beside those doctrines about the nature of the mystical union that is between Christ and believers; and how this is the ground of imputation; and many other momentous points;—might be spoken unto, to evince that though there is nothing of contradiction in these doctrines, yet there is very much that transcends the most enlarged capacity. They are points that the angels themselves are prying into, but cannot fully comprehend. But these things I must wave, and go on to acquaint you with some of the many providences that do in like manner transcend our understandings.

II. Among the many amazing\* PROVIDENCES that are before us, I will single out a few.

\* This word occurs in other parts of this sermon, and was written by the author *amuzing* or *amusing*. Modern usage forbids its application in composition to the meaning in which it is here employed. But in an earlier age *amuse* and *amaze* were considered to be synonymous words, the derivation of each of them being very similar. For, whatever excites wonder and astonishment, throws the mind into a *maze* or a *muse*; both of these primitive words possessing the proper and figurative significations of a *labyrinth*, *perplexity*, or *confusion of thought*, the constituent materials from which are formed wonder and amazement.—EDIT.

1. *That the greatest part of the world should lie in wickedness, unacquainted with the methods of salvation, is an amazing providence.*—Look we into the remotest parts of the world, we find nothing but a strange ignorance of the true God, or of the true worship of God. O, how great a part of the world is overrun with Paganism, Mahometanism, and Judaism! Come we nearer home, and take a view of the Christian world. Behold, how small is it in comparison of those parts where the above-mentioned false religions prevail! and of the many thousands who are called Christians, how many [are] enveloped with the thick clouds of ignorance and error! and how few free from the influence of idolatry and superstition! A multitude of those who have been “baptized into the name of Christ,” have not the opportunity of looking into the sacred oracles, which reveal the true way to life everlasting; and of those who have the happy advantages of consulting the sacred scriptures, how few can understand them! The which is not without a providence of God: but can we compare these providences with those discoveries that are made of the infinite compassions of Almighty God toward the children of men, and comprehend a consistency between them?

In the scriptures it is said, that God would “have all men to be saved, and,” to that end, “to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” (1 Tim. ii. 4,) even when but a very small spot of the earth have any suitable means afforded them for the obtaining [of] such knowledge. In the scriptures the proclamation is general to all: “Ho, every one;” (Isai. lv. 1;) and the exhortation with sinners is, “Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die? As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of a sinner;” (“of a sinner” indefinitely; as if he had said, “of any sinner;”) “but rather that he would turn and live.” (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) Besides, did not Christ die for this end; namely, to show the unexpressible greatness of God’s love to the world? “God so loved,” *so, so* “loved the world:” (John iii. 16:) as if it had been said, “The love of God to the world is *so* transcendent that no words could sufficiently express it; nothing would fully represent it, but the delivery of the Son, the only-begotten Son of God, to the death—the cruel, the shameful, and the reproachful death—of the cross, for the salvation of the world on their believing; and this even when God left millions of angels to continue in everlasting chains of darkness.” Notwithstanding all which, it is manifest that they cannot “believe in him of whom they have not heard,” and cannot hear unless a preacher be sent unto them; and that no such thing has been done, no preacher has been sent; or if in one age, yet not in another. How can we reconcile these providences with the discoveries that are given us of the infinite compassion of God to mankind, when so few are made partakers of it? What of grace is there in leaving the greatest part of the world in a very little better condition than the fallen angels?

I know that there are many things offered toward the satisfaction of a thoughtful person; as, “Who can tell but there are thousands of worlds above us, whose inhabitants are in a better capacity to receive

and improve the instances of Divine Love ; and that this world is but a spot in comparison of them ; and if this whole world should perish, it is but as the hanging up [of] a few malefactors, to show that God is just, as well as merciful?" But how does this solve the difficulty, which is not merely taken from the notion we have of God's merciful nature in itself considered, but from the revelations made thereof unto the children of men in the scripture? about which we cannot have any solid satisfaction, but from things which are obvious before us, not from what is so fully out of our view and knowledge, and concerning creatures of another kind.

It is true, there are some intimations in the sacred scriptures, which, apart and by themselves considered, afford relief; such as these: "The Gentiles, which have not the" written "law, doing the things contained in the law, are a law unto themselves;" by which law they shall at the last be judged, but not by the written law; and who, walking according to this law, will find their conscience to excuse them, as the transgressors thereof shall be under the accusations of conscience. (Rom. ii. 13—15.) Besides, it is said in the foregoing chapter, that the great reason why divine vengeance was against them, was not so much because they "knew not God," or were unacquainted with the methods of salvation; but because, when the Gentiles—who had not Moses nor the prophets for their guide, but only the light of nature, the things made for their help—"they glorified not God as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations." (Rom. i. 21.) And to these considerations if we add what Peter, in Acts x. 34, 35, has, it seems as if many of the Gentiles, who were "strangers to the commonwealth of Israel," were saved; for, saith the apostle, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him;" every one that walketh according to that light [which] he has received, shall be saved. If this be minded without a fixing our thoughts on other scriptural considerations, the difficulty would be removed: but when we reflect on the many other texts that assert Christ Jesus to be the only door to glory; and that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but that of Jesus Christ; (Acts iv. 12;) and the reason of this doctrine, namely, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom. iii. 23;) that such is the essential righteousness of God as engageth him to demand satisfaction; and that, unless his justice be satisfied, no salvation can be had; and that there is none other able to satisfy the justice of God, but Jesus Christ, God-Man; and that all who are interested in his merits, must submit unto him;—I say, whoever will consider the foregoing passages with these, will find himself still at a loss. So that, on the whole, I am brought to this result; that is,—that notwithstanding the Spirit of God doth so very much insist on the largeness of Divine Love to the world, the least part thereof are made partakers of it, unless salvation is to be had out of Christ, or unless a very implicit faith be sufficient to entitle the Heathen unto any of



those special blessings that are the purchase of Christ's blood. But when we come so far, if we do but intently mind these things, we shall find ourselves in the dark; and though we have the greatest reason to conclude that these things are reconcilable, yet must we acknowledge that they are above us, they are too "high," we "cannot attain unto" the height thereof. (Psalm cxxxix. 6.)

2. *That such whose lot hath been cast into more pleasant places, and who have had the advantageous helps of sacred scripture for their direction in the way of life, have yet been by Providence plunged into many and inextricable labyrinths of difficulties, is surprising.*—Concerning the Old Testament, who can without surprise converse with the disputes there are among the learned about the Hebrew copy we now have, or the Septuagint? as, whether the former or the latter is more authentic, and must be taken for the canon. There are some momentous differences between them; and therefore it is our concern to inquire after that which is to be our rule. If it be the Septuagint, we are at a loss about its rise; for it is well known that the Greek is not that language which the Holy Ghost used with Moses and the prophets. It is but a translation; but where is the original? Besides, whatever is said by some of the Fathers concerning the miraculous agreement of the seventy-two Israelites sent from Jerusalem to Ptolemy, as translators of the law of the Jews, it is manifest enough out of Aristæus (of whom the learned Usher has writ so much) that they only translated the law of Moses, and no more: neither is it very difficult to show that the LXX. [which] we now have, is more novel than that of the New Testament.

But if the Hebrew must be taken for the canon, yet, as to the books of Moses, some are at a loss whether the Samaritan or the Hebrew be most authentic. But whether the one or the other, it is still queried whether we have the autograph. Yea, we are still in a labyrinth, not only about the various readings, the *keri* and the *chetib*, but about the antiquity of the points,—whether they are co-eval with the letters, or not. The points are so necessary toward the right understanding the true import of a Hebrew word, that without them it is not easy to find out the true sense of the text; the least alteration of a point makes an unaccountable change in the signification of the words. Notwithstanding which, the novelty of the Hebrew points doth now take with many; whereby we are still at a loss where to find a firm foundation on which our faith may lean: for, seeing the sense of the text so very much depends on these points, if these points are of late and human rise, so is the present sense of the scripture; and if so, how can our faith, which is grounded on the sense of scriptures which leans only on this human invention, be divine and unshaken?

But might these difficulties be removed, yet, as to the greatest number of professed Christians, there are others which to them are as insuperable; for they understand not the original, and have for their guidance and conduct no other help but what either some ignorant or profane priest affords them. Such is the neglect [which] the greatest part of Christendom is guilty of, that where there is one

learned and pious minister to direct, there are two who are either very ignorant or scandalous: for which reason the greatest part of the people who are under the ministers' conduct, are either to receive help from the ignorant, who cannot relieve them; or from the scandalous, who cannot be confided in. How can the people put any trust in the honesty and truth of such who are strangers to nothing more than to such virtues?

There is very much [that] may be said to solve these phenomena; but yet, when all that can be offered has been insisted on, we shall find somewhat in the providence that doth transcend our understandings.

3. I will mention only one providence more that does greatly amaze and astonish many that do truly fear the Lord; and that is this; namely, *Although it be frequently asserted in scripture, that to the godly the promise of the good things of this life, as well as of that to come, is given, (1 Tim. iv. 8,) yet we find the godly to be without them, even when the wicked, who know not God, do abound.*—"Many are the afflictions" and tribulations "of the righteous." (Psalm xxxiv. 19.) They are hated, reproached, and "counted as sheep for the slaughter." (Psalm xlv. 22.) But the wicked—they "live, become old, and are mighty in power. Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them." (Job xxi. 7—9.) "They are not in trouble as other men;" namely, as the godly; "neither are they plagued like" them. (Psalm lxxiii. 5.) Surely "there be" some "just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." All which does plainly show, that no man can "find out the work that is done under the sun; though a wise man seek to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it;" (Eccles. viii. 14, 17;) though there may be some seeming solutions given, yet still somewhat will appear insoluble, and to transcend our understandings.

Having thus shown particularly that there are some doctrines and providences which transcend our understandings; that is, they are so deep and profound, so high and much above us, that we may all with the apostle cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—I say, having shown thus much, I will now proceed to show how we may graciously improve these doctrines and providences. In doing which, I will attempt to be as plain and practical as I can.

#### THE IMPROVEMENT.

III. *That we may graciously improve these doctrines and providences,* we must consider what may be offered toward the quieting [of] our minds, the establishing [of] our faith, the silencing [of] the foolish arguings of our corrupt hearts, and the humbling [of] ourselves. May our minds be quieted, and our hearts established in the

truth; may the vain arguings of corrupt hearts be silenced, and we brought to an humble deportment in all our conversation toward God, notwithstanding all these difficulties that are so transcending; the improvement will be great. I will therefore distinctly handle these particulars, showing that the very transcendency of these doctrines and providences calls for these several improvements.

## IMPROVEMENT I.

The first improvement must be an essay for *the quieting* [of] *the mind*.—The transcendency of these doctrines and providences, the insuperable difficulties in them, do generally perplex the minds of men: we cannot comprehend the deep things of God, and are therefore troubled; our minds are greatly disquieted within us. The first improvement, then, that we must endeavour to make of these transcendencies is, to get the mind into a quiet, calm, and sedate frame. For which end I will, even from the transcendency of these things, propose some

## CONSIDERATIONS.

CONSIDERATION I. The first consideration for the quieting [of] our mind is this: *That, even in these transcendent doctrines and providences, we may behold the footsteps of God's transcendency and incomprehensible greatness, whereby we are engaged to conclude [that] they are of God.*—The which are so admirably ordered, that we may see that they are suited and adjusted unto the make of man for his good. When I consider the transcendency of God, the infinity of him in every perfection, I cannot but be abundantly satisfied to behold the footsteps and impresses thereof in the things that are before me; especially when I also find that all is so excellently well-suited to man for his good, that, as God makes a display of his glory, so he doth discover the greatness of his goodness, even unto us. This great and mighty God, making man for himself, for his own honour and glory, cannot glorify himself by man, but in a way *like himself*; that is, in a way infinitely above us, in a way that transcends our narrow understandings. Whence it is that all those revelations or doctrines that are with reference to this great end,—as are all the mysterious doctrines of our religion, and all those providences that contribute to the bringing it to pass,—are so much above us.

It is true, God did not only design his own glory in these transactions with men, but also our good; and therefore it is that those doctrines and providences that are adjusted to these ends, are in some respect suited to our capacity; how else could they be for our good? If in all respects they should be infinitely above us, we should not be able to apprehend any thing of them; and then they could be of no use unto us. And as they are suited to our capacity, even so they are such as bear on them the signatures and impresses of that great God from and by whom they are, and for whose glory designed. If we believe that there are any transactions between God and man, we must entertain this opinion concerning these doctrines and providences

that are designed for the bringing them to pass. They must be so manifest and obvious unto us, as to direct us concerning what is necessary to be done on our part toward the obtaining [of] the great ends; and also such as bespeak them to be of God; that is, there must be somewhat in them so high and profound as to be beyond us.

Whoever will but intently observe the things that are before us, whether in the natural or moral world, will find somewhat plain and within our compass, and other things to us dark and obscure, transcending our understandings: the which is to show, that all things that proceed from God are designed both for our good and the illustrating [of] the glory of him from whom they proceed. They are designed partly for our good; and therefore [are] partly within our compass: they are also intended to show forth the glory of God; and therefore in them there is somewhat infinitely above us, transcending our capacities. The which being so, it is not very difficult to show what improvement we may make of what transcends us. Yea, we may hereby learn to make as gracious improvement of what is obscure, as of what is more plain and obvious. For, hereby, to the great satisfaction of our souls, we see much of God in these doctrines and providences. Their transcendency is a demonstration that they are of God.

It is remarkable, that in the most mysterious doctrines and providences there is somewhat apprehensible by us, enough to oblige us to conclude that there is no implication in the doctrines, nor any inconsistency between one and another. They are not contrary unto our reasons; neither are the providences such, but that, what difficulty soever about them lies before us, they are not unworthy of God: only we cannot see how, without all scruple, to satisfy ourselves concerning some things of lesser moment with relation unto them. We cannot say that the doctrines and providences are such as in their own nature are incapable of a solution; but this only we can say, We know not how to solve them. There is somewhat in them that is above us; the which does but show that they are from God. If the doctrines and providences had been in all respects plain and obvious, how could it appear [that] they had been of God? Surely, what things soever are in all respects easily within our compass, cannot be supposed to be from One infinitely above us. Wherefore, then, that the world may see that the Author of Christian doctrines and providences is God, God has left some characters and ideas of himself upon them, the which may be observed in every thing that is of God. In those very things that are most known unto us, if well looked into, we shall find somewhat extraordinary, the reason of which we cannot with any satisfaction fully discover; for there is still in them somewhat beyond us.

We may know that this or the other thing is, and what it is; but *how* it is so or so, we know not. This is true of things in the natural world: we know that this is, and what it is; but cannot distinctly show *how* it is what it is, or *how* it possibly should be what it is. We know we see, and what we mean when we say, "We see;" but yet

if we will not believe that we do see, until an hypothesis be laid down, on which, without any scruple, all the many phenomena, or "difficult appearances," that arise from the consideration *how* we see, [may] be solved, we shall never believe we do see. It is true, we know that we see by the eye; but *how* by the eye, is the difficulty. The eye and the object are at a distance; they must be so, if we will see by the eye: but *how*, by what medium, are they brought together? Is there an emission of somewhat from the eye, or an intro-reception of any thing that may be supposed to pass from the object to the organ? Whether the one or the other, is it corporeal or incorporeal, material or immaterial? Not the latter; for what is incorporeal, immaterial, cannot convey the species to the eye: nor what is corporeal, for many other reasons. Whoever will consult the old, and especially the new, philosophers, may see how much is discoursed on this subject, and how little to satisfaction. The like of hearing, of motion, &c.

In philosophy, for this very reason,—namely, because God has left some ideas or footsteps of himself on the things that are made,—there are variety of hypotheses, but not one that can solve every phenomenon, or "difficult appearance." That of Aristotle is now exploded by most; the old Epicurean *dogmata*, revived by Peter Gassend, and the almost-forgotten hypotheses of some others,—of which we have but some scraps in Cicero, Laërtius's "Lives of the Heathen Philosophers," and others,—improved by Des Cartes, are all insufficient for the designed end. Des Cartes can neither answer what is objected against him by Gassendus, nor can Gassendus solve every difficulty that Cartes has cast in his way.

This is so manifest as that there is hardly a great wit but is in one thing or other finding fault with what is urged by others, as insufficient; setting up, as he apprehends, somewhat more plausible: and thus it will be *ad infinitum*, unless the learned of the world satisfy themselves with this; namely, that in all the works of God, how plain soever, there is somewhat of God to be seen in them that is infinitely above us, and not to be comprehended by us.

If this then be so in the natural world, how much more may we suppose it to be so in the moral world, in which it pleaseth the Lord in a more especial manner to make discoveries of himself! The moral system does after a more lively manner contain the portraiture of the divine perfections; and therefore in it there must be somewhat that is more above us than in the natural. We know gospel-doctrines and providences that do transcend our capacity; we know what the doctrines are, and we know that there is reason enough to conclude that these doctrines and providences are of God: and an additional argument to confirm us in this judgment is, that they are above us; there are the marks and signatures of infinity and incomprehensibility upon them. But shall the very thing that is designed as an argument to evince that they are of God, move us to conclude that they are not of him? If there had not been somewhat extraordinary, somewhat in these things above us, we might doubt concerning their being of God; but now there is no place left for such doubtings. Besides, we must con-

sider that the doctrines that fill our minds with various thoughts, being clearly revealed in scripture, though not easily understood, are still to be embraced; for it is their being about "the deep things of God," that occasions their being so far above us. They are about the eternal counsels and purposes of the Most High, the acts and operations of Him who is incomprehensible, the contrivances of fallen man's salvation in a way consistent with the glory of every attribute, &c. All which are matters so grand, that it would be impossible for any finite capacity to comprehend them; much more so for such imperfect worms as ourselves. The doctrines, being about these deep points, must needs be above us, as the subject-matter about which these doctrines are, is above us. The transcendency, then, of these doctrines should afford satisfaction unto us, as it bespeaks them to be of God. God utters things like a God, when he reveals these profound and mysterious doctrines.

The like may be said of the providences. God acts like himself, as well as speaks like himself: yea, and God acts like himself in all his works of providence, as well as in the works of creation; yea, in the works of gubernation, as well as in those of conservation. We cannot comprehend how our beings are conserved; for it is done by God: neither can we understand how the world is governed; for it is God that governs, ordering all things according to the exactest rules for his own glory. Whence if, in the administration of this government, some difficulties which transcend our understandings do occur, it is an argument that God governs the world like God, in infinite wisdom, and therefore in a way much above us; and therefore our minds may be quiet and at rest about these things.

CONSIDER. II. The second consideration for quieting our minds is, *That the transcendency of these doctrines and providences does very much contribute to the exciting and stirring up those graces, in the exercise of which God is glorified in the salvation of some.*—Whoever will duly observe what may be known of God by the discoveries that are made of him, and what the make of man is, will find that God, when at first he created us, had a regard to his own glory, and man's salvation in the exercise of religion. Whence it is that God formed man after his own image, and gave him a law that may be considered as the transcript of his own purity and holiness, and yet such as was suited to those powers and faculties which were at first given us; and that man was no sooner created, but a holy law was given him, and the promise of life on his obedience. The law given is no other than the will of the great God, who made us all; which will must be made known and revealed unto man, before it can have on him the force of a law.

Now the discoveries of God's will are after a two-fold manner; for there are some other discoveries than these that are by the light of nature. What may be understood by the light of nature from the things made, is done by the exercise of our reason; but what is revealed any other way, is not received the same way with the former. Our knowledge of these revelations depends, not solely on the exercise

of reason, but principally on the exercise of faith. It is God who after an extraordinary manner has revealed his will; and therefore it is on the truth of his testimony [that] we must lean for the knowledge thereof. That is, we must believe, we must exercise faith; by the exercise whereof we come to the knowledge of those things which we could not arrive unto merely by the exercise of our highest reasonings. And really God delights to try and exercise our faith; so that now especially, since the fall, the life and heart of that religion that is necessary to salvation consist in the exercise of faith. To be "truly religious," and to be "a sound believer," are expressions of one and the same import. The religion [which] we are designed for and must now exercise, if we will be saved, is the life of faith, which is a life much higher than that of mere reason; for by faith we know what by mere reason we could never know.

If we consider the most momentous points of our religion, we shall find that as they are adjusted to our own capacities, even so they are of matters infinitely above us; they are of matters that are not within our view, unto the knowledge of which we cannot come but by some special revelation: the certainty of which revelations depends on the veracity and truth of God's testimony; and it is our faith alone by which we receive these discoveries that are thus given us of God; whence it is that, the stronger our faith is, the more we glorify God by believing the truth of his testimony. And that we may thus glorify God, it hath pleased the Lord so to order the revelations of his mind and will, and so to dispose of things by his providence, as to pose our reason, and leave us in the dark; at which time, if we lean on the veracity and truth of God's testimony about the doctrine, and on his wisdom and righteousness about his providence, we discover the strength and firmness of our faith, to the glory of God.

1. These things being so, it is manifest that the many profound doctrines that are in scripture, and the many dark providences that attend us, do very much contribute to our living the more religiously; that is, to our walking the more by *faith*, to the saving [of] the soul. This, I conceive, is one great end of the profoundness of the doctrines of religion, and of the many difficulties in the providences of God; namely, to raise us up to a life above sense and reason, even to the life of faith, which is a high and a heavenly life. The more the difficulties that lie in the way of our believing, the more strong is the faith that is exercised; and the stronger our faith, the more God is glorified by us, and the more is our salvation furthered: the which being so, we have great reason to be abundantly quickened in our thoughts.

If we consider the nature of faith, we shall find that mysterious doctrines and providences are very necessary for the engaging us to apply ourselves to the exercise of it.

(1.) "*Faith is the evidence of things not seen.*" (Heb. xi. 1.)—The evidence not only of unseen future glories, but the evidence of somewhat else, not within the view of our sense or reason. Faith doth evidence unto the believer the reality and certainty of the

promises about spiritual blessings to be enjoyed in this life, and doth clearly show unto him that these blessings promised are real, and shall most assuredly be enjoyed. Yea, though there are, in the eye of our sense and our natural reasonings, some impossibilities between us and the inheriting [of] the promises, yet even then faith sees the accomplishment not only possible, but certain and sure.

By faith we believe and receive those truths which, though clearly enough revealed, yet are so much above our capacity that we cannot otherwise embrace them.

By faith we believe that the promise shall be, when we cannot see *how* it can be. Thus was the faith of Abraham exercised: he believed when his sight and reason failed him. Abraham was a hundred years old and, as it were, dead; Sarah barren, and now, according to all rules of natural reason, past child-bearing. Notwithstanding all which, the promise being made that Sarah should bear a son, Abraham believes. He could see how this could be by faith; though he could not see how it could be by his reason. According to his own reasonings, his hopes were gone; but being "strong in faith, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," but had a hope above hope, "being fully persuaded that, what God had promised, he was able also to perform." (Rom. iv. 18—21.) The like also when God commanded Abraham to offer up his son, his own, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, and of whom the promise was: "For in Isaac shall thy seed be called;" but nevertheless Abraham is commanded to kill him for a sacrifice. But here is the difficulty:—if Isaac be slain while so young as he then was, even before he had any child, how could the promise be fulfilled? Abraham must kill him, and yet believe that he should live, that he might be the father of many nations; but how could this be? Surely this transcended his understanding,—but not his faith; for he believed "that God was able to raise him from the dead." Therefore it is said, "By faith Abraham, when he was tempted, offered up Isaac: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." (Heb. xi. 17—19.) Time would fail to mention Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and many others, who, when surrounded with dark dispensations, by believing gave glory to God. Then faith is in a special manner acted and exercised, when the believer is compassed about with a cloud of difficulties. When, in the doctrines that, being plainly revealed, are to be believed, there is somewhat above our reason; and when, in the providences with which we meet, there is somewhat very dark, they seeming to thwart the doctrinal discoveries that are made of the will of God unto us; then is the time to act faith. That is not faith which does carry us no higher than our own scanty reasonings. To believe no more than we can comprehend with our own reason, is too low a thing to deserve the name of "faith." Faith is a more noble and raised grace, by which a man believes when his reason is at a loss.

What is here said of faith is a great truth, and, if duly weighed, will afford relief to such as are perplexed with the profoundness



of some doctrines, &c. For by this it is manifest that the mysteriousness of the doctrines, the surprising manner in which they are revealed, the difficulties about the Hebrew points, and some instances in chronology, the various readings, and the like,—they all serve as a spur to our faith, and a furtherance to our salvation.

We have arguments enough to convince us of the truth of scripture, the certainty of a Divine Providence; and therefore we ought not to be unbelieving, though we meet with some difficulties that our reason cannot overcome. This should satisfy us,—that how great soever the difficulties may be, how far soever they transcend our understandings, yet there is in them no implication; and if so, they are in themselves reconcilable; and although finite worms are not acquainted with the true methods of conciliation, yet God, who is infinite in all perfections, is. These difficulties should not in the least stumble our faith, but rather engage us to be the more strong in believing.

(2.) As by faith we behold the accomplishment of the promises which are not comprehended by our reason, and can, through the mysteriousness of doctrines and providences, see that they are of God; so *by faith we are enabled to put our trust and confidence in God, even when under the darkest dispensations.*—Faith never appears so much in its lustre as when the greatest difficulties lie before it. Then it is that the believer puts his trust in the power, wisdom, mercy, and faithfulness of God, *when* under the obscurest dispensations. When there are some difficult appearances in the sacred scriptures that relate to some doctrines, and when some providences seem to be contrary to the discoveries that are made of God's faithfulness, &c.; then it is that our faith appears in its beauty: for thereby we show the just apprehensions [that] we have of God's power, wisdom, mercy, and faithfulness. That God has promised to extend his compassions to believers, that he will order all things to work together for their good, is evident enough in scripture; but yet, notwithstanding this, all things seem to be against them. They are afflicted and under sore temptations; they lose their temporal estates, are deprived of their liberty, are sick, weak, and in great distress; several thwarting providences attend them; all things are seemingly against them. Thus it was with good old Jacob: he is bereaved of his children: "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not," and Benjamin must be taken away. "All these things," says he, "are against me." (Gen. xlii. 36.) But yet this was the time for Jacob to exercise his faith; as he did in the following chapter, verse 14: as if he had said, "The Lord Almighty be with you; with him I leave you; to him I commit my concerns. 'If I be bereaved, I am bereaved.'" That is, "The will of the Lord be done." Thus it was with Job. God had suffered the tempter to break in upon him; God himself seemed as if he was resolved [that] he should die: and yet then could Job say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." (Job xiii. 15.) So with Habakkuk: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; though "the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;"

though "the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." (Hab. iii. 17—19.)

Many other instances might be given, all which concur to evince that *then* is the time to put our trust in the Lord, *when* we are in the dark, and can see no light. When there are in the providences of God somewhat above us, that we cannot reach unto; then it is that we are to look unto a "Rock that is higher than" ourselves; (Psalm lxi. 2;) then are we called to put our trust in the wisdom and mercy and faithfulness of Him who hath promised to be with us, to uphold and support us. As said David: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in" the Lord; (Psalm lvi. 3;) for though "my flesh and my heart fail, yet God will be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Psalm lxxiii. 26.) On the other side, when, at the sight of "the prosperity of the wicked," the believer's "feet were almost gone," and his "steps had well-nigh slipped," (verse 2,) it is his confidence in God that is then his stay. The providences of God in this instance are remarkable: for though God had said, that the wicked "shall not prosper," nor "live out half their days;" (Jer. xx. 11; Psalm lv. 23;) yet, behold, they live, and "their houses are safe from fear;" (Job xxi. 9;) they "prosper in the world; they increase in riches." (Psalm lxxiii. 12.) How is this consistent with the threatening? or how can the righteous see this, and not be troubled? Surely when they enter into the sanctuary, they see the end of all, and are abundantly satisfied: their faith is hereby tried; but yet they can say, "Good is God to Israel." (Verse 1.) They begin to reason with God, and will say, "Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" but still conclude that the "Lord is righteous." (Jer. xii. 1.) Though "clouds and darkness are round about him," yet "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." (Psalm xvii. 2.) For, notwithstanding all the dark dispensations, the godly do still put their "trust in the Lord," they "stay" themselves on his wisdom, power, mercy, and faithfulness: (Isai. l. 10:) the doing which, all should endeavour, when under dark dispensations.

2. Hereby the grace of *patience* is to the glory of God held up in a continued exercise. Patience is not to be considered to consist merely in an enduring [of] the conflict of temptations and afflictions with a quiet, calm, and sedate temper of spirit; but also in a quiet waiting for, and expectation of, the accomplishment of some great and glorious promises, in looking and patiently waiting for the end, when we shall see with much clearness what now lieth in the dark and out of our view. "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it," saith the apostle. (Rom. viii. 25.)

Now there seems to be some inconsistency between doctrine and doctrine, between some doctrines and providences, yea, and between providences and providences; but yet we must conclude that it is not

so ; and that the time will come, when our Lord will not speak any more in parables unto us, when the veil shall be done away, and when we shall find every thing to answer the truth and holiness of God, no inconsistency in any of the doctrines and providences, but the exactest agreement and most excellent harmony, every one doctrine and providence concurring to the illustration of each other : all which shall be seen with great satisfaction when we shall depart hence, and be with the Lord. " Now we know " but " in part ; we see " but " through a glass, darkly : but then we shall know even as we are known, and see face to face ; " ( 1 Cor. xiii. 12 ; ) the veil shall be taken away. It is true, even *then* somewhat will transcend our understandings, for the reasons suggested in the first consideration. We must not think that God can divest himself of his Divinity, or make any thing that has not in one regard or other some impresses that discover its Author to be infinite : neither must we imagine that man shall cease to be man, or cease to be a finite wight ; neither hope that his capacity shall be enlarged to comprehend Infiniteness. But this we may safely conclude,—that we shall know more hereafter than now, and that the present darkness with which we are now surrounded is no more than what is suited to the state in which we now live. They that are born of God, are encompassed with those remainders of old corruptions which greatly indispose us for the receiving greater light.

There is an admirable order to be observed in the works and providences of God. First, that which is natural ; then, that which is spiritual : first, that which is less perfect ; then, that which is more perfect : first, a dark evening ; then, a glorious morning : first, star-light, that is, light shining in dark places ; then, the Day-Star from on high, the Sun of Righteousness, arises to enlighten our darkness : first, the knowledge the world had of God and Christ was very little ; then, some shadowy representations were made of heavenly truths ; and now the image, but not yet the heavenly things themselves. Under the law was the " shadow " of heavenly things ; that is, a draught of heavenly things in water-colours : now, the " image " of heavenly things ; ( Heb. x. 1 ; ) that is, a more lively representation or portraiture of them. Under the law there was a veil over the people's faces ; they could see but the shadow : " But we all, with open face," that is, with a face unveiled, " behold the glory of the Lord ; " but " as in a glass," in which we have but the image ; ( 2 Cor. iii. 18 ; ) for Christ, though he brought us a clearer discovery of things, yet considered our state, and therefore spake but of " earthly things : " ( John iii. 12 : ) that is, the discovery that now we have is very dark to what it shall be in heaven, when we are capable of receiving heavenly discoveries, and look into the heavenly things themselves. Now we see that the discoveries that are made unto us are of God ; for the signatures of Infinite Wisdom are found on them : but then the discovery will be more full, more clear, distinct, and satisfying. Now we know but just enough to quicken us to look for further knowledge about the doctrines and providences of God ;

and the more we know, the more we desire to know; and such as have formed any right conceptions about them, cannot but conclude [that] there is somewhat excellent in the knowledge of these things: and though, the more we pry into them now, the more unsatisfied we are, because we know no more; yet this is some relief,—that we shall know more hereafter; whence it is, that a judicious and understanding Christian is the more inclined to leave this dark state, looking for that state of vision in which we shall know and see more of God, his ways and workings.

Really there is an extraordinary satisfaction that will attend us in that state, wherein we shall be filled with as much and as distinct a knowledge as our understandings are capable of receiving: the which satisfaction is too great a happiness for sinful mortals here; it is a felicity reserved for hereafter.

The like may be said of the providences of God; which may be considered as a curious work, a part of which only is within our view; and because we see not the whole, we are at a loss concerning what we see; for we find most of the several parts that are before us, to be without any order or comeliness: the which must necessarily be so, because it is but a part of the work that we see, and the beauty, which is the result of that admirable connexion that is to be between part and part in the putting all things together, cannot be seen till the end of all, for which we must both hope and patiently wait.

It is true, many instances can be given, wherein the several parts of providence, with respect to this or the other godly man, seem very strange and surprising; and yet, put together, render the highest satisfaction. Joseph was a good man, and had a right to the promise that “all things should work together for his good;” (Rom. viii. 28;) but yet, if you consider some providences relating to him distinctly, you will find all things against him; namely, that he should be sold by his brethren; that he should be carried into Egypt; and, when in Potiphar’s house, be falsely accused by his mistress, and cast into prison, and there continue for a long time. But yet put these providences together, and you will see what dependence the one had on the other, and how all are joined together for Joseph’s advancement; for, had not Joseph been sold by his brethren, how could he have been brought down to Egypt, and placed in the capacity of a servant with Potiphar? And if he had not been with Potiphar, how could he, by the false accusation of his mistress, be imprisoned? And if not imprisoned, how could he have had the opportunity of interpreting the chief butler’s dream, which was the occasion of his being called before Pharaoh, by which means Joseph was so highly advanced as to be made ruler over all the land of Egypt? Many other instances might be given; but this is sufficient to show that the great reason, why many providences so far transcend our understandings that we cannot find out the consistency, the admirable order and harmony, that is in them, is this; namely, we see not the end. If we could see the end, we should have a fuller satisfaction; but till then we must patiently wait.

By this it is evident that the transcendency of these doctrines and providences is an excellent expedient to excite those graces that are necessary to salvation ; and therefore our minds may very well be quieted about it. So much to the first improvement : I will proceed to a second.

## IMPROVEMENT II.

The second improvement is this : *We may from the transcendency of these doctrines and providences fetch an unanswerable argument to confirm and establish us in the truth of the Christian religion.*—From what has been already urged for the quieting of our minds about these insoluble difficulties, it was shown that the transcendency that is in these doctrines and providences was but the footsteps of God's transcendency. Let us, then, but take this for granted, and compare the impresses or footsteps that there are of God's transcendency in these doctrines, with those on the things that are made, and [those] to be seen in the providences of God ;—I say, compare the doctrines of the gospel, the things made, and his providences, together ; and we shall find an excellent harmony between them, even in this respect,—that the footsteps of God's transcendency are to be seen in them all. (Rom. i. 20.) Whence we have as satisfying an argument to convince us that the doctrines of the gospel are from God, and consequently true, as that the world was created by him, and is now under his government. Yea, such as believe a Providence, and the scripture to be the word of God, have as much to offer for their faith as the mere deist (who only believes the existence of a God) has for his ; for the very same characters, signatures, impresses, and footsteps of God's infinite perfections that are on the things made, are in these doctrines and providences ; of which, the transcendency that is in them is an uncontrollable evidence. Why do we believe the world to be made of God, but because we see that the things made are so admirably framed and ordered, that there is somewhat in them incomprehensible by us ? They are made by One whose wisdom is infinite, and transcends our largest capacities. In like manner, those who will look into the scriptures, and consult the doctrines of the gospel, will find that there are the impresses of infinite wisdom in them ; which could not be, unless they had been of God, who is infinitely wise. Whence it is that, by the transcendency that is in the doctrines, we are engaged to conclude that they are true ; that is, we are hereby confirmed and established in the truth of the Christian religion, that is discovered unto us in the holy scriptures.

## IMPROVEMENT III.

The third improvement is this : *The transcendency of these doctrines and providences proves a most excellent expedient to silence and stop the mouths of the ungodly ; for, by the transcendency of some doctrines and providences, God is carrying on the great end of glorifying his righteousness in the letting-out his fury and indignation on the*

*vessels of wrath.*—God, who made all things for himself, will be glorified either *by* or *upon* the people [whom] he has made : God will be glorified *by* some to their salvation, and *upon* others in their condemnation. And by the transcendency that is in the doctrines and providences, both are done : for the transcendency of these doctrines and providences, as hath been already shown, exciting the faith and patience of some, does farther their salvation ; and as they are stumbling-blocks in the way of others, they occasion the ruin and destruction of others. These transcendent doctrines and providences must be considered as stumbling-blocks that God puts in their way ; not that there is any evil in God's putting them in the way, but the evil is only from the indisposition of the corrupt heart of man.

For the clearer understanding [of] which, we must consider that there is certainly such a decree as that of the election of some particular persons unto glory ; which doth necessarily infer the dereliction of others, the leaving them in a state of sin and misery. Some, being “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” shall, “through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, obtain salvation with eternal glory.” (1 Peter i. 2 ; 2 Tim. ii. 10.) But others there are, even “ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness,” and “who were of old ordained to this condemnation.” (Jude 4.)

The salvation of some, the damnation of others, is acknowledged by all to be certain as to the event ; and that there is no event in time but what was foreknown of God from eternity, is not denied by any that believe God to be God ; and that these events cannot be without a providence of God, is most manifest. It is true, God has a greater influence on the elect than on others : for God does not only support their powers and faculties, and by a physical efficiency enable them to perform what is natural in their moral actions ; but moreover God does by his mighty power in infinite wisdom sweetly determine the elect to the doing what is morally good and savingly gracious. God does not so much in such actions as are sinful and vicious : the moral vitiosity or obliquity that is in a sinful action is not of God ; though what is natural in a sinful action has its origin and rise from God, yet what is moral and vicious is not from God. God does not physically and invincibly determine any man to what is sinful in any action ; the sinfulness of an action has no higher being than a creature for its author. However, though the sins of the damned are without a Divine physical Predetermination, yet not without a Divine Providence. There is no event without a providence of God : as all events are according to the foreknowledge of God, so they are *by* his providence. The destruction of Pharaoh in the Red Sea [was] according to the foreknowledge of God ; and the hardness of his heart, that was the cause of his ruin, was by God's providence. This providence is somewhat more than a mere unconcerned permission, and yet much less than a physical predetermination. It falls short of this latter, because God has no physical

influence on the sinfulness of our actions : and it is more than the former ; for the wisdom and power of God are marvellously exercised in doing very much toward the bringing [of] the event to pass, and that by laying stumbling-blocks in the way of the non-elect ; which stumbling-blocks in our way may *occasion* our sin and ruin, but not *cause* it. So that, although the Lord does lay “stones of stumbling” in our way, which occasion our sin, yet he cannot be said to be the Cause or Author of our sin. No one is the cause or author of another’s sin, but he who does either physically or morally contribute to the commission of sin ; but though God lays “stones of stumbling” before the sinner, yet he does not, in doing so, either morally by persuasions draw, or physically impel and drive, him to the sin. The stumbling-block is before him, and from it the sinner takes occasion to sin against the Lord. Though such is the infinite knowledge and wisdom of God, that he foreknows that such a block in the sinner’s way will occasion his sin, and notwithstanding puts it in his way ; yet he is not therefore the Author of his sin, because God does not hereby either physically or morally move the sinner to the sin ; for, the sinner having a natural power to withstand it, it is his wilfulness and sin [that] he does not.

That God does lay stones of stumbling before us, is evident enough to any who will consult the sacred scriptures. In Ezekiel iii. 20, it is said that God doth “lay a stumbling-block before” the man who was externally righteous, and he “turns from his righteousness” unto sin, and dies in his iniquity. This will appear more convincingly in the instances I will give concerning it.

The discoveries that are made of God’s gracious designs toward us, are about such matters as do amaze us. Whoever will consider what is declared in the gospel concerning the way to eternal life, will find that Jesus Christ, though he be God as well as Man, and, as God, is infinite in all perfections, yet he suffered a veil to be on his Divinity, “and took upon him the form of a servant.” (Phil. ii. 7.) His birth was very mean, as appears by the circumstances of it ; his education under his parents, no way splendid : “Is not this the carpenter’s son ?” (Matt. xiii. 55 ;) his converse among poor fishermen ; and he at length “became obedient unto the death of the cross.” (Phil. ii. 8.) He was “a man of sorrows,” and very contemptible in the eye of the world ; (Isai. liii. 3 ;) whence it is that he is “unto the Jews,” who expected a Messiah to come with worldly grandeur, “a stumbling-block.” (1 Cor. i. 23.)

In like manner are the many profound doctrines of the gospel stones of stumbling. Christ, that is, the doctrines of Christ,—not only such as relate to the meanness of his person, but many others,—are as “stones of stumbling and rocks of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.” (Isai. viii. 14, 15.)

For this very reason, I humbly conclude, there are so many *δυσνοητα*,

“things hard to be understood,” in the scriptures; so many difficulties about the original, the various readings of scripture, &c. Yea, for this reason do many wicked men increase in riches: they have much silver and gold; but it is a stumbling-block unto them, even “the stumbling-block of their iniquity.” (Ezek. vii. 19.) Their very tables are “made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto” the wicked. (Rom. xi. 9.) O, how many do take occasion, from the several difficulties that lie before them in the word of God and in his providences, to reject all religion, to the eternal destruction of their own souls! The which is done to the exaltation of the glorious righteousness of God, that is seen in the condemnation of “the vessels of wrath,” who were “endured with much long-suffering.” (Rom. ix. 22.) And all this by the signal providence of God, which is concerned in the accomplishment of these high ends, yet so that the purity and holiness of God appear as glorious as do his justice and righteousness: for God, who lays these stumbling-blocks before us, does not cause our sin; for that only follows our meeting them in our way, as the product of our own corruption.

It is admirable to consider, that the very same thing that is a mean to excite grace in the one, should be an occasion of infidelity and other sins in another; that such contrarities should in different ways proceed from one and the same providence; that one and the same thing should be a mean of the salvation of the one, and the occasion of the destruction of the other. There is much of infinite wisdom to be seen in this contrivance; for hereby, in the very same thing that proves an occasion of the ruin of the non-elect, there is enough to stop their mouths, and silence them and all such as do take occasion therefrom to sin against God. For, whatever the secret counsels of God are concerning this or the other particular person, God does treat all in a way suitable to those capacities [which] he has given us; he considers us all as rational creatures, as moral agents; and has taken us all under his government; and is as sincere in the promises of life [which] he makes unto all on their compliances with his terms, as he is just and true in the execution of the threatened evils against such as remain obstinate transgressors. And as for the insuperable difficulties that lie before us, the doctrines and providences that transcend our understandings, they are as excellent expedients to engage us to believe to the saving of the soul, as they are the occasions of that unbelief that ends in the damnation of those that perish.

Wherefore, then, seeing this is so, seeing so much good may be gathered from these doctrines and providences, such as take occasion from them to sin, to reject all religion, and live atheistically in the world, are without excuse: for it is manifest that a better use might have been made of these things, and that it is their own sin that they have made so ill an use thereof; the which will not in the least excuse, but aggravate, their misery, and justify God in their condemnation.



## IMPROVEMENT IV.

Fourthly. *We may hence learn to entertain more awful apprehensions of the greatness and majesty of God, and more low thoughts of ourselves.*—Such is the boldness of most men, that they fear not to pry into those things that are above them, even into the secrets of the Most High. We are not satisfied with what is revealed, but are too curiously searching into “the hidden things of God.” Although it is impossible that this curiosity should be attended with the desired success, and although it proved fatal to our first parents, who, desiring to know more than was meet, fell from that happy state in which they were at first placed; yet the temper of most studious inquirers is, to be too curious and bold; and this they will be, though they turn the whole world into confusion by their contests.

It is not unworthy our thoughts to consider what is the principal ground of the many quarrels and wranglings that have been and are among the learned; for then we shall find that a too bold inquiry into the things that are above us and unlawful to be pried into, is the ground of all. There is in us an ambition to be like unto God; we would fain know as much as He who is omniscient; our souls, though, in their own nature, [they] are finite, yet in the desires they have of knowing things are in a manner infinite. “The deep things of God” cannot escape our narrowest search; the nature of his being, the modes and *media* of his operations, and his eternal counsels, fall under our strictest scrutiny and boldest debates.

It is strange to consider with what confidence vain mortals will dispute about these things; and no less surprising to observe the great confusion and disorders that have followed such disputes. How confidently do the Dominicans and Molinists, the Scotists and Durandists, and other Schoolmen, among the Papists,—the Remonstrants and Anti-Remonstrants, the Supra- and Sub-lapsarians, among Protestants,—talk of God, his decrees, and their order, as well as about physical predetermination, &c. ! Among all which there are different opinions in one respect or other; but yet, by all, one and the same unpardonable confidence [is] discovered in adhering to their own *dogmata*: for about these abstruse points they are all as resolute in their determinations, as in matters most plain and obvious; the tendency of which hath been nothing less than strife, contention, and endless quarrels, yea, strange animosities and confusions. Whereas, if we did but seriously consider that all these matters are above us, that they transcend the largest capacities, and therefore are not to be pried into, instead of spending our time and strength about them, we should be engaged to entertain more awful apprehensions of the greatness of God, and lower thoughts of ourselves.

What more manifest, than that there are some doctrines and providences which transcend our understandings? or than that we are but feeble and impotent beings, who cannot search them out? This is not only supposed in our question, but has been already evinced in

this discourse. And is it so? Is there such a transcendency in the doctrines and providences of God? Is there somewhat secret, somewhat above us? And yet shall we, by an unjustifiable curiosity in prying into these secrets, presume on God? What! dost thou not consider, that God is infinitely above thee, that he dwelleth in that light that no eye can approach unto, that his throne is in the heavens, and that there are "clouds and darkness round about him," and that his glory is inaccessible? Why then art thou not afraid to come too near him? Why darcest thou to fix thine eye upon him?

The transcendency of the doctrines and providences of God is his glory, which no eye can see and live; and yet presumest thou to desire a sight thereof? Behold! when a glimpse of the glory of the Lord appeared but in the face of Moses, the people could not bear it; and therefore a veil was put on his face: (Exod. xxxiv. 29—35 :) and art not thou as unable to behold the glory itself, as the Israelites were to fix their eye on a glimpse of it? Consider, the shinings of Moses's face represent unto us the beauty and lustre and bright glory that is in the doctrines of God. So great was the light of gospel-doctrines then, that the children of Israel could not bear it; and therefore it pleased the Lord, in compassion to human weaknesses, to give them but "the shadow of heavenly things." The glorious light of those doctrines was under the veil; it was hid under types and ceremonies; so that they had but some darker representations, such as they could bear. And now, though we are enabled to bear more, and accordingly have clearer discoveries of this glorious light, yet, not being able to bear the light itself, the heavenly things themselves, we have but the image. Though the veil is not such as hides from us so much of the glory as the Jewish types did, yet the veil that is over the glory now is such as keeps us from seeing it as it is. The truth of which is confirmed unto us by the transcendency [that] we now find in these doctrines: there is a cloud between somewhat in them, and us; and therefore we cannot find them fully out: the which being so, it should teach us to consider our own state and condition, how weak and feeble we are, and what reason we have to be humble and modest in all our inquiries about these things.

Could we but believe that the transcendency that is in the doctrines and providences of God, is what indeed it is,—an unanswerable argument to confirm us in the truth of this point; namely, that there is an inaccessible glory in those doctrines and providences, even that light which we are not able to bear, or to behold and live,—we should see cause to entertain more grand, august, and awful apprehensions of God, as well as lower thoughts of ourselves; and then, instead of disputing boldly about these transcendencies, we should find reason enough to acknowledge our own frailty and weakness, and in the sense thereof to be humble and modest in all our disquisitions. Alas! what is man, that he should come so near the ark of God, or dare make too near approach unto the mount that burns, and is covered with a cloud of smoke and great darkness?

Whoever will duly consider how that man, when in innocency, was mostly disposed to close with the temptation of being like unto God in knowledge, and that the Lord, ever since the fall, hath taken special care to keep us very much in the dark, may easily see that the use [which] we are to make of the transcendency of the doctrines and providences of God, is to walk humbly before the Lord, and to be afraid to inquire too curiously after his secrets. When Adam was first created, his knowledge was much more full, clear, and distinct than afterwards it was; and no question but that it afforded him suitable delight and satisfaction. He saw so much excellency in the knowledge of God and his works, that a temptation to the doing [of] any thing but what might increase his knowledge, would with the greatest disdain be contemned and rejected. This the subtle tempter saw, and therefore recommends the forbidden fruit, as what was rather to be chosen as a means of enlarging his knowledge, than as what was pleasing to the taste: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. iii. 5.) Adam, finding so much pleasure in the knowledge he already had, is soon tempted to be inordinate in the desiring [of] more; yea, so inordinate, that, as soon as he meets with the temptation, no knowledge less than what was like unto God's, could satisfy him: and so he fell. So that the sin of our first parents was an ambition to be like unto God in knowledge, an inordinate desire of knowing what could not be known by any but by Him whose understanding is infinite. And this sin appears in all his offspring: we would fain be like unto God, and we are unwilling to be satisfied with such measures as the Lord appoints, and therefore are prying into "the deep things of God." Such are our low thoughts of God, and such are the high thoughts we have of ourselves, that we think it not impossible to know God to perfection, and therefore are so curious and strict in our inquiry after him.

But it has pleased the Lord to show himself to be God, and that we are but men, by the wonders [which] he hath wrought on earth. Hence proud man, in aspiring after more knowledge than was meet, has lost what he formerly had: his understanding is darkened, his heart is blinded, he cannot see. The faculties of his soul, though they remain, yet [are] not in their primitive strength and vigour; they are greatly impaired and corrupted: yea, the enlightened minds of the regenerate have in them such remainders of old corruption as unfit them for receiving all that may be known of God. And ever since the fall, the method [which] God has taken in enlightening men is such as may convince us that we are but men, finite worms, who cannot comprehend the infinite glories of the Lord. For it has pleased the Lord to give unto the children of men some darker representations of himself; and in those revelations that are most plain and clear, there is enough to demonstrate that there is somewhat in every doctrine and providence that is above us. God keeps his distance; he will make us know that he is the Lord, and that we are but men, even vain worms, that cannot comprehend him, and who

therefore ought to submit ourselves unto God, and humble ourselves before him, and not come too near him; for the nearer we come, the more we are in the dark, the more at a loss, yea, the more perplexed and confused are our apprehensions. This the transcendency of the doctrines and providences of God does evince; which is enough to show how humble we ought to be when we discourse of God, and how modest in our inquiries into his doctrines and providences.

Content thyself, therefore, with what is clearly revealed, and leave what is hid and above thee unto God. Be not thou so bold as to measure the boundless mysteries of God by thy narrow, confined understanding; neither do thou presume to reject what thou canst not comprehend. What is of God is above thee: for God is God; he is clothed with honour and majesty, and with that light which is inaccessible. We ought, therefore, to be modest when we speak of the unsearchable doctrines and providences of God: for in them we see enough to admire, but can never comprehend; and when we have spent all our time to "find out God," and the infinity of his being, the mystery of the Trinity, the mode of his workings or operations, the depth of his contrivances about the accomplishing [of] fallen man's salvation, and all the great counsels of God, and the intricacy of his providences, we must come to this close, with the apostle: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

## SERMON XIX.

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HOW OUGHT WE TO DO OUR DUTY TOWARD OTHERS, THOUGH  
THEY DO NOT THEIRS TOWARD US ?*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*—Romans xii. 21.

WHEN God first made the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, looking back upon his work, as taking delight in it, He “saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” (Gen. i. 31.) There was an excellent order and sweet harmony every where: all the creatures above and below, making then but one “host,” (Gen. ii. 1,) did conspire to glorify their Creator, and be beneficial one to another: so that if man had stood in his integrity, the earth would have been a kind of heaven to him. But when he put forth his hand to take and eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which alone, of all the great variety, was forbidden him; an inundation of sin and misery broke in upon him and all his posterity. For, from that one sin of his, there sprung in a little time a far greater number of sins, than persons out of his loins; one sin still begetting another, and that another, till, in a while, “the earth was filled with violence.” (Gen. vi. 11.) God, not willing to leave things in this woful state, designed a renovation by a second Adam, a Reconciler, one that should be our peace both with God and one another, that there might be peace above and peace below restored again.

There were two songs sung to this purpose: the one, at Christ’s coming into the world; the other, as he was about to depart out of it: the former, by “a multitude of the heavenly host, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace;” the latter, by “the whole multitude of the disciples, saying, Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.” (Luke ii. 13, 14; xix. 37, 38.)

The subordinate means of reconciliation is the gospel, called “the word of reconciliation,” (2 Cor. v. 19,) and “the gospel of peace.” (Eph. vi. 15.) This is the great engine in the hand of God to bring men powerfully, yet sweetly, to God and one another. There are no arguments so powerful to persuade to holiness toward God and righteousness toward men, as those drawn from gospel-grace. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation,” will teach a man those lessons which can never be truly learned otherwise:—to “live soberly, righteously, and godly.” (Titus ii. 11, 12.)

Therefore our apostle, like a wise master-builder, in his epistles usually, as may be seen particularly in those to the Ephesians and

Colossians, lays a good foundation for gospel-obedience in the grace thereof. He first sets forth the great mystery of redemption by Jesus Christ, and the grace of God therein; and then concludes with exhortation to all duties, both to God and man, from the consideration thereof.

He doth the like here in this to the Romans: for, having, in the foregoing part of the epistle, convinced both Jew and Gentile, and "concluded all under sin," and showed the only way to justification to be by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, he comes in this and the following chapters to engage them to their duty both to God and man. See how he doeth it: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Verse 1.) "Your bodies;" that is, yourselves, souls and bodies; the body being put by a synecdoche for the whole man. He expresseth both elsewhere, as due to God upon the account of redeeming love: "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. vi. 20.) He exhorts them to many excellent duties in this chapter; upon all which, the word "therefore" (verse 1) hath a powerful influence. Although the duty here exhorted to in the last verse, be so high that it is not easy to reach unto it; namely, "not to be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good;" yet the consideration of "the mercies of God," mentioned above, will make this appear to be but a "reasonable service."

The point of doctrine from this text is:—

#### DOCTRINE.

*That every Christian should not only take heed, that he be not overcome of evil, but endeavour, what in him lieth, to overcome evil with good.*

It divides itself into two branches:—

I. *Every Christian should take heed that he be not overcome of evil.*

II. *Every Christian ought to endeavour, what in him lieth, to overcome evil with good.*

We shall speak a little to each of these in order, and make the application of both together; which done, you will see *how we ought to do our duty toward others, though they do not theirs toward us.* I begin with the first:—

BRANCH I. *Every Christian should take heed that he be not overcome of evil.*—By "evil," understand any unkind or injurious dealing from others; which may be,

1. By detaining or withdrawing from us the love, or the fruits thereof, which by the will of God are due to us, either as men, or men standing in such or such a special relation to them. Or,

2. By speaking or doing that to us or against us, which the law of love, or the special relation wherein we stand unto them, forbids.

"To be overcome of evil," is to be drawn by the evil temper or

carriage of another toward us, to be of the like temper or carriage toward him; to be so provoked by an injury done unto us as to return the like again. As, when two contraries are put together,—suppose, fire and water,—that which brings the other to its temper is said to “master and overcome” it; so, when another’s malice toward us cools our love to him, and brings us to the like evil disposition toward him, our love may be said to be “overcome” by his malice. And great reason there is, that we should take heed that we be not overcome of evil,

1. *If we consider what relics of corruption there are in good men.*—We live not among angels, but men compassed about with many infirmities, which will be apt to make them sometimes offensive to us. When the scer came to Asa with a message from God, because it was that which did not please him, “he was wroth and in a rage with him, and put him in prison:” (2 Chron. xvi. 7—10:) a strange act of a good king! Yet so he was; for the scripture testifies of him, that “nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.” (1 Kings xv. 14.) Aaron, “the saint of the Lord,” (as he is called, Psalm cvi. 16,) and Miriam, are found chiding with Moses, their brother. (Num. xii. 1.) Two of the most eminent preachers of the gospel of peace, Paul and Barnabas, are at variance; and “the contention is so sharp between them, that they depart asunder one from the other.” (Acts xv. 39.) So true was that saying of theirs to the men of Lystra, who, seeing a miracle wrought by them, were about to do sacrifice, as if they had been gods: “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you.” (Acts xiv. 15.)

Sin is a troublesome thing, and will not suffer him in whom it is to be at rest, or any that are near to it or about it. One would think that if any men in the world were like to have been free from disturbing passions, the disciples of Christ and Moses should be the men, whose masters taught and practised meekness to that degree as no man ever did the like: yet we find, that such as were brought up under their wings had their infirmities and disturbing passions, as well as others. Joshua, Moses’s servant, hearing that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, is disturbed himself, and endeavours to disturb Moses about the matter, and would have had him disturb them: “My lord Moses, forbid them.” But he checks his passion, and calms his spirit, by wishing there were more of them: “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets!” (Num. xi. 28, 29.) The like you find in Christ’s own disciples, even in John, who lay in his bosom. He comes to Christ, saying, “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us.” They would have had Christ, it is like, join with them in the prohibition; but he forbids them to forbid him, saying, “He that is not against us is on our part.” (Mark ix. 38—40.) So that, you see, you may find enough from good men to exercise you so far as to try the strength of all your graces.

2. *Beside this, you will find in some a rooted enmity to that which is good.*—There are two spirits, by one of which all the men in the

world are led,—“the spirit of the world,” and “the spirit which is of God.” (1 Cor. ii. 12.) These two spirits, being contrary one to the other, do lead two contrary ways. They have striven long, and will strive as long as they breathe. The contrariety of these two spirits first appeared in Cain and Abel, and hath continued down along through all generations unto this day, and will do so hereafter. It is like the “war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam,—all their days.” (1 Kings xiv. 30.) The hatred of the Philistines against Israel is called by the prophet, “the old hatred,” (Ezek. xxv. 15,) not only because they were alway full of spite against them, but because it was of the same nature as that of old to the people of God.

This “old hatred” is not likely, by “waxing old, to vanish away,” as the old covenant is said to do. (Heb. viii. 13.) It was under the old administration, and appeared against the holy prophets then: “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?” (Acts vii. 52.) And it continued to show itself against Christ, who gave his disciples warning to expect the same, under the new administration: “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” (Matt. x. 25.) And he tells them, “Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” (Matt. v. 11.) How this was verified, the scripture first, and ecclesiastical history afterward, do abundantly show. The apostle tells us, they were “reviled, persecuted, defamed,” and “made as the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things.” (1 Cor. iv. 12, 13.) And in after-times one would wonder,—had not John said, “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you,” (1 John iii. 13,)—that a people so holy, so good, so peaceable and inoffensive, as the primitive Christians were, should be so unworthily dealt with, both by tongue and hand, as they were. Their adversaries reported that they fed upon man’s flesh, that they practised lewdness in their assemblies, and that they were the authors of all the tumults in those days, and what not? “All manner of evil,” but “falsely;” yet by this means great persecutions were raised against them. And if Christians will be Christians still, they will find the world to be the world still; \* so that, unless they be more careful, they will be in danger to be “overcome of evil.” For if they find it hard sometimes not to be overcome of the lesser evil of good men, how will they not be overcome by the greater of bad men? “If the footmen weary them, how will they contend with horses?” (Jer. xii. 5.)

3. *There is something in every man that makes him more easy to be overcome.*—Malice, and other “foolish and hurtful lusts” and “roots of bitterness,” that lie deep in the heart of every man by nature. You see how early they will be putting forth even in children themselves. Revenge is a lesson that every child hath at his fingers’ end. The more to blame are they who, being conversant about them,

\* “Such enemies have they (Christians) had in all ages; and in these our days the same is practised, and will be to the world’s end.”—PERKINS On the Creed.



do teach and prompt them to use their hands to avenge themselves on persons or things, before they be able to use their tongues to that or any other purpose. And as they grow up, they "live in" them,— "in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." (Titus iii. 3.) This is found so common a thing among men, that Joseph's brethren thought it almost impossible that he should not hate them for the evil [which] they had done to him. Therefore, when their father was dead, they say, "Joseph will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him." (Gen. l. 15.) And so it is likely he might, if God had not taught him another lesson: "But he giveth more grace." (James iv. 5, 6.)

