

## SERMON XI.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BATES, D.D.

HOW IS SIN THE MOST FORMIDABLE EVIL?

*How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?—Genesis xxxix. 9.*

THE text is the record of Joseph's innocence and victory, consecrated in scripture for the honour and imitation of that excellent saint in succeeding ages. He had been tried by sharp afflictions,—the conspiring envy of his brethren, and the cruel effects of it, banishment and servitude; and "possessed his soul in patience:" (Luke xxi. 19 :) here he was encountered by a more dangerous temptation in another kind, and preserved his integrity. Adversity excites the spirit to serious recollection, arms it with resolution to endure the assaults, and stop the entrance, of what is afflicting to nature; pleasure by gentle insinuations relaxes the mind to a loose security, softens and melts the heart, and makes it easily receptive of corrupt impressions.

Now, to represent the grace of God that preserved Joseph in its radiance and efficacy, we must consider *the several circumstances* that increased the difficulty of the double victory, over the tempter and himself:—

1. *The tempter.*—His mistress, who had divested the native modesty of the blushing sex, and by her caresses and blandishments sought to draw him to compliance with her desires. Her superior quality might seem to make her request have the force of a command over him.

2. *The solicitation.*—"Lie with me." (Verse 7.) There are no sins to which there is a stronger inclination in our corrupted nature, than to acts of sensuality. The temptation was heightened by the lure of profit and advancement, that he might obtain by her favour and interest in her husband, who was an eminent officer in the Egyptian court: and the denial would be extremely provoking, both in respect it seemed to be a contempt injurious to her dignity, and was a disappointment of her ardent expectations. Hatred and revenge, upon refusal, are equal to the lust of "an imperious whorish woman."\* (Ezek. xvi. 30.) We read the effects of it, in this chapter; for upon his rejecting her desires, rapt up with rage, and to purge herself, she

\* *Regeramus ipsæ crimen, atque ultrò impiam*

*Venerem arguamus. Scelere velandum est scelus.*—SENEC. *Trag. Hippolytus*, 720. "As we cannot succeed with Hippolytus, let us retort on him the solicitation to the offence with which we shall be charged; and let us accuse him to his father of having deliberately attempted to perpetrate the infamous crime of incest. One act of turpitude must always be concealed by committing another."—EDIT.

turned his accuser, wounded his reputation, deprived him of his liberty, and exposed his life to extreme peril. Joseph chose rather to lie in the dust than to rise by sin.

3. *The opportunity was ready, and the object present.*—It is said, “There was none of the men of the house within.” (Verse 11.) She had the advantage of secrecy to fasten the temptation upon him. When a sin may be easily committed, and easily concealed, the restraints of fear and shame are taken off; and every breath of a temptation is strong enough to overthrow the carnally-minded. The purest and noblest chastity is from a principle of duty within, not constrained by the apprehension of discovery and severity.

4. *The continuance of the temptation.*—“She spake to him day by day.” (Verse 10.) Her complexion was lust and impudence; and his repeated denials were ineffectual to quench her incensed desires, the black fire that darkened her mind. “She caught him by the garment, saying, Lie with me:” (verse 12:) she was ready to prostitute herself and ravish him.

5. *The person tempted.*—Joseph, in the flower of his age, the season of sensuality, when innumerable [persons], by the force and swing of their vicious appetites, are impelled to break the holy law of God.

6. *His repulse of the temptation was strong and peremptory.*—“How can I do this great wickedness?” He felt no sympathy, no sensual tenderness, but expressed an impossibility of consenting to her guilty desire. We have in Joseph exemplified that property of the regenerate, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;” (1 John iii. 9;) by a sacred potent instinct in his breast, he is preserved not only from the consummate acts, but recoils from the first offers to it.

7. *The reasons are specified of his rejecting her polluting motion.*—“Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand: there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Verses 8, 9.) It was a complicated crime of injustice and uncleanness; a most injurious violation of the strongest ties of duty and gratitude to his master, and of the sacred marriage-covenant to her husband, and the foulest blot to their persons; therefore, “How can I commit a sin so contrary to natural conscience and supernatural grace, and provoke God?”

Thus I have briefly considered the narrative of Joseph’s temptation; and that divine grace preserved him unspotted from that contagious fire, may be resembled to the miraculous preserving [of] the three Hebrew martyrs unsinged, in the midst of the flaming furnace. (Dan. iii. 24, 25.) The patience of Job, and the chastity of Joseph, are transmitted by the secretaries of the Holy Ghost in scripture, to be in perpetual remembrance and admiration.

From this singular instance of Joseph, who was neither seduced by the allurements of his mistress, nor terrified by the rage of her despised affection, to sin against God, I shall observe two general points:—

I. *That temptations to sin, how alluring soever or terrifying, ought to be rejected with abhorrence.*

II. *That the fear of God is a sure defence and guard against the strongest temptation.*

I will explain and prove the First, and only speak a little of the Second in a branch of the Application.

I. *That temptations to sin, how alluring soever or terrifying, are to be rejected with abhorrence.*

There will be convincing proof of this, by considering two things :

(I.) *That sin in its nature, prescinding from the train of woful effects, is the greatest evil.*

(II.) *That relatively to us, it is the most pernicious, destructive evil.*

(I.) *That sin, considered in itself, is the greatest evil.*—This will be evident by considering the general nature of it, as directly opposite to God the Supreme Good. The definition of sin expresses its essential evil: it is “the transgression of the” divine “law;” (1 John iii. 4;) and consequently opposes the rights of God’s throne, and obscures the glory of his attributes that are exercised in the moral government of the world. God as Creator is our King, our Lawgiver, and Judge. From his propriety in us arises his just title to sovereign power over us: “Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” (Psalm c. 3.) The creatures of a lower order are incapable of distinguishing between moral good and evil, and are determined by the weight of nature to what is merely sensible, and therefore are incapable of a law to regulate their choice. But man, who is endowed with the powers of understanding and election, to conceive and choose what is good, and reject what is evil, is governed by a law,—the declared will of his Maker; accordingly a law, the rule of his obedience, was written in his heart.

Now sin, the transgression of this law, contains many great evils :

1. *Sin is a rebellion against the sovereign majesty of God, that gives the life of authority to the law.*—Therefore divine precepts are enforced with the most proper and binding motives to obedience: “I am the Lord.” (Isai. xlii. 8.) He that with purpose and pleasure commits sin, implicitly renounces his dependence upon God, as his Maker and Governor, overrules the law, and arrogates an irresponsible licence to do his own will. This is expressed by those atheistical designers, “who said, With our tongues will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?” (Psalm xii. 4.) The language of actions, that is more natural and convincing than [that] of words, declares that sinful men despise the commands of God, as if they were not his creatures and subjects. What a dishonour, what a displeasure is it to the God of glory, that proud dust should fly in his face, and control his authority! He has “ten thousand times ten thousand” angels that are high in dignity, and “excel in strength,” waiting in a posture of reverence and observance about his throne, ready to do his will. (Dan. vii. 10; Psalm ciii. 20.)

How provoking is it for a despicable worm to contravene his law, and lift his hand against him! It will be no excuse to plead the commands of men for sin; for as much as God is more glorious than men, so much more are his commands to be respected and obeyed than men's. When there is an evident opposition between the laws of men and of God, we must disobey our superiors though we displease them, and obey our Supreme Ruler. He that does what is forbidden, or neglects to do what is commanded, by the divine law, to please men, though invested with the highest sovereignty on earth, is guilty of double wickedness: of impiety in debasing God, and idolatry in deifying men.

It is an extreme aggravation of this evil, in that sin, as it is a disclaiming our homage to God, so it is in true account a yielding [of] subjection to the devil. For sin is, in the strictest propriety, his work. The original rebellion in Paradise was by his temptation, and all the actual and habitual sins of men since the fall are by his efficacious influence. He darkens the carnal mind, (2 Cor. iv. 4,) and sways the polluted will; he excites and inflames the vicious affections, and imperiously rules "in the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2.) He is therefore stiled "the prince and god of this world." (John xii. 31; 2 Cor. iv. 4.) And what more contumelious indignity can there be, than the preferring, to the glorious Creator of heaven and earth, a damned spirit, the most cursed part of the creation? It is most reasonable, that the baseness of the competitor should be a foil to re-inforce the lustre of God's authority; yet men reject God, and comply with the tempter. O prodigious perverseness!

