

(1 Cor. iv. 3—5.) The fallen angels are said to be bound in chains of darkness, “reserved unto the judgment of the great day;” (Jude 6;) and so are impenitent sinners reserved to that day; when, notwithstanding their present impunity, they shall then fall under judgment more intolerable than that of Sodom. As a malefactor, that is kept in the gaol under bolts and fetters till the assize, hath little reason to rejoice in his present freedom from the sentence of the judge: and this is the case of sinners: “Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” (Eccles. viii. 11.) And so I make the conclusion of this discourse with that which Solomon makes “the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Eccles. xii. 13, 14.)

SERMON III.

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HOW THE UNCHARITABLE AND DANGEROUS CONTENTIONS THAT ARE AMONG PROFESSORS OF THE TRUE RELIGION, MAY BE ALLAYED.

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.—Galatians v. 15.

My business from this scripture is, to inquire into the cause, the danger, and the cure of uncharitable contentions in the church of God.

The holy apostle Paul having some few years before planted a church in Galatia, a region in the upper parts of the Lesser Asia, there soon crept in a sort of false teachers; who contended, that the Mosaical ceremonies—in particular, that circumcision—was still to be observed, even by the believing Gentiles; and that the Christians were not justified before God by faith, but by the works of the law. Which two errors, when he had fully confuted in the former part of this epistle, he applies in this chapter and in the next: 1. By way of *exhortation*, to “stand fast in” this their Christian “liberty;” (verse 1;) which he backs with divers arguments. 2. By way of *direction*, to use the same aright, “not for an occasion to the flesh,” the works whereof he afterwards reckons up at large; (verses 19—22;) but rather, that they should “by love serve one another,” (verse 13,) and abound in all holiness and goodness, which he enlargeth upon in the rest of this chapter and in the next.

This text in hand lies within the verge of this latter use: where the apostle using their own weapon, the law, whereof they cracked so much, against themselves,—he roundly tells them, that the whole law—to wit, the second table, which also hath an inviolable connexion with the first—is fulfilled in loving their neighbour as themselves; (verse 14;) and so, though they were free from the law of ceremonies, yet not from the law of love; and though the moral law had now no power to justify the sinner, nor to condemn the believer, yet still it hath the force of a rule, to guide them in that grand duty, as much as ever before.

These words, then, come-in as a motive, to press the Galatians to exercise that charity which he had affirmed before to be the sum and scope of the whole law; and it is drawn from the danger of the contrary temper. Plain commands of God should be sufficient to sway us to our duty; but generally we have need of the most powerful motives; especially when the violent streams of rage, lust, or revenge do oppose it; as in the case before us: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”

In which words you may see, 1. *The sin specified*, whereof they were supposed to be guilty: “But if ye bite,” that is, reproach and defame one another; some violently maintaining these Jewish ceremonies, and others passionately opposing them: “and devour one another;” that is, tear and oppress each other, by all the mischievous hostilities ye can; for religious feuds are always sharpest. 2. Here is *the danger forewarned*, in case they proceeded therein: “Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another;” that is, “You will certainly destroy one another:” the division of the members must issue in the dissolution of the body. The decay of your love will weaken your faith: both parties will rue it; ye will be in danger of total ruin, body and soul, here and hereafter.

Now, if we consider these words only *in hypothesis*, or “in relation” to these persons in the text, they teach us, 1. That there were contentions in the church of Galatia. So that unity is no infallible mark of a true church: unity may be out of the church of Christ, and dissension may be within it.

2. That many people were violent in them. For the apostle would scarce have expressed himself in such terms of “biting and devouring,” unless there had been some outrageous carriage among them toward one another.

3. That these contentions were very dangerous to them all. They threatened no less than the overthrow of both the contending parties, the consumption of them all.

But, considering the words of the text *in thesis*, or “absolutely,” which we may safely do, seeing the same causes do still produce, or at least dispose unto, the same effects; we may collect this conclusion:—

DOCTRINE.

That uncharitable contentions do prepare for utter destruction.—
And here I shall,

I. *Clear and open the terms ;*

II. *Amplify and confirm the truth ; and,*

III. *Apply and bring home the influence of this point unto ourselves.*

I. (I.) To understand *the subject* of this proposition, to wit, *uncharitable contentions*, we must distinguish,

1. Of *the matter* of contentions ; and they are either of a civil, or of a spiritual, nature.

(1.) *Of a civil nature ;* which concern men in their lives, liberties, names, or estates. And these are either private or public.

(i.) *Private* contentions ; which are about *meum* and *tuum* ; and these are troublesome to those who are in the right, and damnable to those that are in the wrong, and oftentimes ruinous unto both ; and therefore are by all good means to be prevented, or else by all fair and just means to be managed ; and all fit opportunities are to be watched, not so much to obtain a full victory, as a quiet conclusion ; lest the remedy prove, as it doth frequently, worse than the disease.

(ii.) *Public* contentions ; which are usually about the succession, power, or prerogative of princes, and the liberties or properties of subjects. And here, seeing right and justice can be but with one of the contending parties, both ought to find it out, and to acquiesce therein ; and to beware, lest private ends preponderate the public good ; that princes be not fond of unlimited power, nor subjects fond of unlimited liberty.

(2.) Some contentions are *of a spiritual nature*, concerning religion and matter of conscience. And these are either about things that are *essential and fundamental* therein ; that is, about such truths as are plainly revealed, and necessary to salvation : for these, indeed, we must contend earnestly, but yet charitably, with the softest words and hardest arguments we can ; even for these things we must not “ bite and devour one another :” such were some of the points in debate among the Galatians. Or else they are about things that are *controversial* in religion ; that is, that are not essential or fundamental, or that are not plainly appointed of God ; as matters of order, ceremony, and such other circumstances ; about which, in these latter ages of the church, there have been in divers places the greatest contentions. Now, as it is very culpable to be circumstantial in fundamentals, so it is very ridiculous to be fundamental in circumstantials.

2. We must distinguish of *the manner* of these contentions. They are either,

(1.) *Charitable ;* when there is love in the heart, when there is kindness in the tongue and pen, when there is a civil and sweet behaviour in the carriage of the parties that differ. And these may be called rather “ dissensions ” than “ contentions ; ” rather differing from one another’s conceptions, than contrary to one another’s persons. Or else they are,

(2.) *Uncharitable ;* when rancour is in the heart, reviling in the tongue or pen, rage, at least all manner of rudeness and disobligation, in the carriage ; when men speak and write so, as if they would “ bite and devour one another.” And of these the conclusion is to be

understood,—that they “prepare for utter destruction;” and this now is the first thing to be opened.

(II.) *What destruction those do prepare for; which is the predicate of the proposition.* And the destruction they threaten is,

1. *Mutual, or total.*—All that the one opposite party aims at is, to disgrace, to run down, and to ruin the other: “But take heed that ye be not consumed,” *ὅπο αλληλων*, “each by other;” or, “that ye perish not one under another.” Satan, the old Apollyon, who blows the bellows of contention, designs and endeavours the ruin of both; neither of you will have cause to boast in the end.

2. The destruction that these lead unto is *final, eternal* destruction: so the word in the text doth frequently signify. The wrath of God kindled hereby may inflict it, and the infidelity and scepticism that result from them may procure it. So saith a great divine abroad: * “That ye perish not utterly.” So saith a great divine at home: † “Take heed lest ye be the authors of each other’s endless confusion.” And so much for the explication.

II. *The amplifying and confirming of this point shall be done under these following PROPOSITIONS:—*

(I.) *That there ever were, are, and will be, differences amongst God’s own people in the matters of religion.*

(II.) *That these differences may, and should be, managed with charity.*

(III.) *That these contentions are uncharitable, when men bite and devour one another.*

(IV.) *That such contentions do prepare for destruction.*

PROPOSITION I.

There ever were, are, and will be, differences among God’s own people in the matters of religion.—Even amongst the Jews, who had such punctual rules prescribed before them, yet the school of Hillel went one way, and the school of Shammai went another; and their contentions sometimes were sprinkled with the blood one of another. And no sooner was the gospel planted, but the professors of it fell at variance about matters of religion: [this is] plain in the controversies about circumcision, for the quieting whereof that famous council met at Jerusalem. (Acts xv.) The like differences arose in the church at Rome about meats and days; the strong Christians despising the weak, and the weak censuring the strong. (Rom. xiv.) The like dissension in the church of Corinth, about eating meats offered to idols, (1 Cor. viii.) and about the exercise of spiritual gifts. (1 Cor. xiv.) In the church of Galatia, you may perceive by this text to what height their differences did rise, that they were in danger to “devour one another.” At Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica, matters were much at the same pass. Scarce any single church in the New Testament was clear of difference in matters of religion: and this, whilst the blood of our Saviour was warm, and divers of the apostles were yet alive. Shortly after, what dreadful

* LUTHER *in loc.*

† BISHOP HALL’S “Paraphrase,” *in loc.*

combustions were kindled in the church by Novatus, then by Donatus! to say nothing of other heretics, who, not holding the Head, cannot reasonably be reckoned in the body mystical of Christ,—his church. The story is sadly remarkable of Chrysostom and Epiphanius, two bishops, that contended so bitterly with one another, that Epiphanius in his fury wished that Chrysostom might never die a bishop, and Chrysostom in his passion wished that Epiphanius might never go home alive; and the history tells us, that it fell out to them both accordingly. So that no considering man will admire* or be offended at a disease which hath been incident to the true church of Christ in all ages past.

Let not the present church of Rome too much boast of her unity; for the case hath been no better there. For, as there have been more schisms among them than in any other church whatsoever, so there have been collected, out of the very writings of their eminent doctors, some hundreds of differences among themselves in points of religion; and *they* are strangers in the world *that* are ignorant of the quarrels between the Thomists and the Scotists, between the Dominicans and the Jesuits; and many can still remember the feuds between the Jansenists and Molinists: all of them within that communion.

And it is not only among Christians that these differences in religious matters are to be found; but the like dissension is to be met with among Turks and infidels; the Persian kingdom and divers others following Ali, and the Grand Seignior and his dominions following Osman,—the two great sect-masters in that sorry religion; insomuch as the Persian Turks do execrate the other in their daily prayers, saying, “Cursed be Abubeker, Omar, and Osman! and God be favourable to Ali, and be well pleased with him!” Yea, it is no better among the very Heathens, even the most learned of them, to wit, the philosophers; of whom one of their own saith, *Tunc inter philosophos conveniet, quando inter horologia.*† Well, therefore, doth Athanasius answer them, when they objected diversity of opinions to the Christians in the primitive times,—that even they did some of them worship one god, and some of them another; and could neither agree about the object, nor the manner, of their devotions.

By all which it is evident, that as there have been different opinions and practices among all sorts of religions in the world, so the church of God hath been subject to the same malady.

And as it was from the beginning, so it is now, and so will it be, till the world have an end, until the church of God be presented to Jesus Christ, without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” (Eph. v. 27.) And the causes hereof are evident:—

1. *Our general imperfection in this life.*—As the best men are imperfect in their holiness, so are they in their knowledge; there will be defects in our understanding, as well as in our will. Some are babes in knowledge; others are strong men: some “have need of milk, being unskilful in the word of righteousness;” others are “of

* In the old meaning of *wonder*.—EDIT.