Yet seeing grace is imperfect in the best of men on earth, it behoveth them to take heed lest they "be overcome of evil." Grace, so far as they have it, makes them strong; but the remainders of corruption make them weak. I have heard that it hath been said of an eminently holy man, that he had grace enough for two men; yet upon some occasions he was found not to have enough for himself.

4. *He that takes not good heed, so as not to be overcome of evil, will be altogether unable to overcome evil with good.*—How can he overcome evil in another, *that is overcome by it himself?* "How wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?" (Matt. vii. 4.) But that we have a farther duty lying upon us than not to be "overcome of evil," comes in the next place to be shown, in speaking to the second branch of the point; which is,

BRANCH II. *Every Christian ought to endeavour, what in him lieth, to overcome evil with good.*—This lesson was not much taught in old time. Our Saviour tells us, the scribes and Pharisees were wont to teach the contrary: "It hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." (Matt. v. 43.) For which, and other such doctrines as they taught, he calls them, "blind leaders of the blind." (Matt. xv. 14.) The like darkness had blinded the eyes of the old philosophers, for the most part. Some of them, indeed, as Plato and Seneca, have excellent precepts, tending toward the point in hand; but these may be thought to light their candle at their neighbour's torch. Plato was much conversant in, and well acquainted with, the writings of the church of the Jews; and Seneca lived in the days of Paul, and, it is probable, was acquainted with him or with his doctrine, and so might come to a more refined morality.\* But these, remaining still in unbelief as to the great doctrines of faith in Jesus Christ, could not see themselves, nor show to others, the true ground of love or the great motives to it.

It was Jesus Christ—who came to reconcile us when enemies, and died for the ungodly, and did with his own mouth preach his own and his Father's love therein—that brought to light such precepts as these: "Love your enemies," (Matt. v. 44,) and, "Overcome evil with good." Not that these were new commandments, brought first into the world when God was "manifest in the flesh." No; they

\* Vide GATAKERI *Dissert. de Novi Testamenti Stylo*, cap. 44.

were old commandments. Thus we read: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Lev. xix. 18.) And John, speaking of love, says, "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning;" (1 John ii. 7;) though in the next verse he calls it "a new commandment," it being renewed by Christ, who may be said to set forth a new edition of it, amplified and enlarged. "A new commandment," says he, "I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another:" (John xiii. 34:) which is such an "as" as no tongue is able fully to express.

In speaking to the point, we shall show,

1. *That every Christian ought to endeavour to overcome evil with good.*

2. *What good means should be used to that purpose.*

3. *How they should be used, that they may be the more effectual to that end.*

1. *That we are to endeavour to overcome evil with good*, doth appear by this:—we are called to "be followers of God," (Eph. v. 1,) and to be of the mind of Christ, (Phil. ii. 5,) and to "follow his steps." (1 Peter ii. 21.) As every godly man is in some measure like unto God, and every true Christian of Christ's mind and way, so he is to endeavour still to be more like to both. Otherwise, to profess godliness and Christianity, is to take the name of God and Christ in vain. The name which God proclaimed as his was, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Exod. xxxiv. 6.) These are attributes which God delights to magnify: he glories in this: "I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness." (Jer. ix. 24.) How often is it said of him, that he is "slow to anger, and of great kindness!" (Neh. ix. 17; Joel ii. 13; Jonah iv. 2.) God did wonderfully exercise these his attributes toward the old world. When "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," (Gen. vi. 5,) how "slow to anger" was he then! He did not presently send the deluge; but his "long-suffering" is said to "wait, while the ark was a-preparing." (1 Peter iii. 20.) And this time of waiting was no less than "one hundred and twenty years." (Gen. vi. 3.) His loving-kindness appeared, also, in that he sent Noah, who "preached righteousness," and called them all this while to repentance. (2 Peter ii. 5.)

The like "long-suffering and great kindness" he exercised toward the people of the Jews, from Egypt, "the house of bondage" from whence he delivered them, to Canaan, and in that good land, which he so freely gave them, too. They were no sooner brought miraculously through the Red Sea, but they began to provoke; and not long after, you may hear God complaining of them, "How long will this people provoke me?" (Num. xiv. 11.) And in verse 22, he says, They "have tempted me now these ten times." Nor were they better after this; for he was then "grieved with" them "forty years long."

(Psalm xcvi. 10.) After the same rate they carried it when they came into Canaan, as you may see by reading the historical books of the Old Testament. You have a short sum of the kindnesses of God to them and their great miscarriages, in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, where you will find one "yet" after another, and one "nevertheless" after another. God was good to them; "nevertheless" they sin and provoke: they sin and provoke; "nevertheless" God is good to them. (Neh. ix. 26, 30, 31.) The greatness of their sin, and God's great goodness to them, are both set forth in Isai. lxxv. 2, 3: "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face." Their sin is here called "rebellion;" which was not only once or twice, but "continually," and that to his very "face." And the goodness of God to them is set out by the "spreading out of his hands;" which showed great desire of their coming-in, and a readiness to embrace them in so doing: and this is said to be not once or twice, but "all the day." That this scripture is to be understood of the Jews, we have the apostle's warrant: "To Israel he saith. All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Rom. x. 21.) Thus matters stood between God and them "all the days of old." (Isai. lxiii. 9.)

Neither was God's goodness to them, nor their sin against him, less, when God was manifest in the flesh: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. xxiii. 37.) Their sin was great; they "killed and stoned prophets." It was their fathers' work for many generations; and they take up the same trade, and use it against Christ himself: "Thou that stonest the prophets," in the present tense. They endeavoured to stone Christ himself more than once. (John x. 31.) Now see what good he would have done them notwithstanding, and with what affection: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" He was inwardly moved when he uttered these words. You have the like expression, 2 Sam. xviii. 33: "The king," David, "was much moved, and wept," when he heard of Absalom's death; "and said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!" "How often would I have gathered thee," even every hour of the day, "as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" earnestly and affectionately clocking them together, that they might be safe and out of danger. Observe how he carried [it] toward them that would have slain him for curing an impotent man on the sabbath-day. (John v. 16.) He, to abate their fury, speaks many words to them; and at last tells them, "These things I say unto you, that ye might be saved." (Verse 34.) Here is salvation endeavoured, for destruction intended. They would have killed him, but he would have given them life; and, a little after, (verse 40,) he speaks as one bewailing that they would not come to him, that they might have it: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

Now if there be such rich goodness in God, there should be, in all that profess his name, an endeavour to be like him, that they may appear to be the children of so good a Father. (Matt. v. 45.) Christ chargeth his disciples to use the best means within their reach to overcome the worst evils [that] they meet with from others: "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Verse 44.) If such evils as these must be "overcome with good," much more should lesser evils, when they arise, as sometimes they will, from friends or near relations, be "overcome" by the like means. Which brings us to the second thing mentioned; namely,

2. *What good means should be used to this purpose.*—And they are three:—

- (1.) *To do good to them.*
- (2.) *To wish them well, and pray for them.*
- (3.) *To use good words to them and of them.*

Two of these are expressly mentioned by Christ, in the place aforesaid; namely, to "do good to them," and to "pray for them;" and they are all carried in that word, *Ευλογείτε*, "Bless," if it be taken in its largest sense.\* When God blesseth men, he always doeth them good: his benediction is a real benefit, because his speaking is doing: "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." (Gen. i. 3.) He said to Abraham, "In blessing I will bless thee;" (Gen. xxii. 17;) that is, "I will surely and certainly do it." So Isaac, speaking of Jacob, says, "I will bless him; yea, and he shall be blessed." (Gen. xxvii. 33.) And so he was; but not so much because Isaac had said it, as because God had said it before him. For the apostle tells us, that Isaac did bless him "by faith:" (Heb. xi. 20:) now faith must have some word of God to be the ground of it. It was God [who] "spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm xxxiii. 9.)

When men are said to "bless," they do it one of these three ways:—

(1.) *By being beneficial to others in yielding or giving to them any good thing that is in their power.*—Thus Jacob calls the present [which] he made to his brother Esau his "blessing;" (Gen. xxxiii. 10, 11;) and Naaman offering Elisha a present, says, "I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant;" (2 Kings v. 15;) and the apostle, speaking to the Corinthians to make up their "bounty" for the poor saints, calls it *ευλογίαν*, their "blessing." (2 Cor. ix. 5.)

(2.) *By wishing them well, and praying for them.*—So Jacob, speaking of Joseph's sons, says, "In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh." (Gen. xlviii. 20.) And in Deut. xxiv. 13, where charge is given to deliver the poor man's pledge before the going down of the sun, a reason is added: "That

\* *Ευλογείτε*, *Hebraica phrasis pro, Bene precamini, vel, Beneficio afficite: alioquin ευλογειν idem valet quod επαινειν, laudare.*—BEZA. "The word 'Bless' is a Hebrew expression, signifying, 'Wish well to,' or, 'Treat with kindness:' it also has the same meaning with the Greek word denoting 'to praise.'"—EDIT.

he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee ;” that is, “that he may find in his heart to pray to God for a blessing upon thee.”

(3.) *By speaking well of others, and praising them.*—So the wicked is said to “bless the covetous ;” (Psalm x. 3 ; ) that is, to commend him for a wise man, that will “look,” as they say, “to the main chance.” And so it falls in with that in Psalm xlix. 18 : “Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.”

(1.) First, then, we ought to endeavour to “overcome evil” in others *by doing all offices of love and kindness to them, in the capacity wherein we stand, according to our power.*—Are friends unkind or injurious to us? We should not withdraw kindness from them, but be kind still.\* Do our relations not perform the duties of their place? We should be the more careful to perform all the duties of ours to them. Have we to deal with enemies, that would do us all the mischief that lies in their power? We should not do as they would do to us ; but, on the contrary, be beneficial to them in any thing we may. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink :” (Rom. xii. 20 :) these expressions carry more in them than a little bread and drink.† When God is said to “make his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and to send rain on the just and on the unjust ;” (Matt. v. 45 ;) more is meant than the mere shining of the sun and the descending of the rain upon them. All earthly comforts which are produced by the sun’s influence and the fructifying virtue of the rain, are comprehended in them. So, when you ask of God “daily bread,” in asking that, you ask all other necessaries for your life. In like manner, when God says, “Give bread and drink,” he intends any thing else that may do them good. Thus did Joseph deal to his brethren, who had been very injurious to him. When, by the providence of God, he came to such an estate that he was able to do them good, he not only gave them bread in their hunger, but “nourished and comforted them,” and was a shelter to them in a strange land, as long as he lived. (Gen. l. 21.)

As we should do them all the good we can, so we ought to prevent any evil that might fall upon them. Saul had been very defective in his duty to David, both as a prince and a father. As a *prince*, he ought not only to have protected, but rewarded, so deserving a subject : as a *father*, he ought to have cherished such an obedient son, who “went out whithersoever Saul sent him.” (1 Sam. xviii. 5.) But, on the contrary, he not only encourages some of his followers to kill him, but endeavours to take away his life by his own hand. (1 Sam. xix. 1, 10.) Now how doth David carry it in this case? He endeavours to save himself as well as he could, by withdrawing, and giving place to Saul’s wrath ; and when he, in pursuing after him,

\* *Est illa obliquæ talionis forma, ubi ab iis qui nos læserunt beneficentiam avertimus.*—CALVINUS. “That is an indirect mode of retaliation, when we cease from all acts of kindness toward them who have injured us.”—EDIT. † *Jurisperiti, cui victus testamento legatus est, ei intelligunt vestitum, habitationem, lectum, medicinas, et alia similia legata esse.*—PETRUS MARTYR. “When ‘sustenance’ is left to any man by a will, the lawyers understand that clothing, habitation, bed, medicine, and other things of the same kind, have also been bequeathed to him.”—EDIT.

falls into his hands more than once, he doth not only not destroy him himself, but withholdeth those that would. (1 Sam. xxiv. 6, 7; xxvi. 8, 9.) The tenderness that was in him toward such an enraged enemy appeared in this,—that his “heart smote him” but for cutting off the skirt of his garment; though this was done only to show that he was in his power, and that he could have done him a mischief if he would. What effect this had upon Saul, may be seen in the story. When David showed him the skirt of his garment, and spake a few words to show his innocency, he, though a king and mightily enraged against him, is melted into tears: “Saul lifted up his voice, and wept,” saying, “Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.” (1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 16, 17.)

There is nothing likely to overcome the rough temper and rugged carriage of others sooner than a kind and gentle behaviour toward them. When Paul came first to Thessalonica, he found them, or, at least, many among them, to be a rough and untractable people. The Bereans are said to be “more noble,” (Acts xvii. 11,) *ευγενεστεροι*, “of better breeding and more ingenuous,”\* than they who, upon Paul’s preaching there, “took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar. (Verse 5.) Hence it is that he saith, that at his entrance in unto them, he “spake the gospel of God with much contention;” that is, on their part: for, as for his own part, he was otherwise disposed. (1 Thess. ii. 1, 2.) It was the rule [which] he gave to Timothy: “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.) This was his own practice at this time: for, he says, “We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.” (1 Thess. ii. 7.) As a nurse bears with the frowardness and peevishness of children, and, by all ways imaginable, endeavours to quiet them and bring them to a good humour; so did the apostle with them. And it is probable that those of them that did believe, partly by the apostle’s doctrine and partly by his example, were of the like disposition and carriage toward them that believed not. And what the effect of this was, in that place where the gospel was so much opposed at first, we may gather from what he says in his second epistle to them: “Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.” (2 Thess. iii. 1.)

(2.) As we should do them all the good we can, and prevent the evil that might hurt them; so we ought to *pray that God would do them the good, and prevent the evil, [which] we cannot.*—“Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matt. v. 44.) And if for such, much more for such who, though they may be in some particular instances prejudicial to us, have a love to and kind-

\* *Constat apud Græcos translative tunc ευγενειαν ad mores et ad animum accommodari.*—BEZA. “It is evident that among Greek writers the word ‘nobility’ is used negligently, as relating either to the mind or to the manners.”—EDIT.

ness for us. David complains that his "soul was among lions," and that he did "lie among them that were set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth were spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." (Psalm lvii. 4.) And of these, or such as these, he says, "They did tear me, and ceased not." (Psalm xxxv. 15.) What did David now? Did he rend and tear, as they did? No: "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom." (Verse 13.) What could he have done more for his nearest friend or dearest brother? So he says, "I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother." (Verse 14.) Take an instance also of what was done for friends, who in a day of temptation did not the good [that] they should. When Paul came to Rome, he preached the gospel among them for two whole years together. (Acts xxviii. 30, 31.) And no doubt but that he that was "sure that, when he came, he should come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ," (Rom. xv. 29,) was kindly received by them. And we may well think that he who, before he came to them, did so earnestly "beseech them, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, to strive together with him in prayers to God, that he might be delivered from them that did not believe in Judea," (verses 30, 31,) did confidently expect that they would use not only that, but other good means, that he might "be delivered from them that did not believe" at Rome. But it fell out otherwise; for, when a day of trial came, these Romans' faith did so far fail that not a man of them stood by him, when he was in that great danger to be devoured by "the mouth of the lion:" "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." This must needs greatly affect and afflict him; yet in the next words he prays that this sin might not be imputed to them: "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.) You see, this is the will of God, and this hath been the saints' practice.

But if you find holy men, as sometimes you may David and Paul, (Psalm lix. 13; 2 Tim. iv. 14,) uttering themselves in another manner against God's and their enemies, as if they desired evil to fall upon them; either the evil was temporal or eternal.

(i.) If the evil were *temporal*, they cannot be thought to desire it absolutely, *sub ratione mali*, "as evil;" but as it had a tendency to their good.\* As David: "Put them in fear, O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but men." (Psalm ix. 20.) They desired evil no otherwise than good men, that are in place of authority over others, may and ought to use it; namely, not to make others *pœnâ miseris, sed correctione beatis*, "miserable by putting them to pain, but happy by amendment."

(ii.) If you find them sometimes to have a farther reach, and to

\* *Deliberata imprecatio mali sub ratione mali contra homines, quæ est formalis maledictio, non potest non esse mala.*—AMESIUS *De Conscientiâ*, lib. iv. AUGUSTINUS *De Serm. Dom. in Monte*. "A deliberate imprecation of evil, *as evil*, upon men, which is a formal malediction, cannot but be wicked."—EDIT.

look beyond time, to *eternity*; you must consider, they were extraordinary persons, and by the spirit of prophecy did foresee what God had irrevocably determined concerning some men; and upon this supposition they might not only acquiesce in the judgment of God against them, but were obliged to approve of it, too; as all the saints shall at the last day approve of the sentence of Christ against such as they loved and earnestly prayed for, when here on earth, before they knew what their final state would be. That these had such a foresight, is plain by what David spake of Judas many years before he was born. He saw plainly what Judas's cursed end would be, as you may see by reading Psalm cix.; "which," Peter tells us, "the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas." (Acts i. 16.) So that these, being persons and cases extraordinary, are not to be drawn into example by ordinary persons.

It is good for us to mind what Christ says of great sinners: "I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." (Matt. xii. 31, 32.) When Christ says, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," and excepts none but "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost;" no, not a word spoken "against the Son of man" himself;—we may well think, a word spoken or a deed done against ourselves may be pardoned; and, that it may be so, should pray for it; and we may hope for a good effect of it. Stephen's prayer, when he was stoned, probably had an influence on Paul's conversion. (Acts vii. 60.) St. John tells us, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." (1 John v. 16.) So that, unless a man could be assured that another hath sinned that "sin which is unto death," he may, nay, he ought to, pray for him: "He shall ask," &c.

In any case where there is but an "If so be," or a "Who can tell?" or a "Perhaps," there is room left for prayer. In that mighty tempest that arose in the sea to arrest Jonah as he was going to Tarshish, which was likely to have broken the ship, he is called on to "arise, and call upon his God, *if so be* that God will think upon us, that we perish not." (Jonah i. 6.) Their case was very doubtful; yet they pray. So, when Jonah had delivered his message to the Ninevites, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" they "cry mightily unto God," saying, "*Who can tell if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah iii. 4, 8, 9.) Simon Magus was in a very bad state,—"in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity;" and Peter perceived it: yet he bids him "repent and pray, *if perhaps* the thought of his heart might be forgiven him."\* And can we think, that he who put him upon praying for himself, would not pray for him, too; especially considering [that] Simon requested it of him? (Acts viii. 21—24.)

(3.) The third good means to be used to "overcome evil" in others, is to *use good words in speaking*, (i.) *Of them*; (ii.) *To them*.

\* *Si fieri possit, ab ipsis inferis extrahendi nobis sunt homines.*—CALVINUS *in locum*.  
"It is our duty to snatch men even from hell itself, if it be possible."—EDIT.



(i.) *To speak well of them so far as with truth we may.*—Peter Martyr thinks this is required, Rom. xii. 14: "Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not." Where by "blessing," in the former part of the verse, he understands speaking well of them; in the latter, praying for them. But possibly the apostle might double the word only for the greater emphasis, it being a duty of great necessity, and not easy to be performed. However, it must be acknowledged a duty to speak well of them for what is praiseworthy in them. Indeed we may not "call evil good," nor praise any for the evil [that] they do; but must say in that case, as the apostle doth to the Corinthians, "Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." (1 Cor. xi. 22.) On the other hand, we must not "call good evil." (Isai. v. 20.) There being none so bad but have some good gifts and commendable qualities in them, we should acknowledge them in them, and praise them for them. The positive part of the ninth commandment requires this at our hands,—to "bear" a true "witness" to our neighbour. Therefore, as Christ, when he blames this and the other church for the faults [which] he found in them, acknowledgeth the good he found among them, saying to one, "This thou hast," and to another, "This thou hast;" (Rev. ii. 6; iii. 4;) so should we do. And how this tends to overcome evil, the wise man will tell us: "As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise;" (Prov. xxvii. 21;) or, as others, "so is to a man his praise;" that is, it tries him, and refines him, too.

(ii.) As good words of them tend to "overcome evil" in others, so *good words to them.*—Respectful language and modest answers are of great efficacy to allay and abate corrupt affections in others. It was spiritual wisdom in Paul to answer Festus—saying, he was mad and beside himself—calmly and respectfully: "I am not mad, most noble Festus." (Acts xxvi. 25.) With what respect and reverence doth David speak of and to Saul, when he was pursuing him for his life! Speaking of him, he calls him "the Lord's anointed;" (1 Sam. xxvi. 16;) and speaking to him, he doth, as it were, in one breath (for it is within the compass of the three following verses) call him, "My lord the king." And what he spake as well as what he did at that time, did for the present mollify his heart toward him, as appears by his saying to him again: "Is this thy voice, my son David?" (Verses 17—19.) "By long forbearing a prince is persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone." (Prov. xxv. 15.) A flint is sooner broken on a pillow than on a rock. We find the men of Ephraim very angry with Gideon, because he called them not, when he went out against the Midianites: for, the text saith, "They did chide with him sharply." He, though a "mighty man of valour," gave them this modest answer, "What have I now done in comparison of you? Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?" intimating that they had done greater service in pursuing, than he had done in routing, of them. "Then," says the text, "their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that." (Judges viii. 1—3.) "Grievous words" might

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have "stirred up anger;" but his "soft answer turned away wrath."  
(Prov. xv. 1.)

3. The third thing proposed was, to show *the manner how all this good must be done, that it may be the more effectual.*—It must be done,

(1.) *Cordially.*—What you do, must be done as in the presence of Him by whom "actions are weighed." (1 Sam. ii. 3.) Your prayers must not come "out of feigned lips." (Psalm xvii. 1.) What you speak must be "as in the sight of God." (2 Cor. ii. 17.) It is easy to use a few complimentary words in speaking to men, or a few vain words in speaking to God for them, as all are that come not from the heart. When you are about this work, you should endeavour to draw deep, even from the bottom of your hearts. Paul calls his prayer for the Jews, his greatest enemies, his "heart's desire." (Rom. x. 1.)

(2.) *Readily.*—Titus is charged to "put" Christians "in mind" of this: "To be ready to every good work." (Titus iii. 1.) Although these good works be contrary to corrupt nature, grace will make a man ready to them; the holiest men have been always the most forward in them. When God had set that mark of his displeasure on Miriam for chiding with Moses, how ready was he to pray for her! "Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." (Num. xii. 13.) The Jews, before the captivity, were grown to a height of wickedness: "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets," (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.) and, among the rest, Jeremiah in particular, who was sent to tell them of the approaching captivity. Yet he was far from desiring that evil to overtake them, though they said, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now." (Jer. xvii. 15.) He appeals to God in the next verse, that he had not "desired the woful day." He was so far from that, that he prayed hard for that hard-hearted people. How his heart stood this way, you may see by God's telling him again and again that he should not pray for them: "Pray not thou for this people;" (Jer. vii. 16;) so again, (xi. 14,) and once more; (xiv. 11;) till He tells him at last, [that] "though Moses and Samuel stood before" him, yet his "mind could not be toward that people." (xv. 1.)

Such an admirable readiness was found in the man of God against whom Jeroboam stretched out his hand, saying, "Lay hold on him," for his crying in the name of the Lord against his idolatrous altar at Bethel. God had dried up that hand which he stretched forth against the prophet; which brought him to entreat the man of God to pray for him. "And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored again, and became as it was before." (1 Kings xiii. 1—6.)

(3.) *Constantly.*—It is not enough to use these means once or twice for a fit, or when you are in a better frame than ordinary; but it must be your constant course. You find that, when your bodies are full of evil humours, the use of a good medicine once or twice

doth not remove your distemper; therefore you steer to a course of physic. So must you do to remove or alter the tough humours that may be in others; you must use the means constantly. There must not only be a "well-doing," but a "patient continuance in" it. (Rom. ii. 7.) If you find no good effect for a while, "be not weary in well-doing." (Gal. vi. 9.) "Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord." (Prov. xx. 22.) Thus did David for a long time, when Saul was his enemy; he "waited on the Lord," and kept his way, though he was put to many a hard shift the while. And God put a sweet song into his mouth at last, when he had "delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul:" "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God." (Psalm xviii. 20, 21.)

## USES.

USE I. *If these things be so, have we not cause to take up a lamentation, when we see men, professing themselves Christians, make so little account of such duties as Christ hath by precept enjoined, and by example led them to?*—How unsuitable to Christian doctrine is the practice of such as cannot, or will not, forgive the least injury! This is far from endeavouring to "overcome evil with good." How can such say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?" Some of old are said to leave out these words, "As we forgive," &c.; fearing, it is like, that doom, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." (Luke xix. 22.) If any be more hardy in our days, they may know one day that God will not be mocked. (Gal. vi. 7.)

Nor is this all: are there not some that account it necessary to avenge themselves for a small offence,—it may be, only for a word,—though to the hazarding, nay, the loss, of their own and others' blood? And to do thus, is by many accounted to be of a brave spirit; and he that will not do so, is by some not thought worthy of the name of a "gentleman;" as if the name were allied to *Gentilism*, rather than *gentleness*. Indeed, a learned divine, speaking of this matter, saith, "'Gentility,' according to the vulgar and most plausible notion, retains the substance of *Gentilism*, with a light tincture of Christianity."\* But the learned and pious Bishop Davenant, speaking of the same, says, *Hæc opinio est plusquam ethnica*: "This opinion is more than heathenish." For several heathen philosophers have given better counsel in the case than these Christian gentlemen think fit to take; and if it be more than heathenish, think what it must be! † There are others, and too many, too, who—although they

\* DR. JACKSON "Of Justifying Faith," chap. 13, parag. 8, 9. † *Est illa diabolica opinio, quæ invasit mentes omnium ferè qui se generosos somniant; nimirum, non posse se, salvo suo honore et nominis sui existimatione, ferre vel verbum contumeliosum, sed teneri ad ultionem quærendam etiam duello.*—DAVENANTIUS in Col. iii. "It is a diabolical opinion which has seized the minds of those who fancy themselves brave and noble; to wit, that they cannot, without injury to their honour and good fame, bear even an abusive word, but are bound to require satisfaction even by a duel."—EDIT.

dare not go about to wrest the sword of vengeance out of the hand of God, who says, "Vengeance is mine," (Rom. xii. 19,) to commit so great an evil as is the fore-mentioned—yet they will be adventuring to "shoot their arrows, even bitter words," (Psalm lxiv. 3,) against such as do in the least offend them, or stand in their way. And, O that we could say that such as make a greater profession than others, and are in most things of good and exemplary conversations, were altogether free in this matter! But this evil is epidemical; and the best, I fear, are too much infected with it. The sad consequences of this we partly see already, and may see more in time, if God in mercy prevent them not. So that it is for "a lamentation," and likely to "be for a lamentation." (Ezek. xix. 14.)

USE II. *Look about you, and take heed that you be not overcome of evil.*

1. Let not *imaginary* evils "overcome" you; as they will be likely to do, as well as those that are real, if they be so apprehended. There is no observing man but may see what mischief hath come heretofore, and doth come every day, by such. There always have been, and still are, some who, being weak or malicious, do go about telling stories of this and that man or party; and by leaving out or putting into their tale some circumstances, or by setting an emphasis upon a word innocently spoken, do raise in others the highest passions, which hurry them away to speak and do things very sinful and unjust. If Doeg had fairly represented the matter of Ahimelech to Saul, there would have been found such circumstances in the case as might probably have excused him in Saul's own judgment, and have kept him from that barbarous act of slaying so many innocent souls. (1 Sam. xxii. 9—19.)

If David, upon hearing what Ziba had told him of Mephibosheth, had stayed awhile, and heard what he could have said for himself, he would not so soon have forgotten the "passing love" of Jonathan his father, (2 Sam. i. 26,) nor the oath [that] he made to him, "not to cut off kindness from his house for ever." (1 Sam. xx. 15.) But being then in such circumstances as made him credulous, upon a feigned story, without more ado, he presently gave away all that belonged to poor Mephibosheth to that false man. (2 Sam. xvi. 4.) And how many that are, or would easily be made, very good friends, are separated, or kept at a distance at this day, by such means as these, he is a stranger to the world that doth not see.

2. If the evil be *real*, yet "be not overcome" by it. It may be [that] it is not so great as it is apprehended: but if it be, it may be [that] the author of it did not think it would prove so offensive and hard to be borne as you find it to be; and then it would be a greater evil in you to return that to another which you find so hard to be borne yourself.

Christians should be more ready to receive one injury after another, than to return one for another. This I take to be the meaning of Christ, when he says, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matt. v. 39.) Julian the Apos-

tate did blasphemously object against Christ, that he did not observe his own laws; because, when he was smitten by one of the offenders with the palm of his hand, he did not turn the other cheek, but did expostulate with him that did it in these words: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" (John xviii. 23.) But Christ is the best Interpreter of his own laws, and by his practice hath told us what his meaning was in this. He was so far from avenging himself by word or deed, that he was ready and prepared to suffer farther at their hands; so as not only to be smitten again, but to be crucified. And in this he is proposed to us as an Example: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter ii. 21, 22.)

OBJECTION. "Will not such as are injurious grow more insolent, and go from bad to worse, if they be not dealt withal in their own kind?"

ANSWER 1. If any have humanity or ingenuousness in them, they will be ashamed by your forbearing of them: if they be void of these, they will be more irritated and provoked by rendering evil for their evil; and, consequently, you are likely to endure more from them.

2. If they should go from bad to worse, yet you may "not avenge yourselves:" (Rom. xii. 19:) this were to take upon you to be judges in your own case. God hath set up the ordinance of magistracy for this purpose: "He is a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Rom. xiii. 4.) Therefore in greater injuries you are to make application to him for a compensation; as Paul appealed to Cæsar. (Acts xxv. 11.)

3. Although a private person may not avenge himself, yet, in case he be assaulted by another that would take away his life, if no magistrate be at hand, he may stand upon his own defence by the law of nature, which Christ came not to destroy; provided that he endeavour to avoid his adversary by flying, if he may. (2 Sam. iii. 33, 34.) But if he press so hard upon him that he cannot, he may defend himself; wherein he should be as willing to save the other's life as to preserve his own.

4. God himself, when other means fail, doth often appear, to vindicate the wrongs of such as suffer with meekness and patience. He will not stand-by as one unconcerned, especially if his name be interested in the matter. When Rabshakeh came against Jerusalem, he made a railing oration to the people, threatening what he would do: but they "answer him not a word;" for the king had said, "Answer him not." (Isai. xxxvi. 21.) A while after, Hezekiah himself receives a letter, stuffed with the like railing matter. He reads it, but turns from the messenger, and goes to the house of God, and, "spreading the letter before the Lord," leaves the matter with him. (Isai. xxxvii. 14.) "Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand." (Verse 36.)

God commanded Jeremiah to put a yoke upon his neck, as a sign that the Jews should be brought under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar. (Jer. xxvii. 2, 12.) Hananiah, a false prophet, comes and takes the yoke off his neck, and breaks it before his face. (Jer. xxviii. 10.) What doth the good prophet do the while? Doth he strive with him about the yoke, that he might not break it? Or doth he use any unbecoming words, when he had done it? No; it is said, "Jeremiah went his way." (Verse 11.) But God sent him to Hananiah with this message,—that for his "rebellion" he should die that year; which accordingly came to pass in the seventh month. (Verses 12—17.)

Christians that would keep a due decorum in their words and actions when they are injured, should look well to their hearts, and keep them with diligence; for all sinful miscarriages begin there. When the heart is disordered by corrupt affections, the tongue and other members will hardly be kept in any good order. Therefore the apostle, willing the Colossians to put off the evil of the tongue, "blasphemy," which is "evil-speaking," bids them first put off the evils of the heart, "anger" and "malice." (Col. iii. 8.) Whether the heart be "inditing a good" or a bad "matter," the tongue will be as "the pen of a ready writer." (Psalm xlv. 1.) If cholera be suffered to boil to a height in the heart, the scum will be like to run over at the mouth.\* If the heart be as "the troubled sea," which "cannot rest;" it will be casting out the "mire and dirt" which before lay at the bottom. (Isai. lvii. 20.) The evil of the heart is usually vented first at the mouth;† but it will soon appear in the other members. When once the "mouth is full of cursing and bitterness," the "feet" will be "swift to shed blood," till "destruction and misery be in men's ways." (Rom. iii. 14—16.) He that will not be "overcome of evil," must take care to rule his own spirit: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls;" (Prov. xxv. 28;) easily overcome. Nothing can conduce more to the calming of our spirits, when they begin to rise against such as are offensive to us, than to consider how obnoxious we have been and still are to the great God. (Psalm ciii. 10; cxxx. 3.) David's patience toward Shimei was admirable, when he cast stones at him and cursed him still as he went. No doubt, the consideration of the sins whereby he had provoked God, made him the more calm toward that vile wretch. (2 Sam. xvi. 6—10.)

USE III. *Rest not in this,—that you are not overcome of evil; but endeavour, as much as you can, to overcome evil with good.*—Do not your relations perform the duties of their place to you? Be you the more circumspect and diligent to perform the duty of yours to them. Are neighbours unkind to you? Let the law of kindness be in your

\* *Cor felle livoris amarum per linguæ instrumentum spargere nisi amara non potest.*—BERNARDUS. "A heart that is bitter with the gall of malice, cannot utter, by means of the tongue, aught but what is bitter."—EDIT. † *Nullum vindictæ genus tam in promptu habet, quàm hoc maledicendi.*—DAVENANTIUS. "No kind of revenge is so ready, as this of cursing."—EDIT.

mouth, and acts of kindness in your hands, to them. Do any hate you? Let your love work to overcome that hatred.\*

1. *Keep your hearts in a constant awe of God commanding you.*—When they draw back, as they will be apt to do, think of God standing by you, and saying, “Have not I commanded you?” (Joshua i. 9.) If others make no great matter of sinning against God, do you say, as Nehemiah, “But so will not I, because of the fear of God.” (Neh. v. 15.) This was it that kept Samuel to the duty of praying for a people that had dealt very unworthily by him. “As for me,” says he, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” (1 Sam. xii. 23.)

2. *Have much and often in your eye the great example of all goodness,—Christ, whose name you bear.*—He met with a great deal of evil from an unthankful world; yet he “went about doing good” still. (Acts x. 38.) How kind was he in word and deed to his greatest enemies to the very last! When Judas came to betray him, the worst word [that] he gave him was, *Friend*: “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Matt. xxvi. 50.) And when Peter, in zeal for his Master’s safety, had drawn, and cut off the ear of one of the officers that came to take him, “he touched his ear, and healed him.” (Luke xxii. 51.) “Consider Him,” therefore, “that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” (Heb. xii. 3.) If He whom you call “Lord and Master” did thus, should not you do so much rather? (John xiii. 14.)

To further you in this work, take these few considerations.

1. *By doing thus, you will show yourselves to be genuine Christians and truly spiritual.*—To “render evil for evil,” is “devilish;” (James iii. 14, 15;) *good for good*, something human, but no more than publicans used to do: but to render *good for evil*,—that is Christian: “What do ye more than others?” (Matt. v. 43—48.) “The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness.” (Eph. v. 9.) If, then, there be found in you such fruits of the Spirit as are mentioned, Gal. v. 22,—“Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,”—it will be a token that the good Spirit of Christ is in you.

2. *It will tend very much to the amplifying of the kingdom of Christ, and the bettering of the world.*—One great reason why Christianity hath made no greater progress in the world in latter times is, because Christians have not been so much conversant in this duty as they were in the primitive times.† The rendering evil for evil makes *the world* a doleful place; *a house*, a Bedlam for fury and disorder; *a city*, a wilderness for rapine and confusion; *a kingdom*, “a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof,” as was said of that, Num. xiii. 32. But to render good for evil tends to make the world

\* *Vis ut ameris? Ama.* “Love, if thou wishest to be loved.”—EDIT. † *Hæc illa virtus est quæ primitiva ecclesia excelluit, ac crevit ferendo, non resistendo; ad hanc quia redditus sumus inhabiles, res Christianismi in deterius ruunt indies.*—ARETIUS. “This is that virtue in which the primitive church excelled, and increased by suffering, but not by resisting: in consequence of our unskilfulness in this duty, the interests of Christianity are falling daily into a worse condition.”—EDIT.

a peaceable habitation, where God and men may delight to dwell. If this duty were more practised, "the wolf" would sooner "dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid;" as is prophesied, Isai. xi. 6.

3. *It is a sign that God hath more blessings in store, when he hath given a man a heart to perform this duty.* (2 Cor. xiii. 11.)—His "labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.) Beside the eternal reward in heaven, God doth usually give a temporal reward on earth. There is this encouragement given to afford bread to a hungry enemy,—that God will "reward" it. (Prov. xxv. 21, 22.) Saul was "among the prophets" when he presaged good to David for not suffering him to be hurt, when his spear was taken from him, while he lay sleeping: "Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail." (1 Sam. xxvi. 25.) It hath been observed, that such children as have been, without cause, discouraged by their parents, so as not to have a like share in their favour, nor a portion of their substance with the rest, and yet have continued every way dutiful to them, have been blessed by God above the rest; and such servants as have had hard and froward masters, and yet have continued diligent and faithful in their service, have been wonderfully prospered when they have set up for themselves.

4. *This is the most glorious way of overcoming others.*—It is God's and Christ's way: "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." (Hosea xi. 4.) What glory would it be to a man, that it should be said of him, (as Psalm ix. 6,) "Thou hast destroyed cities," if he himself be in the mean time destroyed by his own lusts? "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city."\* (Prov. xvi. 32.)

5. *Hereby you will keep a sweet serenity in your own spirits.*—There is not only "glory and honour," but "peace, to every one that worketh good." (Rom. ii. 10.) How was David transported with joy, when Abigail had been a means of keeping him from avenging himself with his own hand on Nabal and his house! His mouth was full of blessings: he blesseth the Lord God of Israel that sent her; he blesseth her, and blesseth her advice. (1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33.) Much more joy will flow in upon you, if you go farther, and "overcome evil with good." You will bless God heartily, who hath enabled you, against all temptations and your own natural inclinations to the contrary, to perform this excellent and most Christian duty, when you find in yourselves the joy that will attend it.

\* Ἐαυτον νικων μεγαυστη νικη.—ΠΛΑΤΟ. "To conquer one's self is the greatest victory."—EDIT.



SERMON XX.

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HOW MAY THE WELL-DISCHARGE OF OUR PRESENT DUTY GIVE US ASSURANCE OF HELP FROM GOD FOR THE WELL-DISCHARGE OF ALL FUTURE DUTIES?

*And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock : and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth : and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear : and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.—1 Samuel xvii. 34—37.*

*Wait on the Lord : be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart : wait, I say, on the Lord.—Psalm xxvii. 14.*

*The way of the Lord is strength to the upright : but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.—Proverbs x. 29.*

*And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin ; The Lord is with you, while ye be with him ; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.—2 Chronicles xv. 2.*

OUR reverend and worthy brother who hath the ordering of the Morning Lectures in this place, hath now and heretofore in great wisdom singled out many choice, select cases, relating to the mystery of practical godliness, and of singular use to all those who desire to know and feel more in themselves of the power of inward, experimental Christianity. Surely it is not for nothing that God should send to this auditory so many of his messengers, one after another, morning by morning, "rising up early and sending." (Jer. vii. 25.) "To whom much is given, of them much will be required." See that you improve these extraordinary means of grace.

The case that is fallen to my lot this morning is this ; namely, *How may the well-discharge of our present duty give us assurance of help from God for the well-discharge of all future duties ?*

This question hath two parts in it, and cannot be so well grounded upon a single text ; therefore I shall name three or four ; you may have your eye upon all : namely, 1 Sam. xvii. 34—37 ; Psalm xxvii.

14 ; Prov. x. 29 ; 2 Chron. xv. 2. I do not name these several scriptures as so many texts which I intend to preach upon, but as so many proofs of the truth of the point, that it is a case very agreeable to the scriptures and to the analogy of faith : and so I shall take it up, and for once preach common-place-wise upon it ; which was a way of preaching much in use in the last century and upwards by many eminent divines, and not without great success. Now we tie ourselves to single texts : then they preached upon such and such subjects, proving what they said by scripture ; and in this good old way I shall walk for once. Pray follow me with due attention.

This case or question may be resolved into two :—

I. *What our present duty is.*

II. *How the well-discharge of that may encourage us to hope in God for his help and assistance in all future duties.*

I. *What is our present duty?*—Before I define this, it will be necessary to speak something previous to it, which may help us much in this inquiry, and lead us, as it were, by the hand into a right understanding of our present duty. The steps I shall go by are these,—showing you,

1. *What “duty” is, in the general nature and notion of it.*—It is an act of obedience to the will of our superiors. God being our sovereign supreme Lord, Master, and Lawgiver, our duty lies in subjecting ourselves in all things to his will. Duty is that which is due from man to God : it is *justitia erga Deum*,\* it is “justice toward God.” We do not do God right, we rob him of his glory, if we do not do our duty. God knows, indeed, how to recover his right ; and the wrong [that] we do in sinning against him, will in the end redound to our own souls. (Prov. viii. 36.) Every sinner deals injuriously with God : he does not give “unto God the things that are God’s ;” (Matt. xxii. 21 ;) he withholds the obedience that is due unto God ; he will not be subject to his law ; he does not do his duty.

2. *Something is our present duty.*—God hath filled up all our time with duty : not one moment left at our own disposal. We must give an account to him of every thing we do in the body, from first to last : every day hath its proper works, “the things of itself.” (Matt. vi. 34.)

3. *Nothing that is sinful and in itself unlawful, can be our duty at any time ; and therefore, to be sure, not our present duty.*—This needs no proof.

4. *Every thing that is in itself lawful, is not therefore our duty.*—“All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient.” (1 Cor. vi. 12.) Whatsoever is not forbidden under a penalty, is lawful ; that is, whatsoever is not contrary to the rectitude of the law, and in the doing of which we incur no penalty from the law, *that* is lawful : but nothing properly is our duty, but what is commanded. What we have a command to do or not to do, the doing or not doing of that is our duty, as the command runs in the affirmative or negative. The

\* CICERO *De Naturâ Deorum*, lib. 1.

law strictly enjoins some things ; does tolerate and allow of some others of a more indifferent nature, which *in infimo gradu juris*, "in the lowest degree of legality," may be called "lawful ;" and yet circumstances may render our doing these things unlawful, when God is not glorified, nor our neighbour edified : "All things edify not." (1 Cor. x. 23.)

5. *Every thing that is commanded, and is in its time and place our duty, may not be our present duty.*—Affirmative commands do bind *semper*, but not *ad semper*, as negatives do. Affirmatives bind "always ;" that is, we can never be discharged from that obligation that lies upon us to worship God : but we are not bound "at all times" to the outward acts of worship ; for then we should do nothing else. Neither indeed are we bound at all times to inward acts of worship ; for in our sleep we do not act our grace. A disposition so to do, from an inward habit and principle, is all that God requires, when we are not in a capacity to act either grace or reason. Beside, positive commands must give place to a moral duty, because they will not justify our neglect of that. Hence on the sabbath-day we may and ought to lift our neighbour's ox out of the pit, (Luke xiv. 5,) and to perform any other act of necessary charity, notwithstanding that positive command to worship God upon that day.

6. *That which God now requires of you, and in doing of which you may most glorify God and edify your neighbour,—that is undoubtedly your present duty.*

QUESTION. "How shall we know this ?"

ANSWER I. *Always look within your calling for your present duty ; for there it lies.*—Do not go beyond your line : "Do your own business." (1 Thess. iv. 11.) We have different gifts and different talents, "according to the grace that is given to us." Let every one attend to that which God hath fitted him for, and called him to. (Rom. xii. 6—8 ; 1 Peter iv. 10, 11.) "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." (Prov. xiv. 8.) God hath appointed to every one his way of living in this world, from "the smith that bloweth the coals," (Isai. liv. 16,) to the king that sits upon the throne. That cannot be our duty which we are not called to. We are not absolute lords, to do what we list : no ; we are under command, and must obey. "I am one set under authority," says the centurion ; "I say unto my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." (Luke vii. 8.) God hath the supreme authority over us : we ought not to move one step but by his direction. Our calling is twofold :—

1. *General.*—As we are Christians ; so all saints are of the same calling : "Called to be saints." (Rom. i. 7.) We are all equally obliged to the duties of our Christian calling ; that is, to serve and worship God, to believe in him, to love and fear him, &c.

2. *Particular.*—So we differ in our callings. Some are called to the magistracy, some to the ministry ; some are masters, some servants ; some called to this, some to that, trade or occupation.

We are called to Christianity by the preaching of the gospel of Christ. We are called to some outward worldly calling by God's

special appointment in his law : "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work." (Exod. xx. 9.) Every man hath his work,—a full business which he must not neglect : he must do "all" his work. They "walk disorderly" who "work not at all," (2 Thess. iii. 11,) "living in pleasure" and wantonness, (James v. 5,) having nothing to do. Let all idle, voluptuous gallants consider this, who spend their days in mirth and jollity, scorn the thought of business : they must needs be far from their present duty, who are employed in nothing, or that which is worse than nothing. We are called to this or that employment by Providence. That we should be of some calling, is from the word ; that we are of this or that calling, is from Providence. Providence follows the word, and is a fulfilling of that, some way or other.

Much of the duties of our Christian calling do follow us into our particular callings. As duties of worship must be performed in our families every day, let our particular calling be what it will ; so the same graces must be exercised in our particular callings, which were required in our general callings : the same graces do follow us into our particular callings and into all the works of our hands. They who do not keep up duties of worship in their families, will be as remiss in all duties of practical holiness in their lives. They who are not frequent in prayer, are never eminent in holiness. And as no acts of worship, public or private, do please God, that are not performed in faith, and in the fear of God ; so no common acts of our lives are pleasing to God, if not done in faith, and seasoned with that inward exercise of grace that belongs to all the common actions of a Christian.

In showing you your present duty in your particular callings, I shall not insist so much upon duties of worship. You know them,—that prayer, reading the scriptures, meditation, and discourse of what you hear out of the word, are all duties ; and you know when they should be performed,—morning and evening, and as oft as your necessary occasions will permit. Whether you do them,—I must leave that to God and your own consciences. But the present duty [that] I would fix you in, is that of practical holiness, which is your constant duty every moment of the day. I would clear up this to you, and show you what it is, and where it lies ; that, if it be the will of God, you may be always found in it.

I say, then, that your present duty lies in a present exercise of grace, suitable to the present work and business in all its circumstances which you are at any time employed in. If you buy or sell, it must be in the fear of God ; if you marry, it must be in the Lord. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do," you must do it to God's glory ; (1 Cor. x. 31 ; ) which cannot be, if you do not act grace in every thing [which] you do. The true gospel-holiness of an action lies in that grace that goes along with it : it is grace only that turns an action heaven-ward and God-ward. You have no other way to fence yourselves from the temptations, snares, and sins that border upon all the works of your calling, but by keeping yourselves in a due

exercise of grace. Being "in the fear of the Lord all the day long," (Prov. xxiii. 17,) that is the way to "eschew evil, and to do good:" (1 Peter iii. 11 :) it is "the beginning of wisdom;" (Prov. ix. 10;) he acts like a fool who acts without it. "The fear of God" in scripture is put for all the graces of the Spirit; and in that sense I now press it upon you.

You see, your present duty lies in your present work, in the daily business of your particular callings. I suppose, your callings are lawful; that there are no stage-players, conjurers, diviners, astrologers, here. Those who are of such callings, their duty is to leave them, and to betake themselves to some honest employment consistent with grace; and then grace will help you out in it wonderfully. I could name some other callings that I would hardly advise a Christian to. But whatever lawful calling you are of, whatever office you bear, whatever relation you stand in,—as husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants,—whatever your trade, occupation, or employment is, there are particular duties proper to your callings, which cannot be performed but by a suitable exercise of grace, by which you show the respect [which] you have to God, in doing what you do, regulating and moderating yourselves and all your actions, by that rule of the word. You may do the works of your calling, and yet not do the duties of your calling. If you seek only yourselves, your own profit, pleasure, &c., this is not to serve God, but yourselves. You must do what you do in faith, as to the Lord; and then every thing you do will be an act of worship, because it carries in it a religious respect to the will of God.

Herein lies the nature of all practical holiness,—to do every thing after a godly sort. Whatever you are doing, be sure you be in the exercise of some grace: there can be no godliness without grace. Grace in exercise consists in the gracious actings of a holy soul, suitable to the matter or occasion that is before us for the exercise of such or such a grace. Or thus: grace in exercise lies in the various emanations of spiritual life, showing itself in suitable and seasonable actings, as the matter requires. The Spirit of God, dwelling in believers, hath a hand in every thing [which] they do as saints, and doth shape himself in them into that frame, into those holy passions and affections, that may best become a saint in such circumstances; that is, the Spirit does act these things in and by our souls, makes use of our faculties, lets out himself through our hearts, makes us to act so and so. The Spirit is said to "cry, Abba, Father," (Gal. iv. 6,) because it makes us to do so. For instance: if the matter between God and a soul be sin, the Spirit works faith in the blood of Christ, for our justification and pardon; works repentance and humiliation, brings us to self-denial, in order to the mortification of sin in our hearts and lives. If the matter be any lawful business that we are called to in the place and relation [which] we stand in, the Spirit directs us how to do it in the best manner, so as God may be most glorified. Grace in the heart guides the hand. The heart is the seat of all affections: the Spirit knows that man will act so and so, as he

stands affected; and therefore the Spirit sets the affections right for God, works in the heart a true love to God, a holy fear of God, a zeal for his glory. These gracious dispositions toward God follow a saint into all his employments, inclining him to holiness in all his ways.

**OBJECTION.** "Do you ministers take upon you to tell us what we must do in our callings? We have served an apprenticeship, and know better than you what belongs to our business."

**ANSWER.** Mistake me not: for the mystery of your craft, whatever it is, I meddle not with that; God has left you to your own reason and understanding, and so do I. The directions [that] I give you relate only to the religious manner of doing what you do; though I must tell you, it is God that "instructs you to discretion" in all worldly business. (Isai. xxviii. 26.) Whatever your skill and insight is in your calling, prayer may make you wiser: you may obtain a more excellent spirit in your way than you now have, if you seek it of God. (Exod. xxxv. 31—33.) Though you are left to the use of your reason as men, yet faith must go along with it as you are Christians. Therefore I shall show you how to put forth an act of reason in faith.

Some think they are never to make use of faith, but when reason fails them. It is true, in such cases faith is of singular use; Abraham found it so: yet God expects that in the ordinary course of our lives, in all common matters that pass through our hands, reason and faith should go together; for both have their distinct parts in all our ordinary undertakings: and faith is always superior to reason. Reason is subservient to that, as a handmaid, putting forth its utmost strength in all human endeavours, still leaving room for faith to deal with God for a blessing, that all may issue well at last.

**OBJECTION.** "How may we know when reason and faith go together?"

**ANSWER 1.** When, at our entrance upon any business, we seek wisdom and understanding from God, stirring up our reason by our faith, looking up to Him from whom "cometh every good and perfect gift," (James i. 17,) that He would "instruct us unto discretion."

2. When, in answer to faith and prayer, thoughts do come-in that clear up our way to us, and do put us into a right method, pointing out such probable means, inclining to such apposite counsel, as in a rational way tend to the expediting [of] that business [which] we are about. In this case reason owes its light to faith, and ascribes all its skill and discerning to God, who opens the eyes of our natural understandings, and causes the spirit of a man to move aright, in giving a true judgment of what is before us. Such an one can say, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." (Eccles. ix. 11.) "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." (Rom. ix. 16.) Therefore "let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." (Jer. ix. 23, 24.)

3. When, under the greatest assurances of our own reason, we yet live in a humble dependence upon God for success, knowing that God can come between us and our reason, and disappoint us; he can disjoint our counsels, and let-in his own will upon us, when we have laid things never so well together. God can spy a flaw in the best human contrivances, to overthrow all; he can smite us "between the joints and the harness," (1 Kings xxiii. 34,) and give us a mortal wound, when we think we are shot-free. Thus does God sometimes frustrate all man's preparations, turning his wisdom into foolishness, disappointing him in the height of his expectation: he looks for good; and, behold, evil comes. (Job xxx. 26.) *He* puts forth an act of reason in faith, *who* trusts to God, and not to his own reason. It is our duty to make use of it as men, though as Christians we ought not to trust in it.

ANSWER II. *Consider present providences.*—Though it is precept, not providence, that makes duty; yet providence points to duty, to the time and season of it. Much of our duty lies in complying with the opportunity and occasion that providence gives for the doing of this or that good work. "To every thing there is a season," and "every thing is beautiful in his time." (Eccles. iii. 1, 11.) The beauty of holiness lies in timing our duties aright. The godly man "bringeth forth his fruit in his season;" (Psalm i. 3;) *βραβυν σὺθρον*, "meet fruit;" (Heb. vi. 7;) that is, "apposite fruit," "fruit well-placed." What is done out of its place and proper season is not so comely and beautiful: "Do good as you have opportunity." If we would "reap in due season," we must sow in due season; (Gal. vi. 9, 10;) there is a fit season for both. We are never more obliged to our duty, than when we have the fittest opportunity to perform it: and we must eye Providence in this. It is the prerogative of God to appoint times and seasons, not only for his own purposes, but for our duty: he appoints the day, and the things of the day; what and when it shall be done. Should you order a servant to do a business to-day, and he should not do it till the next day, would you not count such an one a disobedient servant, because he observed not your time?

Those in the gospel came into the vineyard at the same hour [at which] they were called: they who were called at one hour, did not come in at another hour. (Matt. xx. 1—4.) A call of God to repentance loses much of its efficacy, if it be not presently complied with; the heart is hardened under it. It is true, God can renew his call; but the first is quite lost, if it be not presently obeyed. "They straightway left their nets, and followed him:" (Matt. iv. 20, 22:) this was a converting call. There are many calls to conversion that are not converting calls: man calls in God's name; but till God speak inwardly to the heart, all the preachers in the world cannot prevail with a sinner to come to Christ. Converting grace is a special providence toward the elect. I am now speaking of the call of common providence to common duties; I mean, such duties as God by his word hath annexed to such providences: "Is any among you

afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." (James v. 13.) Do the duty of thy present condition: keep time with God, because he keeps time with thee. He gives thee thy daily bread; then perform thy daily duty toward him.

ANSWER III. *Consult thy conscience.*—It is a proper judge of what thou hast done, and what thou shouldst do at this instant. Joseph found it so. (Gen. xxxix. 8, 9.) Conscience, in those who are enlightened, cannot easily step over a plain duty; it will stumble at it, and demur about it, does cast a look toward it. Though, by the violence of lust, a man may be hurried another way, yet conscience looks behind: there is a misgiving heart that tells him, "Thus and thus you ought to do." Hear thy conscience speak; it may show thee the right way, and turn thee into it. He is a profligate wretch indeed, who has no reverence for his own conscience: "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment." (Eccles. viii. 5.) Consult thy conscience in what thou art going about; if that startle, stop there, and consider well with thyself. Do not mistake a carnal objection for a scruple of conscience: under the light of the gospel, conscience is better instructed than to doubt of plain duties; all cases of conscience lie in more abstruse matters.

ANSWER IV. *Consider what present temptation thou art under.*—In the light [of] a present temptation, we may see what is our present duty. The devil sets against that, might-and-main: he cares not what we do, if he can keep us from our present duty. He will suffer us to put any thing in the room of that: you may read, pray, and meditate; the devil will allow of any thing but what we should do. He knows it is in vain to tempt some men to gross, scandalous sins; therefore he will reach a duty over the shoulder to them, to juggle out the present duty that lies before them. Take this for a rule; namely, It is always our duty to act in opposition to any present temptation: "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." (Prov. i. 10.) We do never more effectually resist any present evil, than by setting about that good thing that is contrary to it. When the devil sees his temptations have this contrary effect,—to awaken our zeal for God, and to stir us up to a more vigorous prosecution of our duty,—it is not his interest to go on in that temptation which he sees is such a provocation to holiness, and spurs us on the faster to our duty. The devil knows not this beforehand: his temptations are but trials and experiments that he makes, to see how we stand affected, and how they will take.

ANSWER V. *Consult with the word of God.*—Especially those scriptures that speak to the state and condition thou art in in the world; whether master, servant; parent, child; rich or poor. Gather up those texts, and be often reading them over to thy faith. Mingle them afresh every day with faith: carry them about you in your memory, or in a book fair-written, that you may often have your eye upon them; they will be "a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path." (Psalm cxix. 105.) You can never walk exactly in your place and sphere, if you do not walk by this rule; often coming to



the light, that you may see whether your works are wrought in God. Some Christians do many things, many good things, in the dark, or, at least, by a general scripture-light. Some confused notions they have, but no clear, distinct understanding, of their duty. In conversion there are general principles laid in, inclining us to all Christian duties, which, for want of searching the scriptures, we take up by guess: but a distinct, particular knowledge of these duties is an after-work, distinct from our first conversion. It is called "edification," or "building up," which makes us expert, skilful Christians. The scriptures are able to make "the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good" word and "work;" (2 Tim. iii. 17;) *ἄριστος πάντων ἔργων ἀγαθῶν ἐξηρτισμένος: ad omne opus bonum perfectè instructus, vel omnibus numeris absolutus*; "a man so skilled in all things appertaining to his duty, so exact in it, that nothing is wanting, nor nothing redundant." He does neither more nor less than God requires; he keeps close to the rule, puts-in all the spiritual ingredients that may give a duty its right season and savour.

ANSWER VI. *Devote thyself in sincerity to the fear of God, through the whole course of thy life.*—Let it be the full purpose of thy heart to cleave unto God, and to do whatever God shall convince thee to be thy duty. Labour to bring your hearts into such a holy frame, before you make a judgment of your present duty. Sincerity toward God does wonderfully enlighten us; it clears-up the eye of the soul, breaks through all prejudices, makes us judge impartially, according to truth. "Integrity and uprightness" will "preserve" us, (Psalm xxv. 21,) and "direct our way." (Prov. xxi. 29.) This I say: That man whose mind is thus set upon his duty, will not find it so difficult a matter to discern what is his present duty;—ordinarily he will not. In some extraordinary cases there may be more difficulty sometimes; but ordinarily it is otherwise. There is a secret guidance of God in this case: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them." (Prov. xi. 3.) There is a voice behind thee, a whisper from heaven, saying, "This is the way; walk in it." David took this course. First he resolves upon universal obedience: "I have said;" (Psalm cxix. 57, 8, 30, 32;) *אָמַרְתִּי Dixi; id est, in animo statuit apud se;*\* (so, verses 106, 112;) and then begs of God to order his steps, and tell him which foot he should put foremost; what he should do first, and what in the next place; how he should "order his conversation aright." (Verses 5, 35, 135.) If the devil finds you unfix'd and unresolv'd, untrusty and wavering, he will assault you with more violence. Resist him, and he flies from you; give back never so little, and he will come upon you with double force. Till we are thus sincerely fixed upon our duty, "standing perfect and complete in all the will of God," (Col. iv. 12,) resolving to do our duty wherever it lies;—till then, we shall be partial judges of our duty, very apt to single out the easiest and shortest duties, stepping over all the rest; we shall seek rather to please ourselves than God in the duty [which] we perform, and, leaning to a carnal judgment, do

\* "That is, he determined in his own mind."—EDIT.

what seems right in our own eyes ; and then, to be sure, we are wrong.

**OBJECTION.** "Though by these directions given, I may discern duty from downright sin ; yet I am at a loss how to distinguish between duty and duty ; between duty in season, and duty out of season. When two duties come together, and present themselves at once to my conscience, I cannot deny but they are both duties ; but which to do first, I know not."