2. *Sin vilifies the ruling wisdom of God, that prescribed the law to men.*—Although the dominion of God over us be supreme and absolute, yet it is exercised according to "the counsel of his own will," (Eph. i. 11,) by the best means, for the best ends: he is accordingly stiled by the apostle, "the King eternal," and "only wise God." (1 Tim. i. 17.) It is the glorious prerogative of his sovereignty and deity, that he can do no wrong; for he necessarily acts according to the excellences of his nature. Particularly, his wisdom is so reluctant in his laws, that the serious contemplation of it will ravish the sincere minds of men into a compliance with them. They are framed with exact congruity to the nature of God, and his relation to us, and to the faculties of man before he was corrupted. From hence the divine law, being the transcript not only of God's will but his wisdom, binds the understanding and will, our leading faculties, to esteem and approve, to consent [to] and choose, all his precepts as best. Now sin vilifies the infinite understanding of God with respect both to the precepts of the law, the rule of our duty, and the sanction annexed to confirm its obligation. It does constructively tax the precepts as unequal, too rigid and severe a confinement to our wills and actions. Thus the impious rebels complain, "The ways of the Lord are not equal," (Ezek. xviii. 25, 29,) as injurious to their liberty, and not worthy of observance. What St. James saith to

correct the uncharitable, censorious humour of some in his time, "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law," (James iv. 11,) as an imperfect and rash rule, is applicable to sinners in any other kind. As an unskilful hand, by straining too high, breaks the strings of an instrument, and spoils the music; so the strictness and severity of the precepts breaks the harmonious agreement between the wills of men and the law, and casts an imputation of imprudence upon the Lawgiver. This is the implicit blasphemy in sin.

Besides, the law has rewards and punishments to secure our respects and obedience to it. The wise God knows the frame of the reasonable creature, what are the inward springs of our actions; and has accordingly propounded such motives to our hope and fear, the most active passions, as may engage us to perform our duty. He promises his "favour, that is better than life," (Psalm lxxiii. 3,) to the obedient; and threatens his "wrath," that is worse than death, to the rebellious. (Rom. ii. 8.) Now sin makes it evident, that these motives are not effectual in the minds of men: and this reflects upon the wisdom of the Lawgiver, as if defective in not binding his subjects firmly to their duty; for if the advantage or pleasure that may be gained by sin be greater than the reward that is promised to obedience, and the punishment that is threatened against the transgression, the law is unable to restrain from sin, and the ends of government are not obtained. Thus sinners, in venturing upon forbidden things, reproach the understanding of the Divine Lawgiver.

3. *Sin is a contrariety to the unspotted holiness of God.*—Of all the glorious and benign constellation of the divine attributes that shine in the law of God, his holiness has the brightest lustre. God "is holy in all his works;" but the most venerable and precious monument of his holiness is the law. For the holiness of God consists in the correspondence of his will and actions with his moral perfections, wisdom, goodness, and justice; and the law is the perfect copy of his nature and will. The Psalmist, who had a purged eye, saw and admired its purity and perfection: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." (Psalm xix. 7—9.) "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." (Psalm cxix. 140.) It is the perspicuous and glorious rule of our duty, without blemish or imperfection. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Rom. vii. 12.) It enjoins nothing but what is absolutely good, without the least tincture of evil. The sum of it is set down by the apostle: (Titus ii. 12:) to "live soberly," that is, to abstain from any thing that may stain the excellence of an understanding creature: "to live righteously," which respects the state and situation wherein God has disposed men for his glory; it comprehends all the respective duties to others to whom we are united by

the bands of nature, or of civil society, or of spiritual communion : and "to live godly," which includes all the internal and outward duties we owe to God, who is the Sovereign of our spirits, whose will must be the rule, and his glory the end, of our actions. In short, the law is so formed, that, prescinding from the authority of the Lawgiver, its holiness and goodness lay an eternal obligation on us to obey it. Now sin is not only by interpretation a reproach to the wisdom and other perfections of God, but directly and formally a contrariety to his infinite sanctity and purity ; for it consists in a not doing what the law commands, or doing what it forbids. It is therefore said, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God ;" (Rom. viii. 7 ;) an active, immediate, and irreconcilable contrariety to his holy nature and will. From hence there is a reciprocal hatred between God and sinners : God is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" (Hab. i. 13) without an infinite displicence, the effects of which will fall upon sinners ; and though it is an impiety hardly conceivable, yet the scripture tells us, that they are "haters of God." (Rom. i. 30.) It is true, God by the transcendent excellence of his nature is incapable of suffering any evil ; and there are few in the present state arrived to such malice, as to declare open enmity and war against God. In the damned this hatred is explicit and direct, the fever is heightened to a frenzy : the blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversation : if their rage could extend to him, and their power were equal to their desires, they would dethrone the Most High. And the seeds of this are in the breasts of sinners here. As the fearful expectation of irresistible and fiery vengeance increases, their aversation increases. They endeavour to rase out the inscription of God in their souls, and to extinguish the thoughts and sense of their Inspector and Judge. They wish he were not all-seeing and almighty, but blind and impotent, incapable to vindicate the honour of his despised Deity. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm xiv. 1.) The heart is the fountain of desires, and actions interpret the thoughts and affections ; from whence the inference is direct and conclusive, that habitual sinners, who live "without God in the world," (Eph. ii. 12,) have secret desires, [that] there was no Sovereign Being, to observe and require an account of all their actions. The radical cause of this hatred, is from the opposition of the sinful, polluted wills of men to the holiness of God ; for that attribute excites his justice, and power, and wrath, to punish sinners. Therefore the apostle saith, they are "enemies to God in their minds through wicked works." (Col. i. 21.) The naked representing of this impiety, that a reasonable creature should hate the blessed Creator for his most divine perfections, cannot but strike with horror. O the sinfulness of sin !

4. *Sin is the contempt and abuse of his excellent goodness.*—This argument is as vast as God's innumerable mercies, whereby he allures and obliges us to obedience. I shall restrain my discourse of it to three things wherein the divine goodness is very conspicuous, and most ungratefully despised by sinners :—

(1.) *His creating goodness.*—It is clear, without the least shadow

of doubt, that nothing can give the first being to itself; for this were to be before it was, which is a direct contradiction; and it is evident that God is the sole Author of our beings. Our parents afforded the gross matter of our compounded nature; but the variety and union, the beauty and usefulness of the several parts, which is so wonderful, that the body is composed of as many miracles as members, was the design of his wisdom, and the work of his hands. The lively idea and perfect exemplar of that regular fabric, was modelled in the Divine Mind. This affected the Psalmist with admiration: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm cxxxix. 14—16.) And Job observes: "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me together round about." (Job x. 8.) The soul, our principal part, is of a celestial original, inspired from "the Father of spirits." The faculties of understanding and election are the indelible characters of our dignity above the brutes, and make us capable to please, and glorify, and enjoy him. This first and fundamental benefit, upon which all other favours and benefits are the superstructure, was the effect from an eternal cause,—his most free decree, that ordained our birth in the spaces of time. The fountain was his pure goodness; there was no necessity determining his will; he did not want external declarative glory, being infinitely happy in himself; and there could be no superior power to constrain him. And that which renders our Maker's goodness more free and obliging, is the consideration, [that] he might have created millions of men, and left us in our native nothing, and, as I may so speak, lost and buried in perpetual darkness. Now, what was God's end in making us? Certainly it was becoming his infinite understanding, that is, to communicate of his own divine fulness, and to be actively glorified by intelligent creatures. Accordingly it is the solemn acknowledgment of the representative church: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power. For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. iv. 11.) Who is so void of rational sentiments, as not to acknowledge it is our indispensable duty, our "reasonable service," to offer up ourselves an entire "living sacrifice" to his glory? (Rom. xii. 1.) What is more natural, according to the laws of uncorrupt natures, (I might say, "and of corrupt nature," for the Heathens practised it,) than that love should correspond with love? As the one descends in benefits, the other should ascend in thankfulness. As a polished looking-glass of steel strongly reverberates \* the beams of the sun shining upon it, without losing a