† “There will be harmony among the philosophers, when there shall be agreement between the clocks.”—EDIT.

fuller age, and have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v. 12—14.) Foolish men are ready to burden the scriptures in vulgar tongues with the differences that are found in religion; but therein they blaspheme the Holy Ghost: for the word of God is a clear "light;" (Psalm cxix. 105;) the cause of mistakes is the weakness and blindness of our eye-sight, whereby we cannot all with equal clearness see into the meaning of it, by reason of this our imperfection. So that it is scarce possible to prevent all diversity of opinions in religion, unless every pious man had a promise of infallibility annexed to his piety.

2. *Men's education contributes much hereunto.*—It is manifest how strong an influence this hath upon all people's understandings. The principles which then they imbibe, be they right or wrong, they generally live and die with: few will be at the pains to examine them, and few have a mind to alter them. So that it is much to be doubted, that if it had been the fate of many of our professed Christians to have been born and bred under the Turk or Mogul, they had both quietly and resolutely proceeded in their religion. And proportionably, to be bred under parents, masters, or tutors of a different opinion or practice in the true religion, must needs greatly bias such persons toward the same; and every one not having the very same education, there follows a kind of necessity of some difference in religion.

3. *Men's capacities are different.*—Some have a greater sagacity to penetrate into things than others; some have a clearer judgment to weigh and determine of things than others; some have more solid learning by far than others; and these, doubtless, will attain to a higher form and class than others can. Others have neither such natural abilities, nor time to read and think of matters, so as to improve and advance their minds to the pitch of others. And there are not a few, who as they are duller in apprehension, so they are commonly hotter in affection and resolution. And it is scarce possible to reduce these persons, that are so unequal in their capacity, to an identity of opinion: and then "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth" will be apt to "speak;" (Matt. xii. 34;) and so there will follow some difference in the matters of religion.

4. *Men's natural tempers are different.*—Some more airy and mercurial, some more stiff and melancholy. And those complexions do strongly and insensibly incline people to those sentiments that are most suitable and proper to such temperaments; which, being diverse, yea, almost contrary, must of necessity, when they are applied to matters of religion, breed variety of apprehensions. And the same Holy Spirit which inspired the sacred penmen of the scriptures, and yet therein adapts himself, as is manifest, to their natural genius, cannot be expected in his ordinary illuminations to thwart and stifle the natural temper of all mankind; neither are those notions which do grow upon men's natural constitution, easily any other way altered. And,

5. *Men's interests are different.*—The best of men have something of the old Adam in them; and though the sincere Christian must

and will strive against any such temptation, yet, according to the strength of unmortified corruption, men will be prone to be for this opinion, practice, or party, and against that opinion, practice, or party, that falls in or out with their worldly interest. Not that any good man doth wittingly calculate his profession for his baser ends ; but yet they may secretly bias him, especially in more minute and dubious matters belonging to religion. It is a great question, what way or party many men would choose, if their present profession were quite stripped of all carnal and worldly advantages and considerations, and that they were left to square out their religion only with the Bible.

Now from these and many other causes it sadly follows, (for the consequence is a matter to be bewailed,) [that] there will be differences among the people of God in points of religion ; especially in minuter matters, which are but darkly described, and more darkly apprehended by the sons of men : in short, that there is no more hope of perfect unity on earth, than there is of perfect holiness. It is to be endeavoured, but not fully attained till we arrive in heaven : then we shall “ come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,” when we are grown “ perfect men, according to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Eph. iv. 13.)

PROPOSITION II.

These differences may and should be managed with charity.—Not but that unity should by all good men be first endeavoured ; and, to that end, they should all impartially seek for truth, on which side soever it lies ; and this every humble, diligent man shall find. The Spirit of God, which is promised unto his church, and which every true believer shall have for asking, will “ guide ” all such “ into all ” necessary, saving “ truth : ” (John xvi. 13 :) and all other unity, save in the truth, is but conspiracy. “ Accursed is that charity,” saith Luther, “ which is preserved by the shipwreck of faith or truth, to which all things must give place,—both charity, yea, an apostle, yea, an angel from heaven.” “ If the one must be dispensed withal, it is peace, and not truth. Better to have truth without public peace, than peace without saving truth : ” so Dr. Gauden. “ We must not sail for the commodity of peace beyond the line of truth ; we must break the peace in truth’s quarrel : ” so another learned man. But this is to be understood of necessary and essential truths ; in which case, “ that man little consults the will and honour of God, who will expose the truth, to obtain,” as saith Nazianzen, “ the repute of an easy mildness.” *Speciosum quidem nomen est pacis, et pulchra opinio unitatis ; sed quis dubitat eam solam ecclesiæ pacem esse, quæ Christi est ?* saith Hilary.*

But whenas, after all such endeavours have been used as are within the reach of a man’s parts and calling, still differences do remain in smaller matters, these ought to be managed with all charity ; that is,

* “ The name of peace, indeed, is attractive, and the idea of unity beautiful ; but who doubts that the peace of the church is the only one which is of Christ ? ”—EDIT.

with true love ; a love of honour and respect to those that are above us, a love of condescension and forbearance to those that are below us, and a love of hearty good-will and kindness to those that are equal to us : for Aquinas well saith, that "that concord which is the effect of charity, is the union of affections, not of opinions." There may be the same love in the heart, where there are not the same notions in the head ; and this will keep the strong Christian from despising the weak, and this will keep the weak Christian from censuring and judging the strong. They may be of the same heart, who are not every way of the same mind ; or else there could scarce be real affection between any two persons in the world. *Pax non est consensio ingeniorum, sed conjunctio animorum : sentire in omnibus tecum nunc quidem non possum, sed amare debeo ;** as Næranus well said. This is that "more excellent way," which the apostle doth so divinely describe and advance, 1 Cor. xiii., throughout a whole chapter.

But yet this method is hard and very rare, and that chiefly by reason of our pride ; most men thinking too well of themselves, and consequently of their opinion and practice ; and thereupon vilifying all others that differ from them. Every man would be a law-giver, a God to another, would prescribe to them, and quarrel with them for their dissent ; insomuch as the wise man affirms, that "only by pride cometh contention." (Prov. xiii. 10.) If we had but that "lowliness of mind," whereby to "esteem others better than ourselves," then "nothing would be done through strife or vainglory ;" which the Holy Ghost doth earnestly require. (Phil. ii. 3.) But we are as apt to be fond of our own notions, as of our own children ; and as rarely to value others, as if we were the only "people, and wisdom must die with us," (Job xii. 2,) and all others must strike sail unto us. And from this root spring passion and distemper of spirit ; and then *perit judicium, cum res transit in affectum ;* "when men's passions are once kindled, then wrath and revenge manage the controversy," and one Christian is ready to "bite and devour another."

But certainly it should not be thus : religious differences should be managed religiously ; that is, piously and charitably. This *may* be ; it is possible ; for it is prescribed and pressed : "Let us not therefore judge one another any more. But why dost thou judge thy brother ? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother ?" (Rom. xiv. 13, 10;) and, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace." (Verse 19.) And this *should* be : for charity is a grace of an universal extent ; we owe it to all,—to the weak, to the ignorant, to the peevish, to the proud, to the good, and to the bad : "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." (Rom. xiii. 8.) And it is of that necessary connexion with other saving graces, that we can neither have faith nor hope, unless we have charity ; yea, "the greatest of these is charity." (1 Cor. xiii. 13.) And herein the true

* "Peace is not the agreement of dispositions, but the conjunction of spirits : now, indeed, I cannot think with thee in all things ; but it is my duty to love thee."—EDIT.

church of Christ hath ever excelled. The fathers of old, in their dealing with the Donatists, would account them their brethren, when they could not prevail with them for a reciprocation. And it is a golden saying of Bernard: *Adhærebo vobis, etiamsi nolitis; adhærebo vobis, etsi nolim ipse: cum turbatis, ero pacificus; dabo locum iræ, ne diabolo dem*: "I will cleave to you against your will; I will cleave to you even against my own will: when ye are moved, I will be quiet; I will give place to anger, that I may not give place to the devil."

And there is great reason for such a temper: for every difference in religion creates not a different religion: while men do hold the Head, they must needs be of the body. Where the same substantial doctrine is avowed, accidental variety is very tolerable, especially where the peace of God's church is not infringed. It was worthy bishop Reynolds's conclusion, "Where the same straight road to heaven is kept, a small difference of paths hinders not travellers from coming to the same inn at night." So neither should *they* bitterly contest about the next way, *who* steadily own the same Guide, the same rule, the same end; only, every one hath not so clear an eye, nor such opportunity to know the more obscure points pertaining to the Christian religion, which others have. Therefore in these things Luther's motto is best: *In quo aliquid Christi video, illum diligo*; "Where there is any thing of Christ, there I love:" and this love "will cover," not one or two, but "the multitude of sins" and infirmities. (1 Peter iv. 8.)

PROPOSITION III.

These dissensions are uncharitable, when persons bite and devour one another.—The spring of all this poison is in the heart; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the hand acts. There is a defect of real and fervent love, and an excess of selfishness, within; self-opinion, self-will, and self-interest: and this arrogance breeds insolence, and all the "biting and devouring" mentioned in this place. Now if these two expressions do bear a distinct signification, then,

1. Men do "bite" one another *by keen and venomous words.*—When men do "whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words." (Psalm lxiv. 3.) "The tongue," unbridled, "is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." (James iii. 6.) What flames of strife have the tongues and pens of men kindled and continued in the world!

Sometimes *by censuring their brethren.*—"They are time-servers, proud, covetous, superstitious;" or, "They are conceited, peevish, factious." Especially, if any one be really scandalous, by imputing it presently to all his party, as if they were all such; which is the most unjust and uncharitable inference imaginable; for what party of men is there on earth, wherein there are none that are foolish, false, and wicked? In short, there is no vice more common and mischievous, not only among different parties, but with all sorts of people, than in

their ordinary conversation to let fly their censorious arrows against others ; insomuch as it is very rare to speak of any one behind their back without some reflection upon them : which is not only a “biting,” but a back-biting, one another, and so the more base and mischievous.

Sometimes men “bite” one another *by plain slandering one another*, charging them with crimes which they abhor.—Thus one party reckons all their opposites to be presently enemies to the king and to the church ; who, on the other side, are as ready to count them enemies to God and to his people ; monopolizing godliness to one party, and loyalty to another. Nay, each is ready to appropriate all religion and good conscience to themselves, and to unsanctify and vilify all of the contrary mind : a common course of hypocrites,—first to degrade a godly man into ungodliness, that so they may have room to hate him ; though the same law, and the same Lawgiver, forbid us to “bear false witness against our neighbour,” that forbids the “worshipping of a graven image.”

And sometimes men “bite” *by downright railing [at], if not cursing, those that differ from them.*—Devising and affixing the most disgraceful names and titles ; concluding them all to be knaves or fools that are of a contrary mind ; both praying and drinking to their confusion. Thus men “sharpen their tongues like a serpent ; adders’ poison is under their lips.” (Psalm cxl. 3.) “Their throat is an open sepulchre : their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” (Rom. iii. 13, 14.) But “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God :” (James i. 20 :) a bad cause is never made better, but a good cause is always made worse, by such methods. *Adeo invisæ est mihi discordia*, says Erasmus, *ut veritas etiam seditiosa displiceat.** As God’s truth needs not man’s lie, so neither doth it need his rancour, to uphold or promote it.