**ANSWER.** If this be the doubt, consider whether the scripture hath not decided it. In some cases it hath, and upon such grounds as may help us in other cases to know our present duty ; as, Matt. v. 24 : "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." So, Matt. vii. 5 : "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye ; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." When the duty postponed by you does hinder the right performance of that other duty which you are going about, and render it unacceptable to God, then the second duty, as you have ranked them, must take place of the first, and be first done. Acts of worship cannot be done in faith toward God, where charity toward our neighbour is wanting. He doth not believe in God, who loves not his brother. (1 John iii. 10, 23.) And so, in the other case mentioned, it is gross hypocrisy to reprove another, when thou thyself art guilty in the same or a higher kind : "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam," &c. Beside, *he* cannot understand how to reprove another, *who* doth not first reform himself : the casting out [of] our own sins gives us light how to deal with others' : "Then shalt thou see clearly," &c.

**OBJECTION.** "But what if, after all this, it should so fall out, that two duties should press upon my conscience for present performance, and I cannot, either by reason or scripture, determine which to do first, but do hang in suspense, 'am in a strait betwixt two?'" (Phil. i. 23.)

**ANSWER.** This is hardly to be supposed : but, admit it to be thy case, according to thy present judgment ; then,

1. *Sit down once more, and consider.*—Weigh them both well, and hold the balance with a steady hand. I am persuaded, you may perceive some preponderancy on one side, that may direct you what to do, from some over-bearing circumstances that turn the scales. God is the God of order, and not of confusion : He does never command two inconsistent duties at the same time. The covenant is "ordered in all things ;" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5 ; ) and so must our conversations be, too ; (Psalm l. 23 ; ) else we "walk disorderly." Therefore, consider well, what pleases God most ; and for once leave out the relation to the present time, which thou art so much puzzled about ; and consider the nature of the duties themselves,—which of them is most spiritual, which of them the scripture lays most weight upon. For there is a difference between duty and duty ; all are not alike ; as "a broken and a contrite heart" is beyond all other sacrifices. (Psalm li. 16, 17.) God did require them too, but not without

this : both together do best ; but, of the two, he had rather have this alone, than the other alone without this. Outward offerings are never pleasing to God, when the heart goes not along with them. Be sure to mind that most which God is most pleased with.

2. If of two duties you cannot resolve which is most your duty at present, then *resolve upon both, and begin where you will.*—God will not be extreme in that case. Do one, and leave not the other undone, but be sure to find time for that also. When one duty doth quite take us off from the performance of another necessary duty that stood in competition with it, it is greatly to be suspected that there is a temptation then : but if you do both, one after another, you can err only in point of time and order ; and God will overlook that in a sincere Christian, who acts according to his present light, and would do that which God likes best, if he could understand his mind ; but, being not able to judge of that, he resolves upon both successively.

3. *Beg of God to resolve thee.*—“O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes !” (Psalm cxix. 5.) “Shall I go up to Hebron ? or shall I not ?” (2 Sam. ii. 1.) God will “teach” thee what to do. (Psalm xxv. 12.) “He shall direct thy paths.” (Prov. iii. 5, 6.)

## APPLICATION.

In some moving considerations, to quicken you to your present duty.

1. *All the sins of your lives break in upon you, through the omission of your present duty.*—Do but stop that gap, and keep it stopped ; and then there will be no room for sin. I speak not of those unavoidable infirmities that cleave to the saints under their most conscionable walking with God ; but of wilful neglects, that lie heavy upon the conscience, when God awakens it.

2. *Whatever you do in the room of a present duty, is not acceptable to God.*—“Not acceptable,” did I say ? That is too soft a word : it is an offence to him ; it is disobedience and rebellion. Though it be a duty, yet because it is not that duty that God now requires, you sin in doing it. Not that I would have Christians live always distracting in fear, lest what they do should not be their present duty. My meaning is,—when we neglect a known duty, which we are convinced of. But if we use means to know our duty, and do act according to our present light in what we do, we may have peace, and hope for acceptance.

3. *If you do not now perform your present duty, you can never perform it.*—Unless you could recall time, and make that present again which is past. Time passes away, and represents a man to God as he was at that instant : what he is the next, is another thing ; but that hour, that day, week, or year, which thou hast spent in the neglect of thy duty, stands upon record against thee, is irrecoverable. You must account for that ; and, without a pardon, you cannot escape the judgment of God. Mis-spent time is the treasury of God’s wrath ; and what a fiery day of wrath will that make at last, when God shall put all together, and sum up the sins of every day of thy

life, and reckon with thee for all at once, in the great day of his wrath; so much for such an idle hour, and so much for such an idle hour; so much for such and such a day spent in an ale-house, tavern, or brothel-house; so much for such a year and such a year,—it may be, for many years,—spent in open profaneness and all manner of debauchery! As you fill up your time with sin, God fills it up with secret wrath, which will be revealed one day. Time carries along with it all the things, good or evil, that are done in that time,—the neglect of a present duty. Leave that time void of the duty that belongs to it, and there is no going back to fill it up. As, for instance, if your present duty be prayer, if you do not pray *now*, you can never pray *now*. You may pray afterwards; but that does not answer to the present *now*: you may do the same duty for substance at another time, but it does not bear the same date. That hour in which thou dost omit any duty proper to it, will witness against thee, when that part of thy life comes under examination: have a care that time does not carry an evil report of you to God. There is a voice in time: “Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” (Psalm xix. 2.) Time past is present with God: he sees how it slips through thy fingers, how it is stained by thy sins. Time is ill-bestowed upon thee: it may provoke God to shorten thy days, and to cut thee off in the midst of thy years. (Psalm lv. 23.)

4. *You can have no trial of your spirit, nor of the truth of your state: it is impossible [that] you should ever prove your sincerity, but by a conscientious discharge of your present duty.*—The power of godliness lies much in this,—in having a respect to God in all our common actions. There can be no religion without this; and in this there is peace, true heart's ease: Psalm cxix. 45: בְּרִחְוָה in *ipsa latitudine* [“at liberty”]. When a man so walks that his conscience meets with nothing that offends it, that strikes against it, the way is broad enough, a plain path of duty; which is very satisfactory to conscience: but when the business is dark and doubtful, looks as much like sin as duty, a man cannot be at ease in this case. The way is very narrow; there is a grating upon the conscience; and after all the tricks, salvoes, and distinctions that may be used to justify what we do, we cannot have inward peace, whilst something always rubs against the conscience as we go.

5. *You cannot walk evenly with God, if you do not your present duty.*—One would wonder to see what broken forms of godliness some men rest in. They pick and choose, here a duty, and there another; this they will do, and this they will not do. Their religion is but a voluntary religion,—what they please, pure “will-worship.” (Col. ii. 23.) They will stint themselves, and stint God; so much he shall have, and no more. They draw up to themselves a scheme of religion, such as they think will serve the turn; and on they go in this round of duties: here they are now, and here you shall find them seven years hence. I am not against a method of practical godliness, provided it be comprehensive enough; but it is very dan-

gerous tying up ourselves to these narrow set-forms of practical holiness, which some men place all their religion in ; a step farther they will not go. Alas ! the providence of God may lead you to such duties which you thought not of, in doing or suffering for him. (John xxi. 18.) Therefore you should be in a readiness to comply with every call of God, standing complete in his whole will. Present obedience gives understanding for the future : " A good understanding have all they that do his commandments." (Psalm cxi. 10.) Let it be the purpose of your heart to walk before God " unto all well-pleasing ;" (Col. i. 10 ; ) and then your hearts will not reproach you while you live. (Job xxvii. 6.)

Some men walk very unevenly : there are so many gaps in their obedience ; they move from duty to duty *per saltum*, quite " leaping " over some, and lightly touching upon others, as if they had no great mind to any : they act grace so abruptly, that it gives no continued sense ; we know not where to find them. There are so many vacant spaces, so many blanks of omission, so many blots and blurs of commission : they drop a duty here, and another half-a-mile off ; [so] that you cannot say, " A man of God went this way." (1 Kings xiii. 12.) This is not even walking : their way is crooked, in and out ; sometimes they wander on the right hand, and sometimes on the left : they never touch upon the right path, unless it be in crossing the way from one sin to another ; which is rather to break through a duty than to perform it. Here is no beaten path of holiness, no continued track of godliness : they do not " always exercise " themselves to keep a good conscience. (Acts xxiv. 16.) They who are not frequent in duty, are never exact in duty ; their hearts cool so much between duty and duty, that there is no fervour of spirit left ; they are key-cold.\* Now and then they take up a Bible, read a little, dipping at a venture ; but are no way concerned in what they read ; they heed it not : now and then they hear a sermon, now and then pray, but without any life and spirit. They who pray but seldom, never pray well. *Actus perficit habitum* : " Frequent acts beget a habit, and frequent acts maintain it." We can never perfect holiness, but by a constant tenor in holiness, going on from day to day in the practice of it. Some trees,—though they bring not forth much fruit, yet that as is [brought forth], is the bigger and fairer. But it is not so in a Christian : the less you are in duty, the more lank and lean are your duties. As all graces grow up together in the heart, in an apt disposition to actual exercise, when occasion is given to draw them forth ; and as no grace in the heart grows up alone ; so no duty thrives in the life alone. One duty borrows strength from another, is bounded within another. As stones in a wall do bear up one another ; so a Christian is built up of many living stones, many graces, many duties. There is the same reason to do thy duty in one thing, as in another ; the same authority commands

\* *Lifeless* : formerly a common expression, now perhaps obsolete. A *key*, on account of the *coldness* of the metal of which it is made, was formerly, and even yet is, employed to stop a bleeding of the nose.—JOHNSON'S " Dictionary."

both. Unless you "have respect unto *all* the commandments," (Psalm cxix. 6,) you truly respect none.

6. *You must begin somewhere, at some present duty: why not at this?*—It will be as difficult, nay, more difficult, to come to Christ to-morrow, than it is to-day: therefore "to-day hear his voice, and harden not your heart." (Psalm xciv. 7, 8.) Break the ice now, and by faith venture upon thy present duty, wherever it lies: do what you are now called to. You will never know how easy the yoke of Christ is, till it is bound about your necks, nor how light his burden is, till you have taken it up. While you judge of holiness at a distance, as a thing without you and contrary to you, you will never like it. Come a little nearer to it; do but take it in, actually engage in it; and you will find, religion carries meat in its mouth; it is of a reviving nourishing, strengthening nature. It brings that along with it, that enables the soul cheerfully to go through with it. "Enter in at the strait gate:" (Matt. vii. 13:) you cannot judge of the way on this side [of] the gate. Most men stick at the strait gate: beg of God to draw thee through; to lift thee over the threshold, and set thee in the narrow way. As narrow as it is, yet none who enter in at the strait gate by a true and thorough conversion, did ever perish in the way. God will lead thee and sustain thee, and carry thee on to the end of thy race: "Be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself." (1 Kings ii. 2, 3.)

II. *How the well-discharge of our present duty may encourage us to hope in God for his help and assistance in all future duties.*

1. *It is promised.* (2 Chron. xv. 2.)—The cause of desertion is from ourselves. God shows mercy for his own sake, without any respect to any thing in us; but all acts of judgment and wrath take their rise from something in ourselves that provokes God to such severities. Therefore let us keep close to our present duty, and trust God, who has promised "never to leave us, nor forsake us." (Heb. xiii. 5, 6; Isai. xl. 31; Psalm lxxxiv. 11.) There is a special promise, to the seed of Abraham, of help and strength: (Isai. xli. 10:) but they who neglect their present duty, are greatly threatened. (Prov. i. 24—32; Psalm lii. 2—7.)

2. *Present grace is a pledge of future grace.*—To him that hath, more shall be given: (Luke xix. 17, 26:) where God begins a good work, he will finish it. (Heb. xii. 2; Phil. i. 6. So Psalm xxv. 3, 10, 14; Matt. x. 19, 20; Judges xiii. 23.) "The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil." (2 Thess. iii. 3.)

3. *The experience of the saints confirms this.*—See Psalm xviii. 26, 30—32. It was some such thing as this that David had. (Psalm cxix. 56.)

4. *The saints made this an argument in prayer.*—See Psalm xxxviii. 20—22; cxix. 30, 31, 94, 121, 173; xxv. 21.

5. *A conscientious discharge of our present duty fits and disposes our minds to the next duty.*—As there is a concatenation of sins, so of duties; as one sin leads to another, so one duty leads to another: the breach of one commandment is virtually the breach of all. (James ii. 10; 1 John iv. 20.) As there is a “revolting more and more,” (Isai. i. 5,) a “proceeding from evil to evil,” (Jer. ix. 3,) “waxing worse and worse;” (2 Tim. iii. 13;) so a godly man goes from grace to grace, from faith to faith, from strength to strength. (Job xvii. 9.) Therefore “in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Prov. iii. 6.) A man cannot act his faith upon God for future preservation, but in the discharge of his present duty. “Commit the keeping of thy soul to Him in well-doing,” (1 Peter iv. 19,) and then you will “find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. iv. 16.)

6. *By the well-discharge of our present duty, we may attain assurance of salvation.* (Col. iii. 23, 24.)—It is Paul’s motive to Timothy, when he stirs him up to his present duty. (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 5, 8.) As if he had said, “I am Paul the aged, who have one foot in the grave; (verse 6;) but you are a young man, Timothy. You are putting on your armour; but I am putting off mine. ‘I have finished my course,’ and ‘kept the faith:’ I have discharged the duty of my place, and by that means gained assurance of my salvation. ‘Henceforth is laid up for me,’” &c. He dates his full assurance from that time, as the happy result of a well-spent life; and exhorts Timothy to tread in his steps, to “make full proof of his ministry:” “Fight on, Timothy, and fear nothing, that in the end of thy days thou mayest have a comfortable sight of that crown of righteousness which I am sure of.” Therefore let us all, “by patient continuance in well-doing, wait [seek] for eternal life.” (Rom. ii. 7.)

These are the scripture-grounds of hope for the time to come, that God will help us, and stand by us, and “strengthen us with might in our inward man,” giving us a sufficiency of grace answerable to all the occasions [that] we may have for it.

**OBJECTION.** “May not saints fail in future duties?”

**ANSWER.** They may and do fail; and when it is so, their former neglects have no small influence upon their present miscarriage. But though they may fall, yet God “upholdeth them with his hand,” that they do not fall utterly; (Psalm xxxvii. 23, 24;) God gives them a heart that cannot totally depart from him. (Jer. xxxii. 40.)

#### APPLICATION.

You see how “the way of the Lord is strength to the upright.” (Prov. x. 29.) He that is a doer of the word, is like a house built upon a rock, which may be shaken, but will never fall. (Matt. vii. 24, 25.) “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.” (Prov. xiv. 26.) A saint, when he relies upon God for help to perform his present duty, does not say, as Samson did, “Strengthen me only this once;” (Judges xvi. 28;) but promises to “trust in God at all times” hereafter, (Psalm lxii. 8,) to come again and again for help, as often as

there is need. Every single act of faith implies an universal trust reposed in God for all things at all times. He that doth not trust God for every thing, cannot trust in him for any thing; because there is the same reason for one act of faith as for another. You must bear upon God's infinite power, wisdom, and grace, in every act of faith. God is always the same in himself: if you can believe in him now, why not for ever? What should discourage you hereafter, that may not be objected now? You have nothing now to object; therefore conclude with David, that "goodness and mercy shall follow thee all the days of thy life." (Psalm xxiii. 6.) He that hath "delivered, will deliver." (1 Sam. xvii. 37.) Not that the doing a present duty does merit assistance for the future; but God, for our encouragement in well-doing, hath graciously promised it. This is a great motive to quicken us to our present duty.

O that every one of you would go home from this sermon, and set upon your present duty! You that are masters of families, take up Joshua's resolution, and say every one of you in the presence of God this day, that "I and my house will serve the Lord." (Joshua xxiv. 15.) Fly all appearance of evil; declare against every thing that looks like sin; let there be no lying, swearing, drunkenness, or any sort of profaneness, countenanced by you. Be zealous reprovers in your own gates, and walk within your houses with a perfect heart. Live in a continual fear of offending God; beg of him upon your knees to put you into such a daily exercise of grace as may be most suitable to your present circumstances. Grace will help you at every turn. If you thrive in your calling, grace will teach you to give God the praise, and to be thankful: if you sink and go backwards, grace will teach you quietly to submit; how to bear with cheerfulness all disappointments and losses [that] you meet with; how to receive evil, as well as good, from God. (Job ii. 10.) Truly a man without grace is a burden to himself and to every body else: he knows not how to receive good or evil, is in danger to be undone by one as well as the other. The prosperity of the wicked "slays them:" (Prov. i. 32:) "their table becomes a snare to them; and that which should have been for their welfare, a trap." (Psalm lxi. 22.) They will run themselves a-ground, one way or other, and come to nothing at last: God will "turn their way upside down," and bring confusion upon them. (Psalm cxlvi. 9.) But "verily there is a reward for the righteous." (Psalm lviii. 11.)

What I am pressing you to, is your present duty; what is past cannot be recalled. Your present duty is to repent of past sins, and to walk with God in your callings for the time to come. Be upright in your way; admit nothing into your particular callings that is inconsistent with the principles of your general calling, as you are Christians. So carry yourselves, every one of you, that all that deal with you may know you are a real Christian. Were there a greater savour of grace and of the power of godliness in your shops; did you buy and sell in the fear of God, doing all things in faith, as to the Lord, as in his sight, conversing with others in the fear of God; what



a comely sight would this be! what a sermon would this be! You would be living "epistles" of that, seen and "read of all men;" (2 Cor. iii. 1, 2;) and such sermon-notes, gathered out of the lives of professors may make deeper impressions than those that are gathered out of the mouths of preachers. Godliness, exemplified in practice, shows itself more clearly in the thing, than it is possible for us to do in words. Words convey notions of things to our ears; but a holy life holds forth the things themselves to our eyes. Nothing is so like a man as himself. Godliness in practice is godliness itself, extant in the thing, in its own substance and nature; it is visible grace; it is the very matter and subject of our sermons, standing forth in the lives of professors.

I wish we had more of this divinity walking about our streets, more of these living "epistles," seen and "read of all men." These are the books that will convince gainsayers, and provoke them to real holiness. You hear good sermons, and read good books; but doctrines without examples edify little. You do not see and read *that* in the men of this generation, that agrees with gospel-principles. The truth is,—saints are not so visible, so legible, as they should be: we can hardly spell out any thing that savours of true Christianity. It would pose a discerning Christian, to pick out grace out of the lives of some professors: it is couched under such sinful mixtures, is in such a worldly dress, that it does not look like itself. Hence it is, that many real saints go for hypocrites in this world; are suspected by good men, and hated by bad men, upon this account. Let your light shine out more: away with the bushel that keeps-in the light; and take the lantern of prudence, that only keeps out the wind. Christian prudence will direct us in the right performance of our duty; but true Christian prudence never takes us quite off from our present duty. That is hellish policy, not Christian prudence, that distinguishes a man quite out of his duty, and pretends to give sufficient reason for it, too. But God will catch that man in his own craftiness, and turn his wisdom into foolishness.

There can be no reason given against a present duty. If it be duty, and thy duty now, reason cannot countermand it: you may go to hell, with all your reasons, in a wilful neglect of it. But if God incline your hearts every day to make conscience of your present duty, you will be always found in a holy frame, and the blessing of God will be upon you. You will "flourish like the palm-tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon; bringing forth fruit in old age." You will always "be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright." (Psalm xcii. 12—15.)

## SERMON XXI.

BY THE REV. VINCENT ALSOP, A.M.

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WHAT DISTANCE OUGHT WE TO KEEP, IN FOLLOWING THE STRANGE FASHIONS OF APPAREL WHICH COME UP IN THE DAYS WHEREIN WE LIVE ?

*And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.—Zephaniah i. 8.*

THAT this prophecy was synchronal with the reign of good Josiah, appears, verse 1 : and a heinous aggravation it was of Judah's sin, that they were unreformed under a reforming prince. Of *him* it was said, that "there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses ; neither after him arose there any like him." (2 Kings xxiii. 25.) Of *them* it may be said, that there was no generation that turned from the Lord, that departed from the law of their God, before them ; though afterwards there were that equalled, or exceeded, their wickedness.

The prophet, therefore, without the solemnity of a preface, immediately proceeds to sentence : "I will utterly consume all things from off the land." (Zeph. i. 2.) And how could more of wrath be expressed in fewer words ? "Consumption," and "utter consumption," and "utter consumption of all things," is certainly the abstract and epitome of final and total desolation. To silence all objections that might be made against this righteous sentence of God, the Lord commands : "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God : for the day of the Lord is at hand : for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath invited his guests." (Verse 7.) 1. Judah was to be the *sacrifice*. They that would not offer a sacrifice of righteousness, shall be made a sacrifice to justice. 2. The armed Babylonians were to be the *priests*. 3. And the rabble of their enemies were to be the hungry *guests* ; who would not spare, but glut themselves with the spoil of Judah ; to teach them, (and us in them,) that if God be not sanctified in the hearts, he will be on the heads, of a people professing his name. (Lev. x. 3.)

Now in this "day of the Lord's sacrifice," however the main of the storm and hurricane would fall on the heads of the idolaters, and those "that swear by the Lord and Malcham ;" (verse 5 ;) upon all the apostates, and such as shook off the worship of God ; (verse 6 ;) yet some drops of the storm, a skirt of the shower of vengeance,

would light on a sort of second-rate sinners, "such as were clothed with strange apparel." Or if the sinners were the same, yet this sin would be accumulative; and when the ephah is brim-full, one single drop more will make it run over.

In the words, you may observe, 1. *The criminals*; 2. *The crime*; 3. *The punishment*.

1. *The criminals*.—And they were either, (1.) *The principals*: "The princes, and the king's children;" or, as the Septuagint render it, *Τους αρχοντας, και τον οικον του βασιλεως*, "The rulers, and king's household;" that is, the magistrates, nobles, and judges of the land; who, as they were lifted up above the level of the commonalty, ought to have gone before them in all examples of sobriety and gravity; whereas now their levity in what was decent and grave, and their affectation of what was novel and vain, had drawn the people into a participation of the same sin, and obnoxiousness to the same punishment, with themselves. (2.) *The accessories* were "all such" (of what order, rank, degree soever they were) "as were clothed with strange apparel."

Whose sin was the greater, and whose punishment should be the heavier, was of more difficult determination. For the grandees would plead, that some latitude was to be indulged there, in respect of their quality and character; and the inferior sort would argue, that they did but write after the copy set them by their betters. But leave we them to quarrel and debate the point among themselves; both are included in the same condemnation; and it may safely be referred to the Divine Justice, to admeasure out vengeance in proportion to their respective aggravations.

2. *The crime*.—To be "clothed in strange apparel," *מְלִבְּשׁ נְכָרִי*. The Septuagint render it, *ενδυματα αλλοτρια* which may denote, either, (1.) *Exotic and foreign apparel*: such as they fetch far, and [have] bought dear in the price, and must pay much dearer for in the punishment, when justice shall call them to a reckoning. The Jews are noted for a people exceeding fond, even to dotage, of foreign vanities,—foreign wives, foreign worship, and foreign gods too. We read that Ahaz chanced to spy an altar at Damascus that hugely pleased his humour; (God's altar at Jerusalem was a plain piece; but this, a rare specimen of curious art;) and he "sends to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof." (2 Kings xvi. 10.) For if a prince has an itch to innovate in or make a change of his religion, a priest will easily be found that shall justify it,—that the pattern of Damascus is far beyond the pattern in the Mount; and that a model *secundum usum Syriæ*, is more decent and august than one *secundum usum Salem*. Or, (2.) It may denote *such as they had newly invented among themselves*: for they had fruitful, inventing heads, (though barren hearts,) which could conceive a vanity, and bring forth a lie, as soon as the most sickly soul could long for it. (Job xv. 35.)

This "strange apparel" (whether native or foreign) might be so

for the matter, or for the form. Light minds, constant in nothing but inconstancy, would always be varying either the stuff or the shape, the ground or the trimming; and it had been as easy to make a coat for the moon, as to have fitted the fickle humour of that unstable generation. And indeed, at last they had got their עֵקֶל יָרֵךְ, "round tires like the moon;" (Isai. iii. 18;) the liveliest emblem of uncertain, desultory fancies that could have been invented.

3. *The punishment.*—Which is indefinitely expressed: "I will punish:" but how, or in what way, degree, or measure, he will punish, he reserves to himself. As there is not a greater threatening, than for God to promise an impenitent people that he will not punish them; so it looks very angrily, when God threatens to punish, but conceals the manner of the execution: as if it must needs be some "strange" punishment that God would invent on purpose for "strange apparel;" or some curse not written in God's book, that must fall on the heads of such a vertiginous and giddy people.

The crime, then, you have heard; the criminals you have seen; the punishment must be understood. In the mean time, from this text a fair occasion is offered to propose and answer this

#### QUESTION.

*What distance ought we to keep in following the strange fashions of apparel which come up in the days wherein we live?*

That the present generation is lamentably intoxicated with novelties, and as sadly degenerated from the gravity of some former ages, can neither be denied, nor concealed, nor defended, nor, I fear, reformed. And, what is more deplorable, some that wear the livery of a stricter profession, are carried away with the vanity; and even "the daughters of Zion" have caught the epidemical infection. (Isai. iii. 16.) And this has made this question, though *in re tenuis*,\* to be of great importance: to which, yet, before I can give a direct and distinct answer, I must crave your patience, that I may lay down these preliminaries:—

1. That it is exceeding difficult to fix and determine upon the *minimum quod sic*, "the lowest degree" of conformity to these new fashions, "which is sinful;" and the *maximum quod non*, "the highest degree" of conformity to them, "which is not sinful." And that, because the decision of the point depends on many nice circumstances, which must all be duly weighed: and if the scales be not exact and true; the hand that holds them, steady; the eye that judges, clear; it will be impossible to form a judgment in the case.

2. That therefore Satan has herein the greater advantage to overreach us, our own hearts to betray and deceive us, because it is easy to slide insensibly from the lawful to the unlawful, when it is so hard to discern, to a hair's-breadth, where the one ends, and the other begins.

3. That pride will be sure to perplex and entangle the controversy. For, seeing a haughty heart will never confine its licentiousness to the

\* "Though in reality of little consequence."—EDIT.

narrow rule of God, it must widen the rule, and stretch it to its own extravagancies. That lust which scorns to bow its crooked practices to the straight rule, will not fail to bend the rule, if possible, to its own crooked practices: for it is very uneasy to sit in the stocks of a man's own conscience.

4. That there may be some danger, as well as much difficulty, in the determination; since the universality of the corruption, like a deluge, has overspread the face of the earth, and interest is taken into the confederacy; with whom to combat, is an unequal contention. Pride and profit, glory and gain, have their distinct concerns in this controversy: and to decry the silver shrines of Diana, by which so many craftsmen get their livings, must raise a heavy outcry against the opponent. (Acts xix. 23—27.) And when obtaining custom shall second and back these corruptions, he must have *robur et æs triplex circa pectus*,\* a very hardy spirit, that shall dare to cross the stream or stem the current of a prevailing luxuriancy. So that, to have a finger in this ungrateful debate, must engage him in Ishmael's fate,—to have every man's hand lifted up against him; seeing it is unavoidable, that his hand must be set almost against every man. (Gen. xvi. 12.)

5. That yet charity will lend us one safe rule,—that we impose a severer law upon ourselves, and allow a larger indulgence to others. The rule of our own conversation should be with the strictest; but that by which we censure others, a little more with the largest. For thus has the apostle taught us to proceed in things which in their own nature are indifferent. (Rom. xiv.)

6. Prudence will also afford us another excellent rule:—in dubious cases to take the safer side; not to venture too near the brink of a precipice, when we have room enough to walk secure at a greater distance. For, seeing the best that can be said of and pleaded for many of our fashions is, that in themselves they are adiaaphorous, which yet in their common use are sinful; it becomes a Christian to be cautious, and practise only that which is confessedly innocent and inoffensive. For he that will always do what may lawfully be done, shall sometimes do what is unlawful to be done.

7. A humble heart, crucified to the world, and making a conscience of its baptismal covenant, whereby it stands engaged to renounce the pomps and vanities of a wicked world, with all fomentations of and incitations to the flesh, will be the best casuist. Mortification would cut up the controversy by the roots, cure the disease in the cause, and cleanse the stream in the fountain. Nor can any determine for another, so well as he that is true to his soul might for himself.

8. That yet there are some modes of apparel, which so notoriously cross the ends of all apparel, so inconsistent with the rule of decency, so apparently transgressing the bounds of modesty, that no pretence

\* HORATI *Carm.* lib. i. od. iii. 9.

“Or oak, or brass, with triple fold,  
Around his daring bosom roll'd.”—FRANCIS'S Translation.

of an honest intention, no uprightness of heart, can atone [for] or excuse the evil of wearing them. As if, for instance, a garment was made of silk, wrought in such figures as did imitate the pictures of Aretine, and represent nakedness in all the most obscene and filthy postures; the use of such raiment would be a gross abuse, nor could any internal chastity alleviate the guilt of the outward immodesty.

9. Though some modes of apparel can never be well used, there are none but may be ill used: none so good, but they may become bad; though some so bad, that they never can be made good. And the reason of the difference is, because *bonum oritur ex integris, malum e qualibet defectu*; "all circumstances must concur to render a practice lawful; when the want of any one which ought to be present is enough to render it sinful."

10. Though sumptuary laws may justly be made, to retrench the excesses, yet none can lawfully be enacted, to compel men in the defects, of apparel. A law may say, "Farther thou shalt not go;" but not, "Thus far shalt thou go." And the reason is:—they that can reach the standard assigned by the law, may lawfully abate at the command of authority; when, perhaps, some cannot reach the lowest pitch without trenching upon their purses or consciences.

Having premised these things, I re-assume the question: *What distance ought we to keep, in following the strange fashions of apparel that come up in the days wherein we live?*

The resolution of which question will depend,

I. On an impartial inquiry, *wherein the sinfulness of apparel does lie.*

II. On some directions, *how to walk at a due distance from these strange fashions, that we partake not of the sin that may be in them.*

I. Let us, then, in the first place, *inquire, wherein the sinfulness of apparel does lie.*—And that difficulty will be best assailed by a further inquiry into these four particulars:—

(I.) *For what ends God appoints, and nature requires, apparel.*

(II.) *What is the rule of decency to regulate apparel?*

(III.) *From what inward principles these outward modes are taken up.*

(IV.) *What effects these fashions have, or may have, on ourselves or others.*

(I.) Let us, then, inquire, *for what ends God appoints, and nature requires, apparel.*—In the state of innocency and primitive integrity, nakedness was man's richest clothing. No ornament, no raiment, was ever since so decent as then was no-ornament, no-raiment. For as there was then no irregular motion in the soul, so neither was there any in the body, that might dye the cheeks with a blush, or cover the face with shame: "They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen. ii. 25.)

But when they had once violated the covenant, and broken the law of their Creator, shame, the fruit and daughter of sin, seized their souls, and that in respect of God, and of each other: which latter

chiefly (as I conceive) to hide, the best expedient [that] their confused and distracted thoughts could pitch upon was, to stitch together a few fig-leaves, to make themselves aprons; till God, commiserating their wretched plight, provided better covering, more adequate to the necessity of nature, more comporting with decency; that is, "coats of skins." (Gen. iii. 7, 21.)

Wherein the Divine Wisdom so admirably contrived it, 1. That their apparel might *serve as a standing memorial of their demerits*.—That they might carry about them the continual conviction of their sin and the deserved punishment. For what less could they infer, than that they deserved to "die the death," when the innocent beasts must die, to preserve and accommodate their lives? 2. That their apparel might *direct their weak faith to the promised Seed*.—In whom they might expect a better covering, and from a greater shame,—that of their filthiness in the sight of God: in Him, I say, whom those beasts, probably slain in sacrifice, did typify. For that any were slain merely on the account of food before the flood, is not probable; when yet the distinction between the clean and unclean, on the account of sacrifice, is demonstrable. (Gen. vii. 2.)

Now God appoints, and nature (frail, faded nature) requires, apparel,

1. *To hide shame, to cover nakedness*.—That our first parents and their posterity, in their exile from Paradise, might not become a perpetual "covering of the eyes" and shame to each other. Whence it will follow,

(1.) That whatever apparel, or fashions of apparel, do either cross or not comply with this great design of God, [they] must be sinfully used.

(2.) That as any apparel, or fashions of apparel, do more or less cross or not comply with this end, they are proportionably more or less sinful.

But our semi-Evites, aware of danger, from these conclusions, to their naked breasts, will readily reply, that this will be of no great use to decide this controversy, because it is not clear, (1.) What parts of the body it is [which] God has appointed apparel to cover; nor, (2.) Which of them may be uncovered without shame; seeing that some, as the hands, the face, the feet, may be naked, without sin to ourselves or offence to others. To which I answer,

(1.) That the use of the parts, and their destined ends, are to be well considered in this case. The use of the face is chiefly to distinguish, (i.) *The sex*: the male from the female; (ii.) *The individuals*: one person from another. The use of the hands is, that they may be instruments for work, business, and all manual operations.

(2.) That to cover or muffle-up those parts ordinarily, whose ends and use require to be uncovered, is to cross God's end and design, and, by consequence, sinful.

(3.) That to uncover those parts promiscuously, and expose them ordinarily to open view, for which there can be no such good ends and uses assigned, is sinful. For the general law of God must always

take place, where the special use of a particular part requires not the contrary.

(4.) And therefore all apparel, or fashions of apparel, which expose those parts to view, of which exposing God and nature have assigned no use, is sinful. It is true, I confess, our first parents, in that hasty provision which they made against their shame, took care only for aprons: but God—who had adequate conceptions of their wants, and what was necessary to supply them; of the rule of decency, and what would fully answer it—provided for them coats; that so the whole body (except as before excepted) might be covered, and its shame concealed.

2. Another end of apparel was, *to defend the body*, (1.) *From the ordinary injuries of unseasonable seasons*; (2.) *The common inconveniencies of labour and travel*; (3.) *The emergent accidents that might befall them in their pilgrimage*.—For the fall of man had introduced excessive heats and colds; they were driven out of Paradise, to wander and work in a wilderness, now overgrown with briars, thorns, and thistles,—the early fruits of the late curse; and clothes were assigned them in this exigency for a kind of defensive armour. Hence we read, that “Saul armed David with his own armour; and he armed him with a coat of mail.” (1 Sam. xvii. 38.) In the Hebrew it is: “Saul clothed David with his clothes; and he clothed him with a coat of mail.” And the word there used, *שָׁרָא* is of near cognation with that in my text, *לְבָשָׁא*. Hence, therefore,

(1.) Whatever modes of apparel comply not with this gracious end of God, in defending our bodies from those inconveniencies, are sinfully worn and used.

(2.) That it is a horrid cruelty to our frail bodies, to expose them to those injuries against which God has provided a remedy, to gratify pride, or to humour any vanity. And however our gallants hope to keep themselves warm, and to shelter their sin, under the screen of their own foolish proverb, “Pride feels no cold;” yet God has oftentimes made their sin to become their punishment, whilst, by an obstinate striving with the inconveniences of an ill-contrived mode, they have hazarded, if not lost, their healths, if not their lives, by a ridiculous compliment to some new fashion. But how they will stand before the righteous judgment-seat of God, when he shall arraign and try them as guilty of self-murder, in the great day of scrutiny, they may do well timely to advise upon and consider.

3. To these I may add, that when God made man his first suit of apparel, he took measure of him by *that employment which he had cut out for him*.—Man’s assigned work was labour; not to eat the bread of idleness, but first to earn it in the sweat of his face; which, though at first it was a curse, is by grace converted into a blessing. And accordingly God so adapted and accommodated his clothes to his body, that they might not hinder readiness, expedition, industry, diligence, and perseverance in the works of his particular calling. Hence these things will be exceeding plain:—

(1.) That God, having appointed man to labour, cannot be sup-



posed to have made any provision for, or given the least indulgence to, idleness. Intervals for rest,—to redintegrate the decayed spirits,—cessation for a season from hard labour, God allows, and nature requires: but exemption from a particular calling, or any dispensation for sloth in that calling, we find none.

(2.) That God having suited clothing in all its forms and shapes so to the body, that they prejudice him not in the works of his particular calling; whatever fashions of apparel do incommode him therein, and render him unfit or less fit to discharge the duties of it, are so far sinfully used.

(3.) That, therefore, they who, by unmerciful lacing, girding, bracing, pinching themselves in uneasy garments, can scarce breathe, less eat, and least of all labour, do apparently offend against this end of God; and it is but just, that they who will not, or create an impotency that they cannot, work, should not eat, nor long breathe in the earth, whereof they are unprofitable burdens.

Plato calls the body, “the prison of the soul;” (*σωμα quasi σπηλαιον*) and some have made the clothes the prison of the body; wherein they are so cloistered, so immured in the cage and little-ease of a pinching fashion, that the body is made an unprofitable servant to the soul, and both of them to God. In the declining times of the Roman commonwealth, this vanity began to obtain, and is smartly noted by the comedian, as the folly of mothers:—

*Quis matres student*

*Demissis humeris esse, victo pectore, ut graciles sient.*

*Si qua est habitior paulò, pugilem esse aiunt; deducunt cibum:*

*Tametsi boni est natura, reddant curaturá junceus.*

TERENTII *Eunuchus*, act. ii. sc. iii. 20.\*

But thus has pride brought many to their coffins, who, after an uneasy life, spuu out in more pain with doing nothing than they had found in labour, after a few tedious days worn out in asthmas, catarrhs, consumptions, and phthisics, could never get freedom from the confinement of their clothes, till their souls had procured a gaol-delivery from their bodies. However, they cannot justly complain of Providence, who gave them their option, and left them to their own desires,—“rather to be out of the world, than out of the fashion.”

4. There is yet another end of apparel; namely, *the adorning of the body*.—And in this all our wanton fashionists take sanctuary. Out of which that I may force them, or (so far as is sober and moderate) indulge them, I shall first premise a few observations, and then lay down some conclusions.

(1.) Let these few things be *premised*:—

(i.) That ornamentals, strictly taken as distinct from useful garments, do not come under the same appointment of God with neces-

\* “Their mothers try to keep their shoulders down,  
And bind their bosoms, that their shapes may seem  
Genteel and slim. Is a girl rather plump?  
They call her ‘nurse,’ and stint her in her food.  
Thus art, in spite of nature, makes them all  
Mere bulrushes.”—COLMAN’S Translation.

sary clothing. For, First. It is ordinarily sinful to wear no apparel ; but not so, to wear no such ornaments. Secondly. The necessity of nature requires the one ; but no necessity or end of nature requires the other. God's ends, and nature's occasions, may be secured, and answered to the full, without these additional. Ornaments, then, are rather matter of indulgence, than precept ; of permission, than injunction.

(ii.) That plain, simple apparel, as it is a real, so it is a sufficient, ornament to the body. For if nakedness be our shame, apparel that hides it, is so far its beautifying and adorning. When, therefore, we say, " God gave clothes for an ornament," we do not say that he gave ornaments distinct from clothing.

(iii.) That ornaments are either natural or artificial :—*Natural* : such as nature has provided ; as the hair, given by God and nature to the woman, to be her " glory, and for her covering." (1 Cor. xi. 15.) *Artificial* : such as are the product of ingenuity and witty invention. In which, as God has been not illiberal, so man has been very prodigal ; and, not content with primitive simplicity, has " sought out many inventions." (Eccles. vii. 29.)

(iv.) It is evident, that God allowed the Jews the use of artificial ornaments, as distinct from necessary apparel : " Aaron said unto the people, Break off the golden ear-rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And when Moses saw that the people were naked ; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies ; ) then Moses stood," &c. (Exod. xxxii. 2, 25.) It seems, then, that to be stripped of their ear-rings was in some sense to be " made naked," to be exposed to shame in the sight of their enemies.

(v.) That yet there was some difference between the indulgence granted to the male, and that to the female, sex. And this Dr. Fuller observes from the order and placing of the words, " wives, sons, daughters ;" intimating that those sons were in their minority, " under covert-parent," as he explains it : \* and so much seems to be implied in Isai. lxi. 10 ; where we find indeed the bridegroom's " ornaments," but only the bride's " jewels ;" as if the masculine sex was restrained to a more manly and grave sort of ornaments, whereas the female was allowed a greater degree of finery and gallantry. And when God permitted the Jewish women to borrow of their neighbours and inmates " jewels of silver, and jewels of gold," the use was limited to their " sons and daughters," and grown men [were] not considered : (Exod. iii. 22 :) which is also evidently inferred from Judges viii. 24, where the army conquered by Gideon are said to have worn " golden ear-rings ; for they were Ishmaelites ;" clearly implying, that their golden ear-rings were an ornament peculiar to the Ishmaelites, and not common to the Israelites.

(vi.) That though there might be something typical or symbolical in the jewels worn by the Jewish women, (as I conceive there was,) yet the use of them was of common right to the females of other

\* " Pisgah-Sight of Palestine."

nations ; as, indeed, they were of ordinary use long before the Jewish polity was settled : “ The man took a golden ear-ring of half a shekel weight,” a quarter of an ounce, “ and two bracelets for her,” Rebecca’s, “ hands of ten shekels weight,” five ounces. (Gen. xxiv. 22.)

(2.) These things premised, I lay down these CONCLUSIONS :—

CONCLUSION I. *Whatever pretends to ornament, which is inconsistent with modesty, gravity, and sobriety, and [with] whatever is according to godliness, is no ornament, but a defilement.*—Modesty teaches us not to expose those parts to view which no necessity, no good end or use, will justify ; humility teaches us to avoid curiosity in decking a vile body, which ere long must be a feast for worms ; good husbandry will teach us not to lay out on the back what should feed the bellies of a poor family ; and holiness will teach us not to keep such a stir about the outward, when the inward man is naked. Charity will teach us not to expend superfluously on thy own carcass, when so many of thy Father’s children want necessary food and raiment ; and godly wisdom will teach us not to trifle out those precious minutes “ between the comb and the glass,” *inter pectinem et speculum*,\* between curling and painting, which should be laid out on and for eternity.

Let me recommend one place from the apostle : “ While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” (1 Peter iii. 2—4.) Whence these things offer themselves to your observation :—

(i.) That “ plaiting the hair, wearing of gold,” or golden ornaments, are not simply and in themselves condemned ; but only so far as they are either our chiefest ornament, or as we are too curious, too costly, excessive, or expensive in them : for, otherwise, the “ putting on of apparel,” which is joined in the same thread and texture of the discourse and sentence, would be condemned also.

(ii.) That the rule for regulating these ornamentals is, that they be visibly consistent with a “ chaste conversation.” I say, “ visibly consistent :” it must be such a “ chaste conversation” as may be beheld : “ Whilst they behold your chaste conversation.” That pure vestal fire of chastity that burns upon the altar of a holy heart, must flame out and shine in chastity of words, actions, clothing, adorning : for whenever God commands chastity, he commands whatever may feed and nourish it, manifest and declare it ; and forbids whatever may endanger it, wound or weaken, blemish or impair it.

(iii.) That godly “ fear” must be placed as a severe sentinel, to keep strict guard over the heart, that nothing be admitted that may defile our own hearts, nothing steal out that may pollute another’s. We must keep watch over our own hearts and other men’s eyes ; neither lay a snare for the chastity of another, nor a bait for our own. This “ chaste conversation ” must be “ coupled with fear.”

\* TERTULLIANUS.

(iv.) Which holy fear and godly jealousy will have work enough about the matter of ornament; that we neither mistake in our judgment, as if these "outward adornings" with gold, with plaited hair, were of such grand concernment; nor err in our practice, in an immoderate care and superfluous cost about them.

(v.) To render that rule which he hath laid down practicable, he gives us a pattern: "After this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves." (Verse 5.) Where note, First, That they must be "holy women" that are the standard of our imitation; not painting Jezebel, nor dancing Dinah, nor flaunting Bernice; but holy Sarah, godly Rebecca, prudent Abigail. Secondly. They must be such as were "in the old time," when pride was pinfeathered; not such as now, since lust grew fedged and high-flown: such examples as "the old time" afforded, when plain cleanness was accounted abundant elegance: such as the world's infancy produced; not such as an old, decrepit age, grown twice a child, recommends to us. Thirdly. They must be such as could "trust in God" to deliver them from evil, because they rushed not themselves into temptation: for it is hardly conceivable how any should "trust in God" to give them victory, who tempt and challenge the combat; or how they can expect that Divine Grace should secure them from being overcome, when by their enticing attire they provoke others to assail their chastity. If, then, "the daughters of Zion" will be the heirs of Abraham's faith, they must approve themselves the followers of Sarah's modesty.

CONCLUSION II. *Nothing can justly pretend to be lawful ornament, which takes away the distinction which God has put between the two sexes.*—That law, Deut. xxii. 5, is of moral equity and perpetual obligation: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God." *That which pertaineth* אֲבִירָה—The word signifies any "vessel, instrument, utensil, garment, or ornament," military or civil, used for the discrimination of the sex: so Ainsworth.\* And the Rabbins gloss it thus: "The woman shall not poll her locks, nor put on a helmet or a tiara on her head: neither may a man put on a coloured garment or golden jewels, where men use not to wear such jewels." God therefore will have the distinction between the sexes inviolably observed in the outward apparel; which is a fence about the moral law, to prevent those murders, adulteries, and promiscuous lusts, which under those disguises would more secretly and easily be perpetrated. And yet observe:

(i.) That there may be a case put, wherein in some exigency it may be lawful for the woman to wear the apparel of the man: and Asterius gives us one: Εγνων γυναικα και την κομην χειρασαν και ανδρικην περιβεβηνην εσθητα και ταυτην ανθεισεν, ινα ανδρος φευγοντος και κρυπτομενου μη χωρισθη. † "I knew a woman," saith he, "that polled her hair, and put on man's apparel, and that a flowered

\* In *Pentateuchum*.

† *Homilie*.

garment, too; that she might not be separated from her dear husband, that was forced to fly and hide his head."

(ii.) What particular form of apparel shall distinguish the one sex from the other, must be determined by the custom of particular countries; provided that those customs do not thwart some general law of God, the rule of decency, the ends of apparel, or the directions of scripture.

(iii.) That yet there seems some distinctive ornament to have been provided by God, that the difference between the sexes might not be left to the arbitrary customs and desultory humours of men: as in the hair of the head, and in the manner of wearing it; or at least in the beard, which is ordinarily given to the one sex, and denied the other. And hence it seems probable that for women to poll, for men to nourish the hair at the full length, is a contravention to the discriminating badge and cognizance which the God of nature has bestowed upon them.

(iv.) That, however, a prudent and cautious Christian will be well-advised, how his practice contravenes the plain letter of a law, when the distinctions, used to avoid the dint and turn the edge of it, are not very clear and satisfactory, but precarious and such as are contrived to ward off the force of an argument. As, if an instance should be given in that of the apostle: "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her." (1 Cor. xi. 14, 15.) *Εαν κομαζ*, "If a man wears his hair at the full length." Now the evasion used to escape the danger of this text is, that by "nature" is meant no more than the custom of the country; which, being a second nature, is able to warrantize whatever is conformable to it, as also to render whatever is opposite indecent and uncomely: and since the custom of our country is altered, the sin is banished.

But let it be considered, First, That the phrase, *αυτη η φουσις*, "even nature itself," seems to restrain the word to its proper and primary signification. Secondly. That the apostle could not well argue against long hair, nourished to its utmost extent, from the custom of the Greeks; since they, of all men, are famous for wearing it *promissæ* ["hanging down"]; which Homer notes as the common epithet of the Grecians, *καρηκομοωντες Αχαιοι*, "the Grecians that nourished their hair;" nor will it appear that they, from the Trojan war to the days of the apostle, had changed their custom, which they made much of, as that which rendered them formidable to their enemies. Thirdly. But supposing that custom only had formerly taught the men to wear their hair short, and women theirs at the utmost length; and that encroaching practice in process of time should introduce the contrary custom,—for women to poll, and men to nourish, their hair; yet how many millions of sins must be committed, ere the new custom could prevail to justle out the old, and legitimate the new, practice! So that they who plead this for themselves, do but acquit themselves at the cost of other men's condemnation. Fourthly. As the case stands with us, the custom is not so general, either for the

number or quality of the persons, (if by "quality" we understand those of a pious and religious character,) as to justify the modern deviation from a generally-received practice: but this I confess,—if the commonness of the custom be not extensive enough to take away the sin, it is yet so prevailing that it has taken away the sense of it in the consciences of very many professors.

CONCLUSION III. *Nothing ought to be allowed for ornament, which crosses the great end of all apparel,—covering of nakedness.*—The Israelitish women are said to have been "made naked unto their shame," (Exod. xxxii. 25,) when only deprived of their ear-rings, which were one part of their apparel; but amongst us, our English ladies will not acknowledge it any nakedness, any shame, to have their breasts exposed; and they will pretend,

(i.) That the parts which decency requires to be covered, and in whose nakedness shame doth lie, are only those which the apostle calls *ατιμότερα*, "less honourable," and *ασχνημονα*, "uncomely." (1 Cor. xii. 23.) To which I answer, First: That no parts of the body are in themselves "dishonourable and uncomely." Secondly. That yet the uncovering of any will be so, when no honourable use requires the uncovering. Thus the prophet calls the "uncovering of the locks, of the legs, the thigh," the "nakedness and shame of the Babylonians;" (Isai. xlvi. 2, 3;) which though it be meant of a necessitated nakedness,—which may be a reproach, but not a sin,—yet when that is done voluntarily which then was done necessarily, it will become both the sin and the reproach.

(ii.) It is pleaded, that what they do is not out of pride,—to glory in the beauty of the skin; nor out of lust,—to inveigle others to become enamoured at their beauty; but only to avoid the reproach of a morose singularity, and a little, perhaps, to comply with what has the vogue among the more genteel and well-bred persons. To remove this: First. It is a branch of holy singularity, rather to be sober alone, than mad for company. What Christian would not rather choose to lag behind, than strain himself to keep pace with a hairbrained age in all its endless and irrational usages? And, Secondly. Compliance with a vain, humoursome generation is so far from being an excuse, that it is an aggravation of the vanity of the practice.

But these are only the *causæ justificæ*, "the umbrages invented to palliate" the extravagancy: the *causæ suasoriæ* ["the persuasive inducements"] lie much deeper; which because we cannot in all make a judgment of, we must leave them to the censures of their own consciences. I dare not say, it is to allure or invite customers: though what does the open shop and sign at the door signify, but that there is something venal? Nor shall I tax the practice of ambition to show the fineness, clearness, and beauty of the skin; though, if it were so, I would ask, Who are concerned, I pray, to know what hue, what colour, it is of, but either their lawful husbands or unlawful paramours? In the mean time, this too plain is,—that arrogance and impudence have usurped the place, and produced the

effect, of primitive simplicity ; and women are now almost “naked,” but not at all “ashamed.”

CONCLUSION IV. *Whatever pretends to be an ornament, which obscures that natural ornament which God has bestowed, is not an ornament, but a defilement.*—“The harmony and symmetry of the parts each to other,” made and posited conveniently and proportionably to their proper ends and respective uses, “is the real beauty of the outward man :” *Κοσμος ἡ του καλλους ἄρμονια*.\* Upon the front of this is engraved in capital letters, *Deus fecit* [“God made”]. God is not, we should not be, ashamed of it ; much less should we be a shame to it. The throne of this beauty is the countenance, which it is the will of God should ordinarily be uncovered, that the Workman may be seen in his workmanship. And yet this frontispiece, this portal of the fabric, which shows so much of divine art, God will have covered, when the exposing [of] it to view shall expose the soul to temptation. God would have us “turn away” our own “eyes from beholding vanity ;” and has provided a nimble covering, that with one twinkle we may prevent a dart shot at us out of the devil’s bow, by whatsoever hand or from whatsoever quiver. And so would he have us turn away the eyes of others too, when they may wound themselves, and suck poison from the flower of loveliness and beauty. Now if God would have the face covered, whose great end requires the open view, when the uncovering would do harm ; how much more would he have the breasts covered, whose uncovering may do harm, but can do no good, having no lawful end or use assigned for such laying open ! And if God would have the face, the seat of beauty, to be visible, what shall we say of those who by patching disfigure it, who by painting discolour it ; [so] that we may now seek God in his workmanship, and his workmanship in the face, and find neither ?

How had these wantons repined at their creation, and perhaps blasphemed their Creator, had he made them as they have marred themselves ! They had no doubt got a room in the chronicles amongst the prodigious and monstrous births, had they been born with moons, stars, crosses, lozenges upon their cheeks ; especially had they brought into the world with them a coach and horses. But here we shall be attacked with some

QUESTIONS.

QUESTION I. “Is it not lawful to conceal a gross deformity ?”

ANSWER 1. Yes, no doubt ; but not a natural deformity with an artificial vanity. He that gave thee thy ordinary clothing, expects [that] thou wilt use them to hide thy blemishes ; but will nothing serve thy turn but a fantastic vanity ?

2. It is lawful to hide a deformity, but not with a greater than that [which] thou wouldest conceal. A black patch, forsooth, is pretended to hide a blemish, either natural or, it may be, accidentally contracted. Well, be it so : I demand, then, What if God had

\* THEOPHYLACTUS.

branded thy cheek, or stigmatized thy forehead, with a scar of the same figure and colour with that which thou hast invented to hide what thou now hast? Would not such a mark have been accounted a greater blemish than what thou now complainest of? Why, then, dost thou, vain woman, hide a blemish with a deformity? All the quarrel, I perceive, [which] thou hast against the natural is, that it was of *God's* making; and all the fancy [which] thou hast for the artificial is, because it was of *thine own*.

3. Much less is it lawful to hide a natural beauty with an artificial deformity: for what is this, but to be ashamed of what God has done exceeding well, and then to glory in what thou hast made a thousand times worse?

QUESTION II. "Is it not lawful to conciliate beauty where it is not, or to increase it where it already is?"

ANSWER 1. A humble submission to the Divine good-pleasure is the best remedy for imaginary or real defects. Has God made any of us vessels of coarser earth? Who shall say to the Potter, "Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. ix. 20.) "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth." (Isai. xlv. 9.) The best covering for the defects of the face is, to lay our hand upon our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, and to be "dumb with silence, because" the Lord hath done it. (Psalm xxxix. 9.) "Wherefore then dost thou contend with him, who giveth not account of any of his matters?" (Job xxxiii. 13.)

2. True grace is the most excellent receipt for beautifying your face: "Wisdom maketh the face to shine." (Eccles. viii. 1.) There is something (though hard to say what it is) in an unaffected gravity, an unforced modesty, in an ingenuous, affable deportment, free and natural, without starch and pedantry, that recommends and endears more to the acceptation [acceptance] of the judicious than all the curious mixtures of artificial fading colours.

3. Perhaps the evil of thy supposed defect and shortness is more in fancy than in reality: thou art well enough, very well, if thou couldst think so. When we consider our moral blemishes, we deceive ourselves, that we are good, because not so bad as the worst: but when we reflect on our natural defects, we are apt to repine, because we are not as good as the best; and whilst we pore only on what we want, we lose the contentment, and our God the glory, of what we have.

4. And it should be considered that, as some, designing to make it burn the clearer, snuff the candle too low, and so near, till they quite extinguish it; and as others are always careening the vessel of the body with physic, washing and tallowing with external applications, till they sink it; so are many tampering continually to mend the feature and complexion,—which God made very well,—because it pleased him to make them no other, till they utterly spoil them.

5. But yet we must know, that there is "a mid-sized beauty, a moderate rate of comeliness," which the ancients called, *formam statam*; such a mediocrity as is below envy and above contempt: concerning which I observe,



(1.) That this moderate assize of beauty is the safest posture, and most secure from doing or receiving mischief, from tempting or being tempted, that we could be placed in. It is so in all outward concernments: the cedar of Lebanon is exposed to storms; the thistle of Lebanon, liable to be trampled on and trodden down by the insolent foot of every wild beast of the forest. (2 Kings xiv. 9.) And when we come to cast up our accounts in a dying day, or to give up our accounts in the last day, we shall find and acknowledge it to have been so.

(2.) It is lawful by natural means to recover what preternatural accidents have taken away. If sickness has impaired thy complexion and beauty, health will restore it: let the physician do *his* part, and restore health; and health will not be wanting to *hers*, and restore decayed comeliness better than the painter. That the physician is God's ordinance primarily to preserve life and restore health, I know: but whose the painter is, when employed about the redintegrating of faded beauty, you were best to inquire of Jezebel; for I confess my ignorance.

(3.) It is not lawful to aspire after, nor endeavour to procure, the highest pitch of beauty that is attainable by art, when nature has denied it in things of greater value and nobler use than perishing complexion. God has set due bounds to our towering thoughts. I cannot conceive it lawful for me to desire Paul's gifts, unless I had his employment; and we may possibly overshoot ourselves in begging for the highest measures of some graces, unless what God calls us to shall need them.

(4.) Nor is it lawful to endeavour to restore by art what the ordinary course of time and age has deprived us of. It seems to me that we should acquiesce in the devastations which time has made upon our bodies, otherwise than as a rate of health suitable to that declining may make us more lively, active, cheerful, and vigorous in God's work. "The hoary head is a crown of glory; and the beauty of old men is the grey head." (Prov. xvi. 31; xx. 29.) And are we ashamed of our glory? Do we despise our crown? Will nothing serve but juvenile hairs on an aged head? Must we needs try conclusions\* to fetch back the spring in autumn? The former is indeed more pleasant, the latter more fruitful and profitable; who would exchange the harvest for the seed-time? Yet, such is our frowardness, youthful perukes must (if not make, yet) counterfeit black hairs, where age has made them grey; and thus, not seeking true glory in the way of righteousness, we affect and pursue a false, an imaginary honour in a way of unrighteousness.

Let this suffice for the first inquiry: *What are the ends for which God appoints, and nature needs, apparel?*

(II.) Come we to the second: *What is the true rule of decency in apparel?*—That all indecent apparel is a transgression of a general rule, "Let all things be done decently," (1 Cor. xiv. 40,) *εὐσχημονως*, "in a right scheme, in a decent habit,"—is easily granted: but to fix and settle the rule of decency, will be a matter of greater difficulty; especially since much controversy has been raised about it on another

\* In the old meaning of "experiments."—EDIT.

and greater occasion. What influence it may have upon our main inquiry, will appear from this confessed truth,—that the suitableness or unsuitableness, and by consequence the lawfulness or unlawfulness, of all apparel to the person that wears it, will depend very much on its agreeing or disagreeing with this rule of decency.

There are six things, which in conjunction, as I conceive, will complete this rule:—1. *The outward condition*, 2. *The age*, 3. *The sex, of the wearer*; 4. *The climate*; 5. *The law of the land*; 6. *The customs of the place where or under which Providence has cast our habitation*.

1. *The condition of the wearer in outward respects*, is of great consideration: for though all men are made of the same metal and materials by creation, yet all are not cast in the same mould by Providence. One wears a public and politic, another a private, character: God has placed one on the throne, whilst he has set millions to grind at the mill; some are rich, others poor; some cut out for masters, others shaped for servants. And it seems to me, that there should be some distinction in the outward habit, proportionable to what Providence has made in the outward condition. But to render this observation serviceable to the main design, take these

#### PROPOSITIONS.

PROPOSITION I. *It is lawful, and in some respects necessary, that kings, princes, and magistrates, especially in the solemn exercise of their proper and respective offices, be distinguished by their robes from private persons, and from each other.*—All civilized nations have so unanimously concurred in this distinction, that we may receive it as the dictate of nature, the vote of universal reason. Jehoshaphat wore his royal robes; though the wearing them once had likely to have cost him dearer than the matter and making. (1 Kings xxii. 30—33.) Solomon's outward glory was the admiration of the queen of Sheba; and yet, when he shone in all his external lustre and splendour, [he] "was not arrayed like the lily of the field," (Matt. vi. 29,) which gloried only in the bravery of nature's own spinning. So short are the finest works of art of the coarsest manufactures and meanest pieces of the God of nature! And though Herod in his "royal apparel" was eaten by the worms, who fell to, and spared not what vengeance had set before them, before death had said grace; yet the sin lay not in the richness of his robes, but the rottenness of his heart; who, affecting to be more than a man, became less than a worm; and because he was ambitious of being a god, had not the civility usually given to men. (Acts xii. 21—23.)