\* In page 159, line 26, of this volume, the word used by Mr. Woodcock, in reference to a mirror or looking-glass, is *reverterate*, while Dr. Bates here applies *reverberate* in elucidation of the same figure. Both words are derivatively and perhaps philosophically correct, though the latter, in accordance with modern usage, is almost exclusively employed, in acoustics, to the repercussion of sounds.—EDIT.

spark of light ; thus the understanding soul should reflect the affection of love upon our blessed Maker, in reverence, and praise, and thankfulness. Now sin breaks all those sacred bands of grace and gratitude that engage us to love and obey God. He is the just Lord of all our faculties, intellectual and sensitive ; and the sinner employs them as weapons of unrighteousness against him. He preserves us by his powerful, gracious providence, which is a renewed creation every moment ; and the goodness he uses to us, the sinner abuses against him. This is the most unworthy, shameful, and monstrous ingratitude. This makes forgetful and unthankful men more brutish than the dull ox, and the stupid ass, who serve those that feed them ; (Isai. i. 3 ; ) nay, sinks them below the insensible part of the creation, that invariably observes the law and order prescribed by the Creator. Astonishing degeneracy ! “ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth : I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me,” was the complaint of God himself. (Isai. i. 2.) The considerate review of this will melt us into tears of confusion.

(2.) *It was the unvaluable goodness of God to give his law to man, for his rule, both in respect of the matter of the law, and his end in giving it.*

(i.) *The matter of the law.*—This, as is fore-cited from the apostle, is “ holy, and just, and good.” It contains all things that are honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, whatsoever are virtuous and praiseworthy. (Phil. iv. 8.) In obedience to it the innocence and perfection of the reasonable creature consists. This I do but glance upon, [it] having been considered before.

(ii.) *The end of giving the law.*—God was pleased, upon man’s creation, by an illustrious revelation, to show him his duty, to write his law in his heart, that he might not take one step out of the circle of its precepts, and immediately sin and perish. His gracious design was to keep man in his love, that, from the obedience of the reasonable creature, the divine goodness might take its rise to reward him. This unfeigned and excellent goodness the sinner outrageously despises ; for what greater contempt can be expressed against a written law, than the tearing it in pieces, and trampling it under foot ? And this constructively the sinner does to the law of God, which contempt extends to the gracious Giver of it. Thus “ the commandment that was ordained unto life,” by sin was “ found unto death.” (Rom. vii. 10.)

(iii.) *Sin is an extreme vilifying of God’s goodness, in preferring carnal pleasures to his favour and communion with him, wherein the life, the felicity, the heaven of the reasonable creature consists.*—God is infinite in all possible perfections, all-sufficient to make us completely and eternally happy : he disdains to have any competitor, and requires to be supreme in our esteem and affections : the reason of this is so evident by divine and natural light, that it is needless to spend many words about it. It is an observation of St. Austin,\* that

\* *Omnes Deos colendos esse sapienti. Cur ergo a numero ceterorum Ille rejectus est ? Nihil restat ut dicant, cur hujus Dei sacra recipere noluerint, nisi quia solum se coli voluerit.*—*AUGUSTINUS De Consensu Evangel. cap. 17.* “ A wise man ought to wor-



“it was a rule amongst the Heathens, that a wise man should worship all their deities.” The Romans were so insatiable in idolatry, that they sent to foreign countries to bring the gods of several nations: an unpolished stone, a tame serpent, that were reputed deities, they received with great solemnity and reverence. But the true God had no temple, no worship in Rome, where there was a pantheon dedicated to the honour of all the false gods. The reason he gives of it is, that “the true God, who alone has divine excellences, and divine empire, will be worshipped alone, and strictly forbids the assumption of any into his throne.” To adore any beside him is infinitely debasing and provoking to his dread Majesty. Now sin in its nature is a conversion from God to the creature; and whatever the temptation be, in yielding to it there is signified, that we choose something before his favour. Sin is founded in *bono jucundo*, “something that is delectable” to the carnal nature: it is the universal character of carnal men, they are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” (2 Tim. iii. 4.) To some, riches are the most alluring object. The young man in the gospel, when our Saviour commanded him to “give” his estate “to the poor,” and he should “have treasure in heaven, went away sorrowful,” (Matt. xix. 21, 22,) as if he had been offered to his loss. To others, the pleasures that in strict propriety are sensual are most charming. Love is the weight of the soul that turns it, not like a dead weight of the scales, but with election freely to its object: in the carnal balance the present things of the world are of conspicuous moment, and outweigh spiritual and eternal blessings. Although the favour of God be eminently all that can be desired under the notion of riches, or honour, or pleasure, and every atom of our affection is due to him; yet carnal men think it a cheap purchase to obtain the good things of this world by sinful means, with the loss of his favour. This their actions declare. Prodigious folly! as if a few sparks struck out of a flint, that can neither afford light nor warmth, were more desirable than the sun in its brightness. And how contumelious and provoking it is to God, he declares in the most moving expressions: “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” (Jer. ii. 12, 13.) This immediately was charged upon the Jews, who set up idols of jealousy, and adored them, rather than the glorious Jehovah. And in proportion it is true of all sinners; for every vicious affection prefers some vain object before his love, and the enjoyment of his glorious presence, that is the reward of obedience.

5. *The sinner disparages the impartial justice of God.*—In the Divine law there is a connexion between sin and punishment; the evil of doing and the evil of suffering. This is not a mere arbitrary

ship all the gods.’ Why then is He, the only true God, rejected? and why do they refuse to render to Him those divine honours which they pay to the rest? They have no answer but one to give for their unwillingness to receive among their multifarious rituals that of the worship due to this God;—and that is, because it is a first principle in his religion, that he alone shall be worshipped and adored, to the exclusion of all other deities.”—EDIT.

constitution, but founded on the inseparable desert of sin, and the rectitude of God's nature, which unchangeably loves holiness and hates sin. Although the threatening does not lay a strict necessity upon the Lawgiver always to inflict the punishment; yet God having declared his equal laws as the rule of our duty and of his judgment, if they should be usually without effect upon offenders, the bands of government would be dissolved, and consequently the honour of his justice stained both with respect to his nature and office. For, as an essential attribute, it is the correspondence of his will and actions with his moral perfections; and as Sovereign Ruler, he is to preserve equity and order in his kingdom. Now those who voluntarily break his law, presume upon impunity. The first rebellious sin was committed upon this presumption: God threatened, "If you eat the forbidden fruit, you shall die:" the serpent says, "Eat, and you shall not die;" (Gen. iii. 4;) and, assenting to the temptation, Adam fell to disobedience. And ever since, men are fearless to sin upon the same motive. God chargeth the wicked, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," (Psalm l. 21,) not concerned to punish the violation of his sacred laws. The sinner commits the Divine attributes to fight against one another, presuming that mercy will disarm justice, and stop its terrible effects upon impenitent, obstinate sinners. From hence they become bold and hardened in the continuance of their sins. There is "a root that beareth gall and wormwood;" and when the curse of the law is declared and denounced against sin, the wicked "blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." This casts such a foul blemish upon the justice of God, that he threatens the severest vengeance for it: "The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." (Deut xxix. 18—20.) "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." (Psalm l. 22.)