2. Men “devour” one another *by actual endeavours to injure and hurt one another.*—When their inward rage breaks out into overt actions and practices tending to ruin their brethren. And this is done sometimes,

(1.) *By fraud.*—Which signifies all the cunning devices which malice can suggest, whereby to undermine their credit, estate, and comfort. Such there were of old, and yet professors of a true religion ; of whom the Psalmist : “He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den : he lieth in wait to catch the poor : he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.” (Psalm x. 9, 10.) It is endless to particularize all the arts and sleights of uncharitable men each against other ; but the end is to devour the estates, lives, names, and posterity of others. And is this to “love your neighbour as yourselves ?” or to do as you would be done to ? Nothing less.

(2.) Sometimes this is done *by force.*—When either party can get any human law on their side, down without mercy go all their opposites ; yea, sometimes without it and beyond it : yea, oftentimes you

* “So hateful is discord to me, that even truth itself, if factious, is displeasing to me.”—EDIT.

shall see *them* most zealous for compliance with one or two laws, which fit their humour, *who* live in the continual breach of twenty others. All ages have groaned under this disease: what work did not only the Arians and Circumcellians make of old, when they got power into their hands! but in latter ages nothing hath been more common, than the employing the secular arm to the utmost, by those that could obtain it, to promote their purposes. But where is that dove-like innocence and harmlessness this while? *Columbæ non sunt*, saith Augustine; *accipitres sunt, milvi sunt: non laniat columba*:* and he, though he was zealous in writing against the errors of the Donatists, yet professed that he had rather be slain by them than occasion their persecution unto death.

PROPOSITION IV.

These uncharitable contentions do prepare for utter destruction.—So saith, 1. *The scripture.* So, 2. *All history and experience.* 3. *Undeniable reason confirms it.*

1. *For scripture.* See Hosea x. 2: "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty." There may be different notions in the head; yea, there may be different practices; one may eat flesh, and another only herbs; and yet the church may flourish. It was a good motto of a great scholar, *Opinionum varietas, et opinantium unitas, non sunt austerata.*† But when the distemper lodges at the heart, when that is wounded, when that "is divided," the man dies. And this is not only meant of man's heart "divided" and distracted from God, but of men's hearts "divided" from one another; which, it should seem, was the case of Israel at that time under the reign of Hoshea. And what follows? "Now shall they be found faulty;" or, as the word will bear, and others render it, "They shall be made desolate." "This will prepare them for certain and speedy desolation: 'now shall they be made desolate.'" Agreeable to which are our own Saviour's words: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." (Matt. xii. 25.) Where you see,

(1.) *One great cause of the ruin of a kingdom, city, or family.*—Which is, being "divided against itself." If the head and members be set one against another, nay, if there be only an inveterate jealousy between them, it is often fatal; but when the hearts of a people in a kingdom, city, or family, are in a burning fever one against another, and no art or means can qualify them, a dissolution of the body, a desolation of that people, is at hand; for so it follows: "Every" such "kingdom is brought to desolation." Where,

(2.) You see *the greatness of that ruin that follows.*—*Ερημονται*, "It shall be made desert and desolate;" which implies and contains all the miseries that do concur to make a kingdom a desert. It will not only be shaken, endangered, weakened, and decayed; but if some speedy and effectual remedy be not applied, it is ruined utterly.

* "They are not doves; they are hawks, they are kites: the dove does not tear to pieces."—EDIT. † "Difference of sentiment, and the union of those thus dissenting, are not incompatible."—EDIT.

(3.) See *the certainty thereof*.—For, as our Saviour speaks positively in the beginning of the verse, “it *is* brought to desolation;” so, in the latter end of the verse, as peremptorily, “It *shall not* stand.” The undoubted seeds of ruin are in it; nothing but an eradication of them by real amendment can prevent it. And lest any place, angle, or isle in the world should think to escape, see,

(4.) *The universality of this axiom*.—“Every kingdom, every city, and every house.” Though the kingdom be never so well-peopled, never so well-furnished, never so well-fortified; though the city be never so well-built, never so well-chartered, never so well-traded; though the house be never so well-situate, never so well-guarded, never so well-adorned; yet if the inhabitants be divided against themselves, they will come to desolation. But the text in hand is sufficient to affirm this position: “Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another;” which caution questionless implies manifest danger; and the danger is no less than mutual consumption, or utter perishing, as you heard before. *Hic enim est dimicationis exitus*, as Grotius; “the end of these contentions,” if they be not repented and extinguished, is temporal, spiritual, and eternal ruin.

2. *Histories and experience do attest the same*.—For *contentions in general*: it is evident, that the divisions which were among the Trojans, made way for their overthrow by the Greeks; the like animosities among the Greeks brought them under the slavery of Philip. The feuds that were among the Assyrians, brought-in the Persians; and the like among the Persians subjected them to the Macedonians; and the contentions among Alexander’s successors rendered them up to be swallowed by the Romans, one after another. Yea, the Roman empire itself, near the time when the western and the eastern branches of it were hottest in contention about the supremacy of their bishops and about images,—behold, the Goths and Vandals destroyed the one, and the Saracens and Turks ruined the other. The scandalous discords among the Jews exposed Jerusalem at length to that dreadful desolation by Titus Vespasian. And for this island, it hath been still accounted like some great animal, that can only be ruined by its own strength. The contentions of the Britons made the Romans conquerors: *Et cum singuli pugnant, omnes victi*.* Afterwards the Saxons came-in upon the divisions of the natives; and the contentions of the Saxons prepared the way for the Normans.

And for *religious differences*: it is known how Julian the Apostate cherished those between the Catholics and the Donatists; saying, that no savage beasts were so cruel against one another, as the Christians; so that he expected thereby to ruin them all. It is notorious what famous and numerous churches were once in Africa; but, by the contentions of the Manichees, then of the Donatists, they are now extinguished. The contentions among the Protestants in king Edward the Sixth’s reign, ended in the persecution by queen Mary: and if ever the Romans ruin us again, it will be procured by our

* “And when each small party fights apart, all of them are ultimately conquered.”—EDIT.

contentions among ourselves. It is but reasonable to leave those children in the dark, who will be still fighting about the candle; and it will be just with God to force them to agree in red, that are still bickering about black and white. The one party may think to extirpate the other; but both are likely to rue it; and they that have been complices in guilt, must look to be companions in the punishment. By all which you may see whither these uncharitable contentions do usually tend, and where they are like to end: and,

3. *There is too much reason for it.*

(1.) *Ex parte rei* ["on the part of the thing itself"]. These dissensions have a natural tendency to promote our destruction; nothing can more properly bring it to effect. For,

(i.) *They weaken that confidence that is necessary for the preservation of a people.*—Jealousy is the great bane of families, churches, and nations; but a mutual confidence establishes them. How can those that "bite and devour one another," confide in one another? And if the parts be thus ill-affected, how crazy must the whole body be! When we can see little or nothing amiss in a person or in an action, and yet do suspect that there is something concealed, even this creates a distrust, and weakens the welfare of the whole: much more, when suspicions are boiled up into actual dissension, it must needs expose such a church and nation to the utmost peril. For then men presently put the worst construction upon each other, and upon all their words and actions. You know, every thing hath two handles: we should take every thing by the charitable handle; and if it be capable of a fair and friendly sense, so we should receive it: for so we desire in all cases to be understood. We would not be alway interpreted in the worst sense, and why then should we deal so with others? "Charity thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. xiii. 5.) It is true, it behoves men in office and trust to be watchful, and to stand much upon their guard, for the prevention of public dangers: but with private persons, to put ill interpretations upon one another's words or carriage, argues ill nature and baseness of spirit; and this humour greatly weakens that confidence which is necessary to the happiness of any people.

(ii.) *They destroy that love which is the cement of all societies.*—As they proceed from a defect of love, so they quite ruin the remainders of it. Now, this love unites, and so strengthens: but when men's hearts are once divided from each other, what care I what becomes of them [whom] I hate? That made that Scythian Scilurus, when he was on his death-bed, to cause a bundle of javelins to be brought, and laid before his eighty sons; who, being commanded to break the whole bundle, could not possibly do it; but when they were untied, they easily broke them one after another; teaching them thereby to cleave to one another, and that their division would be their destruction. Hereupon it is worth our notice, that the apostle, when he musters up "the works of the flesh" in this chapter, nine kinds of them are contrary to this love; to wit, "Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

envyings, murders ;” (verses 20, 21 ;) and when “ the fruits of the Spirit ” are reckoned, behold how many of them are akin to this love which I am speaking of !—“ The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness ;” (verse 22 ;) as if the carnal man were composed only of flame, and the spiritual man made up of benignity. But such unkind contentions, like rust or canker, do consume this love ; and so, each part looking only to itself, there is none that takes care of the whole ; and so, as by concord small things increase, so by discord great things waste to nothing.

(iii.) *They prepare for the most desperate actions.*—For when there is a dislike settled within, and that men’s spirits are exasperated by provoking words and actions, there wants nothing but opportunity to produce the most violent effects. The text seems to give warning hereof, by saying, “ Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another ;” as if he should say, “ Whomsoever you thus bite and provoke, may possibly be tempted to revenge it ; and so you will fall foul upon one another : your common enemies may well think and say, ‘ Let them alone ; they will tear one another in pieces, &c. Behold the sparks of civil war ; and what else but ruin can follow such premisses ? ’ ” We undertake hereby to be our own executioners, and spare our enemies the pains of destroying us. “ From whence come wars and fightings among you ? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members ? ” And hereupon that following advice is given : “ Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law.” (James iv. 1, 11.)

And it hath been observed, that religious feuds (the more is the pity) are generally the most fierce and violent ; whether because the best things, being corrupted, prove the worst ; or that mistaken conscience and misguided zeal do hurry men to the greatest excesses, and that people think that they can never be too earnest and vigorous in their actings for God : “ The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” (John xvi. 2.) How dangerous must those bigots and those zealots be to one another, that believe they serve God best, when they hate and mischief one another worst ! No persecution from without can be so fatal to the church of God, as the strugglings in her womb ; as no storms or tempests do rend and tear the earth so much, as the convulsions that are within it. And as their uncharitable contentions do thus *ex parte rei* [“ on the part of the thing itself ”] procure,

So, (2.) They do *ex parte Dei* [“ on the part of God ”] deserve destruction ; and therefore they do plainly prepare for it.

(i.) *They do provoke the wrath of God.*—“ God is Love ;” (1 John iv. 8 ;) he is the God of peace ; and then these must evidently offend and cross his blessed nature. The more patient, quiet, and mild men are, the liker are they to God ; and the more uncharitable and implacable, the liker to the devil, “ the accuser of the brethren.” When our dear Saviour, who came on purpose to reconcile God and man, and men to men, [was born,] the anthem which was sung by angels

was, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." (Luke ii. 14.) These contentions do ring these bells backward, and chase away that peace and good-will back to heaven again. When Joseph was so kind to his guilty brethren as to be reconciled to them, he sent them back again with this charge: "See that ye fall not out by the way;" (Gen. xlv. 24;) as if he had said, "See, I am reconciled to you all; quarrel not among yourselves;" a most kind and equal advice. In like manner our blessed Saviour, when he had obtained remission for us, commanded all his disciples to "have salt in themselves, and to have peace one with another;" (Mark ix. 50;) he renews no commandment, but that of loving one another. And the Holy Ghost in the apostles doth still inculcate this lesson above all others,—to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," (Eph. iv. 3,) to "be like-minded," to "have the same love," to "do nothing through strife or vain-glory," (Phil. ii. 2, 3,) to avoid the provoking one another.

