

THE MORNING EXERCISES

AT

CRIPPLEGATE, ST. GILES IN THE FIELDS,

AND

IN SOUTHWARK:

BEING

DIVERS SERMONS,

PREACHED A. D. MDCLIX—MDCLXXXIX.

BY SEVERAL MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

IN OR NEAR LONDON.

FIFTH EDITION.

CAREFULLY COLLATED AND CORRECTED.

WITH NOTES AND TRANSLATIONS,

BY JAMES NICHOLS,

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



IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING THE CONCLUSION OF THE "CONTINUATION," AND THE
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BEING THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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A CONTINUATION
OF
MORNING-EXERCISE QUESTIONS

AND
CASES OF CONSCIENCE,

PRACTICALLY RESOLVED,

BY SUNDRY MINISTERS,

IN OCTOBER, MDCLXXXII.

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

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CONTINUATION
OF THE
MORNING-EXERCISE QUESTIONS.
(CONCLUDED.)

SERMON XXVI.

BY THE REV. THOMAS DOOLITTLE, A. M.

OF PEMBROKE HALL, CAMBRIDGE.

HOW WE SHOULD EYE ETERNITY, THAT IT MAY HAVE ITS DUE
INFLUENCE UPON US IN ALL WE DO.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.—2 Corinthians iv. 18.

Eternal! What a sound doth this word “eternal” make in my ears! what workings doth it cause within my heart! what casting about of thoughts! What word is next to be added to it? Is it, “eternal world?” Where? for this is temporal. O! that eternal world is now by us unseen, and as to us is yet to come. But yet my trembling heart is still solicitous to what other word this word “eternal” might be prefixed as to myself, or those that hear me this day, when they and I, who, through the long-sufferance of God are yet in this present and temporal, shall be in that eternal, world. Shall it be “eternal damnation” in that eternal world? How? after so many knockings of Christ, strivings of the Spirit, tenders of mercy, wooings of grace, calls of ministers, warnings of conscience, admonitions of friends, waitings of patience? all which put us into a fair probability of escaping eternal damnation. O dreadful words! Can more terror be contained, can more misery be comprehended, in any two words, than in “eternal damnation?” But we in time are praying, hearing, repenting, believing, conflicting with devils, mortifying sin, weaning our hearts from this world, that, when we shall go out of time, we might find “life” or “salvation” added to “eternal.” *Eternal salvation!* these be words as comfortable as the other were terrible, as sweet as they were bitter. What, then? This word

“eternal” is the horror of devils, the amazement of damned souls, which causeth desperation in all that hellish crew; for it woundeth like a dart, continually sticking in them, that they most certainly know that they are damned to all eternity. *Eternal!* it is the joy of angels, the delight of saints, that while they are made happy in the beatifical vision, are filled with perfect love and joy, they sit and sing, “All this will be eternal.” *Eternal!* this word—it is a loud alarm to all that be in time; a serious caution to make this our grand concern,—that when we must go out of time, our “eternal” souls might not be doomed down to “eternal” damnation, but might obtain salvation that shall be “eternal;” of which we have hope and expectation, “while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

The consideration of these words may be twofold:—

1. *Relative*: as they are a reason of steadfastness in shaking troubles, as a cordial against fainting under the cross: “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look,” &c. (Verses 16—18.) Not only the experience of present spiritual good in the inward—by the pressing afflictions on the outward—man, in weakening of sin, in purging away our dross, in weaning us from the world, in humbling us for our miscarriages, in reducing us from wandering, in emptying us of self-conceit, in trying our faith, in exercising our patience, in confirming our hope, in awakening of conscience, in bringing us to examine our ways, in renewing our repentance, in proving our love, in quickening us to prayer,—but also the clear and certain prospect of glory after affliction, of a “weight of glory” after “light affliction,” of eternal glory after short affliction, of a weight of glory “far more exceeding” all our present sorrows, burdens, calamities, than tongue can express, or pen describe, or the mind of man conceive; being more than “eye hath seen, or ear hath heard, or have entered into the heart of man,” (1 Cor. ii. 9.)—must needs be an alleviation of our sorrows, a lightening of our burdens, comfort in our grief, joy in our groans, strength in our weakness. Though “we are troubled on every side, yet [are we] not distressed; though perplexed, yet not in despair;” (2 Cor. iv. 8;) though under afflictions both felt and seen, yet “we faint not,” while we keep our eye fixed upon the glorious things in the other world that are unseen and eternal too.

2. *Absolute*: as they set before us the mark and scope [which] we should have in our eye all the while we are in time; namely, unseen, eternal things. You stand in time; but you should look into eternity: you stand tottering upon the very brink of time, and, when by death thrust out of time, you must into eternity; and if in any case the old proverb should prevail, it should not fail in this,—to “look before you leap.” The analysis of the text breaks it into these parts:—

1. *The objects that are before us* : (1.) Things seen. (2.) Things not seen.

2. *The act exerted on these objects.*—"Looking," expressed,

(1.) *Negatively* : "Not at the things which are seen." The men of the world stand gazing at these, till their eyes are dazzled with them, and their souls damned for them.

(2.) *Affirmatively* : "But at the things which are not seen." Men in this world, minding another world, stand looking at these, who have an eye to see those things that are not seen. There is a mystery in godliness.

3. *The persons exerting this act upon these objects.*—We that have the Spirit of God ; who have our eyes opened ; who consider we are hastening, posting out of time into eternity. These things are set before the men of the world, who have eyes, but they do not see.

4. *The property of these objects* : (1.) Things seen are *temporal*. (2.) Things not seen are *eternal*.

5. *The reason moving believers to keep a steadfast eye upon things unseen, and to look off from things seen*, is the eternal duration of the one, and the short continuance of the other : "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for," or "because," "the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal." The good things in this world that are seen,—as riches, pleasures, honours,—are things of time, and only for time ; therefore we are not much concerned whether we win or lose them : and the bad things in this life which are seen,—as poverty, imprisonment, persecution,—are at longest but for a short space ; and therefore we are not much concerned whether we endure them, or be freed from them. But that which addeth weight to the things in the other world now not seen by the men of this world, and draws our eyes toward them, and keeps them fixed thereon, is the eternity of them.

6. *The influence that this looking upon things not seen hath upon the beholders of them, in keeping them from fainting under any afflictions* : "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

Three words require a little explication :—"looking," "temporal," "eternal."

1. "While we look," *σκοπουντων*.—The verb is used six times in the New Testament, and is variously translated.

(1.) *To take heed* : "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." (Luke xi. 35.) "Have a care ; see to it." In this sense it is as if the apostle had said, "We take not so much heed, nor are we so full of care, about these visible, transitory things, as we are of the eternal joys of heaven, and the unseen happiness of the saints above."

(2.) *To consider* : "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. vi. 1.) As if he had said, "We seriously consider and weigh in our minds the vanity, insufficiency, and short continuance of all visible things, both good and bad, whether profit or

poverty, honour or disgrace; and the fulness, excellency, and everlasting nature of things unseen; and therefore prefer these before them."

(3.) *To mark, observe, and take notice of*: "Mark them which cause divisions among you." (Rom. xvi. 17.) "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (Phil. iii. 17.) It is the *observation* that believers make,—that all seen things are temporal; unseen, eternal; which worldly men take no notice of, to influence them in what they do.

(4.) *To look*: "Look not every man on his own things." (Phil. ii. 4.) "To look with a diligent eye," as the archer to the mark whereat he shoots; "to make a thing our scope and aim:" and so the substantive is used, Phil. iii. 14: "I press toward the mark." In this respect the sense is: "The thing that we do aim at in all we do is, to get a title to, and hereafter the possession of, eternal things; to secure our everlasting happy state; to have treasures, not for a while, but for ever; to have honour and glory and joy, not in hasty time, but in abiding eternity." Believers are lowly in heart; but they look high: the men of this world are of a haughty spirit; but they aim at low things.

2. "Temporal:" *ὑποκαίρια*.—Used four times in the New Testament. Twice concerning *temporary believers*: "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while." (Matt. xiii. 21.) "Who have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time." (Mark iv. 17.) Once concerning *the pleasure of sin*: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Heb. xi. 25.) And in the text comprehensively of *all visible things*. Take, then, a summary account of all that wicked, worldly men have; and all is "but for a while." What *the richest* among them have: their grandeur dureth "but for a time;" and then is past and gone, and hath no more existence. What *the merriest* among them have,—pleasures, mirth, carnal delights and joy: and this is "but for a season;" their merry bouts will be quickly over, and then succeeds weeping and wailing for ever. What *the best* among them have: even their faith is "but for a time;" and their hope but for a short time; at longest, till death shall close their eyes, and then [they shall] lie down in everlasting despair: [so] that all their comings-in—whether profits from the world, or pleasures from their sin, or supposed happiness from their supposed graces,—have their goings-out; that, upon all they have, you may write, "All is temporal." They had riches, but they are gone; honours and pleasures, but they are gone; many good things in time, but, at the end of time, all have an end; and then, when their endless misery comes, this will be their doleful tune, "All our good is past and gone."

3. "Eternal," *αἰώνια*, *quasi aesi ov*, "always existing."—All duration (even time itself, taken metaphysically) is nothing else but the permanency of essence. Time external, *in sensu physico*, is but *ens rationis*, or "nothing." Therefore, according to the manner of

beings must be the manner of their abidings. All beings may be ranked into three sorts ; whence arise three sorts of duration :—

(1.) *Some things have both beginning and end* : as beasts and other corruptible creatures. And their duration is *time*, which hath both beginning and end.

(2.) *Some things have a beginning, and no end* : as angels, and the souls of men, and the state of both in the other world. And the duration by which these are measured in philosophy, to distinguish it from time and eternity strictly taken, is called *eviternity* ; which imports only an initial defectibility of the things in themselves. Though by the absolute power of God there might be a period put unto their being once begun, yet there is no principle of corruption in their own nature which should cause a cessation of their existing essence ; nor is it in the verge of any created power or second cause to take that being from them, which was given to them by the First [Cause]. And these things, because they have no end, are eternal.

(3.) *One only being hath neither beginning nor end, nor can have* : and that is God. And his duration is *eternity*, properly and most strictly taken ; which is a duration inferring simple interminability of essence, all at once existing without succession. “Eternity” in the most proper acceptation doth exclude not only actual beginning and end, but all possibility of both ; and denotes indefectibility of essence *a parte ante et a parte post*,* existing all at once in one continued immovable instant, without consideration of any thing in it past or to come, though it always was and will be. Plainly to every capacity might this be thus adapted :—If you look backward, you cannot think of any one moment wherein God was not ; if you look forward, you cannot think of any one moment when God shall not be. For if there had been one moment when God was not, nothing could ever have been,—neither God nor creature : unless that which is nothing could make itself something ; which is impossible, because working supposeth being ; and a contradiction, because it infers the being of a thing before it was ; for, in order of time or nature, the cause must be before the effect. Neither can you conceive any one moment beyond which God should cease to be ; because you cannot imagine any thing in God, or distinct from him, that should be the cause of his ceasing to be.

The object, then, of believers’ looking is *the unseen, the eternal God*, as their happiness *objectively* considered, which is so eternal as to be without beginning and end ; and *the enjoyment of this unseen, eternal God in the invisible heavens*,—which fruition, being their happiness *formally* considered, hath a beginning, but no ending.

Should I follow the signification of the Greek word, as “looking at” a mark [that] we aim at, or an end which we desire to obtain, I should limit my discourse only to unseen, eternal good things ; but if it be taken in a more extended sense, “to take heed, to mark, and diligently consider,” I might bring-in the unseen evils in the world to come. And, indeed, to keep our eye fixed upon invisible things, both

* “Both before and hereafter.”—EDIT.

good and bad, that make men eternally miserable or everlastingly blessed, would have a powerful influence upon every step we take in our daily travels to the unseen, eternal world :—to look at unseen, eternal *evil* things, that we might not fall into them : to look at unseen, eternal *good* things, that we might not fall short of them. Which is the design of the question propounded from this text ; namely,

QUESTION.

How we should eye eternity, that it may have its due influence upon us in all we do.—Which question will be more distinctly answered by resolving these following questions contained in it.

QUESTION I. *Whether there be an eternity, into which all men must enter, when they go out of time.*—That we might not only suppose what too many deny, and more doubt of, and some are tempted to call into question, but have it proved that no man might rationally deny the eternity of that state in the unseen world : for, upon this lies the strength of the reason in the text, why believers look at things unseen,—because they are eternal ; and the object must be proved, before we can rationally urge the exerting of the act upon that object.

QUESTION II. *How we should eye eternity, or look at eternal things.*—For if they be unseen, how shall we see them ? And if they be to us in this world invisible, how shall we look at them ?

QUESTION III. *What influence will such a sight of and looking at eternity have upon our minds, consciences, wills, and affections in all we do ?*

QUESTION I. *Whether there be an eternity of happiness that we should look at to obtain, and of misery to escape ?*

Doth any question this ? Look at men's conversations ; see their neglect of God and Christ ; their frequent, yea, constant refusals of remedying grace ; their leading a sensual, flesh-pleasing life ; their seldom thoughts of death and judgment ; their carelessness to make preparation for another world ; their minding only things temporal ; and then the question may be, " Who do indeed believe that there is such an eternal state ? " Yet the real existence and certainty of eternal things may be evidently manifested by scripture and by arguments.

1. If you give assent to the divine authority of the *scripture*, you cannot deny the certainty of another world, nor the eternal state of souls therein, though this be now unseen to you. " Jesus said, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage : but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage : neither can they die any more : for they are equal unto the angels." (Luke xx. 34—36.) Is not here plain mention of " this " and " that world," and the different state in both ? In " this," men marry and die ; in " that," they neither marry nor die ; yea, Christ himself affirms, that in " that world " they cannot die. And whatsoever words the scripture borrows from the best things of this world to

help our conceptions of the glorious state of holy ones in the other world, some word denoting the eternal duration of it is annexed to them all. Is it called a "kingdom?" it is an "everlasting kingdom." (2 Peter i. 11.) "A crown?" it is "a crown incorruptible," (1 Cor. ix. 25,) "that fadeth not away." (1 Peter v. 4.) Is it called "glory?" it is "eternal glory." (Verse 10; 2 Cor. iv. 17.) "An inheritance?" it is "incorruptible," (1 Peter i. 4,) "eternal." (Heb. ix. 15.) "A house?" it is "eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.) "Salvation?" it is "eternal salvation." (Heb. v. 9.) "Life?" it is "eternal life." (Matt. xxv. 46.)

No less certain is the eternity of the state of the damned, by the scriptures adding some note of everlasting duration to those dreadful things by which their misery is set forth. Is it by "a furnace of fire," (Matt. xiii. 42,) by "a lake of fire?" (Rev. xxi. 8;) it is "fire eternal and unquenchable." (Matt. iii. 12; xxv. 41.) By "a prison?" (1 Peter iii. 19;) from thence is no coming forth. (Matt. v. 25, 26.) By "darkness," and "blackness of darkness?" it is "for ever." (Jude 13.) By "burnings?" it is "everlasting burnings." (Isai. xxxiii. 14.) By "torments?" (Luke xvi. 23;) "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." (Rev. xiv. 11; xx. 10.) By "damnation?" it is "eternal damnation." (Mark iii. 29.) By "destruction?" it is "everlasting destruction." (2 Thess. i. 9.) By "punishment?" it is "everlasting punishment." (Matt. xxv. 46.) By the gnawings of the worm? it is such that never dieth. (Mark ix. 44, 46, 48.) By "wrath that is to come?" (Matt. iii. 7; 1 Thess. i. 10;) when it comes, it will "abide." (John iii. 36.)

Is any thing more fully and plainly asserted in the scripture, than that the things in the other world, now unseen, are eternal things? Those that enjoy the one in heaven, and those that now feel the other in hell, do not, cannot doubt of this; and a little while will put all those that are now in time quite out of all doubting of the certainty of the eternity of the state in the unseen world.

2. The eternity of the unseen things in heaven and hell, the everlasting happy or everlasting miserable state after this life, may be evidenced briefly, yet clearly, by these following arguments:—

(1.) *God did from eternity choose some to be fitted in time to partake of happiness to all eternity.*—"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy;" (Eph. i. 4;) and, being made holy, shall be happy in obtaining that salvation to which he chose us. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." (2 Thess. ii. 13.) "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation." (1 Thess. v. 9.) Which "salvation" doth include absence of all evil, and presence of all good; and this salvation, being "eternal," (Heb. v. 9,) infers the absence of all evil *for ever*, and the presence of all good *for ever*; and whosoever is delivered from all privative evils, and possessed of all positive everlasting good, and that *for ever*, cannot be denied to be happy *for ever*.

(2.) *Christ hath redeemed some to be infallibly brought to eternal glory.*—What reason can be given of the incarnation and death of the Son of God, if there be no eternal misery for men to be delivered from, nor any eternal happiness to be possessed of? For,

(i.) *Did Christ die to deliver his followers from poverty and prisons, from sorrow and sufferings, from trouble and tribulation?*—What! and yet his holy, humble, and sincere people lie under these more than other men that are wicked and ungodly! Why was Paul, then, “in stripes and imprisonments, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in perils and jeopardy” of his life continually? (2 Cor. xi. 23—27;) and such as Pilate, Felix, and Festus in great worldly prosperity? Or can it be imagined, that men persisting in sin should be more partakers of the fruits of Christ’s death, than those that forsake their sin, repent, and turn, and follow him?

(ii.) *Did Christ suffer and die to purchase only temporal good things, as riches, honours, for his disciples?*—Were these worth his precious blood? Whatever Christ died for, it cost him his most sacred blood. Was it, then, for temporal enjoyments only, which Turks and Pagans may and do possess more than thousands of his true and faithful followers? Did Christ intend the benefits of his death for these in more especial manner than for such as remain finally impenitent? and yet shall such reap the fruit of all his sufferings, and those that believe on him go without them? Sober reason doth abhor it, and all the scripture is against it. Would Christ have humbled himself to such a contemptible birth, miserable life, lamentable, painful, shameful death, only for transitory, temporal, fading mercies? If we consider the variety of his sufferings from God, men, and devils, the dignity of the Sufferer, I profess I cannot imagine any reason of all Christ’s undertakings and performances, if there be not an eternal state of misery in suffering of evil things, by his death that believers might be delivered from; and of glory in enjoying of good things, to be brought unto.

(3.) *The Spirit of God doth sanctify some, that they might be “made meet to be partakers of the” eternal “inheritance of the saints in light.”* (Col. i. 12.)—As all are not godly, so all are not ungodly; though most be as they were born, yet many there be that are born again: there is a wonderful difference betwixt men and men. The Spirit of God, infusing a principle of spiritual life, and making some all over new, working in them faith in Christ, holy fear and love, patience and hope, longing desires, renewing in them the holy image of God, is as the earnest and first-fruits, assuring them in due time of a plentiful harvest of everlasting happiness. Faith is in order to eternal life and salvation; (John iii. 16;) love hath the promise of it; (1 Cor. ii. 9; 2 Tim. iv. 8; James i. 12;) obedience ends in it; (Heb. v. 9;) hope waits for it; (Rom. viii. 25;) and because their hope shall never make them ashamed, (Rom. v. 5,) therefore there must be such an eternal blessed state [as] they hope for.

(4.) *The souls of all men are immortal.*—Though they had a beginning, yet [they] shall never cease to be; therefore must, while they be, be in some state; and because they be eternal, must be in some eternal state. This eternal state must be either in the soul's enjoyment of God, or in separation from him; for the wit of man cannot find out a third. For the soul, continuing to be, must be with God, or not with God; shall enjoy him, or not enjoy him: for, to say, "He shall, and shall not," or to say, "He shall not, and yet shall," is a contradiction; and to say, "He neither shall, nor shall not," is as bad. If, therefore, the soul be eternal, and, while it shall be, shall perfectly enjoy God, it shall be eternally happy: if it shall for ever be, and that without God, it shall be eternally miserable; because God is the Chiefest Good, the Ultimate End and Perfection of man. The great work in this, then, is to prove that the soul is eternal, and shall for ever be. For which I offer these things:—

(i.) *There is nothing within or without the soul, that can be the cause of its ceasing to be.*—(Here except God, who, though he can take away the being of souls and angels too, yet he hath abundantly assured us that he will not.) *Nothing within it*, because it is a spiritual being, and hath no internal principle, by contrary qualities, causing a cessation of its being. And because it is simple and indivisible, it is immortal and incorruptible: for that which is not compounded of parts, cannot be dissolved into parts; and where there is no dissolution of a being, there is no corruption or end of it. There is *no creature without it* that can cause the soul to cease: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." (Matt. x. 28.) "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." (Luke xii. 4.) If they would kill the soul, they cannot; when they have killed the body, they have done their worst, their most, their all.

(ii.) *The soul of man hath not dependence upon the body, as to its being and existence.*—It hath certain actings and operations which do not depend upon the body: and if the operations of the soul be independent from the body, such must the principle be from whence such operations do arise; and if it can act without dependence on the body, then it can exist and be without the body. In the body, without dependence on the body, it hath the knowledge of immaterial beings, as God and angels; which were never seen by the eye of the body, nor can [be], because there must be some proportion between the object and the faculty. And the soul doth know itself; wherein it hath no need of the phantasy [fancy]; for when it is intimately present to itself, it wanteth not the ministry of the phantasy [fancy] to its own intellection. Besides, it can conceive of universals, abstracted from its singulars; in which it doth not depend upon the phantasy [fancy]; for *phantasmata sunt singularium, non universalium*.* Therefore, since it can act in the body without dependence on the body, it can exist without the body, and not die

* "Fancies or imaginations relate to particulars, and not to generals."—EDW.

when the body doth. Which yet is more plain and certain from the scripture; which telleth us that the soul of Lazarus, after death, "was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom;" (Luke xvi. 22;) but they did not carry it dead or alive, but alive and not dead. Stephen, when dying, expected the continuance of his soul in being, and its entrance into bliss: "Saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts vii. 59.) The thief upon the cross had a promise from Christ, that that day he should be with him in Paradise. In his body he is not yet; therefore, in his soul without the body: therefore the soul doth exist without the body. Paul believed the immortality of his soul, and its existence after the death of his body: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." (Phil. i. 23.) If his soul had not existed, he had not been a moment sooner with Christ. Nay, his soul in the body had some communion with Christ: if it died with the body, it had none; and that was not "far better," but worse.

(iii.) *The original of the soul by immediate creation* is usually brought as an argument of the immortality and continuance of it to eternity.—To assert the creation of the soul, hath this difficulty attending on it,—how to clear the propagating of original sin: to affirm [that] the soul is *ex traduce*, "propagated by generation," hath this knot to be untied,—how it doth consist with the immortality of the soul, when that which is generable is corruptible. But I for [the] present shall take *their* arguing *who* prove it shall exist for ever, because it is created immediately by God; according to the worn axiom, "Whatsoever is ingenerable, is also incorruptible." The soul cannot be from the matter or bodies of the parents, because that which is spiritual and immaterial cannot be produced out of that which is corporeal and material substance: for then the effect would be more noble than its cause, and the cause would give and impart something to the effect which itself hath not; but that which any thing hath not, it cannot give to another. As in a spiritual, so in a natural, sense, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh;" (John iii. 6;) but the soul is a spirit.

Nor are the souls of the children from the souls of the parents, either by multiplication or division. Not by *division*; that part of the souls of the parents should be communicated and pass from the parents to the children: because it is a spirit; and therefore indivisible into parts, because it hath none; being without matter, therefore without quantity, therefore without divisible parts. Not by *multiplication*: for this must be by participation of something from the parents' souls, or not. If not, then it inferreth creation; for that which is brought out of nothing into being, is created: if by participation of something of the substance of the parents' soul, this infers division; which, before was showed, cannot be.

(iv.) *That the soul shall never die, but abide to all eternity.*—I argue, Either God neither can nor will maintain the soul in eternal duration; or he would, but cannot; or he could, but will not; or he both can and will. If he cannot, then God is not omnipotent; for,

the soul being a spirit, it no more implies a contradiction that the soul should live for ever, than that angels and devils should live for ever. If he can, and any say he will not, I desire a reason of this assertion. How shall any man know God's will, but by what he hath revealed? And God hath not revealed that he will not maintain the souls of men in eternal being, but the contrary. It follows, then, that God both can and will; and therefore they must live to all eternity.

(5.) The certainty of an eternal state in the other unseen world is evident from *the innate appetite universally in all men after eternal happiness*.—There is no man but would be happy, and there is no man that would have his happiness cease. A man might as soon cease to be a man, as cast away all desires of happiness, or will to be for ever miserable; though most mistake what their happiness is. This innate appetite cannot be filled with all the good things in this world; for though the rational appetite be subjectively finite, yet it is objectively infinite. God, therefore, and nature, which do nothing in vain, have put unsatisfied, restless desires after happiness into the hearts of men; which cannot be any thing among things seen and temporal. There must be something that must be the object of this appetite, and able to quiet and fill it in the other world; though most, by folly, blindness, and slothfulness, miss of it.

(6.) *The absurdities which follow the denial of an eternal state of men (though now unseen)* demonstrate the certainty of it.

(i.) *For, then the lives of men, even of the best, must needs be uncomfortable*.—And the life of reason would, as such, be subject to more fears and terrors than the life of sense; which is against all sense and reason. For beasts must die, but do not foresee that they must die: but the rational foresight of death would embitter all his sweetest delights of life, if there were no reason to hope for another after this; and the more the life of man, as man, is more noble than the life of beasts, the more the foresight of the certain loss thereof, without another after this, would affright, afflict, torment. Now it is not rational to think, that God, who made man the chiefest and the choicest of all his visible works, should endue him with such powers and faculties as understanding and will, to make his life, as man, more burdensome, by being filled with fretting fears, racking griefs, and tormenting terrors, more than any beasts are liable to or capable of. Nay, and add, that the more any man did improve, exercise, and use his reason in the frequent meditations of death, the more bitter his life would be, to consider that all the present good [which] he doth enjoy must certainly and shortly be lost by death, and he not capable of any good after death in the stead and room thereof.

(ii.) *Then the condition of many wicked, yea, the worst of, men would be better than the condition of the godly that are the best*.—If the wicked have their good things here, and no evil hereafter; and the people of God their evil things here, and no good hereafter: "If

in this life only we had hope, we were of all men most miserable." (1 Cor. xv. 19.)

(iii.) *Then the chiefest and greatest encouragements to undergo sufferings and losses for God's sake were taken away.*—Why did Moses refuse the honours of Pharaoh's court, and choose to suffer afflictions with the people of God, but because he had his eye to "the recompence of the reward?" (Heb. xi. 25, 26.) Why did Paul endure such conflicts, but for the hope of life and immortality which the gospel had brought to light? (2 Tim. i. 10, 12.) And well might he ask, what it would advantage him that he fought with beasts at Ephesus, if the dead rise not to eternal happiness. (1 Cor. xv. 32.) Might not, then, the suffering saints repent, when they come to die, that they had been so imprudent and unwise, to endure so much, and lose so much; and say, they have been losers by obeying God, and by their holy walking; for there is no happiness after death to be hoped for? "Wherefore I do repent that I did not take my pleasures while I might." But did you ever hear a serious, godly man, when dying, utter such words? But on the contrary on their dying beds [they] do grieve and groan, mourn and lament, that they have been no more holy and obedient; and in suffering times, if they had gold as dust, they would count it all as dross; and if they had a thousand lives, they would lose them all to keep in the favour of God, and to gain the crown of everlasting life.

(iv.) *Then would the flood-gates of sin and profaneness be plucked up, to let-in an inundation of all manner of gross abominations.*—For if men will not be affrighted from their sin with all the threatenings of the sorest pains of hell, nor allured to leave them with all the promises of the sweetest pleasures of heaven; if they were sure there were no torments of hell to be adjudged to, nor glory in heaven to be rewarded by; they would run with greater greediness to the commission of the worst of sins that the devil should tempt them, or their wicked hearts incline them, to.

QUESTION II. *How should we eye eternity, or look at unseen, eternal things?*

They are said to be "unseen," as they are not the objects of our external sense; for in this sense they are not to be seen: but we must look at eternal things that are unseen with an eye that also is unseen; and the several things denoted by "the eyes" in scripture, will give some light to see with what eyes we must look at unseen, eternal things; namely, with an eye of *knowledge, faith, love, desire, hope.* Our looking at eternal things comprehends these acts of the soul:—

1. It includes a sure and certain *knowledge* of them.—As things not understood are said to be "hid from our eyes;" so, what we know we are said to "see:" "I sought in mine heart to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men." (Eccles. ii. 3.) Taking away of knowledge is called "the putting out of the eyes;" (Num. xvi. 14;) and the enlightening [of] the mind, "the opening of the eyes." (Acts xxvi. 18.) And "looking" is put for certain

knowing, (Job. xiii. 27 ; 1 Peter i. 12,) and expressed by "seeing." (Acts vii. 34.) So that the looking at and eyeing of eternal things with the eyes of the understanding, includes,

(1.) The bending of the mind to study them ; as, when a man would look at any object, he bends his head, and turns his eyes, that way.

(2.) The binding of the mind to them ; as a man, when he looks earnestly at any thing, fixeth his eye upon it.

(3.) The exercise of the mind thus bent and bound to eternal things ; that it is often thinking on the unseen, eternal God, Christ, heaven, and the life to come.

2. This looking is by an eye of *faith*.—Looking is believing : "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." (Num. xxi. 8.) The object and the act are both expounded by Christ : "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14, 15.)

3. This looking is with an eye of *love*.—Though in philosophy the affections, as well as the will, are blind powers ; yet in divinity "the eyes" are put for the affections : "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ?" (Prov. xxiii. 5.) And "the eye of the Lord" denotes his love ; (Psalm xxxiii. 18 ;) and believers, that "love" the coming of the unseen Saviour, (2 Tim. iv. 8,) are said to "look for" it. (Phil. iii. 20.) *Ubi amor, ibi oculus* : "We love to look at what we love."

4. This looking is with an eye of *desire*.—Which is expressed by "the eye : " "That ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes." (Num. xv. 39.) עֵינַי עַל-כָּל-מְדַמָּה "Every thing desirable in thine eyes." (1 Kings xx. 6.) "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail." (Job xxxi. 16.) The eye is an index of the desires of the heart.

5. This looking is with an eye of *hope*.—"The eye" is put for hope, Job xi. 20 ; Lam. iv. 17 ; 2 Chron. xx. 12 ; Psalm cxlv. 15 ; xxv. 15. And things hoped for are the objects of our looking : "Looking for that blessed hope." (Titus ii. 13.) In short, the sum is as if it had been said, "While we have a certain knowledge of unseen, eternal things, a firm belief of them, fervent love unto them, ardent desires after them, lively hope and patient expectation of them, we faint not in all our tribulations."

Having opened the eyes with which we are to look at eternal things, I proceed to the manner of our looking : there is a looking *unto* them. (Psalm xxxiv. 5 ; Micah vii. 7.) There is a looking *into* them, by studying the nature of them, to know more of the reality, necessity, and dignity of them : "Which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter i. 12.) If angels do, men should. There is a looking *for* them ; either as we look for things that we have lost,—look till we find ; as the man for his lost sheep, or the woman for her lost silver,

(Luke xv. 4, 8,)—or to look for a thing that is yet to come. (Titus ii. 13; Isai. viii. 17.) And there is a looking *at* them; which is not an idle gazing at the unseen, eternal world, but a practical, lively, affecting look in this manner following:—

1. We should look at eternal things *with such an eye of faith, that should presentiate them unto us, though they are yet to come.*—Hence faith is said to be “the substance,” or “subsistence,” “of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. xi. 1.) Faith so looks at things that are far off, that they have a kind of mental, intellectual existence; though absent, as if they were present; being promised, as sure as if they were already possessed. Faith convinceth and assureth the heart of a believer more strongly of the truth of a thing, while it looks to the revelation and testimony of God, than any argument brought forth from natural reason could do; and doth give as firm assent to the certainty and reality of eternal things, (though unseen,) as to any thing [which] he beholdeth with his eyes, or perceiveth by the apprehension of any sense; because our eyes may be deceived, but God neither can deceive, nor be deceived.

Look, then, for instance, at the coming of Christ with such an eye of faith, as if with your bodily eyes you saw him descending from heaven, in flaming fire, with glorious attendance; as if you heard the trumpet sounding, and the cry made, “Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment;” at which command, as if you saw the dead quickened, and peeping out of their graves, to see why they are raised; as if you saw the wicked come forth, fearfully amazed, with vile and filthy bodies, like toads from their holes, with pale and ghastly countenances, with trembling hearts, and their knees for horror knocking one against another, tearing their hair, smiting on their breasts, and crying out, “What is the matter? What meant that loud alarm, that thundering call, that awaked us out of the deep sleep of death?” “O, the Lord is come, the slighted Christ is come!” “Come! how doth he come?” “How? Clothed with vengeance, with fury in his face; and his wrath, like fire, burns before him: because of his indignation, the heavens melt over our heads, and the earth burns under our feet, and all is in flames round about us.” “O terrible day! such as this we never saw. O the storms! the storms! O, such burning, scorching storms we never saw nor felt before! We have been sleeping all the night of death; and the morning is come, the day doth dawn. Dawn! O, it is broad day all about. We were wont to wake, and go to work, and go to sin, to swear and lie, to drink and take our pleasure; but now we wake, and must to hell, to pain, and punishment. Now we must go from God to devils, from the only Saviour to eternal torments. O, what day is this? What *day*? It seems to be rather night than day; for it is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against us all impenitent sinners; and to us all it will prove the great damnation-day. When our souls and bodies by death

were separated, it was a sorrowful parting; but this is a sorer meeting."

The body with doleful groans doth strangely greet its re-united soul: "O thou cursed soul! must I be tied to thee again with a faster knot than ever? Death did heretofore part thee and me, but all the pains of hell hereafter cannot do it. Thou wast commander over me, and shouldest have managed thy government better: thou shouldest have used this *tongue* to call upon thy Maker: thou shouldest have used these *ears* to have hearkened to the calls of Christ, to the woings of grace, to the entreaties of mercy; these *feet* to have carried thee to the means of grace; these *hands* to have been instruments of good. They were all at thy command: what thou badeest them do, they did; and whither thou commandedst them to go, they went. O that I might have lien rotting in my grave! for then I had been at rest. For, though in the grave I had no pleasure, yet there I felt no pain: but since I have been again united to this before-damned soul, I feel intolerable punishment; and I now perceive it is past doubt that it will be eternal."

The soul will give no better salutations to the body: "O cursed flesh! What! alive again? Must I be linked to such a loathsome lump, worse than any carrion? Thou didst rebel against the commands of reason; and thy appetite was pleased, and thy lusts were obeyed; and all the time of life on earth was spent and fooled away in feeding, clothing, and adorning thee: and as I was led away and enticed by thee to live with thee a sensual, flesh-pleasing life, so, formerly sowing to the flesh, now of the flesh we reap that damnation that shall be eternal. For the Judge is come, his throne is set, and all the world is summoned to appear; the separation is made, the books are opened; all on the right hand are acquitted, and called to the possession of an everlasting kingdom; while we are doomed down to eternal torments. Lo! they are going with their blessed, glorious Lord unto eternal glory; and we with cursed devils, like cursed wretches, to everlasting shame and pain, and banishment from God and Christ and saints and angels for ever!"

Look thus believingly on these unseen things, as if you saw all these, and a thousand times more terrible and more joyful, transacted now before your eyes.

2. Look *directly* at unseen, eternal things.—Many do look indirectly at things eternal, but directly at things temporal; *pretending* things not seen, *intending* things that are seen: in praying, preaching, and professing, [they] seem to have an eye to God and Christ and heaven; but they look askint to their worldly profits, credit, and applause. Should [they] pray that they might see God, it is but that they might be "seen of men." (Matt. vi. 5; xxiii. 14.) But this is to look awry, contrary to Solomon's advice: "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee." (Prov. iv. 25.)

3. Let unseen, eternal things be *the first* that you look at.—Do not first look at riches, honours, pleasures; and please yourselves with purposes, *after* that, to look after God and Christ and the happiness

of heaven, when sickness cometh, and death approacheth; and, when near the end of time, [to] begin to make preparation for eternity. Men spend their days in getting a visible estate, while the unseen, eternal God and glorious Saviour and heaven's happiness are neglected by them; but it would make a considering man to tremble to think what a sight these sinners shall have after death hath closed their eyes; when the separated soul shall see an angry God, a condemning Judge, the gates of heaven shut against it, and itself in everlasting misery.

Unseen, eternal things are first in order of *duration*; for the invisible God was, when nothing was beside himself: and first in order of *dignity*; and should have the priority of our thoughts, care, and diligent endeavours: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi. 33.) When we first take care about eternity, the things of time shall be given to us over and above: but the eternal happiness of heaven shall never be given over and above to those that primarily look at and seek the things of time; for, amongst men, the overplus doth not exceed in worth the things contracted for.

But this damnable preferring [of] things temporal, and cursed postponing [of] things eternal, is the setting of God in the room of the creature, and the creature in the throne of God; as if they would set the heavens where the earth doth stand, and the earth where the heavens are, and so subvert the order of things which God hath appointed to be observed in the nature of things.

4. Look *heedfully* at eternity.—All the things that are only for time, are toys and trifles: the things for an eternal world are the grand concerns [that] we should narrowly look to in time. The gathering of riches in time—to the getting of grace and an interest in Christ, for the escaping of damnation and obtaining of happiness to eternity—is busy idleness, careful negligence, and laborious sloth. If God, "that inhabiteth eternity," (Isai. lvii. 15,) "looks narrowly unto all" our actions done in time; (Job xiii. 27;) how narrowly should we look to our own, when every one is a step to everlasting happiness or eternal misery! We should look narrowly that we do not walk in the broad way that leads unto the one, but in the narrow that will bring us to the other. (Matt. vii. 13, 14.)

5. Look *earnestly, with a longing look*, at unscen, eternal things.—Let your hearts be filled with greatest intense desires after them, as one that looks and thinks it long till the desire be accomplished: as "the mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" (Judges v. 28.) "Why doth time make no more haste to be gone and flee away, that, when it is gone and past, I might enter into eternal joys, that never shall be past and gone? Why doth the sun, that, by its alternate presence and absence, is the measure of my nights and days, make no swifter speed in its diurnal motion? If it be 'as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race,' (Psalm xix. 5,) why doth it

seem to my longing soul (as in the days of Joshua) to 'stand still?' If the sun in the firmament be so slow, let the Sun of Righteousness make more haste, and come, and lighten my passage to the other, eternal world; that I might see him as he is, and be more like unto him than at this distance I can be! 'Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that I may look upon thee. Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices;' (Canticles vi. 13; viii. 14;) that my looking for and after thee might be turned into looking upon thee. Didst thou say?—'A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me.' (John xvi. 16.) Why, dearest Lord, shall I count that 'a little while,' in which I do not see thee? Hast thou left it upon record?—'Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' (Heb. x. 37.) Sweetest Saviour! to my thirsty, panting soul, it seems *a great while*, while thou dost tarry, and not come; time seems long till I do see thee: but when I shall see thee, in looking on thy lovely, glorious self, eternity shall not seem long. I will mind thee of thy promise, 'Surely I come quickly;' and make it matter of my prayer; and, in confidence of the performance of thy promise and audience of my prayer, will say, 'Amen. Even so,' so quickly, 'come, Lord Jesus.' (Rev. xxii. 20.) For according to my 'earnest expectation' and my hope, I 'groan and am travailing in pain,' (Rom. viii. 19, 22,) until I see thee, who to me art now unseen; that then I might live 'by sight,' and no longer 'walk by faith.'" (2 Cor. v. 7.)

6. Look, though with earnest, yet *with patient, expectation*, at unseen, eternal things.—He that walketh now by faith, that he shall hereafter live by sight, will not make undue, untimely haste: though what he seeth by faith in unseen, eternal joys and glory, doth fill his soul with longing desires after them, yet hope doth help with patience to wait for them. (Rom. viii. 25.) For the beatifical "vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end" of temporal life it will be given: "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Hab. ii. 3.) Though it tarry beyond some months or years that you desire to be there, yet it shall not tarry one moment beyond the time that God hath appointed to take you to it. Therefore, in the mean time live by faith, and see in things unseen what can be seen by faith; till things unseen shall clearly, and with open face, be seen by you.

7. Look *with a fixed, steadfast eye* at unseen, eternal things.—If you give a glance or cast of the eye toward things seen and temporal, the eye and heart, too, are ready to fix upon them. If you would fix your eye upon eternity, upon God and Christ and the joys above, Satan, sin, the flesh and world will be diverting of it; [so] that now in time, comparatively, you can but glance upon eternity. If you look that way, many objects will interpose themselves, to hinder your sight, and to turn your eyes from things eternal to things temporal, from God to the creature, from things above to things below. But yet if we were "full of the Holy Ghost," as Stephen was, we might

“look up steadfastly into heaven,” as Stephen did; and, though not with the same eye, yet to the same effect and purpose, “see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” (Acts vii. 55.) Though the thoughts are immanent, yet in this respect they are too transient,—that they do no longer dwell upon eternity. But if the devil and the world find your thoughts tied to this subject, and go about to loosen them, say, “‘Why do ye this?’ For not my Lord, but I have need of them.” (Mark xi. 3.) Or if you are at any season seasonably got up into the mount, viewing eternity, and they send messengers to you to come down, reply, (for they “think to do you mischief;”) “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” And though they send more than “four times after this sort,” yet “answer them still after the same manner.” (Neh. vi. 3, 4.)

8. Look *unweariedly* at unseen, eternal things.—The eye might be fixed for a while upon an object, and after a while be weary in looking at it. Can you look unweariedly at the vanities of this world? and will you be so soon tired in beholding the glorious things in the other world? Do you look on things temporal, where seeing is not satisfying, and yet are never satisfied with looking? and will you not look on things eternal, where seeing would be such a filling of your heart with satisfactory content, that looking would not be tedious to your eye? There is so much in God, in Christ, in all eternal things in heaven,—so much beauty, glory, fulness,—that methinks we might stand looking at them night and day, without any irksomeness at all. But, alas! when “the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak;” (Matt. xxvi. 41;) and whilst the soul must look out of flesh to see those glorious things, it is so clogged with corruption, that is like dust within its eyes, that makes it weep, because it can look no longer. But yet in time we should endeavour to be more like to them that are already in that eternity, where they look at God and Christ unweariedly; and though their looking is not measured by days or months or years, but by immensurable eternity, yet they shall never be weary of looking at them to all eternity.

9. Look *with a joyful, pleasant eye* at unseen, eternal things.—Look till you feel your heart to leap for joy; look till you find your spirit is revived within you; look till the sight of your eye affect your heart. Is Christ unseen? Yet not unknown. Do not you now see him with bodily eyes? Yet you do with an eye of faith and love; and therefore may “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Peter i. 8.) When you look up unto the heavens, and see, and say, “Yonder is the place of my everlasting abode: there I must dwell with God, there I must be with Christ, and joyfully join with angels and saints in praising of my Lord and Saviour;” the foresight of this will make you joyful for the present and pleasant in your looking at it.

10. Look *fiducially* at unseen, eternal things.—With a holy, humble confidence [that], by Jesus Christ, upon the performance of

the conditions of the gospel, they shall be all your own; that, by turning from all your sin, by repentance and faith in Christ, you trust, you shall be possessed of them; that—when you see there are mansions now unseen, there are eternal joys, an immovable kingdom, an incorruptible crown, the eternal God, to be enjoyed; and for all this you have a promise, and you know this promise is made to you—by the performance of the conditions annexed to the promise, you trust in time to come unto it, or rather, when you go out of time into eternity, you shall be blessed in the immediate, full, eternal enjoyment of all the happiness that God hath prepared in heaven, to give you welcome, joyful entertainment in that unseen, eternal world; that you so eye that world, while you live in this, that when by death you are going out of this world into that, you might have this well-grounded confidence to say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.” (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

If you get such a sight as this, as now hath been set forth before you, upon such eternal objects as before were propounded to you, you will be able from your own experience to answer the third question contained in the general case. But yet I will proceed unto that branch:—

QUESTION III. *What influence will such an eyeing of eternity have upon us in all we do?*

“*In all we do?* Will its influence be so universal? will the efficacy of such a sight be so extensive, to reach forth its virtue in all we do?” Yes; “in all we do.” Whether we eat, or drink, or go to sleep; whether we trade, or work, or buy, or sell; whether we pray, or hear, or search our hearts, or meditate, or receive, or study, or preach, or sin, or suffer, or die; it will have a mighty influence upon us in any thing wherein we are active or passive, culpable or praiseworthy; in any condition,—be it poverty or riches, health or sickness; in any relation,—be it of husband and wife, of parents and children, of masters and servants; in any office and employment, sacred or civil. Out of such a heap, because I am limited, I will take a handful; and because I have not room to speak of all, I will not cast them into method, according to their nature, connexion, and dependence one upon another, but take them as they come, in some few particulars only.

1. *Such an eyeing of eternity in all we do would make us careful to avoid sin in any thing we do.*—Or, however we might fail in all we do, yet that we suffer it not to reign or have dominion over us. Look at eternity with a believing eye, and you will look at sin with an angry eye: you will cast a deadly look at sin, when you have a lively look at eternity of joy or misery.

(1.) *Sin would deprive me of eternal life.*—Therefore I will be its death. It would keep me from eternal rest: therefore I will never rest, till I have conquered and subdued it. Nothing in the world would bring upon my eternal soul the eternal loss of the eternal God,

his glorious Son, and Holy Spirit,—of the company of his holy angels and saints, of eternal treasures, of a blessed kingdom and incorruptible crown,—but cursed sin. Poverty, sickness, men, death, devils, cannot; nothing but sin: therefore I will be its bane; *that* shall not reign in me, that would not suffer me to live in everlasting happiness.

(2.) *Sin would plunge me into unseen, eternal torments, into endless flames and everlasting burnings.*—If you could speak with a soul departed but a month ago, and ask him, “What do you now think of the delights of sin, of sporting on the sabbath-day, of your pleasant cups and delightful games, of pleasing of the flesh, and gratifying of its lusts?” what a sad reply would he return, and what a doleful answer would he make you!—“Sin! O that was it that was my ruin; that was it which hath brought me (miserable wretch!) to everlasting torment; that was it which shut me out of heaven, that sank me down to hell! O ye foolish sons of men, that are yet in time, be not mad, as I was mad; and do not do as I did. Let not the seen pleasures and profits of the world, which I have found were but for a time, deceive you and bewitch you. The devil showed me the seen delights of sin, but concealed from me the extremity and eternity of the pain that it hath brought me to: the pleasure is past, and the pain continues, and I am lost for ever; and all *this* sin hath brought me to.” Let your eyeing of eternity, whilst you are standing in time, be instead of *one’s* speaking to you in time, *that* hath been in eternity: for the eternal God doth tell you as much as any damned soul can tell you; and would you believe one from hell, and not the Son of God that came from heaven? O, look and view eternity in the glass of the scripture, and firmly believe it; and it will make slaughtering work amongst your sins, and destroy that which would damn you.

2. *Such eyeing of eternity would be a mighty help to quiet your hearts under the dispensations of Providence here to men on earth.*—When you look at the seen afflictions, distresses, disgraces, stripes, imprisonments, persecutions, and poverty of the people and children of God; and the riches, ease, honours, pleasures, and the seen flourishing prosperity of the worst of men, that by their swearing, drinking, whoring, hating of godliness, being patterns of wickedness, proclaim themselves the children of the devil; and you are offended, and your mind disquieted; except in this you have a better heart than Job, (chap. xxi. 6—16,) or David, a man after God’s own heart, (Psalm lxxiii. 2—16,) or Jeremiah, (chap. xii. 1, 2,) or Habakkuk. (Chap. i. 13, 14.)

Now, amongst the many helps to allay this temptation, the eyeing of the *last, yea, everlasting*, things is not the *least*. Look upon these two sorts of men, (which comprehend all in the world,) as going to eternity, and lodged there; and then you will rather pity them [the wicked], because of their future misery, than envy them for their present prosperity. What, if they have their hearts’ desire for a moment, and must be tormented for ever? What, if they have plea-

asures and carnal delights for a season? they must be under the heavy wrath of God for ever. You might stand and see all their mirth at an end; but their sorrow never will have end: all their joy is but for a moment, "as the crackling of thorns under a pot;" (Eccles. vii. 6;) but their misery will be endless misery. Let them laugh a while; they shall weep for ever: let them rejoice for a season; their mirth shall be turned into heaviness, their temporal rejoicing into everlasting howling. And the eternity of joy will be more than a recompence to the afflicted saints, whatsoever their sufferings for Christ and conscience be in this world.

A supposed case might be a help in this temptation. Suppose, then, that you were poor, and full of pain for so long time, (or, rather, for so short,) that you should fall asleep, and, after you awake, should be poor no more, nor afflicted any more, but have a life of manly delights afterwards. Suppose, again, another man were compassed about with all manner of accommodations;—costly dishes to please his palate, beautiful objects to delight his eyes, all manner of music grateful to his ears; many servants to attend him; all standing bare before him, and bowing the knee in honour to him;—and all this, and much more, he were to enjoy as long as he could abstain from sleeping: but, as soon as he doth fall asleep, he should be taken off his bed, and cast into a furnace of boiling lead or scalding pitch. I demand, which of these two men's conditions you would choose. I know it would be the condition of the former, and not the latter. This, and infinitely beyond this, is the case in hand. You are afflicted till you fall asleep; and then you shall be afflicted no more, but live a life of joy for ever. The wicked prosper till they fall asleep; and they cannot long keep open their eyes, but death will come and close them: then the justice of God will arrest them, and then devils will seize upon them; and they shall be cast into a lake of burning brimstone, where they shall have no rest, night or day; but "the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever." (Rev. xiv. 11.) Exercise your thoughts in this manner, and have an eye unto eternity; and you will more easily and successfully overcome such temptations to murmuring and discontent, from the different dispensations of the providence of God here in time to good and bad.

3. *Such eyeing of eternity would have great influence for the well-improvement of our time.*—Time is to be valued in order to eternity; because we go out of time into eternity, and (that which should make every man in time most concerned,) out of time into eternity of misery or glory. O, what a precious thing is time! It is beyond the worth of gold or silver; because we might do more in time in reference to eternity, than we can do by all our gold and silver: jewels are but toys in comparison of precious time. Many are saving of their money, but are prodigal of time, and have more of time than they know what to do with; when others find so much to do, that they know not what to do for time to do it in. O fools and blind! what were a hundred years, to make preparation for eternity? O sluggish, careless sots! do you ask, "How shall we pass away the

time?" Might ye not with more reason ask, "How shall we prevent hasty time from passing away with such winged motion? Or, if that cannot be prevented, how shall we improve our time that is so fast a-posting from us?" Blind world! do any men in thee inquire, "How shall we spend our time?" It is easily answered: In praying, repenting, begging for grace, the pardon of sin, the favour of God, and peace with him, and fitness for eternal life. Had the damned in hell the time that once they had and you now have, do you think they would ask what they should do to pass away the time? Their cry rather is, "O hasty time, whither art thou fled? Why didst thou move so fast, while we sat still? Or why in time did we so swiftly run in ways of sin, as if we could not have sinned enough before time was past and gone? When we had a God to serve, and souls to save, and an everlasting state to make preparation for, we like fools did say, 'How shall we spend our time?' But now our time is spent, and past, and gone; and now the question is, (which never can be answered,) 'How shall we spend eternity?' which never can be spent; no, not in enduring ten thousand thousand millions of years in pain and punishment; for when they are past, it is as fresh and as far from ending as it was the first moment it began." Then eye eternity, and you cannot but improve your time.

4. *Such eyeing of eternity would make us careful how we die.*—Because death is our passing out of time into eternity. Death is dreadful to the ungodly, because it opens the door into everlasting misery; gainful to all endued with saving grace, because it lets them into everlasting happiness. Did you that are yet Christless, impenitent, and unbelieving, see whither you are going, and where you must within a little time take up your everlasting lodgings; what fear and trembling would seize upon all your joints! and when by sickness you perceived death to be approaching, you would cry out, "O death, forbear, forbear! stay thine hand, and do not strike! for if thou cut me down in this condition, I drop into eternal misery. There is nothing but this single thread of my frail life between me and endless woe; and if this be cut or snapped asunder, I sink into irrecoverable misery, without all hope of ever coming forth." Could you but see a soul the next hour after its separation from the body, what a taking it is in, what woe, what despair it is filled with; would you then live without Christ, go to bed without Christ, and rise and trade and still remain without an interest in Christ? What mean ye, sirs, to make no provision for death that is so near, so very near; when you are as near to going into an everlasting world as you are to going out of this transitory world, and your souls [will] be dragged sooner by devils into hell than your bodies can be carried by men unto your graves? Awake, arise, repent, and turn unto the Lord: for if you sleep on in sin till you sleep by death, you will be awaked by the flames of hell; and then, though you be under the power of eternal death, you will sleep no more and rest no more for ever.

And death is as gainful and desirable to a gracious man, as it is

terrible to the ungodly ; for it lets him into unseen, eternal glory ; to the sight of Christ, unseen to us on earth. How willing would you be to go a thousand miles to see Christ and converse with him, if he were on earth ! It is better to see this precious Christ in eternal glory : it is worth the while to die, to have a view of your Lord-Redeemer in the highest heavens. O the wonderful, transporting joys [that] the soul is filled with, when it first cometh into the unseen, but happy, world ! when it hath the first glorious view of its dearest Lord ! Do you think it would desire to return to live in flesh upon earth again ? Do you know what you do, when you are so loath to die ? Do you understand yourselves, when you are so backward to be taken out of time ? It is to be loath to go into everlasting happiness, to go and take possession of unseen, eternal glory.

5. *Such an eyeing of eternity would make us more patient, constant, joyful, in all our sufferings for Christ's sake.*—When we pore upon our seen troubles, and do not look at rest after trouble ; when we see and feel what is inflicted upon us, but do not look at what is laid up in heaven for us ; when we see the rage of men, and do not look at the love of God ; our hearts and flesh do fail. But if we set unseen, eternal things over against things seen and temporal, it will be strength unto us. Against the power of men, which is temporal, set the power of God, which is eternal ; and then you will see their power to be weakness. Against the policy of men, which is temporal, set the wisdom of God, which is eternal ; and then you will see all their policy to be foolishness. Against the hatred of men, which in its effects to you is temporal, set the love of God, which is both in itself and in its effects to you eternal ; and you will see their hatred to be no better than raging, unreasonable madness. Keep your eye upon the unseen torments in the other world ; and you will rather endure sufferings in this, than venture upon sin, and expose yourselves to them. Keep your eye upon the unseen, eternal crown of glory ; and it will carry you through fire and flames, prisons and reproaches for the sake of Christ : “ Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king : for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” (Heb. xi. 26, 27.)

6. *This eyeing of eternity will be a powerful preservative against the temptations of men or devils, a sovereign antidote against the poison of temptation.*—I see, the invisible God looks at me ; shall I, then, yield to the suggestions of the devil, or the solicitations of men to sin ? I see, there is an everlasting state of joy or torment that I must be shortly in, as sure as I am in this place ; and Satan's design is to bring me to that state of torment ; and if I follow him, I shall be excluded from yonder glorious place, from God and Christ and saints above. Therefore, by the grace of God, I will not yield to this temptation ; but strive I will, and watch and pray I will, against the assaults of this deceitful adversary. For why should I be so foolish [as] to lose eternal glory for momentary pleasures, and run my

immortal soul into eternal pain for short delights? I do plainly see what will be the end, if I do yield,—damnation without end, banishment from God without end. I do clearly see that stealing and murder is not a more ready road to a place of execution upon earth, than yielding to a tempting devil is to everlasting misery.

7. *Such eyeing of eternity would wean our hearts from the things of time.*—A sight and view of heaven's glory would darken the glory of the world, as looking at the shining sun over your head doth obscure in your eyes the things under your feet. After a believing view of the invisible God and the glory of the place above, this world would appear as a very dunghill in your eyes. (Phil. iii. 7, 8.) As, where we love, there we look; so, the more we look, the more we shall love; and the more we love the eternal things that are above, the less we shall love the temporal things that are below.

8. *Such eyeing of eternity would make us more like to God and Jesus Christ.*—It will be a transforming and assimilating look: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Therefore, when we shall see Christ, who is now out of sight, we shall be perfectly like unto him: "But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 2.)

9. *Such an eyeing of eternity would fill our souls with holy admirations of the goodness, grace, and love of God to us.*—When Paul had a sight of such unseen things, he was in a holy ecstasy and divine rapture. (2 Cor. xii. 2—4.) When we consider the eternal happiness of heaven, we shall stand as men amazed, that God should prepare such things for such men, and bear such love and show such mercy to such as we, that are so vile and full of sin; and say, "Lord, what am I, that might for ever have howled in the lowest hell, that I should hope to praise thee in the highest heavens? Lord, what am I, that might have been in everlasting darkness, that there should be prepared for me everlasting light and joy? Why me, Lord? why hast thou designed me, and wrought upon my heart, and made me in any measure meet to be partaker of such eternal glory?" "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33.) "How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Psalm cxxxix. 17.) "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Psalm xxxi. 19.)

10. *Such an eyeing of eternity would have this influence surely upon us, to set ourselves under a painful, skilful, serious ministry.*—It doth much concern you; for you are going to an endless life, and preaching is the appointed means to fit you for an endless happy life. Then, do you choose the most lively, searching, powerful preaching; it is for the life of your souls, for the everlasting life of your everlasting souls. If you were sick and in danger of death, when your

life lies upon it, you would have the advice of an able physician, that is serious and afraid that he no way become guilty of your death. Would you like that physician that seems to be unconcerned, and cares not whether you live or die, if he might but have his fee? or that should merrily jest with you, when you are sick at heart and near to death, if you be not cured? Would you take pleasure in his witty sayings, and be jested into your grave? Or if you go unto a lawyer about your whole estate, though it were in leases that will expire, would you choose one that, you think, did not care whether you win or lose your cause? Would you be pleased with some witty sayings, impertinent to the pleading of your cause? Would you not say?—"Sir, I am in danger of losing all I am worth; my estate lies at stake. Deal plainly with me, and be serious in your undertaking for me; and tell me, in words that I can understand, the plain law by which my case must be tried." And will you be more careful about the temporal life of a body that must die, and about a temporal estate which you must leave when you die? and not about your soul, that must ever live, and never die? No! not so much as to set yourselves under faithful preachers, that shall, in words that you can understand, plainly tell you the laws of Christ, by which you must be tried for your life, and according to them be eternally damned or saved?

11. *Such an eyeing of eternity would make you serious and lively in all your spiritual duties, in all your approaches unto God.*—If you have no grace, the serious thoughts of the unseen, eternal world would stir you up to beg and cry and call for it; if you have [some] to desire more, and to exercise what you have; to confess your sins with such contrite, broken, penitent hearts, as though you saw the fire burning, which by your sins you have deserved to be cast into; to beg for Christ and sanctifying grace and pardoning mercy with that lively importunity, as if you saw the lake of boiling brimstone, into which you must be cast, if you be not sanctified and pardoned; to hear the word of God, that sets this eternal world before you, with that diligent attention, as men hearkening for their lives. To commemorate the death of Christ with such life while you are at the Lord's supper, while you do, as it were, see the torments [that] you are delivered from, and the eternal happiness by faith in a crucified Christ [which] you have a title to; it will cause a fire and flame of love in your hearts to that Lord that died for you, ardent desires after him, complacential delight in him, thankfulness, hope of heaven, hatred to sin, resolution to live to or die for him that died for you. If your hearts are dead and dull and out of frame, go and look into the unseen, eternal world; take a believing view of everlasting joys and torments on the other side of time; and you shall feel warmth and heat and lively actings to be produced in you.

12. *Particularly this eyeing of eternity would make ministers sensible of the weightiness of their work.*—That it calls for all possible diligence and care, our utmost serious study and endeavours, our fervent cries and prayers to God for ability for the better management of our work, and for success therein; forasmuch as our employ-

ment is more immediately about eternal matters,—to save (under Christ) eternal souls from eternal torments, and to bring them to eternal joys. When we are to preach to people that must live for ever in heaven or hell, with God or devils; and our very preaching is the means appointed by God to fit men for an everlasting state: when we stand and view some hundreds of persons before us, and think, “All these are going to eternity: now we see them, and they see us; but after a little while they shall see us no more in our pulpits, nor we them in their pews, nor in any other place in this world; but we and they must go down unto the grave, and into an everlasting world:” when we think, “It may be, some of these are hearing their last sermon, making their last public prayers, keeping their last sabbath; and, before we come to preach again, might be gone into another world:” if we had but a firm belief of eternity ourselves, and a real lively sense of the mortality of their bodies and our own, and the immortality of the souls of both, of the eternity of the joy or torment we must all be quickly in; how pathetically should we plead with them, plentifully weep over them, fervently pray for them; that our words, or rather the word of the eternal God, might have effectual operation on their hearts! This eyeing of eternity should,

(1.) *Influence us to be painful and diligent in our studies to prepare a message of such weight as we come about.*—When we are to preach to men about everlasting matters, to set before them the eternal torments of hell, and the eternal joys of heaven: especially when we consider how hard a thing it is to persuade men to leave their sins, which do endanger their immortal souls; when, if we do not prevail with them to hearken to our message, and obey it speedily and sincerely, they are lost eternally; when it is so hard to prevail with men to accept of Christ, the only eternal Saviour, on the conditions of the gospel. You might easily see that idleness, either in young students that are designed for this work, or in ministers actually engaged in it, is an intolerable sin, and worse in them than in any men under heaven. Idleness in a shop-keeper is a sin, but much more in a minister; in a trader, much more in a preacher. Bear with me, if I tell you [that] an idle cobbler, that is to mend men’s shoes, is not to be approved; but an idle preacher, that is to mend men’s hearts, and save their souls, shall be condemned by God and men; for he lives in daily disobedience of that charge of God: “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them.” (1 Tim. iv. 13, 15, 16.)

(2.) *It would provoke us to be faithful in delivering the whole counsel of God, and not to “daub with untempered mortar.”*—Not to flatter them in their sin, or to be afraid to tell them of their evils, lest we should displease them or offend them. Is it time to soothe men up in their ignorance, in their neglect of duty, when we see them at the very door of eternity, on the very borders of an everlasting world; and this the fruit,—that they shall die in their sins, and their

blood be required at our hands? (Ezek. xxxiii. 1—9.) But [it would provoke us] so to preach and discharge the ministerial function, that, when dying, [we] might be able to say, (as Acts xx. 25—27,) “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

(3.) *To be plain in our speech.*—That every capacity—[even] of the weakest in the congregation, that hath an eternal soul that must be damned or saved for ever—might understand, in things necessary to salvation, what we mean and aim and drive at. It hath made me tremble to hear some soar aloft, that knowing men might know their parts, while the meaner sort are kept from the knowledge of Christ; and put their matter in such a dress of words, in such a style, so composed, that the most stand looking the preacher in the face, and hear a sound, but know not what he saith: and while he doth pretend to feed them, [he] indeed doth starve them; and [while he doth pretend] to teach them, keepeth them in ignorance. Would a man of any bowels of compassion go from a prince to a condemned man, and tell him, in such language that he should not understand, the conditions upon which the prince would pardon him; and the poor man lose his life, because the proud and haughty messenger must show his knack in delivering his message in *fine* English, which the condemned man could not understand? But this is *coarse* dealing with a man in such circumstances that call for pity and compassion: Paul had more parts and learning, but more self-denial, than any of these, when he said, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” (1 Cor. ii. 1, 4.) “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.” (2 Cor. iii. 12, 13.) Some put a veil upon their words, that people of mean education, that yet have souls that must be damned or saved, cannot look into those truths that shall never be “abolished.” But what is this, but a cursed preferring their own parts and praise, before the salvation of eternal souls; and the preaching themselves, and not Christ? which will not be their praise, but shame, at the eternal judgment; when some shall plead [that] they stand there condemned, because the learned preacher would not stoop to speak to them of eternal matters in language that they might have understood.

(4.) *This eyeing of eternity would stir us up to improve our interest in God and men for a continual succession of men in the ministerial function.*—In God, by prayer “that the Lord of the harvest would send forth more labourers into his harvest:” (Matt. ix. 38:) *in men*; whether such as have children of pregnant parts, studious and

bookish, serious in religion, and inclined to this employment,—that they would give them to God, and give them education in order to it, which would be the honour of parents, to have such proceed from their loins that shall be ambassadors to call the blind, ungodly world to mind eternity, to escape everlasting damnation, and obtain eternal life; or whether they be such as have no children so qualified or disposed, yet have riches to be helpful to such as have such children, but not an estate to bring them up. For there is a necessity of a standing, continued ministry. Men in all ages are hasting to eternity: those that were our ancestors in former ages are already there, and have taken up their lodgings where they must for ever dwell; and we are following after them. And what a mercy is it, that we have the gospel preached unto us, wherein we have directions how to escape everlasting torments, and obtain eternal joys, in the other eternal world to which we are a-going! And those that shall live after us, when they have been upon the stage of this world awhile, shall follow us and our fathers into eternity, and give place to those that follow after them. Thus this world doth often change its inhabitants. What is the life of man, but a coming into time, and a going out into eternity? O, how needful is it, then, that while they make their short stay on earth, they should have preaching ministers, to warn them of eternal misery, and teach them the way to eternal glory! Those that are now engaged in the work, will shortly be all silenced by death and dust; and how desirable is it that your children and posterity should see and hear others preaching in their room! And the honourableness of the office might allure young men to incline unto it: is it not an honour to be an ambassador of the great eternal God, to propound articles of everlasting peace between him and everlasting souls? What is buying and selling temporal, transitory things, in comparison of a calling wherein it is men's work and business to save souls from eternal misery, and to bring them to the eternal enjoyment of the glorious God?

Thus in some few particulars we have showed the influence that the eyeing of eternity will have upon us in what we do. Do you see eye eternity; and the rest, here for want of room omitted, you shall by experience find out; which will be better than knowing of them in the notion only, because they are told you.

The conclusion of this discourse shall be some particular USES, omitting many that it would afford.

USE I.