6. *The sinner implicitly denies God's omniscience.*—There is such a turpitude adhering to sin, that it cannot endure the light of the sun, or the light of conscience, but seeks to be concealed under a mask of virtue, or a veil of darkness. There are very few on this side hell, so transformed into the likeness of the devil, as to be impenetrable by shame. What is said of the adulterer and thief, sinners of greater guilt and deeper dye, is true in proportion of every sinner: "If a man see them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." (Job xxiv. 17.) Now from whence is it that many—who, if they were surprised in the actings of their sins, by a child or a stranger, would blush and tremble, yet although the holy God sees all their sins in order to judge them, and will judge in order to punish them—are secure without any fearful or shameful apprehensions of his presence? Did they steadfastly believe that their foul villainies were open to his piercing, pure, and severe eye, they must be struck with terrors, and

covered with confusion. "Will he force the queen before my face?" (Esther vii. 8,) was the speech of the king inflamed with wrath, and the prologue of death against the fallen favourite. Would men dare to affront God's authority, and outrageously break his laws, before his face, if they duly considered his omnipresence, and observance of them? It were impossible. And infidelity is the radical cause of their inconsideration. It was a false imputation against Job, but justly applied to the wicked: "Thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not." (Job xxii. 13, 14.) And such are introduced by the Psalmist, declaring their inward sentiments: "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." (Psalm xciv. 7.)

7. Lastly. *The sinner slights the power of God.*—This attribute renders God a dreadful Judge. He has a right to punish, and power to revenge, every transgression of his law. His judicial power is supreme, his executive is irresistible. He can with one stroke dispatch the body to the grave, and the soul to hell, and make men as miserable as they are sinful. Yet sinners as boldly provoke him as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated Syrians, that they thought that God, the Protector of Israel, had only power on the hills, and not in the valleys, (1 Kings xx. 23,) and renewed the war to their destruction. Thus sinners enter into the lists with God, and range an army of lusts against the armies of heaven, and, blindly bold, run upon their own destruction. They neither believe his all-seeing eye, nor almighty hand. They change the glory of the living God into a dead idol; that has eyes, and sees not; and hands, and handles not: and accordingly his threatenings make no impression upon them.

Thus I have presented a true view of the evil of sin considered in itself: but as Job saith of God, "How little a portion of him is known!" (Job xxvi. 14,) may be said of the evil of sin: "How little of it is known!" for in proportion as our apprehensions are defective and below the greatness of God, so are they of the evil of sin, that contradicts his sovereign will, and dishonours his excellent perfections.

(II.) *Sin, relatively to us, is the most pernicious and destructive evil.*—If we compare it with temporal evils, it preponderates all that men are liable to in the present world. Diseases in our bodies, disasters in our estates, disgrace in our reputation, are, in just esteem, far less evil than the evil of sin; for that corrupts and destroys our more excellent and immortal part: the vile body is of no account in comparison of the precious soul. Therefore the apostle enforces his exhortation: "Dearly beloved" brethren, "I beseech you, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." (1 Peter ii. 11.) The issue of this war is infinitely more woful than of the most cruel against our bodies and goods, our liberties and lives: for our estates and freedom, if lost, may be recovered; if the present life be lost for the cause of God, it shall be restored in greater lustre and perfection; but if the soul be lost, it is lost for ever.

All temporal evils are consistent with the love of God. Job on the dunghill, rough-cast with ulcers, was most precious in God's sight.

Lazarus, in the lowest poverty, and wasted with loathsome sores, was dear to his affection; a guard of angels was sent to convey his departing soul to the divine presence. But sin separates between God and us, (Isai. lix. 2,) who is the fountain of felicity, and the centre of rest to the soul.

Other evils God, who is our wise and compassionate Father and Physician, makes use of as medicinal preparations for the cure of sin: and certainly the disease which would be the death of the soul, is worse than the remedy, though never so bitter and afflicting to sense.

Sin is an evil of that malignity, that the least degree of it is fatal. If it be conceived in the soul, though not actually finished, it is deadly. One sin corrupted in an instant angelical excellences, and turned the glorious spirits of heaven into devils. It is a poison so strong, that the first taste of it shed a deadly taint and malignity into the veins of all mankind.

Sin is such an exceeding evil, that it is the severest punishment Divine Justice inflicts on sinners on this side hell. The giving men over to the power of their lusts, (Rom. i. 24,) is the most fearful judgment, not only with respect to the cause, (God's unrelenting and unquenchable anger,) and the issue, (everlasting destruction,) but in the quality of the judgment. Nay, did sin appear as odious in our eyes as it does in God's, we should account it the worst part of hell itself, the pollutions of the damned to be an evil exceeding the torments superadded to them.

Sin is pregnant with all kinds of evils; the seeds of it are big with judgments. The evils that are obvious to sense, or that are spiritual and inward, temporal and eternal evils, all proceed from sin, often as the natural cause, and always as the meritorious. And many times the same punishment is produced by the efficiency of sin, as well as inflicted for its guilt. Thus uncleanness, without the miraculous waters of jealousy, rots the body; and the pleasure of sin is revenged by a loathsome, consuming disease, the natural consequence of it. Thus intemperance and luxury shorten the lives of men, and accelerate damnation. Fierce desires and wild rage are fuel for the everlasting fire in hell. The same evils, considered physically, are from the efficiency of sin; considered legally, are from the guilt of sin, and the justice of God.

This being a point of great usefulness, that I may be more instructive, I will consider the evils that are consequential to sin under these two heads:—

1. *Such as proceed immediately from it by emanation.*
2. *Those evils and all other as the effects of God's justice and sentence.*

1. *The evils that proceed immediately by emanation from it.*—And though some of them are not resented with feeling apprehensions by sinners, yet they are of a fearful nature. Sin has deprived man of the purity, nobility, and peace of his innocent state.

(1.) *It has stained and tainted him with an universal, intimate, and permanent pollution.*—Man in his first creation was holy and

righteous: a beam of beauty derived from heaven was shed upon his soul, in comparison of which, sensitive beauty is but as the clearness of glass to the lustre of a diamond. His understanding was "light in the Lord;" his will and affections were regular and pure; the divine image was impressed upon all his faculties, that attracted the love and complacency of God himself. Sin has blotted out all his amiable excellences, and superinduced the most foul deformity, the original of which was fetched from hell. Sinners are the natural children of Satan, of a near resemblance to him. The scripture borrows comparisons to represent the defiling quality of sin, from pollutions that are most loathsome to our senses: from pestilential ulcers, putrefying sores, filthy vomit, and defiling mire. This pollution is universal through the whole man,—spirit, soul, and body. It darkens the mind, our supreme faculty, with a cloud of corruption; it depraves the will, and vitiates the affections. It is a pollution so deep and permanent, that the deluge that swept away a world of sinners did not wash away their sins; and the fire at the last day, that shall devour the dross of the visible world, and renew the heavens and the earth, shall not purge away the sins of the guilty inhabitants. This pollution hath so defiled and disfigured man, who was a fair and lovely type wherein the skill and perfections of the Creator were conspicuous, that "it repented God that he had made man." (Gen. vi. 6.) As an artificer, having formed a surprising piece, either a statue or picture, wherein art almost equalled the life and lustre of nature, if it be torn or broken, throws it from his sight with sorrow, impatient to see it so rudely defaced; thus God is said to "hide his face" from sinners, to express his displeasure, as unwilling to behold the disparagement of his master-piece, the excellent product of his wisdom and power.

(2.) *Sin has degraded man from his native state and dignity.*—Man by his extraction and descent was "the son of God," (Luke iii. 38,) "a little lower than the angels," (Heb. ii. 7,) consecrated and crowned as a priest for the service [of] and communion with his glorious Maker, and as king over the world. But "being in honour," he "understood not" his dignity, his duty and felicity, and became "like the beasts that perish." (Psalm xlix. 12, 20.) By his rebellion against his Creator, he made a forfeiture of his dominion, and lost the obedience of sensible creatures, and the service of insensible; which I only mention, and shall restrain my consideration, to show how he is become like the beasts, as an effect resulting from his sin. He is divested of his white robe of innocence, and his noblest perfections, reason and religion. Sense and imagination, the leading faculties in brutes, are his rulers: the rational, governing powers of man have lost their superior sway, and the carnal passions rove without reins to forbidden objects. The lower appetites are predominant, which is the most ignominious and cruel servitude wherein human liberty can be entangled and fettered. His understanding and will, that were capable of taking a flight for the discovery and fruition of celestial and eternal things, are debased, and limited to sensual, perishing things, and derive vilifying qualities from them. He is earthly-minded; his

aims, contrivances, desires are fastened to the earth: the divine spark within him is covered under ashes. He is carnally minded, always studying and making provisions for the flesh: this is a viler debasement than if the counsellors of state were employed in the sordid offices of the kitchen or stable. Nay, it is a diminution below the rank of beasts; for by nature they are incapable of directing their eyes and desires toward heaven, but man is brutish by his voluntary sin. To see the head of a rapacious wolf, or fierce tiger, or lustful horse, joined to the body of a man, how monstrous would it appear! But it is more unnatural and ignominious for men, in whom reason and religion should govern, to resemble them in the brutish appetites of lust and rage; for there is a nearer affinity between the body of a man and of a beast, that agree in the common sensible nature, than between the immortal spirit of a man, and the beasts that perish. In short: sin has enslaved men to Satan, an infernal fiend: they are "taken captives by him at his pleasure:" and, which is the lowest degradation, "they are the servants of corruption." (2 Tim. ii. 26; 2 Peter ii. 19.)