PROP. II. *There is a lawful difference of apparel, arising from the difference of wealth, titles, and honours, though distinguished by no public office.*—Which our Saviour seems to approve of: "They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." (Matt. xi. 8.) Courtiers, then, may assume a garb somewhat above that of meaner persons, suitable to the glory of the prince on whom they attend. And our Lord and Saviour, in his practice, justifies some diversity, who used

both a more liberal diet and agreeable clothing than John the Baptist, whose "raiment was of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey." (Matt. iii. 4.) One garb was decent enough in the rude wilderness, which had been uncomely to Him whose habitation was much in the city.

Should I quote that "rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared deliciously every day;" (Luke xvi. 19;) it would be answered, that he was a riotous glutton, a swine out of Epicurus's sty; and he bespeaks our indignation, not our imitation. And yet I might rejoin, that his sin lay in pampering his carcass in the dining-room, when poor Lazarus could not get the scraps and crumbs that fell from his table. The truth is, it is a parable which always speaks a truth, and is founded in a truth, though the manner of teaching be artificial and feigned; nor do I doubt but our Saviour modelled his parable by, and calculated it for, the innocent and allowed customs of his own country. Nor shall I make further use of that man that came into the assembly with his "gold ring and goodly apparel," (James ii. 2,) than to observe, that the sin lay neither in the one nor the other; but in the partial idolizing [of] a grandee, merely on the account of his external habiliments; when the poor good man was thrust down to the footstool, if not trampled under foot. (Verses 3, 4.)

PROP. III. *No ability of the rich will warrant him in wearing any apparel inconsistent with the ends of God's appointment.*—The purse is not the adequate measure of the lawfulness of apparel: conscience may be straitened, when the purse is enlarged. I note this for the sake of those who always defend themselves with a proverb as wicked as it is dull: "If my mind stand to it, and my purse pay for it, what has any to do with it?" I will tell them who has:—*Nature*, whom thou hast enfeebled; those *souls* that thou hast tempted; *thy own*, which thou hast defiled; and *God himself*, whose ends in giving apparel thou hast neglected and transgressed: each of these have cause of action against thee. A man, then, may be civilly able, who is not morally able, to follow the fashions: the purse may bear the charge, when conscience cannot give thee a discharge, for thy vanity.

PROP. IV. *No measure of wealth can justify those garbs which speak pride, vain-glory, in the wearer.*—I grant, that raiment may indicate no pride in one man, who out of his abundance can spare the charge of [it], which it would speak in another, whose incompetent estate cannot reach the expense, and yet his ambitious mind affects the gallantry. Yet still pride and vain-glory are abominable to God in the rich, as in the poor; in the king, as in the beggar. Difference, then, of apparel may be allowed; but pride and vain-glory have no toleration.

PROP. V. *It is sinful to aspire after those costly garbs which are above our estates to maintain.*—A poor man may be as covetous as the rich, and ordinarily is more; because covetousness lies not merely in the having, but in the immoderate and inordinate desiring to have, what he does not want. And a mean man may be vain-glorious and

proud in his rags, and sometimes of his rags; because this humour lies not so much in the wearing, as in the lusting to wear, glorious trappings, beyond what his estate is able to support. And this I note for the sakes of those aspiring persons, who, when they cannot for their lives reach the chargeable matter, yet show their good-will to bravery, in imitating the cheap vanity of the form and shape.

PROP. VI. *Every man, in the account of God, clothes above his ability, who withdraws from works of necessity, justice, and mercy, to maintain his pride.*—No man is supposed able to do a thing, till he be able to do it when God and man have their own. The rich man's conveniencies must be retrenched by the duties of justice; his superfluities; by the acts of mercy: and when these are subtracted out of the total sum of thy income, the remainder is clearly thy own, only in the Lord.

There is a certain order of things which we must strictly observe. If food and raiment come in competition, the belly must carry it: food was *before* sin, raiment brought in *by* it. If justice and mercy come in competition, justice must carry it: we must pay what we owe, and then give what we can spare. If the necessities of another are competitors with mine, mine own must take place; because I am bound to love my neighbour *as*, but not *before*, myself: but if the necessity of a Christian stands in competition with my own superfluities, his exigence is to take place of my abundance; for no man is really able to be fine, till he has paid all he owes to God and man, to creditors and petitioners.

2. *The age of the person* will allow some diversity of apparel.—One thing may become little children playing in the market-place with their fellows, which would be ridiculous in the grave senator, when he sits in the gate of his city. When we are children, we think; we understand, we speak as children; when we become men, it is hoped, we may “put away childish things.” (1 Cor. xiii. 11.) But what was the reproach of the Grecians, *Ἕλληνες αἰεὶ παῖδες*, may more justly be thrown in our dish: The English, in the matter of apparel, “have always been children.” Is it not nauseous to see a lady of eighty smug and spruce up, as if she was in the flower of eighteen? to trick and trim, as if they were new come in, when they are just going out of the world? to harness out, as if for a wedding, when they should be preparing for the winding-sheet? when the coffin is making, and the grave a-digging, and the worms ready for them, but they ready for neither! And hence I infer,

INFERENCE I. *That for aged persons by any habits or dresses to represent themselves as young and youthful, is sinful.*—Their glass tells them [that] they are old; but they believe it not. Time has snowed grey hairs on their heads; and they acknowledge it not. Would they have others believe [that] they are what they would seem? Then they would have them believe a lie: a lie may be told by visible, as well as audible, signs. Or are they ashamed of the hoary head? Then are they ashamed of what God has made their glory. Or hope they to catch some young birds with that chaff?

Silly birds are they that will be so caught: but, in the mean time, how abominable is the cheater!

INFER. II. *All youthful periwigs and paintings, which are sinful in youth, are doubly sinful in the aged.*—Time has ploughed deep furrows in the face; and they will fill them up with ceruse and vermilion. The clock of time has given warning for their last hour; and they will set it back to noon. The sun is almost setting in the west; and they will outvie Joshua, not content [that] it should stand still there a while, but would force it back “ten degrees,” as on “the dial of Ahaz.” (2 Kings xx. 11.)

3. *The sex* may be allowed a share in the decision of this point: for the female has a greater latitude than the male. It was so with Israel of old, when the bride was allowed her “jewels,” but the bridegroom must rest content with an inferior sort of “ornaments.” It would be a culpable effeminacy for the man to affect and imitate all the lawful little ornaments of women.

Nevertheless this indulgence is clogged with some humbling considerations.

(1.) Has God indulged them a fairer liberty? the very indulgence argues the sex’s weakness: it speaks her the weaker vessel, because she needs it. Small reason have they to glory in a privilege which is but a badge of their infirmity! As if a nobleman’s servant should be exalted for his laced livery, and silver cognizance, which is but the mark of a more honourable servitude!

(2.) Has God indeed indulged that sex with a greater latitude? how should it humble them, that they have transgressed the bounds of Heaven’s indulgence! God has given them a longer tether; and must they needs break it? Will nothing serve, nothing satisfy, unless they range abroad in the boundless waste of their own capricious wills and fancies?

(3.) Know, therefore, that the same authority that has given the liberty, has assigned due limits to it; which that they may be better understood, I shall open that of St. Paul: “I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works:” (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10:) a divine glass, wherein that sex may contemplate both their glory and their shame.

(i.) Here they may behold their real *glory*; which consists, First, In being adorned “in modest apparel,” *εν καταστολη κοσμιω*: that no steam, no smoke, no vapour, flame of immodesty without, discover a latent fire of lust burning within. *Τη αυτη περιβολη μηνυουση των ψυχων την σεμνοτητα*: “That the very apparel should indicate the gravity of the soul:” so Theodoret.\* Jude 23: “Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh:” a soul spotted with lust will stain the garment. So Theophylact, speaking of ancient women: ‘*Ας και απο του σχηματος και καταστολης δει κοσμιας φαινεσθαι*.† “They ought,” says he, “to appear modest by their very habit and clothing.”

\* *In locum.*

† *In Titum iii. 3.*

Secondly. In being adorned "with shamefacedness," *μετα αιδου*. The face will bear a proportion to the heart, and the habit to both. Rolling eyes, wandering looks, out-stretched necks, fawning smiles, and lenocinating glances, disparage the most modest apparel. "The daughters of Zion," equivocally so called, were "haughty" in heart; and it soon appeared in the haughtiness of their necks. (Isai. iii. 16.) An humble soul will adorn its ornaments, when proud gestures and postures deform them. Thirdly. In being adorned "with sobriety," *μετα σωφροσυνης*. Moderation of affection toward outward things is a Christian's holiday-suit; not to over-prize them, or over-use them. This temper should shine through all our garments. Fourthly. "With good works," *δι' εργαων αγαθων*. And there is no doubt [that] had less been laid out in good clothes, more had been expended in good works. But rich clothing has beggared charity; and since women shone in apparel, their light has shone less bright to the "glorifying [of] their Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) Fifthly. Here is the rule by which all is to be regulated: "As women professing godliness." Godliness must be your caterer and cook for the belly; godliness your tailor and sempster for the back; godliness must be consulted what to buy, how to make up what you have bought, and how, and when, and where to wear what you have made up. But did godliness advise to paint or patch the face? to curl or crisp the hair? From what principle of godliness can these vanities proceed? by what rule of godliness are they ordered? or to what end of godliness are they designed?

(ii.) In this gospel-glass they may view their own *shame*: and it lies in that wherein they most of all glory,—curiosity and costliness. First. In *curiosity*: doing much to no purpose, and nothing with a world of pains; "plaiting the hair," *εν πλεγμασιν*, or, as St. Peter phrases it, *εμπλοκη τριχων*, curling, crimping, twirling, variegating into a thousand shapes,—into rings, into mats, into shades, folds, towers, locks. (1 Peter iii. 3.) Tertullian inveighs bitterly against this sort of impertinency: *Quid crinibus vestris quiescere non licet: modò substrictis, modò relaxatis, modò suscitatis, modò elisis?*\* "What ails you," says he, "that you cannot let your poor hair be quiet; but sometimes it must be bound up, by-and-by dishevelled and loose about your ears? one while staring up in towers, and presently polled and notched close?" *Aliaè gestiunt cum cinnis coercere; aliaè ut volucres et vagi elabuntur*:† "Some of you are all for curling it up into rings, others for a loose mode." "Nay," says he, *affigitis nescio quas enormitates sutilium atque textilium capillamentorum*.‡ "Not content with that, you stitch—or I cannot well tell what—monstrous extravagances of false locks and artificial hair and periwigs." O that I could give you a real prospect of a converted Magdalene! She "wiped" our Saviour's "feet with the hairs of her head;" (Luke vii. 38;) as if she would take a holy revenge on that which had been the effect of her own pride, and the cause of ensnaring others; as if she thought nothing too precious for Him that had rid her soul of

\* *De Habitu Mulierum.*† *Ibid.*‡ *De Cultu Feminarum.*

seven devils; as if she had found more honourable employment for her locks, than when they were woven into nets to catch poor silly souls, decked with ribands to be a lure to gazing youth. Secondly. Their shame lies in the excessive *costliness* of their ornaments,—in “gold and pearls.” O the reproach, that a little refined earth should be accounted the glory of the rational creature! that we should esteem that our treasure which came out of oyster-shells! that we should be at such vast charge to paint a walking sepulchre; to embroider a tabernacle, whose cords ere long must be cut asunder, whose stakes in a while must be plucked up, and whose canvass covering must shortly be fretted into rags by the consuming moth!

In a word: God has given the woman some grains of allowance. She that takes more, forfeits all the rest. Look to it, lest, whilst you adorn with gold, God should call you “reprobate silver;” (Jer. vi. 30;) and when you load yourselves with jewels, you be not found in God’s balance much too light. (Dan. v. 27.)

4. *The climate where we dwell* may be of some consideration to fix the rules of decency. God has provided us wholesome cloth, and expects we should cut our coat according to it. When the Sovereign Lord “appointed the nations the bounds of their habitations,” he, as a careful and common Parent, provided suitably for all the inhabitants of the earth. Some he ordered to dwell under the equinoctial line; others under the polar circles. To these he gave numerous flocks of sheep; that, as they needed more and warmer clothing, they might have it of their own growth: to those he gave the silk-worm; that, as they required less and lighter apparel, they might have answerable provision. But luxury has rummaged every corner of the earth to fetch home fuel to feed the insatiable fire of lust; which the more it eats, the more it hungers. Alexander Severus and Aurelianus, those great emperors, are reported never to have worn a garment of entire silk all their lives; which is now become the ordinary wear of every nurse of a village. Emperors then were not clothed as servants are now. It was above one hundred and fifty years after Christ, that some idle monks brought into Europe these silk-spinsters: and truly it is no great credit to the wear, that they who first brought in strange religions and new fashions of worship, should be the men who first introduced strange attire and new fashions of apparel. But so it is: whilst we pursue exotic “lying vanities,” we “forsake our own” domestic “mercies.” (Jonah ii. 8.)

5. *The laws of the land* ought to carry a great stroke in the decision of what is decent. It were to be wished, that evil manners might at length beget good laws. But we are not sick enough with this surfeit, to make us feel the need and submit to the prescription of state-physicians. Such was once the extravagancy of this nation in the prodigious breadth of their shoes, that they were restrained to six inches at the toes. O monstrous excess, where the excess itself was accounted moderation! But because I find no sumptuary laws in force at present, let us look a little back into former ages, and step a while into foreign countries.

The Lacedemonian *ephor*i were exceeding punctual, καθ' ἑκάστην πολυπραγμονεῖν τα περὶ τὴν στολὴν, εἰ ἕκαστα αὐτῆς μὴ ἀπολείπεται τοῦ κόσμου τοῦ δεόντος.\* “That a daily inspection should be exactly made into the matters of apparel, that nothing herein might vary from what was decent, and of necessary comeliness.” *Julius Cæsar lecticarum usum, item conchyliata vestis et margaritarum, nisi certis personis et ætatibus, ademit* : † “Julius Cæsar prohibited the use of sedans and litters, as also of purple or scarlet and pearls, except to some certain persons of such and such years.” And Tacitus, the grave historian, highly commends the prudence and policy of that law : *Præclarè prudenterque Cæsar ordines civium veste discriminavit ; ut scilicet qui locis, ordinibus, dignationibus antestant, cultu quoque ab aliis discriminarentur* : “Cæsar,” says that author, “with admirable prudence, distinguished the several ranks of the citizens by their apparel ; so that they who were advanced above others in offices, degrees, and honours, should also be differenced by their proper habits.”

6. That which completes the rule of decency is *common honesty* : by which I understand “the general received practice of such who in all other things are of a laudable conversation.” The apostle seems to proceed by this rule : “Whatsoever things are comely,” or “honest,” ὅσα σεμνά. “whatsoever things are of good report,” ὅσα εὐφήμα. “think on these things.” (Phil. iv. 8.) Where he refers the decision of what is decent to their outward senses : (1.) To their eyes : “Whatsoever things are comely.” First see how well the fashion becomes the back of a sober, grave Christian, before you put it on your own. First consider how a dress sits on the head of a modest, chaste virgin, before you try the experiment yourselves. (2.) He refers the matter to their ears : “Whatsoever things are of good report.” We should be like that famous artist, who lay close behind his picture, to hearken what every man’s judgment was of it : so should we listen what the generality of sober Christians speak and judge of the new modes and fashions. Their censure is enough to create a suspicion of the “appearance of evil ;” from which the apostle commands us to “abstain.” (1 Thess. v. 22.) Again : “Provide things honest in the sight of all men ;” τα καλά, such as carry a conviction of their “comeliness” with them. (Rom. xii. 17.) Again : “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” (2 Cor. viii. 21.) Let the inward garb of your souls, the frame of your hearts, be such as may approve itself to God ; the outward garb and deportment of your bodies, such as may have a good report of good men.

Only here I must recommend to you these CAUTIONS.

CAUTION I. *All customs that will authorize and warrant your imitation must be rationabiles consuetudines, “reasonable customs :” such as clash not with, offend not against, any maxim of right reason.* —It is a maxim of reason, that the particular modes of apparel should answer the general ends of all apparel : no custom will justify that mode

\* *ÆLIANI Variæ Historiæ*, lib. xiv. cap. 1.

† *SUETONIUS in Vitâ Julii Cæsaris*.



which exposes shame and nakedness to public view. Another maxim of reason, that what was appointed to preserve life, should not be perverted to destroy it. A maxim of reason, that none should glory in that which sin and shame brought into the world : and therefore no apparel should make us proud, since all apparel was thus introduced. If an inveterate custom shall plead time out of mind, and bolster up itself with antiquity, let it know that *nulla consuetudo occurrit rationi* ; “ no custom, how ancient soever, can prescribe against the law of right reason.”

CAUTION II. *All fashions of apparel that will justify themselves by custom, must be able to plead universality among them that in other things make a conscience of their ways and actions.*—The custom of a few good men, or of many wicked men, will be an unsafe rule by which to judge of decency. One speckled bird will not warrant us all to be jays and magpies. A single Cato would abhor those garments which Varro calls *vestes vitreas*, “ glass clothes,” and which Suidas terms *tunicas interlucentes*, “ latticed garments ;” wherein, under the pretence of covering, the debauchees of Rome discovered, their nakedness : nor should a thousand precedents encourage one sober Christian to herd with those in this, who in many other things give a demonstration that they are under no ties of conscience.

CAUTION III. *Not only customs which cross the ends of nature and the rules of scripture, but such as are vain and trifling, contribute nothing to the rule of decency.*—Our blessed Saviour has left us a smart word : “ That every idle word,” *παν ῥημα αργον*, “ that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” (Matt. xii. 36.) And if of “ every idle word,” no doubt of every idle action and practice. If we could, then, certainly tell what an “ idle word” is, we might with the same labour learn what an idle action is. If indeed an “ idle word” in that text denote “ a false or blasphemous speech,” I see not how we can make any use of it here : but with the leave of that learned paraphrast who thus glosses it, I conceive [that] an “ idle word” is somewhat below that, and does signify “ whatever speech is not designed for some good end and use, either natural or moral ; discourse that has no tendency to any thing that is good or useful.” And if so, what may we judge of vain apparel, which complies not with any end of God, of nature ; which neither hides, nor warms, nor adorns the body ? But thus much of the second inquiry.

(III.) I come to the third : *From what inward principles these outward fashions of apparel are taken up.*—As is the heart, so is the man ; and as is the man, such commonly will the garb, the apparel, all his outward behaviour and deportment, be. An evil mind will give an evil tincture to every thing [that] he uses : “ Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.” (Titus i. 15.) Only we must here remember what was before observed,—that though an evil principle will make the action that proceeds from it sin, a good one will not serve to convert an indifferent action into good, if there be not a concurrence of all other circumstances which ought to be pre-

sent. But hence we shall gain one general rule:—All fashions of apparel, however lawful in themselves, that spring from or give indications of an evil heart, are sinfully used. Augustus Cæsar was wont to say, that “rich and gay clothing was either the sign of pride or the nurse of luxury.” \* Perhaps he might be mistaken; nor can any such necessary connexion between pride and costly apparel be demonstrated as shall *infallibly* prove them sinful. Nevertheless, when at any time they do so spring from an evil principle, they may, without violating the law of charity, be doomed as evil. It was an argument of the sobriety of that great emperor, what the same author reports of him,—that “he never wore any apparel but such as his wife, his sister, or daughter, made for him.” Nor indeed do we read of any such trade as that of a tailor in all the scripture; which argues the simplicity and plainness of their habits, that they needed little art and skill, little labour and pains, to make them up.

There are four main principles, amongst some others, from whence these strange, uncouth fashions may and, I fear, ordinarily do arise:—levity of mind, vain-glory, flattery, and idleness.

1. *Levity of mind* is certainly an evil frame,—if that may be called “a frame” which never abides so long as to form an acquired habit. “This various humour has thus much of good in it,”—that if it chops on an evil and incommodious fashion, it will never continue long in it: *Aliquisque malo fuit usus in illo*. Perhaps there is no fashion so foolish as the folly of men,—that they will not abide in any. If it was evil, why did you take it up? if good, why did you lay it down? Δὸς σοῦ σταμεν † I could wish they would or could “tell us where they will fix.” It is strange to hear our gallants cry up, and cry for, that mode to-day, which they will decry and throw away to-morrow: and, yet more strange, to hear a new-born fashion extolled for “the most commodious, convenient, useful, that ever appeared;” and yet, when a newer mode starts up before them, to decry it as “absurd, ridiculous, and inconvenient;” and all the epithets which yesterday were studied to adorn it, are transferred to the latter. “Remember this,” says the prophet, “and show yourselves men.” (Isai. xlvi. 8.) Will you always be children, tossed up and down with every wind of novelty that blows from every quarter of the compass? Nay, herein worse than children, who in time will out-grow their toys and trifles; whereas our *γεροντοπαίδες*, “old boys and old girls,” of fifty, sixty, or more, grow more morose in their inconstancy. And if we would have a stuff that should suit these various shapes, and also agree with their levity, it must be all of changeable taffata.

2. Whatever modes of apparel do indicate or proceed from a *spirit of vain-glory*, are sinfully used. Vain-glory is nothing but *appetitus gloriæ inordinatus*, † “an inordinate desire of glory;” when a person, not content with a moderate repute, such as may vindicate him from contempt, and render him serviceable in his station, must be τῆς

\* SÆTONIUS. † “Afford us a place where we may stand.”—EDIT. † FRANCISCI TOLETI *Summa de Instructione Sacerdotum*, lib. viii. cap. 6.

*μεγας,\* aut Cæsar aut nullus*, "either all or nothing." And the malignity of it lies, either, (1.) In hunting after applause for some excellency that he would be thought to have in him, when he has it not: or, (2.) In aspiring after glory, on the account of some little worth, far more than the thing deserves: or, (3.) In being ambitious of glory from that which really deserves reproach and contempt. Hence we have these

RULES.

**RULE I.** *It argues a vicious frame of heart, to affect the appearance of being rich by costly apparel, when one is really poor.*—It is no very commendable quality, to desire to be thought rich, though a man be what he would be thought. We should rather give the Donor his glory of them, and glorify him with them, than make them matter of ostentation. But to affect the appearance without the thing, is somewhat that deserves a harder name than I shall give it. What a despicable thing was the poor jay in the fable, when every bird had re-assumed her own feathers, and stripped the silly creature naked of its fool's coat! What folly, to be accounted rich, when thou art poor! and by that which makes thee so! What vanity, to desire the shadow, when thou hast not the substance, and when the shadow eats out the substance! which is the case of too many amongst us, who hang their whole inheritance on their backs; and even that is not yet paid for, but must be set on the backside of the mercer's book.

**RULE II.** *It argues a proud spirit to affect admiration and applause from clothing.*—They that have no solid excellency, commonly court the notice of the world by some exterior adventitious bravery. How do our gallants expect reverence, if not adoration, for their whistling silks and ruffling periwigs; and that all should rise and bow to their state, port, and grandeur! Thy silks and periwigs are but excrements; and the latter, perhaps, of one that died of the foul disease, or at the gallows. Tertullian nips this humour severely: *Ne exuviis alieni, forsan immundi, forsan nocentis et gehennæ destinati, sancto et Christiano capiti suppires.*† "O, do not," says he, "wear on thy sacred and Christian head the hair of another, perhaps some foul-discased fellow, perhaps one that was a malefactor and is now in everlasting burnings!"

**RULE III.** *It argues the most wretched, forlorn spirit that can be imagined, to hunt for applause from such fashions as are a shame to thy profession, to thy person, family, age, sex, and species.*—If it be sinful to affect glory from beauty, what is it then to affect it from a borrowed, a counterfeit beauty? If from thy own curled, crisped hair, what then from false hair? If from so mean a thing as thy own red and white, what then from painting, patching, and an adulterate complexion? *In Deum delinquent quæ cutim medicaminibus unguunt, genas rubore maculant, oculos fuligine collinunt; displicet*

\* "Some great one," Acts viii. 9.—EDIT.

† TERTULLIANUS *De Cultu Femi-*

*narum.*

*illis nimirum plastica Dei.\** "They grievously offend God that daub their skin with ointments and slobber-sauces, that besmear their cheeks with vernilion, that black their eye-brows with *stibium*. It seems, they are ashamed, forsooth, of God's handy-work." *Quod nascitur opus Dei est; ergo quod fingitur diaboli negotium est.*† "That which is natural, is God's own work; and therefore that which is counterfeit and artificial, is the invention of the devil."

3. That apparel that proceeds from or indicates a *fawning, adulatory spirit*, is worn with the sin of the wearer. This was Judah's sin, in her "strange," exotic attire, servilely crouching and accommodating herself to their potent neighbours' fashions, that they might insinuate and screw themselves into their favour and affections. Nothing passed for genteel and gallant, but what was *à-la-mode*, "after the mode" of Babylon; which seems to be the colloquing humour of Frenchified English, whose business it is to lie watching for the first post that may bring them the blessed news, in what dress the queen and court appeared in the last masque, ball, or play at the Louvre.

Some mischiefs have always fatally attended this frenzy: One, that we seldom imitate the modes of apparel of another nation, but we learn their immoralities, and commonly their idolatries. A second is, that the Divine Justice commonly plagues a people by that nation [which] they most dote on. A third is, that it is very seldom that any nation is fond of the vanities of another, but they barter away realities to purchase those vanities. For when lust is clerk of the market, all shall go, rather than forego the dearly-beloved vanity.

4. Whatever fashions or modes of apparel are the result of *idleness*, are justly condemned as sinful. There are a sort of *malè feriata ingenia*, "brains whose employment it is to do nothing with a world of study," who do *magno conatu magnas agere nugas*; well noted by the divine poet:—

"Much curiousness is a perpetual wooing,  
Nothing with labour, folly long a-doing." †

How many mis-employ their souls only to undo them! as if God had given them immortal spirits capable of serving him, and they should use them only in contriving how to adorn, but indeed pollute, the body!

(IV.) Proceed we now to the last inquiry: *What are the consequences or effects which these modes and strange fashions of apparel have upon ourselves or others?*—Every Christian is bound to consider his ways, whither they tend, and in what they are likely to issue; not only that his ends and aims be right, but that his actions be such as may reach them. There is, 1. "The end of the work," *fnis operis*; and, 2. "The end of the workman," *fnis operantis*. The end of the work is either, 1. "Such as follows necessarily or naturally from it," *fnis per se*; or, 2. "That which accidentally or contingently follows thereupon," *fnis per accidens*. Thus far, then, we may determine:—

\* TERTULLIANUS *De Cultu Feminarum*.  
"Church Porch."

† Idem, *ibid*.

‡ HERBERT'S

1. *For sober persons to imitate the fashions of the loose, so as to take away all external distinction between the virtuous and debauched, is culpable.*—The apostle would have chastity visible in the “conversation,” and particularly in the apparel, (1 Peter iii. 2—4,) which is one thing that fills up our conversation. God would not have the world huddled up in a mist, that all outward difference between the precious and the vile should be taken away. Tertullian is very earnest with sober women, that in their visiting the sick, going to the public worship, in all their civil visits and congresses, they should apparel themselves so, *ut sit inter ancillas Dei et diaboli discrimen*,\* “that there be a visible discrimination between the servants of God and the handmaids of the devil.” It is pity there are any such profligate wretches; but seeing there are and will be so, it is a thousand pities but they should be known by their attire. It was so of old: we read of a young man, met by “a woman with the attire of an harlot;” and she was no hypocrite,—her heart was as whorish as her habit. (Prov. vii. 10.) Judah took Tamar upon suspicion for one of the same character, partly by her veil, but more by her sitting “in an open place” by the highway-side. (Gen. xxxviii. 14.) But we may now take up a lamentation, “As is the profane, so is the professor; and as is the harlot, so in this particular are many whom we hope to be chaste.” If a wise man would not willingly be seen abroad in a fool’s coat, why should a modest virgin walk the streets in the garb of the debauched and prostitute? Or, if they will needs do it, let them not be angry if others judge them as bad as those whom they are ambitious to imitate. I could wish, therefore, (though with small hopes to see it take effect,) that as once there was a proclamation that all courtezans should be known by their striped veil, so we had the same or some like law revived, that there should be a visible mark of discrimination between two such contrary parties.

2. *That apparel which we find to gratify or awaken corruption in our own souls, though it may be no sin in itself nor in another to whom it is no such temptation, is a sin for us to wear.*—We are commanded to “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” (Rom. xiii. 14.) In vain do we complain that the fire burns and rages, if we pour oil into the flame to feed it: take away the fuel, and the fire goes out of itself. If we were true to our own souls, we might find how difficult, if not impossible, it is to wear gorgeous apparel, and not to be proud of it; to wear gaudy apparel, and not to feel some vanity awakened within us. That God who forbids any sin, forbids all fomentations of it, all incitements to it. If, then, any apparel or mode of apparel shall cherish or excite lust in the heart, whatever it is to others, it is sin to him to whom it becomes such a provocation. What comfort is it to see another drink a potion without harm, when thou already feelest thyself poisoned by it?

3. *Whatever becomes a bait to sin in another, ought to be worn with great caution; and the ends of the wearer, and the wear itself, to be duly considered.*—In order to which, I lay down these

\* *De Cultu Feminarum.*

## PROPOSITIONS.

**PROPOSITION I.** *To design evil, though the effect follow not, is sinful.*—The heart is often criminal, when the hand is not, cannot be so. He that “hunts for the precious life” is a murderer, though God break the neck of and defeat the murder. A man may “conceive mischief” which he cannot “bring forth,” because Providence makes it abortive. And by this rule all they are cast who use or abuse lawful apparel for unlawful ends, though they happily miscarry in them.

**PROP. II.** *An evil that is the effect of its proper cause, is imputed to him that gave or laid the cause, though he designed not actually the effect.*—We are responsible to God for all the evil that naturally and necessarily flows from our actions, whatever our designs are or may be. And the reason is, because it is supposed that we do know, inasmuch as we ought to know, all the natural and necessary moral products of our own actions. And this will condemn some of our filthy fashions, which of themselves produce these accursed effects. And though God can bring good out of evil, or restrain the evil that it follow not from that which otherwise would produce it; yet because we cannot, it is evil in us not to prevent it.

**PROP. III.** *An evil which we ordinarily know hath followed and probably will follow any action of ours, will be charged on us, if we yet shall adventure upon it.*—For what, if there be no natural and necessary connexion between that evil and that action? yet if we see the event to be evil, we are bound to prevent it, if it be in our power. He that knows the damning nature of sin, and what it cost to atone and expiate it,—the worth and price of souls, and what it cost to redeem them,—would not be an accidental instrument of the devil, to lead into the one or destroy the other, by any action of his which he may well and conveniently refrain.

**PROP. IV.** *To be an accidental occasion of sin to another in the remotest order of contingency, though it may not be sin in us, yet will be some part of our affliction and trouble.*—As he that should kill a man accidentally, beside and against his intention, and it should be found “chance-medley” by the verdict, would be deeply concerned that he should send a soul—it may be, unprepared—into eternity.

II. Having now dispatched the first general inquiry, namely, *Wherein the sinfulness of apparel does lie*; I proceed to the second: *What directions God has given us to walk at a due distance, that we partake not of the sin that may be in them.*—To which when I have subjoined a few considerations to press you to such a cautelous walking, I shall conclude this discourse.

**DIRECTION I.** *Be not ambitious to appear the first in any fashion.*—Affect not to take the mode by the fore-lock. Keep some paces behind those that are zealous to march in the front of a novelty. When the danger is sinning, it is valorous enough *tutus latere post principia*, “to bring up the rear.” When custom has familiarized the strangeness, when time has mellowed the harshness, and common usage has taken off the fierce edge of novelty, a good Christian may

safely venture a little nearer, provided he leap not over those bounds prescribed by God, by nature, and decency. It is time enough to think of following, when the way is well-beaten before us. A modest-Christian, in conscience as well as courtesy, will not think scorn to let others go before him.

**DIRECT. II.** *Strive not to come up to the height of the fashion.*—Study not the criticisms, the niceties, the punctilios of it. You may be modish enough in all conscience, without straining to reach the *ακριβοδικαίον* [“strict exactitude”] of those super-fineries which ill-employed wits have teemed and spawned amongst us. A general conformity, without forwardness or frowardness, is one branch of that great rule laid down by the apostle: “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.” (Phil. iv. 5.) There is a golden mean (had we the skill to hit it) between the peevish singularity of some, who morosely admire obsolete and antiquated garbs, such as came in with the Conqueror, or perhaps were worn by Evander’s mother; and the precise exactness of others, who make it religion to depart a hair’s-breadth from the newest fashions. He that expresses the general usage of the nation, without curiosity in the finer strokes and smoother touches of elegance, is the man whom I would take, and propound to you, for a pattern.

**DIRECT. III.** *Follow no fashions so fast, so far, as to run your estates out at the heels.*—*Tuo te pede metire.\** Costly apparel is like a prancing steed: he that will follow it too close, may have his brains knocked out for his folly; or rather his empty skull shattered; for the brains are supposed to have gone long before. Advise first with conscience, what is lawful; then with your purse, what is practicable. Consult what you *may* do, and next what you *can* do. Some things may be done by others, which you may not do; and there are some things which you might lawfully do, if you could conveniently do them. “All things” indifferent “are lawful” in themselves; “but all things are not expedient” to some under some circumstances; and what is not expedient, so far as it is not so, is unlawful. (1 Cor. x. 23.)

If you will drink by another man’s cup, you may be drunk, when he is sober; and if you will clothe at another man’s rate, you may be a beggar, when he feels not the charge. But how many have run themselves out of their estates into debt, and from the height of gallyantry sunk to the depth of poverty, forced either into a gaol or out of their country, whilst they would strain to keep pace with a fashion that was too nimble and fleet for their revenues?

**DIRECT. IV.** *Follow lawful fashions a-breast with your equals.*—But be sure you get right notions, *who* are your equals. Some may be less than your equals in birth, who are more than so in estates: pedigrees and titles will not discharge long bills and reckonings. And some may be your equals in both, who are not so in that wherein equality is most valuable. Walk, then, hand-in-hand with them who

\* ERASMI *Adagia*, p. 60. “Measure yourself by your own foot.” Tantamount in meaning to the old proverb, employed by our author himself in this sermon, “Cut your coat according to your cloth.”—EDIT.

are "heirs together" with you "of the grace of life," (1 Peter iii. 7,) who are partakers with you of the same "precious faith;" (2 Peter i. 1;) with those who have the same hopes with you "of the common salvation." (Jude 3.) Why should we zealously affect a conformity to them in apparel, from whom we must separate in a little time for eternity?

Abraham was a great prince; and yet he "dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." (Heb. xi. 9.) And if a tent would serve him and them, why make we such ado for palaces? Abraham had a promise that he should be "heir of the world;" (Rom. iv. 13;) and yet he confessed he was but a stranger, a pilgrim, a sojourner, even in the Land of Promise; (Heb. xi. 13;) and was always in a travelling garb and habit, ready at an hour's, a minute's, warning to dislodge, and follow whither God should call him. Why then do we clothe as if we were at home, citizens of this world; when we are but tenants-at-will, and have here "no certain dwelling-place?" (1 Cor. iv. 11.)

**DIRECT. V.** *Come not near those fashions whose numerous implements, trinkets, and tackling require much time in dressing and undressing.*—No cost of apparel is so ill bestowed as that of precious time in apparelling. And if common time be so ill spent, what is the solemn, sacred time, laid out in such curiosity! How many sabbaths, sermons, sacraments, prayers, praises, psalms, chapters, meditations, has this one vanity devoured! Let me recommend the counsel of holy Mr. Herbert to you:—

"O, be dress'd!  
Stay not for t'other pin! Why, thou hast lost  
A joy for it worth worlds! Thus hell doth jest  
Away thy blessings, and extremely flout thee;  
Thy clothes being fast, but thy soul loose, about thee!"\*

O the wanton folly of our times, when, as one expresses it, "it is almost as easy to enumerate all the tackling of the Royal Sovereign, as the accoutrements of a capricious lady!" and perhaps it requires not much more time to equip and rig-out a ship for the Indies, than a whimsical madam, when she is to sail in state with all her flags, streamers, pennons, bound for a court-voyage. With less labour did Adam give names to all the creatures in Paradise, than an attire-herald shall give you the nomenclature of all the trinkets that belong to a lady's closet. And yet all this is but to consume a whole morning to put on [that], which must waste the whole evening to put off.

**DIRECT. VI.** *Suit your apparel to the day of God's providence, and to the day of his ordinances.*—There is a day wherein God calls aloud for "baldness;" and do we cross his design with ranting periwigs? Does he bespeak "sackcloth," and are we in our silks and satins? (Isai. xxii. 12, 13.) How absurd is it to appear in the high rant, like Zimri with his Cozbi, when the church of Christ is mourning before the Lord! (Num. xxv.) And yet more incongruous [is it], when God calls, and they that fear his name answer his call,—in a day of solemn fasting and prayer, afflicting their souls before him, and

\* HERBERT'S "Church Porch."



accepting the punishment of their sins,—for a gallant to come ruffling into the assembly, as if he designed only his diversion, and to trifle out a tedious, painful hour, till he may adjourn his little self, with all his splendid equipage, to the devotion of the play-house. Thus did the builders of Babel answer each other, when vengeance had poured confusion on their hearts and tongues,—[one] reaching the hammer when his fellow called for the axe : and thus do we answer our God, who calls for “weeping and mourning,” and we return mirth and jollity and gorgeous apparel.

God by an express law granted this privilege to the new-married man,—that for a twelvemonth he should be exempted from the wars. (Deut. xxiv. 5.) And yet though this indulgence held good when the country was in danger of invasion, no exemption was to be pleaded when the church was exposed to God’s indignation. Then “call a solemn assembly : gather the people, sanctify the congregation : let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.” (Joel ii. 15, 16.) There was no discharge in this war.

But how well was it resented \* by Heaven, when—at the denunciation of the Divine displeasure against Israel, that he would “not go up” with them—“the people mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments!” (Exod. xxxiii. 3, 4.)

**DIRECT. VII.** *In all apparel, keep a little above contempt, and somewhat more below envy.*—He that will veer nigh either extreme, shall never avoid offence, either for sordidness or superfluity. Let not your garments smell either of antiquity or novelty. Shun as much an affected gravity as a wanton levity : there may be as much pride in adhering to the antique garbs of our ancestors, as there is in courting the modern fooleries. A plain cleanliness is the true medium between sluttishness and gaudiness. Truth commonly lies in the middle between the hot contenders, virtue in the middle between the extreme vices, and decency of apparel in the middle between the height of the fashion and a mere running-counter and opposition. Only because our corrupt hearts are more prone to the excess than the defect, I laid the rule, to keep a little more below envy than above contempt.

**DIRECT. VIII.** *Let the ornament of the inward man be your rule for the adorning [of] the outward.*—Take measure of your bodies by your souls ; that is, Consider well what graces, excellences, and virtues will adorn a soul ; and let something analogical be made the trimming for the body. The apostle will have “women adorn themselves in modest apparel ;” (1 Tim. ii. 9 ; ) and especially the graver sort, “that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness ;” (Titus ii. 3 ; ) *ἡ κατὰ στήματι ἱεροπρεπείς* ; which the Tigurine Version renders, *in habitu qui religionem deceat*, “in such a habit as becomes religion ;” and Beza, *in habitu qui sanctimoniam deceat*, “in such a habit as becomes holiness.” Now it may be inquired, “What ! is apparel capable of modesty or immodesty, of holiness or unholiness ?” But the meaning is, The garment, the manner of dressing or wearing, must be such as indicates and discovers such qualities lodging in the

\* See note †, p. 117.—EDIT.

soul. And indeed if we could get the soul suitably adorned, it would cut out, make up, put on, and wear suitable ornaments. The apostle Peter commands us all to "be clothed with humility." (1 Peter v. 5.) Humility is a very proper wear for a sinner: and if the soul be thus clothed, you may trust her to clothe the body. When the inward man is new-framed and new-fashioned, let it alone to frame and fashion the outward attire. The Platonists say that *anima format sibi domicilium*, "it is the soul that forms its house to dwell in:" and she that is so rare an architect as to build the house, will take care that it be conveniently tiled.

**DIRECT. IX.** *Get the heart mortified, and that will mortify the habit.*—Let grace circumcise that, and that will circumcise the long hair and sweeping train, with all the impertinent superfluities that wait on vain-glory. Heal the heart of its inward pride, and that will retrench the excesses of the outward. I do not wonder that we find it so difficult to convince idle women, that these gaieties and extravagancies of curled hair, painting, and patching, are sinful, when we cannot convince them of the evil of impenitency and unbelief.

The most compendious way of reforming persons, families, nations, and churches, is to begin at and deal with the heart; as the shortest way to fell the tree is by sound blows at the root. Could we lay the axe to heart-pride, the branches would fall, the leaves wither, the fruit fade, with one and the same labour. It is an endless labour to demolish this castle of pride by beginning at the top: undermine the foundation, and all the glory of the superstructure falls with it. As a pure living spring will work itself clean from all the accidental filth that is thrown into it from without, so the cleansing of the heart will cleanse the rest. And when the Spirit of Christ shall undertake this work,—to convince the soul effectually of sin, of the sin of nature, and the nature of sin,—all these little appendices and appurtenances of vanity will fall and drop of course. For this was our blessed Saviour's method: "Cleanse the inside of the cup or platter, and the outside will be clean also." (Matt. xxiii. 26.) And if we could (as supernatural grace only can) "make the tree good," the fruit would be good by consequence. (Matt. xii. 33.)

**DIRECT. X.** *Whatever fashions of apparel you have found a temptation to your own souls when worn by others, in prudence avoid them.*—You may reasonably suspect, that what has been a snare to you, will be so to another. For though all are not guilty of the same actual sins, yet all have the same seeds of sins in them; and what has awakened your pride and lust, may awaken the same corruptions in your neighbour.

**DIRECT. XI.** *Let all your indifferences be brought under the government and guidance of religion.*—Indifferent things in their general natures are neither good nor evil; but when religion has the main stroke in managing and ordering them, it will make them good and not evil. Advise with God's glory what you shall eat, what you shall drink, and what you shall put on; that will teach us to deny ourselves in some particulars of our Christian liberty: "Whether ye eat,

or drink, or whatsoever ye do" else, "do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.) Than which, all the masters of the art of eating, all the mistresses of the science of dressing, cannot give you a more approved directory.

**DIRECT. XII.** *Use all these indifferent things with an indifferent affection to them, an indifferent concern for them and about them.*—Treat them, value them, as they deserve. Clothes commend us not to God, nor to wise and good men: why are we then so solicitous about them, as if the kingdom of God lay in them? The apostle, in consideration that "the time is short," would have us "use this world as not abusing it," because "the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. vii. 29, 31.) Yet a little while, and there will be no use, because no need, of them. But God and the world are commonly of contrary judgments; and "that which is highly esteemed among men is" oftentimes an "abomination in the sight of God." (Luke xvi. 15.) Lukewarmness is a temper hot enough for what is neither good nor evil. How great, then, is our sin, who are stone-cold in those matters wherein God would have us "fervent in spirit;" but where he would have us cool and moderate, all of a flame!

**DIRECT. XIII.** *Lastly. Seek that honour chiefly which comes from God only.*—The world is never so wise or so good that we should much value its good word or approbation, but oftentimes so bad and foolish that its commendation is our reproach. What evil have we done, that an evil world should speak well of us? To be accounted honourable by Him, and made beautiful by Him, is true honour, real beauty. In his judgment stands our absolution or condemnation; in his sentence, our life or death; to Him and by Him we stand or fall. (Rom. xiv. 4.) What a wretched honour is it that we receive from apparel, which is no part of ourselves, and for which we are beholden to the trivial skill of a tailor, or attire-woman! But the true reason of the affectation of these vanities lies in that of our Saviour: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John v. 44.)

CONSIDERATIONS TO PRESS TO SUCH A CAUTELOUS WALKING,  
THAT WE PARTAKE NOT IN THE SINFULNESS OF STRANGE  
APPAREL.

1. Let us seriously consider, *how apparel came into the world.*—"Sin brought-in shame, and shame brought-in apparel, and apparel has at last brought-in more sin and shame."\* The old riddle has here found an Œdipus:—

*Mater me genuit; peperit mox filia matrem.*

In the state of primitive integrity, man was clothed with original righteousness. He wore the glorious "image of Him that created him in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." (Col. iii. 10;

\* This translation, though partaking of paraphrase, conveys a correct meaning of the Latin verse; which occurs in another form, and with a shorter version, in page 439 of "the Morning Exercises," vol. i.—EDIT.

Eph. iv. 24.) But sin has now stripped him of his glory, and exposed his shame to the view of God, his Judge. How great, then, is that pride, when we are proud of what should abase us! how vile that glory, that glories in its shame? It was good advice of Chrysostom: Ἡ τῶν ἱματιῶν περιβολὴ ὑπομνησις ἡμῖν γενεσθῶ διηνεκῆς τῆς τε τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐκπτώσεως, καὶ τῆς τιμωρίας διδασκαλία ἦν διὰ τὴν παρακλήν το τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος ἐδεξάτο.\* “Let the wearing of our apparel be a perpetual memorial to us of the good things we have lost, and an instruction what penalties mankind is liable to by disobedience.” For, as Gregory Nazianzen reasons, Εἰ μὲν ἦμεν ὡς ἀρχῆς ἐγενόμεθα, οὐκ ἂν πάντως τοῦ δερματινοῦ χιτωνοῦ προσεδεθήμεν, ἐπιλαμπουσης ἡμῖν τῆς πρὸς τὸ Θεῖον ὁμοιωσεως.† “If,” says he, “we had continued the same [as] we were at first created, we had had no need of a coat of skins, the divine image shining in our souls.” And therefore Chrysostom’s inference is very clear: Τα ἱματῖα οὐχ ἵνα καλλωπιζώμεθα δεδοται, ἀλλ’ ἵνα τὴν ἀπο τῆς γυμνοτήτος αἰσχυνὴν κρυπτάμεν.‡ “Clothes were not given us to set forth our beauty, but to cover that shame that proceeded from nakedness.” But Tertullian excellently prosecutes this argument: *Si tanta in terris moraretur fides, quanta in cælis merces ejus expectatur, nulla omnino vestrum, sorores, ex quo Deum cognovisset, et de eâ, id est, femina, conditione didicisset, lætiores habitum, ne dicam gloriosiores, appetisset; ut non magis in sordibus ageret, et squalorem potius affectaret, ipsam circumferens Evam lugentem et pœnitentem, quod plenius quod de Evâ trahit (ignominiam dico primi delicti, et invidiam perditionis humanæ) omni satisfactionis habitu expiaret*:§ “If there was as much faith on earth as there is reward for it in heaven, there is none of you, since the time she knew God and understood her own condition, that would have affected a joyful, much less a splendid, garb; but rather have lien in sackcloth and ashes, carrying about her an Eve within, that laments and repents; that so she might compensate with the most mortified habit that [which] she derived from the first Eve; I mean, the scandal of the first sin, and the odium of having been the ruin of mankind.” Alas! what pleasure could we take in these vanities, did we consider them as the effect of so sad a cause? And what would the gold of Ophir, the pearls of the ocean, the jewels of the Indies, signify to a soul that was taken up with reflections on its exile from Paradise and the loss of God’s image?

2. It deserves to be laid to heart, *how we came into the world, how we must go out, and how we shall rise again.*—Holy Job confessed, that when he was reduced to beggary, he was somewhat better than when he was born: “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither;” (Job i. 21;) that is, to the earth, the common mother of us all. And we may add, “Naked shall I rise again. I shall see my Redeemer at the last day with these eyes, but, I hope, not in these clothes.” (Job xix. 25—27.) And so the apostle: “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we

\* *Homilia xviii. in Genes.*

† *Oratio de Morte.*

‡ *Tom. vi. p. 241.*

§ *De Habitu Mulierum, in initio.*

can carry nothing out." (1 Tim. vi. 7.) And why then all this ado to spruce-up a rotten carcass for the short time that we are to tarry here? We brought nothing in, but filth and guilt; and if we carry out these, we had better never have come in. Naked we came hither; and if we go naked hence, it had been better to have stayed behind. To what end, then, all this waste? and all this superfluous cost is but waste. A little will serve nature; less will serve grace; but nothing will satisfy lust. A small matter would serve *him* for his passage and pilgrimage that has God for his portion: any thing would suffice for this short parenthesis of time, were we but well harnessed out for eternity. Consider, Christians! God has provided "meats for the belly, and the belly for meats;" clothes for the body, and the body for clothes: but God will "destroy" them all, as for those low ends and uses for which nature or vanity does now employ them. (1 Cor. vi. 13.) Therefore, says the apostle, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." (1 Tim. vi. 8.) Simple food, plain apparel, will answer all the demands of nature; and what is more than this is either evil, or comes of evil, or leads to evil. If it be food, nature is satisfied; inquire no further: acknowledge God in it, crave his blessing on it, bless him for it, and glorify him with it. If it be raiment, inquire no further; God sent it, he indulged it; own his bounty, and bless the Donor. Neither the length of life, nor the comfort of life, consists in the abundance of what thou enjoyest. (Luke xii. 15.) And how do you expect to rise again at the last day? It was an affectionate speech of Tertullian: *Atque utinam miserimus ego, in illo die Christianæ exultationis, vel inter calcanea vestra, caput elevem, videre in cum cerussâ et purpurisso et croco et in illo ambitu capitis resurgatis; an depictam angelî in nebula sublevent obviam Christo:* \* "I would to God such a miserable sinner as I might rise up in the day of the Christians' general triumphing, to see whether you will rise again with your white, red, and yellow painted faces, with your curls, towers, and periwigs; or whether the ministering angels will take up in their arms any painted lady to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds."

3. And let it have a just place in your consideration, to humble you, that *God once borrowed man's greatest bravery from the beasts.*—He made them "coats of skins." (Gen. iii. 21.) That he clothed them, spoke his mercy; that he clothed them with skins, intimated their vileness. Now, have we since that mended the matter, who borrow our choicest materials for clothing from the excrement of a worm? If man himself (in the notion of the philosopher) and his life be but *ὄναρ σκιάς*, "the dream of a shadow," and his clothing the excrement of a worm; I wonder how he can be proud of it, or draw matter of pride from it. "A shadow" is nothing; "a dream of a shadow" is something less than nothing: and yet such is man. A worm is vile; but the excrement of a worm is the vilest vileness: and such is all the glory of man in his ruff and pageantry. Nay, man himself is no better: "Man, that is a worm; and the son of

\* *De Cultu Feminarum.*

man, which is a worm?" (Job xxv. 6 :) מְנוּשׁ רָמַחַ וּבֶן-אָדָם מוֹלֵעָה  
 Here are two words rendered "man:" the one signifies "sickness and misery;" the other, "earth and dust." And here are two words rendered "worm:" the one comes from a root that signifies "to lift up the head;" the other signifies "purple and scarlet:" to teach us that man at his best state, when he lifts up his head highest, is but a wretched worm. Some are longer, some are brighter, worms than others; some, perhaps, may be glow-worms; but all are worms, earth-worms, clothed by the worms, and at last shall be a feast for worms. Art thou proud of thy make? Remember, thou art but a worm? Art thou proud of thy outward shape? Remember, thou art a debtor still to the worms; and be proud if thou canst. Only know that "man that is in honour, and understandeth not" who made him, why He made him, and that answers not the ends of his Creator in his creation, "is like the beasts that perish." (Psalm xlix. 20.)

4. Let it have its due weight in your hearts, that *you have another man, a new man, an inner man, to clothe, to adorn, beautify, and maintain.*—Think not, with the atheist of Malmesbury, that you have enough to do to maintain one man well; for you have two. And shall all the care, all the cost, be bestowed on the case, the cabinet, the shell, when the jewel is neglected? Think with yourselves, when you are harnessing out for some sumptuous feast, when the "gold ring and the gay clothing" go on, to conciliate respect in the eyes of others: "Have I on my wedding-garment? Am I ready for the marriage of the Lamb? Have I on the white garment, 'that the shame of my nakedness appear not' before a pure and holy God?" (Rev. iii. 18.) Look into the gospel-wardrobe: Christ has provided complete apparel to clothe you, as well as complete armour to defend you; and he commands you to put on both. Would you have a chain for your neck, which outshines the gold of Peru; or a tiara for your head, which shames that of the Persian kings? "Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother;" and you have it. (Prov. i. 8, 9.) Would you have clothing of wrought gold, and wear those robes [which] "the King's daughter" glories in, when she is brought-in to the King of glory, that he may take pleasure in her beauty? (Psalm xlv. 11—13.) Would you wear that jewel "which in the sight of God is of great price," beyond those celebrated ones of Augustus or Tiberius? Then get "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." (1 Peter iii. 4.) Would you have that which dazzles the diamond, and disparages the orient pearl? "Adorn" your souls "with modesty, shamefacedness, sobriety, and good works, as women professing godliness." (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.) Would you have the whole furniture of the gospel? You have it provided by the apostle: First "put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, lying." (Col. iii. 8; Eph. iv. 25.) "Anger" ferments to "wrath," "wrath" boils up to "malice," "malice" swells up to "blasphemy," and all these break out into "lying." And "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,

bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." (Col. iii. 12, 13.) And, for an upper garment, "be clothed with humility:" (1 Peter v. 5 :) and that your clothes may not sit loose and indecently on you, but close and fast, gird yourselves with the girdle of truth. (Eph. vi. 14.) And would you have all in one? Then "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. xiii. 14.) This is the counsel of eloquent Chrysostom: *Εἶδε τὴν οἰκουμένην γυμνὴν ὁ σαματι γυμνὴν, ἀλλ' ἀρετῆς γεγυμνωμένην. Εἶδε τὸ πλάσμα ὁ ἐκλάσσε, καὶ ἤλεθσεν ὁ ἐποίησε· καὶ διδάσιν ἐνδύμα τοῖς γυμνοῖς ἑαυτον.\** "God looked down from heaven, and saw the whole world naked ; not naked as to the body, but despoiled of virtue. He saw the sin that they had committed, and he had mercy on them in the transgression they had transgressed ; and to these miserable naked ones he bestowed a garment, even himself."

Here, then, is your real ornament, your truly gorgeous apparel ; if you have but faith to apply it, skill to use it, decently to put it on, and comely to wear it. In a word: would you have the faithful mirror, that will impartially discover all your spots, all your stains, and help you to judge whether they be "the spots of his children," (Deut. xxxii. 5,) such as are consistent with the truth and power of godliness ; and which will not only reveal them, but wash them away? Then take the glass of God's word ; therein view and dress your souls every day : but be sure you forget not what manner of persons that glass has represented you to your own consciences ; but "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James i. 22—24.)

5. Nor let it be forgotten, *who they were in all ages, recorded for the most curious and profuse in the mystery of ornamentals.*—We find Jezebel "painting her face, and tiring her head," and immediately eaten by the dogs ; only, out of civility or loathing, they left some fragments of her abominable carcass. (2 Kings ix. 30—37.) Amongst the rest, I could wish her skull were set in a ring, to serve as a death's-head, to mind our painting ladies of their mortality. The prophet Ezekiel represents the spiritual whoredoms of Judah under the terms of their corporeal luxury : "For whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments." (Ezek. xxiii. 40.) That great nothing, Bernice, had got a stock of impudence, that she durst face a court of judicature ; and "came," *μετὰ πολλῆς φαντασίας*, "with abundance of pomp and fantastical bravery." (Acts xv. 23.) We must not forget that great strumpet, Cleopatra, who wore an union, or pearl, worth fifty thousand pounds ; which in a prodigal frolic and bravado she dissolved in vinegar, and in a glass of wine drank off at one draught. And it might cool the fervour of our ladies to their braveries, when they read of "a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls ;" and presently hear that she was "the Mother of Harlots." (Rev. xvii. 3—5.) And when

\* *Homilia evi. de Christo.*

Platina, their own historian, informs us, that Pope Paul II. painted his face, (a shame in a woman, a greater in a man, and yet greater in him that would be styled "the head of the catholic church,") I hope they will not condemn the Protestants of incivility, if they now and then style his successors "the Whore of Babylon." St. Jerome tells us that Maximilla, the pretended prophetess, but really the whore of Montanus, painted her eyes with *stibium*. And history rings with the effeminate luxury of the monster of men, Heliogabalus, who never wore one suit twice, and studded his shoes with pearls and diamonds. Poppæa, the infamous wife of execrable Nero, had the bridles and all the furniture of her mules of pure gold; and with the same metal, or at least silver, were they shod. But let these be patterns, not to provoke your imitation, but stir up your indignation.

6. *And how heinous is that sin, to endeavour to procure the acceptance of men by that which is an abomination to God!*—And must it not highly provoke his Majesty, to see the critics of artificial beauty put out God's work in a second edition, *auctiorem, non emendatiorem*;\* as if it had been incomplete as it came first out of God's hands? Yet such is the operose study of our fashionists: what nature made black, they will make white; what age has made white, they will have black. Time has made them bald, but by false hair they will restore youth; as if they would commit a rape upon nature, alter her course, make rivers run up to their fountains. God gave thee short hair; but thou, perverse man, wilt cross him, and make it long; and what thou canst not really do, yet thou wilt pretend to do, and counterfeit, at least, contradiction and opposition to his will: the worst sort of hypocrisy certainly in the world, when men would seem more wicked than they are, nay, than they can be! and because neither nature gave nor God allows this extravagant length of mane, they will supply nature by art, to the affront of God! St. Jerome smartly rubs these painted butterflies: *Hæc ad speculum pingitur, et in contumeliam Creatoris conatur pulchrior esse quam nata est.*† "Here is a lady," says he, "that paints her face by the advice of her glass; and, to the reproach of her Creator, would appear fairer in the eyes of men than ever nature made her." How displeasing is it to God, to be displeased with what he has done, that they may please the worst of men! *Displicet illis nimirum plastica Dei*:‡ "They are angry with, or ashamed of, God's handy-work," who, in Cyprian's language, may disown these wretches for any of his handy-work. *Hæc non sunt membra quæ Deus fecit, sed quæ diabolus infecit*:§ "These are not the limbs, the members, which God made; but such as the devil has marred and metamorphosed."

I know, both painting and periwigs have their palliations and excuses:—

(1.) They that ruffle in their waving perukes, and look like the locusts that "came out of the smoke of the bottomless pit," whose "faces were as the faces of men, and they had hair as the hair of

\* "With many additions, but no emendations."—EDIT.

† *Adversus Helvidium.*

‡ TERTULLIANUS.

§ CYPRIANUS.



women;" (Rev. ix. 8;) do plead that they wear them upon good advice, for their health's sake, to divert catarrhs, to prevent consumptions.

ANSWER (i.) And is it indeed so, that the nation is become almost one great hospital? Are the generality of men among us just dropping into consumptions? Then what other lust, what debauchery, has introduced a sinful necessity, and then taught them to plead it? But is it not evident, that the corruption is much larger than the pretended occasion? (ii.) But if cutting off the hair be in some degree useful for that end, are periwigs therefore so? Can no other thing substitute the place of hair, but such a vanity? (iii.) But if this vanity be any ways useful, what does the curling contribute to it? and what does the change of the colour conduce to that effect? Is it no colour but one contrary to the natural, that will do the deed? Or if it must be so, what does the immoderate length signify to that end? How much more ingenuous had it been, to have confessed the sin, and yet persisted in it, than to palliate it with such slender, thin excuses!