Is there an eternal state,—such unseen, eternal joys and torments? Who, then, can sufficiently lament the blindness, madness, and folly of this distracted world, and the unreasonableness of those that have rational and eternal souls?—To see them busily employed in the matters of time, which are only for time, in present honours, pleasures, and profits; while they do neglect everlasting things. Everlasting life and death are before them, everlasting joy or torment is hard at hand; and yet poor sinners take no care how to avoid the

one, or obtain the other. Is it not matter of lamentation, to see so many thousands bereaved of the sober, serious use of their understandings? that while they use their reason to get the riches of this world, they will not act as rational men to get the joys of heaven; and to avoid temporal calamities, yet not to escape eternal misery? Or if they be fallen into present afflictions, they contrive how they may get out of them; if they be sick, reason tells them [that] they must use the means, if they would be well; if they be in pain, nature puts them on to seek after a remedy: and yet these same men neglect all duty, and cast away all care, concerning everlasting matters. They are for seen pleasures and profits, which are passing from them in the enjoyment of them; but the unseen, eternal glory in heaven, they pray not for, they think not of. Are they unjustly charged? Let conscience speak, what thoughts they lie down withal upon their pillow: if they wake, or sleep fly from them, in the silent night, what a noise do the cares of the world make in their souls! With what thoughts do they rise in the morning? of God, or of the world? of the things of time, or of eternity? Their thoughts are in their shops, before they have been in heaven; and [they have] many desires after visible, temporal gain, before they have had one desire after the invisible, eternal God, and treasures that are above. What do they do all the day long? What is it that hath their endeavours, all their labour and travail, their most painful industry and unwearied diligence? Alas! their consciences will tell themselves, and their practices tell others; when there is trading, but no praying; buying and selling, but no religious duties performed; the shop-book is often opened, but the sacred book of God is not looked-into all the week long.

O Lord, forgive the hardness of my heart, that I can see such insufferable folly among reasonable creatures, and can lament this folly no more! Good Lord, forgive the want of compassion in me, that can stand and see this distraction in the world, as if the most of men had lost their wits, and were quite beside themselves; and yet my bowels yearn no more toward immortal souls that are going to unseen miseries in the eternal world! To see distracted men busy in doing things that tend to no account, is not such an amazing sight as to see men, that have reason for the world, to use it not for God and Christ and their own eternal good; to see them love and embrace a present dunghill-world, and cast away all serious, affecting, and effectual thoughts of the life to come; to see them rage against the God of heaven, and cry out against holiness as foolish preciseness, and serious godliness as madness and melancholy.

Alas! these men are brutes in the shape of men; for, like the very beasts, they live by sense, and are led away by a sensitive appetite. The brute takes pleasure in his present provender, and feels the smart of the present spur or goad: and so do sensual sinners find sweetness in their present pleasures and profits, and do complain of present pain and sickness; but of pains to come and joys to come, that are eternal, they have no care or serious thoughts. Better such had been

toads and serpents, than rational creatures; for, as they mind no future things in the other world, so they are not subjects capable of eternal punishment or everlasting happiness. They are not so provident as the ant, that in summer lays up for winter; and, while the warm sun doth shine, provides for a cold and stormy day: but men, that have immortal souls, are only for this present world; but do not provide for a stormy day that is a-coming, nor for an eternal state to which they are hastening.

Let us call the whole creation of God to lament and bewail the folly of man, that was made the best of all God's visible works, but now by such wickedness is bad beyond them all; being made by God for an everlasting state, and yet minds nothing less than that for which he was principally made.

O sun, why is it not thy burden, to give light to men to do those works and walk in those ways that bring them to eternal darkness? O earth, why dost thou not groan, to bear such burdensome fools, that dig into thy bowels for gold and silver, while they do neglect everlasting treasures in the eternal world? O ye sheep and oxen, fish and fowl, why do ye not cry out against them that take away your present life to maintain them in being, but only mind present things,—but forget the eternal God, that gave them dominion over you, to live upon you, while they had time to mind eternal things, but do not? O ye angels of God, and blessed saints in heaven, were ye capable of grief and sorrow, would not ye bitterly lament the sin and folly of poor mortals upon earth? Could ye look down from that blessed place where ye do dwell, and behold the joy and glory which is to us unseen, and see how it is basely slighted by the sons of men; if ye were not above sorrow and mourning, would not ye take this up for a bitter lamentation? O ye saints on earth, whose eyes are open to see what the blind, deluded world doth not see, do ye bitterly take on; let your heads be fountains of water, and your eyes send forth rivers of tears, for the great neglect of the eternal joys and happiness of heaven. Can you see men going out of time into eternity in their sin and in their blood, in their guilt and unconverted state; and your hearts not [be] moved, your bowels not yearn? Have ye spent all your tears in bewailing your own sin, that your eyes are dry when ye behold such monstrous madness and unparalleled folly of so many with whom daily ye converse?

Ye sanctified parents, have ye no pity for your ungodly children? nor sanctified children for ungodly parents?—"O, my father, my father, by whom I had my being, is going to eternal darkness! Alas for my mother, my dear mother! that carried me in her womb, that dandled me upon her knees, that suckled me at her breasts; that did delight to break her sleep, to quiet me when I was froward, to look to me when I was sick; that bound my head when it was pained; that wiped mine eyes when I did weep, and my face when I did sweat, because of my disease;—this my mother is forgetful of her own immortal soul; was more troubled for me when she thought I was near my grave, than for herself, though near to hell. When I was

young, she took care for me for things temporal; but for herself, neither young nor old, for things eternal. Ere long, she will be dead, and, I am afraid, damned too: ere long, she must go out of time; and, for any thing I can perceive, being ignorant and fearless of God and unmindful of eternity, her soul will go into eternity of torments. O how loath am I to have such thoughts of one so near, so dear unto me! O, it is the cutting of my heart, it is bitterness to my soul! I had rather die, than [that] she [should] be damned; and yet it is my fear, she is hastening to eternity of woe; for, to my observing eye, she is taken wholly up with the cares and pride and vanity of this life, and apparently regardless of that eternal world."

Why do not also ye that are parents, that have a belief of an everlasting state, take on, and bewail the doleful state of your ungodly children, that in their sinful courses are posting to eternal pains?—"What, my son? the son of my loins? the son of my womb? did I bear him with so much sorrow, and shall he be a cast-away? Did I travail with him with so much pain, and brought and nursed him up with so much labour; and must he be for ever fuel for the flames of hell? Have I brought forth a child to be a prey to devils, and a companion with them to all eternity? O, my son, my son! what shall I do for thee, my son, my son?" Thus, whatever relation, neighbour, friend, or acquaintance you have, or others, that you see go on in sin, let it be your grief, trouble, lamentation; when there is an eternity of joys, and they will lose it; an eternity of torments, and they be cast into it.

USE II.

Do something every day in preparing for an eternal state.—If any thing of weight lieth upon your hands, this is it. If I could prevail with you in any thing, O that it might be in this! If, in any thing [which] I am to preach, I had need to have gone unto my knees, to beg that my message might be regarded; this is it. If in any thing I should be serious in preaching, and you in hearing; still this [is] it. The longer your abode shall be, the greater preparation you should make. When we exhort you to prepare for other duties, it is but in order unto this,—that you might be prepared for the eternal world. When we exhort you to repent, believe, be holy, or prepare for death, in all we have an eye unto eternity. But if my words be slighted and rejected by you, will you do so by the word of the eternal God himself, that hath given you this in charge? If I show you express commands from God, that will shortly take you into heaven, or judge you down to hell; that will quickly call you out of time into eternity; will you promise [that] you will do it then? Then read—and do what you shall read—Matt. vi. 18—20, 33; Luke xiii. 24; John vi. 27; 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Peter i. 10, 11. To these scriptures I will add these following arguments to persuade you:—

1. *God hath set you in this world for this very work,—to make ready for eternity.*—Consider, I beseech you, and demand an answer of yourselves: why hath God brought you out of nothing, and given

you a being more noble than all his visible works, in making your souls immortal, enduing you with reason and understanding? Do you think, it was that you should look after riches, and not grace; things temporal, not eternal; to buy and sell, and eat and drink and sleep? Do you in your conscience think that God hath appointed you no higher things to mind, no more lasting things to get? Reason will convince you, and conscience will prove it to your face, and the immortality of your own souls, considered, doth undeniably argue, that God hath made you for more noble ends, higher employments, and greater concerns. Why, then, do you not mind the end of your creation, and do the work that God hath set you in time to do, and look after that eternal state that God hath made you for? I have read of a devout pilgrim, [who was] travelling to Jerusalem; and in his way passed through many cities, where he saw many stately buildings, rare monuments, and delightful things: but he was wont to say, "But this is not Jerusalem; this is not the end of my coming hither." I am sure that you are pilgrims; but whether devout or no, let conscience speak: and you should be travelling to the heavenly Jerusalem; and if not, you are [travelling] to eternal torments. Why, then, do you stand gazing at the temporal things [which] you see in your journey, and [why are] your hearts and eyes so taken with them? Sirs, "this is not" the heavenly "Jerusalem; this is not the end of your coming hither." Be sure, the minding, loving, looking after things of time, in the neglect of God and Christ and heaven, is not preparing for eternity; except it be for an eternity of woe and misery; and [for] what need you be at so much pains and labour to get thither?

2. *God doth give you your time in this world to prepare for eternity.*—You have time to repent, to get an interest in Christ, to mortify sin, to pray for grace, to make your peace with God, to get the pardon of your sins; and all this, that you might be fitted for eternity. Why, then, do not you do in time that which God hath given you time for? Can you imagine that God doth lengthen out so long the day of his patience, only that you might labour for temporal riches, or that you should live a life of carnal pleasure, or gratify the flesh? Can it enter into your heads, that God supporteth you in being, and keeps you yet out of the grave and hell, that you might scrape together things temporal, and neglect the things that are eternal? Doth he make his sun to rise upon you every morning, to give you light to drudge for things that are but for a moment, and let alone the things that are for ever? And if God hath given you time in order to eternity, why do you spend your time in getting things that are but for a time, and not for eternity? O the years that you have had! the months, the weeks, that God hath given you, to be improved for eternity! and you spend it,—some in things absolutely sinful, in serving of the devil and your lusts; some in things in themselves lawful, but unlawfully; but none in the things absolutely necessary, that you may be happy in eternity: some in taking of your carnal pleasures; some in trading; some in every thing but the one

thing needful; [so] that none is left for an everlasting state. But when you shall be in eternity, you will repent, though then too late, that in this world you so spent your time.

3. *As you go out of time, so you must in the same state go into eternity.*—If you die in your sin, you must in your sin go down to hell. This is a life of trial; here in time you are probationers for eternity; and as you are found at the end of time, so your state shall be determined to eternity of happiness, or misery without end.

4. *You stand upon the brink of time; you are near the borders of eternity.*—So near, that you that are in time to-day, might be in eternity to-morrow, or sooner: for you never yet saw that hour that you could say, you are sure of the next; when you have drawn one breath, you are not sure to draw another. "Time is short;" (1 Cor. vii. 29;) set forth sometimes by "years;" if seventy, how much is already past! (Psalm xc. 10:) sometimes by "months," (Job xiv. 5,) by "days," (Psalm xc. 12,) by one "day," (Job xiv. 6,) by a "span," and "nothing," (Psalm xxxix. 5,) by "a vapour." (James iv. 14, 15.) But what, if you were to live a thousand years in pleasure upon earth, and after that pass into eternity of pain and torment? would you not, when there, cry out of your own folly,—that you should purchase a thousand years of pleasure at so dear a rate, as to endure for them everlasting burnings? One would think, you should not get it out of your heads that you are almost in eternity. One would think, you should think on this when you lie down and when you do rise up, or dream of this in your sleep,—that you are as near to heaven or hell, to an eternity of joy or misery, as to your grave.

5. *When time is past and gone, and you are entered into eternity, it will be too late to prepare for it.*—Preparation for eternity must be done in time, not in eternity. Now or never; if once death stop your mouth and close your eyes, dying in your sin, you must bid farewell to God and Christ for ever. When time is gone, your hope and all is gone. When time is gone, it will never come again. Yesterday you shall never see more; and the time that is going while I speak and you hear, when gone, will never come; that which is to come will be present, but not that which is past. If you lose your health, you might recover it again; if your estate, you might get it again; but if you lose your time, it is gone for ever.

6. *If you go out of time unfitted for eternity, better you had never been in time.*—Better for you, if you had been always nothing; or, if a being, to have been a dog, a toad, or a serpent; for these do live in time, but after time they do not live in eternal misery, as they are not capable of eternal happiness. And when you lie in extremity and eternity of pains in hell, this will be your judgment,—that it had been better never to have been, than to be for ever miserable.

7. *Multitudes have, and more shall, come short of eternal happiness, and go down to everlasting misery.*—And yet doth it not concern us to be preparing for eternity? What means this sottishness of mind,—that, when multitudes are going daily out of time into eternity, from seen pleasures to unseen pains, we are thus secure and

careless; as if we should live so long in time as never to live in eternity, or that our being should end with time? Have not we deserved eternal punishment, as well as they that in eternity are now enduring of it? and do you know you have deserved it, and take no care to prevent it? not so much as ask of God, by serious prayers and tears, that you might not be cast into everlasting burnings? Do you think you can make as light of the wrath of God when you shall feel it in eternity, as you do when you hear of it in time? Can you be merry in the flames of hell? Can you jest and sport and play, when you shall be filled with the indignation of a provoked God, or when the arrows of the Almighty shall stick so fast as never to be plucked from you? Why, then, do you in time cry out and roar and bitterly complain under the smarting pain that the gout or stone or cholic puts you to? Why do you say, [that] if this were to continue for one year without intermission or mitigation, you had rather die than live? Do not many walk in the broad way that leads to eternal damnation? (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) Are not the holy, humble, penitent ones saved with much difficulty? (1 Peter iv. 18.) Are not many professors gone to hell, and preachers too? (Matt. viii. 12; vii. 22, 23.) And yet is it not time for you in good earnest to mind your eternal state; lest, there being an everlasting kingdom, you should never enter into it; and everlasting torments, and you should feel them to all eternity?

8. *God doth give you all the helps and means you have, that you should make ready for eternity.*—Have not you had sermons and sabbaths? Have not God's ministers preached to you, and warned you from God of the wrath to come, and charged you in the name of God to repent, believe, and turn, and told you [that] you must turn from sin, or burn in hell? And will you go from hearing on earth, to howlings in hell? from the light of the gospel, to utter darkness? with the sound of the voice of mercy in your ears? after a thousand calls to mind your souls, to accept of Christ and remedying grace? Do you mean to have the hottest place in that infernal lake, the heaviest load of wrath in that eternal furnace? Read, and tremble when you read, Matt. xi. 20—24.

9. *This will be approved wisdom ere long by all the sons of men.*—Those that now do mock at praying, and make a mock of sinning, and deride serious godliness, shall quickly be of another mind; shall confess and know that *they* were the wisest men *that* in time prepared for eternity, and *they* were the fools *that* spent their time in sin and vanity. Some do say as much when they lie a-dying, and wish, "O that I had been convinced of this, before my time had been so near an end, before my glass had been so nigh out! O my folly! O my vanity! that had eternity to make preparation for, and yet, of all the time I had, I never spent one hour in hearty prayer unto God to save me from everlasting torments! Woe is me! my strength is almost gone; my time is almost gone; and I in danger of eternal torments, that never shall be past and gone!" Or if they be blind or hardened on their death-beds, yet a moment after death they shall

be convinced indeed that it was worse than madness to neglect eternity. When stepped into the other world, [they] shall be amazed and confounded, saying, "Where am I now? What a place is this! what a state is this! I heard of such a place before; but it is worse than any man's tongue in time could tell. What! is time gone? This is not time. Here is no sun to measure it by its motion; here is no succession of night and day; here is no turning of an hour-glass, no striking or telling of clocks; no morning, noon, and evening: this is not time; I see nothing like the things I saw in time. But a little while ago, I was among my friends on earth. Did I say, *a little while ago?* Alas! I am but lately come, and this 'little while' seems to me a thousand years. No while in this place is little; and it will never be less, because it doth not go. O, happy they that are in eternity, but in another place than I am in! They were wise indeed that have prevented their coming hither, and are got into a place that is as light as this is dark, as joyful as this is sorrowful, as full of ease as this is of pain: and yet this must last as long as that; and that makes this as bitter and dreadful as that is pleasant and delightful. Wise were they that did foresee while they were in time; but I, like a blind fool, did not see, before I felt, what I must endure for ever. I did not see; but death did draw the curtain, open the door, and let me into an everlasting state; but, woe is me! it is of misery and damnation."

You are for being of the mind of the most, and doing that which the generality do approve. Take in but these words, "first or last," and then do so; even that which all, *first or last*, shall confess to be truest wisdom; and the neglect of it, folly and madness. God, angels, good men, do all approve of this as sober wisdom; and the devils cannot deny it—and all damned souls in hell; and all the wicked upon earth, as fast as they go down to them, and feel what now they do not believe and fear, shall not deny it—to be wisdom in them that escaped that, and got to a better place in the eternal world.

10. *In eternity there will be no mixture.*—In the other world there is all pure love, or all pure wrath; all sweet, or all bitter; without all pain, or without all ease; without all misery, or without all happiness: not partly at ease, and partly in pain; partly happy, and partly miserable; but all the one or the other. This life is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell; and here we partake of some good and some evil. No judgment on this side hell upon the worst of men but there is some mercy mixed with it; for it is mercy [that] they are yet on this side hell: and no condition on this side heaven but there is some evil mixed with it; for, till we get to heaven, we shall have sin in us. In heaven all are good, in hell all are bad; on earth some good, but more bad. In hell misery, without mixture of mercy or of hope: they have no mercy,—and that is bad; and they can hope for none,—and that is worse. While they be in time, they are pitied; God doth pity them, and Christ doth pity them, and good men do pity them; their friends and relations do pity them, pray for them, and weep over them: but when time is past, all pity will be past, and

they in misery without pity to all eternity: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night." (Rev. xiv. 10, 11.) "No?" Then, for the Lord's sake, for your souls' sake, as upon my knees I beseech you, if you have any dread of God, any fear of hell, any desire of heaven, any care whither you must go, take no rest night or day in time, till you have secured your everlasting happy state, that you might have everlasting rest night and day in eternity; or that you might pass into that eternity where it is always day, and no night; and not into that where it shall be always night, and never day.

Sirs, what say ye? What are ye resolved upon? To sin still? or to repent that ye have already sinned, and by the grace of God to sin so no more? To work in time, for things of time? or in time to prepare for eternity? Will ye obey my message, or will ye not? Speak in time, or, I will not say, hold your peace for ever; but repent in time, or ye shall cry and roar for ever. The time of this sermon is out, and the time of your life will be quickly out; and I am afraid I shall leave some of you as unfit for eternity as I found you: and my heart doth tremble, lest death should find you as I shall leave you, and the justice of God and the devils of hell shall find you as death shall leave you; and then vengeance shall never leave you, and the burning flames, tormenting devils, and the gnawing worm, shall never leave you. Will ye, then, work it upon your hearts, that ye came into time unfit to go into eternity? that in time ye have made yourselves more unfit? that the only remedy is the Lord Jesus Christ, that in the fulness of time did die, that sinners might not be damned for ever? that this crucified Christ will not save you from eternal misery, nor take you to eternal glory, except ye do perform the conditions of the gospel; without which, his death puts no man into an actual state of happiness? Ye *must* repent and be converted; ye *must* take him for your Saviour and your Lord; ye *must* be holy sincerely, hate sin universally, love Christ superlatively; or else the Saviour will not save you, mercy itself will not save you, from everlasting misery. Ye *must* persevere in all this to the end of your time; and then ye shall be happy in eternity, to eternity.

Otherwise,—[if] ye shall not give audience, Sirs,—otherwise ye shall not be happy. "Happy?" No; ye shall be miserable. If the loss of God and Christ and heaven will make you miserable for ever, ye shall be miserable for ever. If the pains of hell, the company of devils, the stings of conscience, the terrors of darkness, total, final despair of having any end of your damned condition, will make you miserable, ye shall be miserable. If all that God can lay upon you, if all that devils can torment you with, if all that conscience can for ever accuse you for, if all that is in hell, can make you miserable; except you repent in time, and believe on Christ in time, and be sanctified in time, ye shall be miserable for ever.

O my God! be thou my witness of this doctrine. All ye that fear God, that hear me this day, bear me witness that I have published this in the ears of all that hear me. Thou conscience, that art in that man that is yet going on in sin and posting with speed to eternal misery, bear me witness now and at the day of judgment, that I told him what must be done upon him, in him, and by him, if he would escape eternal torments. If he will not hearken nor obey while he is in time, conscience, I bespeak thy witness against him, and that thou bring thy accusation against him, and upbraid him to the confusion of his face,—among all the devils in hell; and all that shall be damned with him,—that he was told he could not keep his sins, and be kept out of that place when he died; he could not reject Christ and finally refuse him, and be saved for ever.

Sinner! carest thou not? wilt thou still on? Good God! must we end thus? Must I come down without hopes of his repenting? and he die with foolish hopes of being saved, and after death be cast into that eternity where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched? But in those endless flames [he] shall cry out and roar, "O cursed caitiff! what did I mean all the while I was in time, to neglect preparation for eternity? O miserable wretch! this is a doleful, dreadful state; and still the more [so], because it is eternal. Woe is me, that I cannot die, nor cease to be! O that God would cut me off! O that devils could tear me into a thousand, thousand pieces! or that I could use such violence to myself, that I might be no longer what I am, nor where I am! But, alas! I wish in vain, and all these desires are in vain; for though the union of my soul and body in my mother's womb was liable to a dissolution, yet since this body did arise out of the bosom of the earth, and is re-united to its soul, [it] admits of no separation for ever; and, which still is worse, this soul and body, now separated from God and Christ and all that be above in that blessed eternity, must never, never be admitted near unto them. O, cursed be the day that ever I was born! Cursed be that folly and madness that brought me to this cursed place! for here I lie under extremity of pain, which, if it were for a year or two, or many millions, and then [to] end, would be in this respect exceeding heavy, because it were to last so long; but that then [it] should be no longer, would make it in the mean while to be the lighter. But when eternity is added to extremity, nothing can be added to make me extremely, because in this extremity I am eternally, miserable. O eternity, eternity! in my condition what is more dreadful than eternity? This fire burns to all eternity; the heavy strokes of revenging justice will be laid on me to all eternity; I am banished from God and happiness to all eternity. O eternity, eternity! nothing cuts me to the heart like the corroding thoughts of this eternity. I am an object of the wrath of God, of the contempt of angels, of the derision of saints, of the mockings of devils and cursed fiends, to all eternity: I burn, but cannot be consumed; I toss and roll, and cannot rest to all eternity. O eternity, eternity! thou art enough to break my heart and make it die, but that it cannot break nor die to all eternity."

And if this shall be the doleful language, the direful lamentations, of souls that went Christless out of time into eternity, do ye, while ye are in time, eye eternity in all you do, and get a title to eternal happiness; or else, when ye are in eternity, ye shall remember that in time ye were forewarned; which warning, because ye did not take [it], shall be a vexation to your hearts to all eternity.

SERMON XXVII.

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A DISCOURSE OF THE RIGHT WAY OF OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNION WITH GOD.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.—1 John i. 7.

THE subject I am to treat upon is *communion with God, how to attain it, and how to maintain it, in as constant a course as we may be capable of in this world*: and for that end I have chosen this text. My usual course is to provide matter for a text; but in this lecture I provide a text for the matter I am to treat upon. The subject is high and copious, much spoken of; but, I fear, not so well understood, and less experienced, though the subject mainly relates to Christian experience. Before I come to the subject, I shall speak something of the text upon which it is grounded.

The author of this epistle is St. John, "John the apostle," "John the divine," as he was anciently called; and he writes this epistle, some think, to the believing Jews only; others think, rather to the whole catholic church; and the matter of the epistle is partly to distinguish the true and the false Christian, and for that end lays down many signal characters to distinguish them; and partly to vindicate the doctrine of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ the true Messiah,—his person, his natures, and salvation by him alone,—from the many errors that were crept-in by false teachers and seducers in his time; as Cerinthus, Ebion, &c., as he intimates in 1 John ii. 26: "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." He also vindicates the holiness of the Christian profession from the impure practices of the Nicolaitanes and the Gnostics, who began early to abuse the true liberty of the gospel, and to turn the grace of God into wantonness. And, lastly, he doth earnestly press them to the Christian love of one another, because of the persecutions [which] he saw were coming upon the church from the Roman empire, and the divisions that would arise amongst themselves from many false brethren.

And hereupon to strengthen their faith and profession the more, he shows forth the gospel in the beginning of this epistle :—

1. *In the antiquity of it* : “That which was from the beginning,” &c.

2. *In the certainty of it*, as in the third verse : “That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.”

3. *In the main scope and end of it* : “These things which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us ;” *with us*, the true apostles of Christ, and not go out from us ; as he complains of some that did in this epistle : “They went out from us, but they were not of us :” (ii. 19 :) and then tells them what their fellowship was : “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” So that he proposeth fellowship with God and with Jesus Christ as the great scope and end of the gospel ; and he mentioneth Christ as well as God, because all our fellowship with God is by Jesus Christ. So that the apostle doth invite and persuade the believing Jews to fellowship with himself and other apostles in the doctrine and ordinances of the gospel dispensed by them ; or, more generally, the whole catholic church of God, consisting both of believing Jew and Gentile. But all this was in order to their having “fellowship with God and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

4. He shows *the way how to have this fellowship with God* : Which he setteth down both negatively, and affirmatively.

1. *Negatively*, in the sixth verse : “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”

2. *Affirmatively*, in the words of the text : “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.”

And this the apostle proves by an argument taken from the nature of God in the fifth verse : “God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all ;” and therefore they that would have fellowship with him who is Light, must walk in the Light ; for “what communion hath Light with darkness ?” But by “Light” is not meant any visible, material light, either natural or artificial ; but a Light that is divine, spiritual, and intellectual. For though God expresseth himself to us by things natural, when he is called Light, or Life, &c., yet he is *ens transcendens*, “a transcendent being ;” and it is a true rule, “Nothing can be predicated univocally of God and the creature.” And he doth not say only of God that “he is in the Light,” as verse the seventh ; or that he “dwelleth in the Light,” as the apostle Paul elsewhere expresseth it ; but, “He is Light ;” Light essentially, originally, eternally ; Light itself ; and “in him,” he saith, “there is no darkness at all.” He is a pure, simple, immixed, and perfect light ; as we say of that which is perfect, “It is *plenum sui*,” “full of itself,” without any mixture of the contrary.

QUESTION. “Why is God called ‘Light without darkness ?’ And what is this Light ?”

I answer,

1. Wisdom is light, and folly is darkness.
2. Knowledge is light, and ignorance is darkness.
3. Truth is light, and error is darkness.
4. Holiness is light, and sin and wickedness are darkness.

So that when he saith that "God is Light," he means that God is wisdom, without mixture of folly; knowledge, without ignorance or nescience; truth, without any error, or any false conceptions in his eternal mind; and holiness, without the least mixture of sin: so that the way to "have fellowship with God," is to "walk in the light," that is to say, to walk in wisdom, and not as fools; to walk according to knowledge, and not in ignorance; to walk in the truth, and not in error; to walk in the way of holiness, and not of sin and wickedness.

Now light in men is either *natural* or *supernatural*.

1. *Natural*: Which is either "the light of the body," which "is the eye;" (Matt. vi. 22;) or the light of the soul, which is the light of reason and natural conscience: this we are to walk in, according to the utmost sphere and extent thereof.

2. But *supernatural light*: That shines from supernatural revelation in the scriptures; and the enlightening Spirit of God in the souls of men, is the light here meant in the text, and which Christians should walk in.

Now this is the way to have fellowship and communion with God, as the text saith, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

Now by "one with another," *μετ' ἀλλήλων*, some say, the apostle means the saints to whom he writes: "We and ye shall have fellowship together, we apostles and ye believers." And the Vulgar Latin carries it that way, and renders it *ad invicem*. But we must rather understand that the apostle here speaks of the fellowship that God hath with his people, and they with him. And so Beza understands it: *Mutuum habemus cum eo communionem*.* An ancient Greek manuscript hath in the text *μετ' αὐτου*, "with him;" that is, "God and we shall have fellowship with one another." And the rather we are to understand it in this sense; for the apostle is not speaking here of the communion which the saints have with one another, but of our communion and fellowship with God, as in the sixth verse, "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." And then he adds: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

I shall now proceed to speak to the subject itself, and herein shall discourse of these four generals:—

- I. *What this communion with God is.*
- II. *Give some distinctions about it.*
- III. *Show how it is to be attained and maintained.*

* "He and we hold communion together."—EDIT.

IV. *Deduce some consequences that follow from my whole discourse concerning it ; and then conclude with some practical application.*

FIRST GENERAL.

I. *What this communion with God is.*—The word in the Greek, *κοινωνία*, is from *κοινός*, which signifies “common ;” and so it imports something that is common and mutual betwixt God and us, as communion among men imports something mutual on each side ; so that our communion with God is either active or passive : *active* in what passeth from us to God, and *passive* in what is communicated from him to us.

1. *Active on our part* : Which consisteth in the divine operations of our souls toward God, when the faculties of the soul are tending toward him, and terminated upon him ; when the mind is exercised in the contemplation of him, the will in choosing and embracing him ; when the affections are fixed upon him, and centre in him ; when by our desires we pursue after him, by our love we cleave to him, and by delight we acquiesce and solace ourselves in him.

2. *Passive on God's part* : And so our communion with God consists in our participation of him, and in his communicating himself to us ; and this communication of God to us in our communion with him is specially in these three things, Light, Life, and Love.

(1.) *In light.* I mean the light of spiritual knowledge and understanding, whereby we are enabled to discern spiritual things spiritually ; this is called “God's shining into our hearts,” by the apostle ; (2 Cor. iv. 6 ;) and “seeing light in God's light,” by the Psalmist. (Psalm xxxvi. 9.)

(2.) *In life.* Whereby we are made partakers of the life of God, though in a lower degree, and are no longer “alienated from the life of God,” as the apostle declared the Gentiles to be. (Eph. iv. 18.) And by this “life of God” we must understand that which the scripture calls “sanctification ;” for holiness is the life of God in man. For when God sanctifies a man, he quickens the soul that was dead in sin, and makes it partake of the divine life, or “the life of God ;” and which elsewhere is called “a partaking of the Divine Nature,” (2 Peter i. 4,) and “a renewing [of] man into the image of God.” (Col. iii. 10.)

(3.) *In love.* God communicates his love also in the sense and taste of it to the soul, which the apostle calls, “the shedding abroad the love of God in the heart.” (Rom. v. 5.) So that, in this communion with God, we have not only the theory of his love in our minds, but some taste and experience of it in our hearts ; and under this is comprehended all that peace, joy, and consolation that springs out of this to the soul, and arising from the communication of the sense of his love to us. The apostle James expresseth this communion with God in both the parts of it, when he saith, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” (James iv. 8.) And Christ expresseth them both also in these words : “If a man love me, he

will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.) He expresseth *the active part* of communion with God by "our loving him, and keeping his commandments;" and *the passive part*, by "his own and his Father's coming to us to make their abode with us." The apostle John expresseth them by "our dwelling in God, and God's dwelling in us." (1 John iv. 16.) We dwell in God either by faith in him, whereby we make him the object of our trust, confidence, and dependence; or especially by our love to him, as he there expresseth it: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God;" and then God's dwelling in us is communion with God in the other part of it, consisting in a communication of himself to us.

But this communion with God—we must think soberly of it. It is not a transformation of the soul of man into the Divine Essence and being; as if man was made God, swallowed up into him, and lost his own existence and being in God. Neither is it a mixture of God's being with the being of the creature; as water and wine are mingled together, so that the nature of them both is lost in that mixture. For it is not thus with angels in heaven, or the glorified spirits there; for they still retain their own distinct nature and being, though they are in the highest communion with God. Neither is it thus between the human and the divine nature of Christ; as if these two were mingled together, and did lose their proper and distinct natures, in each other, though the human and divine nature of Christ have a most near union and communion with each other.

But this communion is a sacred and mutual intercourse that is between God and his people, whereby they go forth and act in the divine exercise of their faculties toward him, and he comes forth in the communication of himself in light, life, and love to them.

SECOND GENERAL.

II. I next proceed to speak of *some distinctions about communion with God.*

1. Communion with God may be considered either with respect to this world, or the world to come; the one is imperfect, the other is perfect; one is mediate, the other immediate; the one is inconstant and often interrupted, the other is constant, fixed, and uniform, without any interruption for ever.

2. This communion with God hath higher and lower degrees both in the nether and upper world; both among the saints here below, and the saints and angels above. As there are orders of angels in heaven, and some nearer to the throne of God than others, and receive higher communications of God to them, so it is with the saints made perfect in that heavenly state.

3. This communion with God is either internal, or external; by *internal* I mean that sacred intercourse between God and the soul which is managed only in the inward man; and by *external* I mean this communion with God managed in some external ordinance of his worship in the communion of saints.

THIRD GENERAL.

III. I next proceed to *show how this communion with God is attained, and then maintained.*

I answer in general, It is attained only in that way which God himself hath appointed thereunto.

The Heathen did aim at having fellowship with their gods; and therefore they built them temples to dwell in, erected oracles for them to speak to them by, and they built altars to sacrifice to them, and appointed priests to be their mediators, or *λειτουργοι φιλιας*, “ministers of friendship” between them and their gods. They used several charms to bring their gods to them, and keep them with them. They made use of various modes and rites of worship, which they thought best pleased their gods, and whereby they might invite their favour to them, and presence with them. Yea, they worshipped several creatures, though not as gods, but yet that, in worshipping them, they might have some communion with those gods that they thought did preside over those creatures [which] they worshipped, as Vulcan over the fire, Neptune over the sea, Ceres over the fruits of the earth, &c. But, notwithstanding these vain apprehensions of the Heathen by such means to have fellowship with their gods, yet the apostle says, “They sacrificed to devils, and not to God,” and had “fellowship with devils.” “I would not,” saith he, “that ye should have fellowship with devils.” (1 Cor. x. 20.)

But the ways of this communion, as I said, must be those which God himself hath appointed; the principal whereof are Jesus Christ himself, and the Holy Spirit.

1. *By Jesus Christ.*—Who was figured upon this account by *Jacob's ladder* that stood betwixt heaven and earth, as the person wherein heaven and earth are united, God and man have communion with each other. Who was also figured by *the temple*, whither the people came up to meet, and have communion with God, and God with them. And particularly by *the mercy-seat*, where God promised to meet his people, and commune with them; and therefore the apostle addeth here in the text: “Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ:” for, on our part, all our access to God is by him. “Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Eph. ii. 18.)

All God's approaches to us are also through him. All that light, life, and love, which God communicates to his people, is through him alone. And we have this communion through Christ with God,

First. *By virtue of his incarnation.*—He assumed our nature into union and communion with God, and so made way for our persons.

Secondly. *By virtue of his life [which] he lived here in the world.*—Considered either in the holy example [that] he hath left us to walk by, or the doctrine that he here preached: by both which he did guide and lead men in the right way to fellowship with his Father.

Thirdly. *By virtue of his death, and making reconciliation for us by his blood.*—For if there had not been a reconciliation and an

agreement made between God and us, we could never have had communion with him. How "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) This communion with God is some lower entrance into the holiest of all in this world; and this is said to be by the blood of Jesus; as the apostle speaks: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. x. 19—22.)

Fourthly. *By virtue of his resurrection, whereby believers come to be raised up to newness of life.* (Rom. vi. 4.)—And it is only in this new life that we have all our communion with God; the "old man" in us is not capable of it, nor the powers of nature, till they be renewed, raised, and quickened through the power of Christ's resurrection.

Fifthly. *By virtue also of his ascension into heaven.*—From whence descends upon believers a Divine Influence and Power through faith, whereby they are carried up above this world, and ascend up to heaven, and into communion with God; as the apostle argues: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." (Col. iii. 1.)

Sixthly. *By virtue of his intercession.*—For this is one great thing that he intercedes for with his Father in heaven, that his people might have union and communion with them; as appears by what Christ prays for in the behalf of his disciples: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," (John xvii. 21.) and so have communion with us.

So that all these things [which] I have spoken concerning Christ, ye see, tend to this great end,—to bring up the saints of God into this communion with him.

2. This communion with God is also *by the Spirit of God.*—As the apostle speaks of "the communion of the Holy Ghost:" "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) The grace of Christ and the love of God are communicated by the Holy Ghost: so that all our fellowship with the Father and the Son is by the Spirit. Now the Spirit doth effect this communion with God,

(1.) *By sanctifying our hearts, and assimilating our natures to the nature of God.*—For there can be no communion where there is no likeness of nature. "What communion hath light with darkness," or fire with water? Because there is no similitude in their natures. As the elements that have symbolical qualities, and some likeness in their nature, do easily pass one into the other by a natural transmutation; in this communion with God, there must be some suitableness and likeness between God and the soul; and that enmity and contrariety which is in our natures to him, must be removed by the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit in us.

(2.) *By elevating and raising the soul above its natural power and reach.*—The apostle distinguisheth between the soul and spirit in man. The spirit is the superior part of the soul; and it is in the spirit that we have our communion with God, who “is a Spirit.” As the union and communion between the soul and the body in nature is by the superior and most refined part of the body, which are the vital, natural, and animal spirits; so our union and communion with God is by the spirit, the supreme part of the soul, and that elevated and raised, by the Spirit of God, above its own natural capacity or power.

These are the principal ways for communion with God. But then, there are subordinate ways, which are the ordinances and institutions of God for that end. For God hath in all ages been training up his people to this,—to have communion with himself; and therefore he did appoint ordinances for that end under the law. There were sacrifices, and altars, and solemn feasts appointed of God, especially the sabbath-day; and a sanctuary erected, &c., and all for this end,—that his people might therein draw nigh to him, and have communion with him. And so, in the New Testament, God hath his ordinances also appointed for this end; as prayer, hearing the word, singing of psalms, baptism, and especially the Lord’s supper, which is therefore called “the communion,” as that ordinance wherein we have a more special communion with Christ, and with God in him.

QUESTION. “But what is to be done more particularly on our part to obtain it, and maintain it also?”

ANSWER I. *In general, we are to desire it and pant after it, as the most beneficial and necessary thing in the world.*—Many have it not, because they desire it not. They satisfy themselves in their converse with things below, and the communion they have with things sensible and natural; and desire not this communion with God.

ANSWER II. *You are to make it your scope and end in all the ordinances you approach to, to have therein communion with God.*—Many come to them out of custom, some out of curiosity, and others in hypocrisy; and so find not that communion with God which else they might obtain if they did make it their great scope and end. David testifies his great longing that he had after the sanctuary of God; but it was for this end,—that he might there meet with God, and have communion with him; as he expresseth it in Psalm xxvii. 4: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.” And again: “O God, my God! early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in thy sanctuary;” (Psalm lxiii. 1, 2;) which is, in effect, that he might there have communion with God. But to speak to this more particularly:—

1. If we would have communion with God, *we must keep up the exercise of faith in Christ.*—For it is, as I said, by him that we have

all our communion with God; therefore Christ had his name *Immanuel* given to him, which signifies "God with us." Let faith look upon God as in Christ, and so we may behold him reconciled; we may behold him coming down to us in our own nature; we may behold him upon a throne of grace, and as entered into a covenant of grace, whereby we may with a greater freedom and boldness have access unto him: which is *the active part* of this communion with God. And, through faith in Christ, God also communicates himself by his Spirit to his people in light, life, and love: which is this communion in *the passive part* of it. The apostle saith to this purpose: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." (1 John iv. 15.) This confession is an act of faith; and if it be not only from the mouth, but from the heart, it leadeth the soul into this communion with God; expressed, on our part, by our dwelling in God, and, on God's part, by his dwelling in us.

2. *Keep up a daily exercise of repentance.*—That so no new sin, nor the guilt of it in the conscience, may hinder and interrupt our communion with God. For "who can say, My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?" (Prov. xx. 9:) and therefore there is need of daily repentance, that sin may not interrupt our communion with God; which it will do, if we abide impenitently under it. The apostle speaks in this chapter of fellowship with God, and here in the text; and afterwards adds: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (Verse 8.) So that this communion with God may consist with the being of sin, but not with impenitence under it; and therefore [he] adds: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" (verse 9;) and we know that confession of sin is one great part of repentance; and when sin is thus confessed and forgiven, it need not hinder our fellowship with God. The apostle also mentioneth, in my text, fellowship with God, and "the cleansing us from sin by the blood of Christ." Both these are put together; so that, to maintain this fellowship with God, we must be cleansed from sin; which is done meritoriously by the blood of Christ, but on our part upon the conditions of faith and repentance.

3. *Keep up a constant course of prayer, and praising God.*

(1.) *Prayer.*—Prayer is a special ordinance for communion with God, and therefore so much commanded in scripture. "Pray without ceasing," saith the apostle in one place. (1 Thess. v. 17.) "Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," as he speaks in another place. (Eph. vi. 18.) For if it be not "a prayer in the Spirit," accompanied with faith and fervour of soul, we may pray, and yet have no communion with God. Prayer is compared to incense; but it doth not ascend to heaven but in the fire of holy affection kindled by the Spirit. And Christ therefore propounded several parables to put men upon fervency, faith, and perseverance in prayer; which are so well known that I need not mention them. If the soul draws nigh to God in any duty, it will be in this; and so

God's drawing nigh to the soul is experienced to be much in this duty of prayer. Christ himself had his transfiguration from heaven, and the glory of God shining forth upon him, while he was praying, as you read, Luke ix. 29. And the experience of the saints can much witness to this:—what visits of light and love they have had, and transfiguring views of heavenly glory, in this duty of prayer. And then,

(2.) *Keep up a constant course of praising God.*—Praise,—it is the great ordinance of heaven for communion with God in a state of perfection; and, as we are able to reach it in our present state, it will raise the soul into communion with God. The soul is in its highest operations when it is praising God; and the higher the acts of the soul are, the nearer it doth approach to him who is the most high God.

4. *Keep yourselves pure.*—Though, by “purity,” I mean not an absolute purity, but watchfulness against all sins and temptations, resisting every sin, living in no sin, and a continued endeavour to mortify all sin in ourselves; the purer the soul is, the fitter it is for communion with God. The promise of seeing God is, by our Saviour, made to the pure in heart; (Matt. v. 8;) and “with the pure, God will show himself pure,” saith the Psalmist. (Psalm xviii. 26.) And the apostle James, speaking concerning this communion with God, which he expresseth by “our drawing nigh to God, and his drawing nigh to us,” adds this exhortation: “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.” (James iv. 8.) And the apostle Paul speaks to the Corinthians of the same thing; and thereupon adviseth them to keep themselves pure: “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor. vi. 16—18.) Under the law God appointed porters to keep their watch at the doors of the temple, that nothing might enter-in to defile that temple, which was his dwelling-place. The soul is to be God's temple for him to dwell in, and therefore we should watch against whatsoever may enter-in to defile our souls; whereby we may be fitter dwellings for him, and for communion with him. And the priests under the law were commanded to purify themselves, before they drew nigh to God in his temple. Yea, and the people also, before they came to the passover, and those solemn feasts wherein they did draw nigh to God,—they were to purify and cleanse themselves. And the very Heathen, before they entered their solemn sacrifices, would have their crier to proclaim to the people, *Ἁγία τοῖς ἁγίοις*: “Holy things are for holy persons.” And they would write this inscription over the doors of their temple: *Nemo immundus huc ingreditor*: “Let no unclean person enter in here.” And all their lustrations and washings [which] they used to

the living, and their purging fires which they dreamed of for souls after death, (and which are still kept up in the holy water and purgatory of the Romish church,) do confirm the truth of this notion, as that which is ingrafted in the minds of all men,—that purity is required as necessary in all our approaches to God, and communion with him.

5. *Let God be much in your thoughts, and in the view of your mind.*—Not only when you approach some solemn ordinance, but in the whole course of your actions: when you go forth, and come in; when ye lie down, and rise up. Let the creatures you converse with, the several dispensations of Divine Providence toward you, present God to your thoughts, and the view of your minds. For how can men that have seldom any thoughts of God, maintain any communion with him? Our communion with God is not as it is with creatures, in a sensible way; but it is by the inward thoughts and exercise of the mind; which therefore we ought to be frequent in.

We should, with David, “set the Lord always before” our face; (Psalm xvi. 8;) and not as he that he speaks of, of whom it is said, “God is not in all his thoughts.” (Psalm x. 4.) This is rather to live “without God in the world,” than to live in communion with him. And these thoughts of God should not be slight and transient, but fixed and serious; especially at some times, which we should more peculiarly devote to solemn meditation. Meditation brings the object nearer to the soul, and the soul nearer to it, though locally distant; unites the soul to it; mixeth itself with it; whereby it doth possess it, or is possessed of it.

6. *Practise self-denial.*—For he that abideth in himself, and liveth in and to himself, liveth at a distance from God. God and self are as two opposite terms: we must forsake the one, if we would approach to the other. When man first fell from God, he fell in with himself; and therefore must forsake himself, if he would return to God, and have communion with him.

There is a two-fold self-denial. (1.) One is *internal*: When we can deny ourselves in all high thoughts of ourselves, confidence in ourselves, all self-ends, self-applause, self-sufficiency, and do even annihilate ourselves: this is highly requisite to our communion with God. Self is that Dagon that must fall before God’s ark; that idol that must be cast out of the temple of man’s soul, that God may enter in, and dwell there. (2.) Then there is a self-denial that is *external*: Which God sometimes calls his people to, in order to communion with himself; as, to forsake father, mother, house, land, liberty, &c.; and all this in order to the receiving the “hundred-fold” in this life, as our Saviour hath promised; (Matt. xix. 29;) which they shall receive in this communion with God. An eminent instance of this we have in Galeacius Caracciolus, who left his country, kindred, estate, honour, that he possessed at home, to enjoy communion with God in the purer ordinances of the Reformed church at Geneva; and, being tempted by gold and silver to return, answered: “His money perish with him that thinks all the gold and

silver in the world worth one day's communion with Jesus Christ!" He found all that he had left an hundred-fold in this communion [which] he had with God and Jesus Christ.

6. *Walk in love.*—This I add, because our apostle doth so much insist upon it in this epistle. Love is an affection requisite to all communion; to communion with saints among themselves, and to communion with God. For "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 16.) And this mutual indwelling is the communion [which] I am treating of.

The philosopher saith of love, "It doth transfer *amantem in amatum*;"* it carries the soul from home to live and dwell in the person or thing beloved. It is *vinculum unionis*, "the band of union;" and all communion is founded in union. And therefore where there is no love, how can there be communion? and where men do not walk in love, how can they walk in communion with God? If Christians walk in strife, envy, debates, emulation, contention, they will hereby be not only hindered in their communion with one another, but with God also.

7. And, lastly: *Let the people of God walk in fellowship with one another.*—Let them be all united to some particular visible church, where they may enjoy all those ordinances of divine worship which God hath instituted for communion with himself. Beside the catholic church, whereof Christ is the supreme Head and Pastor, there are particular churches under the presidency and care of particular pastors; to some of which all professed Christians ought to belong, in order to their communion with God and one another.

But upon this third general I shall speak somewhat further in the application.

FOURTH GENERAL.

IV. I shall now come to the fourth and last general I proposed to speak to, and that is *the consequences or consecretaries that arise from this whole discourse.*

CONSECTARIES.

CONSECTARY I. It follows hence that communion with God is a *very comprehensive duty.*—It comprehends much in it. It consists not in one single grace, of one single act of the soul, or one single duty of religion; but it comprehends the exercise of many graces, reacheth to manifold duties of religion, and consisteth of manifold acts and operations of the soul.

CONSECT. II. It is also a *constant duty.*—Which we are to maintain in a constant course, and not only now and then at some solemn times, or at some solemn ordinance: not as if we ought to do nothing else but worship God, which is the communion reserved for heaven; but it is to be our daily practice, and to set some time apart for it every day, and, as much as we can, to carry this communion

* "It transfers, or carries forward, him who loves toward him who is beloved."—
ENIT.

with God through the several affairs, conditions, and actions of our life.

“ Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace,” said Eliphaz to Job (xxii. 21). The Hebrew is, “ Accustom thyself with God ;” which importeth some frequent course of approaching to God, and converse with him. And when it is said of Noah and Enoch, that they “ walked with God,” it implies a constant course of religion, and communion with God. And when the apostle saith, “ Our conversation is in heaven,” (Phil. iii. 20,) it implies more than the performance now and then of some religious worship, but some constant converse with God and the things of heaven, as citizens of the same civil body or society have among themselves in their civil commerce and conversation with one another; as the Greek word *ωολιτευμα*, there used, doth import.

CONSECT III. *No creatures are capable of communion with God, but angels and men.*—The beasts were not made for it, nor are capable of it, not being rational and intelligent beings. This communion with God requires the exercise of reason and understanding, and that in the highest improvements of them. If we consider it either in the active or passive part of it, the beasts are not capable of it. Though God hath communicated something of himself to all his creatures, and, as the poet expresseth it, *Jovis omnia plena*, “ All things are full of God,” and his infinite being is in all finite beings; yet no creatures have communion with him, but angels and men. Other creatures have a natural instinct or sagacity to preserve and propagate their respective natures or beings, but have no sense of their Creator, no impression of a Deity upon their nature, no rational faculties whereby they might be capable of communion with God.

The angels have communion with God in heaven: they “ always do behold the face” of God, as our Saviour speaks; (Matt. xviii. 10;) so the spirits of just men departed are with Christ, and in nearer communion with God than when they dwelt in their tabernacles of flesh. And the saints upon earth also are not without it, though in a lower degree; whereby the church militant hath communion with the church triumphant in this communion that both have with God; (Heb. xii. 22—24;) which shows the excellency of rational creatures above all others, that they alone are capable of this high employment and privilege.

CONSECT. IV. *The supreme felicity of angels and men lies in communion with God.*—As they alone are capable of it, so their felicity consisteth in it. God hath provided a good suitable to the natures of all his creatures; in the enjoying of which is their chief happiness. But the happiness of rational and intelligent creatures lies in himself; and therefore, in their first creation, they were made happy in their communion with him.

And herein consisteth the chief misery of fallen angels and fallen man,—that they both fell from their communion with God. The angels so fell as never to be restored to it again; and man so fell also as not to be able of himself to return to it. But God hath provided

a way for man, by Christ, to be brought back again to him; which if he neglects or refuseth, he will then be cast into the same hopeless condition with the devil and his angels.

CONSECT. V. *The highest improvement of the faculties of the soul is, to employ them in communion with God.*—They are then in their highest operation upon the highest object. Though they are employed about things of this lower world, and ought so to be in their proper bounds; yet these are not their highest operations which they are capable of. As the highest use that could be made of beasts under the law, was to make them sacrifices to God; and when the Israelites brought gold, silver, purple, scarlet, and precious stones for the use and service of the sanctuary, they devoted them to the highest service they were capable of; so when the faculties of the soul are made a sanctuary to God, and employed in communion with him, they receive their highest improvement.

CONSECT. VI. Lastly: *Communion with God is the life of religion.*—It is but a dead thing without it. All religion hath respect to a Deity, either to confer honour upon it, or to have communion with it; especially the true religion. Without the former, it finds no acceptance with God; without the latter, it is unprofitable to ourselves, yea, we may grow worse under all our profession. What the body is without the soul, and what the matter without the form, that is religion, where men find no influence from heaven upon their hearts, and have no communion with God.

I next proceed to

THE APPLICATION.

USE I. *Take notice, with a holy admiration, of the condescending goodness of God, to admit any of the sons of men into fellowship with himself.*—That there should be fellowship where there is such infinite inequality, such infinite distance; yea, with such as had provoked him, and disobliged him, by their wilful departure from him.

To assume our nature into union and communion with God was great condescent; and so it is to receive any of our persons. “Will God indeed dwell on earth?” said Solomon, when he had built God a house for him to dwell in amongst his people. (1 Kings viii. 27.) For God to approach in ways of such kindness to men, as to communicate himself to them, as I said before, and to admit men to make such near approaches to himself,—both these manifest his great goodness.

USE II. *Take notice wherein Christianity excels philosophy, properly so called.*—The one directs us the way to communion with God, which the other cannot do. Philosophy speaks nothing of the “Mediator, the man Christ Jesus,” by whom alone we can draw nigh to God. Philosophy improves the principles of mere nature, but cannot confer a new nature; doth not infuse such principles as the gospel doth, to lead men into communion with God. Philosophy, whether natural or moral, hath an excellency in it, in its proper sphere; but yet falls far short of Christianity, the principles of the gospel, and the mysteries

of faith, wherein men are led to the true knowledge of God, and fellowship with him.

USE III. *This may be matter of lamentation, in this profane and apostate age, that there is so little of this communion with God to be found among men.*—Some understand not what it is; some desire it not, nor seek after it; some have lost what once they had; and some deride and scoff at it as a foolish fancy, a dream, a delusion of some fanatic people.

Though some may pretend to it that have it not, yet God forbid we should deny it. The apostle in the text asserteth it, and the experience of real Christians in all ages bears witness to it. And if it be not a fancy, but a real thing, I am sure it is the most solemn and important thing in the whole world.

QUESTION. "But why are there so few that attain it?"

ANSWER 1. Some are under "an evil heart of unbelief," whereby "they depart from the living God." (Heb. iii. 12.) And what stands opposite to *communion with him* more than *departing from him*?

2. Others walk in hypocrisy, and have only external communion with the church, and ordinances of it; but, for want of true grace and sincerity in their hearts, have no real communion with God.

3. Others walk in pride; and "God resisteth the proud," "knoweth him afar off;" (James iv. 6; Psalm cxxxviii. 6;) and all communion with God is intercepted hereby.

4. Others are in such "friendship with the world," which, as the apostle saith, is "enmity against God;" (James iv. 4;) and where there is enmity, there can be no communion.

5. Others are under the disturbance of headstrong passions; and communion with God requires a quiet, serene, and sedate frame of spirit.

6. Others concern themselves only about disputes and controversies in religion; and mind not that wherein the life and power of it consisteth, which is communion with God.

7. Others satisfy themselves with notions and speculations, with fine language, strains of rhetoric, well-compiled forms of devotion; and look no farther.

8. Others give way to wandering thoughts, and serve God with a distracted mind, whereby their hearts are carried from God, even while they are serving of him.

9. Others make religion mere matter of discourse, please themselves to talk of it; and that is all.

10. And, lastly: others are fallen into downright atheism, question God's very being, and indeed are of no religion at all; and can have no communion with the Deity, which they doubt of or deny.

Now is not this to be lamented, for men to have no communion with that God who gave them their being, that God in whose favour is their life, that God in whom is treasured up the true felicity of man? God is a fountain of living water, a spring of endless pleasure, an ocean of all perfection and holiness: but what is this to him that hath no

communion with him, and hath not a drop of all this falling upon himself.

But, instead of this communion with God, have not these men "fellowship with unrighteousness," and "with the unfruitful works of darkness," (which the apostle forbids, Eph. v. 11,) fellowship with the adulterer or adulteress in uncleanness, with the swearer in profane oaths, with the unjust in unrighteousness, with the deceiver in his frauds, the liar in false-speaking, the drunkard in riotous and intemperate drinking, which men call "good fellowship?" &c. And I could wish that the fellowship that men call "clubbing" at taverns and coffee-houses at unseasonable hours, whereby the duties of their families are neglected, were forborne at this day. Certainly, a more circumspect walking is required of us, especially such as pretend to religion, in a day wherein God is visiting the nation, and rebuking his own people for their iniquities.

And many, instead of fellowship with God, have fellowship with the devil. I mean not so much witches, sorcerers, or such as confederate expressly with him; but such as do his lusts, and carry on his work in the world. What is the devil's great work? Is it not to propagate wickedness, to persecute the church, to obstruct the gospel, to foment divisions, to corrupt the truth with error, and to sow tares among the wheat? And how many are there that have fellowship with the devil in such works as those! But they little think of the fellowship *they* are in danger to have with him in his torments, *who* at present have this fellowship with him in these works of wickedness.

USE IV. I shall next proceed to *exhort men to seek after this communion with God.*

1. And I shall first speak to *such as are mere strangers to it*; have lived many years in the world, and in a land where the gospel hath been long preached, and yet know nothing of it.

(1.) Let me persuade them that there is really such a thing; and that all that is spoken of it is not mere canting and vain pretence.

(2.) Let me persuade them seriously to seek it; and to make it the great work of their lives, and their great scope and end in all religion, to attain unto it.

(3.) As the gospel invites sinners to Christ, so let them make haste to him, that in him they may have their peace made with God, and receive that grace whereby they may be capable of communion with him.

(4.) Let them no longer walk in darkness. For "if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," as the apostle speaks in this chapter. (Verse 6.) And here remember what I spake in the opening of the text: "Wisdom is light, and folly is darkness; knowledge is light, and ignorance is darkness; truth is light, and error is darkness; holiness is light, and sin and wickedness are darkness."

Let men then, First, walk wisely, and not as fools. Wisdom lies in choosing to a man's self a good end, and in fitting means suitable

to that end : let men do this. Wisdom lies in preferring things according to their true worth and value : let men do so. Wisdom lies in embracing of seasons, and redeeming of time : let men practise this. Wisdom lies in looking to things in their end and issue, and not only how they appear at the present : let men do this also.

And, Secondly, I said, "Knowledge is light, ignorance is darkness." Would you then have communion with God? You must not abide in ignorance ; but read the scriptures, inquire into the mysteries of the gospel, and know the way of coming to God, and communion with him by Christ Jesus, and to an everlasting communion with him in heaven.

And, Thirdly, "Truth is light, and error is darkness." Take heed therefore of false doctrines, espically such as may tend to the obstructing this communion with God. Take heed of Socinian doctrines, in denying Christ's satisfaction, the Trinity, and the Godhead of Christ, &c. Take heed of Popish doctrines, which tell you of other merits beside the merits of Christ, other satisfaction, other mediation, and other headship of the church beside Jesus Christ, &c. Take heed of the leaven of Quakerism, which sets up the light of nature for Christ, and casts off the use of those ordinances which Christ hath appointed for our communion with God. Take heed of the old Pelagian doctrines, that set up the power of nature, and are since revived under other names, to the denial or neglect of that help of the Spirit which is necessary to our communion with God.

And, Lastly, I said, "Holiness is light, and sin and wickedness are darkness." He therefore that would have communion with God must break off from his sin, betake himself to a course of godliness, and holy walking with God. In the apostle's time rose up a sect of carnal professors, who would talk high of fellowship with God, and yet walk after the flesh, and indulge their lusts : whom he is thought especially to refer to in this chapter, that they, thus walking in darkness, cannot have fellowship with that God who is Light.

2. The next branch of the exhortation I direct to *such as are in the practice and experience of this communion with God.*

First. *Maintain it in what constancy you can.*—The fewer interruptions are admitted therein, so much the better. Take heed of violent passions, take heed of distracting cares, take heed of diversions from duties and ordinances [which] you ought to attend unto. Take heed of the snares of bad company, of the influence of bad examples, of the carnal counsels of your own heart, of any compliances against your consciences, of any doubts and disputes in your mind about the fundamental principles of all religion, especially that Christian religion that you make profession of. And watch over the levity and instability of your own minds, which of itself alone may hinder our constancy in this duty. Yea, and the very lawful affairs of our calling, especially if much encumbered, may interrupt us herein.

Secondly. *Advance it to a higher degree.*—That your communion with God may grow up into a greater intimacy ; such as the church, the spouse of Christ, is represented to have in the book of Canticles.

He that can attain it, let him attain it. In Jacob's ladder, which stood betwixt heaven and earth, there were many rounds. In a high mountain there are several degrees of ascent. At Mount Sinai, the people stood at the bottom; some of the priests, and the seventy elders of Israel, went up a little way; but Moses was at the top. Let us ascend this Mount as high as we can; only know, it is not Mount Sinai, but Mount Sion, we must ascend, to have communion with God. And be not discouraged if you meet with some difficulties in your ascent, through the natural bent of your hearts toward things below. The sweetness and advantage [which] you will reap herein, will abundantly recompense all the labour and endeavours after it.

And may not some eminent degree of communion with God be expected of such as do not only live in the times of the New Testament, but have had a long standing in the church of God? that your growth herein may in some measure be proportioned to your time and advantages for it? And that which should quicken you the more, is the present complexion of the times both at home and abroad. We know not what days are coming. "Men's hearts are failing them for fear" of what evils "are coming upon the earth;" as our Saviour foretold. (Matt. xxiv. 29; Luke xxi. 26.) Now, nothing will so fortify the soul against an evil day and an hour of temptation, as this communion with God. This will sweeten a prison, sweeten poverty, sweeten banishment, sweeten the very sorrows of death. This sweetened the martyrs' sufferings of old: that fellowship they had with God in those sufferings, wherein they had fellowship also with Christ in his death.

Now, let these things put you on to this great work; and be not discouraged because of the infinite distance betwixt God and us. He is come down to us in our own nature in Christ, that we may have access to him, and his "terror not make us afraid." (Job xxxiii. 7.) And hear what he speaks himself to our encouragement: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Isai. lvii. 15.) The most high God thus humbleth himself to men.

OBJECTION. "But God is invisible; and how can I have communion with one whom I see not?"

ANSWER. It is true, we cannot have a sensible communion with him, as men have with one another; but spirits that are invisible have converse together, as well as sensible creatures. "God is a Spirit;" and the soul of man is a spirit, and so may be capable of communion with that God who is a Spirit. Had not the apostle communion with invisible things, when he said, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen?" (2 Cor. iv. 18.) And doth not the apostle Peter say, "Whom having not seen, ye love?" (1 Peter i. 8.) And is not "faith the evidence of things not seen?" (Heb. xi. 1.) And though in himself he is invisible, yet he made himself visible in Christ, "who is the image of the invisible God." (Col. i. 15.)

USE V. Having spoken of this *communion with God*, I shall add one use about *the communion of saints*. We know it is one of the articles of our Creed, and that which the apostle in this chapter exhorts to: "These things write we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us;" (verses 3, 4;) with us as apostles, and with us as believers. So that the fellowship of saints comprehends their fellowship with the Father, and their fellowship with the Son, and their fellowship with the apostles, and from thence fellowship with one another.

All saints and churches that hold fellowship with these three, ought to have fellowship among themselves. To bring-in new doctrines, or new rules of worship, not delivered by the apostles, is to forsake communion with the apostles. The terms of communion laid by the apostles for the churches of Christ, ought to be kept inviolable in all churches to the end of the world, and be the foundation of their communion among themselves. And, for my part, I can hold communion with any church where these are maintained, though there may be some circumstantial differences either in opinion or practice; especially if they are not imposed as necessary. For this hath made such woful divisions in the church,—the making *things unnecessary and doubtful* the necessary terms of church-communion. Was the church of Rome itself the truly ancient, catholic, and apostolic church, as she styles herself, I could have communion with it. They that leave the apostles, shake the foundation of the church's stability, and forsake the centre of its unity. The Lord help us all to understand the way of peace and union, in this miserably-divided age!

USE VI. Lastly. And now, from all that hath been said, *we may take a prospect of heaven*.—Heaven is not a Turkish Paradise: it is communion with God that is the very heaven of heaven; as the loss of it is the very hell of hell! And this makes heaven not desirable to the carnal man, who hath no desire after or delight in communion with God. But it doth commend it the more to the spiritual man, that he shall then enjoy that, in its highest perfection, which he hath been pursuing and had the foretastes of in this world.

SERMON XXVIII.

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WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO PREPARE TO MEET GOD IN THE
WAY OF HIS JUDGMENTS OR MERCIES?

Father, glorify thy name.—John xii. 28.

IN this chapter we find the Lord Jesus under two very different exercises: in the one attended with much solemnity, in the other under great perplexity; much courted, much cast down; highly honoured, and exceedingly troubled: and he beareth both with wonderful equanimity. He is feasted at Bethany; (verses 1, 2;) anointed with oil of spikenard, “very costly;” (verse 3;) rideth triumphantly into Jerusalem. (Verses 12—19.) His disciples bless and entertain him upon the way with hosannas; (verse 13; Matt. xxi. 8, 9;) strangers desire to see him, and give him their acknowledgments; (John xii. 20, 21;) and the multitudes throng after him, (verse 12,) and strow his way with palm branches. (Verse 13.) But immediately the scene is changed. As our blessed Lord was not much affected with these things, so, contrary to all expectation, he enters upon a discourse of another nature: “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.” (Verse 23.) “Why? had he not been glorifying throughout this chapter?” Yea; but not comparably to what he here intends: as if he had said, “My feast, my triumph, my applause, bear no proportion to the glory I am hasting to. These are but dull, low glories to what is at hand. ‘The hour is come,’” that is, “is near,” “that the Son of man should be glorified:” glorified upon the cross, by expiating the sins of his elect; glorified thereupon in heaven at the right hand of the Father.”

Christ had his eye upon a higher glory, which would redound to him upon the performing and finishing [of] our redemption. And a true Christian frame overlooks present comforts and honours from men, and fixeth mainly upon the honour to be received from God, in the way of obedience, here and hereafter.

Nor will our Lord Jesus pass over this meditation till he have improved it:—

1. Inferring thence the fruitfulness of his death: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;” (verse 24;) alluding to the propagation of his church by his death.

2. The proportionable advantage of the death of his saints for his sake and testimony, and the disadvantage of forbearing and refusing

to suffer for his name : " He that loveth his life shall lose it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be : if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." (John xii. 25, 26.)

But passing thence to the consideration of his dreadful agony and passion ensuing, his thoughts are at a stand, his " soul is troubled ;" yea, the extremity of his grief stopped his mouth ; so amazing, so astonishing was the foresight of his sufferings !

At last prayer breaks out : " Father, save me from this hour ;" and is presently corrected : " But for this cause came I unto this hour." (Verse 27.) As if he had said, " I would escape, but must not resist thy will. I would save myself, yet not without a salvo to thy purpose and counsel. I am in a strait between nature and faith, between fear and subjection, between death and duty.

1. *Mere trouble is no sin.*—Christ's soul was " troubled," *ταραχται*, as water when it is muddied. (John v. 4, 7.) Not that there was any mixture of sin in his trouble : it was such as might consist with his pure, unspotted nature. If grief be not groundless, if not extravagant, not tainted with unbelief, or [the] effect of disobedience ; it is but nature's weakness. Grace induceth no stoical stupidity ; it is no property of the gospel to make men senseless.

2. *Fear of death, and sense of the wrath of God, are of all things most perplexing.*—" Now is my soul troubled." Now I am to conflict with the Father's anger, men's malice, and death's pains and terrors ; and now, not my flesh only, but " my soul is troubled."

3. *Extreme distress of spirit is of an amazing nature.*—Christ had not the freedom of prayer : " What shall I say ?" and then what he did say was corrected. (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42.)

4. *No extremity can ordinarily, or should really, put a holy soul by the plea of or hope in his relation to God.*—Christ calls God " Father : " " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" (Matt. xxvii. 46.)

5. *Prayer must be suited to the occasion.*—" Save me from this hour," &c. A great argument against most forms is, that a holy soul cannot relish them, nor can I see how God accepts them, because they are impertinent, or not full to the case.