Now how inexcusable doth this leave all fiery and contentious spirits! and how justly may they be handled without any mercy, that handle their brethren without any charity! And certainly, as "the Lord commands a blessing" upon "brethren that dwell together in unity," (Psalm cxxxiii.) so it is a manifest token of his wrath, when a spirit of dissension is sent upon a people. When Manasseh is set against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, "and they together against Judah," then it follows, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." (Isai. ix. 21.) And, look, as the husbandman deals with his wayward cattle, when they cannot agree in the field,—he pounds them up, and makes them quiet in the fold; so may our just and holy God make all those that cannot unite in the church, to agree at the stake; as Meletius and Peter bishop of Alexandria, who fell into such debate when they were in prison for the same cause, that they refused to hold communion together, till they both at length agreed in red. And so two other learned men were at such discord in the mines, whither they were condemned for Christianity, that they made up a wall between their works, to keep them asunder, till at last they met at the fatal pile.

(ii.) *They consume the power and life of godliness.*—God's grace never thrives in an unquiet spirit. The Jews say that Jehovah lives in *Salem*, which signifies "peace;" but he cannot live in *Babel*, which signifies "confusion." That zeal, that time, those studies, which should be employed in the increasing of saving knowledge, faith, hope, and holiness,—they are all consumed in these uncharitable contentions. Instead of "making our own calling and election sure," we are busy to reprobate our brethren, and to render their calling ineffectual. Instead of "considering one another to provoke to love and good works," (Heb. x. 24,) these engage us to consider all the defects and faults of others, and to provoke them to anger and to every evil work. This is "fasting for strife and debate." (Isai. lviii. 4.) These embitter our prayers, and hinder our access to God, when we cannot "lift up" unto him "holy hands without wrath and

doubting." (1 Tim. ii. 8.) Yea, they will tempt us to restrain prayer before God, or to do as Mr. Latimer tells of some, that would not say the Lord's Prayer at all, lest they should be thereby obliged to forgive others; and therefore, in the stead thereof, went to "Our Lady's Psalter." How can such approach the holy table, that will make no agreement with their adversaries? that will not forgive, that desire not to be forgiven? In short, "where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." (James iii. 16—18.)

OBJECTION.

It will be objected here, that "it is our duty, where we have right and truth on our side, to contend earnestly. So they were exhorted (Jude 3) to 'contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.' To be cool or lukewarm, is to betray and sell the truth; and this neutrality becomes no man in the cause of truth."

ANSWER.

To this I answer, 1. *We must consider the nature and consequence of truth.*—That is, that it be a great or necessary truth: for though no truth must be denied, yet many truths may be forborne. If every man should be obliged to vent and propagate at all times every thing which he holds to be true, no place or conversation would be quiet. It was a truth, that a believer might "eat all things;" yet the apostle did not think it necessary to urge or insist upon it, nor that it would quit the cost of a "doubtful disputation." (Rom. xiv. 1, 2.)

2. *In asserting any truth a man may be earnest, and yet charitable.*—He may think well of his opposites, and yet think ill of their opinions; he may oppose an error with a spirit of meekness, with soft words and hard arguments. An excellent direction there is for this: "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And 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. 23—25.) This is far from aggravating men's mistakes, spinning out odious consequences from them, concluding that all of another persuasion do militate against their own consciences, that worldly interest or vain humour sways them, that they are ignorant sots or superstitious time-servers, and the like: this kind of strivings is not for any "servant of the Lord." When Michael had the worst of all adversaries to dispute with, he "durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." (Jude 9.) And if a little railing might not be mixed in a dispute with the devil himself, how dare any man use it against any one of the same nature, nation, and religion with himself? Most piously, therefore, was it resolved

by divers eminent German divines, who met at Marburg to discuss the point of the real presence, that though they could not accord therein, yet they would preserve the bond of charity inviolable among them.

OBJECTION.

Yea, but you object, that "our opposites are violent; and if we be gentle, we shall but encourage them. Shall they be hot in the wrong, and we lukewarm in the right? How can we handle charitably such uncharitable persons?"

ANSWER.

Unto this I answer, 1. *We may be resolute, and yet charitable.*—For one grace never crosses another. As the greatest courage is still accompanied with the greatest generousness to an adversary, so the warmest zeal, if true, is attended with the purest charity; otherwise it is but rage and brutishness, which is very foreign to the Christian temper. Where true grace is *impressed* on the soul, there graciousness and kindness will be *expressed* to all men. When all is said and done, all true Christians are sworn brethren, and must love and bear with one another. *Proh dolor! quid facit in corde Christianorum luporum feritas et canum rabies?**

2. *Bitterness can never cure violence.*—As "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," (James i. 20,) so neither doth it work the reformation of men: one sin can never work a right cure upon another. We see this in ourselves; severity and violence cure nobody: and this should be men's design in all arguments, disputes, and reproofs; namely, to recover and cure those that are out of the way: but *durum super durum non facit murum.*† Hence the expression of that peaceable bishop Hall: "I am, and profess to be, as the terms stand, on neither, and yet on both, parts; for the peace of both, for the humour of neither: how should mortar cement, if it lie not between both stones? The kingdom of God stands not in meats, in colours, in noises, in gestures; God stands not on such trifles; and why should we?" &c. The wisest of men determines this: "The wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife." (Prov. xxx. 33.)

"O, but God's glory," you will say, "is at the stake! Therefore it is not only *lawful* to be zealous, but *necessary.*"

But, 1. *Be sure it be so, that the honour of God be really concerned in these your contentions.*—It is a dangerous thing to engage God's glory in our sinful affections or expressions. You know how dear it cost Moses, that servant of the Lord, when, in great heat against his erring brethren, he brake out "unadvisedly with his lips," (Psalm cvi. 33,) saying, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (Num. xx. 10.) Though otherwise he was the meekest man upon earth, and was at that time sufficiently pro-

* S. CYPRIANUS. "Alas! what have the fierceness of wolves and the madness of dogs to do in the heart of Christians?"—EDIT. † "One hard substance upon another does not make a wall."—EDIT.

voked ; yet Almighty God would not bear to hear this language from him, and shut him out of the promised land for it. God knows, we are more apt to press God's glory into the service of our passions and interests, than to engage ourselves and all our abilities, or to deny our humours, for the promoting thereof.

2. Be it known to you, that *though your ends be very sincere, yet God's glory hath no need of your intemperance.*—As his truth hath no need of our lie, so his honour needs not the rotten pillars of men's passions : “ Will ye speak wickedly for God ? and talk deceitfully for him ? Will ye accept his person ? will ye contend for God ? ” (Job xiii. 7, 8.) He requires it not, he needs it not. The excellency of the end will not legitimate the viciousness of the means ; nay, by “ breaking his law ” in these uncharitable contentions you “ dishonour him. ” (Rom. ii. 23.) God's truth and honour have almost suffered as much by weak and passionate advocates, as by open adversaries.

3. *If you be indeed so concerned for God's glory and for his truth, then you will use all other means to reduce men into the way of truth.*—His glory must be promoted by his own means. You will not only rebuke them, but you will pray for them ; you will speak as zealously for them to God in heaven, as you speak against them upon earth. If they hunger, you will feed them ; if they be disparaged or distressed, you will assist them ; and thus by “ heaping coals of fire upon their heads, ” you will melt them into repentance. (Prov. xxv. 21, 22.) You are not ignorant that the blustering winds make the traveller gird his cloak closer to him, when the warm sun forces him to lay it aside : and men generally will strengthen themselves in their opinions, when they are only pelted with wrath and rancour ; who may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, when they are instructed with meekness.

III. APPLICATION.

USE I.

Then it follows, that *union is the true means of our preservation.*—Unity of judgment,—this, I say again, should be endeavoured, not only in weighty points, but in all matters of doctrine and practice : and if men would labour to divest themselves of prejudice and interest, this might in a great measure be obtained. Truth is but one ; and if all did truly seek truth, they would surely find it : “ The integrity of the upright shall guide them ; ” and “ the righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way. ” (Prov. xi. 3, 5.) But a violent prejudice for or against any opinion or practice, is a notorious hindrance in finding out the truth ; it shuts the windows, that light cannot enter. Whoso, therefore, would find out the plain truth, must strip himself of all such pre-occupation as will not suffer him to make an impartial search into the mind of God about it ; and having found it, must render himself prisoner unto it. So also must all worldly interests be laid at the feet of truth ; and whether the doctrine or

practice in question be in repute or under disgrace, whether it will gain or lose my best friends, whether it will prefer or undo me, are not considerations worthy of him that hath learned to deny himself, and to value the world to come above the world that now is. I say again, If men did but sincerely "seek," they should certainly "find," according to Christ's promise; (Matt. vii. 7;) and so unity in judgment would be attained more than it is, which doubtless would be a sovereign preservative from destruction.

But there is another unity, which is in affection; and that is charity, which is of no less excellency and use to our preservation. There may be many, who may call for unity, not for truth's sake, but for their own. As Musculus observes upon the soldiers that would not divide our Saviour's seamless coat; but it was not out of any respect to him, but hoping every one that it would fall to his lot: "So, many cry out for unity," saith he, "not out of love to the truth or unity, but in expectation that the stream shall run in their own channel." But now charity, as it would be in all material things on truth's side, so in things more disputable it can bear some contradiction; and so concludes, "In the substance of Christianity, he that is not with us, is against us; in things indifferent, he that is not against us, is for us." And to promote this among ourselves, (I mean, the contending Protestants in these nations,)

Let us consider, 1. *How many things we agree in.*—And if men would begin at this end, and not still at the wrong end,—to wit, the few and small things wherein we differ,—we could not, for very shame, be so implacable to one another. We agree in the acknowledgment of the being and providence of God, against atheists and epicures; in the doctrine of the Trinity, against Mahometans; we agree about the person, natures, and offices of our Redeemer, against all heretics, both old and new. In short, we agree in the same creeds, in all the articles of the Christian doctrine; yea, we agree in the substance of the same worship, and in the same sacraments, against both Papists, Socinians, and Quakers: we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Eph. iv. 5.) And then, in civils, we agree in our hearty approbation of our monarchy, and in a dutiful allegiance to our king, and in refusing the supremacy of any other, at home or abroad. And how many particulars of the greatest weight are contained under these heads, wherein all we Protestants are agreed! And if unity in the truth be any ground for love and charity, it is incomprehensible that they who agree in all these things, should be more inveterate against one another, than against such as differ, not *toto celo*, but *toto Tartaro*, from them both.* But it is observed, that the nearer some men are to a conjunction, some difference remaining, the greater is their hatred: thus a Jew hates a Christian more than he doth a Pagan; and a Papist hates a Protestant worse than he doth a Jew; and a nominal Protestant hates a Puritan more than he doth a Papist; as Dr. Featley notes. "The

* "Not as far as one extreme point of heaven is from another, but as distant as are the very extremities of hell."—EDIT.

contentions" of brethren "are like the bars of a castle:" (Prov. xviii. 19 :) a most unreasonable, though a very common, thing!