(2.) They that are for painting the face, do plead [that] they, good women, do it only to please their husbands, that they may keep a room in their affections, now grown old, and not so taking as in their youthful and florid days. And they think they have a clear text that will justify their pious intentions: "She that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband." (1 Cor. vii. 34.)

To which I answer, with Peter Martyr, *Curent ut velint placere maritis; modò id faciant citra fictionem et mendacium; et de seipsis cogitent, an vellent decipi et falli, ut pro viro pulchro et formoso ducerent fœdum et deformem*:\* "Let them do so with all my heart; let them strive to please their husbands: but be sure they do not cheat and abuse him, whilst they please him. For let them make it their own case: would they be so choused as to marry a deformed, ill-looking fellow, whom they took for a handsome and beautiful person?" "An understanding man," as Chrysostom, "would see his wife's face as God made it. And," says he, "when women have once taught their husbands, to be in love with painted faces, they will rather send them to professed whores, than tie them closer to themselves; because common harlots are a thousand times more expert in these adulterations than honest women." And if it be a sin to sophisticate and adulterate wares and merchandise, how much more to paint the face! And Austin, in express: *Fucari pigmentis quo mulier vel candidior vel rubicundior appareat, adulterina fallacia est, quâ etiam ipsos maritos non dubito nolle decipi*: † "For a woman to paint her face, that she may appear either more fair or more ruddy, is an adulterating fallacy; and I am confident, husbands would not willingly have such a trick put upon them." To conclude: if the husband be a wicked man, he will suspect his wife's honesty the more, and be tempted *par pari referre* ["to return like for like"]:

\* *Loci Communes*, p. 383.

† *Epistola ad Possidium*.

if a good man, he will need none of these artifices to secure his affections, but out of conscience will acquiesce in his own choice and the law and will of God.

7. And weigh it seriously, *what a long train of sins waits upon this stately lady, vain-glory.*—Pride never walks the streets alone, nor without a vast retinue of lusts to adorn her pageantry. He that will be profuse in one instance, must be covetous in another: riotous spending is accompanied with penurious sparing. A great fire must have great store of fuel to feed it; and an open table requires abundance of provision to maintain it. Pride must be maintained by oppression, fraud, cozenage. If the tradesman's wife lashes it out in the streets, the husband must fetch it in one way or other in the shop: they that spend unmercifully, must gain unconscionably. The mill will not grind, unless some lust brings grist unto it. A gentleman anticipates his rents in the country: he comes up to town, to vamp his lady and fine daughters with the newest fashion. He ransacks the court and city for the fashion, searches the shops for materials to furnish out the pomp. He returns home; and then his poor tenants go to rack: the sweat is squeezed out of their brows, the blood screwed out of their veins, the marrow out of their bones, that they may pay the unconscionable reckonings and monstrous bills that his own prodigality has drawn upon him.

Nor is it one single sin that fills the train of pride. God is robbed of his worship, the poor of their charity, the creditor of his just debts, posterity of those portions which parents are bound to lay up for their children. Pride drinks the tears of widows and orphans, revels with the hard labours of the indigent, feeds on the flesh of thousands. Elegantly Tertullian: *Brevissimis oculis patrimonium grande profertur; uno lino decies sestertium inseritur; saltus et insulas tenera cervix fert; graciles aurium cutes calendarium expendunt*:\* “A vast estate is enclosed in one small locket; a necklace of almost eight thousand pounds hangs on one single string; a slender neck carries lordships and manors; and the thin tip of the ear wears a jewel or pendant that would defray the charges of housekeeping for a twelvemonth.” This is the evil of what the apostle calls *ἰματισμὸς πολυτελῆς*, “costly apparel.” (1 Tim. ii. 9.)

8. *And how many precious souls hath this one vanity destroyed or endangered!*—Not with meat, but—which is more sinful, because less necessary—with superfluous apparel. How oft has thy own clothing been thy own temptation! as the proud horse is made more proud with his bells and trappings. Is it not enough [that] we have a devil to tempt us, but we must be so to ourselves? How often has apparel drawn out the seeds of corruption, which else had lien under the clod, and never sprouted! How often has it blown up the sparks of concupiscence, which else had lien buried under the ashes! Is not Satan malicious enough, subtle enough, but we must do his work for him, or render it more feasible?

And how do you endanger the souls of others! Wicked men are

\* *De Habitu Mulierum.*

hardened in their pride by your example: they triumph in you as their converts and proselytes: they glory that the professor is now "become as one of" them. Others are tempted to think all religion a cheat, when it cannot prevail with those that pretend to it to deny *one* vanity, when it professes to deny *all*. Who can expect [that] a man should deny his profit and gain, that cannot deny an expensive and chargeable foolery? Or how will that man deny himself in the bulk, when he cannot refuse the blandishment of so small a branch of it? And how many poor innocent souls, perhaps a little inclinable to entertain better thoughts of religion, have been seduced to unchaste thoughts, designs, and actions! Nay, how many may be in hell, whom thy bewitching, whorish attire hath first drawn into sin, and then sent down to hell! Say not, (if thou art a Christian, thou wilt not say it,) "I will use my liberty, and wear what I judge convenient: if others will take offence and stumble, it is their sin, not mine; the offence is taken, not given. If they took an occasion, I gave them no cause; and therefore let them be damned at their own peril." But didst thou know—or seriously consider what thou knowest—the price of a soul's redemption, thou wouldest not hazard its damnation. "Silver and gold" and "corruptible things" may damn a soul, but could not ransom and recover a soul. (1 Peter i. 18.) What a cut would it be to thy heart, couldest thou lay thine ear to the gates of hell, and hear the roarings, cursings, and blasphemies of that miserable crew; how they blaspheme Divine Justice, curse themselves and, amongst others, thyself, that wast an occasion to send them thither, with thy tempting braveries! Hear Tertullian: *Quid igitur in te excitas malum illud? &c.*: "Why, then, dost thou provoke lust in thy own heart?" *Quid autem alteri periculo sumus? &c.*: "Why do we endanger the souls of others?" *Qui præsumit, minus veretur, minus præcavet, plus periclitatur: timor fundamentum salutis est, præsumptio impedimentum timoris*:\* "He that presumes, fears little, uses little precaution, and runs into great danger. Fear is the original of security, but presumption the enemy to fear."

I easily grant that there is a great difference between a cause and an occasion of evil. A cause is much more than an occasion; yet is not the latter so small and light a matter but that many of God's weighty laws were grounded on this,—that the occasion of sin in themselves and others might be avoided. The civil law determines, that if archers, shooting at rovers, should kill a man passing on the road, they shall make satisfaction; that they who dig pit-falls to catch wild beasts, if accidentally a man falls into them, they shall be punished; and that he shall be severely punished that, being set to watch a furnace, falls asleep, whence a scarefire ariseth. But the New Testament is very full: we are not to lay a stumbling-block nor an occasion of offence, nor to use our liberty in that wherein our "weak brother is offended." (Rom. xiv. 13, 21.)

9. Lastly. Let us lay it to heart, that *pride is the forerunner of destruction, whether personal, domestical, or national.*—"Pride goeth

\* *De Cultu Feminarum, in initio.*

before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall :” (Prov. xvi. 18 :) a truth so obvious to the observation of Heathens, that Seneca could say,—

*Quem dies vidit veniens superbum,  
Hunc dies vidit fugiens jacentem.*—*Thyestes*, act. iii. 611.\*

There is the pride of the rich, who “boast themselves in the multitude of their riches ;” (Psalm xlix. 6 ;) there is the pride of the ambitious, who swell with titles and dignities ; and there is the childish pride of women and effeminate men, who glory in apparel. And though this last may seem below the notice of the Divine Nemesis, [vengeance,] yet these light and small things draw down great and heavy judgments. What more trifling and ludicrous than those fopperies mentioned in Isai. iii. 18—23 ? “Their tinkling ornaments ;” as if they would imitate morris-dancers or hobby-horses : “their round tires like the moon ;” an emblem of their lunacy and levity : their “nose-jewels ;” very uncomely, sure, in such Epicurean swine. And though many of them seem to be innocent, as “bonnets, ear-rings, and mantles ;” yet God threatens “that instead of sweet smell there shall be a stink ; and instead of a girdle a rent ; and instead of well-set hair baldness ; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth ; and burning instead of beauty.” (Verse 24.) All which threatenings were punctually accomplished in the Babylonish captivity, whither God sent them, to spare the cost and trouble of fetching home their new fashions, their “strange apparel.”

Archbishop Usher and Mr. Bolton, two great lights of our church, have long since forewarned us, that God would punish England by that nation which we were so ambitious to imitate in their fashions of apparel. And how much is the ground of fear increased since their days ! The plague is never more easily conveyed than in clothes ; and it is to be feared that, with their strange, apish fashions, we have imported their vicious manners, if not their idolatries. The degeneracy of the Romans in this point prognosticated their declining greatness ; and there is no more easy observation than that, when a people cease to be great in generous and noble achievements, they begin to affect this trim way of glory by apparel.

But I must conclude. The use and application must be your own. This sermon will never be complete, till you have preached it over to your souls by meditation, and to the world by a thorough reformation. And if you slight this advice and counsel, yet remember the text, however :—that God “in the day of his sacrifice will punish all such as are clothed with strange apparel.”

\* “The morn beheld him vain and proud ;  
The night, enveloped in his shroud !”—EDIT.

## SERMON XXII.

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HOW MAY CHILD-BEARING WOMEN BE MOST ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED AGAINST, IN, AND UNDER THE HAZARD OF THEIR TRAVAIL?

*Notwithstanding she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.—*  
1 Timothy ii. 15.

THAT I may, with all Christian tenderness, give a satisfactory answer to that practical case, of concernment to be resolved, for the sake of fruitful pious wives, whose manifold sorrows call for the best aids, namely, "How may child-bearing women be most encouraged and supported against, in, and under the hazard of their travail?"—I shall, by God's assistance, according as I am able, with some respect to the time allotted for this exercise, open and apply this notable text [which] I have read to you.

To find out the true importance of which words, it will be requisite to cast an eye upon the foregoing part of the chapter; wherein the apostle exhorteth all Christians to pray for persons of all ranks; (verses 1, 2, 8;) and particularly Christian women to practise answerable to their profession of godliness, instructing them about their deportment in church-assemblies, and at home; (verses 9, 10;) both in reference to *their habits*, that they be modest, without excess in their apparel and dress; and to *their actions*, which they are, 1. Enjoined; namely, to hear with silence and subjection: (verse 11;) 2. Forbidden; namely, to teach, because that were "to usurp authority over the man," which the woman's posteriority in the creation, and priority in the transgression, do not allow of, (verses 12—14,) but, on the contrary, bring her, by whom her husband was deceived, into subjection and child-bearing sorrow with the fruit of her womb. For though Adam was first formed, Eve first sinned, and so infested all with original sin. However, as one notes,\* the opposition is not to be considered of the thing, but in respect of the order, that the sense might be, "Adam was not *first* seduced, but the woman," agreeing with the scope foregoing. Yet that the female sex at home may not despond under the sense of that suffering which Eve's forwardness to sin had more especially brought upon them, the apostle here, in these heartening words, prepares a most sweet and strengthening spiritual cordial, for the cheering up of all good women; and the clearing

\* TESTARDUS *De Naturâ et Gratiâ*. Theſ. 20.

of their eyes from fumes in fainting-fits. And therein it eminently concerns child-bearing ones to copy out the most approved receipt in the comfortable expressions of the Gentile Doctor: That though they breed and bear children with much trouble, which may argue God's displeasure in his sentence, and is indeed a consequent of the first sin,—which they are very sensible of in the antecedents, concomitants, and consequents of their sore labour, that may (as it sometimes hath done in Rachel, and Phinehas's wife, &c.) bring their bodies or their babes (if not both) to the grave,—yet the pains shall be sanctified, and be no obstacle to their welfare; their souls shall be safely delivered.

The “notwithstanding,” in the front of the text, doth, methinks, rhetorically usher-in a comfortable answer to a tacit objection which might arise in the minds of those women who were, without sufficient reason, but too much addicted to a single life, or over-fearful of a married state, partly from the sorrow upon conception and in child-bearing, and partly from that kind of subjection in conversation which, with more reluctancy, the apostasy of the woman, and there-upon the sentence denounced against her, did introduce. For “the wisdom from above,” according to the tenor of the new covenant, thus sweetly and graciously resolves the doubt: That if a woman's subjection in conversation be sanctified, her sorrow upon conception shall be sweetened; if her life be holy, though her throes and pangs be grievous, yet she shall have surpassing “joy that a child is born;” and if she dies in child-bearing, her soul will be eternally happy. So that, in the doleful state and hard condition of child-bearing pain, whereinto the apostasy of Eve hath brought her, (whose sex the Levitical law supposeth to be under greater weakness and uncleanness, Lev. xii. 5, 8,) which makes even Christian married wives more suspicious and fearful upon their conception, here is a ground of good hope, [that] all shall go well with them, who may hence take encouragement as to their temporal safe deliverance, (even as to any other temporal good thing,) in the due exercise of Christian graces. Yea, and here is matter of great support and strong consolation,\* which may alleviate those pinching sorrows, considering that their eternally-safe deliverance cannot be hindered, but rather promoted, thereby.

It is plain, then, we have, in these excellent words, implied and expressed, these two things: as,

I. *A woman's weakness by the fall*, implied to be a more uneasy subjection, and child-bearing: so,

II. *Her support and strength*, as to the ground of it, by grace expressed, both *in respect to the end*, by removing the impediment; (she shall be preserved and saved notwithstanding;) *and way or means*, by continuance in grace, or keeping her ornament, to evidence her title; and that shines with the four jewels of “Faith, Charity, Holiness, and Sobriety.”

I. *That the woman's weakness by the fall, is here implied to be a more uneasy subjection, and painful child-bearing*, may be apparent

\* DANÆUS, JUNIUS et TREMELLIUS *in loc.*

from the precedent verses.—For it should seem, before the fall, when there was an admirable harmony in the whole frame of nature, woman should have bred and brought forth with easiness; and her subjection to the authority of her husband should have been more liberal, without any remittency or discomfort. Whereas now, since that saddest accident, by reason of the imperfection which ariseth from sin, the woman is, as it were, untuned and inclined to account this inflicted subjection to her husband grievous to her, who had given the worst counsel; and doth find the many illnesses which occur in breeding very troublesome; as also the pangs of the approaching birth very terrible, yea, and sometimes, from the fearful apprehensions she hath of the curse, next to intolerable.\* Yet,

II. The apostle expressly mentions *the woman's support and strength by grace*, in that condition, both *with reference to the end*, preservation and salvation; (“She shall be saved in child-bearing;”) and *the way or means to attain it*: “If they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” Here,

(I.) *As to the end*.—Lest any Christian woman should conceit that those notes of the divine sentence, legible in the pains which fruitful wives underwent in breeding and bearing of children, made the state of marriage less acceptable to God; the apostle, who elsewhere determines it to be “honourable in all, and the bed undefiled,” (Heb. xiii. 4,) doth here labour to prevent such a misconceit, by showing, that child-bearing was so far from being any obstacle to the safety and salvation of good women, that, instead of sustaining loss, they should reap great benefit, if they did demean themselves Christian-like, with patience in bearing those sorrows, and prudence in discharging the duties of their relation, and abiding in their “conversation, only as it becometh the gospel.” (Phil. i. 27.)

The words are, *Σωθησεται δε δια της τεκνογονιας*: “Notwithstanding she shall be saved by child-bearing.” Wherein, for explication, somewhat is to be said of the term “salvation,” the particle “in,” and the compound word “child-bearing.”

1. *Somewhat is to be said of “salvation.”*—“She shall be saved:” which is variously expounded of temporal and eternal salvation; and if I take it in the latitude most comprehensively, as including *both* in due circumstances, yet the former in subordination to the latter, I hope I shall be less obnoxious to an over-hasty censure.

(1.) *There is salvation temporal.*—We find the original word *σωθησεται*, signifying “shall be saved,” so taken in scripture, as connoting temporal preservation, keeping alive in safety, and deliverance from sickness, trouble, and danger; as the woman of the bloody issue, (Luke viii. 43—50,) and Lazarus, (John xi. 12,) the disciples and Peter in a storm, (Matt. viii. 25; xiv. 30, 31,) and the passengers in the ship with Paul, (Acts xxvii. 31,) were saved.

(2.) *There is salvation eternal.*—Which is the most famous signification of the word in the New Testament, being most frequently so

\* *Miserima miseria quod maximo periculo et tantum non moribunda enititur factum.* —LUTHERUS in Gen. iii. 16. “A most deplorable misery, when a woman, at the greatest peril of her life, and in an almost dying condition, is delivered of her offspring.” —EDIT.

used in the future passive, (as here,) connoting deliverance from sin and misery, and an estating in everlasting felicity. (Matt. x. 22; xxiv. 13; Mark xiii. 13; xvi. 16; John x. 9; Acts ii. 21; Rom. ix. 27; x. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 15.) So the believing woman shall obtain the same salvation and heavenly glory that her believing husband shall. Yet, that I may more clearly determine the import of the woman's being saved here in the text, it will be necessary to find out the meaning of,

2. *The particle, or preposition, δια.*—Which we do well translate “in;” since, upon searching into authority, I meet with it, by some or other rendered four ways; namely, “by,” “for,” “from,” and the most as we do, “in.”

(1.) There be who would construe it “by,” as I find amongst some of the Papists, (though Bellarmine\* thinks fit to render it as we do,) and that as noting the cause and merit of saving married women,† while they strain to have matrimony accounted a sacrament conferring grace: ‡ as if the meaning were, “She shall be eternally saved *by* child-bearing,” reckoning this good work as causal of salvation. But how can child-bearing, which is a natural thing, either affect or deserve eternal salvation? Then every strumpet by child-bearing, though she remained impenitent and unmortified all her days, would put in her claim; which were most absurd to conceit. And, as some of the Papists would carry it to advance the merit of good works; if the bearing, yea, and religious bringing up, of children, were the cause and means by which women should be saved, what would become of those pious virgins, yea, wives and widows, who have either proved barren, or, through some other defect, have brought forth no children? It would follow, according to this supposition, that they would be excluded [from] salvation; which yet could not be consistent with what their great Schoolman asserts in celebrating the praises of virginity, “which he extols above matrimony;” § though elsewhere he concludes “matrimony to be meritorious;” || and in his comment on the text, saith, “The woman shall be saved, although she go by generation:” that is, if she marry, and be not a virgin. Whereupon he adds: “This *BY*, implying a repugnancy, imports the augmentation of salvation; as if he had said, *By* the generation of children; for the word of God she shall *rather* or *be more* saved.” But, [to] be sure, however it be difficult to reconcile the Popish authors with themselves, all that come to heaven are truly of God's mere grace meritoriously saved by Christ, in whom there is no distinction of sex or condition; but all believers, “male or female, are one in him,” through whom there is no difference of married or unmarried as to justification and salvation. (Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11.) Some indeed learned Protestants ¶ do interpret “by” with relation

\* *De Matrimonio*, tom. ii. † *Significat hic causam et meritum; scilicet, laborum quos patitur mulier in partu.*—A LAPIDE. “The preposition in this passage signifies the cause and the merit of the labours which the wife endures in parturition.”—EDIT.  
 ‡ *Catechismus Romanus*, p. 368. § *Virginitas est excellentior matrimonio.*—*AQUINAS, Sum. Theolog. Secunda Secunda*, quest. clix. 4. || *Actus matrimonialis semper meritorius.*—*Idem, Suppl. Quest. xli. A. 4.* ¶ D. N. KNATCHBULL followed by DR. HAMMOND.



to child-bearing; as if the apostle did mean by "the bearing or generation of a son," *the Child born*; that is, "the Seed of the woman," namely, Jesus, (Luke i. 31; Gen. iii. 15,) who should bruise the serpent's head, by whom alone Adam and Eve and their posterity should "be saved, if they continue in faith," &c. And so (to pass-by what some of the ancients\* have written allegorically, and less solidly upon the word) Theophylact reports some to have understood it of the Virgin Mary; whom he would not have it restrained to, but rejects that exposition. However, some Papists † would have it understood of her, whom they worship as sinless, ‡ contrary to scripture and right reason. For then the comfort from this scripture would have been appropriated to the Virgin Mary, and to no other woman. But the apostle speaks in this verse of that which is future, and not past, as he had constantly done in the foregoing verses; which will evince also, that the above-said Protestants do not fully reach the sense of Paul here, when they interpret it of the woman's bearing the Seed that had been promised, and which was the mean foretold and fulfilled for bruising the serpent's head, and so for rescuing the woman from that eternal punishment which was justly deserved by her sin. However, they imagine they have a colour for their opinion, from the context; namely, verse 14, "the woman," that is, Eve, "being deceived," was first guilty of eating the forbidden fruit, but was rescued from the punishment by the promised seed, that is, by the Messiah born of her, to redeem that nature [which] he assumed; yet not absolutely, but on condition of "faith," &c., and *continuing* in all these: so the advantage should not only accrue to Eve herself, but to all her posterity. It must be granted as an undoubted truth, that Christ is the Seed of the woman meant in the first promise; the Son (though not immediately) of Eve, "the mother of all men;" (Gen. iii. 16, 20;) he is "the Saviour," by whom alone salvation to eternal glory is attainable. Yet, to restrain this child-bearing in my text only to the bearing of Christ, as it is more novel, so it seems too narrow to reach the apostle's meaning; since, as one notes, § this state is best accommodated to every faithful woman, (as well as Eve, and the blessed Virgin,) continuing constant in the exercise of faith and love of Christ, to promote her own salvation; as anon we shall see the plural in the next clause doth import. And that we may clearly understand the apostle doth here speak of conjugal conversation, he doth expressly name "child-bearing;" not signifying "the child born," but "the act of bearing children," as it is used elsewhere in this very epistle, (1 Tim. v. 14,) and also in profane authors.||

(2.) There be who render this particle ¶ "for," as noting "the final cause wherefore she shall be saved;" \*\* unto this end, namely, that she may procreate, and bear children, and, consequently, if she

\* ORIGEN. in *Matt. et Rom.*; AUGUSTINUS *De Trinitate*, lib. xii. cap. 7, &c.  
 † TIRINUS, &c. ‡ CLARUS BONARSCIUS, *al. SCRIBANIUS*. § ZANCHIUS, tom. iii. lib. 4, p. 727. || HIPPOCRATES in *Epist. ad Demag.*; XENOPHON. ¶ ΔΙΑ, "propter."—EPISCOPIUS. \*\* *Finis servatæ mulieris.*—SCHARPIUS.

continue in the holy exercises following in my text, she shall be eternally saved. But this conceit, so far as I apprehend, wants a sufficient ground for the use of this particle elsewhere in the New Testament, in such a contexture, with a genitive case. And the apostle cannot here be easily understood of *the end wherefore* the woman is saved, since he makes salvation itself the end, and speaks here of the graces with which Christian women are qualified, and their exercises to which they are engaged, as incumbent on them to the attaining of that great end, which is, with a *non obstante*, or "notwithstanding," opposed to the sad consequent of that deception which the woman was first guilty of, and so brought herself and posterity to be obnoxious to. As for Heinsius's\* conjecture, that "child-bearing here notes marriage, which," he saith, "for the scarcity of the Greek, he would have so called from *the principal end of it*, child-bearing," it is a mere fancy, without probable ground, being [seeing] the apostle useth the same compound word in this epistle verbally, as diverse from marriage, though no doubt bearing and bringing-up of children is a very proper and signal office of a married woman.

(3.) Some would have it rendered "from," as noting "the term from which," "out of or through which," the escape or deliverance is made: as it is said of those in the ark, they were saved from the deluge, δι' ὑδάτος, "out of or through the water;" (1 Peter iii. 20;) we in our translation read, "by water;" and elsewhere, "He shall be saved ὡς δια πυρός, so as by fire;" (1 Cor. iii. 15;) that is, as those "from or out of the fire," connoting the difficulty of escaping, and not being consumed. As if the apostle had said, "She shall pass safe 'from or out of child-bearing,' and be delivered 'as a fire-brand out of the burnings.'" (Amos iv. 11.) Yet, as a learned man† thinks, this doth not fully reach the apostle's meaning here, because that which follows in the text doth not seem to be a condition of freedom from the sharp and hazardous pain of child-birth, wherein the visible accidents are common to believing and pagan women; and because, since God's sentence of the woman's bringing forth in sorrow, (Gen. iii. 16,) there hath been no promise, upon any condition, that the pain should be abated. But experience hath taught us, that choice holy women, who have been the Lord's most dear servants, have tasted of the denounced sorrow, as deep as any others; and some of them, as Rachel and Phinehas's wife, expired with their pangs. Another learned critic,‡ mighty in the scriptures, thinks, that to say, "'The woman shall be saved,' although she be compelled to bring forth and bring up children with sorrow, (which thing seems to be an argument of the divine wrath,) is an unusual construction, and more forced resolution." But if by "being saved from or out of" that hazardous condition of "child-bearing," though it otherwise carry the signatures of God's displeasure upon it, import only, that it shall be no impediment to pious women's either temporal or eternal salvation, however difficult that office of breeding and bearing may

\* *In locum.*

† DR. HAMMOND.

‡ GATAKERI *Cinnus*, c. xv. p. 330.

seem to be ; (as the faithful ministers not stopped in their hard province "by honour or dishonour," 2 Cor. vi. 8 ;) but she shall be delivered with God's favour for the best : then it agrees, upon the matter, with,

(4.) Our translating of it "in,"\* consonant to the most orthodox expositors, as not signifying *the cause* or *means* here, but only *the bare order* or *way to the end*, or wherein the issue is attainable. So it is frequently used in the New Testament ; as of going *in* that way ; (Matt. ii. 12 ; vii. 13 ;) believers continuing faithful *in* many afflictions antecedent to their entering into the kingdom of God ; (Acts xiv. 22 ;) "*in* the letter and circumcision," and "*in* uncircumcision ;" (Rom. ii. 27, 29 ; iv. 11 ;) "*in* the body of Christ ;" (Rom. vii. 4 ;) "*in* a parable ;" (Luke viii. 4 ;) "*building the temple in* three days," &c. (Matt. xxvi. 61 ; Rom. xiv. 14, &c.) I might also produce many testimonies from ethnic authors, to the frequent use of this particle in them, (as well as scripture,) to signify *in*.† It is plain here in my text, the apostle doth not discourse of *the cause* of woman's salvation, but suggests that bearing and (taking the word *τεκνογονειν* more largely, 1 Tim. v. 14) bringing up of children, is *the ordinary way* ‡ *wherein* pious wives, apt to be suspicious and fearful, should meet with saving help from God, who would lead them on therein to salvation, which of his free grace through Christ he had designed them to, and prepared for them, who, sensible of the signal marks of the divine sentence, in their child-bed sorrows, are appalled under the dreadful apprehensions of the first woman's guilt, and the sad consequent thereof to all of the same sex, ready to swoon away in despair. For as Abraham was, of God's good pleasure, father of the faithful, δι' ακροβυστίας, "*in* uncircumcision," (Rom. iv. 11,) which could be no cause of begetting faith, or any obstruction to justification ; so any, yea, every godly wife whatever, though not permitted to teach in the church, (as, a little before my text, 1 Tim. ii. 12,) yet in her honest function, employment, and good work of child-bearing travail, allotted to her by the righteous Governor of the world, (Mark xiii. 34,) should in due circumstances be either *temporally saved* ; that is, comfortably delivered from those pains, so that she should "no more remember the anguish, for joy that a man," or one of mankind, "was born into the world," (John xvi. 21,) if God, in his all-wise disposal of persons and things, sees this to be best for her : or else *eternally saved* by God in Christ, ("who commandeth light to shine out of darkness," 2 Cor. iv. 6.) being found in her journey heaven-ward, wherein she goes on with submission to God's disposal, in her proper vocation, office, and duty, for the propagation of mankind. "It is strange, then, that any should take this *causally*, as if here the apostle were opening the cause by which women should be saved ; when rather the cause should have been explained why he chiefly

\* Δία pro εν. † Δι' ἀβυστίας. ["In weakness."]—PLUTARCHUS in *Cesare*. Sic, Δία μεθης. ["In a drunken fit."]—PLATO. Δία φοβου. ["In fear."] Δία πενθους. ["In sadness."]—XENOPHON. ‡ Non αιτιολογικως, sed ενυπαρκτικως. "Not descriptively of the cause, but of the way or order in which."—EDIT.

mentioned this condition or state, not *by* which, but *in* which, the woman might be saved. For he had touched on the special punishment wherein the woman was amerced for deceiving the man; and now he would subjoin a cordial to the imposed penalty, or give support under it," \* lest tremulous wives should faint in their child-bearing pangs; which, however they might have the signature of divine wrath upon them, did not exclude them from happiness. But as other Christians, in a way of trial, do pass into glory, so religious wives should not fall from the hope of salvation; because through Christ, in their feminine state and function of child-bearing, though they be not free from all spot of sin, they have a blessed cordial in their sanctified sufferings, and shall, by a comfortable separation of mother and babe, be *safely delivered* of their burden, in their appointed time, if that be best for them; and, at the end of their peregrination in this life, shall be *eternally saved*, supposing they have sustained those troubles "in faith, charity, holiness, and modesty."

Having thus, as well as I could, (making my passage clear through some difficulties,) weighed the import of the particle *δια*, in these four respects, it will be convenient to say a little for the explaining of the compound word [which] it relates to; namely,

3. *Τεκνογονίας*, "child-bearing."—Or "bringing-forth children," as expressing the most proper act of a good woman's parturition, rather than "the child brought forth." Yet some do not only take it more strictly, as noting the very act of a woman's being in labour or travail, wherein are sharp throes and pains, antecedent, concomitant, and subsequent; but also more largely,—from the apostle's use of the word afterward in this epistle, (1 Tim. v. 14,) as hath been hinted,†—as comprehending also the nursing and educating of children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" (Eph. vi. 4;) which is also very painful; as Augustine's mother Monica experienced, when solicitous for his conversion, till Christ was formed in him. These burdens will then be borne in a Christian, acceptable manner, if the woman be, out of the rich grace and bountiful gift of God, so qualified that she is endowed with saving grace; which is,

(II.) *The support and strength expressed, as the way and means, by keeping her ornament, to evidence her title*, or observing the duties required, abiding in the exercise of Christian and conjugal graces, wherein they continue to be employed.—Here, to speak distinctly, we are to look upon the persons and their exercises.

1. *The persons*.—Some,‡ following the Vulgar, [Latin Vulgate,] would have the word rendered singularly, "if *she* continue or remain:" as conceiving there is nothing antecedent to agree with a plural verb. But it is certain that the original word is in the plural number, by the full consent of all copies, as Beza notes; so that there can indeed be no ground for that conceit. The generality, therefore, render it plurally, according to truth, as we do, *Εαν μείνωσιν*, "If they continue, abide, remain, persist, or persevere;" noting the

\* BEZA.

† DANÆUS *in loc.*

‡ GAGNEIUS, ESTIUS.

necessity of being constant in holy duties. But then of those who render the word thus:—

(1.) Some (as the ancients, &c.)\* refer it *to the children brought forth*.—Expounding it of their abiding in the exercise of the following graces. But this doth no way please the most judicious modern expositors,† any more than some of the ancients, as not so consonant to the context, wherein we have nothing of children. And therefore a learned Protestant ‡ doth justly wonder it could come into the mind of any who understand Greek. Be-like they took it to respect the generation of children, if they, by the mother's care, did continue in the faith, &c. But these did not well consider, that the compound word, *τεκνογονια*, “child-bearing,” is of the singular number. When, therefore, this verb plural hath two nouns going before it, that is, the woman, and child-bearing, we should look to which of the two “*continue*” may be best accommodated.§ If to the word “child-bearing,” what more uncouth? Then the paraphrase would thus trip: “The woman shall be saved in child-bearing, if child-bearing continue in the faith,” &c. Who, then, that duly weighs the thing, [but] would refer the verb “continue” unto the person, namely, the woman, and not to child-bearing, which is her allotted work or function? Besides, if it should be expounded of her children's perseverance in grace, it would follow, that a godly mother, who had faithfully done her duty toward her children, would endanger her own salvation, should her children prove untoward and impenitent. Whereas this were contrary to scripture, which doth engage both parents, fathers as well as (if not more than) mothers, in the pious education of their children; and doth clear godly parents, having done their own duty, from being chargeable with the guilt of their children, when they perish through their own personal default. (Ezek. xviii. 3—9.) So that though too often the wickedness of children may be imputed to the parents' neglect, yet certainly the righteous God will accept of the faithful mother's discharging of her own duty, though her children do wickedly miscarry.¶ Wherefore it is most rational, yea, necessary, to refer it, as most do,

(2.) *To the woman*.—And not to her children; to pious mothers, and not their offspring. Nor is there sufficient warrant, considering it is in contexture with the woman's proper office of child-bearing, to take-in both parents, as Chrysostom thinks.¶ And, however the verb “continue” be of the plural number, that is easily understood by an Hebraism frequent in the New Testament, or a figure very usual in sacred and civil authors, both Greek and Latin, suddenly to pass from one number to another, when there is an agreement in the structure with somewhat understood.\*\* So here from the singular to the plural; as before, in this very chapter, from the plural to the singular, speaking of “women,” in verses 9, 10, to speak of “woman,” verse 11; and, again in this epistle, from “a widow” in the singular,

\* *Syriac. et Æthiopic. Versiones*, HIERONYMUS, &c.

† ESTIUS, &c.

‡ CHAMIER.

§ WALTHERI *Harmonia*.

¶ CALVINUS.

¶ *Adversus*

*Vituperatores Vitæ Monasticæ*, lib. iii. Περὶ Γονεωρ.

\*\* *Enallage numeri*.

to speak of "widows" in the plural: "Let them learn to show piety at home." (1 Tim. v. 4.)\* Where, in like construction, a noun collective singular is joined to a verb plural; woman, noting the sex, may be conjoined with either number; it being a grammar-rule, that a verb of the plural number is joined to a noun of the singular, [to] be sure, when the noun is collective, or indefinite; and the reason of the construction is of itself plain, because the singular number doth indeed comprehend in it the plurality of the collective noun.† And the reason of the apostle's sudden transition here might be, because he had briefly discoursed of the office of all Christian women in verse 9. But, collectively under the noun "woman," he saith emphatically of Christian wives, "if *they* continue constant," noting the whole body of Christian wives, who, passing through the pangs of child-bearing, as the allotment of God, do,

2. *Exercise the graces proper to such who mind their eternal welfare.*  
—By persevering in their Christian walk, suitable to their high calling and holy profession; being qualified and adorned with "faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety," those rare jewels, "which in the sight of God are of great price." And the last of these, which some render "modesty," or "chastity," as a species of "temperance," the apostle makes necessary to married women, as well as to virgins.‡ Though not, as the Papists do ridiculously imagine, that matrimony is a sacrament, and doth confer grace: or that, with the Papists, we are to restrain the graces in my text only to the four matrimonial virtues, opposite to the four evils too often incident to a married state; § namely, *fidelity*, in opposition to *adultery*; *charity*, to *enmity*, chiding, and brawling; *sanctity*, to *dishonesty*, or lasciviousness, and rebellion of the members; *sobriety*, to *intemperance* and incontinence. But I know no warrant [which] we have to speak thus narrowly, when it is most rational to conclude, that the apostle doth respect "faith" in Christ for justification and salvation, and not only the faith of matrimony; "charity," or love to Christ and to his [people], and not only conjugal love; "holiness," which becomes all Christians, that is, sanctification of the whole inward and outward man, and not only the peculiar sanctity of the marriage-bed; "sobriety," noting that moderation [which] all who are Christ's should be endowed with, (Gal. v. 24,) and not only the continency of a wife. So that I shall take these graces in their exercises, comprehensively, as relating to a *Christian conversation in the general*, and a *marriage-state in special*.

Thus having been taken up, much longer than I wished, in obviating the difficulties which some cast in the way to the clearer explanation of the terms in my text, I shall be straitened in speaking to the deductions from it, as to the present solution of the case propounded, by reason I want that dexterity [which] some others might have used. I beseech you, bear with me a while, to touch upon two or three doctrinal observations, which methinks do clearly result from the words

\* See 1 Cor. iv. 2; Gal. vi. 1, &c.

† GLASSII *Grammat. Sacra.*

‡ BEZA,

CHAMIER. § BELLARMINUS, tom. II. *De Matrim. Sacrament.*

thus explained, with respect to what went before in the chapter ; namely :—

## DOCTRINAL OBSERVATIONS.

**OBSERVATION I.** *Not teaching in the public assemblies, but a patient breeding, bearing, and bringing-up of children, when God opens the womb, is the commendable office of a good woman in a marriage-state.*—It is clear from the apostle's discourse in the foregoing verses, that he might take-off such women, who, from the pride of their gifts, were apt to take a liberty in public church-meetings, which doth in no wise appertain to them, he enjoins them silence ; and enforceth it from this reason of the woman's subjection, and certain sorrow, inflicted for her forwardness in the transgression. And that such a temporal penalty might not obstruct their eternal felicity, he shows it doth not become "the weaker vessel" (1 Peter iii. 7) to be so puffed-up, as to be talking publicly about church-matters in the assemblies, where they ought to behave themselves modestly, and not indecently ; (1 Cor. xiv. 35 ;) but rather by a patient demeanour, suitable to their condition,\* to glorify God in the parturition and education of a holy seed to serve him. If so be the Lord hath called them into that eligible and honourable estate of marriage, qualified them with an ability to conceive, and blessed them with a power of bringing-forth ; and if he is pleased to exercise them with the many troubles of breeding, but yet "gives them a miscarrying womb," (Hosea ix. 14,) for ends best known to himself, they are more eminently called to patience, "quietness, and meekness of spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price," (1 Peter iii. 4,) not desponding of God's mercy in that doleful condition.

## APPLICATION OF REPROOF.

Some improvement of this first point may be made in a short application for the reproof,

**APPLICATION I.** *Of such malapert women who mind not their own business, the duties properly appertaining to their sex.*—But contrary thereunto, as the apostle speaks in this epistle, will be "busy-bodies, speaking the things which they ought not ;" (1 Tim. v. 13, 14 ;) as the Pepuzians of old,† thrusting themselves into church-assemblies, and invading the ministerial function ; yea, those, who though they do not (as some have done) contradict the pure doctrine of the gospel, in the faces of Christian congregations, yet, at least in their conferences, do imagine, that all their teachings and conceited opinions should pass for uncontrollable dictates and doctrines. If women professing godliness did really labour more after those things which the apostle here looks upon as most commendable for their sex, Christians in our age had not had so many sad experiments of the incon-

\* LUDOVIC. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, p. 21.  
 ἀροφητιδας ἐχουσι.—*Pandect. can.* tom. ii. p. 50.

† Πεπουζῆνοι γυναίκας ὡς  
 "Among the Pepuzian heretics  
 women assume the functions of prophetesses."—EDIT.

veniences which have risen from the liberty of speech in church-matters, which some who would be reputed godly women, and of great attainments, have usurped to themselves. And if preaching in a fixed church do not belong unto women, then, [to] be sure, baptizing doth not. Both are to be performed only by men called, and solemnly set apart for the ministerial office.\* Hence those women, who, from an unwarrantable indulgence of such as made baptism absolutely necessary to the salvation of all, did usurp a liberty and power to baptize weakly children, did evidently contradict the apostolical canon; as may be gathered from what, in the Hampton-Court conference, †—against the arguings of some of the then bishops, for the permission of midwives, in case of necessity, to baptize infants,—king James did assert, from our Saviour's commission, *Go preach, and baptize, &c.*, (Matt. xxviii. 20,) “that it was essential to the lawful ministrations of that ordinance, that it should be performed by a minister duly called.”

APPLIC. II. Again: *it is for the reproof of such soft and delicate women, who like the pleasure, but are impatient of the pain, which ordinarily attends those in a married state.*—To say nothing of those bad women, who, “from a lustful cruelty, or cruel lustfulness,” as Augustine speaks, ‡ “do wish that their issue should perish rather than live;” and therefore do use ill arts, either to prevent conception, or procure abortion; which must needs be very displeasing to God, who, in his law, hath breeding, bearing women much upon his heart, to provide for their safety. (Exod. xxi. 22, 23.) There be some, who, from pre-apprehensions of their own pains, forbear to render their husbands their due, not well weighing the ill consequents of such forbearance. (1 Cor. vii. 3—5.) Others are ready to conceit, it is a discouragement to them to take pains, when very well able, about the nursing and education of their children. It is true, they are not of such nun-like dispositions, as some others, idolizing a single life for their ease, regarding not to be serviceable to God in their generation, according to their capacities, when called. For our apostle, in this epistle, “wills young women to marry, bear children,” (not, as too many in our age, to bear children when not married,) “guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” (1 Tim. v. 14.) Yet they are so greatly addicted to sensual pleasures in the married state, that they like not to take pains in going through their appointed time with their child-breeding, and child-bearing; but do so over-eagerly pursue their appetites, frolics, and fancies, that they too often forget the condition into which God hath brought them, and so deprive themselves and their husbands of those blessings, which, if they did behave themselves soberly and Christian-like, they might well hope for at God's hands, supposing them to continue duly careful (as they should be) to forbear excess in diet, and violent recreations, and to suppress vehement passions,

\* See Mr. N. C. on Titus i. 5.  
1603-4, vol. iii. p. 176, octavo edit. 1842.

† FULLER'S “Church-History,” lib. x. *ad annum*  
‡ *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentiâ*, lib. i. cap. 15.



using that moderation in all things which their condition notably calls for. Which leads me to the second observation.

**OBSERV. II.** *That the sorrows of child-bed should not dishearten Christian women from entering into a marriage-state.*—We plainly see here, lest the pains of child-bed should deter good women from enjoying the comfort of the marriage-bed, Paul doth in my text introduce the great benefit of women's temporal and eternal safety, that they might not despond under the temporal chastisement of child-bearing sorrows, if they were true believers, and lived in subjection to God and their husbands, wherein their husbands act agreeably to God's word: so that, through God's gracious vouchsafement, they should receive no final damage by their grandmother Eve's being *first* seduced; but, upon their unfeigned returning to God, and resigning [themselves] entirely to him, they should find "in his favour life." (Psalm xxx. 5.) The penalty of their sorrows being converted into a blessing by the Sanctifying Spirit, they shall receive comfort in their sharp and tedious throes: and the thousand pains [which] they sustain in breeding, bearing, and religiously bringing up their children, shall work together, by God's infinite wisdom and benign influences, for their temporal safety, so far as God sees that good for them; (Rom. viii. 28;) and, in the issue, for their eternal salvation.

#### APPLICATION.

Hence I infer, to make a short application of this doctrine,

**APPLICATION I.** *That good women, when they are called to it, (for are not called to it at all, and some not at all times, upon several accounts,) they are so far from hindering, that they may forward, their own salvation by entering into a marriage-state.*—And though they may think "subjection to their own husbands," (1 Peter iii. 5,) only "in the Lord, as is fit," (Col. iii. 18,) (for the gospel requires no other subjection, but in the Lord Christ,) to be some obstruction to their comfort and happiness; yet they are much deceived in such apprehensions. For this doctrine, resulting clearly from my text, shows, "that this kind of willing submission and obedience to their own husbands, (Titus ii. 5,) is a better thing than they deem of, accompanying salvation, (Heb. vi. 9,) and acceptable to God;" \* being [seeing] "marriage is honourable in all;" (Heb. xiii. 4;) an ordinance instituted by him, who brings so many good wives to heaven, to enjoy most contenting sweets there, from their afflicting sorrows in child-bed here. Further I infer,

**APPLIC. II.** *That hypocritical pretences of sanctity, and unwarrantable vows of perpetual virginity, should not bring a disparagement upon the honourable state of marriage, from the pains and perils which child-bearing women pass through.*—The disciples of Christ were overhasty in saying, "It is not good to marry." (Matt. xix. 10.) But these of antichrist embrace the "doctrines of demons, and forbid marrying" to their priests, (1 Tim. iv. 1—3,) whether they have the gift of

\* *Admonetur hoc genus obsequii et sibi esse salutare et Deo acceptum.*—CALVINUS in textum.

continency, yea or no; and to such virgins, whom, for their gain, they decoy into an irrevocable vow, (as they call it,) [which] is detestable. Yet this is the common practice of the Papists, how odious soever it be, and in the consequents pernicious; \* as well as the practices of those before reproved, who, either to cherish covetousness, or cover their wantonness, seek to prevent conceptions, or procure abortions: [these] are enemies to the propagation of mankind; and when the subtillties of school-distinctions † are laid aside, will be found culpable of homicide. God deliver us from that mystery of iniquity, which they who go a “wondering after the beast,” (Rev. xiii. 3,) in contempt of marriage, labour to bring in, following a wicked Pope, ‡ though they incur the anathema of a council; § and though, as we may see some of our first Reformers, detecting the Acts of the English Votaries, || cast it out with abomination; in that they said, “the whorish papal synagogue was a great blemish to godly marriage:” ¶ which hath already in our days been ridiculed by some atheistical debauchees, whose monstrous immoralities make them contemptible. Whereas marriage derives its honourable pedigree from the first pair, when innocent in Paradise here below, and is no way obstructive to a happy entrance into the Paradise of God above.

OBSERV. III. Hence I am at last come to the third and principal observation from the words, which will directly answer the inquiry before us; namely, *By perseverance in Christian and conjugal graces and duties, child-bearing wives may be best supported against, in, and under the hazard of their travail.*—This doth clearly result from the text, as I have explained it, and needs not much proof.

“By patient continuance in well-doing, those who seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, have eternal life,” saith the apostle elsewhere: (Rom. ii. 7:) and a prudent wife “abiding in faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety,” may have such support from the strengthening word of promise here and elsewhere, that, “travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered,” (as the borrowed speech expresseth the church’s sorrow, Rev. xii. 2,) she may have good hope of being preserved, and seeing a comfortable separation betwixt her and the burden of her belly. When her “loins are filled with pain,” and “pangs have taken hold on her;” (Isai. xxi. 3;) the Lord will say (as I may allude to that in the prophet) to the loins, “Give up,” and to the womb, “Keep not back:” (Isai. xliii. 6:) so that all shall be sanctified to her; and in a proportion she may rejoice in hope, as Elizabeth from her own experience heartened her cousin Mary, Luke i. 45: “Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord;” if not in kind, yet in equivalency, or that which is better. For though, as the most beloved wife Rachel, in her hard labour, she should die; (Gen. xxxv. 17, 18;) or though the sad estate of the church should multiply her groans, as Phinehas’s wife’s were, for the taking of the ark; (1 Sam. iv. 20, 21;) yet she

\* BERNHARDIN. in *Rosario*.  
 § *Concil. Gangrense*, cap. 10.  
 ¶ “English Votaries,” p. 18.

† ESTIUS in *Senten.*

‡ SYRIC. *Distinct.* 82.

|| BALE’S “Mystery of Iniquity.” pp. 17, 18.

may have good evidence,—from the clear shining of her jewels and chains, which Christ, her Husband, hath put upon her, as his spouse; (Canticles i. 10;) I mean, the exercise of her graces,—that she shall be eternally saved; her soul shall pass into that “rest which remains to the people of God,” (Heb. iv. 9,) where there shall be “neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain: for the former things shall be passed away;” (Rev. xxi. 4;) and that may be written on her tomb-stone, which a learned doctor wrote on that of pious Mrs. Wilkinson,\* who with her child went to heaven from her child-bed: namely,

“Here lie mother and babe both without sins:  
Next birth will make her and her infant twins.”

Those necessary and eminent graces to perseverance or continuance wherein the promise of salvation is made by the apostle unto child-bearing women, on which they live for support *against* and *in* their travail, are, as you have heard, these four; namely, “faith, charity, holiness, sobriety.”

I. ΠΙΣΤΙΣ, “FAITH:” which we may distinctly conceive of as comprehending both that which is divine and moral, or Christian and conjugal.

1. *A divine faith, which is “precious and saving.”* (2 Peter i. 1; Heb. x. 39.)—A grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby the enlightened heart, being united to Christ, doth receive him, and resigns up itself to him as Mediator; and so is “espoused to that one husband,” (2 Cor. xi. 2,) depending entirely upon him. By this faith, receiving the Son of God, who is also the Son of man, born of a woman, is the good wife to live in subjection to Christ, her spiritual Head; and then, though her pains be never so many, her throes never so quick and sharp, she may be confident that all shall go well with her, either in being safely delivered of the fruit of her womb, as “the Lord’s reward,” out of his free love; (Psalm cxxvii. 3;) or having her soul, and that of her seed, eternally saved, being taken into covenant with the Almighty God: (Gen. xvii. 1—7:) so that, in the issue, she will at last, with all humble adoration, yield that it could not have been possibly better with her, than to have been in that condition of subjection and sorrow, in breeding, bearing, and bringing up of children. It was this faith, for the substance of it, which the pious childing women, mentioned in the story of our Saviour’s genealogy, did exercise; a continuance wherein is required of every just, Christian woman, that she may live by it in the pains which threaten death. For by this principle she may be the best supported, and derive virtue from her Saviour, for the sweetening of the bitterest cup, and strength for the staying her up, when “the anguish of bringing forth her first child” is upon her; (Jer. iv. 31;) as Sarah, the notable pattern of pious women, in this case did, concerning whom it is recorded: “By faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged HIM

\* DR. REYNOLDS in her “Life.” She and her child were buried together.

faithful who had promised." (Heb. xi. 11.) A staying and living by faith upon God's providence and promise will revive the drooping spirits of otherwise weak and fearful women, in their good work of child-bearing, for the multiplying of the church with those whom God will save. So that, though impending danger to mother and child may make even good women to quail, when their pangs, as so many touches of God's displeasure against sin, are upon them, yet "by faith" they can fetch relief out of the faithfulness of the Promiser, as Sarah did; and out of this good word [which] he hath recorded in my text; or that more general by the prophet David: "He will sustain," or take care of, those that "cast their care and burden upon him," with the like. (Psalm lv. 22; 1 Peter v. 7.) Hereupon the upright woman, though frail, can resign up herself to God, "being fully persuaded," with "the father of the faithful," "that what he hath promised, he is also able to perform" (Rom. iv. 21) in his own time and way, which is ever the best. And one,\* now with God, speaking largely to this matter, in his "Present to teeming Women," (chap. xiii. p. 139,) hath very well observed: "It was His will, that in their travail there should ever be, while the world stands, that most eminent instance of His power;" indeed, that, I may say, which made Galen, the great heathen physician, after a deep search into the causes of a woman's bringing forth a child, to cry out, "O miracle of nature!" Hence, in her low estate, the pious wife who lives by faith above nature, when "she spreads her hands," and utters her doleful groans before the Almighty, (Jer. iv. 31,) concludes: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam. iii. 18; 2 Sam. xv. 26; Luke xxii. 42.) If it seems good unto Him then to call for her life, and the life of her babe, she can say, "Lord, here am I, and the child which thou hast given me," as the prophet speaks upon another account. (Isai. viii. 18.) She trusts to that good and great promise, that the Seed of the woman "shall break the serpent's head:" (Gen iii. 15 :) and therefore comforts herself, that the serpent's sting is taken away by Him that is born of a woman. And though the birth of her child may cost her much more sorrow than it doth her husband; yet, as Manoah's wife, she may have a secret intimation from the Angel of the Covenant, of and in her safe deliverance, one way or other, which her husband knows not of, (Judges xiii. 3, 9, 23,) and which will abundantly compensate all her sorrows. If she hath been in such a condition before, she can say, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope:" (Rom. v. 3, 4:) and so by faith conclude: "Because thou hast been mine help, therefore will I trust in the shadow of thy wings." (Psalm lxiii. 7.) This saving faith, I might farther show, doth presuppose and imply repentance, and express itself in meditation and prayer.

(1.) *It doth presuppose and imply repentance.*—Which, from a true sense of sin, and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth cause "a loathing of ourselves for our iniquities;" (Ezek. xx. 43; xxxvi. 31;) which is a very proper exercise for a child-bearing woman,

\* MR. OLIVER.

who is eminently concerned antecedently to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," (Matt. iii. 8,) that God may receive her and the fruit of her womb graciously, upon her hearty turning from sin, and returning to and trusting in him. Child-bearing women should fruitfully remember the sentence, acknowledge rightly God's displeasure against sin, and humble themselves very particularly before him, who doth in mercifulness infinitely surpass all the kings of Israel; that he may show special favour to them. For, as a woman newly delivered of her child is not out of peril, whilst that [which] physicians call "the *secundine*" and "the *placenta*," or part thereof, remains; so, neither, if there should be remaining any known sin unrepented of, could she, upon good grounds, expect to be saved from her groanings. One of the ancients \* doth set forth repentance, by comparing the soul to a pair of writing-tables, out of which must be washed whatsoever is written with sin; and, instead thereof, must be entered the characters of grace. And as this spiritual washing is very necessary for all; (John iii. 3, 5; Titus iii. 5;) so, [to] be sure, it is specially necessary for those women who are apt to be over-curious in the washing of their linens for their lying-in, that the purity of the outward be not preferred to that of the inward man.

(2.) *This saving faith doth usually express itself*, in those women who are really espoused unto Christ and in whom he dwells, *by meditation and prayer*.—Which are also very requisite for the support of child-bearing ones, at the approaches of their appointed sorrows.

(i.) *Faith doth express itself in meditation*.—And so, by bringing the soul to contemplate upon God, doth (as wax is softened and prepared for the seal) make the heart soft for any sacred characters or signatures to be imprinted upon it. Hereby an handmaid of the Lord, "when she awakes, is still with him" in heartening soliloquies. (Psalm cxxxix. 18.) The good woman, seriously thinking on the sentence of the Almighty, that "sorrow should be multiplied in her conception, and bringing forth children," (Gen. iii. 16,) reflects upon herself, and considers well, how her portion of afflictions in a federal state is allotted to her by Divine disposal; and thereupon tastes some sweets in their bitterness, and resolves to submit thereunto, as her duty; and finding herself to have been "barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," (2 Peter i. 8,) to bring forth "fruit unto holiness, which ends in eternal life." (Rom. vi. 22.) Instances of such fruitful meditation may be seen in MR. OLIVER'S "Present," fore-cited, chap. v.

(ii.) Further, *faith doth exercise itself in prayer to God*.—That being the mouth of faith in God through Christ; in whose prevailing name Christians are concerned to lift up their hearts unto him for relief in all their straits. Those good wives who own the religion of the Bible, should not with the Heathen in their pains, make their prayers to Lucina; or, with the Papists, to the Virgin Mary, or their St. Margaret; but unto Him alone "in whom they believe," (Rom.

\* GREG. NAZIANZEN.

x. 14,) and who alone "heareth prayers." (Psalm lxxv. 2.) Chrysostom did greatly complain in his time, that the tender mind of a virgin on her marriage-day should be diverted from minding the things of Christ, with immoderate sports, and devices of mirth; and from eyeing of God, who alone could effectually give joy to a married couple.\* And therefore she should then rather implore his aid, as she hath need to do all along in a married state; but much more peculiarly and fervently when, having conceived and grown big, the hour of her child-bed pangs is approaching, that her "heart is sore pained within her, and the terrors of death are fallen upon her," (Psalm lv. 4,) should her precious faith fervently utter her most necessary and affectionate requests unto Him, who hath freely given, by his apostle, the good word of support in my text, with those of the like import elsewhere; and is able to save to the uttermost, deliver effectually, and keep in perfect peace all that fly to him, and stay themselves upon him in that good work [which] he hath appointed them unto. Thus of the principal grace, a divine or Christian faith. There is also,

2. *A moral or conjugal faith.*—Which is more distinctly called "fidelity," or "faithfulness;" a grace much strengthened from the former; and [which] in a wife doth more peculiarly respect her husband; as we may particularly gather from our apostle in this epistle, (1 Tim. v. 12,) compared with that which he speaks more generally of it elsewhere, for "the adorning of the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus ii. 10.) The wife hath plighted her troth to her husband according to the flesh, unto whom the Lord hath in the marriage-covenant joined her; and she is obliged to be constantly faithful in all conjugal duties to him with whom she hath trusted herself, and that by virtue of the covenant of her God. Neither is it enough to be really faithful, but also to seem so, or be seen, as much as may be, so to be.† Not that any Christian woman should be like some of those in the Great Mogul's country, who, to gain the repute of modest, loving, and faithful wives, will have their own corpse burned together with their deceased husbands:‡ but she should show her real fidelity, as in an honest and prudent concealment of her husband's secrets, so in avoiding all just suspicion, by any familiar converse with others, of being false to his bed; and religiously keeping till death the matrimonial obligation, not deserting her dear yoke-fellow when reduced to straits. For so it is storied of the wife of the king of Pontus, that she disguised herself to follow her banished husband, saying, there she reckoned was her kingdom, her riches, and country, wheresoever she could find her husband.§ The wife of a certain count of Castile, when the king had detained her husband in prison, went to visit him, whom she persuaded to put-on her clothes, and leave her there in his stead: of which fact the king hearing, did much wonder at the fidelity of the countess, and sent

\* LUDOV. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, lib. ii. pp. 148, 149. † TERTULLIAN. ‡ PURCHAS'S "Pilgrims," lib. i. p. 225. § LUDOVIC. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, lib. ii. pp. 157, 158.

her to her husband, wishing he had such wives for himself and sons. I might produce more instances; but I hasten. If Christian servants should perform the offices of their relation, "as unto the Lord," (Col. iii. 23,) "with all good fidelity;" (Titus ii. 10;) much more should the Christian wife, who hath solemnly entered into the covenant of the Lord with her husband, in all faithfulness fill up her relation toward him with whom she is become one flesh. Yet, in too many, what a defection is there from this faith! What a violation of this good fidelity in our degenerate and decrepit age! which, unless God give timely repentance of [it], may not only hazard the *temporal*, but will also the *eternal, salvation* of many adulterous child-bearers, who (yet less impudent than some others) wipe their mouth, it may be, and (unless their sharp throes force them to confess their falsity) would be thought to be most genuine daughters of the church, when indeed they hasten its ruin in a spurious brood.

II. The next grace required here in my text, is *Αγαπή*, "CHARITY," or "LOVE." This, in a good wife, I take, as I did faith, for that which is *Christian and conjugal*, respecting *Christ and her husband*.

1. [To] be sure, *every Christian wife should love the Lord Jesus Christ, considered both personally and mystically*.—She should sincerely love Christ *in himself*, and *in his members*. Her faith toward him should "work by love." (Gal. v. 6.)