6. *In our extremities we may be importunate, must not be peremptory, with God in prayer.*—Our Saviour here prayed not more heartily than submissively : " Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. xxvi. 39.)

Our text is the result of the Lord's wrestling, both with his own soul, and with his Father. Here is, first, Christ's prayer : " Father, glorify thy name." And the Father's answer in the next words : but I meddle not with that now.

In the text we have two things : 1. *The compellation* : " Father." 2. *The petition* : " Glorify thy name."

1. *The compellation* : " Father." Prayer ought to be ushered in with some suitable title of God, which is expressive of his supremacy,

our reverence of him and relation to him. All these are couched in the single word "Father." Read Matt. vi. 9, 10; Mal. i. 6; Rom. viii. 15.

(1.) This title expresseth *God's authority and Christ's allegiance*, both owned by him in this little word.

(2.) *Relation*.—The Lord's petitioners must ask so as to assure themselves of acceptance; which the recognition of our interest in God, as our Father in Christ, is very proper to effect. (Read Isai. liiii. 16.) Hence the rule of prayer enters with "Our Father;" and it is most suitable to the spirit of the gospel, that believers call God "Father" in prayer, having the Spirit of the Son poured out upon them to this end. (Gal. iv. 6.)

2. *The petition*: "Father, glorify thy name." As if he had said, "Be thou rather glorified, than I spared. If I die, thy glory will make amends for my torment and death." Where note,

(1.) *His submission to the will of the Father*.—He puts himself into his Father's hands, and subjects himself to his pleasure.

(2.) *His design*.—The Father's glory: "Glorify thy name." He doth not say simply, "Let my agony and death come;" but, "Glorify thy name." As though he had said, "This being the means of thy glory which thou hast fixed upon, here I am; do to me as seemeth good in thy sight." Hence observe,

(i.) The best way to quiet and compose our spirits in time of distress, is the prayer of faith. Wrestle with God, and you conquer your own tumultuatings. (1 Sam. i. 10, 11, 18.)

(ii.) That soul will be heard who forgets or neglects himself in comparison, and prayeth for the accomplishment of the will and glory of God. So doth Christ here; and God heard him. (See Heb. v. 7.)

(iii.) Our exemption from suffering may sometimes be inconsistent with the glory of God. "Save me from this hour," saith Christ, "but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The ground of the point lies in his correction of his first petition.

(iv.) The best and most effectual means to prepare ourselves to meet God either in the way of mercy or judgment, is to resign ourselves to the sovereign will of God, to be disposed of for his glory.

I. *I shall prove the doctrine.*

II. *Open the nature of this resigned frame of spirit.*

III. *Give some arguments, manifesting that it is our duty, especially in a day of distress.*

IV. *Apply the whole.*

Before I enter upon the first, I lay down this supposition:—That believer who is prepared for affliction, is prepared for salvation; that the same qualification fits for both these dispensations. I know some are "vessels of wrath fitted" only for "destruction." (Rom. ix. 22.) If the apostle did there treat of a moral preparation, (which I know he doth not,) then we must distinguish between destruction and affliction; and of the fitness of the vessels of wrath for that, and saints for this. But to decide this matter: our doctrine and ques-

tion speaks of a holy, gracious preparation for sufferings, to bear them quietly and beneficially; not of a judicial aptitude for ruin, much less an eternal act of preterition, which is the apostle's meaning there. This premised, I suppose, none will deny him who is holily qualified for suffering to be in a blessed readiness for comfortable dispensations and providences.

I. Now, that the above-mentioned *resignation to the will of God for his glory prepareth a soul both for mercy or judgment, suffering or deliverance*, appeareth as follows:—

1. *In that we find holy men of old in this spirit ready for either dispensation,—tribulation or comfort, adversity or prosperity.*

Job shall be our first instance: his resignation is notably expressed: “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job i. 21.) The good man, upon the first gust of the storm that beats terribly upon him, falls down at the feet of God, acknowledging his sovereignty, and adoring his name. Well, in this frame he met with greater trials afterward; and how did he bear them? See James v. 11: “Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” In this spirit he bore affliction patiently, and received mercy plentifully. God had two designs on Job,—to try and [to] bless him; and Job’s humble spirit equally qualified him for both.

Take David for a second example. By Absalom’s rebellion he was brought to a great strait, that [he] must fly, to prevent the surprise of his person. Now take notice of his frame: “And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation: but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.” (2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.) David was not without hopes of being restored to his throne, and yet he had fears of the contrary: but whether God would dispose of him that way or this, he submits to his pleasure, resigns himself to his will; and this prepared him for suffering, and qualified him for deliverance. In Isai. xli. 2, it is said that God “called” Abraham “to his foot;” that is, to an entire subjection to his will. He disputed nothing that God revealed, and refused nothing which he commanded. “What was this for?” Why, to fit him for great trials and mercies. (Gen. xii. 1—4; xxii. 1—3, 10, 16—18.) This was Paul’s frame. (Acts xx. 22—24.)

2. *That frame is most fit to meet the Lord in the way of judgment or mercy, which Christ chose to suffer in, and so to enter into glory.*—In the text this was his case; he was shortly to meet with two contrary dispensations. He was to bear our sin, and to conflict with the wrath of God for it; to suffer the violence of hell and the world, and to die an accursed death: but withal immediately he is to be glorified at the right hand of the Father. Both these he had in his eye in

verses 23, 24, of this chapter. He expected a double glory upon his death: here, by the propagation of the gospel; in heaven, by the exaltation of his human nature. (John xvii. 5.) And both these he looked for. (Heb. xii. 2.) "Well, how will he prepare himself for suffering and glory?" Even by lying at his Father's foot in the text; and now he can grapple with all his enemies, and now he can wait for his reward. (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.) It was in this spirit that he went to meet his betrayer. (Verses 45, 46.) This all the evangelists mention for our example. Certainly Christ knew what was the best preparation for judgment or mercy, and chose it for himself, and was therein our pattern.

3. *That is the best way to meet God in the way of his judgments or mercies, which himself prescribeth.*—But a resigned, humbled spirit to his will and pleasure is commanded by himself, to qualify us for such dispensations: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (1 Peter v. 6.) As if he had said, "Bear my afflicting hand, and you shall feel my supporting, exalting hand."

4. *That is the best preparation for mercy or judgment, which God aimeth at in afflicting, and rewardeth in delivering, his people.*—And this is a resigned frame, an obedient, submissive, subdued will to the will of God. If he afflict his children, it is because they are froward; if he cherish them, it is for the compliance with his pleasure. Ephraim was smitten for his stubbornness, and comforted for his obedience. (Jer. xxxi. 18—20.) God hath no contention with us, but our crossness; because our wills thwart his, and our ways contradict his. First we resist his commanding will by disobedience, and then his chastising will by impatience; and he in his wisdom and love is resolved to bring us "to his foot." Well; if we comply beforehand, when we see the storm approaching, God's end is attained; and he either lays down his rod, or mitigateth the chastisement; yea, he will ere long embrace and comfort broken and humble Ephraim. Indeed this frame supersedes affliction: for judgments upon saints are not to destroy, but subdue them to their Father's will; and if we meet our angry Father in this spirit, he may correct a little, but he will certainly comfort much.

5. *Lastly. A resigned soul meeteth God in the way of judgments or mercies to great advantage.*—They are so far from doing him harm, that they do good; therefore it must needs be a blessed preparation for either. Physic never works so well as when the body is antecedently prepared; nor is any person so certainly profited by judgments or mercies, as he that is ready to entertain them. I know, God can do an unprepared soul good by any providence; but I am sure, none can come amiss to such as be prepared. "What, then, will prepare us to receive chastisements profitably?" The apostle tells us: "Be subject to the Father of spirits, and live." (Heb. xii. 9.) Comply with his will, resign yourselves to his pleasure; and whatever he doeth will be a quickening, improving providence.

II. QUESTION. *What is the nature of this resignation to the will of God for his glory? Or wherein doth it consist?*

ANSWER. I shall reply to this query by laying down something implied in it, and then speak to the proper nature thereof.

1. It *implies* many things. I shall instance only in a few, for brevity's sake.

(1.) *It supposeth a lively exercise of faith.*—For as no unbeliever ever did resign himself freely to the will of God, so no believer, if faith be not in exercise, can do it. Yea, it must be an active faith [that] will enable us to put ourselves into the hands of God, (especially in a day of affliction,) to deal with us according to his pleasure. I say, That soul must have a good acquaintance with and a blessed confidence in Him whom he trusteth with his life and all. Paul therefore tells us, in case of suffering, he “knew whom he had trusted.” (2 Tim. i. 12.) Therefore our Saviour here, when he referreth himself to God, expresseth his faith in that very resignation: “Father, glorify thy name.” He believed God to be his Father, and that his Father loved him; and now he is satisfied that his Father dispose of him. “But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God.” “What then?” “My times are in thy hand.” (Psalm xxxi. 14, 15.) As if he had said, “It is not only thy prerogative to dispose of me and my days, but I refer them voluntarily to thee.” He put them into the hands of his God, and trusted them with him.

There be many particulars that the faith of a resigned soul is exercised in; as, that God is his God. Faith must have interest in him whom it trusteth. Isaac will suffer his father to bind and sacrifice him. “Why?” Abraham was his father, and God who had given the command for it was his God. (Gen. xxii.) And it believes that all the will of God is good; good in itself, and good for the resigned soul. A believer may know that there may be pain and affliction in suffering according to the Father's pleasure; but is withal assured, it is his good pleasure. (Heb. xii. 10.) And such a soul believes that its God and Father is kind, loving, and tender; that he will not oppress, that he will not overwhelm. He believes that God glorifies not himself to the damage of his people; but that his glory and their benefit are inseparably linked together. Yea, it is in Christ, the Redeemer of the soul, [that it] putteth itself into the Father's hands; and it expects power and strength from its God to bear the sufferings, and carry [itself] through them. When Moses “forsook Egypt” and his interest there, and “chose to suffer affliction with the people of God,” he did this in faith, eyeing “Him who is invisible.” (Heb. xi. 24—27.) And David in the like case was well satisfied in the good will of God to him. (2 Sam. xv. 25, 26; xxiii. 5.)

(2.) *Consequently, it is a high act of love.*—He that loves his Heavenly Father will be disposed of by him. But it must be a love becoming the glorious object on which it is fixed; (Matt. xxii. 37;) a love that prefers his will and glory before all things else; a love in

comparison of which all other love is hatred; (Luke xiv. 26;) a constraining love. (2 Cor. v. 13, 14.) Abraham loved Isaac well. "Why, then, did he offer him up at the command of God?" O, it was because he loved God better. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John v. 3.) "What! no command grievous? not self-denial? not bearing the cross?" No; those commands are not grievous, because the soul loves God better than itself. We have a great word, Rev. xii. 11: "They loved not their lives unto the death." "Why?" Because their love of Christ was stronger than self-love. We read of some that followed the Lamb wherever he went. (Rev. xiv. 4.) Into tribulation of all sorts they followed the Lamb. "Why?" Love constrained them. Christ therefore resigned himself into the Father's hands; for he loved his Father. Love will lay the soul at God's feet; love will follow and obey the Father's call in all things; love will keep steadfastly in the way of the will of our Beloved. It argues little love to Christ, when we seek to evade suffering for his name, by finding out carnal shifts. He that loves the Father and Son is, as to the main, resolved into their will.

(3.) To come nearer to my intendment: *This resignation of our wills to the pleasure of God for his glory respects sufferings and duties principally.*—For there is no difficulty ordinarily to comply with the good will of God in distributing mercy and favour. But to have our wills resolved into his in case of difficult duty and hard sufferings, which cross our corrupt nature, and press upon our pampered flesh, is a great work, far above the sphere of an unregenerate person, and a special effect of the Spirit of God in and upon the hearts of saints. But because our subject leads to consider the matter in case of afflictions only, I shall confine my discourse thereto; only adding this by the way,—that where a soul disputeth no sufferings, it submits to all duties. If it be resigned to the will of the Lord in the one, it is subjected to him in the other also.

2. Therefore the resignation [which] I spake of, *consists in several things.*

(1.) *In referring ourselves to the will of God in a day of trial, in the very things we fear.*—Our Lord Jesus dreaded nothing like this hour that was coming upon him. It "troubled" and amazed his very "soul;" (verse 27;) gladly would he be saved from it, had it been consistent with his Father's purpose and honour: yet, all this notwithstanding, he boweth his soul, and prayeth his Father to "glorify his name." (So Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.) His soul trembled at the thoughts of the bitterness of that cup: we find him not reluctant at any foregoing suffering; but this "amazed" him, as Mark expresseth it. (Chap. xiv. 33.) Yet see his resolve: "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke xxii. 42.)

Two things in times of trouble we usually start at; yet a resigned soul will refer itself therein to the will of God:—

(i.) *The matter of the trial.*—Very oft we think we could be content to bear any burden but what Providence lays upon us;

carrying it as if God had picked out the very worst of pains and afflictions for us. We would bear sickness, if it pleased God; but cannot away with death. We would lay down our lives at God's feet, but know not to be confined in a nasty gaol. Let God send any thing but poverty, or banishment, or slavery, &c. The meaning of it is, we would suffer according to our own will, not God's. For to corrupt nature any trouble is more eligibile than what Providence fixeth upon. Rachel could die more quietly (as she imagined) than endure the affliction of barrenness. (Gen. xxx. 1.) Though, poor woman! she found that first as hard a task as the second. (Chap. xxxv. 18.)

Was this Christ's meaning, when he prayed the Father to "glorify his name?" Doth he prescribe the suffering, or close with his Father's pleasure? Did Christ say, "Any cup, Father, but this; any death, but this accursed crucifixion?" Nay; but, "If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." (Matt. xxvi. 42.) O how far are we from this frame, when we complain, "Our lot is worse than any man's!" We think God hath chosen the smartest rod in all the bundle for us. But where is our resignation all this while?

(ii.) *The manner of the trial.*—This is usually disputed. Saul in his despair will die; but scorns to be slain by the "uncircumcised." (1 Sam. xxxi. 4.) Abimelech, too, will die, when he cannot help it; but not by the hand of a woman. (Judges ix. 54.) And we flatter ourselves, as if we were willing to glorify God by our death; only we would choose the way of dying. The meaning is, "God shall be glorified as we please; he shall have the honours, but we will prescribe the manner." Indeed! He owes us much thanks for our kindness! Is this to glorify God? No; he is not glorified but in the way of his will.

(2.) *This frame carrieth in it a resolution of our suffering, not only into the will of God, but his glory also.*—"O," saith our blessed Lord, "I will suffer thy wrath, and men's malice and rage; and say, 'Thine be the glory.' I will endure the shame, and thou shalt have the honour. 'Father, glorify thy name.'" Christ stood not upon his own credit, but the Father's glory. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.) Yea, whether ye live or die, suffer or prosper, "do all," suffer all, for "the glory of God." A resigned soul counteth it worth his while to bear any affliction, so God be glorified. Our holy Lord here balanced the glory of God against his sufferings. What a blessed spirit was that of the Baptist! "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John iii. 30.) He began to lose his followers, when Christ entered upon his ministry: but instead of grudging at it or envying him, he is abundantly satisfied that his loss was his Lord's gain. A resigned soul will be base in its own eyes, and be content to be vile in men's sight also, so God be glorified. I know nothing more contrary to the spirit of the gospel, than affectation of reputation to ourselves; nor any thing more Christian, than zeal for and

desire of the glory of God and our Lord Jesus: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?" (John v. 44.) Christ aimed at his Father's glory: "I have glorified thee on the earth." (John xvii. 4.)

(i.) *Here, both in doing and suffering, we must design God's glory.*—Our turn comes not to have glory, till we be in heaven. Nay; we must not only aim at God's glory in our suffering, but be willing that he manage our sufferings to that end. He always hath most glory when he orders the whole affair. Christ doth not say, "Father, I will glorify thy name;" but refers himself unto the Father: "Do thou, O Father, glorify thy name." Our sufferings bring God no glory, unless he order them. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 7.) There was nothing of the will of Christ in the case, further than its submission to the Father's will; so must we lay ourselves at the feet of God, and desire him to work out his own glory in and by us.

(ii.) *We must also be willing that he make what glory for himself he pleaseth of us and by us.*—Some think, from Rev. xi. 7, the witnesses would have finished their testimony too soon, and laid aside the sackcloth and ashes before the time. What know we *when* God hath got glory enough by our sufferings? Nay, let us be content to bear as long and as much as he thinketh fit; to be sure, we cannot glorify him too much. Let him carve for himself; when his name hath had glory enough by us, himself will ease us. Did Christ hang back after his agony in the garden? No; but thence he went to meet his apprehenders, thence to the chief priest, thence to Herod, and thence to Pilate again; then to the place of execution, then to the cross, then to the grave. He suffered as long and as much as it was his Father's pleasure. His prayer in the text fixeth no measure nor time, but leaveth the stint to the will of God. Holy Job bare his several afflictions patiently; not one, but all, till God had done. Paul professeth that he was "not only ready to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts xxi. 13.) And, "None of these things move me," saith he. (Chap. xx. 24.) "If, when God hath glorified himself by my bonds, he thinks fit to get him honour by my death, I submit." This should check our impatience and weariness in a suffering day. How can we say, "Father, glorify thy name," when we would stint him in the degree and time of our sufferings?

(3.) *This frame submits the season when we shall suffer, to the Father's wise determination.*—This was the dismalest hour that ever Christ saw,—the "hour and the power of darkness;" (Luke xxii. 53;) when hell and the world seemed to have all possible advantages against the Lord. And doth he say, "Father, save me from this hour?" Yea; but he corrects himself, and with respect to that hour puts up his request to the Father in the text: "Father, glorify thy name."

He is so far from contending about the season, that he came designedly to Jerusalem at that time to suffer. (John xii. 1—10; Matt. xx. 18, 19.)

But we are apt to reluct in this case: "O Lord, deliver us from this and that hour, and glorify thyself any time else." Some think, Hezekiah was loath to die, (Isai. xxxviii. 2, 3,) because he was in the midst of his reformation, and the work unfinished. He might possibly think it more for God's glory to live then, than die. "Let me outlive this sickness, escape this persecution, avoid this judgment; and, Father, glorify thyself ever after,"—is our language. But where is resignation to the will of God all this while? One would think, the patriarchs died very unseasonably, (Heb. xi. 13, 14,) when they expected the fulfilling of promises; but, however, they died contentedly. Many of us would gladly be spared to see the resurrection of the witnesses, the fall of antichrist, the return of the Jews, and the descension of the New Jerusalem; and then they think they could say with Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." (Luke ii. 29, 30.) These desires are good, if attended with submission to the will of God; otherwise rebellious.

(4.) *Though nature shrink, our souls be perplexed, our thoughts disturbed, for fear of the hour approaching; yet our wills must be resigned, our reasoning silenced, our passions resisted, and all submitted to the will of God.*—The Lord Jesus was now strangely perplexed; fear and amazement stopped his mouth for a while: yet as soon as he can recollect himself, this is the language both of heart and lips, "Father, glorify thy name." It may be, we have plausible arguments against drinking the cup; as our weakness, our fear, and, possibly, that to escape would be more for God's glory, that it is a hard case, that we are not ready, &c. Well; but if we would have God glorify himself, reason must be silent, (Psalm xxxix. 9; Lev. x. 3,) and only faith speak; as Christ doth in the text, and Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.

(5.) *This resignation is not only a thought, but a deliberate desire.*—It is Christ's request to God,—nay, he begs more heartily that the Father glorify himself, than that he should be saved from that hour. Christians may now and then use such an expression, by way of ejaculation, as a short prayer,—the result of some close spiritual reasoning in our souls; but can we settle our desire this way? Can we say in time of plague, persecution, or other distress, "Father, glorify thy name?" The Lord Jesus, knowing how much it conduced to the Father's glory, doth not only desire to suffer, but desires it earnestly and passionately: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke xii. 50.) His heart was bent, bent to glorify his Father; he was therefore angry with Peter for dissuading. (Matt. xvi. 22, 23.) He speaks with a holy passionateness and indignation: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.) And this is recorded for our imitation. "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," (Acts xxi. 13,)—was Paul's spirit. "The name and glory of the Lord Jesus are concerned

in my sufferings, and I will suffer his will." We should endeavour not only to be content, but desirous of suffering, when it is for the glory of God.

(6.) Lastly. *This is Christ's last and final resolve.*—He was at first reluctant; but now he fixeth, and changed not till death. Ah! many of us may say now and then, "Father, glorify thy name;" but our spirit alters, our goodness is "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew," that soon vanisheth. (Hosea xiii. 3.) O, but a resigned soul makes it his abiding resolve.

III. The next general is to *allege some grounds on which this resignation is built, and reasons for it.*

1. *We cannot prescribe how God should be glorified.*—Therefore it is fit [that] we be resigned. How have men befooled themselves and dishonoured God in the case of worship! They will invent and prescribe forms and modes, when they have no ground to believe [that] he will accept them. Nothing pleaseth God but his own will. Even in the case in hand we must not dispose of ourselves, and suffer, how, and when, and where, and by whom we please; for this would rather dishonour than credit the cause of God, because it wholly depends upon his pleasure. He hath laid the whole platform and contrivance thereof in his own counsels and purpose; and therein all the several spirits of the mystery answer, and add beauty to each other. Now any thing of our will would deform the rest, and take off from that divine symmetry and concord which render all becoming the wisdom, holiness, power, and sovereign grace of God. And why do we not as well teach him how he should govern the world, as how he should dispose of us? Would it be for God's honour, if we should direct when it should rain, and when shine; when there should be a storm, and when a calm? He that understands not the whole counsel of God, cannot direct any fragment thereof: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 34.) Nay, is it not most dishonourable, that his creatures should advise him? that dust and ashes should correct his will? (Isai. xlv. 9, 10.) The way of God's glory is the way of his pleasure; (Rev. iv. 11;) into which unless we resolve ourselves, we obstruct his honour.

2. *Because God's glory is most valuable.*—Christ stood not upon his life, in comparison of his Father's glory. What, then, is our life, or ease, or credit, to be laid in the bottom with it? Better the world perish, than God not be glorified. It was made "for his pleasure;" (Rev. iv. 11;) for that end is it continued; and if it be dissolved, that will be the design. See how magnificently the prophet speaks of God: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity." (Isai. xl. 15—17.) And shall "nothing," shall we, stand between him and his glory? Methinks we should tremble at our unwillingness to suffer according to his will, consider-

ing how it eclipses his glory. Joshua was more solicitous for God's name, than his own life or all the camp of Israel. (Joshua vii. 9.)

3. *Because Christ hath showed us the way in this most difficult case.*—"Learn of me," saith he; "for I am meek and lowly." (Matt. xi. 29.) Wherein did he express his meekness? See Isai. liii. 3, 7. He neither refused nor murmured, complained nor resisted; he behaved himself most submissly and obediently. Now "learn of" him: lay down passion and tumult in a suffering day, and lie at the feet of your Father. What, did the Lord submit, and may the servant rebel? Nay; "the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord." (Matt. x. 24.) It is enough to be *like* him. Elijah was content to die, if God pleased. Why? "I am not better than my fathers." (1 Kings xix. 4.) Did the example of the patriarchs move him? Behold, a greater than the patriarchs is here!

4. *Because God hath had his will, and glorified his name, hitherto.*—So he saith immediately after our text.

And must Providence be put out of its course for us? Did not God glorify himself upon and by all our predecessors in all ages? The greatest, the holiest of them gave way to the course of his will; they were sick, imprisoned, poor, strangers, persecuted, and slain, when, by whom, and as he pleased: and what are we, a foolish generation, arisen in this last and worst age, that we should reluct, or murmur, or tumultuate, or be angry or impatient? "My Father worketh hitherto." (John v. 17.) He had not been impeded in his providential will to that day; nor is he yet. And is it fit he should alter his course for us, now at last? This is the Father's own argument.

5. *Because, do what we can, he will glorify his name.*—So himself saith in the words following: "I will glorify it again." Friends, it is fit we consider this matter. When God calls to suffering, this is the language of non-submission: "We will not be persecuted, we will not be imprisoned," &c. But what saith God? "I will glorify it again." Yea, he will do it in spite of us. He did not ask our leave to make us; nor will he, to dispose of us. Non-resignation implies a double contradiction:—

(1.) *To God.*—"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure," is his resolve. (Isai. xlvi. 10.) "No," saith an unresigned soul; "I will not, I cannot bear it; it must not be; at least, for this once." Vain man! what would become of the world, yea, of the church, if God's will were not fixed? In Zech. vi. 1—3, the providences of God are represented by "chariots:" some "red," importing war; some "black," expressing famine; some "grisled and bay," signifying variety of dispensations; others "white," denoting peace and comfort. Well; all this proceeds from "two mountains of brass," denoting the irreversible counsels of God. Go to, then, vain man; if thou wilt not bear war, or famine, &c., stop the chariots, stay their career, if thou canst; or lead them out of their way; but know, thou must first remove the mountains of brass, and change God's eternal, unalterable counsels. Pray, is it not better to submit willingly, than

struggle in vain? Take heed lest, the more thou strivest, thou be the more entangled. "They lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net." (Isai. li. 20.) Never was any thing got by resistance of the will of God, save blows.

(2.) *To ourselves.*—And this is as absurd as the other is vain and atheistical. Have we prayed all our days that "the will of God be done?" If we have not, we are strangers to prayer. (Matt. vi. 10.) If we have, then by refusing to submit to the will of God in suffering times, we contradict ourselves. Now, what an absurdity is it to desire God to do his will, and refuse to submit when he brings his good pleasure upon us! Is this fair dealing? Doth it become reasonable creatures or Christians? May we say and unsay, desire and deny, the same things?

OBJECTION. "But we did not think of suffering, when we put up that petition."

ANSWER. And do we pray we know not or regard not what? Is this to pray in faith? Is it [not] an affront to God, to vent a prayer to him without considering the sense or meaning of it?

OBJECTION. "We were of that mind then; but fear of suffering hath altered our judgments."

ANSWER. And must God change his will, as oft as we vary ours? This were to make him more changeable than ourselves; for whereas we only alter our minds as we think fit, we would have God change as we please, and so make our wills the rule of his.

Besides, what we pray deliberately, we ought to resolve for ever; or else our praying is lightness. To which let me add, that when Christ gave that directory of prayer, he left it as a standing rule, never to be varied.

6. *Because God is our Father.*—Therefore we must acquiesce in his pleasure. This is our Lord's argument couched in the text: "Father, glorify thy name." As if he had said, "I submit to my Father's will. 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'" (John xviii. 11.) Is it becoming our relation to withstand our Father's will and glory? Would you take it well, if your children should rebel, and refuse your correction? And how do you think your Heavenly Father will take your resistance against his? Poor worms that we are, there is no proportion between their disobedience to us, and ours to God. When Saul, though a king, rebelled against the command of God, it is compared to "the sin of witchcraft." (1 Sam. xv. 23.) See how strict the law was in this case upon rebellious children: "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among

you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear." (Deut. xxi. 18—21.) What, then, shall our Father do to us, when we refuse his correction? To enforce this argument, consider, we must submit to our Father's will; for,

(1.) *He gave us our being, lives, and all we have.*—And shall he not dispose [of] them? May he not do what he will with his own? (Matt. xx. 15.) Can we, or any thing we enjoy, be better improved than for our Father's glory? "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. xi. 36.)

(2.) *Our Father is our superior.*—It is fit, therefore, [that] we be resigned to his will. "Honour thy father and thy mother:" (Exod. xx. 12:) how much more our Heavenly Father! (Heb. xii. 9.) See David's spirit in the case: "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." (Psalm cxxi. 1, 2.) As if he had said, "I will keep within my own sphere; I will not stretch beyond my line, in prescribing to God; but submit to his will, 'as a weaned child,' taken from its dear breasts:" intimating, he would wean himself from whatever God disposed from him. How patiently did Isaac permit himself to be bound and sacrificed by Abraham! (Gen. xxii. 9.) And yet he was of age and strength sufficient to have struggled for his life, being twenty-five years old; but that holy young man abhorred the thoughts of striving with his father. And shall not we resign ourselves to our God and Father in Christ Jesus?

(3.) *Our Father is wiser than we.*—Therefore we should rest in his pleasure. Shall we, who "are but of yesterday, and know nothing," (Job viii. 9,) contradict the wise disposal of the Ancient of days, the only wise God? "My father," saith Isaac, "here is the wood and the fire: but where is the lamb?" "O," saith Abraham, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." (Gen. xxii. 7, 8.) He declares not his design; but Isaac is so confident of his father's wisdom, that he replies no more. It becomes the children of God to esteem their Father's will most sacred: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. ix. 20.) What, though we see not how our sufferings can conduce to our Father's glory? remember, "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor our ways as his ways." (Isai. lv. 8.)

(4.) We may well resign ourselves to the will of our Father; for, to be sure, as such, *he would be tender of us.*—"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, wherof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we

have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 5—11.) We indeed may judge our afflictions dreadful and insupportable; but our Father knows what we can bear, and how he will carry us through comfortably. He will "not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." (Matt. xii. 20.) This is the reason why he manageth the corrections of his children,—that they may not be oppressed. Read Isai. xlix. 14—16: "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."

OBJECTION. "This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" (John vi. 60.)

ANSWER 1. It is hard to untamed, wanton, proud nature, to make the will of God our rule, and deny our own wills; but then how hard will suffering be without it! An unresigned soul in a day of affliction is like "a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord;" and "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." (Isai. li. 20; lvii. 20.)

2. But it is easy to a gracious soul, as such. Grace in the heart is the image of God; and this image mainly consists in the conformity of the will to God's will. The scripture calls it, "writing his law in the heart, and putting it in the inward parts." (Jer. xxxi. 33.) Well; and what is the proper natural effect or result hereof? It makes the soul not only obedient in suffering, but to submit with "delight." (Psalm xl. 7, 8.) Now none of God's commands, nothing of his will, scriptural or providential, is "grievous." (1 John v. 3.)

1. Hence I infer that *God is not glorified but in his own way.*—For our wills must be resigned to and resolved into his. If he will that we suffer, it is vain to dream of honouring him otherwise. Suppose we resolve to save ourselves, and make him amends by double and treble duty; we deceive ourselves: "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. xv. 22.) All the manifestative glory of God dependeth on his will. (Rev. iv. 11.) We may extol his power, grace, justice, holiness, &c., and not give him glory, if in the interim we resist his will. It is vain to think of honouring God, and doing our own will: give him all but his will, and we give him nothing. For,

(1.) *His great design is his will.* (Rev. iv. 11.)—He both contriveth and executeth according to it. (Eph. i. 11.) All his word is but his will. (Col. i. 9.) Truth is the analogy of persons, things,

words, and thoughts unto the will of God. And this is his great controversy with men in the world:—they would have their will, and he will have his. And indeed sin is only (and that is enough, and too much) a contradiction of his will. (1 John iii. 4.) And the accomplishment of his will is his glory.

(2.) *In relucting against his will, we contend against all his name and being.*—It is a denial of his sovereignty and prerogative: for what is that but his pleasure? We thwart his decrees; for they are the purpose of his will. We contradict his power thereby, as if he were not able to do his pleasure. Many are our oppositions: we thereby disbelieve his holiness, as if his will were not good; and his wisdom, as if he had not ordered his matters accurately. Yea, we deny his justice by resisting his will, as if he required more than his due. Indeed, his will is the hinge upon which all his attributes move. Disappoint it, and you supplant them all; so absolutely doth his glory depend upon his will.

2. I infer that *God's glorifying his name by our sufferings is not inconsistent with his paternal relation.*—“Father, glorify thy name.” If he be our Father, then he loves, then he careth for us, when he afflicteth us: for nothing can deprive us of the comfort of this relation, which is consistent with that relation. Christ in his agony calls him “Father;” (Matt. xxvi. 39;) when he was betrayed and apprehended. (John xviii. 11.) When he was upon the cross, his expression implies as much; (Matt. xxvii. 46;) and he saith no more, when he was risen. (John xx. 17.)

OBJECTION. “There is not the same reason why God should continue our Father in suffering, as that he should be Christ's in his passion; because he is his eternal Son, we only adopted sons.”

ANSWER. This objection proves only that Christ hath the first right to his paternity, and we only secondarily in him; but not that he is less constantly our Father than his. Though we be but adopted sons, our adoption is endless, not temporary: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” (Jer. xxxi. 3.) And therefore our Father will be our Father in affliction, and we shall be his children. For,

1. His fatherly love is the reason of his chastisements. He would not scourge and correct his children, but because they are his children. He chastiseth them as a Father; he condemneth others as a Judge. (Heb. xii. 7, 8.)

2. We are heirs of his precious promises even in affliction. It seems, then, his faithfulness to his word of promise is engaged when we are tempted: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor. x. 13.)

3. Suffering saints have the image of their Father, when they suffer. Christ's sufferings were consistent with the clouding of his divine nature,—then it did not appear in its glory,—but not with

the separation of it from his human. Saints may be "black" by affliction, but withal they are "lovely" by grace. (Canticles i. 5.)

4. They then stand in most need of his fatherly care and love, and therefore shall not be deprived thereof: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." (Psalm lxxxix. 30—33.) "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Isai. xl. 1, 2.) "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." (Isai. xliii. 2, 3.)

5. Our sonship dependeth on Christ's sonship: if, therefore, God were his Father in his sufferings, he will be our Father in ours. For we are "chosen and predestinated in Christ unto the adoption of sons." (Eph. i. 3—5.) This is the reason why sin itself cannot un-son us,—because we are adopted in Christ; not for our own sake, but his. (Rom. viii. 38, 39.) While we cease not to be Christ's members, we cease not to be the Father's children.

OBJECTION. "But if God be our Father, why doth he suffer his children to be so abused in the world? Can it consist with the love of our Father to see his children imprisoned and slain, &c., before his face, and he not help and save them?"

ANSWER. It is enough that the scripture hath reconciled these things. (Rom. viii. 35—39; Psalm lxxxix. 30—33.) We may as well say, "How could the Father love Jesus Christ, yet bruise him in that dreadful manner?" (Isai. liii. 7—10.) But I add,

1. *That, be the saints never so dear to their Father, yet his own name and glory is more dear.*—Their sufferings being for his glory, he will therefore permit them. Is it fit that he suffer in his name, rather than we in our flesh? or must he lose his glory, to preserve our estates, ease, liberty, or lives? "Nay," saith the Lord Jesus; "Father, glorify thy name." Do any thing with me, rather than neglect thy glory." And see the Father's answer in the following words.

2. *Be his love to his saints never so great, his hatred of sin and his just indignation against it are as great.*—Now here lies the case:—he must either chastise us for our sins, or be unjust; he must either dispense so far with his love as to correct us, or dispense with his righteousness and holiness: and judge now which is most like a father,—to correct a sinning child, or pamper him in sins? (Psalm lxxxix. 30—32.)

3. Hence I infer, that *our peace, ease, joy, estates, liberty, and*

life, are subordinated and must be submitted to the will and glory of God.—Be sure, Christ put these things in their proper place; and, behold, his life and all are resolved into the Father's will and glory. Nor did he undervalue himself or them, in laying them at his Father's feet: certainly he was most tender of that which was most valuable. All the Baptist's credit was to vanish at Christ's appearing upon the stage. Well; did he bustle in his own behalf? Nay, he bare witness that he that came after him was to be preferred before him; (John i. 15;) and being demanded who he was, "he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ." (Verses 19, 20.) What need [of] all this, but that John was tender of the order wherein God had placed him? So, verse 27. O that it were thus with us! that we would lay down ourselves, our lives, &c., at the feet of God, and subordinate them to his glory! that we were willing that he be glorified, though we suffer!

4. *Be we never so great and high, yet our Father must do his pleasure with us, and get glory by us.*—Though Christ "were a Son, yet learned he obedience." (Heb. v. 8.) Yea, he was equal with the Father in nature; (Phil. ii. 6;) yet, having covenanted to be the Father's servant in the mediatory dispensation, "he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Verses 7, 8.) O, "let this mind be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Verse 5.) How was God pleased with Abraham's resignation of his son, his only son, the son of his love, of his age, his darling child! (Gen. xxii. 12, 15—18.) Well; as great as any of us think ourselves, we are not so great as Christ, not so considerable as Abraham; let us be content [that] God should glorify himself by making us little and laying us low in the world. What an abasement was it to Christ to be sold for thirty pieces of silver! See what himself saith of it: "A goodly price, that I was prized at of them." (Zech. xi. 12, 13.) Yet he could bear it in submission to his Father. O that high, proud, lofty, stately professors, who stand upon their greatness, who affect grandeur, would consider this! Certainly the height of Christians is a great part of the controversy [that] God hath with us in this day. Pray, let us bow our spirits and lower our top-sails willingly; for God is bringing us down, and (for any thing I know) he cannot otherwise have his will and glory.

5. *See hence, whither we must drive our perplexities in suffering, if we would conquer them: even to this holy resignation of ourselves unto the sovereign will of God.*

Our Lord Jesus came to no composure, till he arrived at this frame. Compare with the text the foregoing verse. As long as you reluct against providence, expect nothing but tumult: "He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God." (James iv. 6, 7.) Who so proud as the unresigned soul? Well; if we submit not, God will fight against us; and judge what composure we can then have. When Jonah opposed the Lord's

will, had he any rest? "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." (Jonah i. 2—4.) "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" (Job ix. 4.) Till we resign, he will visit our souls with darkness, our bodies with pain, and our matters with frustration and disappointment. A man that will swim against tide and stream and wind, may waste and spend his strength; but, the longer he strives, the more unfeasible his attempt is. So, while you strive against the Lord's pleasure, expect universal disturbance: for when the debate is, who shall yield,—whether God shall abate his will, or we submit ours; we may easily conceive, how bitter, unquiet, and vexatious the contest will be on our part. Well; but come and resign to the will of God, and all will be calm. (Isai. xxx. 15.) There are three things herein exceeding composing:—

(1.) Our spirits and thoughts are now come to a conclusion. Before, there was a contest between grace and nature; *that* would, *this* would not, submit. This created unquietness; but now [that] grace hath got the day, the soul is calm. When there are two armies in the field fighting, all is in a combustion; but when one is conquered, peace ensueth. That which created Christ's trouble, was the struggle between his natural and divine will: now, that being concluded by resignation, he is at rest.

(2.) Now there is no difficulty in our way; for we follow Providence.

(3.) Having resigned, the burden of our suffering is rolled upon God. A resigned soul casteth itself into his arms, as well as submits to his will; and now God is engaged, if not to save us from the hour, yet to help us in and through it.

IV. Lastly. *Let me advise the people of God to take this course.*—If we must suffer imprisonment, loss of goods or liberty or [of] life, let Providence find us in this frame. Well, then; let us be earnest with God, and contend with our own spirits, till we come to this temper, till we can in some blessed measure say with the Lord Jesus Christ, "Father, glorify thy name." Friends, it may be, this doctrine and exhortation will find very slight entertainment with some; but I will promise them, they cannot meet God in the way of his judgments in any other frame. If the Lord Jesus would not venture upon his agony till he had attained it, how shall we be able to meet our sufferings without it?

QUESTION. "It is true this was the frame of Christ; but is it possible for us to attain it?"

ANSWER. Yea, it is feasible. It was not peculiar to Christ, but it is common to his members with him. I have given several instances;

nor doth God oblige us unto impossibilities. There are two things [that] I have to say in the case:—

1. *God gives this resignation sometimes unexpectedly.*—If he surprise a holy soul with affliction, he will sometimes surprise it with submission and resignation. Nay, every believer, in suffering for the name and cause of God, hath the promise of the Spirit, to compose and carry him through. (Mark xiii. 11.) Observe, this promise takes place “in persecution.” What, then? “Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak.” We must not confine this promise to the Spirit’s management of our tongues only; nay, it extends much more to our hearts and thoughts. If the Spirit dictate our words, how much more will it influence our souls! And I add, The Lord doth not say it shall be given beforehand, but “in that hour.”

2. *This spirit of resignation is ordinarily the blessing of exercise.* (Psalm cxxxi. 1, 2.)—As, in all other cases, grace is given in and upon our endeavour; so in this case. “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.” (Hosea vi. 3.) “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.” (Psalm cxix. 2.) And therefore,

1. *Do what you can to clear up your interest in God.*—This once cleared, submission is in a manner easy. Why did Isaac resign himself to his father? (Gen. xxii. 9.) Because he knew he was his father. “My father,” saith Jephthah’s daughter, “if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth.” (Judges xi. 36.) A dutiful child will not, dare not, cannot, profane its relation by contending with its father. Upon this principle our Lord Christ built his resignation in the text. It is impossible to submit willingly to the pleasure of an enemy; enmity excludes submission: (Rom. viii. 7 :) let there be a sense of reconciliation, and resignation will follow.

2. *We must be exercised in the mortification of pride and passion.*—For pride will swell, and passion tumultuate: they who are used to have their wills, shall find it hard, if not impossible, to let God have his without reluctancy. No; self-will will tumultuate against God himself, according to custom. You know how it was with peevish Jonah: “I do well to be angry;” (chap. iv. 9;) with proud Joram: “This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?” (2 Kings vi. 33;) and how with Pharaoh: “And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” (Exod. v. 2.) They were persons used to have their wills. When the devil desired God to afflict Job, (chap. i. 11; ii. 5,) he presumed that Job, having had much prosperity, could not bear a great cross without flying in God’s face. Consequently,

3. *If we have been inured to sufferings, the task is easier yet.*—“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.”

(Lam. iii. 27, 28.) Paul was accustomed to afflictions; and see what he saith: "What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts xxi. 13.) "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 11—13.)

4. *Keep the sense of your own great sinfulness upon your hearts.*—This will stop your mouths, when you would complain of the holy hand of God upon you: "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Lam. iii. 39.) "I will bear the indignation of the Lord," saith the church elsewhere, "because I have sinned against him." (Micah vii. 9.)

5. *Christ prayed himself into this frame.* (John xii. 27, 28.)—The more impatient and discontent we be, the more need of prayer. Christ did not tarry till the hurry were over, but cried to his Father while it continued. And observe how he prayed, and what. He prayed brokenly, and uttered the sense and very case of his soul. No matter how abrupt the prayer be, so it be the representation of our hearts. Thus did David. (Psalm lxi. 2.) Where doth he pray? In banishment. When? When his spirit "is overwhelmed." How doth he pray? He "cried." Thus Hannah prayed herself composed. Remember, resignation is the work of the Spirit of God; and therefore you must plead for it, before you have it.

6. *Subdue your carnal reasonings by the reasonings of faith.*—So did holy David: when the flesh had reasoned him into impatience, he "went into the sanctuary," and was composed. (Psalm lxxiii. 16, 17.) And to help in this combat between faith and sense, take these following considerations:—

(1.) *That all things are good from God's will.*—I am sure, all providences be: they are good, because he willeth them: "Thou art good, and doest good." (Psalm cxix. 68.) Himself is good, and [his] will; therefore are his ways good also. No matter what sense and reason say: God cannot do amiss. And therefore Jeremiah lays down this as a principle, before he dare argue about God's judgments: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" (Jer. xii. 1.) And so David: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalm lxxiii. 1—3.) So Hezekiah: "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" (2 Kings xx. 19.)

(2.) *That what becomes God to do or order, becomes us to suffer.*—

If God bring the affliction, we may bear it. If it be for his glory, it cannot be for our disadvantage. God will not do what is evil ; and we may very well submit to what is good. (Job i. 21.)

(3.) *It is our folly and brutishness, when there is any impatience of God's will.*—Jonah was mad with passion, when he told God [that] he did well to be angry at the dying of the gourd. (Jonah iv. 9 ; Psalm lxxiii. 21, 22.)

(4.) *That God hath managed as unlikely providences for the good of his people, as these that he is bringing upon us.*—And having such experience of his wisdom and faithfulness, it is reason [that] we submit ; especially having the promise too : “ We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” (Rom. viii. 28.)

(5.) *That when there is a contrariety of will between two parties, the best, the wisest, the holiest should carry it.*—If either God must not have his will, or we want ours, it is all the reason in the world [that] we should submit, and embrace the cross patiently. Methinks there should be no debate about this matter.

(6.) *That God will be glorified.*—This silenced Aaron ; (Lev. x. 3 ;) and what are we ? This was answer enough to Christ himself in the text ; and are we too good, or too proud, to acquiesce in it ?

(7.) *That God is glorified upon others on harder terms than any proposed to us.*—Our cup is nothing so bitter as the Lord Jesus's was ; nor like that of the primitive Christians, and martyrs then and since. They were scourged with scorpions ; we, in comparison, but with small rods.

(8.) *Lastly. That submission breaks the blow.*—God will not contend with a resigned soul : *Satis est prostrasse* : * but his day falls heavily upon the unquiet, proud, and obstinate. “ With the forward” he will behave himself “ frowardly.” (Psalm xviii. 26.) Read Isai. ii. 11, 12.

As encouragements to resignation, consider,

1. *This frame is a greater blessing than deliverance.*—Christ chose it, rather than that the cup should pass away ; and the Father rather granted it. Certainly what the Father and Son preferred is best.

2. *This once attained, sufferings are free-will offerings.*—Now affliction is not an absolute necessity, but the soul's choice. And what an honour is it to be willing persons in such a hard case ! If we submit “ willingly,” we “ have a reward ;” if not, a necessity of suffering, however, lies upon us,—to allude to 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17. David acknowledged that God put a special honour upon him and his people, when they offered willingly. (1 Chron. xxix. 9, 14, 17.) How much greater honour is it, to offer ourselves to the pleasure of God, in a suffering season !

3. *This is evidently the duty of the day.*—Fear is on every side ; the fury of brutish men is very high : many of our brethren are already oppressed, and bear it quietly. God calls us to resignation to his will in all providences, and aloud by the voice of his word ; and refuge fails us. “ Why ?” That we may have no possibility of

* “ He is satisfied with having humbled it.”—EPI7.

evading this duty. And being [seeing] it is now seasonable, it should be "beautiful" and desirable in our eyes. (Eccles. iii. 11.)

4. *If we resign to the will of God, faith shall be kept alive, and our hold of our relation to and interest in God continued.*—Christ in the height of his sufferings could call God his God, and commit his spirit confidently into his hands. (Psalm xxxi. 5 ; Luke xxiii. 46.)

5. *If we survive and outlive the storm, God will make us eminently vessels of honour.*—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter i. 7.) What great persons were Abraham and Isaac, after they had resolved themselves into the will of God! "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Gen. xxii. 16—18.) Nay, the benefit thereof extended to their posterity for many generations. What a blessed end had patient, resigned Job! (James v. 11.)

6. *If we die in this frame and day according to the will of God, it shall be no loss, but infinite advantage.* (Isai. lvii. 1, 2.)—See it in David and Christ. (Psalm xvi. 8—10.) After Paul had submitted himself to the will of God and the Lord Jesus, (Acts xx. 24 ; xxi. 13,) how confident was he at his dissolution, and in what a triumphant frame do we find him! "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. iv. 6—8.) When proud, unbroken, impatient souls suffer and die in dread and horror, the resigned Christian shall expire in peace and confidence.

SERMON XXIX.

BY THE REV. MATTHEW SYLVESTER,*

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HOW MAY A GRACIOUS PERSON, FROM WHOM GOD HIDES HIS
FACE, TRUST IN THE LORD AS HIS GOD.

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted
within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who
is the health of my countenance, and my God.*—Psalm xlii. 11.

1. UPON the proposal of this case to me, I rather chose this text than that in Isaiah l. 10; because I thought God and ourselves were both to be considered, in the just resolution of the case before us. For we must as well look *within* as *above* ourselves: and accordingly here we see, that David's first look was *into* himself; and then his next look was *toward* his God. So that I thought this text most suited to the case.

2. When and upon what occasion this Psalm was penned, I will not now inquire into: but whenever it was, David was then under black dispensations of Divine Providence, and under dreadful consternations of spirit, and put very severely to it how to encourage and support himself.

3. The text may be considered. I. AS A HISTORY, (1.) Of David's troubles and afflictions. (2.) David's sense and temper of spirit under them, and concerning them. (3.) Of the course he took to help himself. II. AS A DOCTRINE, to teach God's saints and servants, (1.) To what they are liable. (2.) And by what and how they are to be relieved and supported. III. AS A DIRECTORY.

4. In the text then we have observable: (1.) David's self-arraignment for immoderate despondencies and dejections under the present hand of God upon him: "Why cast down? and why disquieted within me?" (2.) His self-encouragement and instruction: "Hope thou in God."

5. So that you see, David, (1.) Cites himself to his own court, to account for his own disquietments and dejection; and here his scrutiny is severe and close: (2.) He offers some things to himself as a fit course and expedient for self-redress: "Hope thou in God:" and, (3.) The remedying proposal is closely argued and urged: "'For I shall yet praise him,' &c. I shall have cause, a heart, and an opportunity to praise God. Times and things will be better with me than

* One of the excellences ascribed to Mr. Sylvester is that of having been an admirable textuary; of which the reader will find ample proofs in this sermon. I have quoted many of the passages in full, to which he merely referred; as they are generally needful for understanding his course of argument. This has likewise been done in some of the paragraphs toward the close of the preceding sermon.—EDIT.

now they are. I shall have cause to praise God; for He is 'the health of my countenance.' I shall have a heart to do it, for He is 'my God;' and I accordingly now avouch him to be such: I value him, and confide in him, as such. And I do hence infer, that I shall have opportunity and a call for to 'praise' (acknowledge and adore) him, in the solemnities of his own house."

I. First. Let me then consider these words as they relate unto David; and give us THE HISTORY of David's exercise and self-relief. And here,

1. *The patient or afflicted person was holy David.*—A man after God's own heart, enamoured on God, devoted to him, delighted in him, constant and cheerful in his attendances on God, exceeding sensible and observant of all divine approaches to him and withdrawals and retreats from him, thirsting and panting greatly after the solaces and entertainments of God's house and altars, and bitterly lamenting the loss and absence of those solemnities wherein he formerly had so copiously and frequently pleased himself, afflicted mightily with those derisions and reproaches which reflected so severely upon God through him. Though nothing could lower or abate his adoring and delightful thoughts of God; yet it struck him to the heart to hear men always saying, "Where is thy God?" Add hereunto, that David was a king, a prophet, a type of Christ, a man of vast experiences and improvements, and such a peculiar favourite to God as that he was encouraged to more than ordinary expectations from him, of which he had great seals and earnest; and yet, we see, he could not be excused from great storms, and agonies, and anxieties of spirit.

2. *That which this good man underwent was a great dejection and disquietment in his own spirit, by reason of some great afflictions that befell him.*—God's providence touched him in his dearest and most valuable mercies: for he was an exile from God's altars. God's great enemies touched him in that which lay nearest to his heart; for they reproached him with his God, and, consequently, with and for all his religious hopes and duties;—thus striking at his God through him. All this afflicted him the more, in that hereby great jealousies and suspicions were arising of God's deserting him, and dismal fears and thoughts of God's having hid his face from him. And he saw no likelihood, in the posture and presages of second causes, that ever it would be better with him. And hence his spirit יִדְּוֹתַי בְּפָנָיו* was "bowed down," and לִבִּי בְּפָנָיו† "disquieted within" him;

* *Περὶ λυκος, ταπεινωσα. Consterneris.*—Vet. edit. *Conturbabis.*—Chald. Paraph. *Contristas me.*—Syriac. *Dejicis te.*—Arab. *Et in versu 6.* "In this passage, as well as in verse 6, the Greek translators have rendered the words 'greatly dejected, much depressed;' an old Latin version, 'Why art thou filled with consternation?' the Chaldee Paraphrast, 'Why art thou thus disturbed?' the Syriac version, 'Why dost thou make me sad and sorrowful?' the Arabic, 'Why dost thou render me dejected?'—EDIT. † That is, "Disquieted within me." *Συνταρασσεις με;*—LXX. *Tumultueris adversum me?*—Targum. *Conturbas me?*—Syriac. *Et in versu 6.* *Stupilus es, et personas in me ut alii.*—Arab. "In this verse, and in the sixth, the Seventy render the clause, 'Why dost thou perturb or terrify me?' the Targum, 'Why dost thou tumultuate, or raise a disturbance, against me?' the Syriac version, 'Why dost thou disquiet or disturb me?' the Arabic, 'Why art thou so unfeeling, and loudly raillest against me, like others?'"—EDIT.

he was as [if] stripped of all composures, strength, and comforts. His passions,—they were apt to mutiny; his confidences, to decay and wither; and the serenity of his spirit, to decline. Sorrows encompassed him, like a cloud; pressed him down, like a great burden; bound him down, like a chain; came in upon him, like a flood; and rushed in on him, like a dissolute and surprising host: and very difficult he found it, to keep up his religion in its just reputation with himself, whilst thus afflicted in it and upbraided with it.

3. *The course he takes to help himself is this.*—(1.) He surveys his troubles, and takes the exact dimensions of them, observing what impressions and effects they had upon his own spirit; and, (2.) He takes his soul to task about them, as being, (i.) Fittest to resolve the case: (ii.) Every way responsible and accountable for his resentments and deportment, and for the impressions and effects of troubles: (iii.) Most capable of self-correction, instruction, and encouragement, and, consequently, of self-redress, and most concerned therein: and, (iv.) As that which must be active too. David was confident of help from God: and this his confidence is quickened and kept-up by arguments and pleas. He knew no help could be expected any where but in and from God; and he concludes and argues, that God could work and give it, because he was “the God;” and that he would consider him in mercy, because he was “his God.” And these things must be remembered, argued, and revived upon his own soul, and were so.

4. *And with his own considerate and religious soul this matter is debated here.*—What! David’s soul? “My soul.” *A soul*, and therefore great in its original, capacity, and end. *A gracious soul*, and therefore near and dear to God, encouraged by his promises and providence to trust him, serve him, and to cleave to him. What! David’s soul, fitted for God, and for self-management, converses, and improvements? Why should this soul be thus disquieted and cast down? He was not so vain and idle as to expect relief from heaven, by so engaging God for him as to neglect himself; inward as well as other work must be performed.

5. *Observe the manner of his discoursing with himself.*—It is expostulatory. He cites and challenges, searches and chides himself; and hints these things unto himself: that, (1.) Something was attended to that should not. (2.) Something was not attended to that should. (3.) That therefore all ought to be set and kept right, as to his inward thoughts and sentiments, with reference to his present case and cure. (4.) And that because mistakes and rashness, in such important matters, are dangerous and sinful in their tendency, consequences, and effects. Hence then, (i.) He observes his pressures, and the temper and behaviour of his spirit under them; and he finds some trucklings of spirit which he dislikes and wonders at. (ii.) He is solicitous to know the most that can be found, alleged, and urged, to countenance and justify these disquietments and dejections. (iii.) All this he searches after, in order to a fair and impartial trial; and in this trial he concludes, that nothing objected

can hold weight. (iv.) He is aware of other things that are to be produced for the suppression and rebuke of his dejectedness, and for the revival and encouragement of his soul, through hope in God. (v.) These things he is ready and willing to produce and urge, and so to adjust the whole concern. (vi.) And hereupon he drives the thing up to its utmost height, and turns a faithful and impartial self-censurer and instructor; that so he may not be buffeted in the dark, and prove a sinful instrument in his own dejections and distress, nor be baffled by these his sorrows.

6. His self-arraignment and discourses being finished thus, *he now proceeds to self-instruction and encouragement.*—Grace in the heart and God in the eye, when saints have dealt faithfully and closely with themselves, afford them no small relief under their pressures and discouragements from what they feel. Here then observe, (1.) *What David advises himself unto*: “Hope thou in God.” (2.) *How he argues and enforces this his counsel upon himself*: “For I shall yet praise him.”

(1.) *The counsel which he offers to himself is this, namely, to hope in God.*—He would not look upon his case as desperate: but, (i.) Commit his case and soul to God, and leave them wholly with him. (ii.) And so expect protection and redress from God in doing thus. And what is hope, but a desirous expectation of those mercies and reliefs from God which present exigencies and concerns may need and call for, whereas God’s name and promises are our encouragements thereto? This David proposes to and urges upon himself, in his dejected frame of spirit, as his best succour and support, and as his choicest refuge and remedy; and he was very apprehensive of this, that his soul must be active herein, if he would be benefited hereby. And hence he suffered not his spirit to be idle, nor to be guilty of any culpable application and improvement of that great (but oft-times much-abused) truth: “We can do nothing of ourselves; it is God alone must help us.” But he turns counsellor and commander, and becomes a strict inquisitor and most impartial judge to his own soul: and by the meek exercise of all just providence and authority toward his own spirit, he works himself up to his “Hope in God,” by an eye fixed there; and thence and thus expects his help. And though he was deeply sensible of his own doleful state at present, and very prone to aggravate his own calamity, and apt to give-up all for lost; yet he resolves upon all fit inquiries after help; and, with authority and great force of argument, he here commands and so prevails upon himself to “hope in God.” Such work requires good consideration, great resolution, and the just exercise of all authority over ourselves.

(2.) *His arguments and motives hereunto are impregnated with very great sense and strength, and urged upon himself at the just rate thereof.*—“Hope thou in God: for he is, (i.) God. (ii.) Thy God. (iii.) The health of thy countenance.” (iv.) And one whom thou shalt (“certainly and for ever”*) praise as such. (v.) And do it yet; namely, as lamentable and hopeless as thy case appears at

* SYMMACHUS.

present, through seeming difficulties or unlikelihoods. God, and ourselves, well understood, deeply considered, and skilfully urged and improved, give gracious hearts the best encouragements and supports under the severest accidents of time; and they will very strangely animate our hopes in God, under our sorest troubles and dejections.

(i.) David had confidence in God. (ii.) And reasons for it. (iii.) And skill and a heart to urge them. When he reviewed himself, he saw that his soul was gracious; and so he knew God valued it. It was bent for praising God; and so he knew that he should have an opportunity and cause to do it, through some signal favours from him. He had an interest in God; and he would neither lose it, nor neglect it. And he had great experience of God's former mercies; and he would not forget them. And when he thinks on God, then praise must be thought on too, and every thing relating to it; and all the divine perfections, within the circumference of his knowledge, must have their fresh remembrances and powerful sense revived upon his own heart. For he concludes, that, (i.) God is eminent and infinite in all perfection. (ii.) That his eminence shall be evident and conspicuous in the salvation and relief of now-dejected David. (iii.) And that most suitably to all the circumstances and pressures of his afflicted state. (iv.) And that rather much beyond, than any way beneath, his present hope. And hence he calls God, "the health of" his "countenance."

His thoughts and hopes are in their highest flights and vigour. He looks upon God as his Saviour, hope, and God; and judges God resolved and propense to appear and act accordingly on his behalf. He looks for such illustrious signals of God's favour and respects, as shall, (i.) Embolden him undauntedly to face his enemies, without any marks of a dejected and disturbed soul upon his face. (ii.) Such as shall shame his enemies, and humble their contemptuous and proud looks; and shame those insolencies whereby they had upbraided him with his God; and make them readily acknowledge that there is no rock like David's God, and that his hope and refuge were not vainly fixed there. (iii.) Such as should redeem his holy hopes and courses from contempt and scorn, and make his embittered enemies to wish themselves even in despised David's case. For David here expects salvation, as something visible, speedy, and complete, even in the land of the living. Well therefore might he say, "Hope thou in God;" thereby to redress and check his own despondent spirit.

7. *And here, the state and temper of David's spirit is remarkable.*—For it was, (1.) Sensible of God's hand and man's upon it. (2.) Observant of its own resentments and deportment under its grievances. (3.) Therefore much conversant with itself. (4.) Desirous of some redress, but yet from God alone; and not only desirous, but also, (5.) Duly provident and industrious to obtain it; looking *within*, to see its maladies; and *above*, to get relief and succour. For, having grace to act it, and God to help it, and a covenant of promises to encourage and support it, it was resolved, and at work, to act most like its considerate and gracious self, and to make its best of God.

II. Secondly. Let us now consider these words, as they contain WHAT IS DOCTRINAL TO US.—As giving us some notices of our present state and duty; of what we are liable unto, namely, to be “cast down” and “disquieted;” and of what we are to do when exercised thus; namely, 1. To discourse ourselves: 2. And to urge our hope in God upon ourselves, and to press upon ourselves what may enforce it and encourage it. For,

1. We find that all passages of sacred writ are upon record for our instruction and advantage: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” (Rom. xv. 4.) “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) And why not this amongst the rest?

2. We are exhorted to take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. (James v. 10.) And such [a prophet] was David. (Acts ii. 30.)

3. And in this great and exemplary prophet, we have this fourfold mirror: (1.) A mirror of *the calamities*, whereto the best of men may be exposed; namely, to be cast down and disquieted. Dreadful afflictions, and dismal apprehensions and constructions arising from them, and deep resentments * of them, are incident to the holiest and best men. “I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly. I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Thy arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.” (Psalm xxxviii. 2, 6, 8.) I need not tell you what pressures were upon the spirit of the Lord Christ, and how they were resented by him. (2.) A mirror of *that peculiar work at home* which gracious souls in their afflictions are to mind: “I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.” (Psalm lxxvii. 6, 11.) “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” (Psalm iv.

* To prevent any misapprehension of the meaning of this word, and of *resented* in the next sentence, arising from modern usage, I here repeat the explanatory note which was inserted in the first volume of “the Morning Exercises,” p. 483: “*To resent*, from the Latin *sentio*, ‘to feel,’ and the intensive particle *re*, was, in all its forms, almost uniformly used by our old writers, down to the age of James II. in the signification of *feeling intensely* either in the mind, or through any one of the bodily senses. Our modern usage of the word *resentment*, in the bad sense of ‘strong anger on account of some affront or injury received,’ is but confining what was formerly a general term to a more restricted meaning. The reflex French verb *se ressentir*, from which it is derived, still retains this meaning of a reciprocation of feeling, either of kindness or unkindness, between the agent and patient. This interchange of good or bad *sentiment*, (a perverted word of the same origin,) is determined by the character of the feeling which is communicated by the agent, and which is to be accordingly *well* or *ill* taken and reciprocated by the patient. In this correct acceptation it is employed by an eminent religious poet, about the middle of the last century, in a hymn addressed to our Saviour:—

‘My inmost bowels shall *resent*
The yearnings of thy dying love.’—EDIT.

4.) They must search into and commune with themselves, about what lies upon them, and how it is borne and taken by them. (3.) A mirror of *that redress and remedy* whereunto they must repair when thus exercised and afflicted: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." (Psalm xciv. 19.) "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." (Psalm lvi. 3.) "Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee." (Psalm xxv. 20.) None but God, and nothing but hope in him, can give relief unto the troubled soul. And then, (4.) A mirror of *that grace and wisdom* which prompts and fits men to discourse themselves, and to hope in God. "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him," &c. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee." (Psalm xxv. 21.) Here you may see the holy poise and bent of gracious souls. Sufferings, though never so manifold and mighty and continuing, will never bring the graceless soul home to itself or God. Only great thoughts of God, and a due sense of his relations and promises to us, and of his interest in us, can make us bear up our despondent and afflicted spirits by fixed hope in God, and bring us to discourse ourselves to purpose. The power and tendency of holy principles and of gracious dispositions are here conspicuous and legible in my text; take then the sense thereof in this comprehensive proposition following:—

DOCTRINE.

When gracious souls are cast down and disquieted within themselves, they should discourse themselves, and revive those thoughts, and such a sense of God upon themselves, as may encourage and enforce their hopes and confidence in God. (Psalm lxxvii. 6, 10.)

Holy David,—he is here a pattern to us all.

1. For here you see, that, in the greatest agonies and conflicts of his spirit with what attempted thus to bear and keep it down, David here *makes a right and amiable representation of God to himself*.—He "sets him always before him;" (Psalm xvi. 8;) as the Lord Jesus did; (Acts ii. 25;) and that, (1.) As God. (2.) As his God. (3.) As the health of his countenance. (4.) As one that he should praise; and therefore he expected the glorious appearances of this God for him. (5.) As one who, in his great and gracious appearances for his relief, would master all those difficulties which any ways might threaten to obstruct the passages of his desired and expected succours to him. "For I shall yet" (that is, let things be as they will at present) "praise him."

2. *He thence expects great things*.—Such as are matters of high praises and acknowledgments to his God: כִּי עוֹד אֲהַלֵּל * ["For I shall yet praise him;"] and infers them from these cheering considerations of his God.

3. *He improves what he discovers and infers, for the fixing of his hope in God.*

* *Laudabo*.—Targum. ["I will praise him."] *Confitebor ei*.—Latin Vulg. ["I will make my confession to him."]

4. *And all this is to rebuke and moderate his (otherwise too extravagant) dejections and disturbances, arising from excessive sorrows, fears, and cares.*—So that you see, that no sorrows or dejections must banish or divorce us from ourselves and God, and from just hopes in him. No calamities should lay gracious persons prostrate at their feet. But they must conflict and argue with themselves; and bring their sorrows to the impartial test and scrutinies, lest they promote their own distresses by sinful negligences and inadvertencies, and make themselves to be the less receptive of those encouragements and supports which they might otherwise derive with ease from Him who is their God, and under strong propensions and engagements to act and to approve himself accordingly for their good.

Good men are too propense and apt to make their cups more bitter than ever God intended they should be, whilst they attend more unto the resentments* of their afflicted—than to the hopes, advantages, and principles of their gracious—selves. We wrest God's dealings with us, and then we censure him for what we bring upon ourselves. But grace directs to better things, and prompts men first to self-discourses and debates about what is so very hard upon them; that so, the malady with its impressions and effects upon them being well understood, the remedy may the better be considered and improved by them: for as we can do nothing without God, so *he* mistakes the proper state and methods of divine redresses and reliefs, *that* looks for any thing from God whilst he neglects himself.

But let me show you the reach and purport of this doctrine, in these few following

PROPOSITIONS.

PROPOSITION I. *No man so great or good in this world, but he may fall under pressing and uncomfortable circumstances.*—“They all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.” (Heb. i. 11, 12.) “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.” (Psalm xxxiv. 19.) “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in *battle* array against me.” (Job vi. 4.) We have here neither a continuing city nor resting-place: the troubles of the patriarchs, saints, and martyrs, yea, and of Jesus Christ himself, are a full proof of this truth.

PROP. II. *Though men be great and good, yet may their souls be cast down and disquieted within them.*—“My soul refused to be comforted, my spirit was overwhelmed within me. I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.” (Psalm cxliii. 4; lxxvii. 2, 3.) It is hard and rare for the best men to keep their spirits composed and equal, when troubles urge them closely. The time would fail me, and the limits of this discourse would be transgressed, should I but show you, from sacred writ, what passionate escapes might be observed from God's worthies there.

* See the preceding note in p. 83.—EDIT.