(3.) *Sin has broken the sweet peace and blessed concord in the soul, the felicity of our innocent state.*—Peace is the tranquillity that results from order and unity. In man there was a regular harmony of all his faculties; the affections were consonant with his will, his will with his understanding, and his understanding with the law of God. This was the inward state of his soul in his creation; for, having a derived being, it was natural and necessary that he should be appointed to his end, and receive his rule for the obtaining it, from the understanding and will of his Maker. Now whilst there was a correspondence in his faculties and their operations with his rule and end, the will of God and the glory of God, the result of it, as well as the reward of it, was *spiritual peace with God, internal peace with himself, external peace with others.* Now sin has dissolved this unity, violated this sacred order: and from hence,

(i.) *Peace with God, that consisted in his favour and friendship to us, and our filial dependence upon him, which is the spring of full and satisfying joy, is broken.*—God appears a fearful enemy against the sinners; (the penal effects of his wrath I shall speak of distinctly under the second general;) and that divine calm in the conscience, that peace joined with the purest pleasure, that was the reflex of God's favour on the soul, is changed into anxious apprehensions of his just power to punish us. Guilt generates fear, and fear hatred, and both cause a woful flight from God.

(ii.) *Internal peace is broken by sin.*—Whilst the passions were subordinate to the empire of reason, and in accord among themselves, there was perfect peace; but sin has raised an intestine war in man's breast. The "law of the members" rebels "against the law of the mind;" (Rom. vii. 23;) for there is no man so prodigiously wicked, and spoiled of his primitive endowments, but still there remain some principles of morality in the mind; so that his conscience discovers and condemns the vices he allows and practises; which makes the sin-

ner uneasy to himself, and mixes vinegar with his wine.\* Besides, since the passions are disbanded, into what confusion is man fallen! How various, how violent are they, and often repugnant to one another! How often do we change their habits and scenes in a day! Sometimes we are vainly merry, and then as vainly sad; sometimes desirous, and then averse; and with respect to ourselves, sometimes pleased, sometimes vexed; sometimes amiable, and sometimes odious: we are more mutable than the planet that is the emblem of inconstancy. How often do clouds of melancholy darken the bright serenity of the spirit, and cast a dreadful gloom over it! How often do storms of passion disturb its tranquillity! The breast of man, that was the temple of peace, is become a den of dragons; every exorbitant affection tears and torments him. It is true, this is also a penal effect from divine justice: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" (Isai. lvii. 21;) with which that saying of St. Austin is consonant: *Jussit Dominus, et sic est: omnis inordinatus affectus est sibi pœna.*†

(iii.) *Sin has broken our agreement with one another.*—When there was a regular consent between the superior and lower faculties in all men, they were in unity among themselves; for they were perfectly alike: but the tumultuous and tyrannical passions have engaged them in mortal enmity. It is the account St. James gives: "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James iv. 1.) Sin kindles and blows the fire of discord in families, cities, kingdoms. Sin is the fury that brings a smoking firebrand from hell, and sets the world into combustion. Ambition, avarice, the greedy desires of rule and revenge, have made the world a stage of not feigned, but the most bloody, tragedies. In this men are not like, but worse than, the beasts: for the fiercest beasts of Africa or Hyrcania have a respect for their own likeness; though they devour others, yet they spare those of their own kind; but men are so degenerate as to be most cruel against their brethren. These are some of the evils that proceed from sin as their natural cause. And from hence it is evident, that sin makes men miserable, were there no hell of torment to receive them in the next state.

2. I will consider *the evils consequent to sin as the penal effects of the sentence against sin, of Divine Justice that decrees it, and Divine Power that inflicts it.*—And in these the sinner is often an active instrument of his own misery.

(1.) *The fall of the angels is the first and most terrible punishment of sin.*—"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down

\* *Prius est hæc ultio quod, se  
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur.*—*JUVENALIS Satyræ, sat. xiii. 2.*  
† "Man, wretched man, whene'er he stoops to sin,  
Feels, with the act, a strong remorse within;  
'Tis the first vengeance: Conscience tries the cause,  
And vindicates the violated laws."—*GIFFORD'S Translation.*

† "It is the command of our Lord, and human experience confirms it, that every inordinate affection shall be a punishment to him by whom it is indulged."—*EDW.*

to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." (2 Peter ii. 4.) How are they fallen! from what height of glory and felicity into bottomless perdition! How are they continually racked and tormented with the remembrance of their lost happiness! If a thousand of the prime nobility of a nation were executed in a day, by the sentence of a righteous king, we should conclude their crimes to be atrocious. Innumerable angels, dignified with the titles of "dominions" and "principalities," were expelled from heaven, their native seat, and the sanctuary of life; and are dead to all the joyful operations of the intellectual nature, and only alive to everlasting pain.

One sin of pride or envy brought this terrible vengeance; from whence we may infer how provoking sin is to the holy God. We read of king Uzziah, that, upon his presumption to offer incense, he was struck with a leprosy, and the priests "thrust him out, yea, himself hasted to go out of the temple:" (2 Chron. xxvi. 16—20 :) a representation of the punishment of the angels: by presumption, they were struck with a leprosy, and justly expelled from the celestial temple; and not being able to sustain the terrors of the Divine Majesty, they fled from his presence. It is said, "God cast them down," and they "left their own habitation." (Jude 6.)

(2.) Consider *the penal effects of sin with respect to man.*—They are comprehended in the sentence of death, the first and second death, threatened to deter Adam from transgressing the law.

In the first creation man while innocent was immortal; for although his body was compounded of jarring elements, that had a natural tendency to dissolution, yet the soul was endowed with such virtue, as to embalm the body alive, and to preserve it from the least degree of putrefaction. But when man by his voluntary sin was separated from the fountain of life, the soul lost its derivative life from God, and the active life infused by its union into the body. It cannot preserve the natural life beyond its limited term: a righteous retaliation. Thus the apostle tells us, "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin." (Rom. v. 12.) Even infants, who never committed sin, die, having been conceived in sin. And death brought in its retinue evils so numerous and various, that their kinds are more than words to name and distinguish them. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble:" (Job xiv. 1 :) at his birth he enters into a labyrinth of thorns, this miserable world; and his life is a continual turning in it; he cannot escape being sometimes pricked and torn; and at going out of it, his soul is rent from the embraces of the body. It is as impossible to tell the number of the waves in a tempestuous sea, as to recount all the tormenting passions of the soul, all the diseases of the body, which far exceed in number all the unhappy parts wherein they are seated. What an afflicting object would it be, to hear all the mournful lamentations, all the piercing complaints, all the deep groans from the miserable, in this present state! What a prospect of terror, to see death in its various shapes, by famine, by fire, by sword, and by wasting or painful diseases, triumphant over all



mankind! What a sight of woe, to have all the graves and charnel-houses opened, and so many loathsome carcasses, or heaps of dry, naked bones, the trophies of death, exposed to view! Such are the afflicting and destructive effects of sin. "For wickedness burns as a fire: it devours the briars and thorns." (Isai. ix. 18.)