2. Consider *the imperfections of our human nature*.—Our understandings were sorely wounded by the fall of Adam; and they are but imperfectly and unequally recovered by all the means which the gospel affords. Why should we condemn every one that is not endowed with our abilities, or advanced to our capacity? Do we fall out with one that is purblind, because he cannot see so far nor so quick as we? We should rather pity him, and praise God who hath been kinder to us. They that are most intelligent, know but in part: "And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. viii. 2.) That was, therefore, a good answer which Melancthon made to those who objected to the Protestants their divisions: saith he, "The judicious agree in fundamentals: but as, in a great army, the skill or strength of all the captains and of all the soldiers is not equal, but they all agree in their wills and honest designs to serve their prince; so all good men have not the like knowledge, but all agree in their sincere love to goodness."

3. Consider, that *you, who are so violent, do differ from others just as far as they differ from you*.—Do you think that one kind of government in the church is best? they do as verily think so of another. Do you hold such and such ceremonies in religion to be unlawful? they are as confident of the lawfulness of them. Do you conclude, that all private men's opinions in such matters ought to be swallowed up, and to acquiesce in the public determination? they verily believe that the church should leave them, as the apostles did, in their first indifference. Now when such as do not otherwise forfeit their veracity, come and profess that they cannot for their hearts think otherwise than they do; you cannot yield to them, they cannot comply with you; what remedy then is so proper, so Christian, as charity to each other? relying upon that promise, "If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Phil. iii. 15.)

4. Consider, that *there have been greater differences than ours among those that were the true members of Christ's church*.—Witness Acts xv. 1: "And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved:" a material point, and urged, you see, with great confidence; and yet God forbid we should blot these out of the roll of true Christians! How resolute were some great divines in the church *pro* and *con* in the case of re-baptizing those that were lapsed in the primitive times! And what heart can be so hard, as to deny the Lutherans and Calvinists a place in the church of Christ, who yet differ in greater matters than ours? Wherefore, seeing their differences were greater than ours, we should not aggravate them against one another, nor by our violence render them intolerable.

5. Consider *your own personal moral failings*.—Hath not each of us some "right eye?" Are we perfectly good? Are not we all "men

of like passions?" What, if our Judge shall say, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, 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." (Matt. vii. 3, 5.) Alas! if we were truly conscious of our own neglects of many duties, whereof we have been convinced, toward our God, our neighbour, and ourselves; and of the many transgressions and faults which we frequently commit; we should much abate our rigour toward others, and turn our indignation against ourselves. How sad a business would it be, if any of those who have censured and damned their opposites for some dubious matters, should prove slaves to their own lusts, and be found at last to be wretched hypocrites in the main things of religion!

USE II.

If uncharitable contentions do prepare for utter destruction, then woe be to the instruments and bellows of our contentions!—If the evil of them be so great, if the danger from them be so dreadful, then most wicked and wretched are the promoters of them: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Matt. xviii. 7.) If those that set a house or town on fire, be justly reckoned and treated as enemies to human society, certainly they who inflame the souls of Christians against one another, to the ruin of a church and nation, deserve the worst character and the worst punishment. But as Ahasuerus once said to Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" and as she answered, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman;" (Esther vii. 5, 6;) so I may answer,

1. Our common adversary and enemy in this matter is *Satan*.—Our contentions do plainly smell of fire and brimstone: legions of devils, though we cannot see them, are employed herein. He is the old "accuser of the brethren," (Rev. xii. 10,) both to God, and to one another: that wicked spirit is the truest salamander, that lives in the fire of contention. Divisions are the devil's music; but that which makes the devil laugh, should make us weep. How often have there been essays and endeavours to reconcile our unhappy differences; and this cunning and malicious enemy hath defeated them all! I have somewhere read of a treaty between a former king of England, and another of France, which was held and concluded in an old chapel, while their several armies stood ready, expecting the issue. The kings agreed; and, coming out of the chapel, a snake or viper crept out of the old wall; which they seeing, drew their swords to defend themselves; which being discerned by their servants who attended at the door, they drew likewise; and the armies, seeing this, did the like, and slaughtered one another a long time before they understood the mistake. And just so hath it often fared with God's church abroad and at home. Wise and good men have been ready for a reconcilia-

tion, and in effect agreed; when "that old serpent, the devil," being ready to burst with malice at it, hath spoiled so good an enterprise, and renewed the flames of discord again.

2. *Jesuits and other emissaries from Rome.*—These have been Satan's instruments to set the world in flames. It was Campanella's old advice to the Spaniards, that they should by all means keep up union among themselves, and keep open the breaches among the Protestants. The like by Adam Contzen, another Jesuit, in his "Politics." These, doubtless, did blow the coals in our civil wars, and insinuated themselves into each party: and it is strange, that though this their principle and practice be undeniable, neither side will discern or yield any such *boutefeu*s ["incendiaries"] to be among them. What else could maintain that deadly rage and violent prejudice so long among Englishmen and Protestants,—whose temper and religion is of itself so sweet and gentle,—but such instruments as these, who aggravate differences, and exasperate men's spirits, and endeavour to persuade people that it is better to yield to a foreign religion than to one another? And to this end their doctrines and ceremonies are represented with the fairest and falsest colours, our first Reformers abroad and at home silyly censured, and our domestic differences rendered irreconcilable.

3. *Atheistical and debauched persons.*—These hate all sound religion in whomsoever, and are ripe for any profession which will gratify their lusts; and so are as ready to be Mahometans as Romans; who, for all their professions of loyalty, would hate their governors at the heart, if the laws were strictly executed against their vices. These cry out, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us;" (Psalm ii. 3;) and so must needs abhor any such settlement as would conduce to the flourishing of real piety. Besides, their practices provoke God to fasten his judgments upon us, whereof our contentions are not the least. And also, these, having an inveterate antipathy to all sober and religious persons of what character soever, do equally hate such of every party; and, on the other side, adhere unto and animate the looser sort, whose religion consists in humour, noise, or show; and, wherever they live, are pouring oil into our flames.

4. *Ignorant and proud people.*—Whereof the number is too great in every party: such as have neither read the scriptures with judgment, nor other ecclesiastical histories, nor considered the constitution of the churches of God in other parts of the world; but only pore upon what is next to their senses. And these commonly are most conceited and unmovable, abounding only in their own sense, and condemning all others with the greatest contempt. Of such good old Mr. Greenham is to be understood, when, being asked by the lord-treasurer Cecil, where the blame of that great rent lay between the bishops of those times and others, "The fault," said he, "is on both sides, and on neither side: for the godly-wise on both sides bear with each other, and concur in the main; but there be some selfish, peevish spirits on both sides, and these make the quarrel." And how

few are there, that are no way biassed by their worldly interest ! which is a strong and irrefragable argument, and, where it rules, will make men content to behold a whole nation on fire, so that they may warm themselves thereby. How rare a thing is a public spirit, or a man that, looking upon the distracted condition of a church and nation without the false spectacles of prejudice and private interest, can drop a Christian tear, or impartially offer any balm to cure their wounds ! From such as these before-mentioned, proceed our uncharitable contentions : and woe be to them, unless they repent, that is, amend !

USE III.

If these prepare for destruction, then we in this sinful nation are in the ready way to misery.—For,

1. *Our differences and contentions are notorious.*—Divisions in the church ; divisions in the nation ; cities divided ; yea, houses divided ; names of distinction imposed : and no pacificatory endeavours nor inviting providences have yet cemented us. Our enemies smile at it, and our well-wishers mourn.

2. *We are uncharitable in these contentions.*—We “ bite and devour one another ;” we censure, we slander, we rail, we damn ; and we are ready to mischief one another, by force, by fraud : the press sweats, the pulpit rings, with invectives and with reproaches. “ O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear ! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save ! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance ? for spoiling and violence are before me : and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth : for the wicked doth compass about the righteous ; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” (Hab. i. 2—4.) “ The law of kindness ” is banished out of men’s mouths, “ the law of love ” too much out of men’s hearts. Yea, “ some preach Christ even of envy, strife, and contention, supposing to add affliction to ” others’ “ bonds ;” as it was, Phil. i. 15, 16. We may take up Optatus’s complaint of old : *Nullus vestrum est, qui non convitia nostra suis tractatibus misceat : lectiones Dominicas incipitis, et tractatus vestros ad nostras injurias explicatis. Profertis evangelium, et facitis absenti fratri convitium. Auditorum animis infigitis odia, inimicitias suadendo, docendo suadetis.** This hath been Englished too often in pulpits ; I am loath to do it. In all concourses, instead of kindness, freedom, and love, [there are] either uncivil clashings or a fearful reservedness : the worst interpretations [are] made of one another’s actions, words, looks, and behaviour. Certainly the “ enemy hath done this ;” (Matt. xiii. 28 ;) his

* “ Of you who are ministers, not one can be found that does not interlard his public discourses with reproaches against us. You commence the service by repeating the words of our Lord ; but in the course of exposition, you bestow on us insulting and offensive language. You gravely cite passages from the Gospels, [in which love to others is constantly recommended,] yet you indulge in abuse and slander against your brother in his absence. In your smooth and persuasive mode of teaching you excite enmities, and by plausible insinuations fasten in the breasts of your hearers the rankling shafts of hatred.”—EDIT.

cloven foot is evident in these effects: but this is matter of fact, and undeniable.

3. *Too many of those that should quench these flames, exasperate them.*—If St. Paul were here, he would ask again, (as 1 Cor. vi. 5,) “Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? I speak it to your shame.” If St. James were among us, he would ask, (as James iii. 13,) “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom;” and conclude, “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.” (Verse 14.) Magistrates and ministers should be healers; but there have been some of these, and that of each party, that have increased these flames. How industriously have our wounds been kept open! and some have not been ashamed to set themselves against all coalition and union. Where are our healing shepherds? “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (Jer. viii. 22.) The Pythagoreans had a custom, that when two fell at contention, their leaders would appoint them a meeting before sunset, and cause them to embrace one another. But we have many to push us on, and few to moderate us, in our contentions. We tear one another in pieces; and if any interpose, he is stigmatized for a neuter, or else meets with the parter’s portion, to wit, blows on both sides; he finds Livy’s observation but too true, that *media via neque amicos parit nec inimicos tollit*.* Hear holy Augustine in the like case to Jerome and Ruffinus, who were in contention: “Woe is me that I cannot find you nearer together! How am I moved! how do I grieve! what fear am I in! I would fall down at your feet; I would weep and beg each for himself, each for the other, yea, for others’ sakes, especially the weak, that look upon you to their great hazard, combating as it were upon a theatre.” But where hath this holy man left his healing spirit? I am sure, this would become those in each function, and turn to their honour and comfort both here and hereafter.

4. *Our common enemy is ready to devour us.*—The Holy Ghost observes, that when Abraham said unto Lot, “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren;” “the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land;” (Gen. xiii. 7, 8;) that if the relation of brethren would not sway his kinsman, yet the reproach and the danger that might fall upon them both from the Canaanite and the Perizzite might check any further breach between them. We have the Canaanites both within the land and without, that are ready to make one morsel of us, and who, after we have condemned one another for superstition and schism, will truss us all up for heresy, without the infinite mercy of God. Now even antipathies are laid aside in common dangers, as it is probable that all the creatures, though of contrary dispositions, agreed in the ark; and yet we cannot, in this

* “A middle course neither procures friends, nor removes enemies.”—EDIT.

our common peril, agree with our own countrymen. Luther tells of two goats, that, meeting upon a narrow plank over a deep river, whereby they could neither turn back nor pass by, the one of them lies down, that, the other going over him, they might both escape the danger. If mere nature can teach these poor creatures to yield so far to one another, to prevent the ruin of both; surely reason, and especially God's grace being superadded, should teach each different party, in common dangers, to strive which should submit to other, in what possibly they can, to preserve the whole. It is evident, that we all have a watchful and an unmerciful enemy, who as they have long abetted our divisions, so they build their greatest hopes upon the continuance of them; and although they may carry fairer to one side than to another, yet even such must only expect to be used by them as Ulysses was by Polyphemus,—to be devoured last. What unaccountable folly, then, is it for us, with Archimedes, to be taken up with drawing unnecessary lines and figures; while, in the mean time, the city is taken, and "the Romans come and take away both our place and nation!" (John xi. 48.)