PROP. III. *Good men should therefore well discern and weigh what troubles and anxieties are upon them, and not increase their loads and sorrows by being strangers to themselves.*—"I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search." (Psalm lxxvii. 6.) "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." (Eccles. vii. 14.) "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. And the Lord said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.) "My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word." (Psalm cxix. 28.) And they should well distinguish, too, betwixt what God inflicts upon them, and what they cause unto and lay upon themselves; and sift their troubles to the bottom. They must observe what it is that troubles them, and so survey their sufferings, and not subject themselves to strange confusions and amazements.* (Lam. iii. 20.) For it is not what we think of what afflicts us, but what God really inflicts upon us, that we must mind. And they must carefully observe, in all their sorrows, what ministers to grief, and what to shame, and what to their awakening and refining, and what serves to prevent a greater mischief to them, (1 Cor. xi. 30—32,) and to what use God may put their sufferings, as to the church and world, and to the unseen state; and then resolve it with themselves: For what, how far, and why, they are, or ought to be, dejected and disquieted.

PROP. IV. *What troubles and resentments by gracious persons are observed, should be discoursed by them with their own souls.*—They are to ask themselves how these evils came upon them. (Psalm iv. 4.) "Is it the immediate hand of God that lays them on? If so, what have I done against the Lord my God? Have I neglected or negligently managed any parts of public or private worship? as prayer, praise, thanks, hearing, sacraments, or sanctification of the Lord's day. Have I dishonoured God, by misrepresenting him to others or to myself? Have I reflected any dishonour upon my Christian calling? Have I neglected the exciting and improving of the grace of God in me, in

* This word was written by the author *amusements*. Modern usage forbids its application in composition to the meaning in which it is here employed. But in an earlier age *amuse* and *amaze* were considered to be synonymous words, the derivation of each of them being very similar. For whatever excites wonder and astonishment, throws the mind into a *maze* or a *muse*; both of these primitive words possessing the proper and figurative significations of a *labyrinth*, *perplexity*, or *confusion of thought*, the constituent materials from which are formed wonder and amazement.—EDIT.

any of its principles or functions? Or have I behaved myself unworthily or indecently toward others or myself? Or is it by the tongues or hands of men that God afflicts me? If so, what instances of injuriousness, negligence, indiscretion, or immoderate passion, can I or others charge upon myself? What undue heats or ferments have they discerned in my spirit, by rash or wrathful words or actions? If any failures have been on my part, where, when, and how? and why were they committed by me? If none of these are, have been, or can be, charged upon me, what do I undergo from God or man that God's great favourites have not undergone before me? And why may not I repair unto the same encouragements and consolations, which have relieved and supported them when they have been exercised as I am? What! cannot I pledge the best men in the most bitter cups, but I must presently entertain dismal and undue thoughts of God, and make censoriously the worst constructions of what he lays upon me? For to think or say, that God deals unfaithfully or unkindly with me, is to conclude and utter what neither the name nor love of God, nor the experiences of his best and wisest servants, will allow of." Therefore our calm and close debates of these matters with ourselves put us into a fair way to obtain composure and relief.

PROP. V. *Good men, when most disquieted and dejected, are then to discourse their gracious selves.*—And to consider what is within them, as well as what is laid upon them. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." (Heb. xii. 5.) "All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant." (Psalm xlv. 17.) They should remember whose, who, and what they are by grace; and so repress the tumults and despondencies of their own spirits: for they that are sanctified can never be forsaken of their God.

PROP. VI. *A revived sense of God, of their interest in him, and of their expectations from him, affords great succours and supports to gracious souls, and ought to be pleaded and urged upon them by themselves, when all things look dreadfully toward them both within and about them.*—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. iii. 17, 18.) Impatience and despondency [thus] are best rebuked. Hereby a sense of God must be revived; for as we think of God, so shall we value our relation to him, and fix and keep our confidence in him, and proportionate our expectations from him; and it is to this end that we have such glorious and great accounts of God in sacred writ, as to his attributes of power, wisdom, patience, grace, &c. Riches and honour are with him; all kingdom, [dominion,] glory, and power are ascribed unto him; and it is with him how things shall go with us, and in all the parts of his creation. It is peace or war *with us*,

serenity or disturbance *in* us, and good or evil *toward* us, as God himself determineth concerning us. "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only." (Job xxxiv. 29.) And he that "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," (Eph. i. 11,) is to be concluded and believed to be as good and gracious as he is either wise or great; for as power is his majesty, and holiness is his glory, so mercy is his riches; and to him it is a pleasure to be kind and bountiful, and a name of praise and joy to be abundant in compassions and remissions: "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jer. ix. 24.) "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." (Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9.) "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." (Micah vii. 18.)

And yet this is not all: but our relation to and interest in him must be revived, in the remembrances thereof upon our own hearts. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Deut. xxxiii. 29.) "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isai. xli. 10.) "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst." (Jer. iii. 4, 5.) "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi. 16.) "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. iii. 18.) Every relation is for relative purposes and designs, and so affords us great encouragements: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm xxiii. 1, 6.) "My God!" "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?" (Psalm xlii. 8, 9.) "O my Strength! unto thee will I sing; for God is my defence, and the God

of my mercy." (Psalm lix. 17.) "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." (Psalm lxxviii. 20.) Thus "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (1 Sam. xxx. 6.) And here the foundation of our liveliest hopes is fixed; for as God's infinite perfection assures us that he can do all things, so his relation to us, and our interest in him, assure us that he will be gracious to us. And hereto may we safely trust, and in the sense hereof may we address to God by prayer and hope: "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." (Psalm v. 2, 12.) "Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy." (Psalm cix. 26.) "Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word." (Psalm cxix. 114.) And then the sense and value of what we are to look for is to be lively, too, upon our heart. Slighty and contemptible thoughts and estimations of what we look for, will never considerably stem the tide, nor stop the fluxes, of our sorrows and discouragements.

God's favour is a valuable blessing, and as the root of all the rest. His face is glorious and delightful when indeed it shines upon the soul. The rays and beams which this God's blessed face diffuses and transmits, are *supplies of grace for all the duties of a dark and stormy season*: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.) *Supports of spirit under troubles*: "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." (2 Cor. i. 5.) "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 11, 12.) *Deliverance from them, when most of God may be discovered, and most good brought to pass, thereby*: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." (Psalm xxxiv. 19.) *And great advantages to souls by such exercises, whilst they abide upon them*: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James i. 2, 12.) "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom. v. 3—5.) "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is

but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 16—18.) "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) *And so a consequent emboldening of the heart and face toward God, others, and themselves :* "O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me ; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. Show me a token for good ; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed : because thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me." (Psalm lxxxvi. 16, 17.) "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me : for I trust in thy word." (Psalm cxix. 41, 42.) "I became also a reproach unto them : when they looked upon me they shook their heads. Help me, O Lord my God : O save me according to thy mercy : that they may know that this is thy hand ; that thou, Lord, hast done it." (Psalm cix. 25—27.)

PROP. VII. *Good men can never settle and compose their own disturbed spirits, till they proceed to actual solid hope in God.*—"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God. The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind : the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down : the Lord loveth the righteous." (Psalm cxlvi. 5, 8.) "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb : he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God ; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Rom. iv. 18—21.) Here is the soul's only anchor and repose, from the great God alone : there it must expect great things. For nothing can be too great for him to give or do, if once he be resolved upon it. From their God they may look for special and peculiar favours and reliefs, in just and full agreements with all his covenant-relations to them and engagements for them. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy ; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." (Zeph. iii. 17.) "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains : truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." (Jer. iii. 23.) "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee ; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Deut. xxxiii. 26, 29.) "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we

have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isai. xxv. 9. See also Psalm lxxviii. 20.)

And what have good men to keep their spirits up, but hope in such a God? It is only his omnipotence can weigh against the difficulties, his faithfulness against the improbabilities, and his grace and promises against the jealousies and disheartenings, that arise from the delays of their defined and expected mercies: all other expectations and encouragements are but vain. These "hopes in God" have their sure footing: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." (Heb. vi. 17—20.) "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." (Psalm ix. 10.) "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word." (Psalm cxix. 38, 41.) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." (Psalm xxiii. 4.)

Their Hope, as he is God, is all-sufficient: As he is *their* God, he tenderly and compassionately careth for them; and he thinks himself concerned both to fulfil and justify their hopes. And as he is thus theirs by covenant, he will both seasonably and effectually make their cheerful looks to testify the absolute satisfactions of their hearts in their experienced accomplishments of all his gracious promises to them. And as he is "the health of their countenance," so they account the sanctuary and spiritual unveilings and returns of his face to be the glory and salvation which they are most concerned and carried out to look for and to glory in: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all his praise? Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance." (Psalm cvi. 2, 4, 5.)

Here therefore *they* may safely trust and rest themselves, *who* otherwise cannot but be as restless as Noah's dove whilst from the ark, and as discontented and distracted as wandering Cain under the execution of God's dismal doom and curse upon him. He only that is confident that God is trusty, and that so commits himself and all to God *as such*; and this under great expectations, that God will keep and answer all his hopes and trust; and that here stays and rests his thoughts and soul in this,—that God is certainly his Friend and God, and will accordingly befriend him in the best season, and to the

highest purpose and advantage :—he, I say, only can thus still the tumults of his own spirit.

PROP. VIII. *Good men's hope in God should never be discouraged by any difficulties or unlikelihoods in the way.* (Rom. iv. 18, 22.)—Seeing the patron of their expectations is so great as *God*, so near as *their God* ; and so much in their eye of, 1. Expectation, as “the health of their countenance :” and, 2. Of their resolution and design, as to make him the object of their praises, and the avouched and adored Author and Giver of their mercies : and, 3. Of their affection and delight, as no ways thinking of such joyful work as praise till he appear ;—nothing can justify dejections, where God concerns himself to help : “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee : he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (Psalm lv. 22.) It is no great matter how things appear within us, before us, or about us, whilst God stands well-affected toward us, and can be truly called our praise and God : “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. x. 35, 37.) “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself ; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” (Isai. viii. 13.) “I, even I, am he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass ; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy ? and where is the fury of the oppressor ?” (Isai. li. 12, 13.) Nothing can change or hinder Him ; and why should any thing discourage *his*, whom grace hath brought to trust in him ? “What shall we then say to these things ? If God be for us, who can be against us ? For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. viii. 31, 38, 39.)

PROP. IX. *Whatever gracious souls expect from God, they still determine and refer all to his praise and service.*—“To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant ; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.” (Luke i. 72—75.) “I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.” (Psalm cxix. 7, 17.) “Return unto thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” (Psalm cxvi. 7, 9.) They neither desire, expect, nor use, any salvation or supports ultimately for themselves : “And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast

punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this ; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations ? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping ?” (Ezra ix. 13, 14.) “Thy vows are upon me, O God : I will render praises unto thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death : wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living ?” (Psalm lvi. 12, 13.) God’s excellence is observed in all, and his glory is designed and pursued by all, and indeed God is the end and sweetness of all, mercies : “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (Rom. xi. 36.)

And this was resolved upon by holy David, as both his sanctuary-honour, his house-enrichment, and his heart’s delight. The health of his countenance must be the inhabitant of his praises.

III. Thirdly. Let us now consider this text AS A DIRECTORY to guide us to and in the resolution of this case before us. The case is this :

How may a gracious person, from whom God hides his face, trust in the Lord as his God ?

Now if you compare the case and text together, you will find them parallel in these particulars :

1. *In the persons.*—David, that holy person, was concerned in the text ; and a gracious person is here concerned in the case. That David was a gracious person, none can doubt, that read and mind his holy breathings in the Psalms. Nay, they must conclude him to be greatly such : for what raptures, fervours, and appeals, what holy agonies and flights of spirit, what glorious accounts of God and providence, and what instances of holy confidence in God, may you discern !

2. *In their cases.*—The one is cast down and disquieted, and God’s face is hidden from the other. Now God’s hiding of his face insinuates, mostly, some distaste taken ; and thus it hints the cause to be something neglected or committed, or not well managed and performed ; which therefore God cannot approve of in any of his favourites. For God dislikes all nonconformity to his will, either in the matter, manner, principle, means, or end of any instance of deportment toward God, ourselves, or others ; though sometimes this hiding of God’s face may be for other purposes, not now to be insisted on. The soul is “cast down, and disquieted,” saith the text : and thus we have the terrible impressions and effects of this eclipsed face of God upon the spirit of a gracious person. The case is doleful, though God’s design therein be wise and merciful ; for the sensible tokens of God’s gracious face or presence may be and are often-times removed or withheld, to try the soul ; to awaken dormant principles and graces to their most seasonable and advantageous exercises ; to prevent some greater mischiefs, which would arise from divine consolations unseasonably or unfitly placed ; to make and to

expose to public view some monuments of signal deliverances, salvations, and supports ; and to form some glorious mirrors and examples of signal patience and submissions to the will of God :—And all this may be done to serve more glorious purposes than any man in flesh can be aware of ; and to do the church and world, and the concerns of God's own name, more service than we can yet discern.

3. *In their course for remedy and redress.*—David here, after his self-inquiry and arraignment, applies himself to “hope in God ;” to which he argues and confines himself, by the revival of a due sense of God upon his own spirit, and a clear representation of God to himself as his salvation, praise, and God : this for *the text*. Let us now compare *the case* therewith : and here the gracious soul is supposed to be upon the inquiry and search what to do, (when God hath hid his face therefrom,) that he may trust in the Lord as his God. Now *hope* and *trust* are oft synonymous, and taken in holy scripture as expressive of the same thing ; and sure I am, that though they may be distinguished, yet they cannot be divided each from other. No man can trust but he must hope, nor hope but he must trust, in God. Lay then the case and text together ; and these things will be evident : (1.) That the gracious person is concerned in both. (2.) That God, some way or other, hides his face from both. (3.) That God is yet the God of both, and therefore to be eyed and owned as such by both. (4.) That hope or trust in God gives the best relief to both, when thus afflicted, if fixed in God as their God. (5.) That this may be done, and must. (6.) The great inquiry and concern of both is, how they may be done. Let me here premise these things :—

First. *A gracious person is one that is changed and actuated by the grace of God.*—And so prevailingly bent and set for him. (Psalm xiv. 3.) One formed and framed after that gracious pattern from the gospel-mount : “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus ii. 11—14.) “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind ; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. iv. 23, 24.) A man of holy, gracious principles, dispositions, conversation, and designs ; a man radically after God's own heart, and formed to fulfil all God's will relating to him in his sphere and province.

1. He is (as David in the text) one that *well observes and much converses with his own soul.*—In all varieties and stages of conditions here, he makes his own soul his continual care and study, and strictly minds how all things go at home ; you see here David is a strict inquirer into the temper, case, and cure of his own soul.

2. He is one that *still looks higher than himself, in all that happens to or lies upon him.*—He knows, his hopes and business are not con-

finéd within himself: for he takes himself to be concerned with God, as well as with his own soul.

3. He is one *that is restless, and sensibly uneasy in himself, till he look up to God, and till his spirit turn toward him.*—He runs not to debauching recreations and diversions to turn away his troubles, nor to the blandishments and protections or supports of the world or flesh. For these, he knows, will rather cheat and stupify, than refresh, compose, or heal, his wounded spirit. But he repairs to God, as to the most delightful and sure sabbatism and satisfaction of his inner man.

4. He is one *who therefore hath the highest thoughts of God, and thinks it best and safest for him to place his confidence in God as in the Rock of ages.*—His case, he thinks, cannot be desperate, though never so intricate and frightful, whilst God may be engaged by him to be his Friend and God.

5. He is one *that in his hopes and exercises still keeps his eye upon the praise and service of his God.*—For all the reliefs and mercies which he desires, requests, and hopes for, have both their meet and cheerful references to God's praise; and when he hath cause and opportunity, he hath a heart, to praise his God; and it is his greatest aim, and pleasure, and ambition.

6. He is one *that deals impartially with himself about his troubles.*—But dares not challenge God about them, nor arraign him about even the severest of his providential dispensations.

Secondly. *God may be called the God of such a gracious person.*—As he is,

1. *That God to whom he is devoted, and resolved to serve and please.*—“Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.” (Psalm l. 5, 23.) “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice.” (Deut. xxvi. 17.)

2. And as he is *that God in whom he places all his felicity and satisfaction.*—“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever,” (Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26,) “and the health of my countenance;” “my portion;” (Lam. iii. 24;) “the gladness of my joy.” (Psalm xliiii. 4.)

3. And as he is *that God who hath by covenant engaged himself to be his God.*—“For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become their God.” (2 Sam. vii. 24.) For he hath given his heart and hand so to be the God of such an one as never utterly to neglect them here: “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” (1 Peter iii. 12.) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the

called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28. See also verses 31, 38, 39.) Nor to reject their souls hereafter: "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." (Heb. xi. 16.) See Isai. xli. 10; Heb. vi. 17—20; Rom. ii. 10; 2 Cor. vii. 1—9.

Thirdly. *God's hiding of his face from a gracious person must be considered as to, 1. The phrase; 2. The thing:—*

1. *As to the phrase:*

(1.) *It is scriptural.*—"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only." (Job xxxiv. 29.) "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isai. liv. 8; lix. 2.) And it frequently occurs in sacred scriptures.

(2.) *It is metaphorical and allusive unto men.*—Who are said to hide or turn away their faces, when they will not be seen, or spoken to, or conversed with, in any amicable or serviceable ways; whether in design and policy, or through distaste. Strictly, God hath no face, and so cannot be said to hide it. And if you take God's face for his presence or his appearance, manifested by several instances, and symbols, and tokens thereof; then, in some respects, God's face is never hid: for both his works and providences declare the universality and nearness of it; and, in some respects again, it may be, hath been, and is hidden continually from some or other.

2. *As to the thing:* Therefore we are to understand by *the hiding of God's face*, his removing or withholding of all or any of those notices and tokens whereby his merciful and delightful presence with us, his gracious acceptance of us to his favour, and his providential regards to us, are usually testified, even sensibly, to us. "And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities." (Isai. lxiv. 7. See also Jer. xviii. 17.) "I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought." (Deut. xxxi. 17, 18.) And now this is done in several ways and senses; as,

(1.) *By banishing gracious persons from his sanctuary-presence.*—"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." (Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2.) "Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's

sake." (Dan. ix. 17.) And this was David's case, and a sore affliction to his spirit; and may be something of, but not the main thing as to, the case in hand.

(2.) *By the intermission or suspension of God's providence, care, and mercies, as to those instances and effects which would make our lives and courses here more sweet and easy to us.*—"Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake." (Psalm xlv. 22, 26.) "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Psalm x. 1.) "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psalm xiii. 1, 2.) Thus is God said to "hide his face from the house of Jacob." (Isai. viii. 17.) And thus when Providence treats and uses us in this world, and most or all [of] our outward comforts and concerns are so perplexed, embittered, and removed, as if our God would hereby tell us, that he regards and minds us not, and will not be concerned for our outward peace and welfare; then is it that God may be said to "hide his face." Yet neither is this the thing that is principally intended in my case.

(3.) *By God's denying and withholding all probabilities and presages of relief from either men or things, and all sensible intimations of his own purpose to befriend us.*—"We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom." (Psalm lxxiv. 9, 11.) "I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity." (Jer. xviii. 17.) And, "Because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword." (Ezek. xxxix. 23.) Thus when God withers every helpful arm, defeats all enterprises toward deliverance and supports, and shuts up every door of hope, and, by the whole visible frame and posture of second causes, looks toward us and upon us as an angry, frowning God; then is he said to "hide his face:" but this is not what the case principally respects; and therefore,

(4.) *God mainly hides his face when he withholds those inward sensible tokens of respects, which his Spirit usually affords to holy souls.*—"Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?" (Psalm lxxviii. 14.) When he deals with us as if our souls were utterly or very much despised and neglected by him: thus God tells us, that "he will no more hide his face from" his people; because he had "poured out his Spirit upon the house of Israel." (Ezek. xxxix. 29.) This is the face of God indeed, when his Spirit fills our souls with all its joys and graces; and his face is hid indeed, when we have no sensible refreshments and recruits from that Comforter the Holy Ghost, by whom all correspondencies must be maintained betwixt our God and us: and this our case mainly intends.

We find a man recorded for his patience, crying out, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?" (Job xiii. 24.) And when looks God more like an enemy, than when he denies all sensible illapses and recruits of inward light, and life, and joys? Is it not dreadful to have our sanctuary-clusters to relish of no blessing in them? The dews of heaven are oft, in holy services and doctrines, distilled upon us; and our addresses thither have been oft repeated and renewed: but where is the blessing and success we look for? Our souls we find, in our own apprehensions, to be contracted, degraded, and benumbed; corruptions rage, and make their rude resistances to all our sentiments and convictions. Conscience oft quarrels with us; and when God's rods are on us, we sensibly discern great discomposures in our thoughts, strange mutinies and tumults in our passions, uneasiness in our spirits, and damp upon our hopes, sadness on our hearts, and a strange readiness to resist all that God speaks and doth. And how can we imagine that God's heart and face stand toward us?

Fourthly. *Trusting in the Lord as "his God," in such a case as this, takes-in abundance, and amounts to much.*—And these things it offers to the first observant and considerate glance: 1. That the object be trusty: and no otherwise can he be, who is God the Lord. 2. That the act be answerable to the object: for trust is to run parallel with trustiness. And, 3. That this trusty object gives us allowance to put trust in him. For every one that is able, and that would be faithful upon his promise and engagement, will not engage to be responsible for what might otherwise be committed to him; and hence this passage is inserted here, "The Lord his God." 4. That he be a person qualified and acceptable, who here attempts to place his trust in the Lord as *his God*, and therefore here he is styled in the case "a gracious person."

Trust, then, seems to be "a compound of faith and hope; and it is that repose and rest which both afford, until desire and expectation be accomplished by that God on whom this trust is terminated:" so that in trust there are,

1. *A belief and sense of God's existence and of his gracious nature.*—"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) See also Jer. ix. 24; Micah vii. 18. For I must believe that there is a God, and that he is kind and gracious, ere I can trust in him.

2. *Credit given unto his word and promises, as things clear, sure, and great.*—"And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" (Heb. iii. 2, 5, 6, 17, 18.)

For these are both the ground and test of steady and successful trust in God: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." (Psalm cxix. 49.) What is God's ability and faithfulness to me, unless he countenance my trusting in him, and encourage me thereto?

3. *A consequent expectation of those things from him which he engages to perform and give.*—Things suitable to exigences and concerns as far as they agree with God's promises and designs. "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." (Psalm cxix. 76.) See also Rom. iv. 18, 20, 21, and 1 John v. 14, 15. For all that God promises, and would have us to expect, is still with reference to our welfare in its subordination to his glory and the public good; and all other hopes are but extravagant and presumptuous, if not reduced and conformed to this test and standard.

4. *An acquiescence and repose of spirit in the thus fixing of this expectation.*—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength:" (Isai. xxvi. 3, 4:) for confident trust breeds satisfaction, and makes souls patient and serene, till the thing hoped for and desired be brought to pass. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. viii. 24, 25.) For all these inward tumults, which arise within from pressing jealousies, griefs, cares, and fears, are hereby stilled; and all vain shifts and props rejected; and all committed to and left with God. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." (Phil. i. 19, 20.) "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter iv. 19.) "Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. i. 11, 12.) For here no reservations must be made; nor any jealousies, bad surmises, or suspicions be any way cherished or indulged.

The case, explained and summed up, is plainly this:—

How may a gracious person, (one sanctified and inprincipled by grace,) from whom God hides his face, (gives him but little or no inward sense, or outward sensible notices of his wonted acceptance and regards,) trust in the Lord, (quiet and satisfy himself with expecta-

tions of God's gracious acceptance of him, complacency in him, and regards toward him,) *as his God?* (that God to whom he hath committed all, and is devoted to, and who will certainly regard and bless him, as his true favourite, and as one by grace in covenant with him;) *and how may he do it so as to abandon all disturbing shifts and cares elsewhere?*

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Let him retire into himself, and there compose his thoughts for close and serious work; (Psalm iv. 4; lxxvii. 6;) for here he will find a full and truly great employment for every faculty and thought.*—More here is requisite to self-redress, than mere reading, complaints, or prayer. Here is work *within* him and *above* him. God and himself must now take up his closest, deepest, and most serious thoughts and pauses. Much here must be inquired into, remembered, considered, and debated; and the distracted, wandering, careless, inconsiderate soul, that is broken and scattered into wild and incoherent thoughts, is no ways fit for this employment; nor can it, without due recollection of itself, proceed to argue down what lies upon it as its load and burden. He that knows nothing of himself as to his state and temper, and as to those urgent circumstances under which he lies, cannot know much of God; nor well discern what fit and pertinent improvement may be made of God's refreshing name and promises. And he that through his negligence converses little with himself, must know too little of his own affairs and straits to make right applications of God's promises and memorials unto himself, so as to derive therefrom what is fit to cherish and support him. All must be set aside that may distract, and summoned-in that may assist, and thought upon that may relieve, him in his strait. "Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." (Prov. xviii. 1.)

DIRECT. II. *When thus retired and composed, let him discourse and mind his gracious self.*—"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.) "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us." (Isai. xxvi. 12.) Grace in the heart is a great pledge and earnest, and gives us huge assurances, of good things to come: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.) God hath set gracious souls apart for his own self; (Psalm iv. 3;) and to the highest purposes and endowments are they wrought and framed: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter ii. 9.) "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." (Rom. ix. 23.) "Now he that hath wrought us for

the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor. v. 5.) What clearer dawnings of a glorious day, and what more hopeful token and presage of special favour and respects from God to us can we imagine, than the participation of a Divine Nature, that never can be pleased but when aspiring toward God, and that is insatiable till it get up to him? What, a soul created after God, and formed to his praise, and bearing such impresses of the Holy One, and yet determined to dereliction and destruction? O how can these things be? Read but those characters of God upon thy spirit. Mind the propensions and ascents of heaven-born principles. See but what wonders grace hath wrought already. Hath God essayed to tear thy soul from Satan's paw? Hath he transformed thy spirit, and made it so much a resemblance of his own holiness and wisdom? Hath he advanced thine esteem of holiness and heaven? Hath he cast out thy rubbish, and raised in thee a habitation for his own holy name? And will he demolish and disrespect a monument and structure to his own praise? Why did God thus illuminate thine eyes, inflame thy heart with holy fervours, and so invigorate thy active powers, as to enable thee to move toward him, but that thou mightest attain to and possess his highest favours and endearments? Hath it been ever thus with thee, that nothing can satisfy thine heart but holiness, God, and heaven? Why then hath God thus cast his mantle over thee, but to attract and draw thy soul to him? And hath God put these principles, instincts, and propensions into thee, only to torment thee by the unsatisfied engagements of a holy thirst? Is grace so beautiful in another? and is it the less valuable and observable, because God hath implanted it in thy own self? Art thou made restless and dissatisfied every where, but under the influences and sensible smiles of God's most gracious countenance? And doth thy God impose upon thee, and only trifle with thee? Grace is a principle and design so truly heavenly and exalting, as that its tendency proves its extraction, and manifests God's purposes to do thee good for ever.

Let this thy experience be observed; for who can think it likely that God should draw such parallel lines upon thy soul to his own holy will, and make thee such an epistle so manifestly written by his own Spirit, and yet not allow thee to peruse thyself, and to form what is wrought within thee, into such pertinent encouragements and supports as thy respective agonies and distresses may require? And how can this be done, if no survey be made, no inventory taken and considered, of thine inward worth and riches? "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. i. 17—20.) "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,

and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts xxvi. 18.) And certainly, from what God works within a gracious soul, may it infer great things determined to it, and reserved for it: for who can think that God would rear an habitation for himself, and not inhabit it? or raise a temple, so magnificent and sumptuous as the holy soul, and not fill it with his glory? "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.) "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. vi. 16.) Had God designed to forsake thee utterly, would he not have delivered and resigned thee up to a stupid and polluted spirit? Then hadst thou been so inapprehensive of the sinfulness of sin, the beauty of holiness, the pleasure of a well-ordered mind and life, and of invisible realities, as that thou wouldest have easily received and borne the image of the devil and the world upon thee. The thoughts and prospects of an eternal state would never have reconciled thee to the severities and courses of true godliness, nor have made thee so ambitiously solicitous for divine acceptance, and the satisfactions and fruitions of that state where God is all in all, as now they have done. Surely, the soul that is visited with "the Day-Spring from on high, guiding its feet into the way of peace," and all this "by the tender mercy of its God," ought not so easily to give up all for lost, as to despair of light and help, because of present darkness, and of "the valley of the shadow of death." This "white stone," with such "a new name in it," is no small earnest, nor an obscure sign, of everlasting mercies and endearments. God that hath sanctified the soul, hath thereby signified his gracious purpose to do it good at last, and never so to forsake it as to return no more. See, then, what holy principles, favours, aims, and actions, God hath brought thee to; and thence encourage and fix thy trust in God.

DIRECT. III. *Let him then well observe how far the face of God is hid from him indeed.*—Lest otherwise his own condition, and God's aspects and deportment toward him, should be mistaken by him. "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." (Isai. xlix. 14—16; Psalm lxxvii. 6, 10.) How oft do souls mistake God, and form or fancy great discouragements and eclipses, which rather rise and issue from themselves, than him! What, if the brain or body should be indisposed? What, if some bold and wanton expectations or desires, irregularly formed and cherished, come to nothing? Suppose some melancholic Christians (such have I known, and have rather pitied and reprov'd, than cherished and commended them) should desire, expect, and pray for some miraculous illapses of strength and comforts on them, or beg of God some such deliverances and salvations as suit not the ordinary, stated methods of God's pro-

vidence, or make their requests to God for some ecstatic transports and enlargements in a duty, or covet unfit degrees of gifts, or abilities for duties, taking that to be *grace* which may be a gift consistent with a lost condition; and suppose these things never acquiesced [obtained] by them: must it thence follow, that the face of God is hid from them? O what a pass must God be at with these men's souls, when they must take him for their enemy, or for a discontented and distasted friend, unless he will (to humour them) transgress the stated methods of his dealing with men's souls! If their natural strength and fervour do but decay through age or sickness, or other accidental weaknesses; or if God touch them in their darlings here, as interests, relations, possessions; or cast them upon unwelcome straits, though for their good; O then they think him gone from them in deep distaste and wrath, whenas these things rather insinuate demonstrations and assurances of God's faithfulness and favour to them, than any hard thoughts of or bad designs upon them. See then that you be sure that God hides his face from you indeed, before you proceed to infer discouragements, or any ways to countenance your own despondencies, and any jealousies or hard thoughts of God.

But yet it is to be acknowledged, that God sometimes doth hide his face indeed; (Isai. lxiv. 7;) and that either, 1. *Totally*, as to the damned in hell, so as never to show it more to them again. But this is nothing to our present case: Or else, 2. *Partially*, as to those on earth, who are either, (1.) *Unconverted*, or, (2.) *Converted persons*. The former are not here concerned, but the latter. And as to converted persons, such as are truly gracious, God is said to hide his face from them, when he removes his candlestick from them: (Rev. ii. 5 :) Or when they rather only see, than really feel and are bettered by, the light; and are scarce sensible of either savour or power in God's ordinances, or of any improvement in or of themselves thereby: Or when they have not any free intercourses with God in holy duties, but ever find themselves to be deadened and straitened in the addresses of their spirits to God in his holy ordinances; of which their jealousies are increased, by their being conscious to themselves of much barrenness, wantonness, and ingratitude under their sanctuary-privileges: Or when they are terrified with storms and tempests in their own breasts, through pressing fears and multiplied distractions. But here let them consult God's word and providences, and their own consciences, together: and thus debate this matter with themselves:—"What makes thee think, O my soul, that God now hides his face from thee? Is it what is and hath been common either to mankind, or to the 'generation of the just?' or something peculiar to myself, and unusual to others? Is it any thing that can make it evident, that I either yet was never truly gracious, or that God's grace is now extinct in me? Have I a heart for God? and hath he none for me? Is any thing inflicted on me inconsistent with God's saving love to me? Have my afflictions deadened me to God and holiness, or cut off the entail of his covenant-favours upon me? Are there no cases and instances of God's eclipsed face parallel to or much beyond my own,

to be discerned in Abraham, David, Job, Lot, Christ, or others?" See James v. 10; Heb. v. 7, 9. Job's friends got nothing but reproofs from God, for their inferring God's contempt of him from what God laid on him.

It is much to be observed, that God's dearest favourites have had the sharpest exercises, and great darkness and disconsolateness on their spirits, at some times or other; for the sensible comforts and refreshments of religion are seldom found the daily fare of the exactest walkers with God under heaven. And yet how often are these eclipses greatedened by their fancies or follies! And then by their misrepresentations of God to themselves, how oft and much is he dishonoured by them! But let these things be well considered by gracious souls:

1. God doth not always, nor ever, totally hide his face from them whom he hath changed and transformed through grace.

2. That when at any time it is hid from them, it is not hidden in so much wrath, but that mercy shall prevail at last.

3. Nor can it ever be so dark with them, but that some remedies and refreshments may be had, from the Name, the Son, and the covenant: and from that of God within themselves which they ought not to undervalue, overlook, or to deny, or to quit the acknowledgments and comforts of.

Nay, I may boldly say it, that, at the worst, more of God's face doth or may appear to them, and shine upon them, than is at any time hidden from them. I mean, more of that face which is discernible here on earth; for, otherwise, it is but very little of God's face that the best men see at most in this world, if compared with what is to be manifested in eternity unto the heirs of glory. And therefore is it yet a shameful thing, both to be pitied and blamed in gracious persons, that every intermission or retreat of sensible joys and favours shall so enrage their fears and sorrows, as that God's tenderness and faithfulness shall presently be arraigned; and his most gentle discipline, heavily censured, strangely aggravated, extravagantly resented,* and most immoderately bemoaned by them! yea, and that before they have well understood what ails them, and unto what degrees their so bemoaned eclipse hath reached! Come then, my soul, deal fairly with thyself and God, and tell me, What is it that God hath now denied thee? How far hath God denied it? What of God is it that thou once hast seen, but canst not now? What hinders the present sight or the recovery of what before hath been thy strength and joy? Do not mistake God's looks and heart; nor, in a pet, charge God with what he is not guilty of; nor say too hastily, "Why better with me formerly than now?"

DIRECT. IV. *Let him remove and shun all that provokes God thus to hide his face.*—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isai. lix. 1, 2.)

* See the meaning of this old word in page 85 of this volume.—EDIT.

“Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.” (Lam. iii. 39, 40.) No counsel nor encouragement will or can avail that soul for trust or conduct, which neglects its stated work and watch, which God enjoins it to and expects from it. The spots and negligences of God’s own people are displeasing to him: and he will turn his face away from what he loathes and hates. Many a dreadful frown and glance from God had David, when he had defiled his soul and body with lust and blood. The matter of Uriah left that blot and sting upon him, and to his family, which made it evident how unsafe it is for even gracious souls to play the wantons. Complaints and prayers can neither expiate nor commute for those miscarriages and neglects which God forbids and hates. Nor will it be found sufficient, that we make some inquiries after God, or pathetic and mournful declamations against ourselves, if any sins lie near our hearts, and prove predominant in our conversations. The crimes whereby we have disgusted God must be repented of, detested, and rejected. He that would trust in God, and gain the views and comforts of his face, should thoroughly hate, deeply resent, and carefully watch against what God can take no pleasure in, but hath entered his protest against. “Repent and do thy first works,” was grave and sober counsel. (Rev. ii. 5.) Begin then with thyself, and end with God; and work thyself up to his will, and thou shalt see his face with joy. Sin will raise clouds and storms, and cause no small eclipses of God’s face, wherever it enters, is countenanced, and prevails. A heavenly mind and life must be recovered, exercised, and preserved; and practical resolutions must be renewed and kept in their inviolable vigour, whether God sensibly smile or not upon us. Whoever mourns not over, and watches not against, what God abhors, will find his seeing God’s face with joy to be too strange and great a miracle to be expected from him. He that contemns the ways and will of God, can look for nothing but to be contemned by him. “For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” (1 Sam. ii. 30.) The laws of peace and favour must be kept; sins must be broken off by righteousness and repentance; or else God’s face is to be seen no more.

DIRECT. v. Let him consider well how far God is unchangeably the God of gracious souls.—“If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.” (Psalm lxxxix. 30—34.) “If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and

shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them : and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity : because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them : for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the Heathen, that I might be their God : I am the Lord." (Lev. xxvi. 40, 42—45.) The tenor of God's covenant is to be studied thoroughly and well understood, to prevent extravagant or defective trust. It is true God's promises are large, and his relation fixed. (Psalm lxxxiv. 11 ; Isai. xli. 10.) God will be so far always theirs, as to be ever mindful of them and of his covenant with them ; to be duly provident for their good, so as to prevent all that may truly harm and ruin their resigned souls and persons ; (Rom. viii. 28 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 9 ;) to be truly, though wisely, compassionate toward them in all their dejections and temptations. (1 Cor. x. 13 ; Micah vii. 18 ; Isai. xxx. 19 ; xli. 17.) He will neither overburden them, overwork them, nor overlook them ; and he will be always so far theirs, as to exemplify the power and riches of his all-sufficient grace and goodness in them. (Rom. ix. 23 ; 2 Thess. i. 10, 12.) God will refine and save their souls, renew their strength, and clothe them with his righteousness and salvations, and give them such encouragements and supports as may be needful for their present state and work. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isai. xl. 31.) "For which cause we faint not ; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen : for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 16—18.) "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness ; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 11, 12.) "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly : and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." (1 Thess. v. 23, 24.) Let them but act like gracious persons, and all grace shall abound toward them ; and he will see that their integrity and uprightness preserve them, whilst therein they wait on him. Pardoned sins, refined souls, accepted services, prayers, and persons, with great victories, triumphs, and salvations at the last ; God's Spirit in them, his presence with them, and his eternal glory for them when time is folded up and reckoned for : all these shall joyfully convince them in what respects and to what purposes God is immutably,

and will be, their God. (Rom. viii. 31—39.) But if they look or hope that God should be so far theirs, as to keep them from afflictions and the fiery trial, or to feast them continually with sensible consolations and clear views of heaven and of his glorious face, or immediately to give them what they ask, at their discretion, or to prevent all manner of perturbation in their souls, and all distempers in their bodies, brains, and fancies, or to redress miraculously what may be cured and relieved otherwise; they have no promise for this. For where hath God engaged that grace must do the work that is consigned to natural means, or that miracles must effect what an established course of ordinary means may bring men to? Even in the sealing age, when miracles were so multiplied, we find that ordinary means were used in their just extent. Moses must send for Jethro. Cornelius must send for Peter. Philip must turn instructor and interpreter to the eunuch. Manna must only be continued until the Israelites could plough and sow. Why then should any one conclude, that God hath hid his face, unless unreasonable and extraordinary expectations be accomplished? If parts be weak, if gifts be mean, if memory be frail through disadvantages of age or weakness, if passionate fervours be abated through those declensions which are entailed on mortals by a settled decree; must we infer from hence that God hath hid his face from us, and holds us for his enemies, unless he change the ordinary course of nature? And as to soul-concerns and exercises: what, if our spirits be disquieted through the force or expectation of sharp trials and distresses? What, if Satan bluster in our souls? What, if strange suggestions, like fiery darts, be cast into us? What, if we be strongly urged to such imaginations as God himself knows to be odious and ungrateful to us? Must we from hence suspect or think that God disclaims us, and renounces all his merciful relations and regards to us? Hath God engaged any where, that our war with Satan shall end before we die? Can militant Christians be discharged from this warfare before they have finished their course? Whilst you resolve and strive, you conquer; and God abides your God, till you give up the cause, and fall in love with what your God abhors and slights. See Heb. iv. 14—16: "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Was not the great Jehovah as much the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the extremities of his agonies and conflicts, as either before or after them? But he never was so much his God as to excuse him from his bitter cup, and his contest with the devil and this world. The same I may also say of Paul. (2 Cor. xii. 7—9.) God's covenant, and not your thoughts or hopes, must tell how far.

DIRECT. VI. *Let him consider and improve what God affords to help and quicken trust in him.*—"Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave

me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." (Psalm xxvii. 9.) "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 4, 13.) God hath his part, and man hath his, to do; not that God needs him, but because he hath laid him under law unto himself, and suited his remedying duties to his faculties and circumstances. Trust is a compounded act and duty, made up of assent, consent, and reliance; and it respects veracity, goodness, and fidelity in the object trusted-in. Let then the gracious soul look upon God as fit and willing to be trusted-in; as actually engaged and concerned for him, when he is his God, and as faithful, when thus related and engaged. For God both can and will effect all that he undertakes; yet he expects that gracious souls shall fix their deepest thoughts upon what he hath given them to fix and raise their trust upon. Idleness doeth no good. The thinking and industrious and resolved soul thrives much; whilst mere complainers cheat and dispirit themselves and trouble others, dishonour God, and scandalize and dishearten men. It is here as it is in nature: God feeds us, he clothes and keeps us; and we trust in him to do so for us. But if we be not provident and diligent in the well-ordering and improvement of the helps, and benefits, and instructions which God affords us in and by second causes; and so expect that manna come not only down from heaven, but that it also fall into our mouths; we may easily turn this trust into presumption, and starve ourselves in the midst of manna round about us. So, he that expects God should miraculously inspire trust into him, without the intervenient use of his own faculties in the improvement of those helps which God affords, will find such hopes and trust fitter to be rebuked and frustrated, than to be gratified and fulfilled. He that would trust in the Lord as his God, is to consider, 1. *Whom he is to trust in.*—The Lord. 2. *For what he is to trust in him.*—That he may either see his face again, or be supported and preserved under the eclipses of it. 3. *Why he is to trust in him.*—Because of his own necessities, and God's power and fidelity to help him, and the encouragements God gives him.

1. *Think then, O gracious soul, what a God thou hast to trust in.*—God all-sufficient. (Gen. xv. 1; xvii. 1.) Now God's all-sufficiency lies (as far as we can know it yet) in the vast reaches of his infinite wisdom; in the unboundedness of his power, for it is omnipotent; and in the riches of his goodness, which knows no bounds in the expressions and efforts thereof but the inviolable harmony of his own blessed name and nature, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and the capacities of his favourites. (Eph. i. 11.)

(1.) God hath *a heart to do thee good.*—For he is love, and goodness is his nature and delight. "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the

earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." (Jer. ix. 24.) "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 16.) Now love is communicative and diffusive of itself in all such instances and expressions as the case and circumstances of the beloved object may require. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. xxxi. 3.) "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord." (Hosea ii. 19, 20.) Hence you may see God's paraphrase upon this attribute; and his most copious explication of it, in Exodus xxiv. 6, 7: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Love pities favourites in their miseries and self-bemoanings. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." (Jer. xxxi. 18—20.) Love helps them in their straits: "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isai. lxiii. 8, 9.) Love supplies them in their wants: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 19.) Love hears their cries: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 6, 7.) "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." (1 Peter iii. 12.) Love emboldens, delivers, and preserves them, and commands all within its reach and empire to befriend and serve them, to all these purposes, and in all these ways, that are most suitable to itself and them: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim

the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (Isai. lxi. 1—3.) Canst thou not therefore trust in him, who, without any violence or repugnancy to himself, is so propense to do thee good? Let then the love and goodness of thy God come into thy fresh remembrances and most lively thoughts, that so thy trust in him may be encouraged and spirited hereby. How greatly are we reconciled and quickened to place our confidence, where love is most predominate and natural! "For thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God. Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepst covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble" (Hebrew, "weariness") "seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day," saith Nehemiah. (Chap. ix. 31, 32.)

(2.) And as God hath a heart to do thee good, so he hath *wisdom to contrive and manage the means and methods of his purposed and free goodness.* (Eph. i. 8.)—"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24, 25.) See also 1 Tim. i. 17. God guided the wandering Israelites under the wilderness-eclipses of his face "by the skilfulness of his hands." (Psalm lxxviii. 72.) God best knows when to show his face, to what degrees, and how. He sees what ails and what will help thee. He is no stranger to thy gloominess and droopings. He understands wherein, how far, and upon what accounts thou so lamentest his withdrawments from thee; and what these manifestations of himself are, which will afford the best relief to thee. He cannot overlook the proper article of time, wherein those friendly aspects and appearances which thou covetest so much will most befriend and serve thee. The best men have a complication of soul-distempers in them; and those divine discoveries which might relieve them in their droopings may, when desired by them, (were they but then afforded,) possibly make them proud or careless. However, possibly God hath not sufficiently served those purposes to which thy doleful present exercise is directed; and so the birth might prove too hasty to be perfect, were it produced when desired by thee. Job little knew, and all his confident, pressing friends as little, what God was doing by those so rigid usages whereto that holy, patient person was exposed. God hath more souls and things to mind than one; and he will make every part and instance of his grace and goodness to harmonize each with other: and is it not more desirable to every soul resigned to God, to abide in this darkness for a while,

than to have the course and methods of God's orderly proceedings disordered and disturbed, for the mere pleasing of some precipitant desires? Let God alone; and turn not a censurer of his dealings, till thou canst comprehend his whole design upon his whole creation, his family, and on thyself; and let it suffice thee, that Infinite Wisdom is concerned and engaged for thee: and trust him more; for thou mayest safely do it, because he is infinitely wiser than thyself; and knows best when to hide, and when to show, his face.

(3.) God hath *ability and authority*, as well as a heart and wisdom, *to relieve and favour thee*. (Jude 24.)—"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." (2 Cor. ix. 8.) "He shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." (Rom. xiv. 4.) He is the God of power: "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." (Job xlii. 2.) He can revive or damp thy spirit at his pleasure: (Job xxxiv. 29 :) so that there can be no suspicion of impotence or inability with him. He that made heaven and earth can succour drooping hearts; and he that revives this sense of God upon him, will find his trust in God more sweet and easy.

2. *Think also what thou art now allowed to trust him with and for.*—Even with thy whole self; and with all that can concern the church, the world, and thee: Wisdom for conduct; power for due deliverances, and protections, and salvations; and grace and comforts to bear thee up under burdens and temptations, and to furnish thee to every good word and work, and to carry thee safe to everlasting rest: and for the wise and happy issue of every duty, burden, and temptation, mayest thou firmly trust in God. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter iv. 19.) But be sure to trust to him for nothing, as far as thou canst learn or know it, that is unworthy of God to give, and unfit for thee to ask or have. But this you may trust him for: That he hide nothing of that face from thee without which thou canst not be a holy and a happy person; and that he lay nothing on thee unto the prejudice of thy best affairs; and that he never be defective in ministering those supplies to thee, which his own glory, the credit of religion, the public good, and the great duties of thy place and station do require; and that he never call thee out to any thing beyond thy strength and furniture; but that he suit thy strength and spirit unto the work and burdens of thy place and day. (1 Cor. x. 13.) God will not be offended at thee for such trust as this; supposing thy devotedness, and thy due diligence and prudence in the choice and using of all meet subordinate means and helps, and thy fervent cries to him.

3. *Think upon those encouragements which God hath given to this trust.* (Isai. xxvi. 3, 4; Psalm cxii. 7.)—Thou hast God's promises and engagements. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the know-

ledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter i. 3, 4.) "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." (Heb. x. 23, 24.) "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant." (Psalm cxix. 75, 76.) And these are certain, suitable, large, and precious; and the genuine product of infinite, generous, and resolved love. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. vi. 17, 18.) Thou hast those near and dear relations which God hath assumed and owns to thee,—a Husband, Father, King, &c. "For thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Isai. liv. 5, 10.) "And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 18.) "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Rev. xxi. 7.) Thou hast the exhibition of his own Son Jesus Christ. (Heb. x. 19, 23; iv. 14, 16; ii. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 32, 35.) "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John vi. 39, 40.) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter i. 3, 21.) Thou hast the earnest of the indwelling Spirit. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph. i. 13, 14.) "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." (2 Cor. v. 5.) And of that new nature which he hath formed and cherished in thee; as in 2 Tim. i. 7; Rom. viii. 15, 23, 28. Thou hast a sealed covenant with sacramental con-

firmations, and experiences of prosperous trust both in others and thyself. (Psalm ix. 10; Rom. xv. 4; Dan. iii. 28; Heb. xi.)

Do then as David did: infer from known experience all that may strengthen regular confidence; for thus did he: "Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." (Psalm xxxii. 7, 10.) And thus did Paul: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." (2 Cor. i. 8—10.) "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped." (Psalm xxviii. 7.) And thou hast the glory of thy God concerned in the prosperousness of thy trust. "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." (Eph. i. 12.) "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." (Rom. iv. 20.)

And now, to close up all: Why such manifold encouragements to trust in God, if they were either vain or needless? And how can any keep up their trust in God, without their deep and sober thoughts about, and their intent and most deliberate pauses on, these weighty things upon record, which God hath left, to justify and encourage your trusting in him? It is both strange and sad to see many Christians come to their ministers with complaints, or put up bills for prayers in congregations, and to desire solemn days to be set apart for them, whilst they rest only here, as if they looked to be comforted and supported by some charm or miracle. They look to be healed by a word, and they neglect their own work; they do not search into themselves, that they may know whether or no the grace of God hath made them capable of trusting in the Lord as their God. They bring not their calamities and dejections to the test, that they may clearly know under what hand of God they are cast; and how far God hath hid his face from them, and how far not. God enters not into their close and serious thoughts, that they may plainly see and know what there is in him, to draw their spirits forth to trust in him: nor will they studiously revive that sense of God upon themselves, whereby their trust in him may be engaged, established, and emboldened: and yet they cry, "What shall we do to trust in the Lord as our God?" Why, sirs, I will tell you what to do:—

1. *See that your interest in God be cleared up.*—This you may know by the prevalency of your desires, pursuits, and satisfactions, and by the practical resignments of yourselves to him.

2. *See what this interest in God infers.*—Namely, nothing is desperately lost at present, and all will be well at last; and that all lies safe that can concern you. See Psalm xxiii. 1, 4. The truth is, all that can be grateful, great, and sure, may be inferred from hence.

3. *Accommodate and apply what you infer, as skilfully and faithfully as you can, to your distressing and discouraging cases and circumstances.*—There are histories, to tell us what God hath done; and there are doctrines, to tell us what God is and can do; and there are precepts and instructions, to direct us what we are to do; in what cases, upon what grounds and reasons, and to what ends and purposes, we may trust in God. And God hath given us marks, to know what interest we have in him: and a directory and helps to get it, if we have it not; and he hath showed us fully and plainly what it is, and what at last it will amount to, to want or have this interest in himself; and whenas we have gotten it, he hath taught us how to apply it fitly, and how to bear our spirits up in hope and trust thereby; and, after all this and much more, shall we be negligent and lazy, and cry out like fools and drones?—"We know not how to trust in God, nor whether he be ours or not!" Let us not thus abuse ourselves.

4. *Think on those means and helps whereby we may attain to an ability and faculty of trusting in God.*—And let them be most faithfully improved; such as the word, sacraments, sabbaths, conferences, meditation upon the word and works of God. But these need no enlargements on them; and my limits are transgressed already.

Reader, expect not accuracy here; I am very sensible of many imperfections in this sermon; I am separated from my helps, having my Bible only, and my God, to help me in my wandering solitudes and retirements. These things are what I have discoursed with my own heart; and if some censure them, others, I hope, will pity and pray for me. And the God of heaven accept and prosper these (though weak) endeavours!

INFERENCES.

I had some INFERENCES prepared: but, because I would not be too tedious, I forbear to add them, so as to enlarge upon them. I will but mention these.

INFERENCE I. Hence it follows, *that human souls are excellent and capacious principles and beings.*

INFER. II. *Graceless sinners are under dark and dreadful circumstances, when God afflicts and hides his face from them.*—They need not say, "Why cast down so much?" but rather, "Why not more?"

INFER. III. *Excellent is the temper and condition that grace puts men's souls into.*—In that they are enabled, prompted, and directed to such ways, to know and help themselves.

INFER. IV. *Right and due thoughts of God do mighty service to the gracious soul, in all the eclipses and distresses that do or can befall it.* (Psalm xlii. 11.)

INFERENCE I. *Man's soul is a noble and capacious being.*—"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37.) It is called by Solomon, "the lamp, or candle

of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." (Prov. xx. 27.) It is the great treasure that ought to be kept, and used well; "for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23.) Its joys and bitternesses lie deep within itself; and they are not to be intermeddled with by strangers. (Prov. xiv. 10.) The countenance of a man is but the index of his spirit. It is in the soul that joys and sorrows centre and seat themselves: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken." (Prov. xv. 13.) Many infirmities or distresses may easily be undergone by a sound heart; but if the spirit itself be wounded, how dreadful are its wounds! (Prov. xviii. 14.) The spirit of man is God's vicegerent, and a great mirror of himself; and as it accuses and condemns when it well understands and minds itself, so it is the veil and representative of its God unto itself, in Rom. ii. 15, and 1 John iii. 19, 21. It can (you see) both summon-in, and search itself. It can both challenge and discourse itself. It can command, reprove, exhort, encourage, enlarge, restrain, itself; it can arraign its temper, principles, purposes, actions, sufferings, and designs; and make itself inquisitor, judge, jury, witness, and executioner, to itself. It can look every way; and make both heaven and earth, good things and bad, some way or other serviceable to its own concern; and turn all the memorials and notices of its God to self-improvements and relief. It is capable of moral government, and of full joys and sorrows, congenial with its contracted principles, temper, and behaviour, here. It is capable of converse and communion with its God; of grace and comfort, heaven or hell. It can perceive its own distresses and concerns, enjoy the best things, and improve the worst; and so consider all things as to accept, refuse, approve, condemn; and so resolve upon or wave a matter, as it sees to be most fit. Nor needs it to truckle under any thing but guilt and wrath, when plunged thereinto by its own folly and neglect. The text here shows you what the soul of man can do; and if it be replied, that "David's soul,—it was gracious;" and that "grace only brought it thus to be disciplined and tutored by itself;" it is answered, that grace can have no such effects on stones and brutes, which grace and diligent care might make good use of; and all souls might do thus with and by themselves, did they not by sin degrade themselves. For all souls have imperative, directive, and active powers.

INFER. II. *Graceless sinners are under dreadful circumstances when troubles come upon them.*—"But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." (Isai. i. 11.) "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Isai. lvii. 20, 21.) "And

what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" (Isai. x. 3.) "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isai. xxxiii. 14.) For when their miseries surprise and overthrow them, should they then say, "Why so disquieted and cast down?" they have that within them which will rather say, "O, why disquieted no more," seeing there is so little ground of hope from God? "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thess. v. 3.) All is so vile and foul within them, and all so frightful and amazing to them, whether they look within them, about them, or above them, as that the greatest wonder is, how they escape distractions. Souls so neglected and degraded, and every way devoted to the will and service of the devil! such manifold and mighty sins abounding in and from them! and such great wrath to be inflicted on them! such clear and numerous presages of fearful storms approaching toward them! such an inhabitant and tyrant as Satan, to make them do, be, lose, and slight even any thing but what they should! a God so much incensed against them, and every way so resolved and engaged to ensnare and ruin them! and their own spirits, amidst all this, so much estranged from, uneasy in, so frightful to, and so much at variance with themselves, so as that they never can be reconciled to themselves again! Why should not these souls be "disquieted and cast down," when troubles come upon them, like messengers with these heavy tidings from the God of heaven, that they shall see his face no more? What succour, hope, or refuge, hath the dejected soul, but God? What sanctuary is there for it, in its storms and chases, but the all-sufficient Jehovah? And how can mercy and redresses be expected from Him, whom they can no way comfortably call *their* God, whilst as yet unconverted persons? They have neither encouragement nor a heart to seek him acceptably and successfully. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 24—31.) Their present troubles are but the harbingers and foretastes of eternal and unmixed wrath to come. Providence serves the writ, and gives the summons. Conscience confounds, and holds the prisoner fast, under the seizures of God's providence. Justice draws up the bill against them; and

vengeance fixes them to their racks; and they have nothing left them but their fearful expectations and reproaches. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. x. 26, 31.) "And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection." (Deut. xxxii. 37, 38.) Let these men read Job xviii. 7, 21; xxvii. 8, 9.

INFER. III. *Excellent is the case and temper of gracious souls in 2 Cor. i. 12; Phil. i. 20; Isai. xli. 10, 17.*—"For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." A good heart within them, a clear way before them, a good God for them, a good understanding of their case and state, and such encouraging refreshments and supports, so ready for them at their call, when truly needful to them!—what greater requisites than these can we mention and propose unto ourselves, to render our condition easy, safe, and happy here? What need we more, to calm and cheer up our disturbed spirits with? (Rom. viii. 31—39; 2 Cor. xii. 7, 9.) *The God! My God!* "The health of my countenance!" and One that yet is to be praised by me! and therefore One that I must fully and may safely hope in! Why may not these things bear a gracious spirit up, and quicken and embolden it to bid defiance to all attempts which earth or hell can make to ruin and unhinge it? The gracious soul, as such, is fit for any thing; and it is entitled to the greatest blessings from its God, and in due season shall possess them. What God by grace hath made and brought it to, renders it fit for God's great blessings and supports; and what God promises, it may safely trust to, and confidently rely upon. The text here shows you what the gracious soul can do. It can restrain itself from its immoderate sorrows, by its faithful dealing with itself, and by making a right judgment upon whatever doth at any time befall it: and as there is something in it apt to raise storms, and vexatious resentments of its pressures and afflictions, so are there certain principles, and a seed of God, within them; and *that* in God above them, and before them, *which* will not always suffer their sorrows and dejections to transgress their stated bounds and rules; because the composed and still soul is fittest for communion with God, hope in him, service to him, and consolation

from him. See here how narrowly David observed himself, how skilfully he discoursed himself, how powerfully he restrained himself, and how readily he could and did enlarge, encourage, and exalt himself! You may discern in him, that grace will not admit of nor countenance any unfit reflections upon God. It will not fall heavily with its censorious carpings upon his providence, nor in an angry pet of frowardness and impatience fall out with him. It threatens no revenge to evil men. It will not flee to sinful shifts and refuges: neither is any thing chidden, cited, or arraigned, but the "disquieted and disturbed spirit;" and yet even here, it is not so much clamorous and impatient, as it is inquisitive after and resolved upon its regular self-redress. If any thing ail it or afflict it, it minds the grounds, the measures, and the effects thereof upon itself. Stupid, indeed, it is not; for it feels God's hand upon it. Immoderate or careless in its griefs it will not be; for it will call its sorrows and itself unto the test and bar, and there impartially examine all its pressures, its sense of them, and its behaviour under them. Nor will it sullenly be neglectful of itself in troubles; for it will urge itself to all just observations and improvements of its best helps and remedies; and when it finds that only "hope in God" must bear it up and succour it, O then how copiously and closely is the name of God considered by it! "I shall yet praise Him; the health of my countenance, and my God." If it be forced abroad (as holy David now was) to sorrowful wanderings, solitudes, and retirements, its very privacies shall be spent in pertinent soliloquies, and so be improved to its own best advantage, and consequently be made to turn to very good account at last. It is and will be provident for soul-good, wherever it is, and whatever it is called to undergo. And when, upon impartial search, it finds (as it will quickly do) that no relief can be expected but from and by "hope in God," how prevalent are its gracious principles and instincts, in carrying it to look much higher than itself for help! Nor will it ever look upon its case as desperate and lost remedilessly, whilst there is room and ground for hope in God to help it. Yet is it orderly and calm in its procedures; for it first talks with itself, and then looks up to God; and though it be difficult to disperse and quell its griefs and sorrows when they are gathered to a head, yet "duty is duty, hot or cold;" and it is not difficulty that can divorce the gracious soul therefrom. It can find work in storms and trials for all its faculties, principles, and graces; and they must vigorously perform their functions, to serve those weighty turns and purposes which so much concern the exercised soul. And it well knows, and doth consider it as wisely, that storms and tumults of this nature are never truly laid, nor the afflicted soul refreshed, either by transient and hasty or by hard thoughts of God; and it is its happiness and support, that it hath a God to flee to, a heart to hope in him and to praise him, and an interest in God, and a covenant of promises from God, to encourage hope in God.

INFER. IV. *O what refreshments do a due sense and lovely thoughts of God afford to gracious souls under their troubles and disquiet-*

ments!—"And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (2 Tim. iv. 18.) O let those passages be read considerably, in Lam. iii. 21—36. It is in God's gracious name (so solemnly proclaimed in Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7) that gracious souls may act themselves, when all things shake and fail about them, and their hearts tremble in them: "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." (Joel iii. 16.) Here is that anchor which must stay the soul, and hold its hope, when all the seas of its concerns and thoughts are most severely pressed and broken by storms, and tempests in it and about it. Good thoughts of God will make us cheerfully to endure afflictions, and to improve the worst condition. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." (Psalm xliii. 7, 8.) "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. For thou art the God of my strength." (Psalm xliiii. 1, 2.) David here found relief when all things else proved miserable comforters to him. "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul." And what was his encouragement? "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." (Psalm cxvi. 3—5.) And they that would cherish "hope in God" should not so much resort to Sinai as to Sion; and rather go to Gerizim than to Ebal, if they would have such thoughts of God as shall and will encourage hope in him. God here was represented by David to himself as his God, as "the health of his countenance," and as that God whom he should surely praise, whatever other face and aspect were at present upon things; and by these things did he resolve upon, awaken, and refresh his "hope in God." If God be only set before our eyes, as clothed with vengeance, as an inexorable and severe Judge, and as upon the throne of judgment, our hopes will quickly turn to desperation: and who can possibly hope in Him, that takes Him for his enemy? But he that remembers and minds God, as Love itself, as ready to commiserate the cases of his afflicted servants, and as one waiting to be gracious, and ready to forgive, hear, heal, and save; this man gets presently upon the wing, and freely throws himself as at the feet of mercy, and can more easily part with his life, than with his hope in God. (Job xiii. 15.)

EXHORTATIONS.

And now, to give no check to your patience by my prolixity, let me close all, and drive the matter home, if possibly I may, and exhort you to these things:—

EXHORTATION I. *Keep up all amiable and attracting thoughts of*

God, in all your troubles and disquietments. (Micah vii. 18, 20.)— Thus did this gracious person in my text : “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness : according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” (Psalm li. 1.) “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.” (Psalm cxix. 75, 76.) Nothing can stint or bound God’s mercies, nor check the efforts and sensible explications and productions of God’s most gracious name, but the culpable unfitness of your souls to be receptive of his royal favours. “I will hear what God the Lord will speak : for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints.” (Psalm lxxxv. 8.) “Rejoice the soul of thy servant : for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive ; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul ; and have not set thee before them. But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me ; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.” (Psalm lxxxvi. 4, 5, 14—16.) The gracious soul can never justify its own despondencies : for, take it under its severest pressures from evil men and things, let it but act still like itself, and it hath more causes for consolation than for dejectedness. “In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” (2 Cor. vi. 4, 10.) Think not that God forgets or hates thee, because thy bitter cups are not to be dispensed with. “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” (2 Cor. iv. 8—10.) “Sing *therefore* unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks to the memorial of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment ; in his favour is life : weeping may endure for a night ; but joy cometh in the morning.” (Psalm xxx. 4, 5.) And “He that is our God is the God of salvation.” (Psalm lxxviii. 20.) Think on him therefore as infinitely amiable, trusty, and compassionate. For were not his fidelity inviolable, his mercy and grace exceeding rich, and his compassionate bowels deep, how could these characters of excellence, which he imprints upon the gracious soul, be called “his image ?” It is blasphemy against the grace and goodness of your God, and a flat contradiction to all the endearing accounts which he hath given you of his grace and clemency, for you to think him careless or cruel, inaccessible and inexorable, or false.

EXHORT. II. *Bless God for Jesus Christ, by whom we are brought to this relief, and our hope in God.*—“Blessed be the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter i. 3, 4, 9.) For Christ brought-in this "better hope," by which we thus "draw nigh to God." (Heb. vii. 19.) By Christ "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing" what excellent fruits they are now made productive of. (Rom. v. 2—5.) See Eph. i. 11; and let those two chapters engage your deepest and most serious thoughts. I cannot now stand to open them, lest I should grow too large.

When sin had torn us from our God, and set his face against us, how dismally did all things look about and toward us then! The face of God was terrible; the thoughts of God were frightful and amazing; the way to God was blocked up from us; and the majesty of God was nowhere visible, but in the presages and effects of dreadful jealousies and revenges; till Christ arose, "a Prince and Saviour," sent from God, to give a glorious resurrection to our dead and buried hopes. There was enough to cast and keep our spirits down, and to disquiet us for ever:—infinite Wisdom, to contrive our snares and miseries; insuperable Power, to bind and keep us to our torturing racks; inflexible and inexorable Justice (as to us) incensed and prompted by deep and keen resentments of our degeneracies and defections, to call for rigid satisfaction, and to demand the absolute resignation of our all unto divine revenges; and the concerns and glory of God's disturbed government rendering it needful, that God's violated laws by us be fully executed on us, to cut off all relief and hope from us; and nothing in ourselves to be discerned but what must justify divine severities and revenges on us, and fit us for and vex us in that sea of wrath and fury which we expected, and over which we hung. Surely such things as these could not but make us every way hopeless, helpless, and disconsolate, and rack our spirits to the utmost with disquietudes and dejections. But our hope dawned when Christ was promised and prefigured; and made its advances, by gradual discoveries, toward the glorious shining of that more perfect day, wherein "the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings." (Mal. iv. 2; with Isai. l. 10.) And when the Lord-Redeemer came, our hope and trust in God were taught by his doctrine, enjoined and regulated by his laws, sanctified and illustrated by his practice, purchased by his blood, ingenerated and cherished by his Spirit, confirmed by his exhibited and sealed covenant and all his federal relations to us, enforced and encouraged by his intercession with the Father for us; and its accomplishment undertaken and secured to the full by his most glorious resurrection and ascension. (1 Peter i. 21.) And its success is to be visibly and completely full at his appearance and his kingdom; and hence Christ is called "the blessed hope." (Titus ii. 13.) So that with most triumphant thank-

fulness and joy may we cry out: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who is he that condemneth? seeing it is God that justifieth; and Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. Who," or what, "shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. viii. 31, 32, 34, 35, 37.) And what acknowledgments to God can bear proportion to so great a gift as this, whereby our hope and trust in God is thus revived and exalted? (Col. i. 21, 27.) View but the face of God in Christ; and let that name of CHRIST be studied by you, in Isaiah ix. 6, 7; and then see what can any way discourage you from hope or trust in God. The smiles of majesty, and the supplies of grace, which we expect and covet, are all from God in Jesus Christ. (Phil. iv. 19; Eph. iii. 19—21.) Christ is himself "our hope," and the great anchor of it. (1 Tim. i. 1; Heb. vi. 18, 20.) And it is by him that God so reconciles us to himself, as to encourage and accept our hope and trust in him. (2 Cor. v. 18, 21.) Both Comforter and comforts are through him. (John xvi. 7, 22.) And he is the Patron and Exemplar of our hope in God.