Beside other miseries in this life, sometimes the terrors of an accusing conscience seize upon men, which of all evils are most heavy and overwhelming. Solomon, who understood the frame of human nature, tells us, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;" that is, the mind, fortified by principles of moral counsel and constancy, can endure the assault of external evils; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" (Prov. xviii. 14.) This is most insupportable, when the sting and remorse of the mind is from the sense of guilt; for then God appears an enemy righteous and severe: and who can encounter with offended Omnipotence? Such is the sharpness of his sword, and the weight of his hand, that every stroke is deadly inward. Satan, the cruel enemy of souls, exasperates the wound. He discovers and charges sin upon the conscience, with all its killing aggravations, and conceals the Divine mercy, the only lenitive and healing balm to the wounded spirit. What visions of horror, what spectacles of fear, what scenes of sorrow, are presented to the distracted mind by the prince of darkness! And, which heightens the misery, man is a worse enemy to himself than Satan: he falls upon his own sword, and destroys himself. Whatever he sees or hears, afflicts him; whatever he thinks, torments him. The guilty conscience turns "the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood:" (Joel ii. 31:) the precious promises of the gospel, that assure favour and pardon to returning and relenting sinners, are turned into arguments of despair, by reflecting upon the abuse and provocation of mercy, and that the advocate in God's bosom is become the accuser. Doleful state! beyond the conception of all but those who are plunged into it! How often do they run to the grave for sanctuary, and seek for death as a deliverance!

Yet all these anxieties and terrors are but the beginning of sorrows; for the full and terrible recompences of sin shall follow the eternal judgment, pronounced against the wicked at the last day. It is true, the sentence of the law is passed against the sinner in this present state, and temporal evils are the effects of it; but that sentence is revocable: at death the sentence is ratified by the Judge upon every impenitent sinner; it is decisive of his state, and involves him under punishment for ever: but the full execution of judgment shall not be till the public general sentence, pronounced by the everlasting Judge, before the whole world. It exceeds the compass of created thoughts to understand fully the direful effects of sin in the eternal state: for "who knoweth the power of God's wrath?" (Psalm xc. 11.) The scripture represents the punishment in expressions that may instruct the mind, and terrify the imagination; that may work upon the principles of reason and sense, by which men are naturally and strongly moved.

(i.) *Sinners shall be excluded from communion with the blessed God in heaven.*—In whose “presence is fulness of joy,” and at whose “right hand are pleasures for evermore.” (Psalm xvi. 11.) In the clear and transforming vision of his glory, and the intimate and indissoluble union with him by love, consist the perfection and satisfaction of the immortal soul. The felicity resulting from it is so entire and eternal, as God is great and true, who has so often promised it to his saints. Now sin separates lost souls for ever from the reviving presence of God. Who can declare the extent and degrees of that evil? For an evil rises in proportion to the good of which it deprives us: it must therefore follow, that, celestial blessedness being transcendent, the exclusion from it is proportionably evil: and as the felicity of the saints results both from the direct possession of heaven, and from comparison with the contrary state; so the misery of the damned arises both from the thoughts of lost happiness, and from the lasting pain that torments them.

But it may be replied: “If this be the utmost evil that is consequent to sin, the threatening of it is likely to deter but few from pleasing their corrupt appetites; for carnal men have such gross apprehensions, and vitiated affections, that they are careless of spiritual glory and joy. They cannot ‘taste and see how good the Lord is:’ (Psalm xxxiv. 8:) nay, the Divine Presence would be a torment to them: for as light is the most pleasant quality in the world to the sound eye, so it is very afflicting and painful to the eye when corrupted by a suffusion of humours.”

To this a clear answer may be given: In the next state, where the wicked shall for ever be without those sensual objects which here deceive and delight them, their apprehensions will be changed; they shall understand what a happiness the fruition of the blessed God is, and what a misery to be incapable of enjoying him, and expelled from the celestial Paradise. Our Saviour tells the infidel Jews, “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” (Luke xiii. 28.) How will they pine with envy at the sight of that triumphant felicity of which they shall never be partakers! “Depart from me,” will be as terrible a part of the judgment as “everlasting fire.” (Matt. xxv. 41.)

(ii.) *God’s justice* is not satisfied in depriving them of heaven, but *inflicts the most heavy punishment upon sense and conscience in the damned.*—For as the soul and body, in their state of union in this life, were both guilty, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument, of sin; so it is equal [that] when re-united they should feel the penal effects of it. The scripture represents both to our capacity, by “the worm that dieth not,” and “the fire that never shall be quenched,” and by “the destroying of body and soul in hell-fire.” (Mark ix. 43, 44; Matt. x. 28.) Sinners shall then be tormented wherein they were most delighted; they shall be invested with those objects that will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive faculties. “The lake of fire and brimstone,” “the blackness of darkness,” (Rev.

xxi. 8 ; Jude 13,) are words of a terrible signification, and intended to awaken sinners to "flee from the wrath to come." (Matt. iii. 7.) But no words can fully reveal the terrible ingredients of their misery : the punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is dishonoured and provoked by sin, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessory, in the works of sin, so its capacious faculties will be far more tormented than the more limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmitted through the glass of conscience, and centred upon damned spirits : the fire without them is not so tormenting as this fire within them. How will the tormenting passions be inflamed ! What rancour, reluctance, and rage against the Power above that sentenced them to hell ! What impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful sins, the just cause of it ! How will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction as the final remedy of their misery ! But all their ardent wishes are in vain ; for the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven and fire in hell, as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer these torments, which the strength and patience of an angel cannot bear one hour. From hence we may infer, what an inconceivable evil there is in sin, and how hateful it is to the Most High, when "God" who "is love," who is styled "the Father of mercies," (1 John iv. 8 ; 2 Cor. i. 3,) has prepared and does inflict such plagues for ever for the transgression of his holy laws : and such is the equity of his judgment, that he never punishes offenders above their desert.

## APPLICATION.

II. I shall now apply this doctrine, by reflecting the light of it upon our minds and hearts.

1. This discovers *how perverse and depraved the minds and wills of men are, to choose sin rather than affliction, and break the divine law for the obtaining [of] temporal things.*—If one with an attentive eye regards the generality of mankind, what dominion present and sensible things have over them, how securely and habitually they sin in prosecution of their carnal aims, as if the soul should not survive the body, as if there were no tribunal above to examine, no Judge to sentence and punish, sinners ; if he has not marble bowels, it will excite his compassion or indignation. What comparison is there between the good things of this world and of the next in degrees or duration ? Airy honour, sensual pleasures, and worldly riches, are but the thin appearances of happiness, shadows in masquerade, that cannot afford solid content to an immortal spirit : the blessedness of heaven replenishes with everlasting satisfaction. What proportion is there between the "light" and momentary "afflictions" here, and a vast eternity filled with "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," and "desperate sorrow ?" (2 Cor. iv. 17 ; Rom. ii. 8, 9 ; Isai. xvii. 11.) What stupid beast, what monster of a man, would prefer a superficial,

transient delight, the pleasure of a short dream, before ever-satisfying joys? or, to avoid a slight evil, venture upon destruction? Yet this is the true case of sinners: if they can obtain the world with the loss of heaven, they count it a valuable purchase; if they can compound so as to escape temporal troubles, though involved under guilt that brings extreme and eternal misery, they think it a saving bargain. Amazing folly! Either they believe, or do not, the recompences in the future state: if they do not, how unaccountable is their impiety! if they do, it is more prodigious they do not feel the "powers of the world to come," (Heb. vi. 5,) so as to regulate their lives, and control the strongest temptations to sin against God. A wicked believer is more guilty than a wicked infidel. How could we conceive it possible, were it not visible in their actions, that men who have judicative faculties to compare and distinguish things, and accordingly be moved with desires or fears, should with ardent affections pursue despicable vanities, and neglect substantial happiness, and be fearful of the shadows of dangers, and intrepid in the midst of the truest dangers? He is a desperate gamester that will venture a crown at a throw, against some petty advantage; yet this is really done by sinners, who hazard the loss of heaven for this world: they hang by slender strings, a little breath that expires every moment, over bottomless perdition, and are insensible, without any palpitation of heart, any sign of fear.