(1.) *It behoves her to give the primacy of her affection unto Christ himself*.—She is obliged, above all, most entirely and heartily to love the Lord Jesus Christ, her spiritual Husband. For they come under the apostolical benediction, "who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity," or with incorruption. (Eph. vi. 24.) Our Lord Jesus loves such, and is much affected with their doleful condition, as with that of his friend Lazarus. (John xi. 3, 35.) This indeed is a good evidence of a genuine faith, and shows itself to be of a right stamp, when there is a holy care to keep all Christ's commandments. (John xiv. 15.) Hence charity is compared by one to *an ever-turning spit*,\* always providing and labouring for him in whom she resteth. Let this be the chief care of the Christian wife, and she may upon good grounds conclude Christ is hers, and she is his; (Canticles ii. 16;) and say in all trouble, as the good woman, when bloody Bonner threatened her, in the Popish persecution, to take away her husband and son: "Christ is mine husband, and better to me than ten sons: you cannot strip me of him!" Now, if the good wife hath Christ present with her in her travail, (as they who love him with a prevailing love, certainly have in all their affliction,) she hath all, having Him who will "command deliverances for her," (Psalm xliv. 4,) and a "blessing upon her;" (Lev. xxv. 21;) who being indeed Christ's friend, as she is to love him in himself, so also, in the next place,

(2.) *She is concerned to love him in his members*.—Her Christian

\* *Spq* occurs here as a curious misprint for *spit*, which, in olden time, with all its paraphernalia of chains and wheels, and a spaniel trained to keep up the *momentum*, was a very cumbersome but imposing piece of machinery.—EDIT.

charity is to be manifested unto those that are Christ's, for Christ's sake; and, as the apostle writes in this epistle, is such, namely, which answers "the end of the commandment, out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." (1 Tim. i. 5.) We certainly prove our love to Christ, by keeping his commandment, in loving those that are his, sincerely and constantly. (John xiii. 34.) Love to the brethren goes along with our love to God; (1 John v. 1, 2;) and the continuance of it may well dispose to angelical comforts. (Heb. xiii. 1, 2.) However, it may be very advantageous to a child-bearing woman to endear Christian brethren, who are much in doing of God's will, and prevalent with God, to assist her more affectionately with their prayers, having seen her real charity to promote God's service, and advance piety. It will no doubt argue her "abiding in the light," (1 John ii. 10,) and sure "passage from death to life," (iii. 14,) and God's dwelling, or constant presence with her; which will be abundant support to her in the greatest pains, when "she bringeth forth with the most difficulty," as the physician \* finds some to do. Then as she should love Christ in himself, and in his members; so,

2. *Next to Christ, the good wife is, above all others, dearly and constantly to love her own husband, and that "with a pure heart fervently."* (1 Cor. vii. 2; Titus ii. 4; 1 Peter i. 22.)—Yea, and she should never entertain low thoughts of *him*, in that relation, *whom* she could once think worthy of embracing for her husband; and whom, by the covenant of God, in all offices of love, she is obliged "to please." (1 Cor. vii. 34.) Without this bond of perfectness all will be loose, uneasy, and displeasing; yea, the laws and command of God, who by his wise providence ordered the match, will become tedious and irksome.† But where this *conjugal* love is consequent upon the foregoing *Christian* love, there all will become easy. This is the very life of perfect friendship; and where it resides in power, no diligence will be wanting to facilitate all other conjugal duties.‡ For never-failing charity, especially in this relation, will enable the good wife to "bear all things, to believe all things, to hope all things, to endure all things." (1 Cor. xiii. 7, 8.) This holy flame, therefore, as the vestal fire,§ should be ever cherished, that it go not out. Indeed, love being as the soul of society, and of itself immortal, it would argue it were not sincere at first, if it should cease. Dr. Goad, recommending "The Mother's Legacy to her Child unborn," (written by pious Mrs. Joceline, when big with child, preparing for her approaching child-bed,) saith, "What eyes cannot behold her true and unspotted love to her dearest husband? In her affectionate letter to him, prefixed to that little book, she declares, with thankfulness to God, her fears of child-bed painfulness were cured with the remembrance, that 'all things should work together for the best to those that love God,' (which cannot be right in a wife without this

\* ΤΙΚΤΟΥΣΙ χαλεπώς.—HIPPOCRATES, *Aphorism.* 55.

† FRANCISCUS BARBARUS *De Re Uxorid.*, lib. ii. cap. 1.

‡ LUDOVIC. VIVES, p. 104.

§ ALEXANDER AB

ALEXANDRO, lib. v. cap. 12.



true love to her own husband,) and a certain assurance that God would give her patience according to her pain. And she bare all patiently." So did Mrs. Wilkinson, "a most loving wife, whose patience was remarkable in the midst of very sore pains, which frequented her in the breeding and bearing of children. Yet then her speech was, *I fear not pains. I fear myself, lest through impatience I should let fall any unbefitting word.* It is a blessed frame," said that grave divine,\* who recorded it, "when pain seems light, and sin heavy." So, on the other hand, for want of this prevalent conjugal love, in conjunction with Christian love, a daughter of king Ethelred having found the difficulty of her first birth, she did afterwards perpetually abstain from her husband's bed, against the apostle's rule, (1 Cor. vii. 3,) protesting, from a principle of unaccountable self-love, that "it was not fit a daughter of a crowned head should commit herself any more to such perils." It was far otherwise with a young woman in Eubœa, who, being married to a man [whom] she loved dearly, became mother and grandmother to a hundred children. The story of Mrs. Honeywood, in our age, is not less famous. I might produce many other instances; but it is more than time I come to the next-mentioned grace; namely,

III. Ἀγιασμος, "HOLINESS:" which I take, as the former, for that which is *Christian* and *conjugal*, more *general* and *special*.

1. *There is holiness which is considered more generally.*—Being an universal grace, agreeing to a Christian as such, wrought by the Spirit in the new creature, from the peace made by Christ; whereby, the soul being changed into his likeness, there is an abiding in a state of gracious acceptance with God, and a striving in some measure to "be holy as he is holy, in every particle of our conversation," both toward God and man, publicly and privately, in some degrees. As all Christians are to mind their salvation in the "holiness of the Spirit," (2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Peter i. 2,) and to "follow after it" by Christ; (Heb. xii. 14; xiii. 12;) so Christian wives in a child-bearing state, that they may comfortably bring-forth the fruit of their wombs, are highly concerned for that good work to "have their fruit unto holiness." (Rom. vi. 22.) Then, [to] be sure, all shall go well with them, both here and hereafter. Blessedness belongs to "the pure in heart," and "the undefiled in the course of their lives." (Matt. v. 8; Psalm cxix. 1.) "What knows the holy wife, whether," if she should be married to a bad man, by parents' disposal, "she may save her husband?" (1 Cor. vii. 16.) We read of several Christian wives, whose husbands have been brought to real godliness, by their zealous endeavours; as Clemens by Domitia, &c.† For the holy conversation of a wife hath sometimes a great force upon the mind of the husband, who is thereby disposed to entertain good: and if a work of grace be wrought upon him, then he will be more fervent in prayer for his child-bearing wife; who, as she ought, through the whole course of

\* DR. HARRIS in her "Life." p. 253. *Vide et pp.* 271, 211.

† LUDOVIC. VIVES *De Christianâ Femina*, lib. ii.

her life, to be daily "dying in sin, and living to righteousness;" so, in her approaching sorrows, she is more especially concerned,

(1.) *To conform to the preceptive or commanding will of God, in all the actions of her life.*—That she may "present her body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is her reasonable service;" and so, by universal obedience, "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," (Rom. xii. 1, 2,) in the prevailing desires of her soul to please God, who hath called her into a conjugal relation, and enabled her therein to conceive; and so, in her proper office, to "serve her own generation by the will of God," (Acts xiii. 36,) waiting upon him with cheerfulness in filling up her relation, to give her in due time a holy seed, for his glory and the enlargement of his church; as holy Mrs. Joceline, above-mentioned, earnestly desired of God, that she might be "a mother to one of his children."\* Then,

(2.) *To submit to the effecting and disposing will of God, "who works all things according to the counsel of his own will,"* (Eph. i. 11,) *in preparing for death.*—Not to "neglect," but make ready for, "so great salvation" as is purchased by Christ, and offered in the rich and precious promises. (Heb. ii. 3.) If all should hearken to the charge [which] our Saviour gives to his own disciples, "Therefore be ye also ready;" (Matt. xxiv. 44;) then it eminently concerns a big-bellied woman to be in a readiness for her departure, that she may not be surprised, since the pangs are perilous that she is to pass through; and the more, if she be but of a weak, and not of a hale, constitution. The last-mentioned pious gentlewoman,† when she felt herself quick with child, (as then travailing with death itself,)—she secretly took order for the buying [of] a new winding-sheet; thus preparing and consecrating herself to Him who rested "in a new sepulchre, wherein was never man before laid;" (Luke xxiii. 53;) and privately in her closet, looking death in the face, wrote her excellent "Legacy to her unborn Child."

None ever repented of making ready to die. And every Christian is ready, who can entirely submit to God's disposal in life or death. Yea, and then a good woman is likeliest to have *her* will in a safe temporal deliverance, when she is most sincerely willing that God should have *his* in dealing with her as seemeth best to himself. When the yoke of Christ is easy and his burden is light, then is the good wife in the fairest way to be most easily delivered of the burden of her belly, so that she shall have the truest joys afterwards. Thus of holiness considered more generally, and how the child-bearing wife is concerned to exercise it.

2. *Holiness may be considered more specially as it is conjugal, and more peculiarly appropriated to the marriage-state.*—This being a more particular exercise of Christian holiness in the matrimonial band; wherein as every one (both husband and wife) in that relation is concerned, so the childing woman is obliged to be singularly careful to

\* "Mother's Legacy," p. 1.

† MRS. JOCELINE.

“possess her vessel in sanctification,” or sanctimony, “and honour,” (1 Thess. iv. 4,) in a special kind of conjugal cleanness and chasteness, which is opposite to all turpitude, and “lust of concupiscence” in the very appearance of it; that there may be, as much as possible, no show or tincture of uncleanness in the marriage-bed; but that there may be a holy seed, and she may keep herself pure from any taint of lasciviousness. It will cheer up in the hour of her travail, if she can sincerely say in the sight of God, as, it is said in the apocryphal story Sara, the daughter of Raguel, did: “Thou knowest, Lord, I am pure from all sin with man, and that I never polluted my name, nor the name of my father.” (Tobit iii. 14, 15.) This is the true eagle-stone to be constantly worn for the prevention of miscarrying, that there may “not indeed be labouring in vain, or bringing-forth for trouble; but her seed may be the blessing of the Lord, and her offspring with her;” (Isai. lxxv. 23, with 21;) who may solace herself in her integrity, and unspotted reputation, having “her chaste conversation coupled with fear,” (1 Peter iii. 2,) that all shall issue well with her and the fruit of her womb. But this is so much of the same nature with the last grace mentioned here in my text, that the apostle annexeth that to holiness, with,

IV. *Σωφροσύνη*, “SOBRIETY:” so we render it; others, “temperance;” others, “modesty,” as in our old translation; others, “chastity.” And, taking it largely, “the word seems to speak that gracious habit which may best become a prudent, grave, temperate, moderate, or modest mother of a family;”\* for that seems to reach the apostle’s sense, comparing it with what he hath in the ninth verse of this chapter, and elsewhere. (Titus ii. 4, 5; Acts xxvi. 25.) I might consider this, like the former graces, more *generally* and *specially*.

1. *More generally, as Christian.*—“Every one that nameth the name of Christ,” being under an obligation thereby to “depart from iniquity,” (2 Tim. ii. 19,) is engaged to labour after a “sound mind;” (i. 7;) to be “modest, sober,” and “temperate in all things;” (Titus i. 8; ii. 2, 4, 6; 1 Cor. ix. 25;) learning to “use this world as if we used it not;” minding “that which is comely,” and “attending upon the Lord without distraction.” (1 Cor. vii. 31, 35.) Yea, we should “let our moderation be known unto all men,” as “those that are Christ’s, who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” (Phil. iv. 5; Gal. v. 24.) Certainly, then, a Christian wife, and that in a child-bearing condition, is concerned to seek that she may be endued with sobriety, which purgeth the mind from distempers, and putteth the affections into an orderly frame, acceptable to God; and so doth morally give the best insurance to the promises of temporal and eternal safety. But, more particularly,

2. *The special conjugal grace of temperance and modesty is to be exercised by the child-bearing woman in sobriety, chastity, and gracefulness, [graciousness,] both with reference to her affections and senses.*—I have warrant from the apostle, as well as the philosophers, †

\* BEZA.

† WALLÆI *Ethica Arist.* lib. iv.

to take the word so largely, as to comprehend both modesty and temperance. Whereupon I conclude,

(1.) *With modesty she is to govern her passions and affections.*—So that there may be only a humble appetite of due respect, and an abstinence from those unbecoming; a holy care, as to avoid pride on one hand, so ignominy and contempt on the other, as well as to give check to boldness and indecency in her gesture, speech, and behaviour, as to lightness and wantonness in any of these: so that she may by a graceful deportment, as much as she can, in minding “things venerable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report,” (Phil. iv. 8,) “not with the outward adornings of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel,” (1 Peter iii. 3,) show herself to be a virtuous wife, who is not carried away with an affectation of glorying splendour, and artificial handsomeness; but with “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.” (Verse 4.) Then “her heart will not upbraid or reproach her” (Job xxvii. 6) with the glittering of her pendants, when “her pangs in travail have taken her;” (Micah iv. 9, 10;) (as a penitent gentlewoman, on a dangerous sick-bed, once with much sorrow told me, that her foregoing priding herself in *hers* did, and greatly wounded her spirit;) but her modesty, humility, and discretion, will be evidences of her unfeigned faith. For, as an excellent big-bellied woman\* once wrote to her husband, with reference to her daughter: “She would not have her bold, modesty and humility being the groundwork of all virtue.” Again: she is to govern herself,

(2.) *With temperance.*—She should moderate her senses; especially take care to govern well those of taste and touch. For temperance indeed is such a virtue, as doth keep a mean in desiring and avoiding such bodily pleasures as are perceived by those senses, about the proper use of creature-enjoyments; so that, in eating and drinking, as well as other actions, a Christian may be kept in the best temper for “the glorifying of God;” (1 Cor. x. 31;) and in looking upon “temperance” as a “fruit of the Spirit.” (Gal. v. 22, 23.) Here may come under consideration, more strictly and particularly, the good wife’s sobriety and chastity in her conjugal relation.

(i.) *Sobriety.*—Which more strictly respects the moderation of the appetite, and sense of tasting, for the desiring of that which is convenient, and the avoiding of riot. Whilst exercised about meat and drink, for the shunning of intemperance in either, the breeding and big-bellied woman is highly concerned to take special care for her own and the child’s safety. Plato determined, † that “big-bellied women, above all, should so govern themselves during that space, that they may be neither carried away to many and furious pleasures, nor oppressed with grief; but live a mild, quiet, and pacate life.” Many have miscarried by an inordinate giving way to their appetites, and feeding immoderately upon various dainties. So that such should not despise the divine direction given unto Manoah’s wife by the angel. (Judges xiii. 4, 11—14.) For

\* MRS. ELIZ. JOCELINE. † Δειν τας φερουσας εν γαστρι, κ.τ.λ.—*De Legibus*, lib. vii.

though that was given in an extraordinary case ; yet as to the equity of the thing in some proportion, it certainly suggests moderation in that which is ordinary. It is true, in case of a lingering appetite, there is a considerable allowance to be made unto pregnant women ; yea, after conception, before the growing big, lest they should miscarry (as too many modest ones have done) by a not-discovering of it in due season. But, out of that case, childing wives, who have “put on the Lord Jesus Christ,” (Rom. xiii. 14,) they are to eat and drink for health, and not for pampering of the flesh, which is done by excess in the quantity, rather than in the quality, of the food. It is odious in men to be given to immoderate drinking ; but in women, and those professing godliness, it is abominable. Excess in meats and drinks puts violence upon nature by intemperance, and may cause the death of the mother or child, or both at once, to the desperate wounding of the conscience, when “God makes inquisition for blood ;” (Psalm ix. 12 ; li. 14 ; Acts xvi. 28 ;) yea, and may too often precipitate into immodesty. Whereas the Christian wife should indeed be adorned with,

(2.) *Chastity*.—Which, for the matter, was partly hinted before in conjugal fidelity and sanctimony. This strictly respects the other sense afore-mentioned, and requires a keeping of the heart and body from uncleanness. (Prov. iv. 23 ; Matt. v. 28 ; 1 Thess. iv. 4.) It may be granted, men, yea, husbands, are generally more prone to incontinency ; and were I discoursing to them, I might remember them, as well as their wives, of that famous saying of the Roman orator, that, “in the predominancy or kingdom of sensual pleasure, men can have no commerce with virtue ;” \* and therefore are concerned to be watchful and moderate, especially considering what the great philosopher hath said, that “of all the desires of the body, men are apt to be faulty this way.” † Yet since the command of God reaches those of each sex, both are under a religious band in the marriage-state ; and, as one saith, “The pleasure therein must be mingled with some severity ; it must be a wise and conscionable delight.” ‡ It much concerns the Christian wife to give check to any suggestion, much more to any parley, which is in a tendency to violate her matrimonial contract ; or to bring her into any carriage unbecoming that “honourable” state she is brought into, or the undue use of the “undefiled bed.” (Heb. xiii. 4 ; 1 Cor. vii. 5, 2, 3.) So that, however some of the Papists, in magnifying a single life, would appropriate chastity unto virgins, (whom they themselves do debauch in their nunneries,) yet we find from scripture and the ancient fathers, that there is chastity and continency in a marriage-state, as opposed to that in a single life.§ In the exercise of this, with the precedent graces, the good wife, having well learned the lesson of self-denial, can bear her burden in humble confidence of aids

\* *In voluptatis regno nullum omnino esse posse hominibus cum virtute commercium.*  
—CICERO *De Senectute*. † *Των πασων επιθυμιων μαλιστα ακολουθητικοι εισι ταις*  
*περι τα αφροδισια και ακραταις ταυτης.*—ARISTOTELIS *Rhetorica*, cap. 14. ‡ CHAR-  
RON “Of Wisdom,” lib. iii. cap. 12. § See CHAMIER, tom. iii. lib. xvi. cap. 14.

from above, in the hour of her child-bed sorrow, and a safe deliverance in the best way. For, being thus qualified, she hath, from the precious promise in my text, a sure ground of a comfortable exemption from the curse in child-bearing, and of the removal of that original guilt which otherwise greatens the sorrows of women in such a case.

## REASONABLENESS.

I might now (could I have stayed) have showed to you **THE REASONABLENESS** of all this I have been discoursing,

1. *From the fidelity of God.*—Who hath passed his word for the preservation, in due circumstances, of all those thus qualified, as you have heard. Which indeed was Sarah's support, with reference to her child-bearing, "because she judged Him faithful who had promised." (Heb. xi. 11.) He who is most faithful, and cannot lie, hath said, "They who are not weary of well-doing, shall reap, if they faint not." (Gal. vi. 9.)

2. *From the evidence of their own sincerity.*—The continuance in these Christian and conjugal exercises of "faith, charity, holiness, with sobriety," shows, notwithstanding their frailties, (which are no other "spots" than those may be on God's own children,\*) that they are in a safe state; which must needs be great support, supposing the worst that can befall them by their pains. And as "by abiding in Christ," they are spiritually "fruitful;" (John xv. 4;) so they may well hope, that, in bringing forth their natural fruit, they shall be evermore kept under God's benign influence and blessing. The promise in my text is insured, upon God's fidelity, to all those good women who are interested in it. But all those who have evidence of their sincerity, may be well satisfied as to their interest therein; and *the continuance* in the exercises of the graces of "faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety," doth clearly demonstrate, they are persons qualified with sincerity, who, in and through Christ, "in whom the promise is Yea, and Amen," shall certainly inherit it. (2 Cor. i. 20; Heb. vi. 12.)

I may not enlarge, having stayed over-long already; yet would crave a little further leave to make some use of what hath been said.

## APPLICATION.

The application of this last and chief observation; namely, *That perseverance in Christian and conjugal graces and duties is the best support to child-bearing women against, in, and under their travail; may briefly serve to teach care, and administer comfort.*

1. *This teacheth a holy care.*—And that to men as well as to women. We shall find, of either sex may hence learn instruction.

(1.) *It may teach a lesson to men*, whether they be in a single or a married state.

(i.) *They who are not yet married*, but are waiting to meet with

\* Deut. xxxii. 5.

good wives of God's giving,—they are concerned to be careful, as nigh as they can, to choose such as are so qualified as to be interested in the promise here of preservation and salvation in their child-bearing. Plato † derives the Greek word for *a woman* from that which signifies “fruitful, and a bringer forth.” And he that seeketh such an one “to marry with, only in the Lord,” (1 Cor. vii. 39,) that things may go well with her in her child-bearing condition, should consult well how she is endowed and stored with the graces [which] I have been discoursing of, both for the good of herself and the seed she may have by him. It is certainly of great importance to make choice of such a yoke-fellow as may be assuredly entitled to this good and comfortable word that we have here before us, for the support of child-bearing wives, in whose sorrows and joys good-natured and conscientious husbands cannot but have their shares.

(ii.) *They who have wives already* should take special care, upon this account, to discharge the duties of good husbands toward their child-bearing wives, with all good fidelity; namely,

First. *To “dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto them as unto the weaker vessels, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that their prayers be not hindered.”* (1 Peter iii. 7.)

—Yea, and to labour daily with them, both by their Christian advice and holy conversation, to engage their fruitful wives more and more to the constant exercise of these graces and duties, that their sorrows may be sanctified to them, and they may see the salvation of God in their breeding and bearing of children; and if the great and holy God should, in his wise government, think it best to take them hence from a child-bed, they may learn to submit to his disposing will, and rest the better satisfied, as having good evidence of their souls' eternal welfare.

Secondly. *To endeavour, as much as may be, to discharge the parts of good, Christian, and tender husbands toward their dearest yoke-fellows in such a travailing condition.*—Laying much to heart those antecedent, concomitant, and consequent pains [which] a state of pregnancy involves them in; which these husbands themselves, in such a kind, cannot have experience of; that, as it becomes them for the sake of their good and godly wives, they may, as is sometimes said of some sympathizing ones, in a sort, breed with them and for them, by “putting on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,” &c.; (Col. iii. 12;) and fulfil all the duties of the relation they are in, readily and timely providing for them, not only necessaries, but conveniences, as they can, for their longing appetites, and for the heartening of their dear and suffering wives, apt to be cast down under apprehensions of their approaching sorrows; and call-in aid of faithful praying ministers and pious friends, to make requests known unto God for them. And if God hears prayers,

Thirdly. *To be heartily thankful to God upon his giving safe deliverance to their gracious wives, from the pains and perils of child-*

\* Γυνή δε γονή, κ. τ. λ.—*Cratylus*, p. 284.

*bearing.*—When the kind husband hath been really apprehensive of the sicknesses, pains, throes, and groans of his dear wife, in her breeding and bearing a child to him, by aids from above; nothing can be more necessarily incumbent on him, than to adore and be thankful to God, who hath made a comfortable separation betwixt her and the fruit of her womb, and that as a return to prayer, and hearkening unto her groanings. If he who was a Samaritan found himself healed of his leprosy upon crying unto Christ for mercy,—though the other nine (likely, Jews) remained unthankful for the same benefit,—and came “and fell down on his face at Jesus’s feet, giving him thanks, and returning to glorify God with a loud voice,” as expressive of his heartiest sense of the divine favour in the mercy received; (Luke xvii. 15—18;) then certainly the Christian husband, having seen his loving wife, in the exercise of the graces I have been discoursing of, to pass through the peril of child-bearing, and admirably preserved therein by God’s power and goodness, is greatly obliged to return his hearty thanks to God, who hath made good his word wherein he caused them to hope, in granting so signal a mercy. This giving thanks is acceptable unto God, and “a duty indispensably incumbent on us,”\* who are charged “to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;” (Eph. v. 4, 20;) much more for a singular favour earnestly sought for, and granted through difficulty and peril.

Thus briefly I have touched upon the care of married men, with reference to their child-bearing wives, in the fore-mentioned particulars. Again: this doctrine teacheth,

(2.) *A lesson of care to women.* Consider them, as the men, either in a single, or a married state.

(i.) *If yet in a single or unmarried state,* and, by the fair providence of God, called to the change of their condition, they are concerned to take care [that] they may be furnished with the above-mentioned qualifications; to “covet earnestly not only the best gifts,” but to be found in the “more excellent way.” (1 Cor. xii. 31.) This sacred ambition, or holy covetousness, is lawful to virgins, and may commend them to good husbands; that is, to “covet earnestly” those excellent graces of “faith, holiness, charity, and sobriety;” that if they are brought into the honourable state of marriage, and in due time God do bless them with blooming hopes of the fruits of their bodies, and the unknown pains of a woman in travail come upon them, (Gen. xxxviii. 27; Psalm xlvi. 6; 1 Sam. iv. 19; Micah iv. 10,) they may live by faith upon God’s power and promise, and expect salvation in a happy separation betwixt them and the babes [whom] God hath enabled them to conceive, in the appointed season. Yea, and then, though their pains should come as sharply upon any of them as they did upon Rachel and Phinehas’s wife, causing a separation betwixt their own souls and bodies; their souls may go in a very sure way, out of a great cross here, to receive a crown of glory hereafter. Believe it, virgins! These graces are the necessary quali-

\* *Nullum officium magis quàm referenda gratia necessarium.*—SENECA.



fications to fortify your tremulous souls (apt "to be full of fear"\*) against all occurrences. If you have the real ornaments of Christ's spouse, you need not torment yourselves with carking thoughts; your mystical Husband will take care of you, to make what you greatly fear the matter of your joy.

(ii.) *If you are already married, and that "in the Lord,"* who hath opened your wombs, and given you power to conceive; it behoves you, as righteous handmaids of the Lord,

First, *To continue in the constant exercise of these graces.*—Certainly you who are blessed in being instruments for the propagation of mankind, when you find you have conceived, and grow pregnant, are highly concerned to put on and use these ornaments. A great work you are usually busy about, in preparing your child-bed linen; and I shall not discourage, but rather encourage, you to make necessary provision for your tender selves and babes. I easily yield, according to the instinct of nature, as other females, (and with the help of their mates,) you ought to be somewhat indulged to make ready and feather your nests, wherein to lay yourselves and your young. (Luke ix. 58.) But the modesty and moderation you have heard of will not allow you, above your rank, to be costly in superfluous fine feathers, when Christ's poor ministers and members, up and down, do expect your charity. O, I beseech you, good Christian women, let your chief care be (lest you should die in your sorrows) to be arrayed in that truly spiritual "fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints, wherewith the Lamb's wife maketh herself ready." (Rev. xix. 7, 8.) This, this is the principal thing; the graces of "faith, charity, holiness, and sobriety," speak true Christian prudence. And if you therefore take care to put on these, you will be the most surely guided in a subordinate care about other circumstances. And if God hath given any of you real proof already of performing his promise in my text, by vouchsafing temporal salvation to you, it behoves you to take care,

Secondly, *To record the experiments [which] he hath given you of making good his word to you in particular.*—Hath God vanquished your fears, wiped away your tears, and heard your prayers? Engrave the memorials of his goodness and faithfulness upon the tables of your hearts. You have the great example of our dear Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, who, when he had been greatly troubled for Lazarus, whom "he loved," "groaned in spirit, and wept," making his request known to his Father on his behalf; which was graciously answered; he, with great devotion of heart, "lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." (John xi. 41, 3, 35, 38.) Let every ingenuous and grateful mother, whom God hath safely delivered from her child-bearing pains and peril, imprint a grateful remembrance of so signal a mercy with indelible characters in her mind: "Lord, thou hast regarded the low estate of thine handmaiden. When I was in an agony, and well-nigh spent with repeated pains, thou didst stand by me and my babe; yea, thou didst admiri-

\* Γυνή φοβού πλεα.—EURIPIDES in *Medea*.

rably help us, making way for it to pass the bars into this world safely, keeping us both alive. Yea, and it may be, when our friends verily thought with sadness, that my child could not have seen the light, and I should shortly have shut mine eyes upon it, being ready to despair in bringing it forth; then didst thou find a way for us both to escape." (1 Cor. x. 13.) When the above-noted gentlewoman \* was made a mother of a daughter, whom shortly after, being baptized, and brought to her, she blessed, and then "gave God thanks that herself had lived to see it a Christian;" having dedicated it to the Lord in his ordinance, she accounted it an additional mercy to her bringing her forth, and so would have it communicated to others' support. As Paul, when he was made sensible of great mercy in his deliverance, by superadded favours,—“he thanked God, and took courage;” (Acts xxviii. 15;) so should every joyful mother thank God, and be of good courage for the time to come: and “good,” because, by how much the more common, the better it is. She should communicate her rare experiment to encourage others, who are apt to look upon themselves as “a most miserable offspring,”† when their pangs come upon them, that they may be helped. For well said the Greek tragedian,‡ “It becomes one woman to be at hand to help another in her labour.”

Thus we briefly see, this doctrine teacheth care to men and women, both in a single and a married state.

2. *It doth also administer comfort.*—As to the good wives themselves, so likewise to the husbands of such good wives.

(1.) *To good wives themselves, who are qualified as you have heard,* but yet in an hour of temptation are apt to walk very heavily from pre-apprehensions of grievous pains; yea, and, it may be, from great fear of death in their appointed sorrows that are coming upon them, grown weary with their heavy burdens. Whereas a constant abiding in the fore-mentioned graces and duties is a sure ground of good hope that you shall pass well through your child-bed sorrows; which, be sure, shall be no obstacle at all to your eternal welfare. And if you be eternally saved, it will be better for you than to be only temporally delivered. Yes: but you will say, you shall have a rough passage. And if, as Sabina, a Christian martyr, when she travailed, being in prison, you shall cry out,—as she was heard to do in her child-bearing throes: whereupon some asked her how she would endure the torments [which] her persecutors had prepared for her, if she shrunk at those; to whom she said, “I now bear the punishment of my sin; but then I shall suffer for my Saviour!”—it may be answered: “Notwithstanding, be of good cheer.” The apostle certainly brings in my text, as an antidote against discouragement, and to cheer up suspicious and fearful women. They are heart-reviving words to every drooping woman, and should lead her, with Sarah, to “judge him faithful who hath promised;” (Heb. xi. 11;) whereupon she may, notwithstanding her state of subjection and sorrows, be humbly con-

\* Mrs. Joceline, October 12th, 1622.

† Εσμεν αβλιωτατων φυτων.—EURIPIDES

in *Medea*.

‡ Γυναικα γαρ συμπονειν γυναικι χρη.—Idem in *Helena*.

fidest in this great work of serving her generation according to the will of God in child-bearing, of preservation and salvation ; and God will lay no more upon her than he will enable her to bear ; and find a way for her escape, either by a comfortable, sanctified deliverance here, or a blessed translation to heaven, to reap in joy what was sown in tears ; and those but temporary, when the joys are eternal. Further, it doth administer comfort,

(2.) *To the husbands of such good wives ;* that is, such as continue in the graces and duties before and in their pregnancy, or growing big, hoping in God's word, that root and branch shall do well, being under the blessings of the new covenant. When they cannot but sympathize with their wives in their sorrows, they may cheer up in humble confidence, that, the sting being taken out of the punishment, their wives' joys shall be increased by the pains [which] they undergo ; and that God will deliver them, and hear their prayers, and they shall glorify him. (John xvi. 21 ; Psalm l. 15.) And if, after prayers and tears, their dearest consorts should decease, and depart from them, out of their child-bearing pains ; though this be a most cutting and heavy cross in itself, yet comfort may be gathered from it in the issue. For indeed that is the comfort of comforts, which affords life in death ; that is the honey which is taken out of the dead carcass ; that, supposing the worst which can befall us in temporals, gives better security in those things which are eternal. The fruition of God in glory is the highest end ; and when we and ours attain that, after the serving of our generation here according to the will of God, and thereby glorifying his most sacred Majesty, there is matter of greatest consolation and truest joy to holy souls. In expectation of which, let pious husbands and gracious chiding wives, in their mutual offices, wait upon God with submission for a sanctified support, when they stand in most need of divine aids. Then such handmaids of the Lord may humbly hope they shall receive help in and under their child-bearing travail, and, in due time, even a temporal deliverance (supposing that to be best for them) from those pains and perils ; taking comfort from that gracious word of the Lord by the prophet, (though spoken upon another account,) with which I shall conclude : " Fear thou not ; for I am with thee : be not dismayed ; for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isai. xli. 10.)

## SERMON XXIII.

BY THE REV. PETER VINKE, B.D.

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## HOW MAY WE BEST KNOW THE WORTH OF THE SOUL?

*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*  
—Matthew xvi. 26.

In the twenty-first verse of this chapter, our Saviour foretells his sufferings, together with many considerable circumstances; as, *the place where*,—at “Jerusalem;” *the persons from whom*,—“the elders and chief priests and scribes;” *the degree unto which* he must suffer; not only that he “must suffer many things,” but that he was to suffer unto death, and “be killed.” By which enumeration of so many particulars, he spake more plainly, and preached to them the unwelcome doctrine of the cross: a doctrine so strange unto them, as they had shown themselves of a quite contrary opinion, expecting a worldly kingdom, and hoping for considerable advancement in it.

Peter, in the name of the rest, therefore, cavils at it, and inveighs against it; and was probably suffered to be tempted himself, and to become a tempter to our Saviour, that he might not be exalted above measure for what our Saviour had said: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” (Verses 17, 18.) But our blessed Saviour, who had overcome the devil’s temptations, when they came immediately from himself, (Matt. iv. 1—11,) could not be overcome by them, now [that] they are suggested to him by another; but shows that he continued his resolution of suffering the utmost for us, by his severe check given unto Peter under a smart compellation, “Satan.”

This is that very same apostle, who, but a few verses before, had his name changed from Simon to Peter, and, presently after, here from Peter to Satan; to show how much he and all other differ—when mightily assisted by God’s grace and Spirit—from themselves, when left to themselves; and become as other, if not worse than other, men. And how easily do we slide into sin at unawares, and how carefully need we to watch over our very zeal for Christ and goodness, when our very best affections are subject to so gross mistakes, and may deserve such severe reproofs!

Upon this occasion it was that our Saviour, instead of retracting his former resolves, declares that he was not to be alone in them, but they should all come to be of his mind, and be conformed to his will;

nay, that if they would be his disciples indeed, "If any man will come after me," (verse 24,) that is, "be indeed my disciple;" (alluding to the manner and custom of the eastern countries, when the master, or rabbi, was wont to go with his scholars attending after him;) he must not only forego his ease and resign his will, but leave his life; in these things denying of himself, as if his present pleasure or advantage were to be considered no longer of, when they stood in opposition to God's glory or our souls' good.

And this is not only or barely asserted, but convincingly proved; lest the disciples shall cry again, "This is a hard saying;" (John vi. 60;) as, if ever they had cause to say so, they had on this occasion. Our blessed Saviour is willing to abide the trial upon this issue, and to have it judged and determined by themselves; appealing in the words of the text to their rational and wise faculties: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

In which words, as to the *form* of them,

1. Our judgment and consciences are called upon—being [seeing] we do so often vilify our souls, and prefer the little things of this world, now one thing, then another, before them—to show cause for our so doing, and to "bring forth our strong reasons." (Isai. xli. 21.) Of all sorts and ways of arguing, this comes most home, and is closest,—when we are allowed to be as it were both judge and party, and yet must condemn ourselves. This manner of speech is only used when the case is very plain and obvious, and we care not who hear it or determine it. Thus God calls upon the "inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, to judge betwixt him and his vineyard." (Isai. v. 3.) His vineyard were themselves in a figure; and God is willing [that] the case should be referred to their own determination, if they would give themselves time and leisure to think of it. So, Amos ii. 11: "Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord." As if God had said, "I call your own consciences to witness; and, let them but speak, they will testify both my mercies to you, and your sins against me." Or, as elsewhere: "Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" (Ezek. xviii. 25.)

And, O that men would consider how self-condemned they must needs be for all their sins against God, and all their neglects of salvation, and disregards of their souls! Their sins usually go thus "beforehand unto judgment," (1 Tim. v. 24,) and men cannot but condemn themselves. Who can think but that a humble, useful, temperate, pious life is far better than a proud, useless, luxurious, and profane conversation? Would we but show ourselves men in the concerns of our souls, as we do in those of our bodies or estates, acting with that caution and concern in the one as we do in the other, what a vast change should we soon discover! For all God's commandments are for our good, and his ways are "pleasantness," (Prov. iii. 17,) would we but seriously view and consider them.

Howsoever, this is that which will make the worm to gnaw, and the fire to burn, the ungodly in the other world,—in that they have

sinned against those notices of good and evil which they had, or might have had; and in that they have put no difference between their vile bodies and their precious souls; whereas our Saviour here appeals to them concerning the worth of their souls, and the worthlessness of all things comparatively besides.

2. From the form or manner of expression here used, by way of a positive interrogation or expostulation: "What is a man profited? or what shall a man give?" we observe, that the negation is intended to be more vehement; it being usual, not only in scripture, but in common speech, by a positive question vehemently to deny, as by a negative question vehemently to affirm, any thing; as by these scriptures before quoted,—Amos ii. 11; Ezek. xviii. 25,—amongst many other places, may appear. So that the *sense* of these words amounts to this:—

1. It is most evident and undeniable that if any man could gain the whole world, (not that such a thing was ever done, or is indeed possible; but,) upon that supposition, he would be a vast loser by it, if he lost his soul for it. Because,

2. There is nothing of worth or value sufficient to exchange for a soul withal.

Now this text is, as it were, a balance or pair of scales, in which the commodities therein spoken of are weighed.

1. In the one scale is laid *the whole world*: here you may take in "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" (1 John ii. 16;) or whatsoever serves for pleasure, gain, or honour,—the worldly man's trinity. Abate nothing; make good weight, more than was ever weighed out to any one, but supposed or granted only for argument's sake. Yet there is a "Mene, Mene," writ against it: it is weighed, and found too light; (Dan. v. 25—27;) it is touched, and found under value.

2. In the other scale only a *single soul* is put; (yours, or mine;) and that doth so far preponderate and outweigh, or outvie, the whole world, as that there is no comparison betwixt them; nothing is of value to be given or taken in exchange for any of them. As to the former of these,—the world, and the glory of it,—our present purpose is to take no further notice of it. *Sic transit gloria mundi.\** The moon is not worth the looking after, whilst the sun appears; nor all these fading, changeable things, when the soul comes under consideration. It is now expected that the world should be "crucified to us, and we unto the world;" (Gal. vi. 14;) and then only we shall be able to "hear," that is, to understand, what our Saviour here says concerning our souls; which being my intended subject, I shall take occasion from his words to speak to these following particulars:—

I. *What is meant by the "soul" here spoken of?*

II. *What this "soul" here spoken of is.*

III. *In what, more particularly, the worth of this "soul" does appear.*

\* "So fades the glory of this world away."—EDIT.

## WHAT IS MEANT BY THE "SOUL?"

I. As to the first of these, namely, *What is meant by a "soul" in the text?* to mention no other acceptations of the word than such as may be accommodated to this place and our present purpose,

1. "Soul," or ψυχη, the word here used, is put for *life*, by a metonymy of the efficient for the effect, because our life depends upon the soul. Thus: "Take no thought for your life;" (Matt. vi. 25;) when the same word is used which is here translated "soul;" which, well considered, will give a great light into the meaning of this place. For these words are looked upon as a proverbial speech, taken out of Job ii. 4: "All that a man hath will he give for his life." As if our Saviour had from thence inferred, "If a man, being in an apparent danger of a corporal death, would give any thing, or do any thing, to prolong or redeem his life; how much more should a man do or part with, to prevent an eternal death, or to procure an everlasting life!"

2. The word "soul" is put for *the whole man (synecdoche partis\*)* frequently in scripture. Thus, the number of persons "that came with Jacob into Egypt," are reckoned by so many "souls." (Gen. xlv. 26.) As, also, they that were converted by St. Peter's sermon, are counted "three thousand souls." (Acts ii. 41.) This, if considered, furthers our present purpose, and must needs add to our esteem of our souls. For the soul is the man; our souls are ourselves; and what, by this evangelist, our Saviour calls "losing of the soul," in Luke ix. 25 that evangelist, relating the same thing, calls "losing of ourselves." The body is but the house or cabinet; the soul is the jewel in it: the body is but "the clothing," το της ψυχης ιματιον, "that the soul for a while is clothed with," and must put off.

3. This word "soul" is taken most properly and strictly for *the form, constituent, and better part of man*; that breath that is breathed into him from God, when "man becomes a living soul." (Gen. ii. 7.) And in this acceptation we shall take this word here in our following discourse, and are come to inquire,

## WHAT THIS "SOUL" IS.

II. *What it is.*—But we shall not be thoroughly able to satisfy our inquiry: for, being [seeing] all our knowledge ariseth from our senses, and there is nothing in our understanding which was not first in one of them; our souls not incurring into our senses, our understanding is at a loss to frame any adequate conceptions of them. There are three things reckoned amongst the *αγνωριστα και αοριστα*, "such things as cannot be known and," by consequence, "be defined;" and they are, 1. *God*; 2. *Angels*; 3. *Human souls*: and this does very much set forth the excellency of our souls,—that they are only to be known as God himself or the angels are to be known; that is,

\* "By a synecdoche of a part for the whole."—EDIT.

1. *By way of eminency*: when we affirm that being is in a more excellent manner in them, than in any visible thing.

2. *By way of negation*: when we deny those imperfections to be in them which are in matter; as corruptibility.

3. *By their effects*: which are manifest even to our senses; so that it is as certain that we have such souls, as it is not so demonstratively certain what they are. Yet we may so far define a human soul, as to express the conception which we have of it. I shall only set down St. Austin's definition of such a soul: *Est substantia quedam rationis particeps, regendo corpori accommodata*: \* "It is a rational substance, fitted for the government of the body."

But because, as it is said of God, it may be said of the soul: "None hath seen a soul at any time;" and therefore, as there are many that say there is no God, so there are as many who say there is no soul; (both having the same friends and enemies, the very same affirmers or deniers;) I shall be more particular in several conclusions concerning this subject,—our souls.

#### THE SOUL IS A DISTINCT SUBSTANCE FROM THE BODY.

1. We assert that *the soul is a distinct substance from the body.*—Which will appear, if we consider,

(1.) That *such things as are proper to distinct substances*, (as, to "dwell in the body," whilst a man lives; to "leave the body," when he dies,) *are attributed to the soul.*—And this is not the saying or opinion of some one or a few persons, who, though eminent, might be singular, and opine according to their fancies or prejudices; but it hath been, at all times and in all nations, (as an universal tradition,) held undeniably by all considering and thinking men, and they speak accordingly.

(2.) That the soul is a substance and distinct from the body, appears in that *it does "substare,"* that is, *is the subject of accidents.*—Such as are virtue and vice, arts and sciences; which cannot inhere in bare matter. It is not from the body that a man is learned or ignorant, but from his mind.

(3.) The soul is thus distinct from the body, in that *it was made after the body.*—Thus Moses speaks of the creating of the soul distinctly after the forming of the body: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground;" that is, his body, which was dust, and shall return to dust: and then he adds, "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." (Gen. ii. 7.) His body or "nostrils" were made, before the soul was breathed into him; and his soul was breathed into him by a distinct act of Divine Power from that which made his body.

(4.) The soul of man is a different substance from his body, because *it does exist separately from the body.*—Though I will not say, with the Platonists, that the souls of men had a being before their bodies; yet it is certain, they continue their being after that they have left their bodies. This the wiser Heathen were not wholly

\* *Liber de Immortalitate Animæ.*



ignorant of, whose testimonies (as all things of that nature upon this occasion I forbear to meddle with) are full and plain in this case. It suffices us Christians that our Lord and Master supposes this as most certain in the parable of the rich glutton; (Luke xvi. 19—31;) in which there are no less than three instances to prove the soul's existence after the death of the body,—Abraham, Dives, and Lazarus. And though this is indeed a parable, and symbolical scripture is not argumentative, yet so far must [it] be granted true, as may make a foundation for the scope and intent for which it was spoken.

But (what is beyond any cavil or exception) our Saviour tells the thief upon the cross, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." (Luke xxiii. 43.) It is certain, his body was not with our Saviour's. That it might appear our Saviour (not any other) did arise, God so provided, that he was laid in a new tomb, in which none ever was laid before. (Luke xxiii. 53.) Neither could our Saviour mean that he should be with his Godhead in Paradise that day; for, at that very instant in which he spake, in that place and in all places Christ as God is present. Had this man gone to hell, the words in this sense had been true, but not comfortable, to this dying confessor. They can only, therefore, relate to his soul's going to the place of the blessed, when it should that day leave its body.

#### THE SOUL IS A SPIRITUAL SUBSTANCE.

2. We may advance a little further toward the knowledge of our souls, in asserting that *they are spiritual, or spirits*.—Freed from that composition and those drugs that are in matter, which clog and debase it; and it is no small perfection of the soul that it is freed from them. My meaning is, The soul of man is not the "temperament," or *crasis*, of the body. St. Austin thinks that every one may easily be convinced of this in himself: *Quis benè se inspiciens, &c.*: "Who," says he, "considering himself, does not find that he understands any thing [which] he ponders on the better, the more he can withdraw his thoughts from sensible objects?" *Quòd si temperatio corporis esset animus, non utique id possit accidere*:\* "If the soul were the temper of the body, it would not fall out thus; for bodily or sensible things would help, rather than hinder, the understanding."

But I shall be engaged to a further proof of it, which these following arguments may evince:—

(1.) Were it only that *the soul is so often called a "spirit" by God himself in his word*, it were a very considerable argument to prove that it is a spirit. When Adam gave all the creatures names, who doubts but that those names were suitable to their natures? And could that nomenclature be retrieved, it might tell us more of beasts and fowls than is yet, or, it may be, now ever will be, known.† But

\* *Liber de Immortalitate Animæ.* † 'Ὅς αὖ τὰ ὀνόματα εἶδῃ, εἰσεται καὶ τὰ πράγματα.—PLATO in *Cratylò*. "He who has acquired a perfect knowledge of the names of things, will of necessity be well acquainted with the things themselves."—EDIT.

when God speaks so often of a soul under the notion of a spirit, and in many places where a metaphorical sense will not serve the turn, we cannot but know that the soul is what God calls it, as well as the creatures were what Adam called them.

To name but a few texts: the wise man, speaking of the soul, calls it "the spirit," and says, it "returns unto God who gave it;" in contradistinction to the body, which he calls there "dust:" (Eccles. xii. 7:) and if Solomon knew the several creatures, from the cedar to the hyssop, surely he was not so ignorant of the nature of his soul, as to speak so impertinently, if it be not a spirit.

Nay, it is one of God's titles, that he "formeth the spirit of man within him:" (Zech. xii. 1:) which proves its distinction from the body, and its spiritual nature too: and if man's soul were only as the soul of a beast, the forming of it would not deserve to be reckoned up with those stupendous acts of "stretching forth the heavens, and laying the foundation of the earth;" as we see it is in the fore-cited place.

Add to this, that when our blessed Saviour died, the evangelist says, He "yielded up the ghost;" (Matt. xxvii. 50;) that is, his spirit or soul. And St. Stephen died with these last words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts vii. 59.)

(2.) That the soul is a spiritual substance, is evident in that *it is not produced out of matter*.—As the body of Adam was, and all our bodies are; as is observed in the relation we have of man's creation, (Gen. ii. 7,) and in Solomon's observation upon it. (Eccles. xii. 7.) Speaking of death, (after his most admired description of old age,) "Then," says he, "shall the dust," that is, the body, "return to the earth as it was;" there is the original of that assigned: "and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The spirit, or soul, is as certainly made by God out of no pre-existing matter, as the body is made out of matter; and if we grant the one, why should we doubt of the other? To be sure, when Eve was brought unto Adam, he says, She "is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;" (Gen. ii. 23;) but he does not say, "She is a soul of my soul."

Whether the soul be made by God *mediante generatione*,\* or by an immediate creation, (though I am persuaded of the latter, yet,) I shall not peremptorily determine, finding St. Austin, in a plainer case concerning the soul, modestly professing his ignorance.†

(3.) My third argument to prove the soul is a spirit, is, *because in it man bears the image of God*.—"God is a Spirit:" (John iv. 24:) and nothing corporeal, as such, can be said to be in his image, or likeness; neither is any bodily thing, as bodily, capable of wisdom, holiness, righteousness, by which man resembles his Maker.

Now though these scripture-proofs are sufficient to any that believe undoubtedly the verity of scripture, (and such I speak to,) yet [I proceed] to name one or two of another nature. Therefore,

(4.) Fourthly. *The actions or operations of the soul are such as*

\* "By means of generation."—EDIT. † *Nec tunc sciebam, nec adhuc scio.*—*AUGUSTINI Retract.* lib. i. "I neither knew then, nor do I yet know."—EDIT.

cannot proceed from any bodily being.—As, intellection and volition ; to abstract and reflect upon itself and its motions ; in one thought to meditate on hell, in the next on heaven. No corporeal agent can, in less than the twinkling of an eye or turn of a hand, move or act on things so vastly distant. The opinion of the motion of the orbs of the planets and of the firmament is antiquated, and almost laughed at, because no bodies can be conceived to move so swiftly ; and this motion of the soul incredibly exceeds theirs.

(5.) And lastly. The soul is a spirit, in that *it is in the body ; and “one body cannot be in another.”—Non datur penetratio corporum.* The soul takes up no place, as bodies do ; it is *tota in toto*.\* Or, at least, negatively, it is not by parts in the body, as material things are ; part here, and part there : whereas the soul is so in any part, that it is not the less in the other. Thus, these being premised, I come now to that which is mainly intended, namely,

#### IN WHAT THE SOUL'S EXCELLENCY DOES APPEAR.

III. *To show whence we may know the excellency of the soul.*—For, as to some other particulars which may tend to the further explaining the text,—as, 1. *How a soul may be said to be lost ;* and, 2. *What this phrase, “giving an exchange for the soul,” imports,*—I shall take occasion to speak to them as they will fall with what we are yet to speak unto : for I would not make the porch or entry too large or wide.

Though I may suppose that in what I have said, enough may be discovered to prove what I am upon, and that I have laid down such principles as the worth of the soul may easily be inferred from them ; yet it will not be amiss to be minded of the force of them, with the addition of such things as will abundantly serve our present purpose.

#### IN ITS ORIGINAL.

(I.) The first thing that speaks the soul's prerogative, is *its original*.—It is accounted no small privilege to be nobly born, to be descended from princes, or persons eminent in any kind ; yet “man at his best estate is altogether vanity.” (Psalm xxxix. 5.) “Man is a worm, and the son of man” (be he who he will) “is but a worm.” (Job xxv. 6.) His generation is univocal, and like begets its like. But the soul is “the offspring of God.” (Acts xvii. 29.) In that sense the heathen poet, and St. Paul from him, is to be understood. There is no pretence for the body to be the offspring of God, who is a Spirit. If it be warily understood, we may admit of what is ordinarily said of the soul, that it is *divinæ particula auræ*.† I am sure, it is this part only in man that may be said to “partake of the divine nature.” (2 Peter i. 4.)

It is remarkable that the soul at its creation was not made according to any pattern or sampler, taken from amongst the herd of the visible creatures ; but it is a kind of an idea of God, as true and as full an one

\* “It is entire within itself.”—EDIT.  
 “A particle of the divine breath.”—EDIT.

† HORATI *Serm.* lib. ii. sat. ii. 79.

as in matter can be borne. And though man be "lower than the angels" by reason of his body, which is as a clog upon the soul, or a flaw which this precious jewel appears with; yet in some respect the human nature may vie with the angelical nature, and man is the crown and top-stone of the creation, being added last of all by the all-wise Architect to his building of the world.

IN THE END IT IS DESIGNED FOR.

(II.) The excellency of our souls appears from *the end they are designed for*.—It cannot but speak the dignity of the soul, that it alone, of all the creatures, is chosen and set apart by God for such great purposes, as, 1. *To glorify him*; 2. *To enjoy him*. Men, though otherwise of the lowest rank, are ennobled, when their prince appoints them to honourable employments. Now,

1. The soul of man is made for *to bring glory to God*.—Not as the body of man,—only as an instrument, which moves as the soul would have it, as the axe in the hand of the workman; nor as the other visible creatures, who glorify God only as they afford us matter for God's glory: but all the glory that God expects or can reap from all and every one of the corporeal beings, is intrusted with man. Man is the creatures' high priest, and by him they offer up all their sacrifices of praise and thanks. When, in Psalm cxlviii., the sun and moon, nay, storms and tempests, are called upon to praise God, man is cited to meditate on and to glorify God for his wisdom and power which appear in them. And, indeed, were it not for the soul of man, God should have made all the rest of the creatures for nought. Man is only concerned in them, and benefited by them; and his soul [is] only able to bless God for them.

All God's works of creation, nay, and of providence too, are matter of praise,—so done as they ought to be had in remembrance. (Psalm cxl. 4.) When we contemplate or meditate upon them, they afford our souls great cause to be enlarged in our praising of several of the attributes of God. All things are *Deo plena* ["full of God"]. All things have a voice, as well as "day and night:" "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work." (Psalm xix. 1, 2.) They speak God to be almighty, and abundant in goodness; they tell us, as often as we view or consider them, that God, who made and preserves them, is worthy of all our fear and love, service and obedience. It is only the soul of man that is able to read, hear, or understand these things; and therefore man, for his soul's sake, (as the priests had) has many privileges allotted to him by God, who hath put the other creatures generally "under his feet." (Psalm viii. 6.)

It is sadly true, that men rob God of his honour [which] they are intrusted with. Ah! whose soul is a faithful steward of God's manifold gifts? (1 Peter iv. 10.) What sacrilege do not men commit daily? And may we lay it to heart! for God will call heaven and earth else to witness against us. Every creature and providence can testify

[that] they contained matter enough to excite our praises, and to persuade our obedience.

2. Again: the soul of man is made capable *to enjoy God*.—To see God; that is, to know him and love him, in whose “presence there is fulness of joy.” (Psalm xvi. 11.) The sun and planets, with the rest of the spangles of heaven, know not their Maker, nor what they are, nor to what end they serve: they (how bright soever) are not receptive of that light that shines into the hearts and upon the souls of the children of men; if compared with which, their brightest beam is thick darkness, were it only for our *viaticum*, “the repast we have on the road toward heaven.”

The soul, indeed, sees here as “through a glass, darkly,” and “knows but in part;” (1 Cor. xiii. 12;) yet this very taste is better than the full meal that any other creature can make. Yet it must be confessed that *anima malè habitat*, “the soul is uneasy in this world;” not only with griefs and cares, but because it is out of its place, as a bone out of joint. It was made to be with God, and cannot be satisfied when it is from God. But what an excellent creature must that be, whom the King of heaven and God of glory should thus delight to honour, which God should (may I speak such a word?) choose for his companion! I am sure, we are said to have “fellowship with” him. (1 John i. 3.) Whatsoever the soul was before, by choosing and admitting it into his presence, God makes it glorious.

Hence it is that inferior creatures are satisfied with food suitable to them; they have served their end, and have gone to the utmost of their line, according to the law of their creation, to their Creator’s praise: but “the soul of man is upon the rack, and hath a thousand torments,” till it answers his end: *Irrequietum est cor meum, donec venit ad te*; “until it brings actively some glory unto God, and comes in some measure to the enjoyment of God.”

That life, or soul, which inferior creatures have, keeps indeed their bodies from putrefying: but man hath not *animam pro sale*, “his soul only as salt,” to keep his body from stinking; but to act and govern it, that it may be an instrument in the service and to the praise of God; and, by reason of this, his tongue and every member may be made his glory, when it is employed to the glory of God. It is certainly a debasement of the soul to busy it about eating and drinking, dressing or undressing, further than what is necessary to our preservation and our passage through this world as pilgrims and strangers; as we think children to employ their souls ill whilst they make pies of dirt, or run after gay bubbles made up of froth or slime. Only here is the difference: young ones are scarce capable of knowing or doing better; the wings of their souls seem not fledged: but afterwards God justly expects that we should fly higher; and we are able to soar above the third heavens, and in our thoughts, meditations, and affections to go to God; to “taste and see how good he is.” (Psalm xxxiv. 8.)

## THE ENDEAVOURS THAT ARE USED FOR TO GAIN SOULS.

(III.) The preciousness of the soul appears in *the great endeavours that are used to get it*.—This is the standard that we value all things by: “What is given for them? what is done to obtain them?” Inasmuch that many think there is a great indifferency in metals and stone, &c., and that opinion sets the rate on them: by this, gold and silver are esteemed before lead or iron, &c. Now, though the soul hath an essential, innate worth, as appears by what hath been said; yet this (if I may call it) extrinsical consideration does further prove it. For, it is mainly desired by God on the one hand, and by Satan on the other: and though the devil be a fallen angel, yet he hath the greatest knowledge of the nature and worth of things, and is from thence called *δαίμων*. But,

## GOD’S ENDEAVOURS.

1. *God endeavours to win souls*.—This he condescends to woo and entreat for: “My son, give me thine heart.” (Prov. xxiii. 26.) But, to be more particular: though we are not able to apprehend all the means [which] God uses for our souls, yet so many will easily come into our view, that if we were not the most ungrateful and insensible creatures in the world, we could not deny our souls to God; he so loves and values them; he hath done, and does daily, so much for them. Above all,

(1.) *God’s parting with his Son, and Christ with his heart-blood and life, for them*.—“Behold, how he loved him!” could they say when our Saviour shed but a few tears for Lazarus: (John xi. 36:) but much more, when he shed all the blood in his body for our souls, we may well say, “Behold, how he loved them!” When man by sin had incurred the displeasure, and deserved the curse and wrath, of God; and that the blood of bulls and cattle, or a thousand bulls, were too mean to atone for the least transgression; God requiring a greater price for the redemption of a lost soul; our blessed Saviour cries, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;” (Heb. x. 7;) that is, to give satisfaction, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, that these precious souls may not perish.

Christ never interposed to save the bodies,—so many thousands or millions of such as perished in the deluge of the old world; or to keep the bodies from destruction of those wretches that perished by fire in Sodom and Gomorrah: but when souls were in danger, and rather than they should perish, he “comes,” nay, he “delights, to do God’s will” in suffering for them. (Psalm xl. 8.) And what did he suffer! what did he not suffer? Here we must draw a veil; as that painter did, who could not express grief enough to the life.

Go with Christ a little,—cannot ye watch an hour with him? (Matt. xxvi. 40.)—to contemplate this. Go into the garden, to the judgment-seat, to Golgotha. Behold him on the cross; hear his strong sighs and groans: they will break thy heart, if any thing will; and broken it must be. “And why did God suffer his ‘beloved

Son, in whom he was well pleased,' to be thus tormented?" "Why?" God would rather afflict him for a time, than lose our souls for ever. "And why did Christ, who might have chosen otherwise, so freely give his cheeks to the smiters?" "Why?" Only he had set his love upon our souls, which he would not suffer to perish.

Indeed, the text supposes that there is no *ανταλλαγμα*, or "exchange," for a soul. It is a phrase borrowed from former times, when men did not pay in coin for what they bought, but did exchange commodity for commodity; (as yet in some of our islands, &c.) and it does imply, that there is nothing, no, not the world, that bears a parity of value with the soul. Now, though this be most certainly true,—that our soul outvies in worth the whole world, yet the blood of Christ, which is the blood of God, (by reason of the hypostatical union of his human nature with the divine,) is a sufficient ransom for all the souls that shall believe in him; (1 Peter i. 18, 19;) nay, it is sufficient, were it but applied, for the whole world.

But how highly does God prize a soul, seeing that, when they were to be purchased, he asked and would receive no less a rate for it, from his own Son, than his life-blood! And yet men barter it away (as Judas and the priests did our Saviour for thirty pence) at what rate, how low soever, the devil and the world will give for it.

(2.) I might add unto God's giving of his Son for our souls, *his giving of his Spirit to the soul*.—And this, too, that it might "not perish, but have everlasting life:" (John iii. 16:) that he who dwelt in the highest heavens, and whom "the heaven of heavens" is not able to "contain," (1 Kings viii. 27,) should dwell in the soul or heart of man after a more excellent manner than in the most glorious temple that ever was made; and therefore it must as far exceed it. It is true, our bodies are said to be "temples of the Holy Ghost;" (1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19;) but they are only temples of the Holy Ghost as they are the bodies that are animated by such souls; otherwise they had been no more dignified than any other clay or earth.

That God should come and knock and stay and wait for entrance into our souls until (to speak, with scripture, after the manner of men) his head is wet with the dew of the morning, and be grieved at any repulse, unkindness, or denial [which] he meets with; nay, that God, where he is entertained, should never leave or depart from a soul; nay, with his good will, would not absent himself for one moment from it;—it must needs declare his great love unto it and esteem of it. Nay, by thus loving of it, he makes it worthy and valuable, whatsoever it might otherwise have been.