EXHORT. III. *Look to yourselves, lest any way your hope or trust in God be starved, or stifled, or trodden down by you.* (Judges xx. 21; 2 Peter iii. 11—14; 1 John iii. 3; Phil. ii. 12, 13.)—If God make great provisions to countenance, sustain, and raise this hope and trust in him, must it not be our care and work to bear our spirits up in the liveliest exercise thereof? Let then my text be viewed again; and see therein how your work lies before you; see that you mind your souls, and be more conversant therewith than ever. See what you have to trust to,—your God, and the salvations of his face or presence. See that your hope and trust be suited to the grounds and object thereof. Observe the timings of your duty: then most repair to this your hope and trust, when troubles and discouragements press most severely on you; and let your spirits be argued and urged hereto, by a due sense of God, and by motives drawn from him.

SERMON XXX.

BY THE REV. JOHN COLLINS, A.M.*

FELLOW OF HARVARD COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, NEW ENGLAND.

HOW THE RELIGIOUS OF A NATION ARE THE STRENGTH OF IT.

But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten : as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves : so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.—Isaiah vi. 13.

THE prophet was sent with heavy tidings to the people :—

1. Of *spiritual* judgments like to befall them ; blindness of mind, and hardness of heart, to which they should be left,—the most dreadful plague on this side hell. (Verses 9, 10.)

2. Of *temporals* too : “ Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.” (Verses 11, 12.) God many times sends spiritual judgments with temporal : they that are under the former, cannot be secure against the latter ; they that are insensible of the one, may be made to feel the other. But lest it should make the hearts of the few righteous among them over-sad, and should prove in the event a temptation to despair, and deject, instead of humbling, them, he hath a more comfortable message put into his mouth,—some glad tidings to balance the evil. Saints sometimes tremble at those truths in which others are most concerned ; and wicked men, that should most fear them, least regard them. This verse, therefore, brings a cordial for the saints, as the four former did a bitter dose for the ungodly among them. A gracious promise we have here of a remnant to be left in the midst of and after the dismal calamities before-threatened : “ But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten : as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves : so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.”

In it—In “ the land,” mentioned verses 11, 12.

A tenth—A definite number for an indefinite : “ a tenth,” that is, a small remnant, a few in comparison of the whole body of the inhabitants. It was a severe punishment among the Romans, when, for

* In the manuscript announcements of authors' names, prefixed to a few presentation-copies of the “ Continuation ” of the Morning Exercise at Cripplegate, this sermon obtained no other notice than that of the signature N. N. But, soon after Mr. Collins's death, its authorship was ascribed to him, by one who possessed the best means of information,—Dr. Cotton Mather, in his “ History of New England,” book iv. p. 200.—
EDIT.

some great miscarriages in their armies, they would decimate the offending legions,—put every tenth man to death. But here is a more formidable severity, when God would destroy nine parts, and save only a tenth; they that were cut off, should be far more than they that were delivered.

It shall return, and shall be eaten—Either, as some, “return” from its captivity, and be inhabited again, and fed upon again; or, as others, “It shall be eaten,” that is, consumed, or removed, or burnt; the Hebrew word will bear any of these interpretations. “Returning,” then, must signify, by an usual Hebraism, the iteration of the thing mentioned, the repetition of the judgment; and so to “return and be eaten,” is to be eaten again, or consumed again; which here must be understood of the remaining tenth. If we take it in this sense, it is not unlike that of Zech. xiii. 8, 9; where two parts are to “be cut off and die,” and the third to be left; and then that third part is to be “brought through the fire.” If we thus understand the words, the former part of the verse is rather a threatening than a promise, which yet I conceive the whole to be; and so it is, if we take this clause in the former sense.

As a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them—What the trees here mentioned are, whether the same with those that are so called with us, or any other peculiar to those countries, as expositors are not agreed, so we are not much concerned to inquire. It is more material to see what is meant by “substance,” and their “substance being in them.” מַצְבֵּת the word here rendered “substance,” is translated by some *statio, locatio*,* “standing, or placing,” agreeably to the root צָבַע from whence it is derived; by some, *statumen*; † by others, it is taken for “the trunk” of the tree, ‡ or, as our margin, “the stock or stem.” The word is sometimes taken for “a statue or standing image;” sometimes for “a pillar:” so, “the pillar of Rachel’s grave,” (Gen. xxxv. 20,) and Absalom’s “pillar.” (2 Sam. xviii. 18.) I take it in the second translation, for “the stock or body” of the tree; which yet is not much different from the last; “the trunk” or upright part of a tree being that which most resembles “a statue or pillar.”

Whose substance is in them—Whose stock or trunk is in the tree, remains to it, still abides and continues; and so it is opposed to that which follows,—its “casting its leaves.”

When they cast their leaves—בְּשִׁלְכָתָם. “In their casting.” “Leaves” is not in the original, but supplied by the translators. Some take the word for a proper name of a place. In 1 Chron. xxvi. 16, mention is made of a gate belonging to the temple, called Shallecheth; where, they say, there was a “causeway” leading up to the temple, which they suppose planted with trees on both sides; which not only beautified the place, but strengthened it; the roots of the trees knitting and keeping up the earth which had been there cast up to make the way. This may have a good sense, if the words in the original will bear it. I conceive our own translation (with which others agree) to

* PAGNINUS.

† TREMELLIUS. “A prop, or support.”—EDIT.

‡ MERCERUS.

be best: "When they cast their leaves;" and so the opposition is clear between the standing of the stock and the falling of the leaves; and it notes the strength, firmness, and lastingness of the tree itself, though it lose its present beauty and verdure. The stately trees may cast their leaves; but then their trunks continue firm and fast in the earth, which may afterwards spring and flourish afresh.

The holy seed—Or, "seed of holiness," by an usual Hebraism: so "a godly seed," or "seed of God." (Mal. ii. 15.) I doubt not but it is to be understood of the really religious or righteous among that people, who are indeed the only true "seed of God," which others only seem to be.

Shall be the substance thereof—The body of the people are here compared to a tree; the holy seed, to the stock or stem of it, the rest to the leaves. A tree in winter casts its leaves, the sap retiring toward the root; but yet still the stock remains firm and unmovable, and the sap that is in it will afterwards cause it to shoot forth anew. The tree, though bare, is not dead; it hath lost its leaves, but not its life. So, when carnal men and common professors drop away, like leaves from a tree, in the winter of affliction; or, as withered boughs and branches, are broken off by the violence of persecutions, and storms of worldly troubles; then "the holy seed," the truly religious among them, are like the trunk of the tree, which is not blown down nor rooted up, but still continues, still lives, and is likely to flourish again. What is here spoken of the Jews is not peculiar to them, but may likewise be affirmed of other professing people, the great staple privileges of the church being the same both in Jews then and Gentiles now. The seed of God is the stock, whether Jews or Gentiles be the branches: there may be a change in the branches, but not in the stock; that is still the same, when wild branches are grafted in, as it was before the natural were cut off.

The doctrine [which] I observe from the words thus explained, is in answer to the question propounded.

DOCTRINE.

That the truly religious of a nation are, under God, the strength of it.—What I shall say of this doctrine may be reduced to these heads:—I shall show,

- I. *What we are to understand by "the religious" of a nation.*
- II. *How, and in what respects, they may be said to be its "strength."*
- III. *Upon what accounts.*
- IV. *Make application of it to practice.*
- I. *Who are the religious of a nation.*
1. *Negatively.*

(1.) *I understand not "the religious" here in a Popish sense, for those that are under a religious vow, or in a religious order.*—This is an abuse of the word, and a restraining it to those that know little of the thing.

(2.) *I do not restrain it to any particular party or way or persuasion, even among those who, as to their profession, are really of the*

true religion.—Though I am far from so loose and extravagant a charity, as to judge that men may be saved in any religion whatever, if they do but live suitably to the principles and rules of that religion ; when there are so many false, so many idolatrous, ones, so many which deny fundamental truths, or maintain damnable errors : yet, on the other side, I am not so uncharitable as to confine true religiousness, and consequently final salvation, to any particular sect or sort or party of men professing Christianity, to the exclusion of all that dissent from them. True religion is more affection and practice than doctrine or notion, and is seated more in the heart than in the head. Men may be really gracious, and so in truth religious in God's account, who yet differ in some things from others who are no less truly religious too.

There is, indeed, but one true religion in the world ; but, in that, we must distinguish between principles and conclusions, and those either nearer or more remote ; between fundamentals and superstructures, and those either which touch the foundation or are farther from it ; between substance and circumstances ; things necessary, or not necessary, to the being or to the well-being of religion. In some things they that are wise and godly may differ without prejudice to the salvation of either. Every truth is not necessary to salvation, nor is every error *de facto* [“actually”] damning. All men's light is not alike clear, nor are all men's minds equally enlightened ; some see more than others, and some more clearly ; nor is every degree of light which shall be for the perfection of saints hereafter, necessary while they are here in order to their salvation. There may be the unity of faith in the main, and of love too, where yet there is some disagreement about some things believed. It is confessed that there is but one way of salvation,—that of faith and holiness ; from which whatever by-paths of error lead men aside, they do at the same time carry them off from the end of faith,—the salvation of their souls ; whatever is inconsistent with either faith or holiness, is inconsistent likewise with salvation. But every difference or mistake about such truths as are not necessarily saving, must not presently be looked upon as a false way, or an error certainly damning.

The way to life is called “the narrow way ;” (Matt. vii. 14 ;) but is it therefore indivisible ? Is there no latitude in it ? May not two, or three, or four, or five, go abreast in it ? Must all go in the self-same track or path ? May not several paths be in the same great road, or run along by the side of it, and lead to the same place ; which, if sometimes they decline a little from the road, yet, before the end, fall-in again with it, and for the main are parallel to it ? It is as certain that truth is *simplex*, error is *multiformis*,—truth is but “one,” and error is “various,”—and whatever in the least deflects from truth must be a degree of error, as it is that there can be but one perfectly straight line between any two points. But may not a line that divaricates a little from the straight one, and is so far crooked, run-in again to it ? Doth any saint on earth attain to the whole of truth, without any mistake so much as in lesser things ?

Doth any keep exactly to the straight line, so as never to take a crooked step, never in any thing to go off from it? Some indeed may miss it in fewer things, some in more; and yet both, keeping to what is necessary, hit it in the main. Some may go to heaven more directly and with fewer wanderings; when others may go farther aside, and fetch a greater compass, and yet at last arrive at it.

2. *Positively.* By "religious," I understand those,

(1.) *Who, as to the doctrine of Christianity, "hold the Head."* (Col. ii. 19.)—Keep to that only foundation which God hath laid,—the Lord Jesus Christ; though, perhaps, they may build some things on it which are not suitable to it,—“wood, hay, stubble:” (1 Cor. iii. 11, 12:) such whose “works shall be burned,” yet “themselves saved,” though with difficulty and “as by fire.” (Verse 15.) Such I mean, therefore, as own so much truth as is necessary to the life of faith and power of godliness, and maintain no error which is inconsistent with either.

(2.) *Those who, as to the practice of Christianity, "fear God, and work righteousness."* (Acts x. 35.)—They that not only believe in Christ, but live in obedience to him; not only “have received Christ Jesus the Lord,” but “walk in him.” (Col. ii. 6.) All true religion consists in faith and holiness; it is nothing else but a glorifying [of] God by believing and obeying; a seeking salvation in that way and method, in which alone God hath determined to bring men to it; that is, “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (2 Thess. ii. 13.) Whoever, therefore, they are that do unfeignedly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live up to that faith, [they] are truly religious; though in some lesser things they may dissent from others who have the same faith, and practise the same holiness. So that, from being thus religious, I exclude not only atheists that have no religion, idolaters, damnable heretics, and all those whose principles are inconsistent with or repugnant to the truth of the gospel, and so are of a false religion; but even among those that profess the truth, I exclude,

(i.) *Those that are grossly ignorant.*—Know not the first principles of Christianity, understand not what they own and pretend to believe.

(ii.) *Those that are profane, scandalous, vicious livers, despisers of them that are good, persecutors of powerful godliness.*—These are not real saints, but a profane generation; the seed of the serpent, not of God.

(iii.) *Hypocrites.*—Masked professors, that make a show of religion to serve a carnal interest; that “have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof;” (2 Tim. iii. 5;) have unsound hearts, though under never so smooth faces. In a word, all those that are destitute of true faith and real holiness; that allow themselves in any way of known sins, whether more often, as the second sort, or more secret and close, as these last.

II. *How, or in what respects, the religious of a nation are the "strength" of it.*—In order to the stating of this, I shall premise

one distinction :—"The holy seed," or religious, in a nation may be considered either,

1. *As being actually in the world, and actually in a state of grace.*—Brought into Christ's fold, engaged in God's ways, effectually called and sanctified.

2. *Or as being in the world, but not yet converted.*—Though in God's time to be converted ; elect unbelievers. He that is a sinner at present, may be a saint in time ; a publican may come to be an apostle ; nay, a persecutor of the saints may be called to "preach that faith which once he destroyed." (Gal. i. 23.) They that are Christ's sheep by election, may in time, nay, certainly must, be so by actual calling : "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." (John vi. 37.)

3. *Or as not yet actually in being in the world, but in the loins of their parents, whether saints or sinners.*—God may have a seed even among the children of wicked men ; and as sometimes he may pass by the children of gracious men,—the parents may be a seed of God, and children not,—so sometimes he may overlook the parents, and take the children ; the parents may be wicked, and the children holy. God is a Sovereign, and may choose where he will ; and sometimes he pitcheth upon the most unlikely subjects. A wicked Ahaz may have a godly Hezekiah for his son, and a good Josiah a wicked Jehoiakim for his.

This distinction I lay down, because, though I understand the doctrine in the first place of the religious actually in being among a people, yet not only of them, God sometimes acting for a nation with respect to those [whom] he is to have among them. This premised, I come to show in what respect the godly may be said to be the "strength" of a people ; and this I shall [do] by a little following the metaphor in the text. "The holy seed" is here called "the substance," or "stock," of a people ; so that in what respect the strength of a tree is in its stock, in those, or several of them, the strength of a people is in the religion of them.

1. *The stock of a tree is the most firm and durable part of it.*—When the leaves are shaken off, the branches many of them dry and withered ; nay, though it be close lopped, and all the boughs cut down ; yet still it continues and lives, keeps its place and retains its sap. So it is with the truly religious, at least as to their spiritual state : (as we intimated in the explication of the text :) when hypocrites and temporaries drop off from the body of professors, and quit their stations in a church and their religious profession, yet the godly still continue, hold their own, keep their standing. They are all united to Christ the Root, as well as to each other in the body, and as parts together of the same stock ; and so are preserved and continued in life by sap derived to them from the Root,—the constant supplies of the Spirit and grace of Christ. In this respect we may say, "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever ;" (1 John ii. 17;) and, They that "have an unction from the Holy One, abide in him." (Verses 20, 27.)

2. *The stock is that which propagates its kind.*—Cut off all the boughs ; and yet the stem will shoot forth again, send out new leaves and fruit and seed, from which other trees will come. So here the righteous propagate their righteousness, communicate to others, beget children to God, are spiritual parents, and have a spiritual offspring. How many children come in upon their parents' covenant, not only as to outward privileges in the church, but as to real grace ! “The promise is unto them, and to their children ;” (Acts ii. 39 ;) and as it takes place in all of them as to church-membership, so it doth in many as to saintship. And besides, how many are wrought-on by their instruction, won by their example, awakened by their admonitions, overcome by their persuasions ! How many have cause to bless God for religious parents, religious acquaintance, religious instructors, (as well as godly ministers,) who have been instrumental in their conversion ! Thus, when many particular branches of righteousness are plucked off as to their temporal state in this life, yet “the holy seed” continues, the stock is perpetuated in a succession of righteous ones.

Men usually spare the tree for the sake of the stock. “As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not ; for a blessing is in it :”—a man finds a cluster or two of grapes on a vine, and by those few perceives that there is life in the tree, and some hopes of more fruitfulness hereafter, and therefore doth not cut it down :—“so will I do,” says the Lord, “for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.” (Isai. lxxv. 8.) He spares the rest, or many of them ; doth “not destroy them all, for his servants' sakes,” for the sake of the righteous among them. “He shall deliver the island of the innocent :” (Job xxii. 30 ;) according to marginal reading, “The innocent shall deliver the island ;” which suits best with the following clause : “It is delivered by the pureness of their hands.” Eliphaz tells Job before, what advantage he should himself have by returning to God, and “acquainting himself with him ;” (verse 21 ;) from whom he supposes him to have departed, and to be estranged by sin : and here he tells him what benefit should redound to others ; his goodness should not only do good to himself, but keep off evil from them. For the better understanding [of] this, take two things by way of *concession*, and a third by way of *position*.

(1.) I grant, that the religious part of a people may not always be active as men, in a natural or civil way, in delivering them or keeping off evils from them.—They may have no proper and direct efficiency in it ; for,

(i.) *Sometimes they may want power and ability for it.*—They may be but few and inconsiderable for number : “the holy seed” may be very thinly sown ; there may be but a few grains of corn among a great deal of chaff, but a little wheat among abundance of tares. Or, those that are, may be weak and low as to their outward condition in the world ;—for, “not many mighty, not many noble, are called ;” (1 Cor. i. 26 ;)—and so may be in ill case to contribute much by an active concurrence to the help of others.

(ii.) *Sometimes they may be simple and unskilful in outward*

affairs.—Want that wisdom and worldly policy, which might be needful in many cases for the warding [off] of imminent dangers, or removing incumbent troubles. “Not many wise men after the flesh are called,” as well as “not many mighty or noble.” Saints may be wise for their souls, prudent and knowing in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and yet but babes in other things. The wisdom [which] they have is “from above,” (James iii. 17,) and respects things above; and they may be mere ignoramuses in any thing else.

(iii.) *They may have no hand in public affairs, no share in the government.*—Nor be intrusted or made use of by those that are in power. They may be suppressed and brought into bondage by others, as the Israelites were in Egypt, and the Jews in Babylon: they may be so much in suffering by others, that they be in no capacity of acting for them.

(iv.) *Sometimes God’s judgments upon a people may be such as no instruments, and so not the holiest men among them, can keep them off by any natural efficiency, and all attempts in such a way may be in vain.*—Such was the destruction of the old world by the flood, and of Sodom by fire and brimstone, and of several places by inundations, earthquakes, &c.

(2.) I grant, *that sometimes the religious actually in being among a people may not be able by any means to deliver them, or keep off the greatest evils from them.*—For,

(i.) *Sometimes they cannot keep off such evils from themselves.*—Sometimes they may suffer as deeply as any in the common calamities of a nation, and perish themselves as to their outward condition, be crushed in the ruins of the state where they are. Jeremiah and Baruch could not hinder the destruction of Jerusalem, nor prevent the captivity of their nation; but suffered themselves in a great measure among them. And if we look to the external state of the best in the world, how often doth God “destroy the perfect,” as well as “the wicked!” (Job ix. 22.)

(ii.) *Sometimes the sins of a people may be such, that God will not pardon them as to temporal punishments; nay, not to the godly themselves.*—Even they may have been partakers with others in their sins, or may have so provoked God themselves, and sinned in such a way as to cause his name to be blasphemed; so that he is concerned in honour to bring some exemplary punishment upon them. So it was with David: (2 Sam. xii. :) though he pardoned him as to the guilt of eternal death, saved his soul, and spared his life, which was forfeited to Divine Justice for the murder of Uriah; [yet the prophet announced,] that smart afflictions must come on him, the sword must “never depart from his house,” (verse 10,) and the child begotten in adultery must die, (verse 14,) and his wives must be given to his neighbours. (Verse 11.) So, in Psalm xcix. 8, it seems to be spoken of Moses himself, and other godly among the Israelites who died in the wilderness, and were not permitted to come into the land of promise, that “God forgave them,” yet “took vengeance of their inventions.” And, in Jer. xiv., as God would not hear the Jews’ prayers

for themselves; (verse 12;) so, nor the prophet's prayers for them, who is therefore forbid to pray for them. (Verse 11.) And it is said expressly of "the sins of Manasseh," and particularly "the innocent blood that he shed," that God "would not pardon" them. (2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4.) Pardon them he did to Manasseh, who humbled himself for them, so as to save his soul and remit his temporal punishment in part; for he brought him back from his captivity: but to the body of the people, who had been partakers with him in them, and never repented of them, he "would not pardon" them, but they must be destroyed, or go into captivity. In this case the religious of a nation may not be able, by all their intercessions and with all "their righteousness," to "deliver" any more than "their own souls;" as is said of Noah, Daniel, and Job, though so eminently holy. (Ezek. xiv. 14.)

(iii.) *Sometimes God may make a difference between "the holy seed" and the sinners in the same people, so as to deliver the one, when he destroys the other.*—So he provided for Noah, when he drowned the world; and saved Lot, when he destroyed Sodom; and the Christians at Pella, when Jerusalem was sacked by Titus. God may sometimes hide them, when he exposeth others; "cover their heads in the day of battle," when his "arrows are sharp in the heart of his enemies." (Psalm cxl. 7; xlv. 5.) He may "set a mark upon them that cry and sigh for the abominations" of a land; and command the destroying angel, when he slays others, "young and old," and "begins at the sanctuary" too, yet "not to come near" them. (Ezek. ix. 4, 6.) By what hath been said, it appears that the proposition is not universal,—That God always spares a people for the sake of the holy seed among them,—at least, that are not actually in being. I add, therefore,

(3.) By way of position,—*that the religious of a nation, either that are or are to be among them, are frequently, ordinarily, the means of a people's deliverance.*—And when God spares the sinners of his people, it is usually for the sake of the saints; and were it not for them, he would not have any respect to the others; even as the prophet would not have looked to the king of Israel, had it not been for the presence of Jehoshaphat. (2 Kings iii. 14.)

(i.) *Sometimes judgments may be kept off from a people for their sake.*—Had there been but ten righteous in Sodom, God would have spared it. (Gen. xviii. 32.) And he tells Jeremiah, that "if there were any in Jerusalem that executed judgment, and sought the truth," he would "pardon it." (Chap. v. 1.) Jeremiah himself there was, and Baruch, and Ebedmelech, and, it may be, some few others; but the generality were corrupt, and the godly so few that they were next to none,—none to speak of, as we say; as few in Jerusalem, proportionably, as in Sodom in the time of Abraham. And, indeed, it is compared to Sodom; (Isai. i. 10;) and probably from this reason, among others: and God calls them "all grievous revolters, all corrupters." (Jer. vi. 28.) The few righteous ones among them are otherwise provided for; and they were a people

whom God "would not pardon," (as before was said,) and in honour could not. And yet in another case we find a city saved for the sake of a saint: two thousand were not destroyed at Lot's entreaty. (Gen. xix. 21.)

(ii.) *Sometimes judgments may be deferred, and a people's peace and tranquillity lengthened out, for the sake of the religious among them.*—There was to be "peace and truth in Hezekiah's days," though dreadful times to come after. (Isai. xxxix. 8.) And Josiah was to go to his "grave in peace," and not see the evil that should come after his death. (2 Kings xxii. 20.) God "takes away the righteous from the evil to come;" (Isai. lvii. 1;) which implies, that God defers the evil, till he hath taken the righteous, and secured them. It was a sign that evil was coming on that people, because the righteous perished; and it was their sin that they did not observe it: the death of the righteous was the forerunner of judgments, which were deferred while they lived. While God hath any corn in the field, he keeps up the hedges; but when that is once housed, he breaks down the fence, and lets in the beasts. He may not "sweep" a land "with the besom of destruction" for a time, (Isai. xiv. 23,) because he may have some jewels among the rubbish; but when he hath picked them up, he defers no longer. Thus, though he would not spare Sodom for Lot's sake, yet he delayed its vengeance, till he was clear of it. "I cannot do any thing," says the angel to him, "till thou be come thither," that is, to Zoar. (Gen. xix. 22.) And God would not bring-on the deluge, till Noah were safe in the ark. The Romans could not conquer Jerusalem, till the Christians were got out of it; and the judgment of mystical Babylon is deferred, till all God's people be gone out from her. (Rev. xviii. 4.)

(iii.) *Sometimes judgments, though they do come upon a people, yet may, for the sake of the godly among them, be abated and lessened and mingled with mercy.*—So, Matt. xxiv. 22: "For the elect's sake those days," days of "great tribulation," (verse 21,) "shall be shortened." And in Rehoboam's time, God "would not" utterly "destroy them, but grant them some deliverance;" (2 Chron. xii. 7;) partly because "they humbled themselves," and withal "in Judah things went well," (verse 12,) or, as the margin reads it, "Yet in Judah there were good things;" they were not yet universally corrupted, though they had much declined; there was still a stock of old saints left, that did sincerely cleave to God. So, when God "makes a consumption, even determined, in the midst of a land, yet a remnant" shall be left, and "the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness." (Isai. x. 22, 23.) And when God "destroys the sinful kingdom," yet he "will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob;" and though he "sift the house of Israel, yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth." (Amos ix. 8, 9.)

(iv.) *Sometimes God removes judgments from off a people for the sake of the godly.*—So, at least in part, for the sake of Hezekiah and Isaiah, and the rest of the faithful in Jerusalem, God delivered the land from Sennacherib, with the destruction of his army and himself

soon after, when he had taken "all the defenced cities of Judah." (Isai. xxxvi. 1; compared with xxxvii. 4, 15, 36, 38.) Only it is worth our observing here, that God hath in such cases a respect to his saints, whether dead or alive or yet unborn. So, in delivering Judah out of the hand of Sennacherib, he had respect not only to the righteous of a nation then in being, as Hezekiah and Isaiah, &c.; but to David, though long since dead; (having promised a kingdom to be continued to his posterity, he would make good his word;) nay, to those that were yet to come. "The remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: for out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant." (Chap. xxxvii. 31, 32.) This "remnant" were not only they that were then living, and escaped Sennacherib's fury, but many that were yet to come. All that escaped the present danger were not godly, but yet godly ones were to be born of them. And is it not a great truth, that in all the deliverances of that nation, as God had a special regard to Christ, that was to proceed from them according to the flesh, so likewise [he had a special regard] to the elect [whom] he had from eternity given to Christ, and who were to be, in their several generations and successions, "a seed to serve him?" (Psalm xxii. 30.) Other instances might here be brought, but I shall meet with them under another head.

4. *The stock of the tree is that for the sake of which the tree is dressed and watered and looked after.*—Men take care of the trees so long as there is life in the stock; they do not only not grub it up, but prune it, and bestow upon it what cost and labour is fit for it. Many a blessing, both temporal and spiritual, comes upon a nation for the sake of the religious in the midst of it. Who watcheth or waters a vineyard, when all the vines are dead? When the stem of the vine is alive, though many branches be withered, they may lay open the root, and dung it; and all the labour they bestow upon it, is for the sake of the life [which] they see in the body of it. That God "keeps his vineyard, and waters it every moment," (Isai. xxvii. 3,) it is because he sees life in the plants, though there be little fruit on the branches.

(1.) *Temporal good things* we find him sometimes bestowing upon others, for the sake of the godly that are with them; as he blessed Laban, though an idolater, for Jacob's sake; (Gen. xxx. 30;) and Potiphar for Joseph's. (Chap. xxxix. 5.) Peace and plenty he may afford to a people, that his own servants may have their share of it, for their encouragement in holiness. So, that Babylon had so long peace before its downfall, it was that God's people in it might have peace. (Jer. xxix. 7.)

(2.) *Spiritual.*—God gives the means of grace, his oracles and ordinances, and the offers of salvation, to a people, especially for the sake of those that belong to him. It is no small mercy to have an external call, an offer of Christ, to be brought into a salvable condition. If men neglect their opportunities, forsake their own mercies, lose the benefit of them, it is their own fault; the privilege is not

less in itself. Now, where God hath none to call effectually, he doth not use to send the gospel. The apostle Paul was "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia;" and when he would have gone into Bithynia, "the Spirit suffered him not." (Acts xvi. 6, 7.) And why was it, but because God had not any people there who were as yet to be called by his grace? But he is sent into Macedonia, (verse 10,) because there God had work for him, several that were presently to be converted by his ministry. Had not God had a seed among the Macedonians, they might have still continued in the same darkness that the others were in. So likewise God continued Paul so long at Corinth, and tells him that "no man should set on him to hurt him," because he "had much people in that city." (Acts xviii. 10, 11.)

QUESTION. If it be asked, "Why doth God show such respect to others for the sake of the godly?" not to mention other reasons here, I will give but two:—

ANSWER I. *In respect of the godly which are to be gathered in, he doeth it that they may be gathered.*—Many saints may be in the loins of wicked men, as hath been said; and should God cut off the parents, the children would never have a being; or should he not continue the means of grace to them, how should those that come of them be converted? And therefore he keeps off such evils from the parents as might prevent either the birth or the conversion of such as are to be born of them, and bestows upon them such blessings and privileges as may promote and further it. He spares and dresses the tree, for the sake of the fruit [which] he intends it shall bring forth.

ANSWER II. *In relation to those that are already called, God shows kindness to others for their sakes, that there may be time and opportunity for all the work [which] he hath determined to do either in or by them.*

(1.) *In them.*—A people may be spared, that *they* may be spared among them, and share in their deliverance; and the means of grace may be continued to the body of a people, till God hath wrought all that grace in the hearts of his children which he hath designed for them. Should they fall with others, or should the means of grace be taken away, they should want them, and what were lacking in their graces would not be made up. God, therefore, usually continues the gospel to a people, so long as there are any among them to be called in or built up; and when he takes it away from a nation, it is a sign [that] it hath done all its work there which he sent it to do.

(2.) *By them.*—That they may have opportunity for doing what God appointed them to do. Were they taken off with others, they should not have time for their work; were they continually under pressures, always loaded with afflictions, they might be disheartened in it; were the means of grace gone, they might want quickening to it; nay, should God take away the whole set of wicked men from them, they should want much matter for their graces to work upon. Much of the grace of the saints respects their enemies,—love to them, meekness and gentleness in dealing with, patience in bearing

injuries from, them, courage in reprovng their vices, and zeal in opposing or hindering their wickedness, &c. ; and God may spare them sometimes, that they may be matter on which the graces of the saints may be exercised, and thereby the excellency of a true Christian spirit discovered.

III. *On what account the religious of a nation may be said to be its strength, or what influence they have on the welfare and security of a people.*—And this will yet farther evidence the truth of the doctrine.

1. *As they are God's favourites.*—His children, his "jewels," (Mal. iii. 17,) his "treasure," (Exod. xix. 5,) his "portion." (Deut. xxxii. 9.) They are most nearly related to him, most dearly beloved by him. And though several of these titles are attributed to the body of a people, yet they primarily belong to the truly religious among them, and either are given to the rest with respect to them, or only according to what they appear to be, though in reality they are not. The godly have the greatest interest in God, as well as he hath an interest in them ; and therefore they can do most with him, and he doth most upon their account. Men will many times use their servants well for their children's sake ; be kind to a stranger whom they know not, for the sake of a friend whom they do know ; save their bags or trunks, though little worth, if their jewels or treasure be in them : and princes will gratify whole societies for the sake of some particular favourites. God is not less concerned for his friends and favourites, than men are for theirs ; and many a boon (so to speak) he gives to others, out of the respect he bears to them. Men are ambitious of being great, and those that have an interest in princes, to be members of their communities and corporations, because they reckon [that] the whole will fare the better for their sakes, and many special privileges may be indulged them in favour to such honourable members. Why should they not judge the same in the case before us ? Is not God wont to do as much for those [that] he loves, as men do for those [whom] they love ? Happy is that society where God hath many friends, if men be but so wise as to be friendly to them : it is pity but that the favourites of heaven should be *their* favourites too. Abimelech, king of Gerar, thought so, (though a Heathen,) when he would "make a covenant with" Isaac, because he "saw that the Lord was with" him. (Gen. xxvi. 28.)

2. *As they improve their interest with God for a people.*—They are they that intercede with God for them ; "stand in the gap, and make up the hedge," when by other means they cannot, yet by prayer, that so God may "not destroy" them. (Ezek. xxii. 30.) Thus Moses interposed with God for Israel, when under God's great displeasure ; (Psalm cvi. 23 ;) and Abraham prayed for Abimelech's household, (Gen. xx. 17,) and Samuel for the Israelites : "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." (1 Sam. xii. 23.) And still the religious part of a people are the praying part of them, and thereby do most for them ; they pray most and best and to best purpose.

(1.) *Most.*—"I give myself unto prayer." (Psalm cix. 4.) The Hebrew hath only, "I prayer;" as if he had said, "I am all prayer; prayer is my business, my whole work." Prayer, indeed, is the very breath of the new man; a prayerless person is never a religious one, no more than a child can be alive which doth not breathe. No sooner did Paul cease persecuting the godly, and came to be in the number of them himself, but he fell a-praying. (Acts ix. 11.) And generally the most eminent in holiness are most eminent in prayer; but still they that are really God's people, are a praying people. Others may pray by fits; but they, constantly: others may "visit him in their trouble," and "when his chastening is upon them;" (Isai. xxvi. 16;) but they do it even when the greatest blessings are upon them: others cry to him when they need him most; but they, even when they seem to need him least. They pray "always," (Eph. vi. 18,) "without ceasing;" (1 Thess. v. 17;) and that not for themselves only, but for others,—for their enemies; (Matt. v. 44;) and much more for their neighbours, and those of the same community with themselves. And that not only,

(i.) *Because they are themselves concerned in their welfare, as being of the same body.*—And so count it their interest, the welfare of the whole being the welfare of the members.

(ii.) *But because they love others, and pity them, and out of compassion pray for them.*—They are friends and well-wishers to them, and would have them partake of their mercies: they grudge them not the enjoyment of the greatest good things; would have them be as good as themselves, as much in the favour of God as themselves, and every way as happy; and therefore beg that they may be so. It grieves them to see the misery of others, when they themselves are most secure, most free from it.

(iii.) *They have tried prayer most, both for themselves and others; and experienced the sweetness and efficacy of it.*—They pray, because they have prayed, and their prayers have not been in vain; and they pray for others, because they have been heard for others; as well as pray for themselves, because they have been heard for themselves.

(2.) *They pray best.*—Grace will out-pray nature. In carnal men prayer is but the voice of nature or conscience; but in the godly it is the language of grace. Others *make* prayers; these only *pray* prayers. Others pray either in their forms, or in their gifts, or their parts; these only "pray in the Holy Ghost." (Jude 20.) And this, too, I understand not only of their praying for themselves, but likewise for others. For,

(i.) *They have most to plead with God for others, or know best what to plead.*—They that are best acquainted with the word, have most "observed the operation of God's hands," (Psalm xxviii. 5,) the methods of his providence, the issue of his various dispensations in the world; those that are most public-spirited, so as to concern themselves most for the welfare of others, especially of God's people, and for the glory of his name;—have most to plead with God on their

behalf; and so most materials and furniture for prayer, and most arguments for faith to present to God in prayer.

(ii.) *They have faith to urge their pleas.*—They are, indeed, the only persons that have true faith; and it is faith especially [that] makes men plead with God, and improve all the arguments they can, so far as the word, which is the ground of faith, will warrant them. So Moses pleads for Israel; (Exod. xxxii. 11—13;) and Jeremiah for the Jews, in the case of the famine. (Jer. xiv. 7—9.) The more faith in prayer, usually the more pleading in it; and this prayer is always best, because of the faith that is acted in it. The goodness of prayer is not to be judged of by the curiousness of the composition, the elegance of the style, the vehemency of the expression; but by the workings of faith. It is “the prayer of faith” that is called for, and to which the promise is made. (James i. 5, 6; v. 15.)

(iii.) *They urge them with most fervency.*—There is a natural fervency in prayer, which ariseth from natural affections, excited and quickened by some pressing trouble or distress; and there is a gracious fervency, which proceeds from faith. Nothing makes men more earnest and warm in prayer, than faith doth; the more firmly a man believes, the more importunately he asks; the greater hope he hath of prevailing, the more vehement he will be in begging. It was Jacob’s faith [that] made him so importunate in prayer, that he wrestled with God, and would not let him go unless he blessed him; (Gen. xxxii. 24—26;) for he had a promise of being blessed, and all nations in him; (chap. xxviii. 13, 14;) it was the faith of that promise [which] stirred up this fervency. And that great example of importunity in prayer, the Syro-phenician woman, is no less an example of faith: “O woman, great is thy faith.” (Matt. xv. 28.) So that we may conclude, the religious of a people pray best, because both with true faith and spiritual fervency.

(3.) *They pray to best purpose, with most success.*—If ever any prayer be “effectual,” it is “the fervent prayer of a righteous man;” (James v. 16;) which is the same with “the prayer of faith.” (Verse 15.) When God abhors the prayers of others, he hath respect to his; when “the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to” him, “the prayer of the upright is his delight.” (Prov. xv. 8.) “He will fulfil the desires of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.” (Psalm cxlv. 19.) They pray “according to his will,” and he “heareth” them. (1 John v. 14.) They, having most interest in God, (as before,) can prevail most with him, and get most of him. The favourites of a prince will many times prevail with him, when the petitions of common subjects, and much more of rebels, are rejected by him. The prevalency of godly men’s prayers is well known, and hath been often experienced by their enemies themselves. Pharaoh himself believed it, when he desired Moses’s prayers; (Exod. ix. 28;) and Simon Magus, when [he desired] Peter’s. (Acts viii. 24.) Such are conscious to themselves of their want of an interest in God, and their being obnoxious to him, and that the truly godly are in favour with him; and therefore, when their hearts fail them, and

they have not the face to look up to God, they will beg the prayers of those that have. When they are in great distresses or dangers, on sick beds; when conscience teaseth them, death looks grimly on them, hell gapes for them, and heaven frowns upon them; then they must have some good men to pray for them: they think God is ready to hear such, when he is angry with themselves. Thus, Saul would have Samuel come back, and worship with him: (1 Sam. xv. 30 :) he thought God was angry with him and would not look to him, but Samuel might be accepted. It was a good testimony given by a queen to the efficacy of the saints' prayers, when she professed herself more afraid of one poor minister in the pulpit, than of a numerous army in the field. And a good bishop once told a great king concerning a godly gentleman that was under some disfavour for his plain speaking, that he had not a better subject in his kingdom, being a man that could have what he would of God. The Romans themselves took notice of the prevalency of the prayers of the Christian legion among them, in that great deliverance obtained by them in the time of the emperor Marcus.

It is usually a sign of mercy to a person or people, when God opens and enlarges the hearts of his servants in prayer for them: when God intends to do them good, he puts it into the hearts of such to seek it for them. When the time of the Jews' return from their captivity drew near, he set Daniel at work to pray for it. (Chap. ix. 1—3.) And it is as bad a sign, when the hearts of the godly are shut up and straitened, so that either they drop others out of their prayers, or cannot be earnest with God for them: he doth, as it were, secretly forbid them to pray for such; he hinders them, by withdrawing his Spirit from them. The mercies [which] he gives out to others being frequently at the request of his saints, when he stops those requests, it is a sign he hath no mercy for those for whom they were to be made: when a petition is prevented, it is a sign it should not have been granted. When God doth not "prepare" his servants' "hearts," he doth not incline his own ear: (Psalm x. 17 :) as, on the other side, when he intends to hear, he stirs up prayer; even as princes will sometimes give a private intimation to those for whom they design a favour, to petition them for it. To conclude this: the sum of all is,—The religious of a nation are upon this account the strength of it, for that they pray most and with best success for it.

3. *As they are a means many times to stop the current of wickedness, which is ready to overflow a land with judgments, and to bring swift destruction on it.*—For they are thereby a means to prevent or lessen those judgments. It is the sin of a people that lays them open to wrath; and he that would keep off wrath, must endeavour to keep out sin; he that would hinder the effect, must obviate the cause. It is the devil's damnable policy, to draw men into sin, that he may expose them to punishment. This he taught his disciple Balaam, who taught the Midianites "to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." (Rev. ii. 14.) He could not otherwise hurt that

people than by setting God against them ; and that he could not do by any means but bringing them to sin against him. None are greater enemies to a people, nor can go a readier way to ruin them, (of which more hereafter,) than they that draw them into sin, and thereby into God's displeasure : and, on the other hand, none are greater friends to them, than they that labour most to keep them from sin ; for that is the surest way to keep them from suffering ; or, in the words of Phineas in such a case, to " deliver them out of the hand of the Lord," (Joshua xxii. 31.) that is, to keep them from falling into it. Now, who is it that hinders sin most, and stops the dam to prevent an inundation of it, but the religious part of a nation ? Is it they that reprove it, and bear their testimony against it, and by their authority (so far as they are in a capacity) suppress it, and by their example discountenance it. None so active, none so zealous, in opposing sin, as they that are most holy. They not only fear it in themselves, but labour to prevent it in others : if it were in their power, they would neither sin themselves, nor let any else ; though they set themselves especially against the most crying sins, and [those] which are most likely to stir up wrath in God against a people. And when sin is that for which threatenings are denounced and punishments inflicted, they that fear God among any people do most effectually keep off punishment by preventing sin. To prevent it, therefore, is their first care : and if that cannot be, they bewail it, and mourn over it ; they " sigh and cry for the abominations " of a land. (Ezek. ix. 4.) So David " beheld the transgressors, and was grieved : " (Psalm cxix. 158 :) " rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because they kept not God's law." (Verse 136.) And Jeremiah " wept in secret places for the pride " of his people. (Chap. xiii. 17.) This is not a direct and formal stopping [of] the course of sin in a land in respect of others ; yet it is a kind of check to it, so far as it keeps sin from being so general as to overspread themselves : while they thus lay to heart the sins of others, they are not themselves partakers of them, nor sharers in the guilt. These sins are not universal, when there are some that testify their dislike of them by their sorrow for them. The more general sin is, the more dangerous ; and the more likely to bring-on judgments, when the godly themselves become guilty, though not by commission of it, yet by not bewailing it, which is a degree of fellowship with it. But when they mourn for sin committed by others, they free themselves from the guilt of approbation or connivance at or communion in it, and so may be instrumental in keeping off at least more general judgments.

4. *As they not only check the progress of sin, but propagate goodness to others, as well as promote it in themselves.*—This they do by their counsels, admonitions, example. They make it their business not only to do good themselves, but to make others good, and bring them to holiness, as well as keep them from sin ; and so not only themselves live in the exercise of these graces to which the promises are made, " executing judgment, and seeking the truth," (Jer. v. 1.) but they labour to gain others to the same gracious conversation.

Grace, wherever it is, is communicative, spreads itself what it can. They that love God, see so much loveliness in him, that they would fain persuade others to love him too: they that walk in his ways like them so well, and find so much peace and pleasantness in them, (Prov. iii. 17,) and expect such a reward at the end of them, that they are solicitous to get others into them. They know, he whom they serve is bountiful enough and rich enough; there is glory enough in heaven for all, "mansions" enough in Christ's "Father's house" for all; (John xiv. 2;) and the multitude of fellow-servants will neither hinder their work, nor diminish their wages. Nay, they know that they "that win souls are wise," (Prov. xi. 30,) "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever;" (Dan. xii. 3;) and therefore they are desirous to be in the number of them. It is their design to advance God's name and glory; and they would have others help them in the work. And, indeed, God often makes use of, not only ministers in their preaching, but private Christians in their conversation, to promote the conversion of sinners; and commonly when he intends any great reformation among a people, he makes use of those that are already gracious in carrying it on. And "godliness having promise of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come," (1 Tim. iv. 8,) so far as the religious part of a people promote godliness, advance religion among them, so far they are instrumental in procuring their welfare, and keeping off their ruin.

5. *Sometimes the religious of a nation may have an influence upon its public welfare, by doing some eminent service, wherewith God is much pleased, and to which he hath a special respect.*—"Phinehas stood up, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed." (Psalm cvi. 30.) "Phinehas hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy." (Num. xxv. 11.) And he is said to "make an atonement for" them by that act. (Verse 13.) Not that any thing done by a mere man can be a full satisfaction to Divine Justice for a man's own sin, and much less can it be for the sin of another: but however, as sometimes temporal evils, inflicted upon saints themselves, because they have a respect to their sins, though they are not properly penal, yet in a larger sense are called "punishments," and sometimes "vengeance;"—"Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions;" (Psalm xcix. 8;) Moses himself seems to be included: (verses 6, 7:) here was "vengeance" on those who yet were pardoned; which cannot, therefore, be strictly such;—so, likewise, some good the saints do which is pleasing to God, and accepted of him in Christ, on the performance whereof he turns away his anger; (thereby to show his approbation of what is done, and to encourage to more;) and this may in the same large sense be called "an atonement," though properly it be not so. Yet this act of Phinehas hath something in it that resembles an atonement, and may on that account be so called: for his killing Zimri and Cozbi was a fulfilling [of] that

law which required the death of the parties offending in such a kind ; and the holiness of God, which had been contemned by the transgressors, was in some measure vindicated, and in the eyes of the people, by their exemplary punishment.

Another instance we have in Joshua : (chap. vii. :) the Lord was angry with Israel for Achan's trespass ; (verse 12 ;) Joshua hath him stoned to death ; (verse 25 ;) and then "the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger." (Verse 26.) So, when there was a famine in the land for Saul's killing the Gibeonites, (2 Sam. xxi. 1.) David hangs up seven of his sons ; (verse 9 ;) and then the Lord "was entreated for the land." (Verse 14.) When such sins as are public defilements to a land are not punished, the whole land becomes guilty, and usually is visited with some public judgment ; but when they are punished, that judgment is either prevented or removed. No question but Josiah's zeal in reforming religion and destroying idolatry, wherewith the land was so universally polluted, had a great influence on the keeping off God's judgments from it while he lived.

6. Lastly. *God may sometimes spare a people for the sake of his children among them, that they may be useful and helpful to them in his work.*—This end God had in sparing the Gibeonites ; he intended they should be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for his sanctuary, and so assistant to the priests and Levites in their service. (Joshua ix. 27.) So, Isai. lxi. 5, 6 : "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of aliens shall be your ploughmen and your vine-dressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord : men shall call you the Ministers of our God." Not that saints are to be all officers or all rulers, and carnal men their slaves and drudges ; (for, as to their worldly state, worldly men may be above them, and they may owe subjection to them ;) but that they shall be, in their worldly employments and callings, useful and serviceable to the saints in the things of God ; and, either of their own accord, or as overruled by divine disposal, be assistant to them in maintaining and promoting the interest of true religion. God can make even Moab "hide his outcasts ;" (Isai. xvi. 3, 4 ;) "the earth help the woman ;" (Rev. xii. 16 ;) Ahab favour a good Obadiah, that [he] may hide the Lord's prophets ; (1 Kings xviii. 3, 4 ;) a heathen Cyrus "let go his captives, and build his city ;" (Isai. xlv. 13 ;) a Darius, an Artaxerxes, an Ahasuerus, countenance and prefer a Daniel, a Nehemiah, a Mordecai, public instruments of good to his people. Sometimes God may raise up such on purpose, as he did Cyrus ; sometimes preserve and maintain them in their power and places, for his servants' sake, and that they may be helpful to them. Nay, sometimes he may so twist and combine the interest of worldly men with the interest of his children, that they cannot promote their own, without helping on the others'. Sometimes religious and civil liberties may be both together struck at, so that, if the former go down, the latter will be ruined too ; and then it is the wisdom of those that are not truly religious, yet to favour those that are, it being, as it were, in their own defence and for their own securities ; and in such a case God may help them out of respect

to his own, and keep some from civil slavery, that he may keep others from spiritual.

IV. APPLICATION.

USE I. BY WAY OF INFORMATION.

1. *If the religious of a nation are the strength and defence of it, then the same may be said of the religious of the world,—they are the substance of it, the support, the strength of it.*—The world itself is preserved chiefly for the sake of the godly in it, “the holy seed.” The world is a great field, in which the good grain bears but a small proportion to the abundance of tares; and that God doth not pluck up the tares and burn them, it is lest the good corn should be plucked up with them. What is God’s end in preserving the world, and holding it up in its being, but the glorifying [of] himself in his several attributes,—wisdom, power, goodness, but especially his holiness, in the service [which] he enables his saints to do him; and his grace, in the salvation [that] he affords them? That, therefore, he may have that glory, it is needful there should be a continuance of some to serve him, and that may be the subjects of his mercy and grace; and they are his elect, those “vessels of mercy which he hath afore prepared unto glory.” (Rom. ix. 23.) The world therefore shall stand so long as there be any of God’s elect in it to be brought in by actual conversion, or their graces to be completed in further degrees of sanctification; but when the number of those whose names are written in heaven is filled up, and they themselves fitted for heaven, then shall the end of all things come. It cannot be thought that God would ever endure so much wickedness as he sees in the world every day committed, or so long bear its manners with so much patience, had he not a further design in it; namely, the gathering together the whole body of those [whom] he hath given to Christ. He never made this great fabric for the lusts and pleasures of wicked men, that they might enjoy their ease, and gratify their senses, and devour their neighbours; but for his own glory: and he will have some still in it to glorify him, by serving him and living according to his laws; as well as he glorifies himself in saving them. And were there none in it to serve him, he would not suffer others continually to dishonour him; were it not for “the holy seed” [that] he hath scattered abroad in it, he would soon set the field on a flame.

2. *The religious of a nation are not its enemies.*—Not the troublers of a nation, not the pests of a state, the disturbers of a peace, as some count them. Ahab indeed reviled Elijah as one “that troubled Israel;” (1 Kings xviii. 17;) but David would not have said so. He was a godly king, and had other thoughts of his godly subjects; he calls them “the excellent of the earth,” and “all his delight” was in them. (Psalm xvi. 3.) The Jews said of the apostles, that they had “turned the world upside down;” but they were unbelieving Jews that said it. (Acts xvii. 5, 6.) The same apostles were counted “the off-scouring of all things, and the filth of the earth;” (1 Cor. iv. 13;) but it was by those that rather were such

themselves. The idolatrous Heathens were wont to condemn the Christians as the cause of all their public calamities that befell them; but they were Heathens that did so. Yet sometimes we shall find wicked men themselves under a conviction of the contrary, and clearing them of this imputation: so Joash, king of Israel, calls Elisha "the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." (2 Kings xiii. 14.) Sometimes (as before) they beg their prayers; sometimes wish themselves in their condition; and, whatever they esteem them while they live, they would be like them when they die; wicked Balaam would "die the death of the righteous." (Num. xxiii. 10.) Thus conscience absolves whom malice had condemned; and when men come to be cool and sober, they purge the godly from those crimes with which, while they were heated with passion, or intoxicated with a concern for some contrary interest, they had groundlessly aspersed them.

True, indeed, the religious of a people almost every where are the occasion of divisions and distractions; and so was Christ himself. He "came to send fire on the earth;" and not "to give peace, but rather division;" (Luke xii. 49, 51;) nay, "a sword;" (Matt. x. 34;) "to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." (Verse 35.) And yet nor Christ nor his saints are really the troublers of the world, nor the direct and proper causes of those broils and confusions which many times have been made on their accounts; which indeed proceed from the lusts of the wicked, not the graces of the godly. Sinners cannot endure the light of the truth, nor the power of holiness in the lives of saints; and therefore quarrel with them: but are those saints to be blamed for such troubles as, only accidentally and by reason of the corruptions of others, arise on their doing but their duty? Is a bridge to be blamed for troubling the water, because, keeping its place, it stops the water's passage, and is the occasion of its swelling and roaring? Are sheep to be blamed for incensing the wolves? or doves, for provoking the hawks? Truly, just such incendiaries are God's children in the places where they live: they disquiet their neighbours only by the good things they enjoy, which others love and covet, and fain would get from them; or by the good they do, which wicked men hate, and fain would hinder in them. The quarrels of the ungodly world with "the holy seed" among them, are but like that of Cain with Abel: he "slew his brother, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." (1 John iii. 12.)

3. *The sinners of a nation are really the weakness of it.*—It is they, of whatsoever party or sect or persuasion they are, that trouble any people, and occasion their dangers, and procure their ruin. "Righteousness exalteth a nation;" it is "sin" that "is a reproach to" it, that humbles it and brings it down. (Prov. xiv. 34.) Wicked men are they that betray nations and kingdoms, expose them to God's wrath, subject them to his judgments. Did Noah bring the flood upon the old world? or did the wicked of it, by their wickedness?

Did Lot bring down fire from heaven upon Sodom? or did the Sodomites do it by their own lewdness? Did Jeremiah by his preaching, or Baruch and Ebedmelech, and those few other godly in Jerusalem, by their praying and weeping and mourning, bring on the captivity of that people? or did not they themselves, by their idolatry, their profaneness, their swearing, their sabbath-breaking, their polluting God's ordinances, their shedding innocent blood, &c.? Were the apostles and primitive Christians the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans? or were not the unbelieving Jews, by their rejecting Christ, and persecuting those that adhered to him?

I deny not but the sins of the best of saints may sometimes contribute to the bringing down judgments upon others. Jonah's sin raised a tempest upon the mariners; (chap. i. 4;) and David numbering the people brought the plague upon them. (2 Sam. xxiv. 15.) God will not only manifest his own holiness by punishing them that are dearest to him, when they sin against him; but teach them more care and watchfulness against sin, when they find how far the direful effects of it are extended unto others. And yet what is this to the numerous instances on the other side? Which doth ordinarily do most mischief,—the sins of the truly godly, which are fewer and lesser, and mourned over and repented of; or the sins of the profane, the hypocrites, the impenitent? May we not say, that if the sins of the one have slain their thousands, those of the other have slain their ten thousands? The greatest danger any can be in, is to be liable to the displeasure of God, who is holy, and cannot endure to behold iniquity; powerful, and able to destroy those that offend him; can arm and commission innumerable enemies against them, raise the *posse* of heaven and earth upon them, let fly thousands of arrows at them, and command what judgments he please to consume them. And who are they that do ordinarily make a people naked, and lay them open to the wrath and revenge of God? Is it they that love God, or they that hate him? the obedient, or the rebellious? they that please him, or they that provoke him? they that intercede with him, or they that defy him? they that mourn for the abominations of a land, or they that commit and encourage them? they that tremble at his judgments, or [they] that dare his vengeance? in a word, they that hinder all the sin they can, or [they] that hinder all the good they can? they that dare not be wicked, or [they] that will not be holy?

4. *It is the interest of any people, where God hath a seed of righteous ones, to favour them and make much of them.*—They are their best friends that are God's friends. They should favour them most whom God favours, of whose good things they partake, for whose sakes they are preserved, receive many a mercy, enjoy many a privilege, escape many a judgment. It is their interest to be kind to those that have most interest in God, most power with him, and can get most of him. What society of men but usually favours them most whom their prince favours most? and they think it their interest to do so. They know, they may need them, and many a good turn they may do them. They that are the greatest among men, and sit at the upper end of the

world, may need the help of the faith and prayers of the meanest saints; they may need them to interpose with God for them, and ward off his blows, or remove his plagues; and when he hath no respect to a people for their own sakes, yet he may for the sake of his servants among them.

5. *It is folly in any people to persecute them that are truly religious.*—That is but to fall foul upon their friends; (and then they lie open to their enemies, or are indeed their own greatest enemies:) to pluck the stakes out of the hedge, and turn the vineyard into a common: to pull up the sluices; and then there is nothing to keep out an inundation of evils: to pull down the pillars; and then the house comes tumbling about their ears. It is, indeed, but to dig their own graves, to make way for their own destruction, by destroying those that are their preservers. For by this means they lose,

(1.) *The benefit of the saints' prayers.*—When men go on maliciously to abuse and oppress the godly among them, God may refuse to hear even *their* prayers for them. The Jews persecuted Jeremiah, slandered him as a traitor, “smote him” with their tongues, “devised devices against” him, and put him in the dungeon; and God would not hear his prayers for them. (Jer. xxxvii. 13—15; xi. 19; xiv. 11.) Their posterity persecuted the Lord Jesus Christ; and though his prayers were heard for many of them, converted (Acts ii. 41, and afterward) by the preaching of the apostles; yet when they still persevered in their persecuting those very apostles, their prayers could not prevail for them, but God gave them up first to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, (Acts xxviii. 26, 27,) and then to their enemies' sword.

Or God may stop the mouths of his saints, that they shall not so much as pray for them; he may (as was before intimated) straiten them, and withdraw from them, when they begin to open their lips for those whom he hath appointed for destruction. Nay, he may set their hearts to pray against them, and thereby hasten his judgments on them. It is true, God's children are commanded to pray for their enemies and persecutors; (Matt. v. 44;) and there may be mercy in store with God for them, when what they do, they do as Paul did before his conversion, “ignorantly in unbelief.” (1 Tim. i. 13.) Thus Stephen prayed for those that stoned him: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;” (Acts vii. 60;) and Christ, for those that crucified him: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Luke xxiii. 34.) And yet Christ himself excludes the world out of his prayer: “I pray not for the world;” that is, not for the reprobate world, or the world in opposition to those [whom] his Father had given him. (John xvii. 9.)

How often doth David pray against his persecutors! especially in Psalms lxix. and cix. Though his prayers are generally prophetic, yet prayers still they are. And how often do we find him and other saints praying against idolaters, (Psalm xcvi. 7,) haters of Zion, (cxxix. 5,) obstinate and hardened enemies of God's truth and ways and people! (See Psalms lxxiv. and xciv.) And though the Jews in

Babylon were commanded to "pray for the peace of the city," (Jer. xxix. 7,) yet that must be but a limited command: they were to pray for the peace of Babylon during its time, and so long as it was to be the place of their abode; but they were not to pray for its perpetual peace and welfare; for that had been to pray against the declared mind of God in all those prophecies which foretold its ruin, and, indeed, against their own deliverance, which was to follow upon the beginning of Babylon's destruction, in the dissolution of that empire. Nay, do we not find them praying for vengeance on it? "The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say." (Jer. li. 35.)

God's children ought to pray for their own private enemies; nay, for those that at present are enemies to the public weal of Zion; as not knowing who of them may come to be her friends; God may have a seed among them. All have not sinned the "sin unto death," though many may, for whom they are expressly forbid to pray; (1 John v. 16;) and if they knew in particular who they were, they ought no more to pray for them than for the devil himself, if Austin may be believed. But certain it is, they must not, cannot, dare not, pray for the implacable, incorrigible enemies of their Lord and Master. Nay, they cannot pray for the exaltation of Christ's kingdom, but they at the same time pray for the downfall of such. Whenever they pray [that] God's "will may be done, and his kingdom come," they pray for the confusion of those that obstinately oppose his will, and whose ruin must make way for the coming of his kingdom; and so all the saints in the world are every day praying against the malignant, hardened enemies and persecutors of Christ and his people. And is it not a dreadful thing, to have the prayers of saints, of thousands of saints, of all the saints upon earth, against them? those prayers which shall not be lost, which will be heard, and not one of them be in vain. See, in Rev. xi., what power the prayers of the saints have, God's witnesses, even in their sackcloth: "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." (Verses 5, 6.) What is the "fire that proceedeth out of their mouth," but the judgments they denounce and by prayer bring down upon the anti-Christian world? No army with banners [is] more terrible than a company of praying saints. When saints are full of prayer, heaven is big with vengeance: and their prayers cannot go up so fast, but judgments will soon come down as fast.

(2.) They lose *the help of the saints*.—God's protection, and whatever favour he hath been wont to show them for the sake of his saints. This follows upon the former, and I shall meet with it again under the next use. To conclude this, therefore: the enemies would

fain now, as well as in former ages, extirpate God's seed from out of the earth. Their language is, as the Jews' was of Paul, "It is not fit that they should live:" (Acts xxii. 22 :) they would have "the name of Israel be no more in remembrance." (Psalm lxxxiii. 4.) But what would they get by that? Were the holy seed, the plants of God's planting, stubbed up, how soon would the vineyard be laid waste! If the green trees were out of the way, the fire of God's wrath would quickly consume the dry; and what should hinder? who should interpose with the Lord of the vineyard? who should say, "Destroy it not," when, alas! there were no "blessing in it?" (Isai. lxxv. 8.) I dare say, had some men their wish, it would be the blackest day that ever England saw; and, it may be, blacker to none than to them that wish for it.

USE II. EXHORTATION.

(I.) *To the truly religious.*—Of all sorts and persuasions, I mean. Let it appear that you are indeed the substance and strength of a sinful land. Act like those that are so: do what you can to help a poor, sinking nation; "stand in the gap, and make up the hedge;" (Ezek. xxii. 30;) and labour to convince your enemies themselves, that you are their friends, and the best they have, too.

1. *Intercede with God for the land.*—Improve all the interest you have in heaven, to keep off approaching destruction. And, to quicken you, consider,

(1.) *You know not how far you may prevail with God for the prevention of national judgments.*—When other means fail, yet prayer may prevail. Human strength and human wisdom may be able to do little; the power and policy of enemies may be too hard for the wisdom and strength of the godly: but when you can do least yourselves, you may engage God, by prayer, to do most. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength." (Job ix. 4.) If he take your part, he can turn about the hearts of enemies, disappoint their devices, befool their politics, or, if need be, break their power. Enemies are commonly the instruments of evil brought upon a land; yet they are but instruments; God himself is the principal Agent. (Amos iii. 6.) They are the rods in his hand, the scourges, which he useth or lays aside when he pleaseth. You may be helpful in diverting the evils which enemies might do, though you touch them not yourselves, but address to God, and set him against them. You may do in this case as when you have to do with men in civil things: if a prince be offended with you, and like to punish you, though what he doeth, he doeth by ministers and officers, yet you do not fall a-quarrelling with them, but apply yourself to the prince. If he be pacified toward you, his officers dare not meddle with you; his pardon is a *supersedeas* to all their actions. Try what you can do with God; if he side with you, either men shall not desire to touch you, or not be able, if they would, to hurt you.

Think, how many times have the prayers of the saints prevailed with God in the like cases. Moses's prayers prevailed to deliver

Israel, when the Egyptians so closely pursued them: "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" (Exod. xiv. 15;) and at other times. (Exod. xxxii. 14, 34; Num. xiv. 20.) Asa's prayer prevailed against Zerah and his Ethiopian army, (2 Chron. xiv. 11, 12,) and Jehoshaphat's against the Ammonites. (2 Chron. xx. 22—30.) And if prayer hath been so prevalent, why may it not be so still? It is an old, tried means, which hath not used to fail: do not say [that] these were more eminent saints, and so could do more with God by prayer than you can; but remember, you have the same God to pray-to that they had, and he delights as much in prayer now as then he did, and can do as much for us as then he could. You pray with the same kind of faith that they did, and your faith is grounded on the same promises; they are still the same: and the Mediator, who is to present your petitions to God, is still the same; and his interest in those that fear him, and his concern for them, is still the same [as] it was: and then, why may not prayer now prevail as much as formerly, and do as much with God?

(2.) *If you do prevail, it will be both your honour and comfort, to have been instrumental in keeping off public judgments, and procuring public mercies.*—So far as your prayers have been of use for the obtaining [of] such mercies, so far they are *your* mercies, and you will have comfort in them. Any mercy is sweet, when obtained by prayer; much more, such as are of advantage to others as well as yourselves. And it will be as honourable as comfortable, to be the "saviours" of a land; (as saints seem to be called, Obadiah 21;) "the repairers of breaches, the restorers of paths to dwell in." (Isai. lviii. 12.)

(3.) *If you should not prevail for public deliverance, yet your prayers shall not be lost.*—They shall "return into your own bosom," (Psalm xxxv. 13,) in deliverance for yourselves. Either God will separate you from others; you shall "deliver your own souls:" (Ezek. xiv. 14;) or, if not, God will "hide you in the grave;" (Job xiv. 13;) and, while you continue here, will sanctify your sufferings, make you rejoice in tribulation. It will be no small comfort to have done your duty and discharged your consciences, and to suffer without the guilt of negligence and not providing against sufferings.

(4.) *You will have little comfort in suffering in the common calamities, if you have not done your part to keep them off.*—If the breaking-in of wrath upon the land lie at your doors; if a nation be lost for want of your praying and wrestling with God for it. It would be sad suffering with the guilt of your own negligence or slothfulness or coldness or security upon your consciences, and having your hearts reproach you, and tell you that, had you "stood in the gap," you might have "made up the hedge;" had you prayed more, you and others might have suffered less; religion might have flourished, ordinances have continued, the gospel continued; the glory of God might not have departed, had you laboured to keep it.

(5.) *If you that are godly do not prevail, none else are likely to do it.*—Others either pray not at all, but wholly "restrain prayer

before" the Lord; (Job xv. 4;) or, if they do, yet, being such as "regard iniquity in their hearts, the Lord will not hear them." (Psalm lxxvi. 18.) Either their guilt chokes their prayers, or they have not the face to look up to God with any confidence, or the wickedness of their lives waylays their prayers,—their sins intercept their petitions, and hinder any gracious reception of them: the sacrifices of such are an abomination to the Lord, and are so far from making up the breach, that they make it wider.

(6.) Lastly. Consider, *how many there be that labour all they can to ruin the land.*—The sinners of the land are by far the greatest part of it; sin is spread over all; and sinners act as if they were weary of their mercies, weary of their liberties, weary of Christ and his saints, of his gospel and ordinances; as if they were all in a plot against the land, and resolved to try if [they] could sin it into destruction, into its old darkness and spiritual bondage. How many are laying designs against the liberties and privileges, the estates and lives, of others! How many are oppressing and persecuting and molesting those that are peaceable in the land! And how loud do so many sins cry in God's ears! You had need pray hard for mercy, when sin cries so loud for vengeance. Be up, then, and doing; set prayer against sin; if others attempt to out-sin your prayers, do you labour to out-pray their sins. Do not think that a little, cold, heartless praying will prevent or obviate the consequents of so much sinning: when there be armies of enemies and armies of sins, there needs an army of prayers too.

2. *Do not rest in prayer, but hinder all the sin you can.*—Not only in yourselves, but in others with whom you have to do, and over whom you have any power. Hinder it in your families by restraint and correction; in your neighbours and friends, by admonition and reproof. So much sin as you hinder, so much you contribute to the peace and prosperity of the nation. It is vain to think of preventing judgment, if you do not endeavour to hinder sin, which calls for it. Though punishment may not immediately follow at the heels of sin, "sentence against an evil work may not be executed speedily;" (Eccles. viii. 11;) yet, so long as sin is spared or connived at, it is all the while breeding judgment: the store of sin adds to the treasure of wrath.