How strong is the delusion and concupiscence of the carnally-minded! The lusts of the flesh bribe and corrupt their understandings, or divert them from serious consideration of their ways and the issues of them. From hence it is they are presently entangled and vanquished by sensual temptations; they are cozened by the colours of good and evil; and Satan easily accomplishes his most pernicious and envious design, to make men miserable as himself. How just is the reproach of Wisdom!—"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and fools hate knowledge?" (Prov. i. 22.) The light of reason and revelation shines upon them; they have not the excuse of ignorance, but the righteous and heavy condemnation of those who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." (John iii. 19.) It is no mean degree of guilt to extenuate sin, and make an apology for sinners. The wisest of men tells us, "Fools make a mock at sin:" (Prov. xiv. 9:) they count it a fond niceness, a silly preciseness, to be fearful of offending God. They boast of their deceitful arts and insinuations, whereby they represent sin as a light matter, to corrupt others. But it is infinitely better to be defective in the subtilty of the serpent, than in the innocence of the dove. A mere natural, who is only capable of sensitive actions, and is distinguished from a brute by his shape, is not such a forlorn sot as the sinful fool. What the prophet Jeremy speaks of one who gets riches unjustly, that he shall leave them, and in the end die a fool, will be verified of the wilful, obstinate sinner: in the end he shall by the terrible conviction of his own mind be found guilty of the most woful folly: and how many have acknowledged in their last hours, when usually men speak with the most feeling and least affectation, how have they, in

[the] words of the Psalmist, arraigned themselves : " So foolish have we been, and ignorant, and like beasts before thee ! " (Psalm lxxiii. 22.) <sup>1</sup>

2. From hence we may be instructed of *the wonderful patience of God, who bears with a world of sinners, that are obnoxious to his justice, and under his power every day.*—If we consider the number and aggravations of men's sins,—how many have out-told the hairs of their heads in actual transgressions, how mighty and manifest their sins are, that the Deity and Providence are questioned for the suspending of vengeance,—and yet that God, notwithstanding all their enormous injuries and violent provocations, is patient toward sinners ; it cannot but fill us with admiration. His mercy, like the cheerful light of the sun, visits us every morning with its benign influences ; his justice, like thunder, rarely strikes the wicked. He affords not only the supports of life, but many comforts and refreshments, to the unthankful and rebellious.

It is not from any defect in his power that they are not consumed, but from the abundance of his mercy. He made the world without any strain of his power, and can as easily destroy it. He has an innumerable company of angels attending his commands, and every angel is an army in strength : one of them destroyed a hundred and fourscore and five thousand in a night. (2 Kings xix. 35.) He can use the most despicable and weakest creatures, frogs, and lice, and flies, as instruments of vengeance to subdue the proudest Pharaoh, the most obstinate rebels. He sees sin wherever it is, and hates it wherever he sees it ; yet his patience endures their crying sins, and his long-sufferance expects their repentance. " The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter iii. 9.) He spares sinners with such indulgence, in order to their salvation. It is deservedly one of his royal titles, " the God of patience." (Rom. xv. 5.) Our fierce spirits are apt to take fire and revenge for every injury, real or supposed ; but the great God, who is infinitely sensible of all the indignities offered to his majesty, " defers " his " anger," and " loads them with his benefits every day." (Isai. xlvi. 9 ; Psalm lxviii. 19.) What is more astonishing than " the riches of his goodness," (Rom. ii. 4,) unless it be the perverse abuse of it by sinners to harden themselves in their impieties ? But although his clemency delays the punishment, the sacredness and constancy of his justice will not forget it : when " patience " has had its " perfect work," (James i. 4,) justice shall have a solemn triumph in the final destruction of impenitent, unreformed sinners.

3. *The consideration of the evil of sin, so great in itself, and pernicious to us, heightens our obligations to the divine mercy, in " saving us from our sins," and an everlasting hell, the just punishment of them.*—Our loss was unvaluable, our misery extreme ; and, without infinite mercy, we had been under an unremediable necessity of sinning and suffering for ever. God saw us in this wretched and desperate state, and his " eye affected his heart," " in his pity he redeemed "

and restored us. (Lam. iii. 51; Isai. lxiii. 9.) This is the clearest testimony of pure goodness; for God did not want external glory, who is infinitely happy in his own perfections. He could, when man revolted from his duty, have created a new world of innocent creatures; for infinite power is not spent nor lessened by finite productions; but his undeserved and undesired mercy appeared in our salvation. The way of accomplishing it renders mercy more illustrious; for, to glorify his justice, and preserve the honour of his holiness unblemished, he "laid upon" his Son "the iniquity of us all." (Isai. liii. 6.) This was love that passeth all understanding: our Saviour speaks of it with admiration: "God so loved the world," and hated sin, "that he gave his only-begotten Son" to die for it, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.)

And how dear are our engagements to Jesus Christ! The Judge would not release the guilty without a ransom, nor the Surety without satisfaction; and the Son of God most compassionately and willingly gave his precious blood to obtain our deliverance. If his perfections were not most amiable and ravishing, yet that he died for us, should infinitely endear him to us. To those who "believe, he is precious:" (1 Peter ii. 7:) to those who have felt their undone condition, and that, by his merits and mediation, are restored to the favour of God, he is eminently precious. Who can break the constraints of such love? If there be a spark of reason or a grain of unfeigned faith in us, we must "judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and those that live should live to his glory who died for" their salvation. (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.)

Add to this, that in the sufferings of Christ there is the clearest demonstration of the evil of sin, and how hateful it is to God, if we consider the dignity of his person, the greatness of his sufferings, and the innocent recoilings of his human nature from such fearful sufferings. He was the eternal Son of God, the Heir of his Father's love and glory, the Lord of angels. He suffered in his body the most ignominious and painful death, being nailed to the cross in the sight of the world. The sufferings of his soul were incomparably more afflicting; for though, heavenly meek, he endured the derision and cruel violence of his enemies with a silent patience, yet in the dark eclipse of his Father's countenance, in the desolate state of his soul, "the Lamb of God" (John i. 29, 36) opened his mouth in that mournful complaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46.) His innocent nature did not recoil from those fearful sufferings, that, with repeated ardency of affection, he deprecated that bitter cup: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; let this cup pass from me:" (Mark xiv. 36; Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44:) he addressed to the divine power and love, the attributes that relieve the miserable; yet he drank-off the dregs of the cup of God's wrath. Now we may from hence conclude, how great an evil sin is, that could not be expiated by a meaner sacrifice than the "offering" up [of] the "soul" of Christ to atone incensed justice; (Isai. liii. 10;) and no lower a price

than the blood of the Son of God, the most unvaluable treasure, could ransom men who were devoted to destruction.

4. *The consideration of the evil of sin, in itself and to us, should excite us with a holy circumspection to keep ourselves from being defiled with it.*—It is our indispensable duty, our transcendent interest, to obey the divine law entirely and constantly. The tempter cannot present any motives that, to a rectified mind, are sufficient to induce a consent to sin and offend God. Let the scales be even, and put into one all the delights of the senses, all the pleasures and honours of the world, which are the elements of carnal felicity, how light are they against the enjoyment of the blessed God in glory! Will the gain of this perishing world compensate the loss of the soul and salvation for ever? If there were any possible comparison between empty, deluding vanities, and celestial happiness, the choice would be more difficult, and the mistake less culpable; but they vanish into nothing in the comparison; so that to commit the least sin that makes us liable to the forfeiture of heaven, for “the pleasures of sin” that are but “for a season,” (Heb. xi. 25,) is madness in that degree that no words can express. Suppose the tempter inspires his rage into his slaves, and tries to constrain us to sin by persecution; how unreasonable is it to be dismayed at the threatenings of men, who must die, and who can only touch the body, and to despise “the terrors of the Lord,” who lives for ever and can punish for ever! (Matt. x. 28.) Methinks we should look upon the perverted, raging world as a swarm of angry flies, that may disquiet but cannot hurt us. Socrates, when unrighteously prosecuted to death, said of his enemies, with a courage becoming the breast of a Christian, “They may kill me, but cannot hurt me.” How should these considerations raise in us an invincible resolution and reluctance against the tempter, in all his approaches and addresses to us! And that we may so resist him, as to cause his flight from us, (James iv. 7,) let us imitate the excellent saint whose example is set before us,

(1.) *By possessing the soul with a lively and solemn sense of God's presence, who is the Inspector and Judge of all our actions.*—Joseph repelled the temptation with this powerful thought: “How can I sin against God?” “The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever:” (Psalm xix. 9:) it is a watchful sentinel, that resists temptations without, and suppresses corruptions within. It is like the cherubim placed with “a flaming sword” in Paradise, to prevent the re-entry of Adam when guilty and polluted. (Gen. iii. 24.) For this end we must, by frequent and serious considerations, represent the Divine Being and glory in our minds, that there may be a gracious constitution of soul; this will be our preservative from sin. For although the habitual thoughts of God are not always in act; yet upon a temptation they are presently excited, and appear in the view of conscience, and are effectual to make us reject the tempter with defiance and indignation.