USE IV.

Let us all then be entreated, conjured, and persuaded to forbear biting and devouring one another. — "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory." (Phil. ii. 1—3.) Leave off this brutish behaviour toward one another. To which end consider, 1. *The greatness and baseness of the sin*; 2. *The certainty and sadness of the danger that attends it*; 3. *The best method to cure the sin, and prevent the danger.*

1. For the first,—*the greatness and baseness of the sin.*

(1.) *You break the great command of God's law, which is love.*—For, next to the love of God is the love of our neighbour; and they are so conjoined, that the one cannot exist without the other: "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20.) When, therefore, you think you are zealous for God, by this kind of managery you are breaking his laws. Yea, you break "the royal law," which commands you to "love your neighbour as yourselves;" (James ii. 8;) and no other devotion, preciseness, or charity will answer for this defect; as it follows: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point," (referring to this very fault,) "he is guilty of all." (Verse 10.)

(2.) *You trample upon the great precept of the gospel, which is love.*—"And 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.) See here "commandment" in the beginning of the verse, and "commandment" again in the end of it: and then it is joined and goes hand-in-hand with faith in Jesus

Christ; so that you may as safely be without the one as without the other. And again: "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." (Chap. iv. 21.) Now, what love can there be in the heart, when there is nothing but reproach, contempt, and rage, in the tongue, in the pen, and in the carriage? It is certain, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" (Matt. xii. 34;) and the lungs must needs be corrupt within, when such purulent matter is expectorated. Say not, that your love to the truth, or to the public good, must regulate your behaviour to particular persons; for neither the truth nor the public good does need your uncharitable words or behaviour. Our blessed Saviour had great truths to declare, and great errors to oppose; yet he did "not strive, nor cry; neither did any man hear his voice in the streets." (Verse 19.) And as Lactantius argued with the Heathens, *Vel Ethnici Christianos sapientes judicant vel stultos; tamen non vel sapientes imitantur, vel stultis parcurt;** so your opposites are either wise or foolish: if wise, you should comply with them, respect and reverence them; if foolish, you should forbear and pity them. But whatsoever they are, you ought entirely to love them.

(3.) *These contentions do bring great dishonour to Jesus Christ.*—He is "the Prince of Peace," (Isai. ix. 6,) the true King of Salem; the great Promoter of peace, and the great Pattern of it. When he came into the world, "peace" was sung; when he departed out of the world, "peace" was bequeathed. Now this quarrelsome temper in his servants doth grievously reflect upon him. For he saith, "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.) As if he had said, "Their dissensions and quarrels will tempt men to think that I came not from thee, who art the Mirror of wisdom and love." He employed all his sacred breath, to pluck men out of the power of the devil, the world, and the flesh; to promote faith, repentance, and holiness; and "to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke i. 79.) And accordingly the apostle tells us, that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) Let not us, therefore, dishonour our Redeemer; let us not calculate a new gospel; let us not lay too great a stress on small matters; let us not provoke men to think, that our great Master came to "tithe mint, anise, and cummin," who came about far other work, and taught us far greater matters. (Matt. xxiii. 23.) It is recorded of Alexander Severus, a heathen emperor, that seeing two Christians contending, he forbade them to assume the name of Christians upon them; for that by their quarrelling they disgraced their Master. How many now by this rule would be interdicted "that worthy name!" (James ii. 7.)

* "The Heathen either account the Christians wise men, or consider them to be fools: yet they neither imitate them as being-wise, nor spare them as foolish."—EDIT.

(4.) *These uncharitable contentions do grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*—He descended like a dove, and cannot brook “the gall of bitterness.” When, therefore, the apostle had dehorted the Ephesians from “grieving the Holy Spirit of God,” (chap. iv. 30,) he adds in the next verse, “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” This sweet Dove will never lodge in a vulture’s nest. You heard, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,” &c.; and whatsoever pretences any may make to the Spirit, if they do not verify them by a meek, loving, and charitable behaviour to others, they abuse the Holy Spirit, and deceive others. For as nothing is more grateful to this Good Spirit than love and peace, so nothing more distasteful than wrath and contention.

(5.) *These contentions do stir up much corruption, both in the aggressor and the defendant.*—There is a great deal of folly in the wisest and best of men; and this either lurks in the habit, or is produced into act, more or less, as there is greater or lesser temptation. Sin dwells in our natures, as the mud in the bottom of a glass of water; when it is shaken, it appears, and stains the whole glass. There is a world of pride, anger, envy, and revenge, in men’s hearts; and these contentions draw them forth, strengthen them, and make them rampant: “As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.” (Prov. xxvi. 21.) So that the wise man concludes, that “he loveth transgression that loveth strife.” (Prov. xvii. 19.) And hereupon some have made observations upon the deaths of bishop Ridley and bishop Hooper, that they suffered with more torture than others, and *that* because of their contentions together before.

(6.) *They do greatly hinder the conversion of the ungodly, and the progress in holiness of the godly.*—Whereas the great work of God’s ministers should be to instruct the ignorant, to convince and reform the profane, to build up God’s children in their faith and holiness;—this should be their study in private, this their business in public;—now the ignorant and ungodly are left quiet in their sins, the sober and pious are little improved in their Christian course, and men’s talents of time, parts, and pains, are laid out in dry and unprofitable controversies. And then private persons, who should employ their converse together to their mutual edification,—they are perpetually irritating one another by these fruitless contentions. I have heard of a monster, born in Scotland in the reign of James IV. with two heads and one body, which two heads would be still arguing and knocking each other in eager disputes; too fit an emblem of this disputing age! But we that have but one blessed Head, yet the members are always contending among themselves. Instead of exhorting, we are censuring; instead of reproving, we are reproaching; instead of “provoking to love and good works,” we provoke one another to wrath and discontent. And then for the devout use of prayer, doubtless these wrath-

ful contentions must needs greatly disturb it. For if husband and wife should maintain a constant amity, that their "prayers be not hindered," (1 Peter iii. 7,) a continual contesting with our brethren must greatly clog and damp them. Whereupon Cyprian, citing those words of our Saviour, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven," (Matt. xviii. 19,) hath this observation: *Plus impetrari potest paucorum concordia prece, quàm discordia oratione multorum*: "A few in concord shall obtain more than many in discord."

(7.) *These contentions in religion tempt men to be atheists.*—When they read and hear such unmerciful rage in Christians one against another, and that they who profess agreement in nineteen things, are ready to anathematize one another about the twentieth; what a stumbling-block must it needs be unto weak and unresolved persons, and tempt them to throw aside all religion! So Optatus observed of old in the like case: *Vos dicitis, LICET; nos dicimus, NON LICET. Inter LICET vestrum, et NON LICET nostrum, nutant animæ populorum.** I say, this "tempts men;" but it is only a temptation; for who, that hath a present journey to go for his life, will sullenly forbear to set forward, because all his friends in the town are not agreed what o'clock it is at his setting out? Every man is bound upon peril of everlasting damnation to "win Christ" and "be found in him," to "work out his own salvation," and to set about it without delay: now what a weak thing is it for any man to refuse or neglect this necessary work, because some men are not agreed about a gesture or a ceremony! Such fools shall die in their sin; but their blood shall be required at their hands who have been a scandal to them. (Ezek. iii. 18.)

(8.) *These biting and devouring contentions are uncivil, inhuman, and barbarous.*—It hath been always reckoned for good breeding, not to be confident and peremptory in asserting any thing whereof any in the company modestly doubts; and, on the other side, if any cannot comply with the sentiments of another, to enter his dissent with all possible respect, and without any reflection or provocation. We account it barbarous rudeness in discoursing, yea, or in discussing any point, to signify in civil company the least provoking gesture; much more, to fall into a rage, or to express revenge. And yet, if you hear the harangues, and read the printed discourses, of some *gentlemen*, you would conclude that they have but a small pittance either of good humour or of ingenious education. Man is a rational creature, and is not born with teeth, nor formed with [a] sting or with horns; neither is he teachable or ductile by such boisterous methods. When love indites the reproof, when that accompanies the argument, it penetrates and prevails: *Dilige, et dic quod vis.*† But there not only were, but yet there are, "tongues that devise mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue." (Psalm lii. 2, 4.) I should somewhat suspect their divi-

* "You say, 'It is lawful;' we say, 'It is not lawful.' Between your 'lawful,' and our 'not lawful,' the minds of the people waver."—EDIT. † "Only let your manner be loving, and you may say what you will."—EDIT.

nity, whose ethics are no better. Thus you see the manifold sinfulness and base vileness of this sin truly, but imperfectly, described. And now,

2. Consider *the certainty and sadness of the danger*.—You were assured of the certainty of ruin from these contentions in the fourth Proposition,—that it is in vain to expect safety, to be exempted from the calamity threatened. Do but weigh this very scripture, and that determination of our Saviour, “And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand;” (Matt. xii. 25;) and you will conclude, that nothing but a miraculous interposition of God’s power and mercy can prevent it. As, when a disease is in its nature and degree mortal, the physician adviseth the man to settle his conscience and estate, for his danger is imminent; so, when we see that charity broken, which is the girdle that binds a nation together; when we see the black and blue spots of rancour and revenge on the faces and looks, and in the words and carriage, of so many; it sufficiently proclaims our danger; that if we escape more sudden and violent destruction, yet we are sure of a consumption: “Take heed ye be not consumed one of other.” And though ye be dead in your own persons, before this denunciation take effect, yet you will, so far as guilty herein, entail ruin upon the generation to come. And if you would but consider, that you must be sick and die yourselves, at which time, in all likelihood, you will have different apprehensions of these controversies; when conscience shows you the history of your sinful life, and discovers a holy God, before whom you must immediately appear, and the strict account which you must presently give, and the ocean of eternity which is just before you; then you will see that these other points were but of small moment in comparison, and not worth that heat and vigour [which] you spent upon them. And as the danger signified by this word “consumed” is sure, so it is very sad and great. For,

(1.) *It includes the ruin of our outward comforts*.—We know not when we are well. To have houses, plenty, liberty, peace and quiet, are to be reputed for very great mercies; but these feuds and quarrels tend to dispossess you of them. Our sad experience shows us how our body politic languisheth by reason of the uncharitable contentions of the members thereof. What decay of trade, what breaking of tradesmen, what sinking of the rents of land, and what a general consumption, invades us! The judgments of God are already as “a moth” to us; [it will be] well if they break not forth “as a lion” upon us, as was once threatened and fulfilled upon Ephraim. (Hosea v. 12—14.) We are rendered by our contentions suspicious of one another’s integrity, doubtful of one another’s ability; and some have proceeded to that height of animosity, as to forbear all dealing and commerce with those of an opposite party. Whither must this tend, where must this end, but in desolation? If the blood do not circulate, the whole body will suffer for it; and if but a part be miserable, the whole cannot be happy. And if all your

present adversaries were ruined and gone, yet consider that the Benjamites were all, save six hundred, destroyed, and that for maintaining a bad cause; and the men of Israel had sworn in their fury that none of them would give his daughter to wife to any of them: yet when their hot blood was cooled, they lamented, and said, "There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day;" and then they used all their wits and policy to restore that tribe again. (Judges xxi.) We shall be worse than Jews, if we have not such-like resentments.*

(2.) *It threatens the ruin of our religion.*—The only true and safe religion on earth, which should be dearer to every man than his life. Upon the occasion of such distempers in his time, Gregory Nazianzen cried out, "I fear, antichrist will come upon us:" and they drew from him that pathetic expression, whereby he wished that he might with Jonah be thrown into the sea, if thereby the tempests then in the church might be calmed. Our common enemies are powerful, cunning, and malicious; and they gape for our destruction. This island is the great shelter and bulwark of the Protestant religion: what madness, then, seizeth us, to destroy ourselves? "Who hath bewitched" us? (Gal. iii. 1.) "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her *own* hands." (Prov. xiv. 1.) Would to God that we had but the honest policy of Aristides and Themistocles! who, though they were often jarring, yet being employed abroad together about their country's affairs, made an agreement to leave their quarrels upon the mountains which they were then travelling over, till the common business was dispatched which they went about, and then agreed afterwards to examine them. Let us be so wise and charitable as to let fall our contests against one another, till our common profession be out of imminent danger; and then we may with more leisure and safety adjust our differences. How shall we bite our nails, yea, our very tongues, for indignation, if we shall first exasperate, and then weaken, one another to that degree, that the cruel enemies of both shall have made an easy conquest of us! It is no new thing for truth (like Christ, John v. 13) to slip away in the throng of men's contentions.