3. *Do all the good you can.*—In your several places; not only your personal, but relative, capacities: by instruction, by counsel, by example, labour to propagate goodness to all with whom you converse: while others are spreading sin, do you endeavour to promote holiness. Commend the ways of God to others, by walking exactly in them yourselves. Practise those things that are "lovely:" (Phil. iv. 8:) that may be a means to make those love your religion, who hitherto never loved yourselves. The more you do for the gaining of souls, the more you do for the good of the nation: every saint [that] you are instrumental to make, will be a new stake in the hedge, a new stone in the wall, an addition to the strength and security of the land.

(II.) *To sinners.*—How many of those to whom this exhortation is

addressed will read it, I know not; and, if they do, whether they will own themselves sinners, and count themselves concerned in what is said. But this I am sure of,—that if they are not sinners and wicked, they are saints: (these two divide the land: all are either godly or ungodly, though there be different degrees among both:) and if saints they are, the former exhortation will reach them. Let them, then, act up to it, and show themselves saints; let them appear, and stand up for the public good, and interpose with God for the preservation and welfare of their land. But, sirs, if your consciences give the lie to your pretensions, and tell you that you are not saints, that you are ungodly, you then are they to whom in this exhortation I am to apply myself. If the truly religious be a defence to the nation, do you accordingly carry yourselves toward them; use them well, make much of them, be kind to them, take heed of hurting them. Be so far disobedient for once to your father the devil, as not [to] gratify him, to your own undoing, by maligning, traducing, opposing, or persecuting, those that fain would save you, and, under God, are your best benefactors; do not hinder them from being godly, from serving their Lord, and doing that whereby they are preventing your ruin and promoting your good. Take heed of touching them, or meddling with them: if the argument would move you, I would say, Take heed of it,

1. *For God's sake.*—Who hath an interest in them; whose “jewels,” whose “anointed” ones, whose children, they are, and whose image they bear. (Psalm cxix. 94; Mal. iii. 17; Psalm cv. 15.) If you do but own God as your Lord, or pretend to do so, you should have some respect to those that belong to him; and they that have no regard for saints, have none for God himself; they that hate them “that are begotten,” cannot “love him that begat.” (1 John v. 1.) I know, you will be ready to say [that] they are not saints, but a company of factious or seditious or hypocritical persons, whom you oppose. I wonder what is become of all the saints: you dare not say you are such yourselves; and all that are not like you in sin, though never so much of the same judgment with you, you call “hypocrites.” Hath God no true servants left in the land? or where must we look for them? But what, if the dirt [which] you throw upon the factious be found sticking upon the religious? What, if the wound [that] you give the hypocrites draw blood from the saints; and those that you call “the enemies of the nation,” appear to be the friends of God? It cost Zebah and Zalmunna dear, for killing those that “resembled the children of a king.” (Judges viii. 18.) Take heed of daring to put forth your hands against those that do but “resemble the children of” God; lest, when you think not of it, they prove to have been so. But if this prevail not, (as I fear it will not,) yet,

2. Take heed of troubling God's holy ones, *for your own sakes.*—It is your interest and your wisdom, (as before,) no less than your duty; for they can do more for you and more against you, than all the world beside. In Gen. xx. 7, God bids Abimelech restore Abraham his wife: “For,” says he, “he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live:” he was concerned to use Abraham well, when he

might get so much by it. "And if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine:" his wronging Abraham should cost him dear. Consider,

(1.) "*Their Redeemer is strong.*" (Jer. l. 34.)—Who that is, the next words tell you: "The Lord of hosts is his name." It is dangerous meddling with any that have great friends and allies; such may by their means be too hard for you, though in themselves they be but weak. He that is a king's son may be but a child, and so but feeble himself, and not able to resist the force of one that is strong and violent: but he hath a king for his father,—one that hath a sovereign power, and can command thousands; and by him he may prevail over a strong enemy. The godly may be but weak and mean and contemptible in themselves; but they have a Friend, nay, a Father, that is strong: "the Lord of hosts" is "their Redeemer;" one that can deal with you, over-top you, crush you, make you "perish" with the very "rebuke of his countenance." (Psalm lxxx. 16.) If he do but blow upon you, your "breath goes" out of you, you die, and "return to your earth." (Psalm cxlvi. 4.)

(2.) "*He shall thoroughly plead their cause.*"—So it follows. Assure yourselves, God will certainly do it, first or last, here or hereafter. Their cause is his cause; he "knows that for his" name's "sake they suffer rebuke," (Jer. xv. 15,) "for his sake" they are appointed "as sheep for the slaughter." (Psalm xlv. 22.) They suffer so many unworthy things, however upon other pretences, yet really because they belong to him; so that, if you strike at them, you strike at him; if you touch them, you "touch the apple of his eye." (Zech. ii. 8.) Christ at the last day will judge you according as your carriage hath been to his people; and interprets all done or not done to them as done or not done to himself. (Matt. xxv. 40, 45.) God may for a long time keep silence and let you alone, but one day will meet with you; be sure, in the other life; it may be, in this: and then, can you either,

(i.) *Ward off his blows, when he lays them on you?*—Can you withstand his power, grapple with Omnipotence? Cannot he bring those evils upon you, which it is impossible for you to keep off or resist? "The Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." (Isai. lxvi. 15.) Or,

(ii.) *Can you bear what he inflicts?*—"Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong," when He comes to "deal with you?" (Ezek. xxii. 14.) Alas! you cannot stand before the messengers of his wrath. How are you brought down with a little pain or sickness! a fit of the stone or cholic makes you almost mad. And how, then, will you endure, if God himself once take you to hand, if he fill you with his fury, and pour out his wrath immediately upon your souls?

Is it not, then, your interest to favour God's saints, to take heed of meddling with them to *their* hurt, when it is likely [for] the conclusion to be in *your own*? when, as they are your best friends, so they

may prove your most formidable enemies, by engaging God against you; who, when they suffer wrongfully, will not fail to take their part and be on their side, and, though he use you for a time as scourges in his hand for the correction of them, yet when he hath done with you, is then ready to throw you into the fire. (Isai. x. 12.) Remember, then, that as the religious of a nation ordinarily do most good to them, so, when they are abused and trampled upon, they do most hurt; because God pleads their cause, and espouses their quarrel. Many a judgment they bring down upon their enemies,—that is, God doth for them: the violence done to them, is severely punished upon them that do it. How was Egypt plagued for Israel's sake, and the Philistines, and others after them, and the Babylonians after them all! Nay, "who" ever "hardened himself against them, and prospered?" (Job ix. 4.) God's Jerusalem is, at one time or other, "a burdensome stone" to all them "that burden themselves with it." (Zech. xii. 3.) "The house of Jacob is a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble." (Obad. 18.) God takes notice of the least injuries done to his children by their enemies; nay, of their very omissions and neglects. The Moabite and the Ammonite were not to enter into the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation, "because they met not" the children of Israel "with bread and with water, when they came out of Egypt:" (Deut. xxiii. 3, 4 :) and what, then, will become of them that grudge God's children bread, that rob them of their spiritual bread and water of life, would take from them the allowance [which] their Father hath given them, and so would starve their very souls?

(3.) *Who ever showed kindness to the godly in vain?*—A cup of cold water, given to a disciple "in the name of a disciple," or "because he belongs to Christ," shall not want its reward: (Matt. x. 42; Mark ix. 41 :) Christ takes the least respect shown them, as done to himself. Visiting the prisoners, clothing the naked, relieving the poor, are acceptable offices, and usually followed with some blessing even in this life. And, I wonder, wherein are they that this day persecute God's children the worse for them, or for any countenance [that] they have shown them? Nor are they ever likely to be, if it be not their own fault, by stirring up God's jealousy, and pulling down his vengeance upon their own heads. Were but [this] truth effectually believed, what an alteration would it make upon the spirits of men! How would those that are at present so unkind to the truly religious, become their friends and favourers! and "the governors of Judah would say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God." (Zech. xii. 5.)

SERMON XXXI.

BY THE REV. THOMAS WOODCOCK, A.M.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF JESUS-COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

WHETHER IT BE EXPEDIENT, AND HOW THE CONGREGATION
MAY SAY "AMEN" IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.*And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people
answered, Amen, Amen.—Nehemiah viii. 6.*

OMNIPOTENT and eternal Goodness never wants instruments to deliver his church from slavery, or reform it from degeneracy. All the empires and emperors in the world have served the kingdom of God, and been as scaffolds set up about the house of God, to be taken down when that is built up and finished. They have been as Gibeonites and Nethinims to the temple of the Lord. The Assyrian was God's rod upon Israel's back. [The] Persian was here God's shepherd, whose spirit was stirred up to raise up the Jews. Alexander was a servant; and the Romans have been but God's slaves, to do his will against their own.

The state of the church at this juncture was the end of a desolation, or beginning of a reformation. The Jews had weathered out seventy years in captivity, wherein multitudes of them were worn off. A remnant being left, God raised up Cyrus, and moved him to set them free from Babylon, according to the prophecy of Isaiah (xlv. 1—4) two hundred and ten years before.

Many of the people, through lazy worldliness or despondency, chose rather still to "lie among the pots" in Chaldea, than return to Jerusalem to build their city and temple; though Cyrus gave them not only liberty by proclamations, but accommodations for the work. But God raised up the spirit of Zerubbabel, Joshua, Nehemiah, and Ezra, to carry it on.

This Ezra was a great man of God, one of the great synagogue, a prophet, a scribe, a priest. Some will have it, that as Jehoiakim cut and burnt the roll, (Jer. xxxvi. 23,) so the Chaldeans burned all the books of the law; and so Ezra restored them as a prophet by revelation or his memory. But this is false: for Daniel "understood by books" the expiration of the seventy years; (chap. ix. 2;) and Cyrus himself read the prophecy of Isaiah; for he says, [that] "the Lord charged him to build his house at Jerusalem." (Ezra i. 2.) But he was a prophet, as he was directed by God's Spirit to compose this history of his; and a perfect scribe,—living to Malachi's time, he wrote the complete Old Testament, and made a perfect copy. But here he officiates as a priest,—the son of Seraiah, from Phinehas, Eleazar, and Aaron,—to serve the Lord. (Ezra vii. 1.) When they

had neither temple nor tabernacle, they set up the worship of the God of heaven in the open heaven; which was neither typical nor topical, but natural and evangelical, worship.

Upon the first day of the seventh month, in a pulpit in the street, (the people meeting "as one man," Ezra iii. 1,) he read the law of God,—and that distinctly, "giving the sense" of it, (Neh. viii. 8,)—from morning to noon; and all the congregation stood attentively; and at noon probably he dismissed them with a blessing, according to God's command. (Num. vi. 23.)

But here, at the opening [of] the book, praying to God, and praising him for his good hand over them and his good word before them, he blessed the Lord, ere he blessed the people: "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen."

In which words there is, 1. The priest's or minister's office,—blessing. And, 2. The people's office: "And all the people answered, Amen, Amen." 3. The great God, in the midst of this great congregation, the Object of the priest's office, and the people's also. Whence this

DOCTRINE.

That it is a lawful and laudable practice for people, in the conclusion of public prayer or praising God, to pronounce an Amen.

This will answer the question; which is, *Whether it be expedient, and how the congregation may say "Amen" in public worship?* I. *I will explain what is meant by "Amen."* II. *Show what warrant there is for the practice.* III. *Deduce some inference from all.*

I. 1. First, then, there is *Amen substantive*.—And that is God himself, who is what he is, Alpha and Omega, Truth itself. "He who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God Amen," or "of Truth." (Isai. lrv. 16.) Jesus Christ is God and "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness." (Rev. iii. 14.) He is that God in whom we may bless ourselves; his being is of himself as God, and he gives being to his word; "all the promises of God" being "in him Yea, and in him Amen," (2 Cor. i. 20,) whether Hebrew or Greek, Old Testament or New, promises, in him they are completed, and by him they are fulfilled.

2. There is *Amen affirmative*.—A phrase used in the beginning of any momentous truth, as an asseveration. What is "Amen," in Matt. xvi. 28, [is] *αληθως*, or "verily," in Luke ix. 27. Our Saviour hath this phrase peculiar to himself, "Amen, Amen," to give confirmation to the doctrine, and to raise our attention and faith; or to show that not only truth is spoken, but by him who is Truth itself.

3. There is *ευκτικον*, or "*optative*," Amen.—Which is as much as *Γενοιτο*, "'Let it be so:' blessed be God by us, and blessed be we of the Lord;" or, as in Jer. xxviii. 6 it is expounded, "Amen: the Lord do so: the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied." This Amen was used to be set-to, when good was spoken;

as, when David commanded Solomon to be made king, Benaiah said, "Amen: the Lord God of my lord the king say so too." (1 Kings i. 36.) Or, when in imprecations of evil,—as the woman tried by the water of jealousy, which sprinkled on the curse, it blotted out the curse, if she was innocent; if guilty, her thigh presently rotted: she was to say, "'Amen, Amen,' let it be so if I be guilty, and let it be so if I be innocent." (Num. v. 22.) So, at the end of the curses in Deut. xxvii. 15—26: "And all the people shall say, Amen." They are loath to have the curse come; therefore they are commanded there to say, "Amen:" but they need no command to seal the blessings with Amen; all are apt enough to believe and wish them.

But here is a double Amen, which hath the greater emphasis, and requires greater attention and intension of mind; as Neh. ix. 5: "Bless the Lord your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise." "Ever and ever" is answered by "Amen, Amen;" or, "Let it be ratified in heaven, so on earth." And the Jews say, that he that pronounceth this Amen as he ought, is greater than he that blesseth in the name of the Lord; he that pronounceth this Amen with all his might, the gates of heaven fly open to him. But there are three evil Amens; they call the first, (1.) "Abbreviated in the first syllable or letter;" and whoever so pronounceth it as to hasten his Amen, his days shall be soon passed. (2.) There is "Amen cut off, in the last syllable suppressed." (3.) There is "the pupillar, or orphan, Amen;" when it is pronounced at random, impertinently, and unseasonably, without understanding, prayer, or praise foregoing; and so there is no father to beget devotion in them, and so it is an orphan Amen, and his children shall be fatherless that pronounceth such a lifeless word and a fatherless Amen. But he that with knowledge and fervour pronounceth this Amen, his days shall be prolonged upon earth, as Buxtorf relates.

II. Now I am to give you some considerations and arguments for the use of this Amen, and the manner of it.—And they are seven.

1. It is lawful and laudable publicly to use it, *because it is connatural to prayer and praise.*—I do not lay the lawfulness of it upon a Persian decree, or a positive injunction, set on things no ways connatural to the action; for that is forced meat, and turns a man's stomach and his conscience. There is no need for a rubric by the men of the great synagogue, or a canon, to command a man to blush, when it is only the natural passion that will command it: so, when the heart is warm in prayer with serious and earnest affections, a double Amen doth as naturally flow from us as milk from a mother's breast to her suckling. And Amen comes from אָמַן, *aman*, which signifies "to nurse;" as if it were, if not the mother, yet the faithful nurse, of lively devotion. Assent to repetitions is essential unto prayer, and it is not signified publicly but by our Amen. Not that we are obliged to speak it always and with a loud voice. *Quantis arteriis opus est, si pro sono audiamur!** "What lungs had we need to have, if God

* TERTULLIAN.

hear us for our loudness!" But when the heart is affected, we see here how "the people stood up, and lifted up their hands" to heaven; naturally signifying, they would lift the name of God with all their might: but they cast down themselves, "bowing down their heads, and worshipping the Lord with their faces to the ground." Who can hold his breath from a groan or sigh, when matter and affection meet together? The Israelites here could not withhold their hands; nor Hannah hold still her eyes, when earnest in temple-prayer; (1 Sam. i. 10;) nor can a zealous heart hold the tongue from moving to an Amen at the end of prayer and praise. There is no child of God that can say, "Our Father," but, lower or louder, he must and will say, "Amen." The Jews in time of incense called themselves "mutes" in deep, silent prayer; when they praised God on instruments, "semivocates;" but when in open prayer and praises, then they were "vocates" in their Amens.

2. *We have the practice of the Old and New Testament believers for our example.*—In Moses you had it in Numbers and Deuteronomy, and David oft useth it in the Psalms; yea, this double Amen: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen." (Psalm xli. 13.) God was Israel's God, accepting their praises, hearing prayers, fulfilling promises, and this for ever and ever; and be it eternally ratified, "Amen, and Amen," to all generations. In Psalm cvi. 48, the same words are repeated, with this exhortation, "Let all the people say, Amen. Hallelujah." And they had the same praises and petitions to offer; therefore the same conclusion is suitable. So the prophet Jeremiah, speaking of God's oath to give Canaan to the Jews, says, "Amen, O Lord," or, "Be it so." (Jer. xi. 5.) So Paul: "How can *the idiot*," "the private man," who knows only his own private single language, "say Amen" to prayer or praise in another tongue? (1 Cor. xiv. 16.) Which not only imports the custom, but the manner of saying Amen to be with faith and understanding. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. iii. 21.) Yea, Jesus Christ, a greater than Moses, prophets, and apostles, adds this conclusion to his perfect form of petitions, in Matt. vi. 9—13. So, in his book of Revelation, "the four beasts and the four and twenty elders," who represented the whole church of Jews and Gentiles together, cry, "Amen." (Chap. v. 14.) Yea, that innumerable company of those triumphing souls, who had white robes and palms in their hands, as victors over temptations, with the elders and angels, "fell on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. vii. 11, 12.) So at the fall of Babylon, as the voice of many thunders and waters, the church cries, "Amen; Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and hath avenged the blood of his servants." (Rev. xix. 1—6.) Yea, it lasts unto the marriage of the Lamb: (verse 7:) still, when the Bridegroom comes, the church cries, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." (Rev. xxii. 20.)

3. *Amen, after prayer and praise, is the man's consent, judgment, and approbation of what is offered unto God.*—It is the setting-to of our seal to all, and our putting our hands to bear a part in the praises and to have a share in the petitions. It imports the desire of our soul, which is the formality of prayer. Now all these are essential to these duties; and the pronounciation is but the publication of our inward sense, which is very significant in public worship. Hearing is but the formal sense in conceiving the petitions; but speech brings them forth, and is a more open profession and a more masculine expression of devotion. "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." (Lam. iii. 41.) When the heart is intensely elevated to God, it carries the hands and the voice along with it; it acts all the body from the centre; as Tertullian phraseth it, *Bona conscientia eructat ad superficiem.** He lifts up his soul and body too to God; (Psalm cxliii. 8;) as they lifted up the *mincah*, or "heave-offering," and waved it before the Lord. The soul will work the body into sympathy, when it is earnest indeed: that which made the veins of the body to open their mouths in drops of blood, as Christ's prayer in his agony did, (Luke xxii. 44,) will certainly make us open our lips. Out "of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Chap. vi. 45.)

4. *This vocal Amen is, as it were, the epitome and sum of all our petitions and praises to God.*—It is the centre which all those lines are drawn toward. It is all the duty, virtually reduced to one word and point. Yea, it is the repeating and echoing, or redoubling, of all over again. As the mercury behind the glass, it reverberates the lively image of all preceding devotion. It is a drawing [of] the arrow to the pile by a strong ejaculation, *quod toto corde Deum petimus*, in Bellarmine's phrase; "whereby the whole heart is darted up to God." It is a "stirring up [of] ourselves to take hold of God." (Isai. lxiv. 7.) It is taking aim, and "directing our prayer to him, and looking up;" (Psalm v. 3;) as if they would hand up God's praises to him, and stand ready to receive his mercies with open hands and mouths. It winds up all together in one bundle. Many are willing to have God forgive their trespasses, but cannot so readily forgive others; we may be free for God to give us daily bounty and bread, but cannot make it as meat and drink to do his will. Men will easily accept of God's kindness—not so roundly pay their tribute of praises. Such cannot roundly pray, nor say, "Amen." "Ah, Lord!" and, "Amen," are two long prayers in few words, managed by the whole soul; and thus it is an Amen with a Hallelujah. When we seek God "with all our hearts," then we find him. (Jer. xxix. 13.)

5. *Amen, rightly pronounced, is an intense act of faith, or it involves a strong faith.*—The Hebrew verb in Niphal signifies "to be firm, stable, and strong," and in Hiphil it signifies "to believe and trust;" and, indeed, we cannot believe or trust to any thing but that which is stable, invariable, and immutable. So that there are two declarations made by this Amen: (1.) That God is firm and immu-

* "A good conscience raises all up to the surface."—EDIT.

tably true in himself and his word. (2.) That we will not only believe his truth, but trust to his veracity and build upon it; as the prophet doth both: "That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord." (Jer. xi. 5.) This is a laying hold on God's strength; (Isai. xxvii. 5;) as we see Abraham: "He believed in the Lord," (Gen. xv. 6,) אֱמַן אֱלֹהִים *vehemeen*; God's truth is believed, his veracity trusted to. Israel twisted about both these, as Abraham did; he wrestled with God, and "prevailed." (Gen. xxxii. 28.) The Jews say, *Amen habet tres nucleos*, "[Amen] hath three kernels;" the one is of an oath, the second of faith, the third of confidence, as Bunto says, on אֱמַן. When we have confessed our sins, we do by our Amen say, [that] all is true, and we have deserved God's displeasure; we beg pardon of them, and so believe [that] God hath promised pardon to the penitent; we trust ourselves with God in Christ, and believe that he will pardon our sins, as all others that cast themselves upon his promised grace.

6. *The unanimous pronounciation of Amen is an assurance that God will accept our praises and answer our prayers.*—So as the soul comes off with Luther's *Vicimus*, "We have prevailed." "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark xi. 24.) Nay, "if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." (1 John v. 15.) We ought to believe we shall have them, either in kind or value; and Infinite Wisdom and Goodness must be judge in that case alone. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xviii. 19.) If any single soul pray in faith, it shall be heard; much more, if two "have a symphony," (as the word imports,) they shall be answered: how much more, when the whole congregation is in harmony, and unanimously cries, "Amen;" when the whole congregation meets "as one man," (Ezra iii. 1,) and "the multitude of believers are of one heart and of one soul!" (Acts iv. 32.) God will say, "Amen," to such Amens. They are, as it were, בַּח-קוֹל a *Bath-Col*, "the echo and voice" of God from the mercy-seat: *Sanctorum vota sunt oracula*.* God's Spirit stirs up such prayers, and they shall not be denied.

The soul, like Luther, says, *Fiat voluntas mea*,—as men make their wills, "In the name of God, *Amen*, 'it shall be thus:'"—"For once let my will, O Lord, be done!" Heaven's gate is open to this united knock.

7. And lastly, *This unanimous Amen of faith strikes terror on the enenies of the church, whether devils or men.*—When the Romans had conquered Philip and the Grecians, and Flaminius caused peace to be proclaimed to the Grecians, "there was such a shout," says Plutarch, "that the very crows and other birds fell down to the

* "The prayers of the saints are oracular."—EDIT.

ground,—the air was so rent and shaken." And when the church of God, "Terrible as an army with banners," gives her unanimous voices of Amens, not only "Satan falls as lightning from heaven," (Luke x. 18.) but Simon Magus by Peter's prayer is fetched down, when he attempted to fly in the air, as if he had been the Holy Dove and Power of God, as ecclesiastical story relates. And Socrates tells us, that, upon Theodosius's prayers and his army's, the Barbarians' captain was smitten with a thunder-bolt, and his soldiers by fire; as the Turks mined the eastern empire of the Romans by "fire and smoke and brimstone," that is, by guns and gunpowder. (Rev. ix. 17.) When the church is united in hearty Amens, it is like the shout that the Israelites gave, when God and his ark came into the camp, which was such a great sound "that the earth rang again." (1 Sam. iv. 5.) For then "God is gone up with a shout," (Psalm xlvii. 5.) to answer the prayers made for the salvation of his people. This makes the hearts of their enemies to melt and tremble, as the Philistines' did. As Jerome expresseth it, "The hollow idols and their temples, that were empty, did echo and rebound the church's Amen, so as their fabrics shaken." Thus when the (שׁוֹפָר *shophar*) "lovely trumpet" sounded the seventh time upon the seventh day, the walls of Jericho fell; (Joshua vi. 20;) and so shall the gates and walls of Babylon by the preaching of the gospel on the Lord's days, and the prayers of the saints. The united breath of God's people sends a blast upon their enemies: the trumpet blew, and the people shouted, and Jericho fell down to the ground. Our Amens must not drop like a cold bullet of lead out of the mouth of a musket, bowing to the ground; but they must be fired by preparations of the heart and warm affections, they must be discharged and shot-off with the utmost *valdè* ["vehemency"] of the soul and fervency of the spirit. Samuel thundered in prayer, and God thundered upon Israel's enemies: "And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." (1 Sam. vii. 9, 10.) So David prays that God would "bow the heavens, and come down," &c.; (Psalm cxliv. 5;) and he did "bow the heavens, and come down," and "the Lord thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hailstones and coals of fire." (Psalm xviii. 9, 13.) When God's people can unite in one voice, God gives his voice with them and for them.

III. USES.

USE I. The first inference, then, is of REPROOF for our deep silence, and too much neglect of this hearty Amen.—Which proceeds from these four ill causes:—

1. From thence whence all ill things come in upon us, even from *Popish ignorance and darkness*.—When men grew dull and stupid,

and neither understood nor cared to understand, either the word of God to us, or ours to him in prayer, religion was looked upon as a *ωαρεργον*, a "by-business," or troublesome, laborious, and needless curiosity. It was enough to believe as the church believed, and to pray as the church prayed. And so they devolved all their devotions on a pack of idle monks and friars, whom they called "religious orders," who should serve God, supererogate, and merit for them; yea, procure a freedom from purgatory, and not only pardons, but Paradise also, for their moneys; and as soon as their silver did chink in the basin of the priest, out springs the soul from purgatory; as if the sound of money was powerful in purgatory, as true Amens are in heaven.

2. *The divisions among Christians of the Reformed religion, is another cause of this defect and neglect.*—"When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." (1 Cor. xiv. 26.) One was for singing, another for reading, a third for preaching; one for prophesying, another for interpreting. The apostle gives two rules, to oppose this and women's talking in the church: "Let all things be done decently and in order to edification." (1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40.) Natural decency forbids all confusion. In our days, some have such schismatical phrases, notions, and doctrines, in preaching, praying, and praising, that a sober Christian cannot say, "Amen." Some [are] so zealous for forms, that nothing else must be a prayer but the Lord's Prayer; as if, because Cyprian calls it "a legitimate form," all others were spurious; when it is the sense that is the prayer, and not the words, which are differently set down in Luke from Matthew, as Chemnitius well observes. Others are so vehement against all forms, that they would reduce all devotion to an invisible spirituality; as if they had dropped their bodies, and were crowded within the veil, into the triumphant choir of spirits in heaven. But certainly, while we are in the body, we ought to glorify God with our bodies as well as our spirits, and with our tongues as the body's instruments in public worship. *Verbo Deus laudandus, quia Deus Verbum*, says Lactantius: "God was made flesh to speak to us; therefore we ought to speak to him." The tongue is man's "glory:" (Psalm xvi. 9:) as it differenceth us from beasts, so it "makes us priests unto God," to offer up our own and the dumb creatures' sacrifices of praise to God: "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. i. 6.)

3. Another rate of this defect is *the degenerating of assemblies from their first constitution and plantation.*—For these, as all bodies, contracted defilements both in ministers and people. Formality hath overrun that zeal, piety, and charity, which formerly burned among them: so that many assemblies are run down so into the spirit of the world, that they differ little from Papists. How have some ministers been thrust-in upon the assemblies by a secular hand, who never understood how to preach, or pray a live prayer! and many congregations [are] full of such ignorance and profaneness, that the arches

and vaults in the building give as good an echo as their dead Amens. One comes in his drink; another, piping hot out of their worldly businesses; a third, in huffing finery and bravery, to be gazed on; another is heavy laden with sleep, and comes for a nap. How can they that are not concerned for God's glory, his church, his word, the pardon of their sins, nor think themselves beholden to God for daily bread, or that they need daily grace, say, either, "Our Father," or, "Amen," with any sense? When either ministers or people drink and swill and swear and roar with one another at the tavern all the week, and yet will be the most vocal and loud in their responsals on the Lord's day, it turns men's stomachs and consciences from public expressions, as [smelling] something too rankly of hypocritical formality; that, with the wise Heathen in the ship, when a company of wicked persons cried and prayed,—“Hold your peace,” said he, “lest the gods know you are here, and so destroy us.”* Roaring at the ale-house, and bellowing at the church, are both alike beastly and ugly to be heard.

4. *Worldly peace, plenty, and prosperity dirty and dull the wheels of the soul, so as activity and fervency are bird-limed.*—It is unreasonable, yet too true, that those tenants who have the best farms, pay God his rent worst. When Christians were kept warm by the zeal of their persecutors, they met in caves and woods, with the hazard of their lives; they had a zeal for God and the gospel, they heard and prayed as for their lives, and for the life of religion. It might be their last sermon or prayer they might join in, and so they had a fervent, hearty love for one another; which made them not only seal their prayers with warm Amens, but they sealed “one another also with a holy kiss.” (Rom. xvi. 16.) Not knowing whether they should ever see one another's faces again in the flesh, or no, they fell on one another's necks, and kissed, at parting; (Acts xx. 37, 38;) another expression springing naturally from strong affection, truly Christian, in those times; which, if practised in this dirty age, would be perhaps proved, as well as judged, a piece of wretched carnality. But their flesh was kept under by poverty and persecutions, so as such filthy temptations were burnt up by the love of God and each other. And we have cause to fear, God hath some such irons in the fire, to sear off that dead, yet proud, flesh, which in these days is bred in the hearts of many professors. In the mean time this flesh hinders our very lips from closing in a sound Amen.

USE II. This, then, informs us, that if ever the church recover primitive purity and fervency, it must have such administrations as,

1. *The whole worship of God must be in a known tongue, that so all may say, “Amen,” in the congregation.*—It is observed by Tertullian,† that “sack” is the same in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; (to which we may add English also;) to show, all nations are sinners, and need repentance and humiliation in sackcloth and ashes: and so “Amen” is the same in all languages; that all nations might have the same intel-

* DIOGENES LAERTIUS.

† *De Pœnitentiâ.*

ligible language, in their devotions especially. But the Papists will tell us, that a jewel is of equal value in an ignorant clown's hand, as it is of when in a skilful lapidary's; a petition to a prince is of the same efficacy in one's hand who can neither write nor read, as it is in a scholar's hand. And all is true, if God did not read hearts, when princes only read papers: God required to be worshipped with an understanding soul. Nay, the Jesuits tell us, the unlearned do merit and obtain more than they that understand, because they have more humility and fervour: but it is a strange humility and fervency to pass for a grace, which is not an act of an intelligent man; it is so far from divine and meritorious, that it is not a human act. Cajetan, more to the plain truth, tells us, that organs, which are a distraction to the intelligent worshippers, were yet retained to promote the unlearned men's devotions; and charms, though not understood, yet have power over serpents and devils: so that prayers and praises in an unknown language are, with them, enchantments upon the only wise God, and their devotion is rather the breath of an organ than the breathings [of], and being "filled with, the Spirit." (Eph. v. 18.)

2. This informs us, also, *that all public administrations are to be in the matter of them intelligible, as well as in the form of language.*—Ministers are not to use over-studied phrases, and singular notions of their own fancies, which sometimes men endeavour to pin upon their auditors. Prayer is putting the word and promises of God in suit; and therefore plain scriptural pleadings are our best arguments. Any unintelligible or doubtful expressions do but lay a stumbling-block in the way, to hinder the hearers giving readily their Amen. Therefore we must not only pray with our own "spirits," but with the people's "understanding also." "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?" (1 Cor. xiv. 15, 16.) Our seal must be, and can be only, set to God's covenant: his trust goes before our Amen. So God promiseth to give his people "pastors after his own heart, which shall feed them with knowledge and understanding;" (Jer. iii. 15;) without which, our sacrifices are but the offering up of swine's flesh, or cutting off a dog's neck. (Isai. lxvi. 3.)

3. *All the congregation must be unanimous,—of one heart, sense, and soul.*—Or else they can never meet and centre in one Amen, but are in separation when they are together. The apostle tells us, that the variance of husband and wife causeth their prayers to be hindered, 1 Peter iii. 7; (when passion is up, devotion is down;) or very opposite, like the mountains of blessing and cursing, (Deut. xi. 29,) or Samaria and Jerusalem, or Hannah and Peninnah, scolding under the same roof. But the true Jerusalem is a city at unity with itself: "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together." (Psalm cxxii. 3.) "One Lord, one baptism," one bread, one body, one soul, "one spirit," one heart, "one faith," (Eph. iv. 4, 5,) and one request;

namely, that "the Lord may be King over all the earth; that the Lord may be one, and his name one:" (Zech. xiv. 9:) which will be, when God shall "give his people one heart, and one way, that they may fear him for ever." (Jer. xxxii. 39.) Then there shall be as many taches as loops, and sockets as tenons, and all the "tabernacle be one." (Exod. xxxvi. 13.) As the Jews,—when they sacrificed, they compassed the altar round; so, when they feasted, they "sat round." (1 Sam. xvi. 11.) This symphony and harmony, when it obtains, will make one Amen, when God's praises and the saints' prayers shall be all one; which will be, when Christ's prayer shall be answered: "Let them be one, as we are." (John xvii. 11.) All heart-burnings shall cease, when all our fire shall be only upon God's altar, and unite in one pyramidal flame, aspiring and terminating in the pure love of God.

4. *To all this, there must come-in diligent attention and intension of mind.*—For, else they cannot consent to all and every part. And as a man who is to set his hand and seal to an indenture will hear all the conditions, that he may know what he binds himself to; so we, being to seal all the prayers with our lips and heart, "Amen," had need mind what we seal to. How do many frisk and air their thoughts in vanities, like a wanton spaniel from his master's walk; and come in from this false scent to the quest, with full cry and a dirty Amen! This only mocks God's all-seeing eye, and hypocritically colludes with the congregation. And when we consider how few hold pace with every petition,—the fourth Toletan council, that made a canon against any using Hallelujah in Lent, might have forbidden Amens also in public congregations; considering that jejune attention and intension of mind, which accompanies the devotions of the generality. But when all societies shall be intelligent, unanimous, intent, and affectionate, they may, ought [to], and will say Amens, with Hallelujahs too, though Lenten canon forbid both.

USE III. The third use is of CAUTION, to beware of all that which may hinder this powerful Amen.

1. Then beware of *all sin*.—Deliberate sins deaden our faith and spirits in prayer. *Quantum a præceptis, tantum ab auribus Dei distamus*:* "We are always as much at a distance from God's hearing us, as we are from hearing his righteous precepts." "If we regard iniquity in our hearts," God will not say, "Amen," to our prayers, (Psalm lxi. 18,) nor can we do it in faith. How can any say, "Amen," to, "Cursed be the man that maket hany graven or molten image, or that removeth his neighbour's landmark?" (Deut. xxvii. 15, 17.) For an unholy person to say, "Hallowed be thy Name," is to pray God to sanctify himself upon him; and he that cannot have charity to forgive them that trespass against him, while he prays God to forgive his trespasses, he doth interpretatively pray that God would not forgive his sins.

2. Take heed of *too much business*.—For that dusteth us with so

* TERTULLIANUS *De Oratione Dominica*.

many thoughts, which not only choke the word, but stifle our prayers. The apostle would have them *αμεριμνους*, "without cares," that they might "serve the Lord without distraction," *προς το ευσχημον και ευπροσεδρον τω Κυριω απερισπαστως*. (1 Cor. vii. 32, 35.) By these "convulsive motions" of distracting thoughts, which pull us first on one hand, then on the other, the face of the duty and the soul is very distorted, ill-favoured, "of an ill scheme and fashion;" all the beauty of duty is gone off; nor can the soul "well sit close to the Lord and steady," but sits tottering,—half on, half off; no settled frame of spirit can be maintained. First one business, then another, comes and pulls us off, to speak with us, so as we are not at leisure to speak with God. As Cyprian says,* "It is strange we should think God should hear us, when we do not hear ourselves."

3. Beware of a *lazy posture of the body*.—For the soul is drawn into consent and sympathy with it. Here the Jews "stood up," to show their reverence and attention to the word of God. (Neh. viii. 5.) They "lifted up their hands, bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Here was exalted attention and devotion, and most humble veneration, with intense affections; and these could say, "Amen, Amen." (Verse 6.) But to see one sit and hang down his head, and hang his hat on his nose; or, perhaps, sleeping till he snore himself awake, and then give a yawn or an idle Amen; any one, without breach of charity, may think him guilty of lazy hypocrisy with detestation. This is a mocking of God, giving the congregation a flap† with this fox's tail, when they have cunningly slept over the greatest part of the prayer, and slipped out of the congregation without removal. *Irreligiosissimum est sedere; nisi quoddam Deo exprobramus quoddam oratio nos fatigaverit*; as Tertullian says:‡ "It is most indecent, (without a good reason,) to sit at prayer; for it is else in effect to tell God [that] prayer hath tired us out."

USE IV. The fourth use is of DIRECTION AND EXHORTATION,—*how to keep up this harmonious Amen in public assemblies.*

1. *Let pastor and people never meet, but premise some solemn preparations of heart to meet the Lord*.—Rehoboam, and most of the kings of Israel, and their people also, sinned in this,—that they "prepared not" themselves to set their "hearts to seek the Lord." (2 Chron. xii. 14.) He "fitted not his heart," as the Hebrew word imports; it was no more fit to that duty, than an ass is to play upon a harp. We should never offer God that which cost us nothing. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet," (Exod. iii. 5.)—vain thoughts and vile affections,—and "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," (Rom. xiii. 14,) ere you go into the Father's presence. A worldly spirit, coming off from common employments, is not fit for communion with God. A common heart will never be enclosed in any duty, but runs wild of itself, and lies open to all incursions. Uzza was smitten, though he touched the ark out of a good intention, but in an undue manner:

* Epist. viii.
 † Concerning this word, see the note in vol. i. page 1.

‡ *De Orations Dominicis.*

he did it not in judgment, nor according to God's order and appointment. (1 Chron. xv. 13.)

2. *We must "watch unto prayer."* (Matt. xxvi. 41; 1 Peter iv. 7.)—For the devil is there; as to catch away the good seed, so to catch us away by every wandering thought. Peter and John were at Christ's transfiguration in the mount, but were sadly "heavy with sleep." (Luke ix. 32.) It is strange, when they should have been taken up with raptures and ecstasies of joy, that they should be so drossy and drowsy. But how hard a matter it is for to watch with Christ one hour in duty! (Matt. xxvi. 40.) Grief might make them heavy in the garden; and yet Christ's propassion, and sweating drops of blood, was enough to have put them into an agony of compassion. But, alas! neither the garden nor the mount is able to transport us, or keep up intension of soul or affection, unless God keep fire on his own altar, and blow-up our spark into a flame.

3. Our intension cannot last long; our actions depending on the body, and those spirits, the finer particles of the blood, separated from it by the alembic of the brain. And as it is some time ere they rise, so their height and speed is soon over, and then we run down into phlegm and heaviness. Therefore, in all public duties, (solemn fastings excepted, for humbling soul and body,) *we ought not to be too prolix, but to labour for strength rather than length.*—Thick and short; as David's panting, (Psalm xlii. 1,) and Daniel's praying: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." (Chap. ix. 19.) When weighty petitions are sent up for the whole church, they draw universal consent. Not that we ought, for brevity's sake, to confine all prayer to the Lord's Prayer, as if no bushel was a bushel but the standard; so, to fall down at this, and stand up against all others: whereas it is so diffused in sense, and so contracted in words, that the text may very well admit a comment in conformity to its sense; and we need a more comprehensive mind than the vulgar have, to fill those words with.

4. When all is done, there is nothing done, but all to do, till we *implore the good Spirit of God.*—Which he gave the Jews here: "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst." (Neh. ix. 20.) And he bade them work; for his Spirit was with them, and should remain among them, when they built the temple: "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." (Haggai ii. 4, 5.) Christ bade his disciples tarry at Jerusalem, till they were "endued with power from on high;" (Luke xxiv. 49;) there was no preaching or praying without this "Spirit of grace and supplications." (Zech. xii. 10.) It is impossible [that] the organs of our bodies or faculties of our souls should praise God aright, unless

this Spirit of God fill them, and blow them up. He must *επιχορηγειν*, (Phil. i. 19,) "tune the praise, and form the prayer," in us; he must *εσπερειν*, (James v. 16,) "inlay it, and work it," both in and out; and he is "the Master of the choir," to hold and keep us in frame, as well as set us in, and enable us to drive all our petitions home and through, to a fervent Amen. *Deus solus docere potest ut velit se orari*, as Tertullian says: "None but God can teach us how to pray to God." That Spirit of adoption that enableth us to say, "Abba, Father," (Rom. viii. 15,) can only teach us how to pronounce, "Amen, Amen."

CASUISTICAL MORNING EXERCISES.

[AT CRIPPLEGATE.]

THE FOURTH VOLUME.

BY SEVERAL MINISTERS IN AND ABOUT LONDON.

PREACHED IN OCTOBER, MDCLXXXIX.

I have sent unto you my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying,
Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings.—Jeremiah
xxxv. 15.

TO THE READER.

THESE sermons are sent out into the world upon the same design with the former, namely, to promote practical godliness. Though none, I hope, will be offended with *the matter*, yet *the circumstances* require some apology, which serious readers will candidly interpret. This collection is less than the former, the usual time of the Exercise being contracted from a month to a fortnight, and I could in modesty crave but a week's addition. Besides, a less disorderly paging is made use of, to prevent a greater;* while all errors of this kind could not possibly be avoided; the book being wrought off at several

* According to this account, the fourth volume was put to press within a week after the last sermon had been preached, which was at the close of October, 1689; and the copy would consequently be in the hands of the printers early in November. It seems to have been ready for delivery to the subscribers about the middle of December; Dr. Annesley having dated his preface the 4th of that month.

Of the four volumes of "the Morning Exercise at Cripplegate," as well as of that against Popery, the first edition of each is exceedingly irregular in the numbering of its pages. This arose from the hasty mode of printing. To expedite publication, the manuscripts of the different sermons were confided to several printers, who do not appear to have been as great adepts in "casting-off copy," as are many of the modern members of the profession. Thus, in the seven offices in which the second volume of the series, called "the Supplement," was printed, the copy must have been very incorrectly calculated and apportioned; for it was executed in the following manner:—The first printer commenced with page 1, and ended at page 154; the second numbered his "taking" 111—180; the third, 241—296; the fourth, 225—432; the fifth, 335—424; the sixth, 476—566; and the seventh, 601—887.

This is the glaring irregularity to which Dr. Annesley alludes, when he calls the centenary method, which he adopted in "the Casuistical Morning Exercises," a *less disorderly paging*. The four printing-offices at which this volume was completed, commenced the portion of it which had been consigned to their execution, severally, with the signatures A, 2 A, 3 A, 4 A; the first beginning with the figure 1, the second with 200, the third with 300, and the fourth with 400; and, instead of the former irregular plan of *paging*, the consecutive notation of each part was marked with *folios*. This was a manifest improvement upon the former volumes of the "Exercises;" but though the *commencement* exhibited the semblance of order, the *termination* was very "disorderly." The first portion numbered its sheets from folio 1—76, being actually 153 quarto pages; the others concluded thus, 200—261, 300—361, 400—440.—EDR.

presses, and that necessitated by the importunity of those who heard the sermons, they being impatient till they can *read* what they *heard* with so great satisfaction. Yet such things as these may occasion an abatement of their acceptance; but greater prejudices than these may be blown away with a breath. Do but say and hold, that you will set yourselves to profit, to mend your own faults, not to hunt for others'; my apology will appear less necessary, the sermons more useful, and my recommendation of them superfluous.

I suppose some may single out some particular case with special respect to the question or preacher, and may probably be induced to read on, till he meet with more profit than he desired. In a word, I shall as heartily pray, that every reader may get good by his reading, as I heartily request every one that doth get good by it, to lift up a prayer for

Your worthless soul-servant,

SAMUEL ANNESLEY.

December 4th, 1689.

CASUISTICAL MORNING EXERCISES.

SERMON I.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL ANNESLEY, LL.D.

HOW MAY WE GIVE CHRIST A SATISFYING ACCOUNT, WHY WE ATTEND UPON THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD?

But what went ye out for to see?—Matthew xi. 9.

COULD I preface this Exercise with any thing, which, through grace, would force its own application, and lie lieger* in your consciences, to mingle with every sermon you shall hear; that these sermons may influence your lives, so that your profiting (though you modestly veil it, yet) may shine through the veil, and may appear unto all men, so as to commend religion in them who are prejudiced against it, and to encourage those who have made some entrance into it; then you and I, when we shall meet in glory, shall bless God for this Exercise.

Shall we try, Christians, what may be done? Conscience, do thine office! and, through God's assistance, I will endeavour to do mine.

John Baptist was bodily in prison, spiritually in heaven. He is not solicitous about himself, but his disciples, and therefore sends them to Christ; as a dying father consigns his children to a faithful tutor, and then dies quietly: he had instructed them while he could, and now recommends them to Christ. When John's disciples were gone, Christ asked the people, who used to flock after John's ministry while he flourished, but now grew cold upon his long imprisonment;—Christ asks them what end they proposed to themselves. "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" As if he had said, "You could not look upon John to be a light, hollow, empty preacher, to bend with every wind and wave." "But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?"—As if he had said, "You could not expect any thing smooth and delicate. John was no court-preacher; if he had, he would not be so long in prison, and now in daily danger of his life." These two metaphors show what John was not like. My text lies in the question, which is not negative, but affirmative. They looked upon him as a prophet, an extraordinary person sent from God:

* "Remain as God's ambassador in your consciences."—EDIT.

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“Yea,” saith Christ, “and more than a prophet;” that is, John spake of Christ in another manner than the former prophets: they spake of him as a great way off, John points to him as present: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John i. 29.) I know, some give quite another sense of the words, which I will not so much as mention, but presently propose what I take to be the sum of the text.

DOCTRINE.

We should strictly and frequently call ourselves to an account, that we may the better give an answer to Christ's question, what end we propose to ourselves in attending upon the ministry of the word.

It was but a little while since there was a general flocking after John Baptist, as if they would turn the city into a wilderness, and make the wilderness the city. “He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light;” (John v. 35;) but that flash is over, and now they are flocking after Christ with like affection. Christ doth as it were say to them, “It is a foolish and ridiculous lightness to run after the best preachers in the world, without proposing some end unto ourselves beyond the vanity and pomp of the world, some fruit that may remain.” The blessed apostle would have those that had been his hearers to call themselves to an account; “examine” themselves; (2 Cor. xiii. 5;) put such searching questions to their own consciences,—whether they be “in the faith;” whether the doctrine of faith hold them, that they do not swerve from it; and whether the grace of faith be in them, that they live by it? If not, they cannot expect that Christ should approve of them.

I shall endeavour to make my way to the stating of the case, through the explaining of the doctrine by these

PROPOSITIONS.

PROPOSITION I. *John Baptist's ministry was the best in the world, when he began to preach; and all people that had any care of their souls went out after him.*—His ministry differed from the ordinary ministry of the times. He cried not up human inventions before divine institutions; but with holy vehemency pressed the necessary doctrine of repentance; a repentance upon which they might expect pardon of sin: (Luke iii. 3:) and it was convincing where it was not converting, [in] those that loved their sins better than to yield. It was of Divine Authority, yet they loved their credit better than to affirm it was but of human authority. (Mark xi. 28—32.) In short: his main design was to bring or send persons to Christ. “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (Matt. iii. 11, 12.) As if he had said, “Christ will baptize

with the pouring-out of his Spirit on believers, and with that fiery trial which shall refine the gold from the dross, and winnow the wheat from the chaff: he will gather the faithful into his heavenly kingdom, and burn up unbelievers with unquenchable fire."

PROP. II. *Persons of all ranks, with some kind of pains and self-denial, followed John Baptist for his convincing instruction.* (Matt. iii. 5.)—Some were savingly converted, and got that good by his ministry which they made good use of many a year after: it is said of Apollos, that he knew "only the baptism of John." "He taught diligently the things of the Lord;" and with the help of what he got by Christian conference, "he mightily convinced the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah." (Acts xviii. 25—28.) But, beside few such,

1. *The Pharisees*: they followed him who were themselves the most applauded preachers among the Jews, they whose dictates were taken for oracles; they left the chair of Moses to hear this Elias.

2. *The Sadducees*: who denied the resurrection, and the immortality of the soul. John asks them, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. iii. 7, 8.) As if he had said, "You Pharisees are so conceited of your own righteousness, that you think you are in no danger of hell; and you Sadducees think there is none." John presses both to repentance, that might evidence itself by its fruit to be sincere.

3. *Persons that pretended nothing to religion*, but were so infamous for gross wickedness that every one who valued his reputation shunned being seen in their company. "The publicans and the harlots" got heaven by believing. (Matt. xxi. 31, 32.)

4. *Soldiers*: that the Romans kept to maintain their conquest of Judea. Such do not use to trouble themselves with cases of conscience. "The soldiers also demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?" (Luke iii. 14.) He doth not blame the employment, but regulates their behaviour.

5. *Courtiers*: who could not bear plain dealing, yet could expect no other from him. They could not but fear him, though they did not love him. It is said that Herod himself "feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." (Mark vi. 20.) As if he would bribe his conscience by parting with some sins more quietly, to give him leave to keep others, that he could not part with.

And thus you see what a congregation John preached to.

PROP. III. *Those that attend upon the ministry of the word,—they do or should propose unto themselves some end why they do it.*—Those who through grace propose a good end to themselves,—they always obtain their end; they who receive the truth in the love of it, shall be saved; (2 Thess. ii. 10;) but for the most,

1. *Some propose to themselves no end at all.*—Neither can they so much as speak sense to any one that shall ask them why they come there. I cannot better express it, than in the words of the divine historian, in describing of that rout, truly so called, though he names

176 SERMON I. HOW TO GIVE CHRIST A SATISFYING ACCOUNT, it "a church:" Ἡ ἐκκλησία συγκεχυμένη. "The assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together." (Acts xix. 32.) I am loath to say, this description fits too many congregations.

2. *Some propose to themselves ends downright sinful.*—Namely, some, to catch at expressions, for the exercise of their frothy wits over a glass of wine. "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made too strong" for you to break. (Isai. xxviii. 22.) Some, to ensnare the minister; we need not think it strange, for they dealt so with our Master: "They send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words;" and they pretend a scrupulous conscience: they say unto him, "Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: is it lawful to give" that as "tribute to Cæsar," which Moses appointed for the use of the sanctuary? (Mark xii. 13, 14.) Christ doth as it were answer them, [that] if it were really a case of conscience, they would not stick at paying both; the one *because they must*, the other, *because they ought*. Some get into the greatest crowd for the advancement of their diving trade of picking pockets; they not at all observing how the devil tricks them of their souls for perverting the ends of the gospel.

3. *Some propose ends frivolous and trifling, though they are sinful too.*—For instance: some, to see fashions; some, to be taken notice of among serious Christians, for worldly, not spiritual, advantage.

PROP. IV. *Those that propose a good end, must call themselves to a strict and severe account, how that end is obtained or lost.*—A slight account is in some respect worse than none at all; for by a shuffling account you do but as it were bribe God's officer (natural conscience) to respite you from time to time, till death surpriseth you with a summons to give up your account to Christ himself.

I will name four metaphors which will illustrate and prove this:

1. We must give such an account *as a scholar to his teacher, of what he learns.*—"And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?" (Mark iv. 13.) As if he had said, "If you understand not those similitudes that most plainly show you how you must receive the word if ever you get saving benefit by it, how will you ever profit by any thing else?"

2. You must give an account *as a steward to his master.*—"Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." (Luke xvi. 2.) But here is the difference between being stewards to *our heavenly* and to *an earthly* master: Christ and his servants have but one and the same interest; if we improve whatever he intrust us with for our real profit, we do thereby give him the glory [which] he expects, and he will accept of our accounts.

3. We must give an account *as a debtor to our creditor.*—"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king which would take account of his debtors. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents," &c. (Matt. xviii. 23, 24.) We are so far sinfully indebted to the justice of God,

that unless we be discharged upon our Surety's payment, we must be imprisoned with devils unto eternity.

4. We must give an account *as a malefactor to a judge*.—"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. xii. 36, 37.) Unprofitable words cannot escape being accounted for. Let us fulfil all these metaphors in calling ourselves to account; and when we have done that, we have not done all; for,

PROP. V. *The strict account we take of ourselves must be frequent*.—Every Christian is Christ's garden, that "drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it." (Heb. vi. 7.) As there must be frequent showers on God's part, so there must be frequent weeding on our part, or no blessing to be expected. This is not a duty that can be dispatched at once; those that do not often account, never account as they ought. Methinks I may allude unto the dying words of Elisha to Joash, when he bid the king "smite upon the ground," without prescribing how oft; but when he smote only "thrice, the man of God was wroth with him," and told him he should have smitten oftener. (2 Kings xiii. 18, 19.) What, do you reflect upon yourselves only upon some qualm of conscience, or upon some rousing sermon, or upon some startling providence? Do not you know that your hearts are incredibly deceitful, Satan perpetually watchful to steal away the word? And he will do it unless you hide it in your heart. (Psalm cxix. 11.) Your ordinary experience tells you, that you never let your accounts run on to any length but they are entangled; and that your frequent self-reflections are always blessed with growth of grace.

But I will come to some INFERENCES from the doctrine.

INFERENCES.

INFERENCE I. *It is not the bare hearing of the best preachers in the world that will save you*.—Though a minister be never so successful in the conversion of sinners, unless your souls be converted, you had better never have heard him. Let not any scoffing atheist say, "Then I will never hear any of them more." Sirs, pray believe this one word,—*That will not make your damnation more tolerable*. "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all: 'We will be as the Heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.' As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you." (Ezek. xx. 32, 33.) God will not send his word to a people, and leave them at their liberty to continue in their infidelity, or to return to it at their pleasure: if they will live as Heathens, their condemnation shall be far worse.

INFER. II. *Many persons, who lay aside other business, spend much time and take much pains to hear the best preachers: but they either not proposing or not pursuing a right end, renders all they do worse than nothing; and they drop into hell, while they seem to be*

knocking at heaven-door.—We read of “five thousand men, beside women and children.” (May we not moderately reckon the women and children to double the number?) These poor people, when they came from home, took provision with them for several days, drank water, lay several nights upon the ground in the open fields, stayed after their victuals were spent, till they were scarce able to get home for faintness. All this appears by having baskets so ready to gather up the fragments; whereas in the wilderness there was none to be bought or borrowed. (Matt. xiv. 15, &c.; xv. 32, &c.) But, alas! how few of this ten thousand were then savingly converted! We read not of any great numbers of converts by Christ’s preaching; for Christ but covertly and sparingly discovered himself to be the Messiah, lest he should hinder the main thing [which] he came into the world for, namely, to die for sinners; for “had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1 Cor. ii. 8.) Besides, Christ told his disciples, their preaching should be followed with the conversion of more souls than his. (John xiv. 12.) Pause a little, and think, how many will tell Christ they have heard him preach in their streets, and they have followed him into the wilderness; they have there wanted their sleep in the night, and gone with a hungry belly in the day, for which Christ fed them by miracle; and yet Christ “will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matt. vii. 23; Luke xiii. 26, 27.)

Let me follow these inferences with a word or two of

REPROOF.

1. *Of those whose other duties do not hold proportion with their hearing.*—Mistake me not; I had rather never speak word more while I live, than speak a word to gratify scoffers at religion, who scornfully twit those that are better than themselves with their hearing so many sermons: but yet I dare not soothe-up *those* in their hypocrisy, whose religion lies all in hearing of sermons, as if there were no other duties to be minded; no family duties, no relative duties, whereas only hearing will make at best but ricketty Christians.

2. *They are also to be reprov'd, that only go to see a sermon.*—“What went ye out into the wilderness to see?” What? To see fashions? They can give a more exact account of every fantastical dress, than of any one savoury truth they heard; whereas it is said of Christ’s hearers: “The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.” (Luke iv. 20.) A wandering eye is an infallible evidence of a wandering heart.

USE.

But I will come closer to the case, in a USE OF EXHORTATION; with DIRECTIONS to all sorts of hearers, that they would forthwith set upon the practice of this great comprehensive duty, to give Christ a satisfying account why they attend upon the ministry of the word.

“Every one must give an account of himself to God.” That you may do it with comfort, take these or such-like

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Set yourselves toward the removing of those hinderances which, till you in good earnest set upon the removing of them, you can never give a good account to yourselves, much less to Christ, of any soul-business.*—I will name but four, and with the naming of them give a word of direction how to attempt their removal. For instance :

1. *The state of unregeneracy is a dead weight to the soul.*—It keeps it down from lifting-up itself heavenward. One dead in sin blesseth himself that his conscience is not troublesome ; that is, it is neither squeamish to boggle at sin, nor inquisitive after the danger of it.

The only **REMEDY** I shall name is this ; namely, Mind conversion as far as it is possible for an unconverted person to mind it. “How far is that ?” Thou canst never tell till thou hast tried. Query, *Whether ever any pushed this forward to the utmost, and missed of conversion.* Not that any thing [which] an unconverted person can possibly do, can merit grace ; but the soul’s holding-on in its attempt, and in some measure breaking through the corruptions and temptations that way-lay it, is a token for good, that the Spirit of grace is hopefully at work, to bring over the soul to Christ ; the Spirit of God saying to that soul, what David said to his son Solomon : “Arise and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.” (1 Chron. xxii. 16.)

2. *The second hinderance is love of ease.*—Persons do not love to meddle with that which they apprehend will be a troublesome business. “What ! to be always upon our watch ? to be always examining why, and to what end, we so much as hear a sermon ? This is wearisome and intolerable.” For **REMEDY** :

Rouse up thy soul, as thou wouldest do thy body in a lethargy ; thou wouldest then be jogged, and pulled, and shaken ; there is more need in thy soul-lethargy. It is the voice of him that deserves to be thy Beloved that calls thee ; do not give an answer directly contrary to Christ’s spouse : “I am awake, but my heart is asleep.” (Canticles v. 2.)

3. *A third hinderance is unbelief.*—As to this, I speak not now of the state of unbelief ; but they do not believe this to be so needful as it is represented. The truth is, if we run up sins into their causes, we shall find unbelief to be the most teeming mother of most omissions, and of more than omissions. For instance : *Why do you omit such a duty ?* “I do not believe it to be necessary.” *Why do you not reflect upon the duties which you do not omit ?* “I do not believe God requires it.” For **CURE** :

Consider : you have more grounds and motives for faith in this matter, than you have for any thing you practise. For instance : you pray ; (I hope you do, I would not have my supposition fail me ;) it is more your duty to reflect *why* you pray, and *how* you pray, than it

is merely to pray. You may teach a parrot to speak words of prayer ; but it is a special exercise of grace to pray aright as to the manner of it. So, you believe it is a duty to attend upon the word ; it is more your duty to propose a right end, and to reflect how that end is pursued, attained, or lost, than it is barely to hear. Pardon me, if I use a nauseous metaphor to set forth an odious sin : some of you bring your dogs with you, and they hear the sound of words, lie still, and depart when the sermon is ended. Upon reflection, you will be ashamed to do no more.

4. *A fourth hinderance is the satisfaction that natural conscience takes in a little tiny devotion.*—Natural conscience requireth a little, and but a little ; a little will satisfy it, so it be but something. Doeg “was detained before the Lord.” (1 Sam. xxi. 7.) It had been better for him to have been sick in his bed, than to have been quieting his conscience with such circumstantiated devotion. For CURE :

Do but review what thy natural conscience takes satisfaction in, and thou wilt be more dissatisfied ; bring but thy conscience, with thy duty, to the rule, and then examine it. To act only like a slave, (Gal. iv. 30,) that desires no more than to turn his work off hand, to do no more than he needs must,—this leads to rejection ; whereas a conscience guided by scripture will put you upon doing all as a child, that the manner of it may please your heavenly Father ; and this will qualify you for an heavenly inheritance.

This is the first direction : *Remove hinderances.*

DIRECT. II. *Call yourselves to an account, BEFORE, IN, and AFTER the hearing of the word, to what end thou camest, and how the end is pursued, or dropped.*

1. *Before you hear.*—Solomon adviseth thus : “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools ; for they consider not that they do evil ;” (Eccles. v. 1 ;) be more ready to receive instruction, and to accept of what God says, which will be thy wisdom, than to offer sacrifice, and neglect obedience, like foolish hypocrites. And a greater than Solomon, our Lord Jesus Christ, (Luke xiv. 28—33,) cautions us by a double metaphor at his school-door, when we come to be his disciples, namely, that spiritual edification will be in this like worldly building,—[it will] cost more than we imagine ; and our spiritual warfare will be in this like the carnal,—more costly than at first we conceive : it will cost us more careful thoughts, more waking nights, more painful days, more prayers and tears, more self-denial and contempt of the world, than inconsiderate persons will believe.

For your care before you hear, I shall propose but three things :—

(1.) *Renew your repentance of the sins of your hearing.*—The more particularly, and expressly, and heartily you do this, the better you will be able to give account of your attendance upon the word. This will be like the washing or scouring of a vessel before you fill it, that what you put into it may not be spoiled. According to that of the apostle James, “Lay apart,” not only restrain and keep in, but put

off and throw away, "all filthiness."* (James i. 21.) It is a metaphor borrowed from the filth of the body, and thence transferred to the soul. Sin is a sordid thing, and we must not only lay aside all things that defile us, but "all superfluity of naughtiness." Some interpret it of those excrements which we are in pain till we are rid of them: as if he had said, "Wash off all outward filth, and purge out all inward; for without this we can never savingly receive the word."

(2.) *Propose to yourselves such an end for your hearing, that you will not be ashamed of.*—If God should give you your liberty, propose what end you will to yourselves, provided it be such as upon serious reflection you will not be ashamed of. For instance: you go to hear a sermon to see a mistress: is not that an end to be ashamed of? Or you fetch a walk for your recreation, and sit down to rest you at the end of it to hear a sermon; and when you have rested you return: may you not be ashamed of this? You go to a sermon for the language or notions of it; though both these may be excellent, your end is sinful. But yet I will close this with this advice; namely, Hold on to hear sermons, though with an end to be repented of; for while you play with the bait, you may be caught with the hook; while you are in the way of grace, you may be graciously surprised.

(3.) Above all, *preface your hearing with prayer.*—As praying is the last thing the minister doth before he preacheth, let praying be the last thing you do before you go out to hear. "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii. 7.) Many times our profiting is according to our praying. But here again I advise you to hear, though you pray not at all; for by hearing you will be convinced that it is your duty to pray, you will be instructed and encouraged in it.

2. *In hearing.*—When you are engaged, pray do not gratify Satan then by a diversion for preparation. No, though it be by prayer; (any other than ejaculatory;) that must have been before. Herein likewise take these three directions:—

(1.) *Set yourselves before God, to hear Christ speaking to you from heaven.*—The more actually and seriously you presentiate Christ unto yourselves, the more you will give up yourselves to him. I grant, we cannot preach as the apostles wrote, by the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, without all error and mistake; (query, *Whether all their popular sermons were so infallibly guided?* It seems not, Gal. ii. 11;) yet Christ speaks through us as through a cracked trumpet: though we betray our own frailties, yet, for the main of our sermons, we dare say, "Thus saith the Lord," which is a proof of Christ speaking in us. (2 Cor. xiii. 3.) This will be matter of thanksgivings by both your ministers and yourselves, when you receive "the word of God, which ye heard of us, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God;" then it will certainly "work effectually." (1 Thess. ii. 13.)

(2.) *Mix your hearing with ejaculatory prayers.*—Ejaculations to

* Ἐπιπορευῶν, sordes.

God, and soliloquies to yourselves, will help to make and keep the heart tight. Jog your own hearts, as you do your sleeping neighbour. Call-in your thoughts while they are within call, and, as far as it is possible, think of nothing but what you are about. A heart thus confined, is likely to be most enlarged both with grace and comfort.

(3.) *Be sure to hold fast the scope of what you hear.*—Not only those passages which more particularly affect you, but that which is the main design of the sermon. I think, *this* the weakest memory may retain; and I think, this will do most good when it is retained. In short, be sure you retain something. Do thus, or somewhat like it, in hearing.

3. *After hearing.*—These questions were proposed by Christ, both negatively and affirmatively, some months, perhaps some years, after they had heard John. And Christ proposeth that with some vehemency. That you may give a good answer, I shall commend to you but two things:—

(1.) *Consideration.*—Chew the cud; this is the metaphor that is commonly made use of. The beasts that chewed the cud, were clean for food and sacrifice. (Lev. xi. 3.) These creatures gather up their food into a kind of inward bag, and then they sit down and bring it up to chew it over again, and then convey it into the stomach for nourishment. So *that* Christian *whose* self and service is a sacrifice acceptable to God, gathers up what he thinks the best in a sermon, and, when retired, chews it over again for his spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. As your considering, thinking man is the only wise man, so your considering, thinking Christian is the only thriving Christian.

(2.) *Add something to your practice, and continue that till it give way to something else of greater moment.*—I am far from laying any stress upon any spiritual prudentials that I can offer. But I would humbly propose it to thinking Christians, whether if every Lord's day, (I do not exclude other days; but,) query, *Whether we may not expect more from Lord's-days' sermons than any other?* the Lord's day being the time of divine appointment, and other days, of human conveniency. The business of the Lord's day is devotion; on other days we make a scape from worldly business to a sermon, and then rush into the world again, as if we would redeem that time for the world that we spent with God. I query, therefore, if we do charge ourselves, upon what we hear on the Lord's day, to practise something more, or something more carefully, than before, and to keep to that till that give place to something else of greater moment. Did we beg something of God more this week than the last; did we single out some sin for mortification more this week than the last; did we do something enjoined on the Lord's day; this would be to us like the shew-bread to Israel, which was made thus: they brought twenty-four pecks of wheat-meal, out of which they sifted twenty-four pottles of fine flour, of which they made twelve unleavened cakes; every one was ten hand-breadths long, and five broad, and seven

fingers high ; which signified the multitude of the faithful, presented unto God in his church, as upon a pure table, continually serving him ; (Lev. xxiv. 8, 9 ;) as also the spiritual repast which the church of God obtaineth from and before God, who feedeth them with Christ the Bread of life, especially every sabbath-day. Were this, or some such course taken from week to week, would not this hook into your practice all the great duties of religion ? And so you would give a good account of your hearing ; but,

DIRECT. III. My third direction is this : *Do not only satisfy yourselves, but carry on your inquiry, that it may through grace satisfy Christ.*—My text is a question proposed by Christ, and to him must we give our answer. You may give a plausible account to ministers ; but pray remember you must give an account to Christ. You may, by *leading* questions, mislead ministers ; as persons that go to law do their lawyers ; and they lose *their cause* by it. But when, by studied hypocrisy, you mislead ministers to gratify you with a mistaken judgment, you lose *your souls* by it. It is Christ that asks the question, not to be informed by you : “for he knows what is in man,” better than they themselves. Christ would have you to be plain-hearted and ingenuous, that wherein you see cause to complain, he may help you. When the trembling soul, after the hearing of such ministers as would undecieve them, is like Jeremy, for his people’s being deceived by false prophets :—“My heart within me is broken because of the prophets ; all my bones shake ; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness.” (Jer. xxiii. 9.) As if you were to say, “Fear and trembling take hold of me. I am ashamed, I am at my wit’s end ! The word of God calls for so *much* holiness, and I have so *little* ! Thou inquirest, Lord, what I hear for. I dare not say, that my intentions and ends are so serious as they should be ; I am afraid to own any thing that is good :”—Christ, in a way of compassion, is ready to encourage such a soul. Canst thou but sincerely say, thou comest to meet Christ, and to learn of Christ ; Jesus Christ welcomes such to him, and they may answer him with comfort.