This holy fear is not a mere judicial impression, that restrains from sin for the dreadful punishment that follows; for that servile affec-

tion, though it may stop a temptation, and hinder the eruption of a lust into the gross act, yet it does not renew the nature, and make us holy and heavenly. There may be a respective dislike of sin with a direct affection to it. Besides, a mere servile fear is repugnant to nature, and will be expelled, if possible. Therefore, that we may "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long," (Prov. xxiii. 17,) we must regard him in his endearing attributes,—his love, his goodness and compassion, his rewarding mercy; and this will produce a filial fear of reverence and caution, lest we should offend so gracious a God. As the natural life is preserved by grateful food, not by aloes and wormwood, which are useful medicines; so the spiritual life is maintained by the comfortable apprehensions of God, as the Rewarder of our fidelity in all our trials.

(2.) *Strip sin of its disguises, wash off its flattering colours, that you may see its native ugliness.*—Joseph's reply to the tempter [was], "How can I do this great wickedness?" Illusion and concupiscence are the inducements to sin: when a lust represents the temptation as very alluring, and hinders the reflection of the mind upon the intrinsic and consequential evil of sin, it is like the putting [of] poison into the glass; but when it has so far corrupted the mind, that sin is esteemed a small evil, poison is thrown into the fountain. If we consider the majesty of the Lawgiver, there is no law small, nor sin small that is the transgression of it. Yet the most are secure in an evil course, by conceits that their sins are small. It is true, there is a vast difference between sins in their nature and circumstances: there are insensible omissions, and accusing acts; but the least is damnable. Besides, the allowance and number of sins, reputed small, will involve under intolerable guilt. What is lighter than a grain of sand? You may blow away a hundred with a breath. And what is heavier than a heap of sand condensed together? It is our wisdom and duty to consider the evil of sin in its essential malignity, which implies no less than that God was neither wise nor good in making his law, and that he is not just and powerful to vindicate it; and, when tempted to any pleasant sin, to consider the due aggravations of it, as Joseph did; which will control the efficacy of the temptation. I shall only add, that when a man has mortified the lusts of the flesh, he has overcome the main part of the infernal army that "wars against the soul." (1 Peter ii. 11.) Sensual objects do powerfully and pleasantly insinuate into carnal men, and the affections are very unwillingly restrained from them. To undertake the cure of those whose disease is their pleasure, is almost a vain attempt; for they do not judge it an evil to be regarded, and will not accept distasteful remedies.

(3) *Fly all tempting occasions of sin.*—Joseph would not be alone with his mistress. There is no virtue so confirmed, and in that degree of eminence, but, if one be frequently engaged in vicious society, it is in danger of being eclipsed and controlled by the opposite vice. If the ermines will associate with the swine, they must lie in the mire; if the sheep with wolves, they must learn to bite and



devour; if doves with vultures, they must learn to live on the prey. Our surest guard is to keep at a distance from all engaging snares. He that from carelessness or confidence ventures into temptations, makes himself an easy prey to the tempter. And let us daily pray for the divine assistance to keep us from the evil of the world; without which all our resolutions will be as ineffectual as ropes of sand to bind us to our duty.

5. *The consideration of the evil of sin is a powerful motive to our solemn and speedy repentance.*—The remembrance of our original and actual sins will convince us, that we are born for repentance. There are innumerable silent sins that are unobserved, and do not alarm the conscience; and although a true saint will neither hide any sin, nor suffer sin to hide itself in his breast, yet the most holy men in the world have great reason, with the Psalmist, to say, with melting affections, “‘Who can understand his errors? O cleanse thou me from secret faults;’ (Psalm xix. 12;) discover them to me by the light of the word, and cover them in the blood of the Redeemer.” There are sins of infirmity and daily incursion, from which none can be perfectly freed in this mortal state; these should excite our watchfulness, and be lamented with true tears. There are crying sins, of a crimson guilt, which are to be confessed with heart-breaking sorrow, confounding shame, and implacable antipathy against them, and to be forsaken for ever. Of these, *some are of a deep dye in their nature, and some from the circumstances in committing them.*

(1.) *Some are of a heinous nature, and more directly and expressly renounce our duty, and more immediately obstruct our communion with God, as a mud wall intercepts the light of the sun from shining upon us.*

(2.) *Some derive a greater guilt from the circumstances in the commission.* Such are,

(i.) *Sins against knowledge.*—For according to the ingrediency of the will in sin, the guilt arises. Now when conscience interposes between the carnal heart and the temptation, and represents the evil of sin, and deters from compliance, and yet men will venture to break the divine law, this exceedingly aggravates the offence; for such sins are committed with a fuller consent, and are justly called “rebellion against the light.” And the clearer the light is, the more it will increase the disconsolate, fearful darkness in hell.

(ii.) *Sins committed against the love as well as the law of God are exceedingly aggravated.*—To pervert the benefits we receive from God to his dishonour, to turn them into occasions of sin which were designed to endear obedience to us, to sin licentiously and securely in hopes of an easy pardon at last, is intensive of our guilt in a high degree. This is to poison the antidote, and make it deadly. There is a sacrifice to reconcile offended Justice; but if men obstinately continue in sin, and abuse the grace of the gospel, there is no sacrifice to appease exasperated Mercy.

(iii.) *Sins committed against solemn promises and engagements to forsake them, have a deeper dye.*—For perfidiousness is joined with

this disobedience. The divine law strictly binds us to our duty, antecedently to our consent; but when we promise to obey it, we increase our obligations, and by sinning break double chains. In short, any habitual allowed sin induces a heavy guilt; for it argues a deeper root and foundation of sin in the heart, a stronger inclination to it, from whence the repeated acts proceed, which are new provocations to the pure eyes of God. Accordingly, in repenting reflections, our sorrow should be most afflicting, our humiliation deeper, our self-condemnation most severe, for those sins which have been most dishonourable to God, and defiling to us. Not that we can make any satisfaction for our sins, though we should fill the air with our sighs, and heaven with our tears; but it becomes us to have our sorrows enlarged in some proportion to our unworthiness. And this mournful disposition prepares us for the grace of God. The law does not allow repentance, but exacts entire obedience: it is the privilege of the gospel that repenting sinners are assured of forgiveness. Without this qualification, it is inconsistent with the majesty, purity, and justice of God, to extend pardoning mercy to sinners; for they will never value, nor humbly and ardently seek for, mercy, till they feel the woful effects of sin in their conscience. Only the stung Israelite would look to the brasen serpent: (Num. xxi. 9:) and this is requisite to prevent our relapsing into sin; for, the dominion of sin being founded in the love of pleasure, the proper means to extinguish it is by a bitter repentance; the heart is first broken *for* sin, and then *from* it.

To conclude: let us renew our repentance every day; let not the wounds of our spirits putrefy. Let not the sun go down upon God's wrath. (Eph. iv. 26.) Let us always renew the applications of Christ's blood that alone can cleanse us from sin.