(3.) *This destruction infers the ruin of our posterity.*—They are embarked with us in the same vessel, and are in a fair likelihood to be sunk with us. And this must greatly affect any considering person,—that your sinfulness should not only provoke God to deliver his ark into his enemies' hands, and deprive you of the gospel; but also that your children and posterity, who have been faultless herein, should be left to live in Egyptian darkness,—inherit your estates, and the curse that is entailed upon them. We have been contending about the shadow of religion, and they must suffer for the substance of it.

The providence of God hath several times most expressly called us to unity, to charity, and to concord. In the year 1660, our general union in civils, and our general flexibility to a mutual agreement in religious matters, was a plain direction of providence to us to bury

* On the meaning of this word see the note in page 85.—EDIT.

our debate and strife, and to put up the temporal and spiritual sword together. But we have been "biting and devouring one another" ever since, now almost thirty years. When it pleased God to contend from heaven with us by the plague and fire, and to permit men to contend with us by war, it was a sufficient *item* to us to make our peace with God, and to be at peace among ourselves. But we have been "biting and devouring one another," for all that. In the year 1678, when there appeared deep and strong designs and endeavours to subvert religion, and to bury both parties in the same grave; Divine Providence did thereby articulately call to us to lay our quarrels to sleep, and cordially to join our prayers and endeavours in our places to rescue our common faith from so great a danger. But yet we have been, since that time, "biting and devouring one another," as sharply as ever before. And now once more we have a fair call, and each party hath professed a serious inclination, to unite together against our common adversaries. God forbid that our prejudices, humours, or interests should still hinder so great a blessing!

3. I come now, in the third and last place, to direct *the best method to cure this great evil, and to prevent this great danger.*—
And,

(1.) *Lament your own and others' sin in this particular.*—All sound amendment begins in godly sorrow. We are glowing hot in wrath and strife; tears are necessary to quench this flame: mourn for others' fierceness and for your own. "For the divisions of Reuben," let there be "great searchings of heart." (Judges v. 15, 16.) When we are once truly humbled and penitent before God, our brethren will have better quarter from us. Consider how often you have added fuel to this fire, how you have exasperated this burning fever, and how little you have done to assuage and mitigate it; how easily you have been prejudiced, how easily provoked, how hardly pacified. If you should have met with such treatment from your Heavenly Father as your brethren have had from you, you had been devoured and consumed long ago. Do not think that needless divisions in Christ's church is so light a fault, that reproaches and revilings are venial sins; when our Saviour hath assured us, that it were better for him that shall offend one of his little ones that believe in him, to have "a millstone hanged about his neck, and be drowned in the depth of the sea;" (Matt. xviii. 6;) and how wittily soever it be expressed, yet he that "shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." (Matt. v. 22.) Whatever uncharitable reflection, therefore, you have been guilty of, repent of it speedily; and also mourn for the miscarriages of others. When we are a little melted for our own and others' faults, then we are fit for the healing mercy of God: "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." (Job xlii. 10.)

(2.) *Learn Christian wisdom.*—Thereby you will be able to weigh and consider things, and to look at them on every side. What mischief hath zeal without wisdom done in the church of God! A wise man will observe the weight and consequence of the things [which]

he undertakes to oppose and defend; and then he will consider what are the most proper means to convince and to reduce his mistaken adversary: "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent," that is, "a sedate, calm, and cool," "spirit." (Prov. xvii. 27.) A wise man distinguisheth between tolerable mistakes and intolerable, and proportions his zeal and the expressions thereof accordingly: whereas "a fool's lips enter into contention;" (Prov. xviii. 6;) he is hurried by his folly into all the terms, moods, and figures of provocation. And therefore the apostle James calls for such wisdom upon this account: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom." (James iii. 13.) As the deepest rivers run most calmly, so the wisest minds are ever most peaceable. A wise man will consider that it will be in the church as it is in a house: some children do work, and others make work; some are for the school, some for the field, some for the cradle; and yet all children: and thus God hath tempered the body, that there may be a various love among the members:—in the strong to the weak, a love of care; in the weak to the strong, a love of reverence. Again: a wise man can govern his passions; and not "cast fire-brands, arrows, and death," and then say, "Am not I in sport?" (Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.) No; he will make controversies as few, and then as short, as he can; and manage sacred matters with a solid gravity. And "therefore get wisdom: and with all your getting get understanding." (Chap. iv. 7.) And to that end, add to earnest prayer, reading in God's book especially, and, as far as your calling and capacity will permit, in the histories of the church; and withal observe and digest those things which you have seen, or heard, or read: so will you be able, perhaps, to make peace among others; however, to keep the peace yourselves.

(3.) *Endeavour for a catholic spirit.*—That is, a due and tender respect to all the parts and members of the Christian church. For of that whole mystical body, every true Christian is a member: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Cor. xii. 13, 27.) Hereby we shall not suddenly unchurch others, at home or abroad, for some imperfections or corruptions: for he is but meanly read in the records of the church, that hath not observed manifold defects, deformities, and corruptions in all the Christian societies which have been in the world; and on the other side, that some holy persons in all ages have in some thing or other dissented from the common opinions; and that many weak and peevish people have [exercised] and ever will exercise the patience and charity of the rest. On the contrary, a poor, narrow spirit in many hath not been the least cause of our contentions; whereby they have confined the grace, presence, and goodness of God to some few persons or societies, that have been more strict and devout than others: "No godly people but they; none godly ministers but

theirs." And the Papists are notoriously culpable in this point, while they would impropriate all Christianity to themselves; not valuing any person, how learned and holy soever, who will not be of their communion. But a *true catholic*, though he be fully persuaded in his own mind of his principles and practices, yet he can wish well unto, and think well of, and cordially embrace, all that are sound in the fundamentals of religion, though in divers things they do err and go astray.

(4.) "*Be clothed with humility.*" (1 Peter v. 5.)—For whatsoever pleas and pretences are hung out, it is pride within which hath a hand in the beginning and maintaining of our quarrels: "Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease." (Prov. xxii. 10.) Hereby we are "wise in our own eyes;" (Prov. iii. 7;) we "look not on others' things," but only on our own. (Phil. ii. 4.) This makes the superior look upon the inferior that differs from him with great contempt; and this prompts him that is on the lower ground to all the envious reflections and constructions imaginable of him that is got above him. Says the one, "Shall I give way or yield a jot to men so ordinary for their parts, and so obnoxious for their circumstances? I that neither need them nor value them?" Says the other, "These men are all either blinded with preferment, or hunting after it; their parts are either utterly abused, or quite blasted." Thus the ball of contention is tossed from one to another by the hands of pride and scorn.

Whereas humility makes a man think meanly of himself, moderately of his own notions and apprehensions, highly of those that deserve it, and respectfully of all. It was this which taught excellent bishop Ridley, when he was in prison, thus to accost honest bishop Hooper: "But now, my dear brother, 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." * More comfort to them, if they had been on these terms in the time of their liberty and prosperity. Humility is a great step to unity: "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. iv. 1—3.) Pray behold how these graces are here linked together,—"*lowliness, meekness, unity, and peace.*" The humble man will not endure that his reputation shall outweigh the peace of the church; and therefore is

more willing that truth should be victorious than himself. He will go two miles for one, to meet his adversary in an honest way of accommodation; and when he cannot make his judgment to bend, yet his heart shall stoop to you with all sincerity. This virtue made Aristippus come to Æschines, when they were at feud, with this greeting, "Æschines, shall we be friends?" And this dictated his answer, "Yes, sir, with all my heart." "But remember," saith Aristippus, "that I, being elder than you, do make the first motion." "Yea," said the other; "and therefore I conclude you to be the worthier man; for I began the strife, and you began the peace." Let us all, then, "be clothed with humility:" assume not in regard of your learning, wit, or parts; consider, you are but sharers in our common Benefactor: neither let your riches or dignities make you to speak or write otherwise than you would do without them: and this will go a great way to prevent our "biting and devouring one another."

(5.) *Apply yourselves to the practice of real piety.*—By this I mean, that we should employ our chief care to procure and increase a lively faith, to exercise daily repentance, to strengthen our hope, to inflame our love to God and to our neighbour, to grow in humility, zeal, patience, and self-denial; to be diligent in watchfulness over our thoughts, words, and ways, in mortification of our sinful passions and affections, in the examination of our spiritual estate, in meditation, in secret and fervent prayer, and in universal and steady obedience. In these things do run the vital spirits of religion: and whoso is seriously employed in these, will have but little time, and less mind, for unnecessary contentions. These will keep that heat about the heart, which, evaporating, degenerates into airy and fiery exhalations, and leaves the soul as cold as ice to any holy desires. "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." (Heb. xiii. 9.)

It is manifest what a sad decay of these hath followed our multiplied quarrels; and how hard it is to be "fervent in spirit," and withal to be fiery in controversies. He that walks with God, and whose "conversation is in heaven," will be quickly weary of windy disputes with men, and will be apt to conclude, with one of the ancients, *Lassus sum, dum et cum sermone atque invidia, et cum hostibus et cum nostris, pugno*:* which hath occasioned divers great divines the more earnestly to long for heaven, that they might be out of the noise of endless and perverse disputations. The serious practice of godliness hath the promise of divine direction in all material points: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant." (Psalm xxv. 14.) "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John vii. 17.) And likewise, he that "lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit," dares not "bite or devour" his neighbour. "Let not us," saith the

* "I am weary with encountering ribald speeches and corroding envy, and with contending against enemies, as well as our own people."—EDIT.

apostle, that so walk, "be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another." (Gal. v. 25, 26.)