Under this head, consider,

1. *Christ asks thee here in this world, that thou mayest now be able to give such an answer as thou mayest stand-by at the last day, when there will be neither hopes nor time to rectify it, if it be insufficient.*—It is in this something like our pleadings in courts of judicature ; we must put-in our plea, and stand to it : “Thou knowest, Lord, there is, through grace, something of sincerity ; but, for any thing else, do thou, Lord, answer for me.” Pray mark this ; when once the soul can bring the question back again to Christ, thus : “Thou askest me what I come for. Lord, I come for thee to answer for me. I cannot satisfy my own conscience : it is ready to fly in my face. Much less can I satisfy my jealous Master, unless thou compassionately answer for me. Lord, thou usest to answer for thine own.”

May we then suppose Christ thus to inquire?—"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of any one who sincerely comes to wait for me in mine ordinances?" Can we suppose any one to be so daring as to perk up, and say?—"I charge all these to be a company of proud, conceited hypocrites. They will needs be wiser than their neighbours. They spend their time in running up and down to hear sermons." Christ doth, as it were, answer: "Dost thou make this a crime? What he did, it was out of love to me, and obedience to me. 'He hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from him.' (Luke x. 42.) And, for you, who are so ready to accuse others, and excuse yourselves for slighting or ill-managing all the means offered for your salvation: 'Bind him hand and foot,' that he may make no resistance; 'take him away,' that he may neither make an escape, nor have any hopes of mercy; 'and cast him into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matt. xxii. 13.)

2. *If you do not give Christ an answer which he will accept of, it is in vain to expect relief from any other.*—If the Father be offended, Christ interposeth himself, bears the wrath of God, and prevents it from us. Christ is the Days-man between God and us.

If the Spirit be grieved by our quenching his motions, and striving against his striving with us to hear and obey the Lord Jesus:—provided that rise not to the sin against the Holy Ghost, which the greatest part of trembling Christians often fear they have committed; though by the way let me tell them, that their fear [lest] they have committed it, yields them sufficient assurance they have not committed it; for this sin is always attended with such hardness of heart that they sin without remorse:—so that while the Spirit overcomes their resistances, and prevails with them to comply with Christ, through Christ their sins against the Spirit shall be pardoned.

But when the Angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ, was promised "to be sent before" the Israelites in the wilderness, "to keep them in the way, and to bring them into the place prepared for them;" they are expressly charged "to beware of him, and obey his voice. Provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions," but severely punish them. (Exod. xxiii. 20, 21.) Not that sins against Christ shall never be pardoned, though repented of; but to keep us from adventuring upon sin, as if it should easily be pardoned; whereas the apostle tells us, "If we sin wilfully, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." (Heb. x. 26.) That is, those that reject and renounce Christ's sacrifice for sin, there is no other sacrifice can atone [to] God for them. I grant, that this text chiefly concerns the unpardonable sin. But, I pray you, consider: those that do not make it the main business of their lives to give Christ such an account as he will accept of, what improvement they have made of his word; if they live and die in that neglect, they shall as certainly perish as they who commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. There are but very few [who] can commit that sin; but an incredible number commit this, without considering the danger of it. Now, Christians,

is your time to make-up such an account as you must stand or fall by to eternity. (O that I had but one minute's such conception of eternity, as it is possible to be had in this world! I reckon it would influence my whole life.) Christ's sentence at last will be according to the account we give him here; and if his sentence be not as you would have it, there will be no altering of it. Your repentance then will be no small part of your torment.

OBJECTION. "I cannot think that Christ will be so sharp and severe. This affrights me more than any thing. This is the most terrible consideration that ever I heard. I expected relief from Christ at last, and that Christ should hear me at my first call; though I have neglected to hear him, so as to have any practical regard to what he said all my life. The thoughts of what you say would amaze me, did I believe it. But I hope to find it otherwise."

ANSWER 1. Do not flatter yourselves with vain hopes; but let what I have spoken fright you to your duty, not from it. You may expect as much from Christ as you can reasonably desire. Would you have Christ to be to you like a foolish mother to a cockered child? Let the child do what he will; do but chide him, or threaten him, he runs to his mother, and she will excuse all, and bear him out in all, though it be to his future undoing of soul and body. Christians, never expect it: Christ will never do so. Christ tells us beforehand, that none shall be more ready than he to help us against sin, provided we will be ruled by him. But we shall find, none will be more severe against it, if they be impenitently rebellious. "As he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. vii. 13.) And,

2. How absurdly disingenuous is it, to be careless of our account, and to expect that Christ should answer for us! Christ was more ready to answer for his disciples, than they could be to ask him, when, through infirmity, they were sleeping, when they should have been praying. But it is absurd to expect any thing like it, when it is not infirmity but wilfulness, through dislike of his service, and hatred of holiness. You would verify the Pharisees' slander of Christ, that he is "a friend of publicans and sinners;" a friend to their sins, not to their souls. In short, therefore, be conscientiously solicitous to give an account to Christ, such as may be graciously acceptable; and though there is nothing beyond this, yet there may be something over and above.

DIRECT. IV. Let this, therefore, be my last direction:

Make it your care to give a silencing account to the devil, and all his agents.—I grant, that neither he nor they will ever be silent. They will reproach and revile you. They will mutter and whisper, and secretly say and do all they can against you; and they will never want something out of which they will force matter of reproach. You have Christ, in this very context, saying, "Whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not

lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." (Matt. xi. 16—18.) They do as it were say of John, "The devil enables him to endure such hardship:" and therefore they reject his doctrine. And they reproach Christ's person, as if his more free temper encouraged licentiousness. Let a godly man's conversation be what it will, it will never please those that hate holiness. But yet, my brethren, it will strangely muzzle them. They can but grumble out a reproach; or if they speak out, it is by clamour to drown the whispers of their consciences, when they can say something like that: "So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned. And she took it up, and went into the city: and brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved, after she was sufficed. And her mother-in-law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" &c. (Ruth ii. 17—19.) As if you were to say, "Such of Christ's harvest-men have been at work, and I have been gleaned after them. I have met with that which to me hath been a feast. The word hath been refreshing; and I can show you some of the handfuls that I have gleaned. I have attended upon the ministry of the word, and have picked up some knowledge, who was before an ignorant wretch, and never minded my soul. I have picked up something of food for my soul, whereas I was pining away in mine iniquities. My conversation will witness where I have been gleaned; and I humbly resolve, there I will abide, in the use of such means, while God vouchsafes them." When you thus resolve, you must expect Satan will do his utmost to flatter or fright you out of your purposes. But while you can approve your ends to Christ, yourselves may answer Satan in the hinderances he will throw in your way. For example:

Satan. Why art thou so solicitous for thy soul? Thou mayest be saved without all this ado. It is more than needs.

Soul. No, Satan! All I can do is too little, did not Christ undertake for me. But I will not do the less for Christ's doing so much.

Satan. All thou doest is to no purpose: thou shalt be damned at last.

Soul. Should it be so, I would rather serve God for nothing, than thee for all thy flattering, lying promises. I will do God all the service I can for the mercies I have received, though I should never have more. The very work of religion is better than the work of sin, even without a reward.

Satan. Spare thyself, poor soul! Thou art not all spirit: thou hast flesh and blood as well as others. Why wilt thou expose thyself to contempt and sufferings? No man in his wits will court a general hatred.

Soul. Peace, Satan! Be it known to thee, and to all thyimps, I had rather have your hatred than your love. All your kindness to me is to ruin me.

Satan. Be not so conceited of thine own wisdom. Look about

thee in the world. Have not others souls to save as well as thou? and they do not proudly pretend to be wiser than their neighbours.

Soul. Be gone, Satan! I will parley no longer. If others neglect salvation, therefore must I? Will their missing of salvation relieve me for the loss of mine? Though a Peter persuade Christ to spare himself;—nay, when his friends went out to lay hold of him, thinking his zeal had crazed him;—nay, when his brethren had wheedled-in his mother to send to him, to abate his work;—he would not yield a minute. (Mark iii. 21, 31.) By the grace of God, (though I shall come infinitely short,) I will make Christ my pattern; and therefore, Satan, say thy worst, and do thy worst. Through Christ, I defy thee.

Will not some such account (in some respect, I may say) to the devil himself, more confound him, when he shall see all his spiteful insinuations work out comfortable evidences of present grace; ay, of growing grace, and future glory? If this will not silence him, it will make him roar in his chains. When he finds himself tied up from doing what mischief he would, he roars for vexation; while the gracious person (thanks to Christ!) laughs at him. "Out of the mouths of" very unlikely persons "hast thou ordained strength, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger." (Psalm viii. 2.) As if the Psalmist had said, "God doth by the spiritual skill and strength which he gives even to young, weak converts, unfit to grapple with an enemy,—God enables even such to silence, confound, and conquer the enemies of God and his people, and the devil in the head of them, whose kingdom and power are broken by this means, and those that fight under his banner against God and Christ." And pray, observe the title here given him; namely, "the avenger." He, being sentenced by God to eternal torments, makes it his business to revenge himself, what he can, upon God and Christ, upon his children and servants. Christians, if you can through grace make Satan himself, against his will, help you to profit by the word, this will raise your souls beyond what is ordinary, both for grace and comfort; or, if God in his wisdom suspend such manifestations of himself, yet such exercise of grace shall certainly tend to the multiplying of praises in the other world.

And now, though I have, in my pitiful manner, answered the case, my work is not yet done till I have answered a COMPLAINT upon the case; and it is the complaint of those who have least cause; of those who give Christ that answer to his question which satisfies him, but yet cannot give an answer [which] will satisfy themselves. Their hearts ache from the very proposing of the question, and their hearts misgive them under all that is said in answer to it.

COMPLAINT I. "We have more cause to complain than we are able to express. O the sermons that we have lost, of which we can give no account at all! and of those that are not utterly lost, we have made no suitable improvement. We are convinced that we should be as impartial now in examining, whether we have got saving faith by hearing of the word; we should be as strict *now*, as if we were

upon our dying bed. (We know not whether ever we shall have a death-bed; many, more likely to live than ourselves, die suddenly; and why not we?) Nay, rather *now*; for we have not now wearisome sickness to disable us. We have now those helps that we cannot have then; freedom of ordinances in public, capacities for duties in secret. We may now bring things to an issue, which is then next to impossible. These and a thousand such considerations even fright me. When I sit down to think, my thoughts even overwhelm me, to reflect what a sorry account I can give of all that I have heard."

These and more doleful complaints are the usual entertainments of their most serious Christian friends. To all which I shall offer these answers:—

ANSWER. The word of God which they apply to their sorrow, they ought as well to apply to their comfort. For those who are really grieved that they cannot satisfy themselves, much less (as they think) Christ,—they are mistaken; for Christ is ordinarily best satisfied with that [with] which the gracious soul is least satisfied. For instance, that prayer which he is most ashamed of, Christ most approves of. "The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." (Canticles ii. 12.) It is spring-time in the soul. When the groans of a contrite heart sound harsh to others, they are music in Christ's ears: not that Christ delights in his people's sorrows, but as they are evidences of his graces in them, and of his Spirit's abiding with them. It is only the gracious soul that is grieved at heart, that he cannot give Christ a better account of his profiting. "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for my iniquities are increased over my head, and my trespass is grown up unto the heavens. What shall I say after this? There is hope in Israel concerning this thing." (Ezra ix. 6, 10; x. 2.) The apostle expressly assures us, that "those that judge themselves shall not be judged" with a judgment of condemnation. (1 Cor. xi. 31, 32.) Cheer up therefore, poor drooping soul! and to thy comfort consider whether this be not the only thing wherein Christ and you believers be not of the same mind. Christ puts a better interpretation of his actings, than he himself dares. Many a time Christ owns that as grace, which he condemns for hypocrisy. Christ forgives him that which he can never forgive himself. Christ says, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" for that which he ever finds fault with.

COMPLAINT II. But the complaining soul saith, I mistake him, I speak to the wrong person: "Propose comfort to those that are grieved [that] they cannot give Christ a satisfying account; whereas I am not troubled enough, nor grieved enough. A serious reflection upon such returns as mine to Christ's kindness would certainly break any heart but mine. But, alas! I am next to nothing affected with it."

I therefore further **ANSWER**: Thy complaining for want of sensible complaining entitles thee to comfort. Darest thou own so much as this, that thou art troubled [because] thou canst be no more troubled at the shameful account thou givest to Christ? Thou art afraid that word

has overtaken thee: "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart," &c. (Isai. vi. 9, 10.) Surely thou canst not think worse of thyself than this. Let me tell thee, The more thou thinkest of this, the less cause thou hast to apply this to thyself; for those whom God gives up to judicial hardness, never think or speak of such things but in scorn, and to make a mock of them; and that thou darest not do. There is another word for thee to think of: "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the place of my rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at thy word." (Isai. lxvi. 1, 2.) If God hath any place upon earth for his repose, it is in that soul that stands in awe of his word, and with due reverence receives it. What, dost thou complain thou art not troubled enough? nor contrite enough? not humbled enough? How do many souls bring their complaints to ministers, and bring their bills to congregations, for brokenness of heart, and a deep sense of sin, when they are so much broken already, that their other duties are almost justled out by it! Do not therefore overlook that text: "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) We should make it our business, to live in a serious course of holiness toward God; and righteousness toward men, in the love and practice of peace with all; and in the joyful sense of the love of God, and hopes of glory; taking pleasure in the promoting of the graces and comforts of others in our way to heaven. Christians, forget not, that "the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. viii. 10.) The serving of God with cheerfulness strengtheneth both body and mind; whereas excess of grief damps the spirit and enfeebles the body, unfitting us for the service of either God or man.

COMPLAINT III. But the complaining soul will still complain: "Say what you will or can, comfort belongs not to me. I may say with Asaph, 'My soul refuseth to be comforted. I remember God, and am troubled: I complain, and my spirit is overwhelmed. God holds mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' (Psalm lxxvii. 2—4.) As if I were to say, 'I cannot but reject all the consolations that my friends suggest to me. The thoughts of God's goodness, wisdom, and power have sometimes been refreshing to me; but now they are matter of terror to me. God is angry with me, and I cannot bear it. My trouble is so great, I cannot express it. Your speaking comfort to me, is but as the singing of songs to a heavy heart.'"

Notwithstanding all this, and a great deal more of such complaints, yet I will assert, and make good my assertion, that comfort belongs to them that conclude against themselves that their case is hopeless; and I will try to make those very persons confess it. We are not to take men's own word, that either the promises or threatenings are their portion; but we must examine the grounds of their preemptory

assertion. For instance: If a wicked wretch shall confidently boast, he doth not in the least doubt but he shall as certainly be saved as any of those that take most care about their salvation, though he never troubles his thoughts about it; do you think, that, in taking his accounts, Christ will let his confidence pass for saving faith, and give him heaven for his presumption? Surely, you cannot think he will, while he hath given us so plain a rule how to judge of words by things; namely, "By their fruits ye shall know them. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." (Matt. vii. 16, 18.) So then as a man shall not save his soul for his groundless presumption, so neither shall he lose his soul for his groundless despondency. Thou complainest of thyself, not of Christ. "He is precious" in thine eye; (1 Peter ii. 7;) therefore thy faith is saving. Thou fearest that thou dost not cleave to Christ, yet thou hadst rather die than offend him: this is a faith of adherence, and that is saving. Thou complainest, but restlessly strivest to be more inwardly, outwardly, universally holy: that is a good evidence [that] thy state is good, though, while under a temptation or under a cloud, thou canst not see it to be so.

COMPLAINT IV. But thou still sayest, "I am an unprofitable hearer; and I cannot believe that Christ will pardon what is amiss, and accept of any thing as good, of what I can do; and therefore pray quit this way of answering my complaint, by telling me of comfort: if you have any thing else to offer, I will hear it. I may expect rather to hear of Christ in a clap of thunder, than in a soft and still voice."

I will speak to thee no more directly of comfort, but only ask thee a question about the comforts of others. What are thy thoughts about the comforts and joys of the Holy Ghost? Are there any such things? or are they mere fancies? If there be any such things, what thinkest thou of those that partake of them? Is the enjoyment of them desirable? Are they happy that have them? Whether is more eligible, —to spend your life in mourning complaints, or to spend it in the joyful praises of the Lord our Redeemer? Are these questions hard to be answered? These questions are out of question.

"O, there are no joys like the joys of the Holy Ghost: the best of carnal joys are incomparably below them! Though I fear I shall never be so happy as to enjoy them, yet I cannot but admire them that do. Do you ask which is more eligible,—a life of mourning complaints, or a life of joys? Ask a man under a fit of the stone, whether that is more eligible than a state of health."

Well, dost thou speak this heartily? Ask thy heart again, that thou mayest not mistake me, or go back from thine own answer. Are the joys of the Holy Ghost realities? Are they unspeakably beyond all other joys? Are they happy that enjoy them? Wilt thou stand to thy word? Then they are all thine own. Thou hast a title to them at present, and, as sure as thy Redeemer lives, thou shalt be put into the possession of them. Mark how I prove it. Every one that hath truth of grace, hath an indefeasible title to glory: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God;

that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John v. 13.) They have [not only] a *seal* for assurance, but an *earnest*, which is a begun possession, (2 Cor. i. 22,) elsewhere called "the first-fruits." (Rom. viii. 23.) But every one that prizeth the holy joys of the Holy Ghost hath truth of grace. Graceless persons make a mock of the joys of the Holy Ghost. They can scarce forbear sneering at the mention of them. He prefers carnal comforts before them. "Many say, Who will show us any good?" But the gracious soul says, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (Psalm iv. 6, 7.) This is "the godly man, whom the Lord hath set apart for himself." (Verse 3.) Not any one that is not a saint himself hath any esteem for a saint as a saint: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (1 John iii. 14.) Now, I dare appeal to yourselves, in the very midst of all your complaints: When thou fearest thou shalt never have any of these joys, yet thou hast a value for them above any other. Thou preferrest thy complaints before worldly pleasures. Thou dost not, thou canst not, but follow Christ, though it be tremblingly. If all these be not infallible evidences of grace, what are? Chide thyself and pray thyself out of thy complaining temper. "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works." (Eccles. ix. 7.)

And thus you have my answer, as well to the complaint, as to the case: God make it beneficial to all that shall read it!

QUESTIONS.

There remain some QUESTIONS depending upon the Case, that require some answer: I will attempt that also.

QUESTION I. "When we make choice of a minister to be, under Christ, the special guide of our souls, how shall we avoid the sinful preferring of one before another? How may we escape that partiality which is one of the great sins of the age,—to cry up some, and decry others; to overvalue some, and to undervalue others? 'Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.' (1 Cor. i. 12.)—'*I am of Paul.* He had an extraordinary call to the apostolical office: there is none [who] preaches free grace like him. *He withstood Peter to the face, because he was to be blamed.* (Gal. ii. 11.) And as for Apollos, he had need to learn of his hearers: *When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.* (Acts xviii. 26—28.) None of these things can be spoken of Paul, and therefore *I am for Paul.*'—Another says, '*I am for Apollos.* He is a powerful preacher, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, fervent in spirit, diligent in the things of the Lord, speaking boldly in the synagogues, mightily convincing the Jews. (Verses 24—28.) I am for Apollos. Paul is nothing to him for a preacher: *his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible;* (2 Cor. x. 10;) and there-

192 SERMON I. HOW TO GIVE CHRIST A SATISFYING ACCOUNT, fore *I am for Apollos.*'—Another saith, '*I am for Cephas.* He was the chief apostle. Christ gave him a special charge to *feed his sheep and his lambs*; (John xxi. 15—17;) and therefore I will be of his flock.'—Another says, '*I am for Christ.* All these have their imperfections, but Christ hath none; and therefore I will expect the immediate teaching of Christ by his Spirit. I am not for the teachings of men.' And thus Christians do not only differ from one another in their esteem of preachers, but we shall find them differ from themselves in their esteem of the same persons. They magnify and vilify the same ministers. 'John was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season,' and but for a season, 'to rejoice in his light.' (John v. 35.) To Christ himself they said one day, 'Hosanna!' and, the next day, 'Crucify him!' And of Paul: the Galatians one while received 'him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus;' presently after are as shy of him as of an enemy, because he insists upon some truths [which] they have no mind to. (Gal. iv. 14—16.) How may this distemper be prevented or cured?"

ANSWER 1. *Keep up your esteem of Jesus Christ, as your great Shepherd, and of all faithful ministers, as his under-officers.*—"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus's sake." (2 Cor. iv. 5.) It is impossible to overvalue Christ, provided you do not *mistake* his work, and *neglect* your own. Do not expect that from Christ which he will not do: he will not teach you without the ministry of man, where he vouchsafes it. Christ hath the words of eternal life, but yet he commits to the ushers of his school "the word of reconciliation:" and "we pray you in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. v. 19, 20.) And it is Christ that saith expressly: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." (Luke x. 16.) This doth not only relate to extraordinary officers, such as the apostles; for Christ as well gave "pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. iv. 11, 12.) And therefore conscientiously attend upon the ministry of men, but expect the benefit of it only by the blessing of Christ. Whoever plants or waters, the success is from Christ.

2. *Take heed of a narrow spirit; confine not the church of Christ to a party.*—No, not the best party upon earth. What, hath Christ only these few sheep in the wilderness? If Christ should have no other subjects, his would be a little flock indeed. Whereas Christ's sealed ones, who are sealed for holiness, are "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." (Rev. vii. 9.) Christians, be as severe against yourselves as you will; but be not so against others. Say to thyself, "If I should be less strict than I am, I should question mine own fitness for church-communion. But I dare not judge so of another: I do not know his temptations: I do

not know how far God might leave him to himself, 'to try him, that he might know what was in his heart,' &c. (2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) Shall I from such an action judge of his state? No, I dare not." Be severe to yourselves, but be charitable unto others.

3. *Take heed of over-esteeming any, lest God blast his ministry as to you, that it be less profitable than before.*—You may easily observe, that when any one is overvalued, God is robbed of the overplus of honour that is given to any creature. This is a tender thing, and God will not bear it; let a well-ordered self-love steer you right in this matter. Query: *Whether ministers' or people's falling into scandalous sin, or dangerous error, spring not from this root?*

These cautions concern as well the sincere as others; but my last under this head concerns only hypocrites, or those who have too much cause to suspect themselves to be so.

4. *Take heed of being swayed by private interest.*—"To have men's persons in admiration, because of advantage;" (Jude 16;) that is, of flattering persons upon some carnal account. You have the apostle naming some of their spiritual diseases: *If any man affect to teach or to hear otherwise; and consent not to wholesome words*—That is, words that tend to cure the soul of spiritual distempers. *Even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness*—That is, that doctrine which promotes downright godliness. *He is proud*—That is, he is swelled up, he is great in his own esteem, though "knowing nothing" solidly. *But doting brain-sick about questions of no use, and strifes of words*—Contending about words. *Whereof cometh envy*—Of those that are wiser than himself. *Strife*—An ignorant person will not yield that another knows more than himself. *Railings*—What he wants in arguments, he will make up with foul language. *Evil surmisings*—Uncharitably suspecting what they will not speak out. *Perverse disputings*—Not to clear-up truth, but to shuffle-in error. *Of men of corrupt minds*—Distempered in their heads. *Destitute of the truth*—Have quitted savoury truth. *Supposing that gain is godliness*—Whatever tends to their worldly interest, that is very well consistent with their religion. *From such withdraw thyself*—Have nothing to do with them. (1 Tim. vi. 3—5.)

QUESTION II. "When there is a difference in the directions that are given by ministers, what shall those do who are to observe them? Prescriptions are sometimes peremptory, and we are charged to do expressly thus; and when we hear the same duty pressed by another, he directeth otherwise. 'If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the' spiritual 'warfare?'" (1 Cor. xiv. 8.)

ANSWER 1. Those that ordinarily ask this question, do not do it for practical direction, but for captious diversion. They do not speak by way of inquiry, but excuse. They will except against this and the other, but they will follow none; and therefore I will pass by these.

2. *Do but practise that wherein all the ministers of Christ are*

agreed, and you are safe.—They all give the same directions for substance: though their directions are *different*, they are not *contrary*. You know there is nothing more ordinary than for two ministers to preach upon one text, and to handle it different ways, and to draw from it different inferences, and different uses; but while they keep to scripture, and to the analogy of faith, all is commendable and beneficial. Christ is pleased variously to distribute both graces and gifts, both to ministers and Christians; and it is to the glory of his wisdom and grace that he doth so. All who are faithful to Christ and souls, agree in such things as these; namely, to convince of the evil of sin, and of the necessity of regeneration. There is none that is worth the name of a minister that can give sin a good word: they cannot speak slightly of sin; they cannot encourage sin; they cannot, they dare not, flatter you in your sins: they all agree to assure you, that “your sin will find you out;” (Num. xxxii. 23;) that if you do not find out your sin to repentance, your sin will find you out to your ruin. They all agree to direct you to Christ: some do it with more skill and warmth than others, but all agree in the thing: “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. iii. 11.) They all agree in pressing a life of holiness, to evidence the sincerity of your faith: “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord” with comfort. (Heb. xii. 14.)

3. *Endeavour to learn the holy skill and the holy zeal of making your advantage of the different talents of Christ’s faithful ministers.*—Hear none but whom you may groundedly take to be ministers of Christ; and then esteem such for their Master’s sake. Whoever brings me a message from Christ shall be welcome. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet” (though sweaty, dusty, dirty) “of him that bringeth good tidings” of the dissolution of the Babylonian captivity! (Isai. lii. 7;) “that publisheth salvation” by Jesus Christ: how much more amiable must these be! “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (1 Cor. xii. 7, 11.) No one shall have all, lest he should be proud; none shall want all, lest he should be discouraged. (Verse 21.)

4. *Strive to approve yourselves to be of a healing temper.*—You will hereby get more profit to yourselves, and be more useful unto others. “Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.” (Matt. v. 9.) Those that long and labour for peace, they are like God and Christ, and shall be owned as such. It is a duty for every one to sit down under a particular pastor, for the enjoyment of all ordinances; but as still holding communion with the truly catholic church. Though you can hold *local* communion but with one congregation at once, yet you may hold *mental* communion with the whole church of Christ at the same time. Do any thing but sin, to comply with others for their spiritual edification; and be not too hasty in accounting any thing sinful, wherein the sincere servants of Christ may have sentiments different from yours; rather *suspend* your own practice, than *censure* others’. I would commend

it to you, to love the truth and peace, to love truth more than peace ; but yet to consider, several truths of lesser moment may be waved for peace' sake. For instance: I may part with several things of my own right for peace' sake. Abraham the uncle lets his nephew Lot make that choice which belonged to himself, lest their infidel neighbours should scorn both for their contentions. (Gen. xiii. 8, 9.) The blessed apostle will not insist upon his due maintenance, lest he should hinder the spreading of the gospel. (1 Cor. ix. 12.) This rule is therefore to be observed,—that when two different commands at the same time call for our obedience, we must consider which of them is of greatest moment, not so much in itself, as to that season ; for so a command about the immediate worship of God must give place to a command that concerns but man's bodily relief: "I will have mercy rather than sacrifice." (Matt. ix. 13.) Several good works must be omitted when the doing of them will do more hurt than good. I will close this with that of the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 19—22: *Though I be free from all men*—Not obliged to any one more than another. *Yet have I made myself servant unto all*—I have complied with the persuasions and inclinations of others in things indifferent. *That I might gain the more*—That I might win them to Christ for their salvation. *Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews*—That is, to the unbelieving Jews ; I conformed to some of their ceremonies, that I might persuade them to embrace Christianity. *To them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law*—That is, to those believing Jews and Gentiles, who yet think it is necessary to observe the law of Moses ; I comply also with them in some ceremonies which were not yet unlawful. *To them that are without the law, as without law*—That is, to those Gentiles that do not look upon themselves as bound to observe the law of Moses ; among them I use my Christian liberty for the non-observing of days, and meats, &c. *Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ*—That is, I walk by the rule of the moral law ; and, subjecting myself to all the commands of Christ in the gospel, *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak*—That is, I condescended to the weak, in teaching them according to their capacity to learn. *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*—That is, I accommodate myself to all persons, for the promoting of the gospel.

QUESTION III. "How shall weak Christians, that have but low parts, little grace, few helps, and many hinderances, follow these or such-like directions?"

ANSWER 1. Know this to your comfort, that, though you are such, yet *while you are low in your own esteem, and diligent in the use of what means and helps you have, you stand fair to be as thriving Christians, as rich in grace and comfort, as those [whom] you apprehended far [to] exceed you.*—It is the low valleys that are most fruitful. *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world*—God picks-up those that seem to others to be the refuse of the world. *To confound the wise*—As Christ chose the poor fishermen, to convince

the most knowing part of the world. *God hath chosen the weak things of the world*—Such persons as seem most incapable of understanding the mysteries of the gospel. *To confound the things that are mighty*—To put to silence those that are far above them. *And base things of the world, and things which are despised, God hath chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are*—God, by those who are as contemptible as if they had no being to be taken notice of, manifests the emptiness of those that seem most excellent. (1 Cor. i. 27, 28.) Pray consider: when the whole world was drowned, and when Sodom and the neighbour-cities were burned, there was not one servant saved. But now under the gospel they are in a special manner charged, (and honoured by the charge,) “to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;” (Titus ii. 10;) and they stand upon even ground, as to spiritual privileges, with any rank of men in the world: “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all.” (Col. iii. 11.) It is neither *the Grecians*, being the most learned part of the world; nor *the Jews*, being the only national church in the world; it is neither the observing [of] the ceremonial law; it is not *the Barbarian*, that wants accomplishments; nor *the Scythians*, who are, of all barbarians, most barbarous; it is not *bond*, that is, those who are in the worst of human slavery; nor *free*, that is, those who were never in bondage to any: *But Christ is all, and in all*: That is, He infinitely supplies all outward defects: He is infinitely better to them than all outward privileges: so that you have comparatively nothing else to do but to clear up your union with Jesus Christ.

2. *Practise what you know, though it be never so little; improve what helps you have, though they be never so few; and your graces will grow more than you are aware of.*—“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.” (Mark iv. 26, 27.) Those that receive the good seed of the word into good, honest hearts, (or the word hath made them so,) it hath an insensible efficacy, which produceth a gradual increase of grace, even beyond observation. But you complain that you see no such thing. In some respect I may say, The less you take notice of your own graces, the better; provided you do not belie the Spirit of God in overlooking and denying what he hath wrought. Things necessary to salvation are but few, and plain, easy to be (through grace) sufficiently understood and practised. Though there is not any thing so inconsiderable but [it] may exercise the greatest parts and learning attainable in this life; yet there is not any thing necessary to be known, but Jesus Christ, who is our Prophet to teach us, will both give instruction, and capacity to receive it, to all his willing disciples; and Christ will require an account for no more talents than he gives.

3. *Endeavour to make a true observation, how those things which are in their own nature hinderances to the soul, are graciously and*

powerfully governed by God for our souls' profiting by them.—That, as the apostle, “I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” (Phil. i. 12.) When Paul was first taken off from preaching, and cast into prison, who would not at first hearing be ready to cry?—“O, many a poor soul will rue this day! This is the blackest cloud that ever darkened our gospel-day!” The apostle doth as it were tell them, they are greatly mistaken: at present, the fame of his sufferings rung through court, city, and country; and persons were so far from forsaking the truth through discouragement, that they boldly own the gospel: and now was he more at leisure to write those epistles which would benefit the church in future ages. But, to bring this down to ordinary Christians: you know that groundless fears, and trembling misgivings of heart, are the ordinary diseases of a scrupulous conscience; these now dispirit us and hinder us from that cheerful behaviour that might render religion more amiable, and so hinder the spreading of it. And, beside this, Satan, that subtle angler for souls, strikes-in with our spiritual diseases, and plies the soul with next to overwhelming temptations; and he never fails of success through want of skill, or through want of industry. But, blessed be God for overruling all this! God, by but upholding the soul under (not delivering the soul from) its fears, keeps it humble, and makes it more useful, throughout the whole course of its regeneration: and, as for the advantage that Satan takes, God is pleased to give the poor, trembling soul those experiences, that it is our sin not to take notice of them. For instance: That Christian, that is in his own eyes the poorest, weakest, silliest sheep in Christ's fold, shall outwit Satan in all his stratagems, and overpower him in all his assaults, though he knows not how he does it. Thus the poor soul, when he is hard beset, retreats to Christ; and though he dare not call his carriage an acting faith upon Christ, Christ will own it as such, and reward it as such. For how is it that such a poor soul hath held out so many years under its own fears and Satan's temptations, but that Christ upheld both it and its faith? Here is faith not discerned, yet victorious.

4. *Endeavour thankfully and impartially to take notice of the advantages of your condition.*—Do not so much look at what you apprehend more desirable in another's condition, as to know and consider the circumstances of your own condition. Another's condition is better for them: God sees your condition to be better for you; it is the station wherein God sets you: “Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.” (1 Cor. vii. 24.) Your station in the world is not so high as others', and your distractions in the world are not so great as others'. God hath not set you in his church so high as others; God doth not require so much of you as he doth of others. But, alas! you have not the graces that others have; neither have you the temptations nor desertions that others have. Those who have the largest measure, and the highest degrees, of grace, have always exercises suitable to their receipts; they have sometimes the sorest trials, sometimes the greatest corruptions; and if not that, yet

you will find it is such as Job, and Asaph, and Heman, that make most doleful complaints of the hidings of God's face. Therefore take the apostle's counsel: "Art thou called, being a servant? care not for it." (1 Cor. vii. 21.) As though he had said, Be not troubled at it, as if thy mean condition in the world rendered thee less acceptable unto God. Poor Lazarus is in rich Abraham's bosom. "Hearken, my beloved brethren:" as if he had said, This is a matter worthy your special notice: "Hath not God chosen" (As if he had said, Dare ye deny it?) "the poor of this world," that is, in the things of this world, or in the esteem of this world, "rich in faith?" (James ii. 5;) that is, they have abundance of the grace of faith, and of the privileges of faith; they have no inheritance on earth, but they have at present a title to, and they shall soon have the possession of, the heavenly kingdom.

SERMON II.

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WHEREIN, AND WHEREFORE, THE DAMNATION OF THOSE THAT PERISH UNDER THE GOSPEL WILL BE MORE INTOLERABLE THAN THE DAMNATION OF SODOM, OR THE WORST OF THE HEATHENS, AT THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.—Matthew xi. 24.

THE case [which] I am to discourse of this morning, is this: *Wherein, and wherefore, the damnation of those that perish under the gospel will be more intolerable than the damnation of Sodom, or the worst of the Heathens, at the day of judgment.*

We read, in the foregoing chapter, [of] our Saviour giving commission to his twelve disciples, whom he called "apostles;" where we have their commission asserted, instructions about it, and encouragements to the discharge of it.

But by his commission given to them, he did not thereby excuse himself; by his sending them forth to preach and work miracles, he did not forbear and indulge himself: others' labours did not excuse his own. For we read in the first verse of this chapter, "When Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities." And some of the cities are these, mentioned in this chapter,—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; three cities in Galilee. And he begins his speech to them in a way of exprobration: "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done." (Verse 20.) Whence

we may note, that this was not the first time of his coming to these cities: he had been with them before, both teaching and working miracles; else how could he now upbraid them? And, also, that these were not the only cities where he had thus been present; but here, the text saith, "were wrought," *αι ωλεισται δυναμεις αυτου*, "most of his mighty works."

And he begins with Chorazin and Bethsaida, and puts them both together, either because they were near one another,—about two miles distant; or because they both had equal privileges of his presence with them, and so [were] equally under guilt.

And in his upbraiding them, we may consider,

1. *What he upbraids them for.*—That "they repented not," notwithstanding the mighty works they had seen done before their eyes, and the heavenly doctrine they had heard preached in their ears.

2. *Whom he upbraids them by.*—It is Tyre and Sidon, the Tyrians and Sidonians; who were Phenicians inhabiting Syria, none of the Jewish nation, out of the pale of the church, brought up in the ignorance of God and true religion; yet if the works done in these cities had been done among them, they would have repented, and repented in dust and ashes, when these cities repented not at all: whereupon, our Saviour denounceth a woe against them: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida!"

3. *He upbraids them by name.*—And not in general with other impenitent sinners; for particulars affect more than generals.

Next he proceeds to Capernaum; and because, it may be, this city was under greater guilt than the two former, or any other in Galilee, therefore Christ names it by itself, and doth not only name it, but notify it,

1. *As being lifted up to heaven.*—Not in outward grandeur, pomp, or power; but by signal favours and privileges, from Christ's presence, his preaching, and mighty works done in it.

2. *As a city to be cast down to hell.*—"Thou shalt be cast down to hell;" or "hurled down by force and violence," as the Greek word, *καταβιβασθησθαι*, imports; and "to hell," *τωσ αιδου*, or, "as low as hell." A great fall indeed! What so high as heaven? and what so low as hell? Though, by "hell" some understand a temporal destruction,—some fatal calamity, that should carry it to the grave of oblivion, and bury it in ashes out of sight: which was executed upon it by the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and then by the Romans. But seeing Christ speaks in the text of "the day of judgment," I suppose he rather speaks of the eternal hell and damnation [which] it should be hurled then into.

3. He notifies it *by the form of his speech, directed to it in a way of indignation.*—"And thou, Capernaum." As if he held up his hand, shook his head, and contracted his brow against it: "Ah! Capernaum, Capernaum, of all cities, thou art likely to have the severest doom."

4. And, again, *by comparing it with Sodom, and representing it as worse than Sodom.*—"If the mighty works, which have been done in

thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Sodom would have repented; or had so many righteous persons in it, whereby not to be destroyed with fire and brimstone.

Now, as all these three cities were in Galilee, so they belonged to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali; which are foretold by the prophet Isaiah, as such as would first fall into the dimness and darkness of affliction in the Assyrian captivities, and as such as should first have the gospel-light shining amongst them in Christ's public ministry: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined;" (Isai. ix, 1, 2;) and therefore are first upbraided and rebuked by our Saviour, because they repented not.

But I pass from the context to the text; wherein we have our Saviour looking to the day of judgment, and the rewards of sinners to be then distributed: "But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."

Which words he speaks to Capernaum, and are a prediction of its doom in the day of judgment. And we might take up several NOTES from them:—

NOTE I. *There shall be a day of judgment.*—Whether men will believe it or not, yet it shall be. Christ here saith it, and the righteousness of God makes it necessary. It hath a witness in every man's conscience: "Felix trembled," though a Heathen, when Paul discoursed of it. (Acts xxiv. 25.) It is one of the articles of the Creed, and one of "the principles" of the Christian religion, in Heb. vi. 2, called "eternal judgment." But I shall not insist on this.

NOTE II. *In the day of judgment some sinners shall fare worse than others.*—Of those that shall be condemned, some will fall under sorer condemnation. Of those that go into everlasting fire, some, as in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, shall be cast into hotter flames; and [of] those that are "cast into outer darkness," (Matt. viii. 12,) yet for some "is reserved the blackness of darkness." (Jude 13.) When our Saviour tells us of some that are made two times more the children of hell than others, (Matt. xxiii. 15,) and of some that shall be beaten with few stripes, and others with many stripes, (Luke xii. 47, 48,) it shows there are degrees of punishment in the state of damnation. Some have questioned whether there will be degrees of glory to the saints in heaven: but [there are] none but believe there will be degrees of torment in hell; some more, some less, tolerable. But neither this shall I insist upon.

NOTE III. *In the day of judgment there will be a distribution of sinners' punishments according to the exact rules of justice.*—Why else shall it be more tolerable for some sinners than others? As grace and mercy will distribute the rewards to the saints, so justice [will distribute] punishment to the wicked. So that nothing will be added above what is due, and nothing abated of what is due; not one stripe inflicted [beyond], nor one diminished of, what justice shall determine. "By him actions are weighed," saith Hannah in her song. (1 Sam. ii. 3.) Bad actions, as well as good; and the

sinfulness of them [is] known to a grain : and the heavier sin shall have the heavier judgment. Neither this do I insist upon.

NOTE IV. *Christ's saying is sufficient ground for our believing.*—“But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable,” &c. He adds no more by way of proof ; his saying it, is enough. How often do we find in the gospel these words!—“Verily I say unto you ;” and sometimes, “Verily, verily, I say unto you ;” or, “Amen, Amen :” and [he] is himself called “the Amen.” (Rev. iii. 14.) We owe this deference to him, as to believe him upon his naked word. If an *ipse dixit* passed for a proof in Pythagoras's school, much more should it in Christ's. Neither will I insist on this.

NOTE V. *In the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Sodom than Capernaum.*—And this will lead me to discourse of these two cities literally, and from thence to speak of the case proposed more at large and generally.

These two cities may be considered under a threefold distinction :—

1. *Nominal.*—The one is called *Sodom* ; in the Hebrew, *Sedom*, or *Sedomah*. Sometimes we read of “the land of Sodom,” or “the Sodomites ;” and then it comprehends Gomorrah, which is often mentioned with it ; as, Isai. i. 9 ; Matt. x. 15, &c. And Admah and Zeboim and Bela, also, may be meant by “the land of Sodom,” and “the cities of the plain.” (Gen. xix. 25.) And the other city is called *Capernaum* ; which signifies in Hebrew, “a field of consolation,” or “a pleasant field :” as Sodom hath its name from a word that denotes “secrecy,” or *cætus consultantium* [“a council”]. (Gen. xlix. 6.) But I shall not criticize upon names.

2. *Local.*—Sodom was on the east of Canaan, in the plain of Jordan ;—which Lot chose at his parting from Abraham ; and he is said to journey to the east ; (Gen. xiii. 11 ;)—and was a pleasant and fruitful plain, and “as the garden of the Lord,” till it was destroyed from heaven. (Verse 10.) But Capernaum was on the north or north-west of the land of Judah.

3. *Moral.*—Both were sinful cities, but their sins of a distinct kind. The sins of Sodom were sins against the law more directly, and against the light of nature, and of the highest scandal ; but Capernaum's sins were more against the new light of the gospel, breaking forth upon them from Christ's ministry, and the mighty works whereby his doctrine was confirmed among them.

Now Christ, considering both these cities, and the sin of both, gives the decision in the text : “That it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, than for Capernaum, in the day of judgment.”

And may not this seem strange and amazing ? Sodom was a city that was wicked to a prodigy and to a proverb. It is said, that “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly ;” (Gen. xiii. 13 ;) and impudency in sin is called a “declaring their sin like Sodom.” (Isai. iii. 9.) And, “They are all of them unto me as Sodom,” saith God, speaking of the sin of the Jews ; (Jer. xxiii. 14 ;) and wicked rulers are called “rulers of Sodom.” (Isai. i. 10.) Whereupon Lot is said to “vex his righteous soul with their unlawful

deeds." (2 Peter ii. 8.) And there is a sin, not fit to be mentioned, called by the name of "sodomy," so denominated from the place. Yet, notwithstanding all this, it will be more tolerable for Sodom than Capernaum in the day of judgment. Capernaum was "lifted up to heaven" by many favours and privileges, which were not vouchsafed to Sodom; had means of knowing the Saviour of the world, and the way of salvation, above what Sodom had; had Christ himself, the Son of God, present, preaching, and doing many wonderful works in it, which Sodom never had. Many things are recorded in the evangelists about this Capernaum, and its privileges above most cities. It is said, that Christ "dwelt" here. (Matt. iv. 13.) Here he healed the centurion's servant by a word from his mouth; (Matt. viii. 5—13;) here he healed Peter's wife's mother, and many that were sick and possessed of devils; (verses 14—16;) and here he healed the paralytic man let down through the tiles of the house; (Mark ii. 1—12;) and here he cast out the unclean spirit by a rebuke from his mouth. (Mark i. 21—27.) Here he wrought the miracle of the tribute-money taken out of the mouth of a fish; (Matt. xvii. 24—27;) here he entered the synagogue, and taught once and again, [so] that "they were astonished at his doctrine;" (Mark i. 22;) and here he preached that divine and mysterious sermon about the bread of life which came down from heaven, and eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man. (John vi. 59.) And this city was so famous for Christ's miracles, that when he came to Nazareth, they expected him to do the works there which he had "done in Capernaum." (Luke iv. 23.) Now when, after all this, Capernaum did not receive him nor his doctrine, but "murmured at" both, (John vi. 41,) and turned not to God by true repentance, this was the sin of that city, which will make it more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment, than for it.

But that I might bring my discourse home and closer to ourselves and to the case proposed, we shall consider these two cities as types and examples of two sorts of sinners; for so it may be supposed our Saviour intended them:—*Sodom*, as a type of the Heathen, and all that wickedness found among them, who have not heard of Christ and salvation by him; and *Capernaum*, a type of those sinners who live under the gospel, and have had Christ preached to them, and present among them by his word and ordinances. And so I come to the last note, which will fully answer to the case proposed.

NOTE VI. *That the worst of the Heathen, who never had Christ preached to them, and salvation offered by him, shall fare better in the day of judgment, than those that continue impenitent under the gospel.*—A tremendous doctrine.

Sodom is here instanced in by our Saviour, as being the most notorious sinners among all the Heathens, worse than Tyre and Sidon before mentioned, or any heathen city; and yet [they] shall fare better than Capernaum, though none of Sodom's sins be charged by our Saviour upon it. But they repented not under the means of

grace and salvation: "Because they repented not," saith the text: this was their sin.

QUESTION. "But what is this impenitency under the gospel?"

ANSWER 1. It is not all hardness of heart that is impenitency; many good Christians may still find something of it: but it is when men harden their own hearts; (Heb. iii. 8;) which are two different things.

2. It is not any particular act of sin that may be called "impenitency," but a trade and course of sin.

3. It implies a wilful rejecting [of] the offers of grace and salvation by Christ, in those that live under the gospel.

4. It implies a slighting and contempt of the threatenings denounced against sin and sinners.

5. It implies a resolved purpose to persist in sin, though man knows it to be sin. When the sinner's mind is not changed, nor he comes to himself, and to "grow wise after" all his folly; (as the Greek word for "repentance," *μετανοια*, doth import;) this is impenitency.

This I premise, to clear my way to the following discourse; as also by answering the following objection.

OBJECTION. "But Capernaum's case is not ours. Capernaum saw Christ in the flesh, which we never did; they heard doctrine preached from his own mouth, which we never did; they saw his miracles wrought before their eyes, which we never saw. Had we had their advantages and privileges, we would not have done as they did, nor been impenitent as they were."

ANSWER. This evasion is much like that of the scribes and Pharisees, mentioned Matt. xxiii. 30: "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets;" when they at the same time were filled with that malice against Christ, which issued in the shedding of his precious blood. But I answer,

1. Though we have not Christ with us in his fleshly presence, yet we have his doctrine still with us, and preached to us. And it was not his fleshly presence that brought any sinners to repentance, but his doctrine.

2. Though we see not Christ's miracles wrought before our eyes, yet we have them recorded by the four evangelists, and by such as were either eye-witnesses, or wrote by an infallible Spirit, or rather both. And if we believe the gospel, we believe what is there recorded; and "faith is the evidence of things not seen," (Heb. xi. 1,) and will make their impression upon the heart, as if seen with the eye.

3. Of those many thousands both of Jews and Gentiles that were brought to repentance by the gospel in the primitive times, not one of a hundred or of a thousand did either see Christ in the flesh, heard him preach, or saw him work any miracle.

4. Of those many thousands that did see him and his works, and hear him preach, when he was upon earth, not one of a hundred

were brought to repentance thereby. (See John xii. 37.) And are any sure in these days, [that,] had they then lived, they should not have been of that number? considering that men have now the same blindness and hardness upon their minds and hearts which they had then, and the same love to their sins and prejudices against holiness as were then. And therefore impenitency now will expose a man to as severe punishment, and present him as guilty before God at the day of judgment, as it will Capernaum. And doth not our Saviour denounce the same severities against them that received not his disciples' preaching, as [against those who received not] his own? "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words," having offered peace to them, "depart out of that house or city, and shake off the dust of your feet" against them. "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city." (Matt. x. 14, 15.) And this holds true in every age, and in the present age; in every city, and in this city; in every nation, and in our own nation.

DOCTRINE.

Thus having made my way clear, I now proceed; and show, that *impenitency under the gospel will expose men to the most intolerable judgment in the day of Christ.*

I. *I shall prove that it will do so.*

II. *Why it will do so.*

III. *Wherein will this greater intolerableness consist?*

I. *That it will do so.*—I need not prove it by any other argument, than what we have in the text. "I say unto you," saith our Saviour; and again, "I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable," &c. (Verse 22.) And he adds his "amen" and "verily" to it: "Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment," &c. (Matt. x. 15.) If we believe not that Christ hath said this, we are infidels to the gospel: if we think he hath said false, we are guilty of blasphemy. Is it not *he* that saith, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," (Matt. xxiv. 35,) *that* saith this? Is it not *he* who is styled "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness," (Rev. iii. 14,) *that* hath said this? Is it not *he* who came down from heaven, out of the bosom of God, and spake nothing but what he had seen and heard from his Father, *that* saith this? And therefore it may seem some reflection upon Christ's veracity, and my auditors' infidelity and incredulity, to bring any other proof.

II. Next: *Why will it be so at the day of judgment?*

ANSWER. Because impenitency under the gospel hath more of sin in it, than any sin of the Heathen. And this is the general reason.

And where there is most sin, there will be the severest judgment. I suppose, none of you think, as some philosophers of old, that all sins are equal: and inequality of sin requires in justice inequality in punishment. That saying of Christ to Pilate shows that there are degrees of sin: "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater

sin :” (John xix. 11 :) and so, we may conclude, there will be degrees of punishment.

And these degrees of sin must needs be known to God, who is a God of knowledge ; and, being known to him, his justice requires of him punishment in a proportion ; though not in this life, yet at “ the day of revelation of the righteous judgment of God ;” (Rom. ii. 5 ;) when all men shall be put into the scale, as Daniel told Belshazzar, (Dan. v. 27,) and judgment passed upon them according to what weight they bear ; and their actions also considered and weighed in all their circumstances,—what grace and holiness may be found in the actions of some, and what sin in the actions of others. So that many sins that may pass for no sins now, may be found sinful then ; and such as pass for small sins and of little scandal before men now, may be found highly sinful in that day.

There are many sins that have more scandal than impenitency under the gospel, and yet not so much guilt. As we use to say in divinity, that some sins are *majoris reatús*, but *minoris scandali* ;* so it is here : the sins of Sodom had more scandal, but the sins of Capernaum greater guilt.

QUESTION. “ But wherein lies the sinfulness of impenitency under the gospel above other sin ?”

ANSWER 1. *Such will be left without excuse above all others.*—If the Heathen are said to be “ without excuse,” (Rom. i. 20,) not living and worshipping God according to the dictates of natural light, and the notices of God suggested by the works of creation ; if the Jews will have their “ mouth stopped,” having the written law of God and the knowledge of God’s will therein, and yet transgressing this law ; (as the apostle speaks, Rom. iii. 19 ;) much more will those who live impenitently under the gospel be without excuse, and have their mouths stopped, in the day of judgment. “ If I had not come and spoken unto them,” saith Christ, “ they had not had sin : but now they have no cloak for their sin.” (John xv. 22.) The gospel strips sinners of every cloak, and so exposeth them more naked to the severe justice of God : for “ this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light,” (John iii. 19,) and so are “ without excuse.”

(1.) Such cannot plead, as the Heathen may, that they were ignorant of a Saviour, and how to be saved by him from their sin.

(2.) Neither can they plead, that salvation by him was revealed so darkly, that they could not have any distinct knowledge of it ; as the Jew may plead.

(3.) Neither can they plead, that this revelation was never confirmed from heaven, so that they might certainly believe it to be from heaven, and not the invention of men. The confirmation of it is now made evident.

(4.) Neither can they plead, that they knew not that unbelief and impenitency were damnable sins, and would expose men to the judgment and wrath of God.

* “ Of greater guilt, but of less scandal.”—EDIT.

(5.) Neither can they plead ignorance of God's punitive justice : the sufferings of Christ for sin, to satisfy offended justice, do clearly evidence this to all that know any thing of the gospel ; and this more fully than any judgments [which] God hath inflicted upon sinners in this world, even Sodom itself.

(6.) Neither can they plead ignorance of a future state ; of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and judgment to come, and heaven and hell. Though the Heathen had but dark notions, the wisest of them, about these things ; yet now "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel," (2 Tim. i. 10,) and a future state is more clearly revealed than before either to Jew or Gentile.

(7.) Neither can they plead ignorance of God's pardoning mercy, and his readiness to pardon upon repentance ; whereby sinners may be hardened in their sin, as being without all hope. "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," saith the Psalmist. (Psalm cxxx. 4.) And, "Knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," saith the apostle. (Rom. ii. 4.) And, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. v. 19.) His pardoning mercy is now clearly revealed, which is the great motive to repentance.

OBJECTION. "But then, to be ignorant, will be a man's advantage, and will furnish him with an excuse."

ANSWER. That ignorance which is invincible, will excuse ; but not slothful and affected ignorance. If a king hath published and proclaimed his law, a man's ignorance will not excuse him from the penalty. And to shut out the light, is as sinful as to sin against it. When "the light shineth in darkness," it will be no excuse, if "the darkness comprehend it not." (John i. 5.)

2. *Impenitency under the gospel is a resisting the loudest calls of God to repentance.*—The Heathen were called to repentance by the light of natural conscience, and the works of creation and providence ; the Jews were called by the law [which] God gave them, and the prophets [whom] God sent among them : but now, under the gospel, the call is louder than before. When the gospel was entering the world in John Baptist's ministry, it entered thus : "Repent ye : for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iii. 2.) And under Christ's own ministry the call was louder : "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark i. 15.) And under the apostles' ministry the call went into all the world : "The times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts xvii. 30.) And still the great work of the ministry is that which our Saviour speaks of his [ministry], and the end of his coming : "Not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matt. ix. 13.) And what the apostle Paul speaks of his ministry in Asia : "Testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ ;" (Acts xx. 21 ;) this is the great work of the ministry now. And higher motives are laid before sinners to repent under the gospel, than ever before.

3. *There is the highest contempt of God in it.*—He called by his prophets to repentance before; but now he hath called by his own Son. If a king sends his own son to command rebels to lay down their arms and accept of terms of mercy, and they still refuse, it is greater contempt than if he had sent his servants; as the king in the parable said, “Surely they will reverence my son,” (Matt. xxi. 37,) though they misused and killed his servants.

There hath been contempt of God by sinners in every age; as the Psalmist complains: “Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?” (Psalm x. 13.) But this contempt riseth to a higher degree under the gospel, since Christ came into the world.

(1.) *A higher contempt of God’s authority.*—To transgress the law of God, delivered by angels upon the mount to Moses, and by Moses to the people, was a contempt of God’s authority, and “received a just recompence of reward.” (Heb. ii. 2.) How [much] greater contempt is it to disobey the gospel, which was preached by the Lord himself! as the apostle there argues. (Verse 3.) To “refuse him that spake from heaven,” is greater contempt of God’s authority, than to “refuse him that spake on earth.” (Chap. xii. 25.)

Rejecting the gospel,—Christ calls it a “despising” both [of] him and his Father. (Luke x. 16.) And the law was delivered in the hand of Christ to men, when he came into the world; so that now disobedience to it is a higher contempt both of the law and Lawgiver, than before. “If I had not come and spoken unto them,” saith Christ, “they had not had sin.” (John xv. 22.) The authority of the Speaker makes the contempt the greater.

(2.) *A higher contempt of God’s goodness.*—For the goodness of God is now revealed in the gospel more fully and clearly than before. Every impenitent sinner under the gospel puts a contempt upon the highest revelation of God’s goodness; and that “goodness” that should “lead him to repentance,” is now rejected and “despised.” (Rom. ii. 4.) And nothing doth aggravate sin more, than when committed against special love, grace, kindness, and goodness. To turn grace into wantonness, is great abuse; but to put it under contempt, is abominable. Man can better bear to have his power or authority or wisdom contemned, than his goodness. Ingratitude is justly reputed among the worst of vices; and the contempt of goodness is the highest act of ingratitude; and the higher the goodness is that is contemned, the higher still is the ingratitude, and the more provoking.

(3.) *A higher contempt of God’s threatenings.*—God’s threatenings under the law were, for the most part, of temporal evils; but now, under the gospel, the threats rise higher, and are more dreadful. It is “the damnation of hell,” “everlasting fire,” “outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth;” “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” &c. (2 Thess. i. 9.) And great men cannot well bear to have their anger slighted, and their threats despised or derided.

But though the lion roar, and God’s threats are denounced, and his

wrath revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men, more than ever before ; yet the impenitent sinner trembles not, but goes on in his sin, and saith, he shall have peace ; and so casts contempt upon the severest threatenings of God.

4. *This impenitency is a disappointing God in his end.*—It is a frustrating of his great design ; which is, to recover lost man to himself by Jesus Christ. And man is not recovered and brought back to God but by true repentance ; and it is his great end in sending his gospel to a people, to bring them to repentance ; and this end of God is now made void, when sinners repent not. Men are sometimes grieved, and sometimes angried, when they are disappointed in their end ; so is God said to be. He complains often of this in the scriptures : when he is disappointed in the end of his *corrections*, he complains, “ In vain have I smitten your children ; they received no correction.” (Jer. ii. 30.) And in the end of his *showing favour* : “ I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” (Isai. i. 2.) And complains of his vineyard disappointing the end of his *care and cost* about it : “ When I looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes.” (Isai. v. 4.)

Our Saviour is said to “ rejoice,” when sinners were brought to repentance ; he now enjoyed the end of his coming. (Luke x. 21.) But then, at another time, he “ grieved, because of the hardness of men’s hearts.” (Mark iii. 5.) And there is still “ joy in heaven,” when sinners repent ; (Luke xv. 7 ;) and Christ’s faithful ministers rejoice also, when sinners repent ; for they now attain their end which they come upon, and will give up their account with joy concerning such, as they will do with grief concerning others. (Heb. xiii. 17.) Whereupon the apostle as a “ co-worker with” God, beseecheth the Corinthians “ that they receive not the grace of God in vain ;” (2 Cor. vi. 1 ;) that neither God nor himself may be disappointed in the end of their work, being “ co-workers.” And grace is bestowed in vain, when it brings not sinners to repentance, and when men accept not of the reconciliation mentioned in the foregoing chapter, which grace hath provided for them. It was a sad complaint of the prophet, when he saith, “ I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain ;” (Isai. xlix. 4 ;) much more, for an apostle and a minister of the New Testament thus to complain ; and much more, for Christ to complain thus, as sometimes he did ; and most of all, for God himself to complain, as he doth in the case of sinners’ impenitency. So that impenitency under the gospel must needs be very sinful.

5. *This impenitency hath much folly in it, as well as sin.*—For men to run themselves into the destruction which they might avoid, and refuse the offers of God’s mercy and grace in the gospel,—is not this folly ? He is called “ a fool ” that hath “ a price in his hand, and hath no heart to use it ;” (Prov. xvii. 16 ;) and the virgins in the parable, that lost their season of entering-in with the Bridegroom, are styled “ foolish virgins.” (Matt. xxv. 2.) And are not sinners, that continue in their sin and impenitency under the gospel, thus foolish ?

for they have, set before them, the fairest price and the richest seasons. The prodigal in the parable, when he came home to his father, is said to "come to himself:" (Luke xv. 17:) so, when a sinner repents, and comes home to God, he now "comes to himself," as if his former life was folly and madness.

6. *Impenitency under the gospel shows greater wilfulness in sin.*—As it argues great folly in the mind, so [does it argue great] perverseness in the will. And the more there is of the will in sin, the more sinful it is: as the Schoolmen say, *Bonitas et malitia moralis sunt potissimum in voluntate.** Paul could say, [that] it was not he that sinned, when he did sin, because his will was against it: "The evil which I would not, that do I. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." (Rom. vii. 19, 20.) And this God chiefly looks at in actions both good and evil. There seems to be more wilfulness in impenitency under the gospel, than ever before. The more light and knowledge men sin against, the more will there is in sin; and the fairer offers are made to men of heaven and salvation, the more wilful is the refusal: and this is the case of sinners under the gospel. They do not repent, and they will not repent; they do not hear, and they will not hear; they do not leave their sin, and they will not leave it.

7. Lastly. *Impenitency under the gospel is attended with the greatest resistance of the Spirit.*—Greater than in former times. There is more of the Spirit goes along with the gospel-ministration, than with any before it; and there cannot be a disobedience to the gospel, without resisting that Spirit that goes along with it. Upon some the Spirit prevails, and brings them to repentance; and in others he is resisted; and some resist to that degree, that they are said to offer "despite unto the Spirit of grace." (Heb. x. 29.) And the sin that is accounted unpardonable, is committed against the Holy Ghost; and, it is thought, cannot be committed but under the gospel; whereby sinners are brought by a sinful, to a judicial, impenitency. (Heb. vi. 4—6.) So that by this time you may see the great sinfulness of impenitency under the gospel, beyond what was or could be in Sodom; whereby men's damnation will be more intolerable.

III. Now I come to the last particular,—to show *wherein the greater intolerableness will consist.*

1. *Such will suffer greater torments from their own consciences.*—The worm of conscience will gnaw them with greater pain: the reflections of it upon the sinner will be with greater force and fury. By how much men have sinned against greater light and mercy, by so much the remembrance of this will be the more afflictive. It was some aggravation of Dives's torments in hell,—the remembrance of former good things enjoyed: much more will the remembrance of a day of salvation lost, and of the refusal or neglect of gospel-grace and mercy, be afflictive to sinners in a state of damnation.

* "Moral goodness and wickedness have their principal seat in the will."—EDW.

The light [which] they have sinned against will be hell-fire in their consciences for ever; and the clearer light, the hotter fire: and the higher they have been lifted up by the opportunities of grace toward heaven, the lower they will fall under the weight of guilt and the rebukes of conscience.

2. *They will suffer more than others from the devil and his angels.*—For, that they are the executioners of God's wrath upon the wicked in this world, is out of question; and so, some think, they will be in the world to come, but only as under God's commission; which they ground upon that text: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the tormentors," &c., (Matt. v. 25; xviii. 34,) by whom they understand evil spirits.

3. *Christ himself will appear in greatest severity against such.*—He is said to "be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8:) by both which expressions are meant impenitent sinners under the gospel. His first coming was in a flame of love, to save men; but when men are impenitent, and reject his salvation, he will come next in flames of wrath, to take vengeance; and in the first place against these; to the Jew before the Gentile, (Rom. ii. 9,) and to the impenitent Christian before both.

4. *Witnesses will rise up against these more than any other sinners.*—The Heathen will come-in against them; as our Saviour speaks: "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it." (Matt. xii. 41, 42.)

The Heathen, who have gone further by the light of nature than many who have lived under the light of the gospel, will come-in as witnesses against them.

The Jew may come-in as a witness, also; who, under the darker light of the law, hath out-stripped many that were under a gospel-ministration.

The good angels may come-in as witnesses; who, having been present in the church-assemblies, have heard the calls there given to sinners to repent.

The bad angels may come-in, and plead against them, that *they* never refused the calls of the gospel to believe and repent; for they never had any.

Ministers may come-in as witnesses; who spent their pains and strength upon them, to invite and call them to repentance; but they would not hear.

Many of their neighbours and fellow-Christians may witness against them, who did believe and repent under the same means, whenas these did not. All which will contribute to make their damnation the more intolerable.

THE APPLICATION.

USE I. *We may hence learn what to judge of the Heathen, who have not heard of Christ.*—I shall not dispute, whether any of them may be saved, or not ; yet this I can say,—that their damnation will be more tolerable than [that] of many others. Those that sinned without the law shall have more favourable judgment than those that sinned under the law ; and those that detained only natural truth in unrighteousness, as the Heathen, shall fare better than those that so detained truth supernatural. (Rom. i. 18.)

And among the Heathen, Diogenes may fare better than Dionysius, Cato than Catiline, Vespasian than Diocletian. The last judgment will be exactly righteous.

USE II. *Hence it appears, that what is in itself a great favour and privilege to a people, may be the occasion of the greatest evil.*—As the gospel is in itself [a great privilege], yet will be an occasion to many of a damnation that will be most inexcusable and most intolerable. Christ was first preached to the Jews, which was their privilege : but they rejecting him, it brought sorer calamities upon their nation than ever before ; and “the wrath came upon them to the uttermost ;” (1 Thess. ii. 16 ;) and that Christ that is a corner-stone to his church, they first stumbled at, and then it fell upon them and did grind them to powder. (Matt. xxi. 42, 44.) And how it will fare with them in the day of judgment, he tells them, in John xii. 48 : “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day.” And what judgment will be more severe than theirs, who have refused and rejected words that came immediately from the mouth of the Son of God ? words so full of grace and mercy, truth and faithfulness, wisdom and understanding ! so that “never any man spake as this man.” (John vii. 46.) As the men of Bethshemesh rejoiced and offered sacrifices of thanksgiving at the coming of the ark to them ; but it proved an occasion of the destruction of many thousands of them. (1 Sam. vi. 13—19.)

USE III. *We may hence take notice, how ineffectual the best outward means are of themselves to bring a people to repentance.*—Could any city have greater means for it than Capernaum ? Here Christ wrought miracles that did amaze them, and preached doctrine that did astonish them, but not bring them to repentance. The gospel doth sometimes make some impressions upon the minds of people, that may still continue impenitent in their sin. Some, when they have heard a sermon, will applaud it, but not repent ; whether it be from a conforming or non-conforming minister, yet by neither are [they] brought to repentance.