(3.) God's valuing of our souls appears in *the care and pains which he takes for our souls daily*.

(i.) *In that he hath instituted means whereby he might come to obtain our souls, nay, to strengthen and comfort them, and have communion with them*.—These are his ordinances,—the word, sacraments, and prayer. He is brought-in by the prophet as one "rising up early and sending" his messengers and ministers: (Jer. vii. 13, 25:)

he neglects no time ; with the very first, he is, as it were, seizing upon us, and crying to us, "Return ! Why will ye die ?" (Ezek. xviii. 30, 31.)

(ii.) Nay, Secondly, *he bears with us, and exercises a great deal of patience toward us, if so be he might at length gain our souls ; and says, "When shall it once be ?"*—Every sin we commit presseth God, as a cart is pressed with sheaves. All the patience and meekness in all the best of creatures, if joined together, could not endure such an indignity as every sin offers to God ; but they would ease themselves of such a burden ; which yet God endures multitudes of, only that his "long-suffering" might be "salvation" to our souls. (2 Peter iii. 15.)

(iii.) Yet further : *his bearing with the whole world of wicked men, notwithstanding their blasphemies and open defiance of him, is only out of love to some few souls who serve and fear him.*—Hence the Psalmist says concerning the world, "I bear up the pillars of it." (Psalm lxxv. 3.) A gracious soul is the true Atlas that keeps the world from falling. God, out of respect unto such, withholdeth that destroying fire that shall, when their number is made up, consume it.

(iv.) And lastly. *All the providences of God, in which he worketh hitherto, are intended by him for the good of our souls, and done by God out of respect unto them.*

First. By his *mercies* God would allure our souls to love and serve him. These are the "cords of a man : " (Hosea xi. 4 :) by these God would oblige and tie our souls the closer unto him.\* Mercies are vocal ; they all have a language or speech, which we ought to learn to understand, whereby they recommend God unto our souls : and as they came from God, so for this purpose they came from him, —that our souls might by their means go to God, who indeed sent them on that very errand, —to bring our souls unto him.

Secondly. Nay, the very *judgments* of God in the world prove his value for our souls, who, rather than miss of them, does this "his strange work." (Isai. xxviii. 21.) God does "not afflict willingly ;" (Lam. iii. 33 ;) but, rather than to be deprived of men's souls, he will do that which he is so loath to come unto. Thus he does not only afflict the wicked, who obstinately remain so, to caution and instruct the souls of his people ; (as princes' children are lessoned when their proxies are whipped ;) but he corrects his dearest children and servants. Though it goes to his heart, and he himself is "afflicted in all their afflictions ;" (Isai. lxiii. 9 ;) yet, rather than their souls should perish with the world, he is ready to do, nay, to suffer, any thing.

But when all is said, these are but a few shreds of what might be laid before you. God's love to and prizing of our souls need not so much to be *proved* : I would hope that it is *felt*.

\* *Quàm magis extendas, tantò astringunt arctius.*—PLAUTI *Menæchmi*, act. i. sc. 1. 19. "The more you stretch them, the more tightly will they bind." —EDIT.



## ENDEAVOURS USED BY SATAN FOR OUR SOULS.

2. *But, on the other side, as God does endeavour, so does Satan, to gain the soul.*—*Fas est et ab hoste doceri*: “We may learn this from our greatest enemy,”—that our souls are worth all our care and pains in keeping; being [seeing] our adversary the devil thinks no pains too great to get them. He goeth up and down, “seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter v. 8.) He compasses the earth, as we may read in the book of Job. (Chap. i. 7; ii. 2.) He had “considered” Job, and so considers all others,—what temptation is likeliest to prevail; what their tempers and distempers are; what traps will take some, and what snares others. He knows our beloved sins, and dresses them up, so as we might be loath to part with them. He did not desire to go into the herd of swine, that he might destroy them; but that by that means he might tempt their owners; as, indeed, it took effect,—the Gadarenes preferring their swine before their souls or their Saviour. (Matt. viii. 31—34.) When our Saviour came to cast him out of any one, the devil was tormented. “Why art thou come to torment us?” they cry. (Verse 29; Luke viii. 28.) It was not because they were forced to leave their bodies, but because by that means he should have no such opportunity to mischief their souls. O, this is a torment to Satan,—to be deprived of our souls!

There is not a sermon we hear, but this evil one is ready to take away the seed as soon as ever it is sown: (Matt. xiii. 19:) there is not a prayer we make, but these “fowls” of air attend to light upon the sacrifice; and hardly can they be driven away. (Gen. xv. 11.) Whersoever we are, whatsoever we do, the devil attends and waits for advantage against us, that he might but gain our souls.

And, O that men were but so industrious to preserve their souls, as Satan is to ruin them! “The Philistines are upon thee!” and dost thou sleep? The thieves are up that intend to rob thee! and dost not thou arise? Satan does not do all this for nothing, or for that which is worth but little; this eagle does not catch at flies: he “hunts for the precious” soul. (Prov. vi. 26.)

## THE DURATION OF OUR SOULS.

(IV.) There is one argument more, to prove the excellency of our souls; and that is, if you consider *their duration or lasting*.—It is as a dead colour upon all the beauties and glories in the world, that they are fading; there is a worm at the root of the gourd which men delight in, and sit with greatest content under; insomuch as it is not yet resolved whether our comfort is greater, whilst we have these outward things; or our grief, when we part from them. To be sure, the one must needs bear proportion unto the other; and the more any thing is loved, the loather we are to leave it.

Now, that the soul transcends in this respect the world and all that is in it, (it being to remain, when they shall be no more,) may appear from the nature of the soul, which admits not those contrary quali-

ties which, acting upon one another, destroy their subject in which they are. There are many treatises to prove the immortality of the soul, which I will not so much as mention. Only one argument [that] Bernard uses, because I find it not elsewhere, I shall set down here: *Immortalis anima est, quoniam, cum ipsa sibi vita sit, sicut non est quo cadat a se, sic non est quo cadat a vitâ*: \* “The soul of man being life unto itself, as it cannot part with itself, so it cannot part with its life.” The body therefore dies, because it hath its life, not in itself, but from the soul, which it may be severed from: but the soul lives not by virtue of its union with the body; but the body lives by virtue of its union with the soul. I am the less intent upon my proving of this, because all thinking men do grant it. Nay, it is an antecedent verity to the Christian religion: unless our souls be immortal, our “faith is vain,” and all those absurdities will follow which the apostle reckons up, 1 Cor. xv., as the consequents of denying the resurrection of the body.

Nay, unless the soul be immortal, all religion is but imposture; and we are designed upon and abused, when we are called upon and persuaded to the worshipping and serving of God. So that it is indeed as necessary for us to believe our souls to be immortal, as it is necessary for us to believe that there is a God; and either a good man’s hope, or a wicked man’s fears, are sufficient evidences of both. That there is another life, or a future state after this life, a good man *would not but* believe, and a wicked *cannot but* believe. They are only inconsidering, debauched men,—whose lusts and sins have made it greatly their interest that they might die like beasts, as well as they have lived like them,—who did ever seem to question it. I say, “seem to question it;” for their *surda vulnera*,† the wounds that conscience makes in them, would not pierce so deep, nor look so sadly, if they had such a lenitive as the thoughts that they might not be felt in the other world.

But, O, eternity, eternity! what a shrill and dismal noise does it make in a wicked man’s ear, (or heart, rather,) when heard or thought on! and, on the contrary, what melody is it to a gracious man, to hear that his soul is immortal, and his crown incorruptible!

OBJECTION. “But the text supposes the soul may be lost; and what is that else, but that it dies?”

ANSWER. The soul, indeed, may be lost, and die in a figurative sense. There is a great resemblance betwixt the death of the body, and that of the soul. The body dies when it is separated from the soul, by which it lives; and the soul dies when it is separated from God, who is its life. *Sicut anima vita est corporis, sic Deus vita est animæ*.‡ Take a soul from the body, the body stirs, breathes, lives no more: so, if God’s grace and Spirit be not in the soul, it moves not, but is “dead in trespasses and sins.” Sin does that to the soul, which diseases and mortal wounds do to the body: “In the day that

\* *Liber de Animâ.*

† Their “imperceptible wounds.”—EDIT.

‡ BER-

NARDI *Liber de Animâ.* “As the soul is the life of the body, so is God the life of the soul.”—EDIT.

thou entest thereof," that is, whensoever thou sinnest, "thou shalt surely die." (Gen. ii. 17.)

I should here have concluded my arguments for the preciousness of the soul; but I will add one or two more, *ad hominem*, "which may affect men most, according to what they are usually taken with and persuaded by." And therefore,

#### THE CAUSE OF OUR LIFE.

(V.) In the fifth place. *The soul is the cause of that life which we so prize, and it preserves that body which we so value.*—And certainly, then, if ye may be judges yourselves, it is most considerable. What is the body of the most beloved person without the soul? A stench and an abomination. "O, bury her out of my sight!" says Abraham of his beloved Sarah. (Gen. xxiii. 4.)

What do men take pains and care about? what are they at cost and charge upon, rising early, and going to bed late? but only for such things as may serve and please the body? which very body must be beholden to the soul for to keep it from becoming worms' meat and rottenness. We might value our bodies and their concerns as much as we do, or as we list to do, would it but cause us so much the more to esteem our souls as they deserve, for keeping our bodies in a capacity for our care and kindness.

#### OUR BODIES FOLLOW THEIR CONDITION.

(VI.) It is in the last place very considerable as to us, to enhance our opinion of the soul, that *our bodies follow the condition of our souls.*—As our souls are, so shall our bodies be, when raised up, to all eternity. And therefore St. Stephen, when he was a-dying, commends only his soul to our Saviour; (Acts vii. 59;) and our Saviour himself in his last breath commends his "spirit," or soul, to his Father; (Luke xxiii. 46;) neither making any mention of their bodies, as knowing that their bodies by consequence would be happy; that they would be cared for by God, and raised up in God's time, to be blessed with their souls to all eternity.

If our souls be found unbelieving and impenitent, without God's image and favour, all the rich attire and sumptuous fare will not keep our bodies, no more than they did Dives's body, from being tormented in those flames that shall burn, and none can quench them. (Luke xvi. 19—26.) On the other side, if our souls be sanctified and accepted, notwithstanding any present poverty, disease, or misery, they shall hereafter "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. viii. 11.) Shall I carry this a little further? It may be more home and close unto you.

The welfare of the body even in this life depends upon the soul. As the case of thy soul is, so are all those very things that befall thy body, even in this world. We judge amiss, and "call good evil, and evil good:" take all things together, and stay till the conclusion; and you will then see that all the prosperity that befell a man, his riches, health, friends, reputation, &c., were all evil, if his soul be

evil ; (that is, unpardoned, unregenerated ;) O, very evil ! (Isai. iii. 10, 11.) "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Psalm vii. 11.) In his healthful, prosperous days he hath the wrath of God, the least drop whereof will embitter all his sweets ; and this is mixed in the cup, and is as "death in the pot." (2 Kings iv. 40.) But one that hath his soul pardoned and purged from sin by the blood and Spirit of the Son of God, all his very torments and miseries, if any such befall him, are what God in wisdom hath chosen for him, (Rom. viii. 28,) and in faithfulness hath laid upon him ; they are the very best providences that God could find out for him. Thus "unto the pure all things are pure : but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure ; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." (Titus i. 15.)

And now I hope that, the preciousness of the soul being manifest, although I have all along enforced my arguments as practically as I could, I may yet have room for the remaining application which I am now come unto.

## APPLICATION.

### I. INFORMATION.

1. *If the soul be so precious, we have heard enough to make us abhor sin for ever.*—Sin must needs be the most mischievous thing to us, it being that only which can ruin our souls, whereby only we can lose our souls. Other evils can but bereave us of our estates, or at most of our lives ; but they have no more mischief which they can do : but sin does deservedly cast body and soul into everlasting fire ; they are only our "iniquities" which "separate between" God and us ; (Isai. lix. 2 ;) not "tribulation and anguish," &c., (Rom. ii. 9,) no loss or cross. These can and do work for good : but sin is such a bitter root, that it can bring forth nothing but bitter fruits. Sin is the soul's sickness, nay, its death ; causing a divorce betwixt it and God, the Fountain of its life. Hence it is said to "war against the soul," (1 Peter ii. 11,) and to "pierce" the soul "through." (1 Tim. vi. 10.) I appeal to any, whether they would not detest and oppose those that should do such things to their bodies. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe," (Luke xxiv. 25,) if ye will not believe God, who hath said, "There is no peace," nothing truly good, (no salvation, to be sure,) "to the wicked ;" (Isai. lvii. 21 ;) believe at least yourselves, who cannot but find that, as sin grows stronger, your souls grow weaker ; and that by it you forsake your own mercies, and get boils and ulcers, nay, the plague, in your souls.

2. *This does recommend and endear our blessed Saviour to us.*—Who is the Saviour of our souls, and the "Shepherd of our souls ;" (1 Peter ii. 25 ;) and therefore only it is that they do not want. (Psalm xxiii. 1.) He washed them in his blood, and quickens them by his Spirit, and keeps them by his power, and crowns them with his glory. To them "who believe" these things, "he is precious." (1 Peter ii. 7.) If ye value your souls above the world, ye will value

our Saviour above all the world too ; for, had it not been for his love and care, your souls had been the miserablest things in it.

3. *This commends holiness in all its parts to us.*—Holiness is nothing else but the right temper and healthful constitution of the soul ; it is the beauty of the soul, without which it is most deformed and loathsome in God's sight.

To be heavenly and holy, is to be as God is, and to have "the Spirit of glory resting upon you." (1 Peter iv. 14.) Nay, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" (Heb. xii. 14 :) for though there was no defect in the price that Christ paid ; he did and suffered till all was fulfilled ; yet, if we be wanting in our applying of it, we may perish ; and it will be our sore "condemnation, that light is come into the world, and we love darkness rather than light." (John iii. 19.) It is Christ within us that is our "hope of glory." (Col. i. 27.)

I must not take occasion to commend those comprehensive graces, faith and repentance, unto you ; but, in a word, as ye love your souls, value and esteem them. They are to you as *tabula post naufragium*, "a plank to get safely to shore withal." If you do not make timely [timely] use of it, your souls will be drowned, and perish everlastingly.

Godliness is the soul's food ; ye cannot live a day without it, or your souls will be weak and faint, nay, expire and die. It is indeed the soul's life. As Jacob's life was bound up in Benjamin's life, so is the soul's life bound up in godliness. Where godliness decays, there the soul goes down with sorrow to the grave, nay, to hell : where godliness thrives, the soul exults and cries out, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." (Luke ii. 29.) Nay, in this world, what a feast does godliness make for the soul, whilst, it may be, the body hath only a dish of herbs !

## II. REPREHENSION.

*I may, then, in the next place, blame and bewail the folly and madness of most men ; who live as if they had no souls, or as if their souls were fit only to be placed with the dogs of the fold.* (Job xxx. 1.)—Like a woman I have heard of, who, when her house was on fire, was very busy in saving of her stuff, carrying out with all her might as much as she could. At last she bethought herself of her child, which was left in a cradle ; but when she returned to look after that, she found that the fire had destroyed it : and there she was first aware of her preposterous care for her goods before her child, running up and down as one distracted, crying, "My child, my child !" as David for his son Absalom. (2 Sam. xviii. 33.) So, alas ! when it is too late, all that neglect their souls in this life, will howl out in the midst of their scorching flames : "O my soul, my soul ! I would I had died for thee, my dear and precious soul !"

We would have nothing bad by our good will ; we would not have bad relatives, children, or other ; no, not so much as a bad piece of coin : and how comes it to pass that men can be so content with

bad souls? Thy soul is thyself; and if thy soul be bad, thou art bad thyself: and how hast thou deserved so ill of thyself, that thou shouldst neglect thyself, and care not what become of thy soul, which is thyself?

Xerxes, when he beheld his numerous army, wept. "O," said he, "what a many here are that, in a very short space, must yield to death, and be devoured by worms!" It is a far sadder consideration that such multitudes of men's souls are lost, and perish eternally; and let the abounding of sin speak, whether this be a causeless fear. When the apostles heard that one of them, though but *one*, was "the son of perdition," and should lose his soul; every one of them was jealous over his condition, and cried out, "Is it I? Is it I?" (Matt. xxvi. 22.) I cannot tell who particularly it is; yet I cannot but know there are many sins that speak men ripe for judgment; and many other sins which, though they be not so notorious and visible, are yet certainly as truly destructive and damnable. A leak in any part of the ship may sink it. And now, O that my words might reach your hearts! I speak in the behalf of your precious souls. These words are not about trifles, which you may consider or neglect as you please; but, as Moses said in the like case, these words are "your life," (Deut. xxxii. 47,) and no less than life or death eternal depends upon your receiving of them.

When your bodies are distempered, what sending is there for a physician! how are the symptoms of the disease considered! Or if an estate be doubtful, what counsel do we not take, what cost and charge are we not at, to insure it? Yet we let our souls run all imaginable, yea, and unimaginable, hazards without the least care,—to be sure, without suitable care to their worth or danger: and how can we any longer go for Christians, or the disciples of Him who taught us here the preciousness of our souls, and himself valued them accordingly? Whatsoever we may flatter ourselves with, only such as are of the same mind with Him, shall have salvation by Him.

### III. EXHORTATION.

*It is high time, then, to be exhorted and prevailed with—to suitable affections and dispositions, shall I say? or rather—to suitable lives and conversations unto what ye have heard.*—The truths that have been spoken unto, are not so much speculative as practical; they meet with little or no controversy in the theory, but in the practice of them. The devil knows that, let men believe what they will concerning their souls, he is sure enough to obtain them, and that with great advantage to a more sore condemnation, if they do not practise according to what they are convinced of.

Show, then, that thou dost value and esteem thy soul according to the worth and dignity. Children, or fools, or barbarous Africans, prefer beads and toys before gold and real pearls; but it were folly and madness, if *we* should do so; and yet I am afraid, we do worse every day.

Whatsoever is the price the tempter offers, or persuades to sin with,

remember that it is for thy soul. If thou consentest and yieldest, the bargain is struck; thou doest what in thee lies to give thy soul, for the pleasure or advantage of the sin. Judas had an ill bargain, that lost his soul and his Saviour for thirty pence: though many sell their Saviour, and their souls too, cheaper every day,—“a goodly price,” be it what it will. God gave his Son for thy soul, and intrusted thee with it; and thou, ungrateful and vile wretch, dost barter it away for trifles! You know Nathan’s parable of the ewe-lamb, (2 Sam. xii. 1—7,) so tenderly beloved by the right owner of it; and yet it was slain to entertain a stranger. That parable respects more than David. “Thou art the man:” thy soul is the beloved lamb, and the devil is the stranger; (whom, to be sure, thou art no way concerned to entertain;) when thou sinnest, thou slayest this ewe-lamb to entertain and gratify this stranger. O that the parallel might be carried a little further, and that some or other, upon the reading of this, would cry out with David, “I have sinned!” (Verse 13.)

And if thou wouldest indeed value thy soul, be persuaded, from what thou hast heard, that all those things which concern thy soul, are far more excellent than those which concern thy body; as, for instance, that,

#### CONSIDERATIONS TO FACILITATE THIS DUTY.

1. *Thy soul’s riches are the best riches.*—Called by our Saviour “true riches.” (Luke xvi. 11.) Ah! that any should be contentedly without them!

2. *The soul’s pleasures are the choicest pleasures.*—True joy is not a superficial thing, that affects the countenance, and produces smiles or laughter; many poor wretches in Bedlam are thus merrily mad: but *res severa est verum gaudium*.\* The heart is the seat of all our affections, and so of our joy; and nothing can rejoice that, but the favour of God to the soul.

3. *The soul’s honour is the truest honour.*—If honour be *in honorante*,† what honour is it to have the applause or homage of sorry, sinful men? But it is God that delights to honour the soul, and will put off his own glory upon it.

I shall say nothing to vilify the body, which is the other part [that] we consist of, and we overprize and value: it is enough to say, with Bernard, *Quantumcunque excolatur, caro est*: “Trim thy body, pamper it, bestow all thy care and pains upon it; it is but flesh still;” it will be worms’ meat; and, by all thy carking and caring for it, thou art but preparing to feast those contemptible creatures more delicately. Or if that will be some while first, yet I may ask you, as Plato did one of his scholars, (who minded his table and cheer,) What he did mean, to make his prison so strong? Alas! the body is but the prison of the soul; the soul is at liberty only when it gets out of it. Let these things frequently come into your minds. To which add,

\* “True joy is a composed and serious affection.”—EDIT.

† “In the person who bestows honour.”—EDIT.

1. *If the miseries and wants which concern the body be so great, as indeed we esteem them, and sometimes feel them, to be; what then are the necessities and calamities of the soul?*—The soul being so excellent; nay, the meanest human soul being more worth than all the bodies in the world. Is there any pain which torments thy body? how intolerable will the pain be that will torment thy soul! the biting of a scorpion, and the raging of fire, are but faint resemblances of it. If bodily hunger be so sharp, (what did it not cause the poor woman in the siege of Samaria to do, or to part with? 2 Kings vi. 26—29,) how intense is the hunger and thirst in the soul, whilst yet we are under the dispensations of mercy! But if once God's offended patience turns to anger, who can endure to be scorched with the flames of it?

2. *If the pleasures and advantages [that] men have for the bodies be so desirable, O, what are those pleasures and advantages [which] we have or may have for our souls!*—For God hath provided for all his creatures suitably to their natures. The herbs and plants have earth and dung, beasts have grass, to nourish them with. The body of man is plentifully provided out of the store-house and wardrobe of the creatures with food and raiment; but there is nothing amongst them all found good enough for the soul. The soul can only "be satisfied with the good things of God's house, even of his holy temple;" (Psalm lxxv. 4;) or, as David says elsewhere, "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." (Psalm xvii. 15.)

But that I may not be only in generals, persuading you to a practical valuation for your souls; let the esteem you have for your souls appear in these particulars:—

#### PARTICULARS IN WHICH WE MUST PRACTISE THIS DUTY.

1. *Value thyself upon the account of thy soul.*—How do men stand upon their tiptoes, if they may by any means over-top others! This will almost make thy pride commendable, if thou gloriest only that thy soul is so near akin, so much alike, to God; thou art not so far removed as *tertius a Jove*.\* O, reverence thyself more, and think thyself too good for the most fashionable or creditable sin. "Should such a man as" thou sin? (Neh. vi. 11.) Should any whose souls are spiritual in their original, be sensual in their conversation? Far be it from you. But,

2. *Use your souls well, if they be so excellent.*—Do not set them upon trifles. A meaner soul than ours would serve to do those offices [which] we put our souls upon; namely, to eat and drink and sleep. A king's son sent to a philosopher, his governor, to know whether he might not take such pastimes as other young men did. He only returned for answer, that he should remember that he was a king's son. O, remember who it is you call "the Father of" your "spirits;" (Heb. xii. 9;) and pick not straws (you may easily know what I mean) with those very souls which are given thee for higher and better purposes.

\* "The third in descent from Jupiter."—EDIT.



Remember that known maxim, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*.\* A degenerate, filthy, or sinful soul is worse than any body can be. A degenerate soul is so much worse than a blind or lame body or ulcerous, as the soul otherwise is in itself better than the body.

We cannot use our souls well, unless we give them their due superiority over our passions and affections, and, indeed, over all the things relating to the body. God did make these souls for to rule in man, and he set up our understanding in the throne, and commanded our other faculties to obey it, as his viceroy and deputy. When men prefer their humours or lusts, they make their vile bodies to lord it over these precious souls, and employ their souls as purveyors, nay, as drudges, for the body. The servant rides on horseback, and the prince goes on foot; nay, there is a greater disparity where the soul is made to truckle to the body.

3. Thirdly, and above all, *Have a care that ye do not lose these souls that are so valuable*.—I have shown you how that they may be lost; let me now leave some considerations to be enlarged upon by you:—

(1.) *The danger [which] your souls are in, is very great*.—"The Philistines are upon thee." Thou dost not only run a hazard, and it may be, or may not be; but unless thou doest mightily, and in time—even to-day, "while it is called To-day" (Heb. iii. 13)—bestir thyself, thy soul is certainly, and may be inevitably, lost. As David said to Jonathan in another case concerning himself, "As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between me and death;" (1 Sam. xx. 3;) so "there is but a step between" thy soul "and death." Nay, your souls are "dead in trespasses and sins;" (Eph. ii. 1;) they are lost; but God hath sent his Son "to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.)

(2.) *The loss of your souls is very great*.—It is much to lose an estate, or wife, or child; but if thou lovest thy soul, thou dost not lose only *much*, but thou lovest *all*. For the whole world cannot now profit thee; and though the clatter and noise that worldly things make about our ears will not suffer us to hear or mind this, yet dare but to be alone, converse with thyself, ask thy heart and conscience, and it will tell thee as much; especially when thou art in affliction, or on a sick bed, &c.

(3.) *The loss of thy soul is never to be repaired*.—Men may meet with losses, which yet they may otherwise recover, or may have something else that may countervail them: but not only nothing can countervail this loss,—no more than dross and dung can [countervail] jewels of the greatest price; but if thou dost once lose thy soul, nothing can retrieve or regain it. In this case *non licet bis peccare*: † if thou once lovest thy soul in this life, there is no means hereafter whereby thou mayest recover it; but as the tree falls, so it lieth. Thou that redest this! upon this moment (for aught either you or I know) depends thy eternity. *Nunquid aut alter Christus*,

\* "That which corrupts the best things is corruption of the worst description."—EDIT.

† "No opportunity is afforded for a second sinful error."—EDIT.

*an idem iterum crucifigi habet pro animâ?\** as Bernard asks the question. "Is there," says he, "another Christ? or do you think that he will be crucified again for thy soul?"

(4.) *Shall I add, that this soul is thine own, and thou hast not, nor ever shalt have, another, and therefore it stands thee upon to keep it safe?*—The text calls our souls *ours*,—"his own soul." "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose *his own* soul?" Christ does not call the world, or any thing in it, *ours*; but he calls our souls *ours*. And certainly they are *ours* so as nothing else is; for we must forego all other things, and be parted from them, and have been and may be without them; but without our souls we never were, nor can be.

And it is thy *only* soul, [which] thou hast to make thy darling, and to be fond and careful of. "Most of other things we have double of;" as two eyes, two hands, and feet, &c.: "but God hath given thee but one soul:" *Omnia Deus dedit duplicia, animam verè unam*. If thou lovest one of the members of thy body, the other in a great measure serves in its stead: but thy soul must needs be more carefully looked to than thy right eye or thy right hand; for nothing, to be sure, can stand instead of it, if it be once lost. O, remember, this is the "one thing necessary." (Luke x. 42.)

(5.) *You must answer for the loss of your souls; God hath intrusted them with you.*—A great trust, a great charge; we must account for this talent when our Lord comes. David's brethren asked him, with whom he had left their sheep: (1 Sam. xvii. 28:) God will ask every one of you, with whom ye did leave your souls. Are not your children, nay, are not your goods, (many a man's swine,) more cared for and looked after than your souls?

There are two words in the text that are observed to be forensical, and relate to a court of judicatory,† which the "gaining and losing" in the text refer to. The loss of his soul will be as a mulct or penalty inflicted by the just and righteous Judge upon every one that hath been careless of his soul. He that does not earnestly endeavour to keep his soul whilst he lives, the evil angels, when he dies, shall require it of him; as, you know, the soul of the covetous wretch was adjudged to them. (Luke xii. 20.) How unconcernedly do we read or hear of such things! But, *mutato nomine, de te, &c.*;‡ yet but a little while, and it may be thy case. It may be, the diversions of the world will not let thee have the while to attend to what you hear: but what are all the pleasures and enjoyments you can have, might they be continued to thee as long as ever they were unto any, but as the singing of a little longer psalm before thy execution? O that my words, therefore, might be acceptable unto you! I have shown you the excellency of souls, as when the disciples showed to our Saviour the costly stopes and curious fabric of the temple. Our blessed Lord

\* BERNARDI *Epist.* lv. † Κερδαιεν and ζημιουσαι.—BEZA.

‡ *Quid rides? Mutato nomine, de te*

*Fabula narratur.*—HORAT. *Serm.* lib. i. sat. i. 69.

"You smile, and stop me as I just began:

Change but the name, you'll find yourself the man."—DUNCOMBE'S Translation.

told them, the time was a-coming in which not one stone should be left upon another, but all should be thrown down. (Matt. xxiv. 1, 2.) The application be (not to all that hate us, but) to all that implacably hate God!

O, awake, arise, bestir yourselves, watch and ward; and, above all, call-in the assistance of the "Keeper" of Israel; (Psalm cxxi. 5;) that, not only with all thy keeping, (Prov. iv. 23,) but with all his keeping, thy soul may be "kept by his power through faith unto salvation." (1 Peter i. 5.)

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## SERMON XXIV.

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THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT OPENED; WITH SOME PRACTICAL INQUIRIES RESOLVED ABOUT IT.

*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*—Romans viii. 14.

OUR apostle, in the close of the preceding verse, had made use of a very powerful motive to excite these Romans (and in them all others) unto mortification: "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." In this verse, he backs that motive with an argument to evince its truth and certainty: \* Such as "are the sons of God shall live:" Such who are "led by the Spirit," (namely, to "mortify the deeds of the body") "are the sons of God:" Therefore such "shall live."

Others consider these words, not so much as a proof of the foregoing motive, but rather as another distinct motive in themselves to promote mortification.† Such who "are led by the Spirit" thereunto, they are taken into the high and glorious relation of being "the sons of God," or "the children of God," as it is, verse 16. Now, what an inducement is this to Christians to live under, and comply with, the Spirit's leading, as it directs and excites unto the "mortifying of the deeds of the body!" Both of these connexions are good; but I prefer the first.

\* *Probatio ex ejus quod proxime præcessit.*—CALVINUS. "This is the proof of the assertion which immediately precedes."—EDIT. *Probat quod dixit: Fictis.*—ESTIUS. "He makes good his previous affirmation: 'Ye shall live.'"—EDIT. † *Εἶτα ἕτερον τιθεὶς μισθόν, ἐπηγάγεν, Ὅσοι γὰρ Πνεύματι Θεοῦ αἰνοῦνται, οὗτοι εἰσὶν υἱοὶ Θεοῦ.*—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "Then, placing before them another reward, he adds, 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'"—EDIT. *Ἐπηγάγατο αὐτοῦ ἀνωτέρω ὅτι Ζησεσθε. Νῦν μείζονα στεφανὸν καὶ μισθὸν ὑπεριονοῦν τοῦ ἀποτέρου τιθεῖσι, —τὴν Δεῖαν υἱοθεσίαν.*—THEOPHYLACTUS. "He had before declared to them, 'Ye shall live.' Now he exposes to their view a greater prize and a fuller recompence than the former,—divine adoption."—EDIT.

If we take them apart, and as they lie in themselves, so they contain these three things in them:—

1. *A glorious privilege*: the being “the sons of God.”

2. *A description of the persons to whom this privilege belongs*: they are such who “are led by the Spirit of God.”

3. *The adequateness or commensurateness between the persons described and the privilege asserted*: “As many as are led,”—just so many, and no more; all such, and none but such,—“are the sons of God.” It is inclusive or extensive to *all of them*; exclusive and limiting to *all others*.

The words are an entire proposition: “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” The subject hereof—they that “are led by the Spirit”—I am to speak unto; as to the predicate,—“they are the sons of God,”—that I shall not insist upon, further than as it is reducible under the subject.

*As many as are led by the Spirit of God*—*Αγορται*. Some render it by *aguntur*: “As many as are acted by the Spirit:” some, by *impelluntur*:\* “As many as are impelled, vigorously urged and moved, by the Spirit:” the most, by *ducuntur*: “As many as are led by the Spirit.” We have the same phrase, (with another privilege annexed,) Gal. v. 18: “If ye be led,” *αγεσθε*, “by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

It is evident, the expression is allusive and metaphorical. And it alludes either to guides,—such as “lead” the blind, or those that are in the dark, or travellers that know not their way,—or to mothers and nurses, who take their children by the hand, such as cannot go, and therefore they “lead,” uphold, and help them. Answerably to both of these, believers “are led by the Spirit of God;” with respect partly to their spiritual blindness and darkness, and partly to their spiritual weakness and infirmity. The Holy Ghost is both their Guide and Director, to keep them from wandering; and also their Upholder and Strengtheners, to keep them from falling.

The point to be discoursed of is this:—

#### OBSERVATION.

*That God's Spirit is a leading Spirit to and in all God's children.*  
—The acts and operations of this Spirit are various and multiform. Several of which are instanced in in this chapter: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Verse 2.) “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Verse 13.) “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Verse 16.) “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according

\* *Αγορται* id est, *impelluntur ad sanctas actiones*.—PISCATOR. “As many as are led, that is, impelled to holy actions.”—EPIT.

to the will of God." (Verses 26, 27.) But I must confine myself to that one in the text,—the *ἡγεμονία*, "leading, conduct, manuduction," which this blessed Spirit vouchsafes to the people of God.

He is the saints' "Leader," their *Ἀγῶγος*, *Dux vitæ*, "the Guide of their life." Look : as by Christ they have *προσαγωγῆν* "leading, access, admission," to God the Father in prayer ; (Eph. ii. 18 ; iii. 12 ;) so by the Spirit they have *αγῶγην*, "leading and guidance" in their whole course of life.

In the discussing of this weighty point, I will,

I. *Open the nature of the act,—the leading of the Spirit.*

II. *Propound and answer some practical inquiries about it.*

I. For the better opening of it, I must,

1. *Lay down some things more generally concerning it.*

2. *Then come to the closer and stricter explication of it.*

1. Under the first, I shall commend the following particulars to you :—

#### DISTINCTIONS PREMISED ABOUT THE SPIRIT'S LEADING.

(1.) *The leading of the Spirit is either general and common, or peculiar and special.*—If we consider him as God, in his joint participation of the Deity with the Father and the Son, and in his joint operations with them according to their Divine Essence ; so there is a leading by him which does extend to *all creatures* whatsoever. For all of them, by his divine power and influx, in their several beings, actions, motions, and tendencies, are disposed, ordered, governed, and overruled to the glory of the Creator and the good of the universe. Take them in all their faculties and in all their operations ; they are all excited, directed, actuated by this Spirit ; and so, in a general sense, they all come under his guidance and regency.

This also may be said to extend to *all men* ; to the unregenerate, as well as to the regenerate. "How ?" Why, as they all do act and move in and by him ; (Acts xvii. 28 ;) as he, in a common and providential way, does order and regulate all their several actions and motions : for this he does in all, as he is the first Cause and the supreme Sovereign. So that, as there is his common illumination, common conviction, common restraints, common gifts, which even the graceless partake of ; so there is, too, a common leading by him which they also have.

Now, most certainly, this is not that leading which the text speaks of ; for, this cannot be the foundation or evidence of the privilege mentioned. A common act will never entitle to a special relation. How many are thus "led by the Spirit" who yet are far from being "the sons of God !" That leading, therefore, must be here intended, which is special and peculiar to God's people,\* such as will amount

\* *Ductus Spiritus quo filii Dei aguntur non est generalis Dei actus quo omnia moventur ; sed est specialis gratia ; quæ filii Dei sanctificantur, in viâ salutis diriguntur ad Deum.*—PAREUS. "That leading of the Spirit by which the sons of God are led, is not a general act of God, by which all things are moved ; but it is a special grace, by which the sons of God are sanctified, and are guided to God in the way of salvation."—EDIV. *Observare convenit esse multiplicem Spiritus actionem. Est enim universalis, quæ omnes*

to the making of the proposition here reciprocal and convertible ; thus :—All “ the sons of God are led by the Spirit ;” and, All that “ are led by the Spirit are the sons of God.”

(2.) *The special leading of the Spirit is extraordinary or ordinary.*—The former was confined to some persons and to some times ; and was not to extend to all saints, nor to continue in all ages. Thus the holy prophets, the apostles, were “ led by the Spirit ;” as they were immediately inspired, guided, and moved by Him in the discharge of their extraordinary work and office. These, in the penning of the holy scriptures, and in all that they revealed of and from God, were “ acted” and “ moved \* by the Holy Ghost,” (2 Peter i. 21.) and hereupon they were infallible in what they revealed. But this was extraordinary, and so limited and temporary. The latter leading of the Spirit, therefore, must be that which is here spoken of,—that which appertains to all God’s children and at all times. Did the apostle, when he says, “ As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God,” mean, that as many as have extraordinary visions, revelations, inspirations, impulses, from the Spirit of God, are thus related to God, and none other? Surely, no. Should we carry it thus high, we should exclude all but the fore-mentioned prophets and apostles from being God’s children ; which would be both sad, and also false. Wherefore it is unquestionable, that the ordinary, abiding, and permanent leading of the Spirit; and that which reaches to all believers, is here intended.

(3.) *This act of the Spirit may be considered, either as it is exerted at the first conversion, or after.*—For as we distinguish the grace of God into preventient and subsequent, so we may also distinguish of the leading of the Spirit. He leads at and in order to the first conversion ; as he then does irradiate the mind, incline the will, spiritualize the affections, and so lead or guide the whole soul to God and Christ. Then he leads after conversion : as this is done by him all along in the whole course of a Christian’s life ; for it is a continued act. The guidance of the Spirit to bring a man *into* the state of grace,—that is done but once ; but the guidance of the Spirit *in* the state of grace,—that is done daily and renewedly. The first imports the infusing of a living, vital principle into the soul ; the latter supposes this principle, and makes use of it, in the conduct of a child of God in the way of holiness. Both are here to be taken in ; yet, I conceive, the last may be most proper. And observe : these two leadings of the Spirit have a different respect to our sonship with God ; for the former constitutes it, the latter only discovers and evidences it. The Spirit, as leading me to God at the first conversion,

*creaturæ sustinentur ac moventur ; sunt et peculiares in hominibus, et illæ quidem variae. Sed hic sanctificationem intelligit, quæ non nisi electos suos Dominus dignatur, dum eos sibi in filios segregat.*—CALVINUS *in loc.* “ It is fitting to observe that the agency of the Spirit is manifold. For there is his universal operation, by which all creatures are sustained and moved ; and there are also his peculiar influences upon men, and those indeed of various kinds. But here the apostle refers to sanctification, which the Lord vouchsafes to none but his elect, whilst he sets them apart for himself as sons.”—EDIT.

\* *Φερομενοι οτ αγομενοι.*

makes me a child of God ; the Spirit, as leading me after conversion, causes it to appear that I am a child of God.

(4.) *There is the having of the Spirit, and there is the leading of the Spirit.*—We have both in this chapter : the one, verse 9 : “ If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ;” the other, in the text. Now, although these two be conjunct and inseparable, (whoever “ have the Spirit,” they are “ led by the Spirit,”) yet they are distinct things. To “ have the Spirit,” is to be made a possessor of him in his indwelling in us : to be “ led by the Spirit,” is our partaking of his directive influence, after we are made possessors of him. The first supposes the receiving of the Agent or principle ; the second imports the operation from that Agent or principle.

The Greek expositors do much insist upon this ; but with that explication of it which I do not drive at. “ Observe,” say they, “ it is not said, ‘ As many as have received the Spirit are the sons of God ;’ but, ‘ As many as are led by the Spirit.’ ”\* For, (as they gloss upon it,) many “ receive” the Spirit at baptism, who yet afterwards not being “ led by the Spirit” to and in a holy life, their sonship to God ceases. But this stating of the having of the Spirit I meddle not with. I consider the reception of the Spirit, not only in an external, baptismal way, but in that which is inward, real, and saving. And even this I make to be distinct from his leading : for although these are never disjoined and separated, but do always co-exist, and accompany each the other, all circumstances concurring ; yet in themselves they differ, both as to order and precedence, and also as to nature and essence. The having of a soul, and then the having of the subsequent acts of that soul, are different things : so it is in that which I am upon.

2. These things, that are more general, being premised, I come to a more strict and particular explication of this leading of the Spirit.—“ What is it to be ‘ led by’ Him ?”

It notes something on the Spirit’s part, and something on the creatures’ part. Both must be taken in, in the opening and stating of it.

#### THE SPECIAL ACTS INCLUDED IN THE SPIRIT’S LEADING.

(1.) *Something on the Spirit’s part.* So it imports,

(i.) *His special guidance.*

(ii.) *His powerful inclination.*

(iii.) *His co-operation and corroboration.*

(iv.) *His regency and gubernation.*

(i.) *His special guidance.*—To be “ led by the Spirit,”—it is to live under the blessed guidance and conduct of the Spirit. This is the notion which does most obviously comport with “ leading.” How

\* ΟΥΚ ΕΙΠΕΝ, ‘Οσοι Πνευμα ελαβον, αλλ’, ‘Οσοι Πνευματι Θεου αγονται.—CHRY-SOSTOMUS, whom Œcumenius and Theophylact follow. *Ideo non dicit, Qui Spiritum Dei acceperunt, sed, Qui Spiritu Dei aguntur ; id est, qui illius acui obtemperant.*—MUSELUS. “ Hence he does not say, ‘ As many as have received the Spirit ;’ but, ‘ As many as are led by the Spirit,’ that is, obey his impulses.”—EDIT.

is the blind man "led?" Why, as he has one to direct and guide him to and in the way wherein he is to go: so here.

Of this act, as done by God and his Spirit, the scripture often speaks: "And the Lord shall guide thee continually." (Isai. lviii. 11.) "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." (Isai. xlvi. 17.) "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm lxxiii. 24.) "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalm cxliii. 10.) "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation." (Psalm xxv. 5.) "I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them." (Isai. lxi. 8.) "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." (Psalm xxxvii. 23.) "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (Isai. xxx. 21.) Here is the leading of the Spirit. What the cloud was to the Israelites in the directing of them in their motions; what the guide is to the traveller who knows not his way; that the Spirit of God is to believers,—their Guide and Director in this their journeying- and wilderness-state.

(ii.) *His powerful inclination.*—He leads not only by a naked guidance or directive light beamed into the understanding, whereby believers are brought to know God's will and what they are to do: "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" (Col. i. 9;) "proving what is acceptable to the Lord." (Eph. v. 10.) But he leads, also, by the efficacious inclining of the heart, the bowing and bending of the will, the overpowering of the affections, to close with and follow his guidance in the doing of what is good and in the shunning of what is evil.\* Divines bring the whole of the Spirit's leading under two words, *monendo et movendo*: he first "counsels and directs" as to what is to be done, and then he "excites and effectually inclines" to the doing thereof. "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes:" (Psalm cxix. 33:) here is the informing and directing act of the Spirit. "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness:" (Verses 35, 36:) here is the efficacious and powerful act of the Spirit. They who feel and experience this in themselves,—they are the persons that are "led by the Spirit." I shall have occasion to speak more of it in what will follow.

(iii.) *His co-operation and corroboration.*—When one leads another, both the person leading, and the person led, have their proper action and motion, and both unite and concur therein. And so it is

\* *Quid est duci Spiritu Dei? Est a Spiritu Sancto, foris verbo, intus illuminatione, doceri de Dei voluntate; necnon efficaciter flecti ac regi ad volendum et faciendum ea quæ Deo placent.*—PAREUS. "What is it to be 'led by the Spirit of God?' It is to be instructed by the Holy Ghost in the will of God, outwardly by means of the word, inwardly by divine enlightenment. It is, also, to be effectually bent and directed to will and to do such things as are well-pleasing to the Lord."—EDIT.



in the saints' being "led by the Spirit," as to what is holy and good. He acts, and they act too; something there is done on his part, something on theirs too; and there is a mutual, conjunct efficiency, or agency, in both. "He acts; then they act:" *acti agunt*. And the act is theirs, and his too; theirs subjectively and formally, his in respect of excitation to it and assistance in it. They do the thing, but it is by his influx: "Thou hast wrought all our works in us." (Isai. xxvi. 12.) "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) In short, we move, we act; and the Spirit concurs and co-operates with us therein: and so we are "led by" him. Austin, when he is proving the necessity of the latter from my text, does also prove the reality and verity of the former.\*

The other act of the Spirit—corroboration or strengthening—falls in with this in part. So, his leading resembles the mother's or nurse's leading the child. It being weak, not able to go alone, they take it by the hand, hold it up, join their strength with its weakness; and so they enable it to go. In like manner, the strong and mighty Spirit of God does, as it were, take weak Christians by the hand, and communicate his strength to them; by which they are enabled to do what is required of them.† As it follows in this chapter, with respect to prayer: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities;" (verse 26;) *συναντιλαμβάνεται*, "lifts with us and against us," at the other end of the burden. And so it is in all the duties of holiness; the Spirit "lifts with," helps the infirmities of believers, and strengthens them thereunto: "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." (Phil. iv. 13.) "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." (Eph. iii. 16.) I may allude to that of Elisha: "He said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands." (2 Kings xiii. 16.) So we "put" our "hands upon the bow,"—attempt to believe, pray, mortify sin, and the like; and then the Holy Spirit "puts his hand upon" ours, to confirm and strengthen us in all these. Was it not for this, we could "do nothing;" (John xv. 5;) was it not for this leading, we could not move one step in the path of holiness.

(iv.) A fourth thing included in this leading of the Spirit, is *his*

\* *Dicit mihi aliquis, Ergo agimur, non agimus. Respondeo, Imò, et agis et ageris; et tunc bene agis, si a bono ageris. Spiritus enim Dei, qui te agit, agentibus adjutor est. Ipse nomen adjutoris præscribit tibi, quia et tu ipse aliquid agis.*—S. AUGUSTINUS, *Sermon. xlii. de Verbis Apostol.* "Some one will say to me, 'Then we do not act, but are actuated.' I answer, Nay: you both act and are actuated; and then you act well, when you are actuated by what is good. For the Spirit of God, who actuates you, is a helper to those who act. He gives thee the name of a helper, because thou dost thyself also perform something."—EDIT. † *Non modò Dux est Spiritus, sed etiam adjuvat vires ambulantis. Regenti infantum ritu sine illo nutricio nihil possunt.*—CONTZEN. "The Spirit of God is not only a Leader, but he also increases the strength of those who walk in his track. Those who are born again can do nothing without being led along and supported by Him, as infants are by their nurses."—EDIT.

*regency and gubernation.*—Where he governs, there he leads. So *vice versâ*; and his leading is ever attended with rule and authority. It is like a general's leading an army, who authoritatively disposes and orders all its motions; like Moses's leading the people of Israel, who had the rule and government over them. As to Christ, they are put together: "Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." (Isai. lv. 4.) Such a leading is this of the Spirit in gracious souls. He has the regiment of them: he commands and orders them in their course as he pleases; they are subject to his will, steered by him in their motions, as the ship is by the pilot, or the chariot by him that drives it.\*

These are the things, on the Spirit's part, which do constitute his leading.

(2.) To fill this up, there is *something on the creatures' part.*—And that is, their yielding up of themselves to the guidance and conduct of the Spirit; their free, willing, spontaneous following of him in what he moves and dictates to them. Without this, it is not "leading;" for that imports motion after something that goes before. And that motion too must be voluntary; or else it is being haled and dragged, not "led."† This is the disposition and carriage of the sons of God toward the Spirit:—he excites them to be holy, heavenly-minded, to resist and mortify corruption, to pray, hear God's word, perform other religious duties; yea, to take up their cross: in all they readily comply with him. As David, in that particular case: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm xxvii. 8.) "He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." (Isai. ii. 3.) "Draw me, we will run after thee." (Canticles i. 4.) Here is the Spirit's leading, and the believer's following of him. It is set forth by "walking after the Spirit:" (Rom. viii. 1 :) it supposes a principle of life; dead things may be drawn, but they cannot properly be said to be "led." Where the spiritual life is, such do willingly conform to what the Spirit directs them unto. But this I shall say no more of in this explanatory part; it being a thing that requires our practice, rather than any large explication of it.

Thus I have opened the nature of the Spirit's leading. But, it being a point of great importance, and the due stating of it being highly necessary, upon sundry accounts; I will further speak to these four things about it:—

\* Ουδε ἀπλως ειπεν, 'Όσοι Πνευματι Θεου ζωσιν, αλλ', 'Όσοι Πνευματι Θεου αγωνται' δεικνυς ότι οὕτω βουλεται αυτον Κυριον ειναι της ημετερας ζωης, ως τον κυβερνητην του πλοιου, και τον ηνιοχον του ζευγους των ιππων.—CHRYSOSTOMUS. "He does not say merely, 'As many as live by the Spirit of God,' but, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God;' evidently intending that the Holy Ghost should be the Ruler of our life in the same manner as the pilot is of the course of a ship, or the charioteer of his team of horses."—EDIT. Παντος του βιου 'Ηνιοχον και 'Ηγεμονα προστησονται.—CΕCUMENIUS. "They will choose him as the Director and Leader of their whole life."—EDIT. Αγωνται, τουτεστι, κυβερνωνται και ηνιοχουνται.—THEOPHYLACTUS. "They 'are led,' that is, are piloted and guided."—EDIT. † BISHOP HALL'S "Remains," p. 147. HOLLINGSWORTH "Of the Spirit," p. 65.

## FOUR THINGS OPENED ABOUT THE SPIRIT'S LEADING.

1. *The matter or terminus,—what the Spirit leads unto.*
2. *The rule by which he leads.*
3. *The way and manner wherein he leads.*
4. *The extent and measure of it.*

## THE MATTER OF IT.

1. *The matter,—what the Spirit leads unto.*—This is of great extent ; but all may be reduced to these two things,—truth and holiness. Truth is seated in the understanding, and speaks the Spirit's leading of that faculty : holiness reaches to the heart within, and conversation without ; and speaks the Spirit's leading of both, in their utmost comprehensiveness. These he leads and guides unto ; but not in the least to their opposites,—error and sin. Every agent is for that which comports and suits with his own nature, and against that which is contrary thereunto ; therefore, the Spirit being a "Spirit of truth and of holiness," this determines him to lead to these, and to these only. So his conduct is stated in holy writ : "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John xvi. 13.) "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." (Eph. v. 9.) "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (Psalm xxiii. 3.) This holiness includes in it *holy affections, the exercise of the several graces* ; and these the Spirit guides unto : "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. iii. 5.) *The avoiding and mortifying of sin* ; and this the Spirit guides unto : "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.) Immediately it follows, "As many as are led by the Spirit ;" showing that the mortification of sin is one special thing which the Spirit leads to. "Walk in the Spirit," after his guidance, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Gal. v. 16.) "Why?" Because he always makes this the matter of his guidance,—to keep men off from the lust of the flesh, from all sinful ways and courses. He is a "Good" and "Holy Spirit" in himself ; and therefore all his motions tend to what is good and holy. As Satan, (he being the evil spirit,) suitably to his nature, does excite and urge to what is evil ; (Acts v. 3 ; John xiii. 2 ;) so *e contra*, ["on the other hand,"] the Spirit of God (he being the "good Spirit") does excite and urge to what is good, and to nothing else. How do *they* blaspheme this Holy Spirit, *who* do wicked things, and yet presume to say, [that] the Spirit leads them thereunto ! This must be laid down as a principle of undoubted verity, that the sole and whole tendency of the Spirit's leading is to purity, obedience, universal holiness ; and in no case to sin and wickedness.

## THE RULE OF IT.

2. *The rule by which he leads.*—And that, in short, is the written word. God guides by the Spirit; the Spirit guides by the word. He is our Guide, and the word is our rule. The Spirit himself, as to his own actings, has no external rule to act by, his internal holiness and perfection being his sole rule. But as to us, in our actings, we have an external rule, by which all that we do is to be squared: and therefore, by and according to this rule, the Spirit guides us; and our conformity thereunto is both the measure, and also the design and end, of the Spirit in his guidance of us.

The word itself carries in it a leading and directive property: “When thou goest, it shall lead thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.” (Prov. vi. 22, 23.) “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm cxix. 105.) “Order my steps in thy word.” (Verse 133.) “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.” (Micah vi. 8.) The written revelation of God’s will is the Christian’s great rule, the compass by which in all things he must steer his course, the star that must direct him in all his motions. It is “to the law and to the testimony,” (Isai. viii. 20,) that we must have our continual recourse for the regulating of us in all matters of faith and practice. Now this leading of the word, and that of the Spirit, are never to be severed: as that is in subordination to this, so this is ever in conjunction with that.

This word we must in all things keep close unto, or else we run ourselves upon most dangerous rocks. The enthusiast is for a light within, for immediate revelations, inspirations, impulses from the Spirit, and I know not what. But are these preter-scriptural? Much more, are they anti-scriptural? O, then, they are nothing but men’s own fancies and delusions, and not at all the leadings of the Spirit of God. When any, upon the pretence of these, go off from the written word, what wild opinions and practices do they run themselves upon! (Of which we have had too many instances both at home and abroad.) The Spirit and the word are our full and complete guide: the Spirit gives light and life to the word; and the word gives evidence that the guidance is from the Spirit.

QUESTION. But it may be asked, “Does the Spirit guide only in this mediate way? Is there not an immediate leading by him? at least, *pro hic et nunc?*”\*

ANSWER. No; unless you state it thus:—that, although he may not always, in an express and in an explicit manner, guide *by* the word; yet his guiding always is *according to* the word and consentaneous to it. The word evermore is in the matter, though sometimes it may not be in the manner, of the Spirit’s guidance. He may, without making use of the word, by an immediate divine light and excitation, lead me to this or that duty; but he never leads me to any thing but what the word first makes to be duty. Take it in that other act of the Spirit which follows here: “The Spirit itself beareth

\* “On emergent occasions.”—EDIT.

witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. viii. 16.) This "witnessing" of adoption is usually *mediate, and by the word*: yet it is not always so; sometimes it is *immediate, and without the word*. That is, the Spirit assures of this, not only in a syllogistical way, by such and such scripture-signs, marks, qualifications, dispositions, which evidence sonship to God; (as, "He that is led by the Spirit, is the son of God: Thou art one who art led by the Spirit: Therefore thou art the son of God;") but he sometimes may, and does, directly and immediately say to a person, "Thou art a child of God." But now, though here he thus witnesses abstractly and precisely, without making use of the marks and signs of the word concerning this relation; yet he never so witnesses but according to the word; that is, where those marks and signs are. In like manner it is as to his leading. This is not always managed by an express revival upon the heart of this or that passage in the word; yet, for the matter of it, it is ever done in a way consonant and agreeable to the word.

And so long as we keep to this, I think there will be no great danger of enthusiasm or fanaticism, rightly so called.

#### THE MANNER OF IT.

3. *The manner of the Spirit's leading.*—Concerning which, (not to run out into all the various explications that occur about it,) I will confine myself to these two things:—the Spirit leads,

(1.) *With power and efficacy.*

(2.) *With sweetness and gentleness.* Fortiter et suaviter.

(1.) *With power and efficacy.*—The Spirit leads so, as that the person led shall certainly follow him. For, in this act, he does not only illuminate the understanding, or barely dictate to the mind and conscience what way is to be taken; but he does also inwardly, by a secret power upon the heart, incline and bend the will to close with what he directs unto. He leads with a strong hand, so as that the soul shall not be able to resist him; I mean, *ad victoriam*.\* I speak not of his guidance which is common and general, but of that which is peculiar and saving; of that which is put forth either in those that are regenerate already, or in those whom God designs to make such. This leading of the Spirit, in such persons, is ever carried on with power and efficacy. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 27.) Here is not only an informing light, but an overpowering influence: "I will *cause you* to walk in my statutes." "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned." (Jer. xxxi. 18.) It is "leading" in the text,—to show the mildness of the Spirit's operation; elsewhere it is "drawing,"—to show the power of the Spirit's operation. It is "drawing," as to the depraved will; it is "leading," as to the sanctified will. The evil spirit leads to sin. "How?" Why, he moves, persuades, solicits to sin; and further than that he cannot go. But the Holy Spirit, in his leading to grace

\* "So as to overcome him."—EDIT.

and holiness, pursues this with a determining and overcoming power ; so as that the effect which he aims at shall certainly be produced. This we must grant ; or else we must hold a parity of operation betwixt the two spirits,—that the Holy Spirit has but the same causal influx upon what is good, which the wicked spirit has upon what is evil ; than which nothing can be more absurd !

(2.) Yet it is power acted and exerted *with all sweetness, mildness, and gentleness*.—Here is “leading, but no force ; conduct, but no compulsion, no coercion ;” *vehemens inclinatio, non coactio* :\* the will is determined, but so as that not the least violence is done to it, to the infringing of its liberty.† How spontaneously does the person led follow him that leads him ! So it is here. This and all the other workings of the Spirit are admirably suited to the nature of reasonable and free agents. Efficacious grace does not at all destroy natural liberty. Where the Spirit does not find sinners willing, by his sweet methods he makes them willing : “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” (Psalm cx. 3.) • A “day of power ;” yet “willing.” Even the Spirit’s drawing is managed with all consistency to the freedom of the will. ‘*Ελκυει ο Θεος, αλλα βουλομενον ελκυει*. ‡ “He draws, but it is one that he makes willing to follow.” “Behold, I will allure her :” (Hosea ii. 14 :) ay, there is the Spirit’s leading ! This being the constant and avowed doctrine of the Protestants, and particularly their explication of the Spirit’s leading in the text ; § how injurious and invidious are the Popish writers, in their traducing and calumniating of them, as if they asserted the Spirit, in this or any other act, to work with compulsion, or in a way destructive to man’s essential liberty ! It is a vile scandal ! And yet how do Estius, Salmeron, Contzen, (upon the words,) charge our divines with it ! We perfectly concur with blessed St. Austin, || in that excellent passage of his cited by the Rhemists : “*As many as are led by the Spirit—He meaneth not,*” says he, “that the children of God are violently compelled against their wills ; but that they be sweetly drawn, moved, or induced to do good.” But no more of this.

#### THE EXTENT OF IT.

4. *The extent of this leading of the Spirit.*—A threefold account may be given of that.

(1.) *In regard of the subject or person led.*—So it extends to the whole man : first to the interior acts of the soul in its several faculties,—understanding, will, and affections ; and then to the exterior acts of the body ; yea, to the whole conversation : for all these are

\* GORRANUS. † *Ne arbitreris istam asperam molestamque violentiam : dulcis est, suavis est ; ipsa suavitas te trahit.*—AUGUSTINUS. “Do not suppose it to be a harsh and forcible violence : it is pleasant, it is sweet ; nay, sweetness itself draws thee along.”—EDIT. ‡ CHRYSOSTOMUS. § *Ductus Spiritus non est impulsus violentus, quo rapimur inviti ut stipites ; sed est efficax persuasio, quæ ex nolentibus efficitur volentes.*—PAREUS, with many others. “The leading of the Spirit is not a violent impulse, by which we are hurried along unwillingly like senseless blocks ; but it is an efficacious persuasion, by which, from being reluctant, we are rendered willing.”—EDIT. || *Enchiridion, cap. 64. De Verbis Apostol., Serm. xiii. cap. 11, 12.*

comprehended within, and fall under, the Spirit's leading. For, as his sanctifying operation extends to all of these:—"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (1 Thess. v. 23:)—so does his guiding operation also; these two being commensurate and co-extensive. This might be made out in particulars, was I not afraid of too much prolixity.

(2.) *In regard of the object or matter that the Spirit leads unto.*—So it extends to the whole duty of a Christian; to all that he is to know, believe, and do. Look: as the word, in its *external* leading, guides us in all things that concern faith and practice, it being a complete and perfect rule; (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17;) so it is with the Spirit in his *internal* leading, too. For knowledge and faith, the promise is: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv. 26.) And again: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John xvi. 13; see 1 John ii. 20—27.) And so it is as to holiness, also: this Spirit directs those who have him to and in the practice of holiness, in its full and utmost extent and latitude. As "the grace of God," the gospel *without*, "teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" (Titus ii. 11, 12;) which is the sum of all duty toward God, toward men, and toward ourselves: so the Spirit *within* teaches, guides, inclines to all these. His gracious conduct is not confined to, does not terminate in, this or that particular duty of religion: no; but it extends to every duty, to the whole obedience of a Christian.