(6.) "*Follow after charity.*" (1 Cor. xiv. 1.)—"Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth," (Chap. viii. 1.) This is the healing grace; and if this be not applied to our bleeding wounds, they will never be cured. This "suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." Pray read on, and mark all these passages: "Charity doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things" tolerable, "believeth all things" credible, "hopeth all things" possible, "endureth all things," and, as it follows, endureth after all things. (1 Cor. xiii. 4—8.) That whole chapter [is] most fit to be read, and often studied by all that love peace. *Charitas dicit aliorum bona certa, meliora; certa mala, minora; bona dubia, certa; dubia mala, nulla*: an excellent conclusion of charity:—that "it reckons the good parts, qualities, or actions that are certainly in others, to be rather better than they are indeed; and the ills, to be less than they are indeed; the doubtful good things in them, to be certain; and the doubtful evil, to be none." And how far would this temper and practice go to the promoting of unity and concord! And how directly contrary do most of them proceed, that make the greatest noise in our irreligious quarrels! not only putting the most invidious sense upon one another's words and actions, but also the most uncharitable judgment upon their persons, upon their spiritual and eternal estate.

We must know that, as faith unites us to the Head, so love unites us to all the members; and as we can have no faith nor hope without charity, so, as any man increaseth in faith, so he is enlarged in his charity. The more true piety any man hath, doubtless the more charity still that man hath. "We that did hate one another," saith Justin Martyr of the Christians, "do now live most friendly and familiarly together, and pray for our enemies." If we must err one way, (as who is infallible?) it is safer for you to err by too much mildness, than by over-much rigour; for Almighty God, though he be wise and just, yet he is most emphatically called "Love:" "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is Love." (1 John iv. 7, 8.) And for you to reply, that you do heartily love those that are every way orthodox,—that is, that agree with you in opinion,—is nothing thankworthy: "Do not even the publicans the same?" (Matt. v. 46.) That may be nothing but self-love; but your religion enjoins you to "love your enemies;" (verse 44;) and it is but a sorry expression of this love to "bite and devour one another" for unnecessary matters. It were better, as one says, that Cæsar should break all Pollio's curious glasses, than [that] they should break the bond of charity, or that the breach of them should be the occasion of so much inhumanity of brethren one against another. Let charity,

therefore, guide the magistrate in making and executing civil laws ; let charity accompany Christ's ministers in their studies, pulpits, and behaviour to their people ; let charity be maintained by all the laity toward one another : then shall we have that "unity, peace, and concord," which we solemnly pray for ; this dove will bring back the olive-branch into the ark of the church.

(7.) *Avoid extremes.*—Do not labour to screw-up one another to the utmost. It is observed that every peace that is concluded upon rigorous or disadvantageous terms, endures but a while ; the aggrieved party will take the first opportunity of relief, as an over-rented tenant to throw up his lease. Conscience must be wary, but it would be easy, in matters of religion ; and therefore should be directed ; but may not, indeed cannot, be forced contrary to its sentiments. When a late French king had earnestly solicited a great statesman, retiring from the court, to leave with him some of his most politic observations, and to that end had locked him up in his closet, only with pen, ink, and paper ; it is said, that he only took several sheets of paper, and wrote in the top of the sheet *Modus*, in the middle *Modus*, and in the bottom again *Modus* ; advertising his master thereby, that the sum of all prudence in government was to observe "a mean" in his administrations.

Indeed, if one party have all the truth on their side, it is most fit [that] the others should yield themselves to be their prisoners : but if that be not evident, as it is scarce probable, it is most equal that each do move toward the other as far as they can ; or else they will never come together. If the things in question be any way necessary, God forbid that ye should refuse them ; if they be not, God forbid that ye should urge them. It was king James's sense to cardinal Perron, *Quare existimat ejus majestas nullam ad ineundam concordiam brevioram viam fore, quam si diligenter separentur necessaria à non necessariis ; et ut de necessariis conveniat, omnia opera insumatur ; in non necessariis, libertati Christianæ locus detur* : that is, "The next way to concord, is to distinguish between things that are necessary, and to endeavour a full agreement in those ; and things that are not necessary, and to allow a Christian liberty in these." Not that, in dissuading you from extremes, I would commend lukewarmness or halting in the course that men have chosen ; but that they so govern their resolution by wisdom and charity, that they may not unnecessarily provoke, grieve, or exasperate others, who perhaps have as sound hearts, if not as clear heads, as themselves. It was a great and a wise man's motto, *Mediocria firma* ;* and a true proverb among the vulgar, "Too-too will break in two."

(8.) *Mind every one his own business.*—The apostle gives this rule : "That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." (1 Thess. iv. 11.) It is not a thing arbitrary, but "commanded:" and that upon good reason ; for when men want employment, or have employments too mean for their spirits, or, having good callings, do neglect

* "Moderate things are firm."—EDIT.

them, they are fit instruments to stir up contention. These permit "their tongues to walk through the earth," (Psalm lxxiii. 9,) and will exercise themselves in things too high for them. These collect and disperse all the invidious narrations they can meet with, and make no conscience of wounding every man's reputation that is on the other side: by all which they greatly contribute to the heightening and exasperating the differences that are among us. And, in short, they are the seventh sort of people that are "an abomination unto the Lord;" namely, such as "sow discord among brethren." (Prov. vi. 19.) If, therefore, men would mind first and chiefly the business of their own souls, and "exercise" themselves in this,— "to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men;" (Acts xxiv. 16;) if they would keep their own vineyards, weed up those tares which spring up in their own hearts, and stir up the graces of God's Holy Spirit in them; and then travail in birth with earnest endeavours for the conversion and salvation of their own poor children and servants; and then be diligent in their temporal callings; they would have neither list nor leisure to "wander about from house to house," from ale-house to tavern, from tavern to coffee-house, as they do; and are "not only idle, but tattlers also and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not;" like those women which are reprov'd in 1 Tim. v. 13.

Every man hath his particular post and province to attend [to]; and, I grant, beside his domestic concerns, he is bound in conscience to promote the good of the town, parish, city, and nation whereunto he belongs; and, in consequence thereto, wisely and resolutely to assert and preserve all the privileges belonging to any of them, and conscionably to discharge the respective duties incumbent upon him: but this entitles no private persons to be correcting their governors, instructing their ministers, turning the world upside down, disquieting themselves and others, and leaving bad impressions upon those [whom] they converse withal; whereas our great business should be to "have" the "salt" of grace and truth "in ourselves," and to "have" and further "peace one with another." (Mark ix. 50.)

(9.) *Observe that good old rule, of doing to others as you would be done to.*—You would have others to bear with you; and why will not you bear with others? You would have the best sense put upon your words, actions, and carriages; and why will not you put the best sense on their words, actions, and carriages? You would not be imposed on, censured, reproached, backbitten, slandered; no more should you impose upon others, or censure them, or reproach or backbite or slander them. I may say to you, as Chrysostom, on that, Matt. vii. 12: "Let thy own will here be thy law." Let not this rule, which was revered by Heathens, be trampled on by Christians. It is true, error cannot reasonably expect the same regard from truth, as the truth may from error; yet erroneous persons, whose errors are not mortal, should no more be devoured by the servants of truth, than those who have right on their side, by those that are in the wrong. Those who have not otherwise forfeited the

repute of sobriety, piety, and honesty, save only that they cannot be of your mind; let them still be so esteemed and treated, as you yourselves desire to be esteemed and treated, if any contrary party should ever have wind and sun with them. Remember how this melted Sesostrius, a Pagan, into compassion, when he observed one of his royal captives, who helped to draw his chariot, looking wistly on the wheel, how the part now lowest was presently uppermost; so that he, considering the mutability of these sublunary things, released him from that bondage. And, however, forget not what the Holy Ghost saith: "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James ii. 13.)

(10.) My last advice is, to "*pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*"—This every one may do, and this every one ought to do: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall ever prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." (Psalm cxxii. 6, 7.) There are few greater reasons for our solemn fasting and prayer than this. If some plague, or war, or drought come upon us, we reckon it is high time to fast and pray: but, alas! those are in themselves but miseries; but our contentions are so our miseries, that they are our sins also: those will but destroy some of our people; but uncharitable contentions will consume us all. But whatever others do herein, let it be every sincere Christian's care to lay holy violence to heaven upon this account. You have done all that is in your power to restore love and peace; and it is in vain: try, then, what God can do: *Abi in cellam, et dic, Miserere, Deus.** He can make men to be of one mind in a house, city, and nation: he can bow the hearts of a whole nation, even as the heart of one man, and that in a moment of time: he can bring the wolf and the lion and the lamb to "feed together;" so that "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all his holy mountain." (Isai. lvi. 25.) And O that the prayer of our most blessed Saviour may yet prevail with God to pour down a spirit of love and peace into us all! (John xvii. 21.)

In the mean time, let all those that are passive, that are upright, humble, and quiet, comfort themselves with Salvian's saying, *Insectantur nos, et in nobis Deum*: "Christ is a fellow-sufferer with all that suffer as Christians; and their design is against God himself, that devour his servants." And then, *Pergant nostræ patientiæ præcones εἰπειν πάντων ὠνηρόν ρημα, modò ψευδομένοι: beatos nos hoc modo facient, dum vellent miseros*: "They that 'speak' and write 'all manner of evil of you,' so it be 'falsely,' while they endeavour to render you miserable, do thereby make you happy." True virtue and piety shines most in the fire; and therefore "in your patience possess ye your souls," (Luke xxi. 19.) if you can possess nothing else.

And for others, if after all warnings and endeavours their hearts be still filled with rancour and bent upon mischief, we must leave them to St. Augustine's sentence: *Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.*† There is a God who "tells" his servants' "wanderings, and puts

* "Go into thy closet, and say, 'Have compassion, O God.'"—EDIT.

† "God

first deprives of reason, those whom he wills to destruction."—EDIT.

their tears into his bottle," (Psalm lvi. 8,) and who will execute judgment upon all that have spoken or done hardly toward them; and though they may support themselves with their present impunity and prosperity, yet "the Lord of that servant that began to smite his fellow-servants, shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder." (Matt. xxiv. 49—51.) And though they may think it a long time to that day, they will find there is a longer space after it. They that choose the fire, shall have their fill of it: for "unto them that are contentious," there remains "indignation and wrath," and fire that is everlasting. (Rom. ii. 8.)

But I despair not of so much remorse in such as have without prejudice and with consideration read these pages, but that they will awake and shake off the enchantment which hath possessed them; and, discerning their sin and our common danger, they will embrace all their faithful brethren, and become sincere lovers of truth and peace; which effect, the God of Love and Peace work in us all by his Holy Spirit, for the sake of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen, Amen.

SERMON IV.

BY THE REV. RICHARD MAYO, A. M.

FROM WHAT FEAR OF DEATH ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD
DELIVERED BY CHRIST, AND BY WHAT MEANS DOETH HE
DELIVER THEM FROM IT?

*And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time
subject to bondage.—Hebrews ii. 15.*

IN this and in the foregoing verse, you have some account of the design and end of our Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnation and passion. There were divers weighty reasons why he assumed our nature, and therein subjected himself to death; and two of them are told us in this context:—

1. *That he might destroy the devil.*
2. *That he might deliver the elect people of God.*
1. *That he might destroy the devil.*—Who is described to be one "that had the power of death;" not the supreme, but a subordinate, power of death; a power of death as God's executioner to inflict it, and affright men with it; to make it terrible and formidable to them, by heightening their guilty fears, and representing to them its dreadful consequents. In these and in divers other respects that might be mentioned, the devil is said to "have the power of death." "Him,"