(3.) *In regard of the degree and measure of it.*—Concerning which it is clear, that this leading of the Spirit, in the directing, inclining, governing motions of it, is not, as to degree, equal in all God's children. All have the thing in the necessary and substantial part of it, yet so as that there is a gradual difference in their having of it; some having more, and some less. He, being a free and arbitrary agent, does proportion this act of his grace to different persons as he pleases. And he making *some* more ductile to his leadings than others, accordingly he vouchsafes more of them to *those*, than he does to others. But in none does it reach so high as to render them perfect here. For, although we should grant, (which I do not,) that the Spirit should advance his guidance (considered in itself, and as it comes from him) to such a degree and pitch, as to lay the foundation of perfection in saints here below; yet considering what the capacity of the subjects of this act is here, (they being flesh as well as spirit,) it is not imaginable that, *de facto* and *in event*,\* they should ever here be perfect upon it. Wherefore it must be bounded and limited, though not from what the Spirit *could* do, yet from what he is *pleased* to do in believers in their present imperfect state. "He will guide you into *all* truth." (John xvi. 13.) "What! so as to make saints

\* "Actually and in the issue."—EDIT.

omniscient or infallible?" He guides unto *all* holiness. "What! so as to render them sinless and impeccable here on earth?" We must by no means carry it thus high. It, therefore, must be qualified thus: "He will guide you into all truth;" that is, into the knowledge of all necessary and fundamental truths: "and he shall guide you into all holiness;" that is, so far as your present state admits of, and so far as is necessary for your future glory. Beyond this measure, we must not extend or heighten the Spirit's leading. For the truth is, —if we take it in this bounded notion, we secure the thing; but if we go higher, we totally undermine and nullify it; as all experience proves.

And by the way observe, that this guidance of the Spirit in the *general*, and that guidance of his in *particular* in the duty of prayer, do much stand upon the same level. Insomuch that as the former (the Spirit's immediate guiding of believers in the matter and manner of their actions) does not thereupon render them or their actions perfectly holy and free from all mixtures of sin, so neither does the latter (the Spirit's immediate guidance and assistance in the matter and manner of prayer) render the prayers of such infallible, or of equal authority with the scriptures, as some object. Because, as to both, this agency of the Spirit is to be limited; partly from the consideration of the present state of the subject in whom it is exerted, and partly from the Spirit's aim and end therein. It is true, (to obviate a bad inference that may be drawn from hence,) the apostles themselves, considered as but men and as men in the state of imperfection, —so, they were fallible as we are. But as they had, in matters of faith and doctrine, for a special end, that extraordinary guidance and direction from the Spirit which no common believers now have; so they, and they only, became infallible. Wherefore, although saints now are partakers of a special assistance and guidance from the Spirit in prayer and in their general course of life, *quoad veritatem rei*; \* yet this does not make them infallible in the one, or impeccable in the other; it being vouchsafed to them but in such a degree as is consistent with their present state, and subservient to the end of the Spirit in his present operations in them; which is but to guide them to necessary truth and holiness, to help them in their infirmities, and the like; but not to advance them to apostolical endowments; of which now, the evangelical doctrine being published and sealed, there is no necessity.

II. And thus I have gone over the doctrinal explication of the leading of the Spirit. I come now to *resolve some practical inquiries about it*, which will be instead of the application.

#### INQUIRY I.

The first is this: *How may we, as to ourselves or others, know, whether we or they be led by the Spirit of God?*

It highly concerns us to be very inquisitive about this; both because our sonship to God must be evidenced by it, (for the text is

\* "As it regards the truth of the thing."—EDIT.



express: "As many as," and no more than, "are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,") and also because there are great mistakes in men about this. The most lay claim to it, when yet, God knows, but very few partake of it in truth and reality. How many please themselves with the thoughts of their being "led by the Spirit," when it is most obvious they are not!

"Every man in the world is acted by some spirit or other." \* Now, there being different and contrary spirits, some evil and some good, the question is, "What that is which we are led and acted by."

There is "the spirit of the world," (1 Cor. ii. 12,) by which the men of the world are "led." There is the corrupt and sinful spirit: "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (James iv. 5.) By this all in the unregenerate state are "led." There is "the spirit of whoredom," (Hosea iv. 12,) the "spirit of perverseness," (Isai. xix. 14,) the spirit of seduction, (1 Tim. iv. 1,) under the conduct of which too many are. These are the evil spirits *within* us, which influence men in their actings. And then there is the grand evil spirit *without*,—the devil; "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2.) And O, what a heart-piercing, soul-afflicting thing is it to consider, how the generality of men are led by this wicked spirit! All these spirits are *evil*.

In opposition to which, there are other spirits that are *good*. And they are either the *renewed* spirit in God's people, the heart as sanctified, as having a vital, supernatural principle infused into it, which leads and inclines to holiness; or the *renewing* Spirit, God's own Spirit, of whom the text speaks.

These spirits are contrary to the former, both in themselves and also in their leadings. For as *they* are all for what is evil, so *these* are all for what is good. And the contrariety is such betwixt them, as that they are *αυστάτα*, "incompatible" in the same subject, in their full, entire power and strength. So as that a person can be led but by one of them; both cannot lead together; I mean, as to a man's general course, and as to their absolute power and dominion in him.

The text speaking of the leading of God's Spirit, the inquiry must be confined to that: and so it is laid down: *How may we know whether we be led by the Spirit of God?*

For the RESOLUTION of which, I must refer you to what I have been upon. Having said so much in the opening of the thing itself, by the comparing of yourselves with that you will be able to determine your own case,—whether it belong to you or not. It would be superfluous for me to enlarge again upon those heads in the application, which I have already been so large upon in the explication. Only, therefore, (to give some brief direction,) I would desire you to *look back*,

1. *To the essential and constitutive acts included in the Holy*

\* *Omnes homines aguntur aliquo spiritu.*—ORIGENES.

*Spirit's leading; namely, guidance, inclination of the heart to good, corroboration, gubernation.*—Art thou one that art guided by this Spirit to and in the great duties of Christianity? one who art strongly inclined to what is good? one that feelst an inward divine strengthening for doing and suffering? one that art ruled and governed by this Spirit? Surely, thou art “led” by him! But if it be otherwise, thou art led not by this, but by some other, spirit.

2. *To the matter or terminus of the Spirit's leading,—truth and holiness.*—Do thy opinions carry truth in them? thy practices, holiness? O, then thou art “led by the Spirit.” But what shall we say to those who are “led away with,” *συναπαχθεντες*, “the error of the wicked,” (2 Peter iii. 17,) or “led away,” *αγομενα*, “with divers lusts?” (2 Tim. iii. 6.) Why, it is a concluded case,—these are not “led by the Spirit.” The course discovers the guide: the fruits of the Spirit ever accompany the leading of the Spirit. *Principiata respondent suis principiis.\** If the action be holy, spiritual, and good, such as suits with the Holy Spirit, it then proceeds from him: but if it be sinful and wicked, Satan and thy own evil heart are thy leaders in it and to it. “Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God,” (1 John iii. 10,) nor “led by his Spirit.” What! live in drunkenness, uncleanness, sensuality, injustice, malice, hatred? and yet pretend to the conduct of the good Spirit? What a delusion is this to thyself! what a reproach and injury to the blessed Spirit!

3. *To the rule by which the Spirit leads,—the written word of God.*—He indited this word, and he guides by it. The Spirit and the word go hand-in-hand together. Is your faith regulated by this? [Are] your conversations steered by this? Hereby you may know, that the Spirit leads you. But if any believe, live, “speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isai. viii. 20.) “He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” (1 John iv. 6.) O, let all take heed of fathering any thing upon the Holy Spirit, which does not comport with, nor is founded upon, the holy scriptures! The enthusiast is very bold with the Spirit; but his arrogance and folly shall be made manifest at one time or another.

4. *To the manner of the Spirit's leading: he leads with power and efficacy.*—Well, what do you find of this? What have you more than a bare directive light? Is there a “power working in” you, (Eph. iii. 20,) effectually to incline and draw you to what is good? to beat down and subdue the innate renitency and reluctancy of the will? O, here is the leading of the Spirit! To find out which, two things must be searched into:—

(1.) *Whether it be the Spirit of God that leads us.*

(2.) *Whether he leads us in a peculiar and saving, or only in a common and general, way.* Now the first must be found out by the foregoing heads; the last, by that head which I am now upon. If

\* “Actions answer to their principles.”—EDIT.

the Spirit work in me as a Spirit of power, as well as of light and direction, I may conclude I am "led by" him.

I beseech you, lay these trials and your hearts close together; and the decision then will be easy and safe. And pray consider,—as the Spirit's leading must evidence your divine sonship, so the things set before you must evidence the reality of that divine leading.

## INQUIRY II.

A second inquiry is, *What inducements are there to excite and move men to endeavour to attain and live under this leading of God's Spirit?*

ANSWER. Many and great. O, how strong are the motives that are proper for the urging of this!

1. As, First, *The excellency of the thing.*—*The Person leading*,—he is excellent; the great Spirit of God: *the act*,—divine and supernatural leading,—that is excellent: *the object* which this tends unto and terminates in,—that is excellent; as the loving of God, delighting in God, conformity to God. All carry a transcendent glory and excellency in them. O, did but sinners know what this *ἡγεμονια*, this "conduct and guidance," of the Spirit is, what a blessed thing it is to possess and feel it; how earnest would they be in their desires and pursuits after it! I am sure, the saints that have it would not be without it (no, not one day) for millions of worlds.

2. *The necessity of it.*—The leading of the Spirit,—O, how highly necessary is it! Who can be without it? What becomes of the poor blind man that has none to guide him? of the weak child that has none to uphold it? Alas! the poor sinner, in both respects, does more need the Spirit's leading inwardly, than either of these need external leading. Such is our spiritual blindness,—our aptness to wander, our ignorance of our way, our liability to fall into [down] precipices, and the like,—as that, without a divine hand to guide us, we are lost. And such, too, is our spiritual debility and weakness, as that, if the Spirit of God do not hold us up in our going, "taking us by our arms," (Hosea xi. 3,) we fall immediately. How absolutely necessary, therefore, is the Spirit's leading, both for direction and also for sustentation! It is true, God has planted in man a natural faculty, to guide and direct him in his actings; *το ἡγεμονικον*, the understanding, reason, conscience, to be his "director" and monitor as to what he is to do: and this, in things of a mere natural and moral consideration, may be of great use to him: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." (Prov. xx. 27.) Ah! but as to things of a spiritual consideration, the matters of evangelical faith and practice, he must have a higher guide and leader, even the Holy Ghost; or else in these things he will be at an utter loss: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jer. x. 23.) "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." (Prov. xvi. 9.) The natural light, separate from what is supernatural, is a very incompetent and insufficient guide; which evinces the necessity of the Spirit's guidance.

3. *As the natural guide is defective and insufficient, so there are other guides which are destructive and damnable.*—Such as Satan, depraved nature, indwelling sin, the flesh, the world. O, what dangerous guides are these! If they be our leaders, whither will they lead us? Why, first to sin and wickedness here, and then to hell hereafter. It is with them as with Solomon's whore: "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." (Prov. vii. 27.) Can the course be good, when the guide is bad? and can the end be good, when the course is bad? Neither can be expected. The conversation *naturally* comports with the leader; and the end *judicially* comports with the conversation: so that, if these lead you, this will inevitably follow upon it,—you will be very wicked in this life, and very miserable in the life to come.

And beside this, pray consider what a base thing it is for such a creature as man to be under the conduct and government of such base things as these! O what a debasement is it, to him who is of such a divine extract and original, to be at the beck and ordering of such vile things as Satan, sin, and the rest! Yet this is the misery of the fallen state: upon Adam's fall, man has sadly lost his way, and has put himself under woful guides; and one great thing done in his restoration to his primitive state, is to reduce him to God as his first and best Guide and Leader.

To drive this a little further: in a word, know that where it is not the leading of the good Spirit, it is the leading of the evil spirit. For one of these it must be; not a man in the world but he is led by one of them. Now, do you not dread the thoughts of being led by Satan? O, it will be so, unless you be led by this Holy Spirit of God. What! the devil thy leader? O dreadful! What comes after a devil-leading, but a devil-tormenting?

4. *Weigh the way and manner of the Spirit's leading.*—You see how the conduct of the opposite leaders is stated: well, how does this Leader manage his conduct? *With great exactness and wisdom:* he so leads, as never to mislead; so, as always to direct with the deepest judgment. For, as in all his other acts, so in this, he is "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of knowledge." (Isai. xi. 2.) "I will instruct thee," says God, "and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye;" (Psalm xxxii. 8;) that is, with great care and accuracy. Thus the Spirit leads. And he does this *with infinite truth and faithfulness* also. As the wise man, personating his father, says, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom: I have led thee in right paths;" (Prov. iv. 11;) and as Abraham's servant, in the particular case before him: "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, which hath led me in the right way;" (Gen. xxiv. 27, 48;) and as the Psalmist, with respect to God's conduct of Israel in the wilderness: "He led them forth by the right way;" (Psalm cvii. 7;) such a leading is this of the Spirit as to believers in their whole course; he always leads them "in the right way." And then, he leads *safely*, in reference both to the way and to the end: "He led them on safely."

(Psalm lxxviii. 53.) I do but allude to it. Here is no such leader as those [whom] the prophet speaks of: "The leaders of this people cause them to err: and they that are led of them are destroyed." (Isai. ix. 16.) O, who, then, would not be desirous to be "led by" him? The skilfullest, faithfullest, safest guide, the traveller pitches upon: O Christian, wilt not thou do the same for thy precious and immortal soul?

5. *The advantages, benefits, blessings, that attend and result from this leading of the Spirit, are great and glorious.*—As, (to instance in a few,) *inward peace and comfort*: wherever the Spirit is a leading Spirit, there he is, or will be, a comforting Spirit. *A readiness to all duties of holiness*: so as to do them spontaneously and with delight: "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" (Gal. v. 18;) that is, so as in your obedience to act from a servile spirit, and from the mere external compulsions of the law: but, having the gracious conduct of the Spirit, this will make you do all freely, with the greatest promptitude and alacrity. *Sonship to God*: so it here comes in: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." As it leads to conversion, *it makes us* the sons of God; as it leads after conversion, *it evidences us to be* the sons of God; as has been already said. If the Spirit be thy Leader, God is thy Father: and what a privilege is this! (John i. 12; 1 John iii. 1.) And then, as the consummation of all, comes *the glory and blessedness of heaven*, as the certain portion of such who are "led by the Spirit." Death and hell are not more sure upon the leading of sin and Satan, than life and heaven are sure upon the leading of this Spirit. God ever saves in heaven such whom he leads on earth: "As many as walk according to this rule, mercy and peace be upon them." (Gal. vi. 16.) "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm lxxiii. 24.)

All being put together and seriously weighed, have I not said enough and enough to excite you all to attain and close with this blessed leading of the Spirit of God? Much more might have been added by way of motive; but if what has been said will not prevail, I despair of ever prevailing with you.

#### INQUIRY III.

A third inquiry follows: *How may this leading of the Spirit be attained? What is to be done by us, that we may be thus led by Him?*

ANSWER. In order to this, take the following DIRECTIONS:—

1. *There must be the having of the Spirit, before there can be the leading of the Spirit.*—This order is founded in the nature of the thing. We cannot expect to participate of the Spirit's operations, (such as are saving,) before we participate of the Spirit himself. Therefore, pray attend upon the gospel, by which he is conveyed to sinners; and then, when you have once received him, he will "not be idle and ineffective, but an operative and leading Spirit in you." \*

\* *Non est Spiritus Sanctus otiosus; movet mentes et ducit.*—MELANCHTHON.

2. *The antecedent, first leading of the Spirit must be had, before there can be the having of his subsequent and secondary leading.*—That is to say, he must first lead you to God by conversion; first bring you into a state of grace: and then way is made for his subsequent leading and direction. When he has been a quickening Spirit in the infusing of a vital principle into the soul, then succeeds this act which I am upon. And not till then; for who will attempt to lead a thing that is dead? This method of the Spirit, therefore, must be regarded and complied with. It is first sanctification; then manuduction, in the several things contained therein.

3. *Be willing to follow the leading, the motions of the Spirit.*—He gives again and again his secret guidance to you; showing what you are to do, what not. If this be followed and complied with, he will continue it; if not, he will withdraw, and leave you to follow the conduct of your own inclinations; a sore judgment! "My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." (Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12.) O dreadful word! The same will the Spirit do, upon our rejecting or resisting of his leading. He may long strive, but he will "not always strive." (Gen. vi. 3.) If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more. His initial workings in this are to be closed with, or he goes no further. That one act in the leading of the Spirit, namely, his powerful inclining of the heart to comply with what he leads unto, secures all the rest. If thou art an opposer of the Spirit, he will not be thy guide: yield to him, and close with him, and he will not withhold this grace from thee.

4. *Let your dependence be upon God and his Spirit for guidance and direction.*—Would you have him to lead you? O, let your trust and reliance be upon him; and see that you renounce all confidences in yourselves. He that thinks he has wisdom or grace enough in himself to "order his conversation aright," shall never find the Spirit to be a guide to him. "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." (Psalm xxv. 9.) When a man is brought to this meek, humble frame, then he is in the way of the Spirit's leading: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thy own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 5, 6.) Christian prudence, caution, and circumspection, is our duty; but do we lay the stress of our confidence upon that? "The steps of our strength shall be straitened, and our own counsel shall cast us down;" as he speaks, Job xviii. 7. "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Prov. xx. 24.) So long as thou thinkest [that] thou canst go by thyself, the Spirit will not take thee by the hand to lead thee.

5. *Pray much for this grace of the Spirit.*—It being a free and

arbitrary act on his part, he will be sought-to for it, and give it forth in that way which best suits with his sovereignty. How much was David in prayer to God for this! "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me." (Psalm xxv. 5.) "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness; make thy way straight before my face." (Psalm v. 8.) "For thy name's sake lead me, and guide me." (Psalm xxxi. 3.) "Lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm cxxxix. 24.) "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalm cxliii. 10.) O, what a desirable mercy is this leading mercy! And, sirs, will you not pray, and pray fervently, for it? Yea, will you not every day make this your request?—"Blessed God and Spirit, let me be led by thee this day." First he works as a Spirit of prayer, in the drawing forth of the soul's desires after this mercy; and then as a guiding and leading Spirit. And the former is a good plea for the latter: "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee." (Psalm cxliii. 8.) O that we might all follow these directions; and then we should have, not the thing only, but a large measure thereof!

## INQUIRY IV.

It may in the fourth place be queried, *What duties are incumbent upon those who are led by the Spirit?*

ANSWER. Such as these:—

1. *They should more and more follow the leadings of the Spirit.*—I hope I speak to some of you who have these, and live daily under them. If so, what is your duty? Why, in a higher degree to obey and fall in with them. The following of them, as that is simply and absolutely considered, is to be supposed and granted from your being "led by the Spirit;" for the former is necessarily included in the latter. And therefore, it is not this, as considered in itself, that I am so much to press upon you, as the manner, degree, and measure of it. And, in this respect, the best stand in need of counsel and quickening; for who do so follow the Spirit's leading as they ought? We have an excellent Guide; one that leads us with infinite wisdom and faithfulness; that directs us to nothing but what is good, and good *for us*. Ah! but here is our sin and misery,—we do not carry ourselves as we ought, in such an obeying and following of his conduct as that requires.

As to this, therefore, I would excite you to follow the Spirit's leading thus:—

(1.) *More exactly.*—So as to act just as he would have you act, to move just as he would have you move, to keep pace with him step by step in all his holy motions. What Israel did to the cloud,—“At the commandment of the Lord they journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents. And when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed,” (Num. ix. 18, 21.)—that we should do to the Holy Spirit, in the exact ordering of

all our motions by and according to his guidance. This should be the aim and endeavour of every one of us, though, through weakness and infirmity, we cannot actually and universally come up to it.

(2.) Follow the Spirit *more fully*.—God gives this high character of Caleb, that he “followed him fully.” (Num. xiv. 24.) Art thou one that art “led by the Spirit?” O follow him fully! Whatever truth he would have you believe, let it be believed; whatever duty he would have you practise, let it be practised; whatsoever sin he would have you mortify, let it be mortified. As the scribe said to Christ, “Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;” (Matt. viii. 19;) so do you say to the Spirit, “I will follow thee whithersoever thou leadest me. Excite me to good,—I will do it; restrain me from evil,—I will shun it.” Blessed are they who thus follow this Leader!

(3.) Do this *more uniformly and constantly*.—In being more even, fixed, and steady, in holy walking.

(4.) *More readily and freely*.—O, there should be no demurring, disputing, consulting with flesh and blood, hanging back, in the case; but a willing, ready, cheerful compliance with whatever the Spirit leads us unto! How well does this comport, as with the nature and essence, so with the matter and manner, of his leading!

(5.) Follow him *so as to make further progress in the way wherein he guides you*.—So as continually to be getting nearer and nearer to the end of your journey.

(6.) And, lastly: Follow him *with stronger resolution and purpose of heart*.—Whatever difficulties, discouragements, dangers, you meet with, yet resolve that nothing shall make you leave your Guide, or the holy course that he has led you to. And thus I would persuade you to rise higher and higher in your following of the Spirit.

2. *Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you*.—You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How does he wander and bewilder himself, when the Spirit does not guide him! How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! how unable to go, when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's leading! Take a good man without this, and he is like a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a poor child that has none to sustain it, the rude multitude that have none to keep them in any order. What a sad difference is there in the same person, as to what he is when the Spirit *leads* him, and as to what he is when the Spirit *leaves* him! O, therefore, let us always keep him with us! I may allude to that passage of Moses to Hobab: “And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.” (Num. x. 31.) So let none of us



let the Spirit depart, or occasion his leaving of us ; for, in the wilderness he will be as "eyes to us," to direct and show us our way. How dismal would the state of the Israelites in the wilderness have been, if there they had not had the cloud to guide them ! So it is in the thing before us.

**OBJECTION.** "But does the Spirit at any time do this to God's people ? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it ?"

**ANSWER.** Yes ; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him ; and when he is grieved, he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally, yet for a time and in such a degree. As a guide, that is to conduct the traveller ; if this traveller shall refuse to follow him, or shall give unkind usage to him, what does the guide then do ? Why, he recedes, and leaves him to shift for himself. It is thus in the case in hand : if we comply with the Spirit in his motions, and use him tenderly, he will hold on in his leading of us ; but if otherwise, he will concern himself no more about us. O, take heed how you carry yourselves toward him ; not only upon ingenuousness, it is base to be unkind to our Guide, ("Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way ?" Jer. ii. 17.) but also upon the account of self-love : for "as we behave ourselves to him, so he will behave himself to us :"  
*Ita nos tractat, ut a nobis tractatur.*

3. *Labour after the having of the leading of the Spirit in a higher degree and measure, than what as yet you have attained unto.*—It is not enough merely to keep it, but there must be a getting more of it. As there should be a rise in our following, so we should press after a rise in the Spirit's leading of us. And that in a threefold respect :—that he lead us,

(1.) *More extensively, as to the object ;*

(2.) *With greater light and clearness, power and efficacy, as to the manner ;*

(3.) *With more evenness and constancy, as to the duration and continuance of it.* He guides you to truth ; but does he guide you to *all* truth ? He guides you *unto* truth ; but does he guide you *into* truth ? and is this his constant and continued working in you ? O, this high measure of it we should aspire at and pant after, taking up with nothing short of it ! And so, as to holiness and practical godliness, the same is to be endeavoured after. There is indeed much mercy in the lowest degree of this act, and they that have the least should be thankful ; but yet a fuller proportion may and ought to be desired by every child of God. And surely, they who experience what this leading of the Spirit is, never think they have enough of it.

4. *So live, as that it may appear to others that you are led by this Spirit.*—Christians, your actions and conversations should be such as may suit with the Spirit that leads you ; such as may evidence to the world, that you are not in pretence only, but in truth and reality, under a divine and supernatural conduct. Do we lay claim to this ?

O, then, what good do we do more, what evil less, than others do? What! live in sin? do evil things? be proud, worldly, covetous, passionate, unclean, malicious, fraudulent? and yet pretend you are "led by the Holy Spirit?" Lord, what an indignity and affront do you put upon him! what a cheat and fallacy upon your own souls! Pray never talk of this, unless your lives be holy and good. For ye who are real saints, O, that you would oft think of this, and look upon it as one of the highest engagements to circumspect walking! You that are guided by such a word without and such a Spirit within, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" (2 Peter iii. 11.)

5. *Be very thankful for this glorious mercy.*—"Led by the Spirit?" Admirable love! What thankfulness is due to Father, Son, and Spirit for it! for all these have a hand, though the last be more immediately concerned, in it. When you know not your way, this Spirit shows it to you; when you are weak and feeble, not able to go, this Spirit strengthens you: "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." (Hosea xi. 3.) When others are left to the conduct of their own light, understanding, inclinations, which lead them to sin and death; you are under the conduct of this gracious Spirit, who leads you to grace and glory. What cause have you to admire this distinguishing grace! How great is the *Father's* love in this! who, as fathers here, when they send their sons into foreign countries, and they themselves cannot be with them,—they send a tutor or governor with them in all their travels to instruct and govern and take care of them; just so does your Heavenly Father do for you, in and by his Spirit, in this state of your pilgrimage and absence from him. How great is the love of the *Son* in this! for he has purchased, and now does actually send, this Spirit to be your Teacher, Monitor, and Guide. And how great is the love of the *Spirit*, too, in this! All his operations carry infinite goodness and condescension in them; but none more than this,—his tender and patient guiding of us. Should not all the Persons, therefore, be heartily, sincerely, and with the greatest enlargedness of heart, blessed and adored for it? especially considering how they design and aim at the exalting of themselves by this very act. As in the miraculous leading of the people of Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and so on,—set forth, Isai. lxiii. 12—14: "That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name; that led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people:" for what end? "To make thyself a glorious name,"—surely so in that spiritual and gracious leading that I am treating of, the great God, whether essentially or personally considered, designs much glory and adoration to himself. And let him have it, (for he well deserves it,) from all that have any experience of this grace.

## INQUIRY V.

A fifth inquiry : *May such who are led by the Spirit fetch comfort from it ? Is this a solid bottom for any to build holy joy upon ?*

ANSWER. Undoubtedly it is ! You who have it, may rejoice, and that greatly : for,

1. *It is a clear evidence, a deciding argument, of your being the sons of God.*—And what a soul-rejoicing privilege is that ! “Sons of God ?” this assures of dear affection, tender care, strong protection, constant provision, free access to God, ready audience of prayer, a gracious presence in every condition, a favourable acceptance of all duties, a good inheritance and portion ; and what not ? All these blessings are yours, if ye be “the sons of God ;” and so you are, if “led by the Spirit.” O, then, what a ground of comfort is this !

2. As it is a certain evidence of sonship here, so *it is a certain pledge of heaven and salvation hereafter.*—And that, both upon the account of the relation which it instates in,—“For if sons, then heirs ; heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ,” (Rom. viii. 17.)—and also upon the account of the leading itself. For wherever that is, as it is in order to salvation, so this salvation by it shall certainly be obtained. Never did any perish that lived under the Spirit's guidance and conduct. God ever saves, where the Spirit leads. All that he guides, come safe to the end of their journey, to their eternal rest.

3. Beside the things which are wrapped up in this leading, beside the matter and manner of it, (all of which carry in them ground of the highest joy,) consider but two things further about it :—

(1.) *That it is abiding, permanent, continuing.*—The Spirit does not lead, and then leave : (as some guides do with poor travellers, deserting them in the midst of their dangers :) no ; but he holds on, repeats and lengthens out this act to the very last. True, this depends upon conditions on our part, as ye have heard : but yet these do not make the thing uncertain and liable to intercision ; because it is part of the Spirit's leading, to direct, incline, and overpower to the performance of those conditions. So it is secured, as to the continuance of it, to all the elect of God, Every upright Christian may triumphantly say, with David, “This God is our God for ever and ever : he will be our Guide even unto death.” (Psalm xlviii. 14.) The cloud never left Israel, till it brought them to the Land of Promise : so it is here.

(2.) *That it is managed and carried on, all along, with mixtures of all other graces.*—That is, with the bestowing of inward peace and comfort, and of all supplies necessary to the believing soul. It is not a bare, naked leading ; but such as is attended with the conveyance of all other mercies. According to that encouraging text, Isai. xlix. 10 : “He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.” Is not here *ισχυρα παρακλησις*, “strong consolation,” (Heb. vi. 18,) for all who are led by God's Spirit ?

## INQUIRY VI.

In the sixth and last place, it might be inquired: *Since this leading of the Holy Spirit is a special and discriminating act, what inferences may be drawn from it as being such?*

ANSWER. I might instance in several, if I had not already exceeded the bounds of a sermon. Therefore, take but this one: *That it is not a thing much to be wondered at, that saints and sinners do so much differ, and that saints and sinners do so little differ.*

The difference betwixt the two former is great; light and darkness, heaven and hell, do not more differ than they. That which the one loves, the other hates. In their visible practices, there is little but sin in the one; there is holiness, though imperfect, in the other. The one curses, swears, takes God's name in vain, lives a brutish life, minds not God; the other fears God, avoids evil, desires to order words, thoughts, actions, by the rule of the word, prays, sanctifies the sabbath, does good: is not here a vast difference? There is, indeed! But can it be expected it should be otherwise, they being led by different and contrary spirits? O, upon this, no wonder that their actings and courses are so different! Men will and must be and do according to the spirit which guides and governs them: therefore, the unregenerate and wicked being under the guidance and power of the evil spirit, they will do what suits with that spirit; *e contra*, ["on the opposite,"] the renewed and sanctified being under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, they will do what suits with that Spirit. And upon this foundation there must be an everlasting difference and contrariety betwixt them.

But then, for saints and saints,—they do not thus differ. As to lesser matters, there may be too much of differences even amongst them; but as to the fundamentals of faith and practice, so there is an admirable harmony, unity, and consent amongst them. Some live in one age, some in another; some in one place, some in another: yet there is a blessed oneness and agreement amongst them all. They believe the same truths, perform the same duties, attend upon the same worship, walk in the same path of holiness, have and act the same graces, groan under the same burdens, drive-on the same designs: as face answers to face, so do they to one another. "And whence is this?" Why, from this:—they are all "led by" one and the same Spirit. Hence it is that they do so concur in all the necessary and vital parts of religion: "We having the same Spirit of faith." (2 Cor. iv. 13.) "There is one body, and one Spirit," (Eph. iv. 4,) which actuates and animates all that body. It is "one and the self-same Spirit which worketh in all;" as the apostle speaks in reference to gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 11. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God:" here are "many" that are "led," but it is but one "Spirit" that leads them all. This is that which causes such an unanimity and harmony in God's people, both in matters of faith and practice. O that the world might see more of the thing! and then the reason thereof would be obvious.

## SERMON XXV.

BY THE REV. DAVID CLARKSON, B.D.\*

FELLOW OF CLARE HALL, CAMBRIDGE.

WHAT ADVANTAGE MAY WE EXPECT FROM CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR UNION WITH HIMSELF, AND THE BLESSINGS RELATING TO IT?

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.—John xvii. 20, 21.*

IN this chapter we have the admirable prayer of Christ, offered up to the Father, a little before his last and greatest sufferings. In this prayer we may observe *the design* and *the contents* of it. *The design* of it is to encourage his disciples: "These words spake Jesus," &c. (Verse 1.) He had spoken much in the former chapters for their comfort and encouragement; and in pursuit of the same design "he lifts up his eyes to heaven," and pours forth this heavenly prayer in their hearing. *The contents*, that which he prays for is union with Him and the Father, and the blessings relating thereto, of which more particularly afterwards. The words, considered jointly with *the design* and *contents* of the prayer, offer us this observation:—

*The people of Christ have great encouragement from his prayer in reference to union with God, and the blessings relating to it.*

In the prosecution hereof,

- I. *I shall give some account of the severals he prayed for; and,*
- II. *Show what encouragement we have to expect what he prays for.*

### OBSERVATION I.

For the first: he prays for *union with himself and the Father; for faith, the bond of this union; for holiness, the effect of it; for perseverance, that it may continue, and not be dissolved and interrupted; lastly, for glory, the consummation of this union.*

\* I have ascribed the authorship of this sermon to the Rev. David Clarkson, B. D., on the strength and credit of a List of the Preachers, written in an ancient hand, and prefixed to a well-preserved copy of the volume. But in similar manuscript Lists, inserted in those copies which I have either inspected, or of which I have heard, the only announcement has been, "N. N.," the common indication of an unknown author. Style is usually too fallacious a guide in coming to a correct conclusion in matters of this description; though the simplicity of its construction, with other circumstances, would incline one to award the composition to Mr. Clarkson. In the absence of better information from more accredited sources, this is tendered, as being exceedingly probable, and containing something beyond mere conjecture.—EDIT.

1. For *faith, that those may have faith who did not, or do not yet, believe.*—"That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (Verse 21.) He prays, that those who were chosen to glory as the end, and so to faith as the means, may be brought to believe on Christ, as sent of the Father to be the Mediator, and so accept of him as their Prophet, Priest, and King.

2. He prays for *holiness, the growth and increase of it.*—"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (Verse 17.) The word of truth, through the Spirit working with it, and making impressions by it on the heart, is the instrument and mean, both to begin holiness in regeneration, (1 Peter i. 23; James i. 18,) and to promote it where it is begun. (1 Peter ii. 2.) He prays that the Lord would make his word effectual to cleanse and sanctify them more and more. He would have those who are given to him to be sanctified, truly separated from sin, the world, and carnal self, truly consecrated and appropriated to himself, truly offered up and employed for him, as those who are wholly his, and cannot without sacrifice be converted to other ends and uses than those that are his.

3. He prays for *perseverance, that those who are given him may hold out and continue to the end, in faith, and holiness, and union with Him and the Father.*—That they may not fall away to unbelief, or profaneness, nor be ever separated from him with whom they are once united: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me," &c. (Verse 11.) *Keep them*—In all dangers, in all assaults, in all trials. Secure them from sin, from Satan, from the world, that they may be neither frightened nor enticed from me. *Through thine own name*—The name of God is that by which he is known, as we are known by our names: all those glorious perfections, whereby he hath made known himself unto us, his power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, sovereignty, all-sufficiency, &c. He would have all the infinite excellences and perfections of God, all by which he is called and known, engaged for the security of his people, that none of them may fall away, and be lost. "Keep them" by thy power, by thy wisdom, goodness, sovereignty, all-sufficiency, &c. Or if we take these words for an argument wherewith he urges this petition, it is of no less force: "Keep them" *for thine own name's sake*, for the honour of thine own name: so he engages the honour of God for the security of his people, that none of them may fall away; and that is the greatest, the strongest engagement in the world, and gives the best security that possibly can be. The Lord will do more for his own name's sake, than for all the works of his hands, than for all that is in heaven and earth besides. His honour is his interest; so that the interest of God is thereby engaged to secure the eternal concerns of his people. Those men in the world that we are not secure of, and can have no confidence in otherwise; yet if their interest do engage them for us, we think ourselves so far sure of them. Interest amongst men is the strongest obligation, if they understand it, and have but so much respect to themselves as to be true to it. Christ, by his prayer, engages the interest of his

Father, his name, his honour, for the security of his people, that they may not fall away, and be lost; and if we acknowledge him to be God, we cannot in the least suspect, either that he knows not what his interest is, or that he will not be true to it. When it is for his name's sake, or his honour, to secure his people, it shall certainly be done; and this is that which Christ urges in this petition.

4. He prays for *glory*.—"And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." (Verses 22, 24.) It is the glory of Christ that he is the Son of God, his only Son by eternal generation, and "Heir of all things." (Heb. i. 2, 3; John i. 14.) Now such a glory will Christ have for his people; something like it, though, in a way, below it. He will have them to be sons and heirs of God, co-heirs with himself. A wonderful glory indeed, and such a degree of it as could never have entered into the heart of man to expect or believe, if the Lord himself had not given assurance of it! "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 17.) All that are given him, he will have to be adorned with his own title, and be accounted and called "sons of God;" and all that are sons, he will have to be "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with himself," not of some meaner part of his Father's possession, but even of his kingdom. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James ii. 5.) Being heirs, they have hopes to inherit. (Titus iii. 7.) They have a title upon this account, and so hope. But Christ, not satisfied with this, prays also that they may have possession: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me;" (verse 24;) that they may behold it so as to partake of it. This sight will be the highest, the happiest enjoyment: it will be an ennobling, a glorifying sight; a sight that will make them who behold it happy, perfectly so, eternally so. The sight of Christ's glory will make them glorious: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 1, 2.) We are "sons;" that is a great glory indeed. But there is a glory to come which is far greater; so great that no expression can fully represent it to us, or make it appear to be so much, so great, as indeed it is. But this is the sum of it: "We shall be like him" in glory; "for we shall see" how glorious he is. The sight of our glorious Redeemer will make us glorious like him. When we are in the sight of that glory wherewith he now shines "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," (Heb. viii. 1,) to which the greatest brightness of the sun is less than a spark, we shall be adorned with his beams, and so made glorious. A hint hereof we have in what is recorded of Moses, who when he was admitted to a nearer converse with God, it is said, "His face shined." (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 35.) His face was *horned*, as the word imports: it appeared in

such a form as the rays of the sun appear to us ; his face sent forth beams like the sun. There was such a radiant lustre, such a glory in his face, as the weak eyes of mortals could not bear, could not look on. When we are where Christ is, and see him in the brightness of his glory, (which is that he prays for,) the sight of it will transform our souls "from glory to glory," as the apostle's expression is in reference to that of Moses. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) A glory will be derived upon our souls from his glory, and upon our bodies too. That glorious vision will be a transforming sight, and "change our vile bodies, so that they shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body." (Phil. iii. 21.)

5. He prays for *union*.—"That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." (Verse 21.) This union is a mystery, a great depth, such as I was loath to venture on, if it could have been avoided. What my shallowness can say of it briefly, I shall comprise in some few particulars.

(1.) It is an union of believers with God, with the Father and the Son ; not an union of believers among themselves, at least not this only. For the union expressed in those first words, "That they may be one," is declared or illustrated in these following, "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee ;" and so is the same union with that in the last words, which is taken to be an union with the Father and the Son : "That they may be one in " or *with* "us." Or else the words here used to illustrate one thing, would not illustrate that, but another. "That they may be one." "How ?" "As thou, Father, art one in me, and I in thee," so "they may be one in us." Besides, the same words in effect are used in verse 22 : "That they may be one, even as we are one ;" and the same explained immediately in verse 23 : "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (Verse 26.) By which, without question, Christ both here and elsewhere expresses the union of believers with himself ; though I will not deny that the union among believers themselves may be included, being a consequent of the other ; and that which unites them with Christ, unites them among themselves.

(2.) This union hath some resemblance of that between the Father and the Son : "That they may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee : " *Καθως*, "as," denotes not any thing of *equality*, but only something of *likeness*. That we may know what of resemblance there is, we must inquire, (but very modestly, as becomes those who are so much in the dark,) how the Father is said to be in the Son, and he in the Father. For this purpose Christ may be considered, either *as God*, or *as man*.

*As God*, he is in the Father, and the Father in him ; or, which is the same, he is one with the Father ; because they are of one and the same nature and essence. The same infinite excellences and essential perfections that are in the Father, are also in the Son ; upon this account the Son is said to be in the Father, and the Father in him : "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ?



Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." (John xiv. 10, 11.) So that "he that hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father;" (verse 9;) and he that hath known the Son, "hath known the Father;" (verse 7;) because they are one and the same in nature and essence, the very same as to all divine perfections. And thus the Father and Son, with the Spirit, are said to be one: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one;" (1 John v. 7;) one in essence, and all the perfections which are essential to God, though distinct in personality and manner of subsistence. There is an essential union between the Father and the Son, as he is God. No such union must be imagined between them and believers: the distance is no less than infinite; and if there can be any resemblance, it must be very remote.

If we consider Christ *as man*, he may be said to be "one with the Father;" and is so, because the same Spirit, who is called "the Spirit of God," and "the Spirit of the Father," dwells in the human nature of Christ. (Matt. xii. 18; John iii. 34.) And this may help us better to apprehend how we may be said to be one in or with the Father and the Son. Therefore,

(3.) The most intelligible way of expressing this union which I meet with, is this: Believers are said to be "one with the Father," because that Spirit which proceeds from him, and is called his Spirit, is in them. They are said to be "one with the Son," not only because that Spirit which proceeds from the Son, and is called "the Spirit of Christ," resides in believers; but because the same individual Spirit, which dwells in the human nature of Christ, dwells also in them: "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) He that is one with the Lord hath one Spirit with him; he is quickened and acted by the Spirit of the Lord dwelling in him. They are *not one essentially*, as the Father and the Son are one, being of one and the same essence; *nor one personally*, as the divine and human nature of Christ, being united in one person; *nor one morally* only, as he whose heart cleaves to another by love is one with him; but *one spiritually*, or "one spirit," because one and the same Spirit is in both. So, elsewhere, our union with God and Christ is said to be by the Spirit in us: "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.) We are in Christ, and God is in us as his habitation, as those in whom he dwells. "How?" "Through his Spirit;" by "his Spirit dwelling in us," as it is expressed in Rom. viii. 9—11: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you," &c. Ye are spiritual, "if the Spirit of God dwell in you." But "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" none of his members, not united to him. But "if Christ be in you," (as is before signified,) "by the Spirit of God dwelling in you," &c.

So that this union, by the apostle's account, consists in the Spirit's dwelling in us; and it will be farther cleared by showing *how* the Spirit dwells in us.

(4.) The Holy Spirit, by virtue of whose inhabitation believers are said to be united unto the Father and the Son, dwells in them as a principle of spiritual life and motion, quickens them to a new life and all the acts of it. There are some who will not have *the person* of the Holy Ghost to be in the saints; but I know not how this can be denied, without denying either the immensity or personality of the Divine Spirit. For if he be *a person*, and if he be *every where*, his person will be present, and reside in them. It is true, upon this account merely, nothing singular is ascribed to them; for his person is not with them only, but everywhere. The peculiarity of this privilege lies here,—that he is in them as a principle of spiritual life and motion; and thus he is not in any other creature on earth. He quickens and acts them as a vital principle. Like as a human soul, united unto the body, gives it life and motion suitable to its nature; so does the Spirit of God, taking possession of the soul of a believer, enliven and act it with the life and motions of a divine and spiritual nature. Not that the Spirit is united to the soul, as the soul is with the body; for these united make one person, whereas the personality of the Spirit is incommunicable; But that the Holy Spirit performs such offices in a believing soul as have some resemblance, and are some way correspondent, to what the soul does in and for the body, and which the scripture expresses in like terms; and this we find frequently. The Spirit is said to quicken and act those in whom he dwells; they have new life and motion by his inhabitation: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.) The apostle having signified in the former verses, that our union with God and Christ is by the Spirit's dwelling in us, he expresses what may be expected from this inhabitation: Christ's Spirit, dwelling in us, will "quicken our mortal bodies;" will be a principle of life in them, quickening them to a new life, a life of holiness. The same Spirit, as he quickens, so he acts, those in whom he dwells, who are therefore said to be "led" by him: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" (verse 14;) they are excited, directed, enabled to act like the children of God, by his Spirit dwelling in them. So, Ezek. xxxvi. 27: "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them;" the Spirit which I will put within you, shall make you active in my ways.

So much for the first proposal.

#### OBSERVATION II.

*What encouragement have we from Christ's prayer, that this union, and the blessings relating thereto, shall be vouchsafed?*

ANSWER. Our encouragement in general is the full assurance given

us, that his prayer is prevalent for what he desired. The particular grounds of this assurance are more particular encouragements. There are several things requisite to a prayer; which when they concur, the word of God assures us that it will prevail.

1. *When the things desired are according to the will of God.*—“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (1 John v. 14, 15.)

2. *When the person praying hath a special interest in God, and duly improves it.*—There are some whom, the scripture declares, God will not hear. “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.” (John ix. 31.) “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” (Psalm lxi. 18.) “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” (Prov. xxviii. 9.)

3. *When the persons prayed for are such as the Lord hath some particular favour or respect for.*—There are some for whom the Lord will not hear the best of his servants interceding on their behalf. “Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.” “Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.” “Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good.” (Jer. vii. 16; xi. 14; xiv. 11.)

Now in the prayer of Christ there is a concurrence, and that in a transcendent manner, of all those things that render a prayer undoubtedly prevalent.

1. *The things that he prayed for were consonant to the will of God in every instance.*—He knew what was the Father's will in its full extent, and discerned it with the greatest clearness and certainty. For as he is God, he is “one with the Father,” of one and the same essence and will; and as he is man, he had “in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” a fulness of the Spirit of revelation, so that he did perfectly apprehend what was “the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God.” (Rom. xii. 2.) He did not only know this in particular instances, by general rules of scripture, as we do; but had the conduct of an infallible Spirit, and that always: not sometimes only and in some things, as holy men of God, the prophets and apostles had it; but in every act and word. And as he perfectly and infallibly understood what was agreeable to the will of God in all points, so he gave himself up entirely to the most exact observance of it, without varying, without the least shadow of mistake or deviation. This was the end why he came into the world. (John vi. 38.) This was his constant practice, in his sufferings and actings, and in his prayers: “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” (John v. 30.) This was his

delight: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John iv. 34.) Now, since he presented nothing in his petitions but what was his Father's own will, desired nothing but it was his Father's will to grant, we may be as certain that his prayer was granted, as we are sure that the Lord will comply with his own will.

2. For the second:—*When the person praying hath a special interest in God, and duly improves it:*—It will be apparent by showing who it was that prayed, and how he prayed: of which take an account in some particulars.

(1.) *This was the prayer of the Man Christ Jesus, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."* (Heb. vii. 26.)—He was "a lamb without spot and blemish;" (1 Peter i. 19;) and so was this offering: the pure eye of God could see no blemish in him or it. His requests were not prejudiced by any antecedent guilt; nor tainted with any impure mixture, either apparent or secret; nor chargeable with the least defect in fervour, faith, affectionateness, &c. It was a sinless prayer in all respects; and so, such a prayer as was never offered to God on earth, since the foundation of the world and sin's entering into it. It was not liable to the least exception, no, not at the tribunal of strict justice; and so could not but be acceptable and prevalent.

Nay, it was not only clear from every the least speck of sin, but was the product of admirable holiness, such as is not to be found in the holiest soul or spirit, saint or angel. He had it in larger measures, in a higher degree, and in a more excellent way. Some tell us, that if all the holiness that is in all the angels and saints were united in one subject, it would fall short of that which is in Christ's human nature. However, it is taken for granted, that the capacity of his soul was wonderfully enlarged by its personal union with the Godhead, far beyond the capacity of any other finite being; and all this capacity was wholly filled with holiness: "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" (1 Col. i. 19;) and "God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him." (John iii. 34.) Saints and angels receive it as vessels of small measure; but in Christ it is unmeasurable. Now, all this holiness was exerted in this prayer, and diffused through it. Grace in him was not acted sometimes intensely, sometimes more remissly; (for remissness seems to import some culpable defect;) but was put forth on proper occasions, and particularly in this prayer, in its full power and vigour. Upon this account this prayer was the holiest offering that ever was presented to the most holy God, either on earth, or in heaven; and therefore could not but be most acceptable to him, and accordingly prevalent and successful.

(2.) *It is the prayer of him who is God, of him who is God and man in one person.*—As the blood of Christ is said to be "the blood of God," (Acts xx. 28,) by the same reason, the prayer of Christ may be said to be "the prayer of God." And though it be properly the act of Christ's human nature, yet this nature being

personally united with the Godhead, it is upon that ground duly ascribed to the Divine Nature and Person of Christ; which being infinite, an answerable value and excellency is derived upon this prayer: so that, though it be but finite in itself, as it is the proper act of a finite being, yet it is of infinite excellency and value relatively, and so far of infinite efficacy. Let us suppose, that all the angels and saints in heaven and earth should agree to prostrate themselves before God, and join together in one prayer for us, and *that* influenced with all the holiness, enforced with all the fervour and importunity, that those heavenly spirits and holy souls are capable of; we would conclude such a prayer would be undoubtedly prevalent: and yet we may believe upon unquestionable grounds, that this one prayer of our blessed Redeemer is incomparably, yea, infinitely, more prevalent and effectual. In short: this prayer is nothing else but the will and desires of him who is God, offered in manner of a supplication; and there can be no question but that will and those desires shall be fulfilled to the utmost.

(3.) *This prayer was founded on merit.*—He prayed for nothing but what he was worthy to obtain; sought nothing on our behalf but what he did purchase for us, and deserve of his Father. He might present this supplication “for his own righteousness,” as the best of his people could not, durst not, do. (Dan. ix. 18.) He might expect to obtain what he asked from the hand of justice; not as we, only from mere bounty and free mercy. Christ's obedience unto death,—it was meritorious, and did deserve for his people all that he prayed for. All the ingredients of strict and proper merit concur in the obedience and sufferings of Christ, as I might show particularly, but that I hasten: they were of equal worth with the recompence which he prays for in the behalf of his people. He thereby fully satisfied the demands both of law and justice; and though it was the life and pardon and happiness of a world of condemned persons that he prays for, yet his obedience and blood are of more worth than all these; for they are of infinite value, being the obedience and blood of him who was God. So that Christ's obedience, active and passive, is meritorious, not only *ratione pacti*, “by reason of the agreement” betwixt the Father and him, he having performed all the conditions required in order to our redemption; but *ratione pretii*, “by virtue of the intrinsic value of what he paid and performed.” “Now” (to use the apostle's expression) “to him that *thus* worketh the reward is reckoned, not of grace, but of debt:” (Rom. iv. 4.) It is grace to us, but it is debt to Christ; and so the plea on our behalf being for a just debt, it cannot but be most effectual with the righteous God.

(4.) *It is the prayer of him for whose sake all other prayers were heard.*—We have direction, if we would have our prayers not fail of success, to present them in the name of Christ; that is, to beg what we desire for his sake; and he gives assurance that what we so pray for, (in his name or for his sake,) shall be granted. (John xvi. 23; xv. 16; xiv. 13, 14.) Now if the prayers of his people will prevail for his sake, there can be no question but his own prayer will be

prevalent. All our prayers are accepted through him, upon his account, nor can they be acceptable otherwise. (1 Peter ii. 5.) There is that corruption in our natures, which depraves and vitiates our spiritual sacrifices, our prayers particularly; there is more or less of a sinful tincture in them. They cannot be well-pleasing to that Holy of God who is "of purer eyes than to behold sin, or to look on iniquity," (Habak. i. 13.) till they be purged, and the guilt expiated. Nothing is sufficient for expiation but the great Propitiatory Sacrifice, by virtue whereof this guilt is expiated, and we are said to be sanctified in a sacrificial sense, that is, purged from guilt. (Heb. x. 10.) Thus "he by himself purged our sins;" (Heb. i. 3;) and thereby that which was occasion of offence to God being removed, our prayers became acceptable through Jesus Christ. In this sense he saith, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 19.) *I sanctify*—That is, I offer myself an expiatory sacrifice. *That they may be truly sanctified*—That is, freed from guilt, and so rendered well-pleasing and acceptable. Now the prayers of others being acceptable through the mediation of Christ, the prayers of the great Mediator himself will undoubtedly be most acceptable, most prevalent.

3. *As to the persons prayed for: they are such as on whom the Father is no less willing to bestow what is here desired than Christ was to seek them on their behalf.*—This appears by several expressions in this chapter:—

First. *They belonged to the Father in a special manner.*—"Thine they were;" (John xvii. 6;) and, "Thine they are." (Verse 9.) They were *his in design and purpose*, before the foundation of the world; chosen vessels, set apart for him, as his own peculiarly: (2 Tim. ii. 19;) and *his actually*, by effectual calling; they resigning up themselves to him, and he taking possession of them as his own: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." (John xvii. 8.) "Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." (Rom. ix. 24, 25.) Now to whom is the Lord willing to grant these favours, if not to those who are so much his own?

Secondly. *Those whom he prays for are "given to him."*—As is many times expressed; (John xvii. 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24;) and given to him that he might redeem and save them, or, as it is expressed, verse 2, "that he should give eternal life unto them." This comprises all that he prays for on their behalf, and that is the end why they are given him. Now the Father is as willing to promote his own end and design as the Son; and so no less willing to grant what is desired in order thereto, than the great Intercessor was to pray for them.

Thirdly. *Those for whom he prays are such as the Father loves with a transcendent, a wonderful love.*—"And hast loved them as thou

hast loved me:" (verse 23:) not with the same love which the Father hath for the Son, nor with a love equal to it, but a love so great as comes nearest to it of all others; a greater love than any creatures, men or angels, have for them, or for one another; a far greater love than he hath for any other creatures in this world. A demonstrative instance hereof we have, in that he gave his Son for them; which was the greatest expression of love that ever the world saw or heard of, and greater than could ever have been believed, if truth itself had not declared it. That he should send his Son to reside on earth, not gloriously like himself, but to take "the form of a servant," and live as a man of sorrows and sufferings, and die as a sacrifice under the sin and curse of those for whom he was offered,—O what manner of love was this! Now, as the apostle argues: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) How can he not be freely willing to give us any thing at his Son's request, when he loved us so as to give the Son himself for us?

## USE.

Since it is thus, what greater encouragement can we have for our faith and prayers, than this prayer of Christ? What can be a firmer ground of hope, or more effectually raise our expectations, of what is here prayed for? that is, of all wherein our happiness is concerned: for the prayer doth comprise all that is requisite to make us happy here and for ever.

1. *What support is there that FAITH doth need or can have, which it may not here meet with?*—Is it the infinite mercies and compassions of God? Why, this prayer not only engages the mercy and compassions, but the justice and righteousness, of God: it is a righteous thing with God to grant the requests of Christ.

Is it the covenant of grace, or the great and precious promises? Why, he that here prays is the Mediator of the Covenant, in whom "all the promises are Yea and Amen." (2 Cor. i. 20.)

Is it the humiliation of the Son of God? Why, this is a signal instance of his humiliation, where He who hath heaven and earth and all creatures at his command, offers himself in the form of a servant, and presents these particulars in the posture, with the voice, and in the words of a supplicant.

Is it the obedience and righteousness of Christ? Why, this was in him a meritorious act of obedience; he prayed as one "made under the law;" (Gal. iv. 4;) and this was one way whereby he fulfilled the righteousness of it.

Is it the death and sufferings of Christ? Why, this is the ground upon which his prayer proceeds: "'For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified:' (John xvii. 19:) those for whom I offer these requests, are no other than those for whom I offer myself a sacrifice."

Is it the intercession of Christ at the right hand of the Father? Why, his *prayer on earth* and *intercession* differ but circumstantially;

and the circumstances which make the difference make no less for the support of faith. He prayed for the same persons and for the same things too, for which he intercedes; and it is the same person that both prayed and intercedes. He is, in both, the Son of God and the Son of man too. The difference is, that in his intercession, his sacrifice is presented *as already offered*; in his prayer, it was presented *as ready to be offered*: but it was no less effectual before it was actually offered, than after. Besides, he *prayed* in the state of humiliation; he *intercedes* in the height of his glorious advancement; but his exaltation in heaven is the effect of his prayer on earth. "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (Verse 5.) In short, his prayer was *his intercession begun*, and his intercession is *the continuing of his prayer*; for it hath the essence of a prayer, being the presenting of his will and desires to the Father on the behalf of his people.

Lastly: Is the word of Him who is Truth itself, a support of faith? Why, this we have also in reference to Christ's prayer: "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me. And I know that thou hearest me always." (John. xi. 41, 42.) You see what supports faith hath from this prayer,—even all that is requisite to raise it to a full assurance, if not all that is possible.

2. *What QUALIFICATIONS would you desire in one that pleads for you, to make you confident that his plea will be successful and prevalent?*—You may find a concurrence of all these, and that far more transcendently than in any in whom you would have the most confidence. For,

First. He hath *power*, no less than *all*: "All power is given him in heaven and earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) He hath power to prevail with the Father, and power to order all creatures in heaven and earth into a subserviency to what he desires.

He is *willing*; and earnestly desires the happiness of his people, and all that tends to it; and these desires flow from the wonderful love of an infinite God, and the greatest compassions of a perfect man, united in one person; and so from an affection altogether unparalleled, such as cannot be found in heaven or earth, save only in the Lord our Redeemer and Advocate.

Farther: he hath *authority*. He was called to be a High Priest, (Heb. iii. 1, 2,) and obliged by that office to pray for his people; and, being *faithful* in the discharge of it,—could not but be successful therein. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." (Heb. v. 1, 4, 5, 7.)



His honour is engaged, and depends both upon the execution of his office and the success of it. The Father called him to be a High Priest, and so to pray for his people. He would not have called him to it but with a design to comply with him in it, and to be prevailed with by it.

Besides, he hath *right*; and pleads for nothing but what he hath right to obtain; pleads for nothing with the righteous God on our behalf but what he hath purchased with that which is of infinite value.

Also he hath *interest*, the greatest imaginable; as much interest as is possible. He makes not this address to a stranger, or a friend, or a common relative; but to his Father, one who loves him as himself. (John v. 19—23.) He hath as much interest in him as in himself, and can prevail as much with him as with himself; and can no more be denied by him in what he desires, than he can deny himself: for they are both one: "I and my Father are one." (John x. 30.)

They have not only one interest and design, but one *essence and will*. What Christ wills, the Father wills. Christ directs us to say to the Father when we pray, "Thy will be done:" and the Father saith to Christ praying for us, "Thy will be done;" for it is no other than his own will; and heaven and earth shall pass away, rather than one jot or tittle of it shall not be fulfilled.

Lastly: he had a *personal, a particular respect for every [one] of his servants* in his prayer. It is as comfortable, and will be as effectual, and gives as much assurance of success, as if now in heaven he did pray for every [one] of us by name. The high priest under the law carried the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast, when he went into the holiest, to intercede for the people. He was herein a type of Christ, the great High Priest; and his people were so in his mind and heart while he made these requests, that his prayer reached every individual, no less effectually than if he had petitioned for each of them by name.

These severals, duly considered, are enough (if any thing in the world be so) to advance faith unto the height of confidence, that those for whom Christ prayed shall obtain all the rich and glorious things which he desired.

3. Finally. *Here is the greatest encouragement for our prayers that can be desired.*—For hereby it is manifest, that whatever we can beg of God, which is needful for our happiness here or hereafter, it hath been already prayed for on our behalf by Christ himself, who was not, who could not be, denied. When we pray for our relatives or others, who are given to Christ, but do not yet believe, that they may have faith; when we pray for union with the Father and the Son, for the comfort, improvement, and continuance of this union; when we pray for pardon of sin, and the purging of guilt, by the Grand Sacrifice of expiation; when we pray for holiness, the increase and exercise of it; when we pray to be kept from the evil of the world, (which is all in the world we need to fear,) from the evil of suffering, or whatever may be destructive to our souls; in a word, when we pray for eternal

glory ;—it is evident, by the premisses, that all these, and what else is necessary for these purposes, were, on the behalf of those that do or shall believe, the requests of the Great Mediator,—who was God and man in one person, and could no more be repulsed than God can deny himself,—in a prayer that was not liable to the least exception from Justice or Holiness itself, that was in all points exactly agreeable unto the will of God, and infinitely acceptable to the Divine Majesty. Therefore, praying for any or all [of] these things expressed or included in this divine prayer, as we are required, we may be as fully persuaded that they will not be denied us, as we may be confident that the requests of our great Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, will be granted.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.