John Baptist preached repentance ; and Christ came and preached, “Repent ;” and yet the Jews, for the greatest part, repented not by the one or the other. Some are for gospel-preaching, some for preaching the law, and yet hold fast their sins under both. Such is the stupidity that is fallen upon man, and such deceitfulness [is there] in his heart, and [he] is so fast bound by the chains of his sin !

OBJECTION. "But God can bring man to repentance if he will."

ANSWER. God hath a twofold power,—*potestas absoluta, et ordinata*; "a power that he exerts immediately, or in the use of means." God can by his *absolute* power preserve man's life without eating or drinking; but he maintains it ordinarily in the use of means, which man is obliged to use, and, if he reject them, will be guilty of his own death. God affords sinners means to bring them to repentance; and, if they reject them, God is not obliged to work by his immediate power. Hereupon God is said to be "willing that all" should be saved, and "come to repentance," (2 Peter iii. 9,) by his calling them, and affording means to repentance.

QUESTION. "But why doth God make these means effectual to some, not to others, by giving special grace?"

ANSWER. When he that makes this question can resolve me why Christ wrought his mighty works in Chorazin and Bethsaida, and not in Tyre and Sidon, when he foresaw that Tyre and Sidon would thereupon repent in dust and ashes, and Chorazin and Bethsaida would not repent; I shall then answer him in his inquiry. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." (Deut. xxix. 29.) Let sinners use the means, and wait there for God's special grace. And can Sodom justly complain that Christ came not to do his mighty works in it, and brought not the light of the gospel to it, when she offered such violence to the common dictates of the light and law of nature?

USE IV. See hence *what little reason men have to boast of their knowledge or gospel privileges, when these may turn to their sorer condemnation.*—"That servant which knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii. 47.)

And so Christ speaks to the Pharisees, who boasted themselves to be the *פֶּחַחִים* *pechachim*, "the seeing men," whose eyes were opened: "But now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." (John ix. 41.)

And thus the Jews boasted over the Gentiles, that they "knew God's will, were instructed out of the law, and were instructors of the foolish, and teachers of babes;" (Rom. ii. 18—20;) and boasted themselves to be the circumcision: but yet, they not keeping the law, the uncircumcision should judge and condemn them. (Verse 27.) We have many among us who boast of a little knowledge [that] they have more than others, and have learned to talk and dispute of religion, and despise others as foolish, ignorant, blind, and babes; when all this may make their judgment the more intolerable. Some of the Jews have a tradition, that the holy fire of the altar was hid in a hole of a rock all the time of the captivity; and when at their return they looked for it, it was turned into a jelly; which they took and laid upon the altar, and [which] there was kindled into a fire again by the beams of the sun. When the light that is in the mind kindles a flame of love in the heart, and thence are presented holy sacrifices to

God; this is light sanctified, and sanctifying the soul: but when it rests in the mind, and is resisted in the heart and practice of men, it will, whether men will or no, shine into their consciences, first or last, to their greater terror and condemnation.

And therefore let men take heed of sin against light and knowledge; against the light of nature, the light of education, the light of good example; especially the light of the gospel: for such sins make the greatest noise in the conscience, do most harden men's hearts, make men self-condemned, and will most expose men at the day of judgment.

USE V. And so I come to the next use; which is, *to awaken us of this city and this nation, who have had gospel-favours and privileges above most people under heaven.*—May we not say of London, as Christ of Capernaum?—"O London, who hast been lift up to heaven!" And if any from hence shall perish, and be cast down to hell, how great will their fall be! It would be better perishing out of Tyre and Sidon, and Sodom, than out of London. *Tolluntur in altum, ut casu graviore ruant*;* as the poet speaks of men that fall from high places. What, though God hath by a wonderful hand opened us a door of liberty? what, though we have such plenty of excellent preaching? and what, though we are such constant hearers of these lectures, morning by morning? yet if any of us still continue impenitent, it will but increase our doom at doomsday.

OBJECTION. "But we hope that that day will never come; and all this talk of it is but to fright people a little into good manners; a device of princes, to keep people under government; or of priests, to make markets of their consciences."

ANSWER 1. It is true, few live as if they believed it. But can any man say that he is sure it will never come? I think no man dare say that. Therefore it is our best wisdom to prepare for that day which *may* come, though we should not be sure it *will* come. A wise man will provide against an evil that may possibly come, though he is not sure it will come; especially considering the dreadful consequence of being surprised.

2. And it is true that this day is delayed; but it is because God waits for sinners' repentance, and would have men saved, and enter in before the door be shut. (2 Peter iii. 9.)

3. Do any of us not believe it, when the devils themselves believe and tremble? when they said to our Saviour, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" (Matt. viii. 29;) it showed [that] they believed a day of judgment. But I spake of this before.

QUESTION. "But what will preserve us then from damnation, seeing such a judgment-day must certainly come?"

ANSWER. That which would have preserved Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, will preserve us; and that is true repentance; which you may know what it is by the description I have given before of its contrary, which is impenitency. Let us all in good earnest turn to God and repent. Let us repent of our pride and immodest

* "They are raised up on high, that they may descend with a heavier fall."—EDIT.

dresses in apparel, and reform; let our women take down their high-towering dresses, and our men shorten their monstrous perukes. Let us repent of our strife and contention, and the persecutions that have been amongst us. Let us repent of the great neglect of family-duties, and our spending so much time at taverns and coffee-houses. Let others repent of their frauds in commerce and trading; and others, of their oaths and blasphemies; and others, of their extortion and oppression; others, of their base temporizing in religion. Let children repent of disobedience to parents; and parents, of their neglect of the instruction and education of their children: so masters and servants, of the neglect of the duties of their mutual relation. Let us repent of our careless hearing, and our unprofitable hearing; of our loose observation of the sabbath, and unworthy receiving [of] the Lord's supper; and "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." (Matt. iii. 8.) Let London remember what befell Sodom for not repenting, and take heed of Sodom's sins; (2 Peter ii. 6;) which are said to be "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness," (Ezek. xvi. 49,) and "fornication, and going after strange flesh;" and now have "suffered the vengeance of eternal fire:" (Jude 7:) that this city may not be called "Sodom's sister," as Jerusalem was, for being so like her in her sin; (Ezek. xvi. 48;) and her fruit not like the apples of Sodom, fair without, and within nothing but ashes.

But I have better hope concerning this city; and that, as God hath wonderfully saved it, so he will do still; and that its case is not as Sodom's, not to have in it ten righteous persons, when Abraham interceded for the sparing of it. And though this city was once laid in ashes, yet not as Sodom, which was never built again, and is now a bituminous lake, called *Asphaltites*; and the waters of it are deadly, and the fumes out of it mortal, and the ground and trees about it barren; which Pliny, Solinus, Diodorus Siculus, and other heathen writers, have taken notice of. But London stands up out of its ruins, to the terror of those that designed it to oblivion and perpetual desolation; and is more populous than ever: and the joyful sound of the gospel, and the voice of the turtle, are yet heard in her streets; and not the voice of owls and satyrs, as is foretold of Babylon, (Isai. xiii. 21,) "which is spiritually called Sodom," (Rev. xi. 8,) and was typed by the city Jericho, which would expose the man to a fatal curse that should attempt to rebuild it. (Joshua vi. 26.)

USE VI. *From all that hath been said, we may, lastly, conclude, that sinners that are impenitent have little reason to flatter themselves because of their present impunity.*—Let them consider how it will fare with them in the day of judgment. Christ refers to that in the text; and those who have eyes to see afar off, will look so far as that day. So did Paul: "Wherefore we strive, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." (2 Cor. v. 9, 10.) And hereupon he counted it a small thing to be judged of men, or at "man's day," looking to the judgment to come, and that great day of the Lord.

(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 ἀλλήλων*, “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 consensus 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 auustata.*† 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 Marpurg 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 insigitis 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 ῥήμα, 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,"

as it follows, "hath Christ destroyed;" that is, "disarmed and disabled." Christ hath not destroyed him as to his being and substance, but as to his power and authority over the children and chosen of God. And this Christ did by his own death: "Through," or, "By," "death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." It was upon the cross that he "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Col. ii. 15.)

2. To come to what I intend: another end and reason of Christ's incarnation and passion was, *that he might deliver the elect people of God.*—These he calls "the children" in the foregoing verse; not "the children" of men, as some expound it, but "the children" of God; such children as the Father had given the Son; so they are said to be in verse 13: "Behold," says Christ, "I and the children which God hath given me;" such as were "predestinated unto the adoption of children," as it is phrased in Eph. i. 5. These the text also describes, and tells us in what condition they were by nature: "Through fear of death they were all their life-time subject to bondage." By "all their life-time" you must understand all that time which they lived before they were delivered. This is the condition of the elect of God, as they come into the world: they are not only "subject unto death," but unto "the fear of death," and unto "bondage" by reason thereof. The word *ενοχοι*, which is rendered "subject," signifies [that] they were "held fast and manacled," as birds that are taken in a snare, or as malefactors that are going to their execution. The word *δουλεια*, which is rendered "bondage," signifies "a state of servitude or slavery," such as men dislike, but cannot avoid. One calls it "a penal disquietment or perplexity of mind, that ariseth from a sense of misery, that a man would fain be rid of, and cannot; it is a yoke whereby his neck is galled, but he cannot put it off; and if he should be released from it by any undue ways or means, it would be to his farther detriment and danger in the end."

Now from this "fear of death" the children are said to be "delivered" by Christ. There are many evils from which he redeems and delivers them: he delivers them from the bondage of sin and Satan, from the rigour and curse of the law, from everlasting punishment and wrath to come; and he "delivers them" also from "the fear of death." This is implied, if it be not expressed, in the text; for, upon the mentioning of their deliverance, he gives this description of the persons that are delivered,—that they were such as were afraid of death, and liable to continual bondage by reason thereof. Hence all expositors, both ancient and modern, do rationally infer, that the fear of death is one of those evils from whence we are delivered by Jesus Christ.

QUESTION.

The text, thus briefly opened, administers a fair occasion of resolving this case or question:—*From what fear of death are the children*

of God delivered by Jesus Christ, and by what means doth he deliver them from it ?

I shall break this question in two ; and inquire,

I. *From what fear of death the children of God are delivered by Jesus Christ ;* and then,

II. *By what means or methods he doth deliver them from it.*

I. *From what fear of death are the children of God delivered by Jesus Christ ?*—That I may resolve this question aright, I must distinguish of the fear of death.

1. There is a *natural* fear of death.—This is common to all men as men ; and it is more or less in them according to their different constitutions, and other accidental occurrences. This is nothing else but nature's aversion to its own dissolution ; and in itself it is a sinless infirmity, such as sickness, weariness, or the like. To be loath or afraid to die, is human, and inseparable from the nature of man. This fear of death is found with the best of men. "Nature," as one says, "hath a share in them as well as in others, and will work as nature, or like itself." The apostle Paul tells us how good, godly men are unwilling to "be unclothed," and to put off the body. (2 Cor. v. 4.) Our blessed Saviour, (who was a true, though not a mere, man,) without the least impeachment of the holiness and perfection of his human nature, expressed at some times an aversion to death. (John xii. 27 ; Mark xiv. 35.) This, therefore, is not the fear of death of which the text speaks, and from which the children of God are delivered by Jesus Christ.

2. There is a *slavish* fear of death.—Which "hath torment" in it, (1 John iv. 18,) or which torments the souls of men ; which fills their hearts with terrors and distractions, which discomposeth their minds, and unfits them for the duties of their general or particular callings, and totally disables them from prosecuting the things that belong to their peace and welfare. This is that fear of death of which the text speaks, and from which "the children" are delivered ; such as genders unto bondage, and is servile or slavish ; a fear of death as penal, and drawing after it everlasting punishment. This fear of death takes hold of carnal men ; they are not so much afraid of death, as of that which the scripture calls "the second death : " (Rev. ii. 11 ; xx. 6 :) it is that which follows after death, that makes it so formidable to them. "After death," as that text speaks, Heb. ix. 27, comes "judgment," when they must receive according to the things which they have done in the body. When they die, they must launch out into an endless ocean, and "go the way," as Job says, "whence they shall never return." (Job xvi. 22.) And if death overtakes them in their unregenerate state and condition, then it will be an entrance or inlet "into outer darkness," where there is "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. viii. 12.)

These and such-like are the considerations that make death so dreadful to the children of men, that give it the denomination of "the king of terrors," and of terrible things the most terrible. "They are not," as one said, "afraid to die ; but they are afraid to be damned."

Hence it is, that though death be terrible to all men, yet it is most terrible to those whose consciences are awakened, and whose understandings are enlightened; who have been instructed in the knowledge of God, and of a future state of retribution. "Death," as one observes, "is not half so terrible to a Heathen, as it is to an ungodly Christian." Heathen men are in the dark, and see but little of that which is the true terror of death: but enlightened Christians, who have been acquainted with the scripture; who know that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;" (Rom. i. 18;) "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" (1 Cor. vi. 9;) that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations" and people "that forget God;" (Psalm ix. 17;) that Jesus Christ "shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" (2 Thess. i. 7—9;) that the greatest part by far of the wages of sin, which is eternal damnation, shall be paid in another world;—these are they that are surrounded with the slavish fears of death.

It is true, that many wicked persons who live under the gospel are under none of these terrors: but then it is *because they look on death at a great distance from them*; and the remoteness of any object, though in itself never so terrible, takes away the fear of it.

Or else it is *because they are over-busied and taken up about the things of the world*; as "the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life;" (1 John ii. 16;) and if any thoughts of death, and of the world to come, arise in their minds, they are presently smothered and stifled by worldly objects and diversions. Cain was a while afraid of death; he thought every one that met him would slay him: but by-and-by he gets into the land of Nod, and there he falls a-building of cities, and doth so immerse or drown himself in the affairs of the world, that by little and little the slavish fear [which] he had of death did wear out of his mind.

Or else it is *because of their atheism or infidelity*. There is a great deal of this amongst professed Christians. All wicked men, as the apostle Paul says, are *ἀθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*, "without God in the world;" (Eph. ii. 12;) or, as it may be rendered, they are "atheists in the world." They are all practical atheists, and too many are atheists in opinion likewise; they "say in their hearts," though they do not speak it out with their tongues, that "there is no God;" (Psalm xiv. 1;) they have not a thorough belief of a Deity, or of a future state of rewards and punishments.

Or else it is, in the last place, *because of their great security*. Multitudes of professed Christians are fast asleep in their sins; they give up themselves sinfully, and many of them are given up of God judicially, to "a spirit of slumber and of deep sleep:" (Isai. xxix. 10; Rom. xi. 8;) and when this is the case with men, no wonder they are without any dread of death, or hell, or any thing else. You

know, when a man is in a deep sleep he fears no danger whatsoever.

These and such-like are the reasons, why many carnal persons do spend their days in mirth and sensuality, without any actual fear of death, or of its dreadful consequents. But then it must be remembered that these very persons are "subject," or "liable," thereunto; and if God awaken their consciences, and rouse them out of their security, then "they are" (as it is in Job xxiv. 17) "in the terrors of the shadow of death;" "horror overwhelms them," (as it is in that Psalm, lv. 4, 5,) "and the terrors of death fall upon them." Like Felix, they fall a "trembling;" (Acts xxiv. 25;) and like Belshazzar, their knees are ready to "smite one against another." (Dan. v. 6.)

It is time now, that I should come to the second branch of the question; which is,

II. *By what means and methods are the children of God delivered by Christ from the fear of death?*

To this I shall return an answer, 1. By showing you *what Christ hath already done*, and then, 2. *What he continues still to do*, in order to this end.

1. I shall show you *what Christ hath already done, to deliver or free the children of God from the fear of death.*—He himself in his own person hath suffered, or "tasted," death for them. This is every where declared in the New Testament, and it is hinted to us in the text: Christ "by death," that is, by his own death, "hath delivered the children from the fear of death." The death of Christ hath made death to look with another face than formerly it had. As the wood that Moses cast into the waters of Marah did alter their property, (Exod. xv. 25,) so the death of Christ hath altered the property of death, and taken away the bitterness and formidableness thereof. Hence it is that the death of believers in scripture is called a "sleep." It is said of Stephen, when he died, (though it was by a violent death,) that "he fell asleep:" (Acts vii. 60 :) and the apostle Paul says, that as "Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Thess. iv. 14.) It is well observed by some, that the apostle doth seem purposely to vary the phrase: he says, that Jesus "died," and that the saints "sleep in" him; and the reason is, because that he sustained death with all its terrors, that so it might become a calm and quiet "sleep" unto the saints. The death of Christ must needs sweeten the forethoughts of death to the children and chosen of God, because that he died in their stead: he did not only die in their nature, but in their room; not only for their good, but also in their stead. You know how it was with the sacrifices of old; they were put to death in the room of the sacrificers: so it was with Christ, the Truth of those sacrifices; he was put to death in the room of sinners, and they died in him as their Representative. Now this serves to free them from an enthralling fear of death: why should they fear that which Christ hath undergone in their place and room?

There are two things more to be considered under this head.

(1.) *Christ by his death hath taken away the true reason of the fear of death; that is, the curse and condemnation of the law of God.*—The apostle Paul says, that “the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.” (1 Cor. xv. 56.) Death hath its wounding power from sin, and sin hath its condemning power from the law: it is the law that discovers the nature of sin, that enhanceth the guilt of sin, that denounceth condemnation against him that commits it; and it is this condemnation of the law that torments the sinner with the fear of death. Now, Christ having in our stead subjected himself to death, and so undergone the penalty of the law, he hath taken away the curse and condemning power thereof. He “hath,” says the apostle Paul, “redeemed us from the curse of the law, being” himself “made a curse for us.” (Gal. iii. 13.) “There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. viii. 1.) The death of Christ hath satisfied every demand of the broken law: the law of God hath nothing now to lay to the charge of God’s elect; it owns the blood of Christ to be a sufficient compensation for their violations of it; there are no petty satisfactions to be made by themselves, since Christ hath made complete satisfaction for them, and in their behalf. The law now is ready to acquit the believer: it says, “Thou mayest live for all me, and live eternally; I require not thy death, as being satisfied with the death of Christ. When thou diest a natural death, it is rather to comply with the appointment of God, and in order to the raising up hereafter a better and more curious fabric of thy body, than to satisfy any demand of mine.”

(2.) *Christ by his death hath deprived the devil of the power of death; and by this means also he hath delivered the children from a servile fear of death.*—The devil, as I said before, hath a power to terrify the consciences of men with the apprehension of death and the dreadful consequents thereof. You see into what bondage he brings men upon this account: many times he brings “the children” themselves into the suburbs of hell, and lays them under dreadful terrors and horrors. “The pains of hell,” says one of them, “gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow;” (Psalm cxvi. 3;) and again, at another time, “The sorrows of hell compassed me about.” (2 Sam. xxii. 6.) Now this power of Satan is taken away by the death of Christ. The blood of Christ hath cancelled, or at least contracted and lessened, his commission: so that, when he assaults a believer in this kind, he is easily resisted; the devil gives ground, if the believer stands his ground; he cannot prevail against a child of God, unless God give him a special commission, or unless he yields to his temptation. “Being justified by faith” in the death of Christ, “we have that peace” which all the devils in hell are not able to disturb; (Rom. v. 1;) the weapons of his power and warfare in this way are wrested out of his hands by the death of Christ. Thus you see what Christ hath already done.

2. Let me proceed to show you *what he continues still to do, in*

order to the freeing and delivering the children of God from the fear of death, and the bondage that ensues thereon.

(1.) *He worketh and increaseth those graces of his Spirit in them which are destructive hereof, and opposite hereunto.*—You will say, “Which are they?”

(i.) There is the grace of *faith*.—This is the grace that conquers the world, that conquers the devil, and that conquers also the slavish fear of death. This excellent grace of faith hath such an excellent hand in the conquering of all these, that it is called “the conquest and victory” itself. “This is the victory that overcometh the world,” says the apostle John, “even our faith.” (1 John v. 4.) Our Saviour tells Peter, that “Satan had desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat.” (Luke xxii. 31.) “And with what did he sift and shake him?” Why, it was with the fear of death; he was afraid they would deal with him as they did with his Master. It was his slavish fear of death that made him deny Christ, and to do it once and again. But anon he recovered himself, and got above this fear: he was ready by-and-by boldly to confess Christ, and that in the face of death and danger. “How came this about?” Why, it was by means of faith: Christ had prayed for him that his “faith should not fail.” (Verse 32.) It may be said of those that are fearful of death, that they are “of little faith.”

(ii.) A second grace is *love*.—An ardent love of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ will banish all slavish fear of death out of the soul: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.” (1 John iv. 18.) “Of what fear doth he speak?” The next words tell you; he speaks of slavish, tormenting fear; of that fear which “hath torment.” By “perfect love” he means a greater measure and degree of love. I said but now of fearful Christians, that they have but “little faith:” I may add also, that they have but little love; for “perfect” or great “love” expels all tormenting and servile fear.

(iii.) A third grace is *hope*.—That very nature of hope is quite contrary to fear. Where there is a hope of eternal life, there can be no prevailing fear of death. It is said of the righteous, that they “have hope in their death;” (Prov. xiv. 32;) and those that “have hope in their death,”—they are not afraid to die. *Then* hope doth more especially free us from an inordinate fear of death, *when* it grows up to that which the scripture calls “the full assurance of hope.” (Heb. vi. 11.) This is a gracious gift which the Father bestows upon many of his children: they “know that they are in him;” (1 John ii. 5;) that they “have passed from death unto life;” (chap. iii. 14;) that when “the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, they shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor. v. 1.) Ay, this is that which steels and fortifies them against the fear and terror of death. This leads me to consider of a second way or means whereby Christ delivers the children from a slavish fear of death.

(2.) *He delivers them from it by convincing and persuading them that they shall not be losers, but gainers, yea, great gainers, thereby.*

—It was this persuasion that made the apostle Paul to desire death, rather than to dread it. "I desire," says he, "to depart," or "to be dissolved;" "which is far better." (Phil. i. 23.) And again, he saith, "For to me to die is gain." (Verse 21.) It were easy here to expatiate, and show the advantage, the exceeding great advantage, that believers have by death. It is commonly said to consist in these two things,—in *a freedom from all evil, in the fruition of all good.*

(i.) It consists in *a freedom from all evil.*—Which is sub-divided into the evil of *sorrow*, and the evil of *sin*. Believers are freed by death from the evil of *sorrow*. It is one blessed notion of the life to come, that God will "wipe away all tears from his people's eyes," (Rev. vii. 17,) and remove all sorrow, and causes of sorrow, from their hearts. Believers also are freed by death from the evil of *sin*, which is indeed the greatest evil, the evil of evils: all the evils of sorrow are but the effects and fruits of the evil of sin. By death they are delivered from all actual sins, not only from fleshly, but [also from] spiritual, filthiness. Now they are delivered ordinarily from inordinate actions, but then also from inordinate affections; they shall never any more be troubled with pride, passion, discontent, unbelief, or the like. By death, also, they are discharged from original sin, and all remainders thereof: when the body dies, believers are rid of that "body of death" which dwelleth in them, and is always present with them; they no more complain of themselves as wretched creatures upon the account thereof. (Rom. vii. 24, 25.)

(ii.) It consists in *the fruition of all good.*—Believers, when they die,—they enjoy God himself, who is the chiefest Good. He is *Bonum in quo omnia bona*; "all other things that are good and desirable are comprised in him," as the sun-beams are in the sun. The saints' enjoyment of God in this life is a heaven upon earth; but our enjoyment of God after death will be the heaven of heavens. David says in one place, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) "There are saints and angels and archangels in heaven," says Musculus, "with whom David and such as he will have to do; but what are these to God?" Believers will not barely enjoy God after death, but they will enjoy him *fully*. In this life they enjoy a little of God; and O, how sweet and refreshing it is! but, in the life to come, they shall have as much enjoyment of God as their hearts can wish or hold. Now they enjoy God in the use of means,—in prayer, in hearing the word, and in receiving the Lord's supper: but hereafter they shall have, not only a full, but an immediate, fruition of God. Now they see the face of God in the glass of his word and ordinances; and, O, what a lovely sight is it! but then they shall see God "face to face;" (1 Cor. xiii. 12;) and what tongue can mention, or heart imagine, the loveliness of that sight?

If it were not too great a digression, I could readily demonstrate the gain and advantage of death from other topics. Believers in the other life shall possess and inherit the kingdom of heaven; which doth more transcend the kingdoms of this world, and all the glory of them, than the light of the sun doth excel the light of a candle.

They shall be most gloriously perfected, both in their souls and in their bodies: their "vile bodies," at the resurrection, "shall be changed, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. iii. 21.) Their gain and happiness will be greatly augmented in the other life, by the work and employment that they shall do, and by the society and company that they shall have. They shall associate with "an innumerable company of angels, and with just men made perfect;" (Heb. xii. 22, 23;) with many of their dearest relations and friends, whom whilst alive they dearly loved, and whose death and departure hence they greatly lamented. Let me close this with one text; it is in 1 John iii. 2. There the apostle tells us wherein the gain and glory of the godly consisteth after death: he sums it up in two things: "They shall be like" Christ; and they "shall see him as he is." Ay, that is the happiness of "the children," when they die; it lies in conformity to Christ, and in the vision, the beatifical vision, of him.

(3.) *Christ delivers believers from the slavish fear of death, by giving them some real foretastes of heaven and of eternal life.*—It is usual with God to give his people some cluster of the grapes of Canaan here in the wilderness; to give them some drops and sips of that new wine, which they shall drink full draughts of in the kingdom of their Father. He gives them to "taste" not only "of the good word of God, and of the heavenly gift," but "of the powers of the world to come:" (Heb. vi. 4, 5:) and this sets them a-longing to have their fill thereof; even as the Gauls, when they had tasted the wines of Italy,—they were not satisfied to have those wines brought to them, but they would go and possess the land where they grew.

This foretaste of heaven is that which the scripture calls "the earnest of our inheritance;" (Eph. i. 14;) it is both a pledge and a small part of that happiness which the saints shall hereafter inherit. "Ourselves," says the apostle, "which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." (Rom. viii. 23.) By "redemption" he means the resurrection of the body at the last day, which the scripture calls a "resurrection unto life." The apostle knew, there could be no "redemption of the body" without the dissolution thereof; therefore, in waiting for the one, he must needs also wait for the other. The apostle and the believers with him did "groan" for this; they were so far from groaning under the fears of death, that they rather groaned to be partakers of that which follows after death; nay, "in this they groaned earnestly," as he elsewhere speaks. (2 Cor. v. 2.) Now, whence was this, but from their "having the first-fruits of the Spirit," which are all one with the foretastes of heaven and everlasting happiness of which I have been speaking? Those that, whilst they live, have these tastes of future blessedness,—they are not afraid of death,—the door by which they enter into the full enjoyment of them.

Having thus resolved this question in both its branches, give me

leave to make some short application of what I have said, and I will conclude.

APPLICATION.

I would exhort you that are the children of God, (and O that all that read these lines were of the number of such !) I would earnestly beseech and exhort you to prize and improve this great privilege ; to wit, a deliverance from the slavish fear of death.

1. Be persuaded to *prize it*.—It is a privilege that was purchased for you at a dear rate, even with the precious blood of Christ. O what a blessed privilege is this,—not only to be delivered from the second death, but also from the servile and enthralling fear of the first death ! This is the benefit and blessing that the apostle Paul seems to be so much affected with. “Thanks be to God,” says he, “which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. xv. 57.) “What victory doth he mean ?” The foregoing words tell us, that he means a victory over death, with all its fearful concomitants and consequents. Death is become a friend, and not an enemy ; it is without any sting or curse attending it. O, this is owing to Jesus Christ : he is the great Deliverer : he hath so ordered the matter, that though we must die, yet we shall not be in “bondage” all our days “through” a slavish “fear of death.”

2. Be persuaded to *improve this privilege*.—Put-in for a part and share therein. See to it, that you be partakers of this benefit of *Christ’s* death,—to live without any tormenting fear of *your own*. You will say, “How shall we help it ? Can we contribute any thing toward our deliverance from the fear of death ?” I answer, You may ; and therefore, as I have shown you what Christ hath done and doeth to deliver you, so now give me leave to show you farther what you must do toward your own deliverance. I will give you some short hints of things, which you may enlarge upon at your leisure in your own thoughts.

1. *You must be earnest with God, that he would apply to you this benefit of his Son’s death by his blessed Spirit*.—O, beg of God, and that with all importunity, that “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus may set you free from” a tormenting fear of “death.” (Rom. viii. 2.) This hath been done for others ; and who can tell but it may be done for you likewise ? Only remember that God “will for this be inquired of by you, to do it for you.” (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.)

2. *You must give all diligence to the attaining of a greater measure of faith, love, and hope*.—Yea, to the attaining of a “full assurance of hope.” It is by means hereof, (as you heard before,) that the children are delivered in part from the fear of death. It is grace, and the assurance of grace, that is the “anchor of the soul,” that keeps it safe from the fear of shipwreck. (Heb. vi. 19.)

3. *You must “resist the devil,” and withstand his temptations, not only to other sins, but to the sin of despondency in particular*. (James iv. 7.)—You must not give place to Satan, (Eph. iv. 27,) nor give way to enthralling fear, when he tempts you thereunto. Remember,

(as I told you before,) it is the law of the combat betwixt the devil and you, that if you fight, he shall fly; if you stand your ground, he must give ground.

4. *You must have frequent meditation of death, and of the gain that is to be gotten thereby.*—The frequent thoughts hereof will familiarize death to you; and if once death and you be familiar together, you will not be so much afraid of it.

5. *You must have frequent contemplation also of the resurrection.*—You find that Job had conquered the fear of death; and if you read the nineteenth chapter of Job, verses 26, 27, you will see that his thoughts of the resurrection were very helpful to him herein. *He* is a conqueror over the fear of death, *that* considers with the apostle Paul, that the grave shall lose its victory. (1 Cor. xv. 55.) It was the saying of a worthy minister of our nation, that nothing lifted him over the fear of death, like the belief and meditation of the resurrection to eternal life.

6. *You must take heed of living or allowing yourselves in any known sin.*—If it be as your right eye, you must pull it out. (Matt. v. 29.) The guilt of one known sin will put a sting into death, and make it very terrible to you, especially in your near approaches unto it.

7. *You must look to it, that your whole conversation be ordered aright, and that it be as becomes the gospel of Christ.*—When all is done, an upright and holy life is one of the best defences against the dread of death. We are told in two several chapters of the Proverbs, that “righteousness delivereth from death.” (Chap. x. 2; xi. 4.) Whatever other interpretations those words will admit of, I am sure this is a true one,—that it delivers from a slavish fear of death. Hear how David speaks: he bids you “mark the perfect man, and behold the righteous,” or “upright:” “for the end of that man is peace.” (Psalm xxxvii. 37.) The apostle Paul was above the fear of death; he seemed rather to desire than dread it: (as I said before:) and well it might be thus with him, seeing he “lived in all good conscience;” (Acts xxiii. 1;) and had this “testimony from his conscience,—that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he had had his conversation in the world.” (2 Cor. i. 12.)

SERMON V.

BY THE REV. PETER VINKE, B.D.

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HOW IS GOSPEL-GRACE THE BEST MOTIVE TO HOLINESS ?

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.—2 Timothy ii. 19.

THIS epistle was written by St. Paul to his "son Timothy," (2 Tim. i. 2,) whom he had begot "in the faith," (1 Tim. i. 2,) as his fatherly blessing, a little before his death; for he was, at the writing of it, in bonds, (2 Tim. i. 8,) and he had "finished" his "course:" (chap. iv. 7:)—this very Paul, whom God had so miraculously delivered at Damascus, (2 Cor. xi. 33,) and at Philippi, (Acts xvi. 26,) and where not? for whosoever reads the catalogue of his sufferings, (1 Cor. xi. 23—28,) may wonder how so many evils could befall any one man. But as they did abound, deliverance did proportionably abound. Yet now, when God had no further work for him to do, he calls his servant home to receive his wages; and being so near the end of his race, Paul stretches out his hand, "for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 14.)

And if we cannot but allow the children of God to "grow in grace, and in knowledge," (2 Peter iii. 18,) and that the lights of God's setting up in his church are brightest a little before they are extinguished by death, Timothy and all believers had reason to mind especially the words of this dying man; this epistle being his last will and testament, in which every member of Christ's church hath a legacy left unto him, more precious (if understood and improved) than gold that perisheth.

In the beginning of this chapter, verse 2, the apostle requires, that those things he had taught might be continued still to be taught and to be practised. He knew that there was no getting into heaven *per saltum*;* that there was no coming to glory, but *by taking the degrees* (at least, arriving at the truth) of grace; and therefore here, as elsewhere in all his epistles, so many exhortations and dehortations are to be found, so many precepts about what we are to do, and cautions about what we are to avoid. The philosopher, treating of happiness, observes: *Περι γαρ ταυτης, και των εις ταυτην συγτεινοντων, και των εναντιων, ταυτη αι προτροκαι και αι αποτροκαι πασαι [ωσιν] εισι.*† The way is narrow, and the danger is great; and they are the best friends to us that bid us beware, and are jealous lest we should mistake.

* "Suddenly, by a leap."—EDIT. † ARISTOTELIS *Rhetoricorum*, lib. i. cap. 5. "For, in reference to happiness and those things which are either incentives or opposed to it, all men have much not only to excite them to it, but also to dissuade them from it."—EDIT.

But withal the apostle here meets with a great obstacle, a stone or rock of offence, which he endeavours to remove out of our way. Hymenæus and Philetus, two considerable persons, and probably highly accounted of in the church, (for, we find, no such difficulty arose at the turning away of Phygellus and Hermogenes, of whom mention is made, 2 Tim. i. 15,) apostatized from the truth; and whether they were, by their office, teachers, or no, is not certain; but that their breath was infectious, and that "their words did eat as a canker," is testified, verse 17. That their error was in a fundamental article, (denying the resurrection,) is very obvious; for, as the apostle says, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;" (1 Cor. xv. 13, 14;) yet such a darkness, or perverseness rather, have the fall and our corruption betrayed us to, that, without God cause his light to shine into us, there is nothing so senseless, irrational, or unscriptural, which we shall not embrace for truth.

Hence these wretches did not perish alone, but "overthrew the faith of some" (verse 18) *προσκαιροι*, or "temporary," believers, who assented to the truths of the gospel, and were reckoned amongst the faithful; nay, and they shrewdly shook the faith of others. When men in a field-battle see such fall who stood next them, or were before them, their hearts are apt to misgive them, lest the next bullet should take them off also. Especially true believers, knowing so much of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, as to make them humble all their days, and being so charitable toward others, and apt to believe any better than themselves, their concern also being so great for their souls, *hinc lacrymæ*,*—they cry: "We shall one day fall."

To such the apostle accommodates these words: *Nevertheless*—As if he had said, "Granting all that any fearful and weak (but true) believers amongst you can object, that so many fall away, and such as seemed so resolute have apostatized." *Yet the foundation of God standeth sure*—Though they who built upon the sand, with their stateliest and highest confidence, fell; yet every building upon the rock should hold out all winds and weathers. (Matt. vii. 24, 25.)

To prove which, the apostle offers a double security:—

1. *From the election and foreknowledge of God.*—"The Lord knoweth them that are his:" *Verba sensus et intellectus ponunt affectum et effectum*,† is a known rule to understand scripture by. God does not only know his people, as he does all other men, and all other creatures in the world; but he hath a special eye upon every one of them, and a special care for them as well as love unto them: and this is, as it were, THE PRIVY SEAL which every child of God may take for his security.

2. *They have also a BROAD SEAL, their sanctification.*—Which,

* "This is the source of their grief and tears."—EDIT. † "Words denote the effect and impression on the feelings and the understanding which their plain and intelligible meaning conveys."—EDIT.

comparatively at least, is evident ; for it is as a light set on a candlestick, and is visible, more or less, unto all : at least they may have "the testimony of a good conscience," (2 Cor. i. 12,) which is as a thousand witnesses.

Some have thought that these words may relate to an ancient custom of putting words and sentences upon such stones as were laid for foundations in buildings, in which something of the builder or author, or at least something thought worthy by him to be perpetuated, was inserted : and what more worthy than that which I have now mentioned of "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God?" (Rom. xi. 33 :) which may be allowed to be on the top of this foundation-stone : and round about the stone, that which follows : "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Which words I shall at present be confined to. They may be understood as a reasonable caution ; lest any that heard of the continuance and assurance of God's care and love should be puffed up. For as the apostle would not have the defection of others to cause any to despond ; so he would by no means have others' security, upon any pretensions whatsoever, to cause them to presume. But, as a wise physician, having prescribed so great a cordial against their fainting at the sight of others' falling, by telling them, that they who were of God's building should stand ; (1 Cor. iii. 9;) he gives them direction how to use this cordial, lest, if unwarily taken, it might strengthen their distemper : in which direction we may take notice,

1. *Upon whom this injunction is laid.*—Namely, "Every one that nameth the name of Christ."

2. *The injunction itself.*—Namely, "To depart from iniquity." Which last words, "to depart from iniquity," I shall suppose to be so far understood, as that I need not to stay in the explication of them. All sin is an unequal and unjust thing ; against our duty which we owe to God or man ; it is *ἀδικία*. But the manner of the apostle's expression is equivalent to a negative form, which is most comprehensive ; and therefore eight of the Ten Commandments at least are negative ; but they do all include the contrary positive : as the forbidding us to have any other God, commands us to take Jehovah for our God, and to love and obey him accordingly. And thus *the departing from iniquity* includes not only the leaving of all sin, but the following after and practising of holiness, in all duties that are required in every relation and condition : so that there is no duty to God or man, but he "that names the name of Christ" is required to practise it ; nor any sin against God or man, against the first or second table, but he is enjoined to forsake it. Which will farther appear when we have considered,

I. *What is meant by naming the name of Christ, or who is understood by the apostle to name this name of Christ ?*

II. *That such an one as thus names the name of Christ, is especially concerned and obliged to depart from iniquity.*

WHAT IS MEANT BY NAMING THE NAME OF CHRIST.

I. As to the first: *What is meant by naming the name of Christ?* —It is evident that it cannot be understood of a bare speaking of the word "Christ," sounding the letters of which it is made, which Pagans and Mahometans may do, and the wicked Jews often did; but by "naming the name of Christ," is understood, a making some special use of it, or of him that is signified by it. We must therefore consider,

That wheresoever there is any thing of divine revelation, there man's fall and misery are manifested. For though by natural light it could be perceived that all was not well with man; (hence the many complaints, that nature dealt very hardly with man, the noblest visible creature, that had rule and command over the rest of the creation;) yet that he was so short-lived, so full of misery and trouble, which seemed as natural to him, as for "sparks" to "fly upward;" (Job v. 7;) this was for a lamentation amongst the very Heathen; but *ποθεν xaxa*, "whence all this mischief came," they knew not. In scripture only we find the cause of our disease, and the remedy against it; and here, *Ubi invenitur venenum, juxta latus ejus nascitur antidotus*: "Where we may discover the malady, we may seek for and discover the remedy."

In the word of God we have means prescribed, institutions appointed, which being used and observed will help and recover us.

In the former economy and dispensation, they were veiled under shadows and types. The "wages of sin" being "death," (Rom. vi. 23,) every transgressor of the law forfeits his life; (Gen. ii. 17;) and his sin cannot be expiated but by blood: it might justly have been his own blood, and no other's; but the Lawgiver being graciously pleased to accept of *animam vicariam*, "another's blood or life," such as he should appoint, he did for a while accept of the sacrificing of beasts in the stead of the sinners, till the fulness of time was come, in which he sent his Son (this Christ whom the text mentions) to make full satisfaction to his offended justice, and by his death to expiate for all the sins of them that by faith apply themselves unto him. Hence it is said, he was "made sin for us," (2 Cor. v. 21,) and that "he was bruised for our iniquities," and that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." (Isai. liii. 5.)

But as under the law the transgressor was to lay his hand upon the beast to be sacrificed, thereby acknowledging that he was the creature that had deserved to die, and desiring that the death of the beast to be sacrificed might be accepted in his stead; (Lev. iii. 2; iv. 4;) so under the gospel we must apply to Christ with a due sense of our sins, and our deserving of death for them, and be accordingly affected with them.

Yet, more: when all the outward ceremonies were performed, the sacrificed beast accepted and slain, though the law according to the letter was satisfied, and a legal expiation did ensue, and a legal atonement was made; yet if the person that brought the sacrifice did not

mortify his sin, as well as the priest kill the sacrifice, his conscience inwardly remained defiled, and God still provoked and incensed. Nay, if the sinner had done one without the other,—killed his beast, and spared his sin alive,—God looked upon it as a double iniquity ; for so indeed it was, to acknowledge he had offended God, and to pretend that he desired to be reconciled unto him, and yet to go on in provoking of him. Hence God did forbid and reject their sacrifices, though of his own appointment : “ I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy fold ; ” (Psalm l. 9 ;) nay, he declares that, in such a case, “ he that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man ; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck ; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood ; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol ; ” (Isai. lvi. 3 ;) and elsewhere, “ Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me.” (Isai. i. 13.)

Now that all sacrifices were types of Christ, through whom only they had their virtue and efficacy, is confessed by all Christians. Thus Christ was a “ Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ; ” (Rev. xiii. 8 ;) and the Christian, when affected with his sin, and desirous to be reconciled to God, whom by his sin he hath provoked, lays the hand of his faith upon Christ, and humbly begs that Christ’s death for him may be accepted instead of his own, which he had deserved. But now, to give a further illustration of my text and subject, if he pleads (though for Christ’s sake) for pardon of sin, and yet retains a love and liking to his sin ; if he desires never so earnestly that he may not die for sin, and yet is willing that his sin may live ; these are vain oblations, vain prayers, but most real and dreadful provocations. There is a *Σηριον εν ημιν*, “ a beast within us,” which we must kill ; I mean, every corruption ; or no sacrifice, no, not of the Lamb of God himself, will be accepted for us. *Habes in te quod occidas* : “ Every man hath some sin or other within him,” nay, a whole “ body of sin,” “ which he must slay ” by at least a sincere, continued endeavour, or all legal and gospel sacrifices too in the world will not avail him : we must “ mortify the deeds of the flesh,” or we cannot live. (Rom. viii. 13.)

And now we may easily understand who they are that name the name of Christ, and to what purpose. For our Saviour is he who is so called, (the same with Messias,) from his being anointed by God to those offices of King, Priest, and Prophet to his church.

ALL CHRISTIANS NAME THE NAME OF CHRIST.

Now those that apply themselves unto him for life and salvation, are necessitated to name his name : and so they do,

I. IN THEIR PROFESSION.

In their profession.—Hence we are called Christians ; and we own the name, and rejoice and glory in it, as a name divinely imposed on the disciples of the blessed Jesus, by God himself ; for so *χρηματισαι* does import. (Acts xi. 26.) And in our baptism we agree to be

listed amongst his soldiers, and to fight under his banner ; nay, we name Christ's name, and it is our ambition to be called by it.

1. *Owning him as our Father.*—By whose Spirit we “are born again through his word ;” (1 Peter i. 23 ;) and as Jacob would have his name named on the children of Joseph, thereby owning and respecting of them as if they were his own children ; (Gen. xlviii. 16 ;) so does Christ look upon all believers as his children, and condescends to have his name named on them ; nay, he names them his children, when he says, “Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me.” (Heb. ii. 13 ; Isai. viii. 18.)

2. *Looking upon Christ as our Husband.* (2 Cor. xi. 2.)—To whom this apostle tells us that we are “espoused.” It is as ancient as the prophet Isaiah's time to have the wife called by the name of her husband ; which is the meaning of their desire, “Let us be called by thy name ;” (Isai. iv. 1 ;) that is, that, being married, they might change their names for that of their husbands : and this was the custom amongst many of the Romans, as still amongst us : *Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caia,**

And thus all that look upon Christ as their Father, and hope for the inheritance [which] he hath so dearly bought for them ; or who-soever behold him as their Husband, and esteem his love, and long for the enjoying of him ; are concerned in this obligation, to “depart from iniquity.” As also,

II. IN THEIR PETITION.

In their petition naming Christ.—In every prayer, to be sure, they name the name of Christ, in that they ask all in his name, that is, in his strength, and for his sake. So indeed runs the promise : “What-soever ye shall ask in my name ;” (John xiv. 13 ;) and in the next verse, (14,) “If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” Especially after our Saviour's ascension, when he had paid the price for his people, and for all the pardons and graces, strength or comfort, they should want, he bids them expressly to mention his name, relying on his merit for the obtaining of them. He told them a little before his going to suffer for them, “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name ;” (John xvi. 24 ;) though doubtless they had prayed, according as they were commanded, the Lord's Prayer, (Luke xi. 2—4 ;) day by day, and, implicitly at least, desired all those mercies through a Mediator. They knew that the high priest was to appear with the names of God's Israel, and to offer up incense for them ; yet

[* In the 30th of his “Roman Questions,” Plutarch gives the following account of this nuptial formula : “Why do the bridemen, that bring-in the bride, [and lift her over the threshold,] require her to say, *Where thou art CAIUS, there am I CAIA ?* What, if the reason be, that, by mutual agreement, she enters presently upon participation of all things, even to share in the government of the household ? And this is the meaning of it : ‘Where thou art the lord and master of the family, there am I also the dame and mistress.’ Or is it that *Caia Cæcilia*, an honest and good woman, being married to one of Tarquin's sons, had her statue of brass erected in the temple of *Ancus Martius*, on which in ancient times were hung sandals and spindles, as a significant memorial of her housewifery and industry ?”—CHAUNCY'S Translation.]

clearly and explicitly Christ's own apostles did not enjoy this great privilege. And doubtless some new advantages have accrued to the disciples of Christ, since that prayer was recommended or commanded, by his death and resurrection. Now the explicit naming of Christ is a very great encouragement in prayer, whether in those or any other words.

More particularly, pardon and acceptance, justification and peace with God, must especially be desired in the name of Christ, and for his sake only; for he was "made a curse for us," and, by being a curse for us, hath redeemed us from the curse. (Gal. iii. 13.) He was as accursed in our stead, and did bear what the curse did threaten to transgressors. Which being done, and God's justice and the law satisfied, it follows that in him God is "well-pleased;" (Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5;) which words are not only mentioned by the other evangelists, but repeated again in that extraordinary voice at his transfiguration; and are the more remarkable, in that it is not said, that Christ was God's beloved Son, *with* whom God was pleased; (though that was a truth from all eternity;) but, that God is pleased *in* him, that is, that God is well-pleased with all that are by faith united to him, and are as it were ingrafted in him. Hence we are said to be "justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:" (Rom. iii. 24:) so that all who are liable to condemnation have no other remedy, no hope or help, but in Christ Jesus; and "there is no other name" by which they can be saved, but by "the name of Christ;" for we "are justified" by faith in his "name." (Acts iv. 12; 1 Cor. vi. 11.)

Justification, properly speaking, is not the making of any righteous or holy; (though none are justified, who are not also sanctified;) but it is the accepting of any person who duly comes in the name of Christ, as righteous and holy; for so he is in God's sight, Christ's righteousness being imputed unto him; and for Christ's sake he becomes one of those blessed ones unto whom the Lord does not impute sin, as the Psalmist expresses it in those very words. (Psalm xxxii. 2.)

Whatsoever the import of the Latin word, from whence our English word "justification," may seem to be,* the words *δικαιουν* and *δικαιοσυνθαι* used by the apostle, are juridical words, and relate to a court of judicature; where when the accused party upon sufficient ground is acquitted, he is said to be justified; and justification or absolution is the proper antitheton to condemnation, as by the whole of St. Paul to the Romans, viii. 33, may appear.

Now we must suppose that the convinced sinner sets himself as in God's sight; and having seriously considered what the law threatens, dreading that curse and wrath to come, hearing his conscience pleading guilty to the accusations of the law against him, he seems to hear the Judge asking of him what he hath to say for himself, why the sentence of death should not pass upon him. Here it is that he

* *En Græcis bonis Latina fecere non bona.*—TERTULLIANUS. "See how they have rendered the good and expressive Greek words into very indifferent Latin."—EDIT.

names Christ, and remembers in prayer unto God what the blessed Jesus did and suffered unto the utmost for him. He became sin for him; he could not be a sinner, but he was dealt withal as if he had been one, because he was in the sinner's stead. Now the convinced sinner urges God's promise and covenant with Christ, that he should "see of the travail of his soul," &c. (Isai. liii. 11.) Thus the name of Christ is the soul's "strong tower;" he "runneth unto it, and is safe;" (Prov. xviii. 10;) and in Christ, who is also the Lord Jehovah, he hath "righteousness and strength." (Isai. xlv. 24.)

Again: Is the penitent sinner so oppressed that words fail him, only sighs and groans (which in his case are never wanting) are frequent with him? The name of Christ upholds him; for he knows, as God said of Aaron, "that he can speak well;" (Exod. iv. 14;) and "he ever liveth to make intercession for him." (Heb. vii. 25.)

I do not wonder that our being thus made whole only through the name of Christ should be by so many gainsayed and ridiculed; for it is hard to bring our thoughts into subjection unto the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. x. 5.) And when I read it so often called the "righteousness of God" in scripture, (Rom. x. 3; 2 Cor. v. 21,) (as surely he alone could find out the ransom, &c.,) I know it must be something beyond the ordinary apprehension of man; for "no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God;" (1 Cor. ii. 11;) and *nil diurnum nox capit*.*

HE WHO THUS NAMES THE NAME OF CHRIST IS SPECIALLY OBLIGED TO DEPART FROM INIQUITY.

II. May this suffice concerning the subject of my text, namely, he "that nameth the name of Christ." We must now speak of THE INJUNCTION that is laid upon him, or the direction given unto him, *Let every such an one depart from iniquity*.—In which we shall have cause to inquire how it consists with the naming of Christ, especially for our justification, as I have explained it; and these four particulars I shall offer to your consideration:—

1. *That departing from iniquity (or holiness) is no cause of our justification, properly taken: notwithstanding,*

2. *Holiness hath an influence upon our salvation; and also,*

3. *Holiness is indispensably necessary to all justified persons.*

4. *Nay, more: Free justification, or justification by God's free grace in Jesus Christ, is the best and most forcible incentive unto holiness.*

I. DEPARTING FROM INIQUITY IS NO CAUSE OF JUSTIFICATION.

It will appear that holiness is no cause of our justification: it did neither move God, when foreseen, to choose us; nor, when actually existing, to justify us.

REASON I. *Mercy is only from something in God.*

For all God's works of mercy arise from something in God himself.—Who is the "Fountain of" mercy, or of "living waters;" (Jer.

* "The night comprehends nothing which belongs to the day."—EDIT.

xvii. 13;) and judgments are said to be his "strange work," (Isai. xxviii. 21,) because he never proceeds to them but when he is necessitated to vindicate the glory of his injured attributes; that is, the cause of all God's severities is out of himself, and only to be found in the provocations of his creatures. The cause of all his mercies are his own bowels and compassions, and wholly in and from himself: "O Israel," thy destruction is from thyself; but "in me is thy help." (Hosea xiii. 9.) Nay, when God says unto the soul, "Live," he sees it in its "blood;" and it remains in its "blood," until he says unto it, "Live." (Ezek. xvi. 6.) For, in the apostle's phrase, he "justifies the ungodly" and the sinners; (Rom. iv. 5, 6;) that is, God does for Christ's sake discharge and acquit sinners who flee unto him, and desire pardon and acceptance through the blood of his Son, "the Lamb of God that" thus "taketh away the sin of the world." (John i. 29.)

And yet thus "the Judge of all the earth" does right too, when he makes Christ to become righteousness unto the believing and penitent sinners; for by the same reason and justice that they fell in one Adam, they may be made alive in another: (Rom. v. 19:) and "where is the disputer?" (1 Cor. i. 20.)

REASON 11. *There is no commutative justice between God and his creature.*

There is no commutative justice betwixt God and his creature.— We can give no equivalent for the least mercy, the least crumb, the least drop, to be sure, as coming from God. The giver puts a suitable price upon the gift: as the giver is in excellency, so is the gift in esteem. What a prince or a king gives is much magnified, though many times otherwise a trifle. But here is eternal life and a crown immortal, given by the great King of heaven and earth to such as know themselves to be but dust and ashes; and, to be sure, they cry, "Grace, grace unto it." (Zech. iv. 7.)

God gets nothing by all our holiest performances, devoutest prayers, and most spiritual duties. Our righteousness cannot profit him. "Can a man be profitable unto God?" (Job xxiii. 2;) that is, he cannot by any ways be profitable unto his Maker. No: it is for our sakes that God hath given us his commandments and institutions, that we might by them mend the frame and temper of our hearts, and be fitted for to enjoy him to all eternity. In the mean while, to stay our longing after him, he affords us to see him thus, though as in "a glass darkly." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.)

But if God could be pro-merited, as they speak, and obliged, it must be by some things that are our own; and, secondly, it must be by such things as are not due upon any other account whatsoever. Now "what hast thou which thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) Thy faculties and powers, thy grace and goodness, a heart and will to do good, every enlargement of prayer, and exercise of faith, or any other grace, is his; it is he "that works in us both to will and to do according to his own good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.) And if thanks

be not due to a servant when he does what he is bidden, as our Saviour expresses, (Luke xvii. 9,) what can be due to a creature from his Creator, who gives him food and raiment, life and breath, and all things? Where is there any proportion betwixt these, and any returns we can make? In all trading or exchanging, there it is, *Δος τι, και λαβε τι*, a *quid* for *quo*,* which cannot be given to God by us.

II. DEPARTING FROM INIQUITY HATH ITS INFLUENCE UPON,
THOUGH NO CAUSE OF, OUR SALVATION.

Departing from iniquity hath an influence upon our salvation, though it be not a cause of our salvation.—And though it cannot be admitted as a foregoing condition of our justification, for the reasons above given; yet it must be acknowledged to be a condition in the heirs of salvation; for “without holiness no man shall see God.” (Heb. xii. 14.) And, rightly understood, holiness is such a thing with which we shall be saved, and, to be sure, without which we shall not be saved. The Heathens made the way to the temple of honour through the temple of virtue; and amongst Christians, grace is the way to glory; that is, walking in the way of God’s commandments brings us to the place where God is; which way is as necessary to be walked in by all those that will go to God at last, as a path that leads to a town or place must be gone in by all that will come thither.

It is true, good works do not go before justification, but follow after; for being sanctified also when we are justified, “we are created unto good works in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. ii. 10.) Till we have a being, we cannot act; and till the root be made good, the fruit cannot be good. Amongst the moralists it may still be a rule, *Bona agendo, sumus boni*; “By doing good we become good;” but this must not be so strictly urged in divinity, where the fountain must be cleansed before the stream can run pure. Indeed, after conversion and regeneration, nothing increases the habits of grace more than the actings of grace; and in this natural and infused habits do agree: they are both strengthened by acting of them. Whatsoever grace you would have strong and lively in the soul, let it be conscientiously and frequently exercised, and it will become so: this hath many a *probatum est* [“proof”] amongst the children of God.

The consideration of these things does give us a true account, why in scripture we shall find good works and holiness so much magnified on the one hand, and yet sometimes on the other hand so debased: not to make proof of the former, the extolling good works, which deservedly is every where in scripture; yet withal we shall find them very diminutively spoken of in scripture; as where it is said, that “our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;” (Isai. lxiv. 6;) and also where the apostle says, that he accounts his blamelessness and righteousness which is in the law “but loss,” nay, “dung.” (Phil. iii. 8.) That is to say, when good works are considered with any relation to justification, or when they are compared with the righteousness of Christ,

* “Give me that, and I will give you this.”—EDIT.

we cannot think or speak too meanly of them ; but when holiness is considered as a fruit of the Spirit, always accompanying justification, and a requisite preparative for glory, and an ornament to our profession, in the mean while we cannot too much extol it, nor be too zealous and earnest in the acquiring and practising of it ; especially considering that,

III. HOLINESS IS INDISPENSABLY NECESSARY TO JUSTIFIED ONES.

Holiness is indispensably necessary unto all justified persons. Departing from iniquity is the duty of all that name the name of Christ.—As it was necessary that Christ should take upon him our flesh, so it is as necessary that we should receive from him his Spirit. He must become “flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone,” (Gen. ii. 23,) that he might pay our debt in the same nature which contracted it ; so we must partake of his Spirit, that we may be capacitated to receive the fruit of his redemption, and be one with him.

Nay, all promises, the very covenant of grace itself is thus to be understood ; namely, that the beneficiaries, or they that receive benefit by them, should be holy ; otherwise they might not, without presumption, hope for any good from them. And though we do not meet with this always expressed, yet it is always to be understood ; God expressly declaring, that though Coniah, a wicked person, was as a “signet upon his right hand, yet he would pluck him thence.” (Jer. xxii. 24.)

And when God engageth to continue his favour unto any, he engageth to continue them in a fit disposition to receive his favour. Thus to the posterity of David, which in a type were the representatives of the spiritual seed that should be raised to our elder brother Christ Jesus, whom David typified, it was promised that they should “endure for ever ;” (Psalm lxxxix. 29 ;) but then in case of forsaking of God’s law, he would “visit their transgressions with a rod,” (verse 32,) or he would use such means, though irksome for him to do, and grievous for them to bear, as might bring them back unto himself by repentance. Nay, were the promise of God never so plain and full in any case unto any person, yet there is always a *sub-intelligitur* * of such a demeanour as may be fit to receive the mercy promised : as we may see in the case of Eli and his family, which God doth acknowledge that he had promised the priesthood to ; and yet, upon the provocations of Eli and his sons, God says, “ ‘ Be it far from me, that I should perform it.’ ” (1 Sam. ii. 30.) Neither is God unrighteous, or his veracity to be excepted against ; for so long as we have to do with so holy a God, all covenants are to be understood so as may agree with his holiness, and not otherwise.

Thou sayest, (but “they are but vain words,”) that thou hast such mercies promised unto thee, and treasured up for thee ; whereas unless thou beest sanctified and “born again,” thou canst not “enter into the kingdom of heaven,” or so much as “see the kingdom of God,”

* “A proviso or understanding.”—EDIT.

(John iii. 3,) or be benefited by any promise that God hath made. As it is storied of one who was very debauched and wicked, and, taking up a Bible, which by his religion he had not been acquainted with, (being a Papist,) he confessed that whatsoever book that was, it made against him; so unless thou dost sincerely labour after holiness, there is never a word in all the book of God that speaks any comfort unto thee, none of the fruit that grows upon the tree of life can be tasted by thee.

This might be more evinced, if we fix our mind on these following reasons :

REASON I. *From the nature of God.*

The first may be taken from the nature of God.—I mean, the essential holiness of his nature, by which he cannot have communion with any one that is unholy, no more than light can have “fellowship with darkness;” but he indispensably hates and opposes all wickedness, and hath declared his enmity against it. As fire cannot but devour stubble, so God’s holiness will not suffer him to spare any whom he finds sin and guilt upon. (Isai. v. 24.) Hence so many threatenings and denunciations of judgments against it, which do not linger, whatsoever the sinner may think. Neither can the gospel change God’s nature, or make him less to abhor sin. It is indeed a declaration of the way and means which God hath ordained to exalt his grace and mercy to the sinner by; but it is in saving of him from his sin, and not with it. Nay,

REASON II. *From the requisites in the gospel itself.*

All the privileges of the gospel do include or pre-suppose departing from iniquity.—An unholy person, whilst such, *ipsa salus non potest salvare*, “salvation itself cannot preserve.” How did the Jews search every hole and corner of their houses to find out leaven, and how earnestly did they cast it away! or else the paschal lamb would not have availed them, and the destroying angel would not have passed from them. And “these things are our examples,” (1 Cor. x. 6,) and tell us, that unless we industriously search out and cast away the leaven of sin and wickedness, the very death of Christ, the Lamb of God, will profit us nothing. It is as the first principle of the Christian religion, “that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” (1 Cor. vi. 9,) which the apostle took for granted the Corinthians could not but know. And what a bead-roll is there of such as he declares “shall not inherit the kingdom of God!” (Verses 9, 10.) No less than ten abominations are there mentioned to exclude from heaven, and some of them valued in common account but as peccadilloes. Men are apt to say of any sin, “Is it not a little one? and my soul shall live.” (Gen. xix. 20.) But, as the apostle there cautions, “Be not deceived.” (1 Cor. vi. 9.) Deceits of this nature are frequent, but very dangerous. And this is the gospel to which we appeal when we are scared and frightened by the law: but in all the gospel there is nothing that can take away or lessen our obligation to

God's commandments; but what does every way straiten and strengthen it. Now we are bound with a double cord, which is harder to be broken; and it shows that sin under the gospel hath acquired greater strength when it snaps it asunder.

Let us take a view of the privileges of those that are saved by the gospel, and see how they are obliged to holiness by them.

1. *Election is the first.*—And if we are “chosen in Christ Jesus,” the apostle tells us, that we are “chosen in him, that we should be holy and without blame before him;” (Eph. i. 4;) and if we should make our “calling and election sure,” it must be “with fear and trembling.” (2 Peter i. 10; Phil. ii. 12.) The book of life is with God in heaven: thou canst not see thy name there, but it is transcribed for thy comfort in thy heart when thou art sanctified; and the more thou proceedest in holiness, the more legible it will be unto thee.

2. *Our vocation is unto holiness.*—Does God call any of his to come from the world and sin unto him, as Christ called Saul? And “his sheep do hear his voice:” they “are called to be saints,” (Acts ix.; John x. 3; Rom. i. 7,) they are called to be made holy, and to be sanctified, (whatsoever they were before,) when once they come to Christ: “But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified.” (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Christ comes by water and blood, and not by water or blood only; and Christ is made of God unto us not only “righteousness,” but “sanctification.” (1 Cor. i. 30.)

3. *Our regeneration, or being born again, which the gospel insists so much upon, is in being made like unto God.*—“Partakers of the divine nature,” (2 Peter i. 4,) enabled to love what he loves, and to hate what he hates, and to be conformed unto him in all things; so that God and regenerate ones have but one will. Thus they are said to be “created” again “unto good works.” (Eph. ii. 10.)

4. *And what is glory, which we seek for, and endeavour after, but only holiness in perfection?* (Rom. ii. 7.)—Grace is glory in the bud, glory is grace in the flower; hence they are put together, and we are said to be “called to glory and virtue.” (2 Peter i. 3.) Wheresoever true grace is, there will be glory; and in whomsoever glory is, there hath been grace: God hath put these two together, and let no man put them asunder. As Laban's two daughters were disposed of,—the elder, though less lovely, must be first accepted by Jacob; (Gen. xxix. 26;) so God deals with his two, grace and glory: grace is the elder, and though not so desirable, (every one would covet glory,) yet this is the law of the land,—the younger must not be given before the elder; you must woo for and obtain grace, before you can be admitted to the enjoyment of glory.

Nay, we are only so far Christians as we are like Christ in principle and practice; as we partake of the spirit which he had, and lead such a life as he did. Christian is not an empty name; and being called so, makes us not to be so. Every one is not a scholar, or an artist in any faculty, who is called so. Besides, Christianity is a practical science; and thou hast no more of it than thou dost practise. O

how little have most men! The Heathen painted their deified heroes with this sentence proceeding from them: *Si feceritis sicut nos, eritis sicut nos*. We may imagine we hear our Saviour telling us from heaven, "If ye do as I did, ye shall be as I am."

And certainly, though heaven and the glory of it be freely promised, and it is no contradiction to say, that it is fully purchased, and sufficiently paid for, being [seeing] the apostle calls it a "purchased possession;" (Eph. i. 14;) yet there must be a meetness and suitability to it in every one that shall be admitted to the fruition of it: we must be "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12.) What should an unholy heart do in heaven? Heaven would not be heaven unto it; that is, it could not be a place of bliss and joy unspeakable unto such. There are no carnal delights; not so much as the here lawful, because necessary, ones of eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage: there is no gold and silver, to fill the bags of the covetous earth-worms; no Delilahs, for the wantons; no company, to debauch and carouse with. If a sermon or a Lord's day be so tedious, ("Will it be gone?") how unhappy would an unchanged, unsanctified soul think itself to hear perpetual hallelujahs and praises, to be conined amongst the souls of just men, and holy angels! (Heb. xii. 14, 23.) God certainly will not cast his jewels before such swine. (Matt. vii. 6.)

Besides, the gospel does by no means take away the ground of that discrimination which will be at the last between the sheep and goats, between them that shall stand on the right hand, and on the left, of the Judge of the quick and dead. In the final sentence there must be a truth in what shall be said to the blessed, "I was an hundred, and ye gave me meat;" (Matt. xxv. 35;) as well as the final condemnation of the cursed, "I was an hungry, and ye gave me no meat," &c. (Verse 42.)

But I need not multiply reasons to prove that every one must depart from iniquity, even such as hope to be saved. For,

REASON III. *Taken from our very natures.*

It is written in our very natures, did we but understand them.—Every man that receives a reasonable soul, is, by his receiving of it, obliged to give God a reasonable service: as all creatures are called upon to glorify and praise God; and they do it in their kind, by affording unto man, who is their priest, and [who] only can offer for them, cause of thanksgiving and admiration. (Psalm cxlviii.)

But man owes most for himself, as having received most. There is no man comes into the world, but he hath some of his Lord's money intrusted with him, under an obligation and charge to "occupy it until he come;" (Luke xix. 13;) and he hath undertaken to do so. This is the *επαγγελια ανθρωπου*,* or the inessentiate promise which every one is understood to make at his creation; namely, to perform all reasonable service, (and it is such, whatsoever God commands,) and to be subject to his Maker in all things.

* "The engagement or promise on the part of man."—EDIT.

And when this promise or oath is broken, man cannot but be uneasy; his conscience accuses, condemns, torments him; so that it is indeed *μεγας πονος το μη ζην καλωσ*.* A wicked man is in more trouble and pain in the pursuit of his lust and wickedness, than a good man meets with in all the severest exercise of holiness.

The soul that is renewed and born again, is so far from being disengaged from holiness, that its engagement is doubled; for he is redeemed, that "he might serve God in holiness and righteousness." (Luke i. 74, 75.) God hath chosen him for his champion, to fight against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." And should such an one desert or yield, it were cowardice or treachery. God expects greater matters from such; that being "formed for himself," he should "show forth his praise." (Isai. xliii. 21.)

To be sure, no act of grace, no gospel-privilege or advantage, present or to come, can take away or lessen our obligation to become holy; for, this being the law of our creation, whilst we are God's creatures, so made, so endued, that is, whilst we have our beings, and we are at all, we carry our bonds about with us, which we may not break without sinning against the law of our creation, which it is impossible that any thing or matter in the gospel, which comes after it, should disannul.

OBJECTION. "But if holiness be so absolutely necessary to life and happiness, and that under the gospel, to which men flee to escape the condemnation of the law, 'who then can be saved?'"

The apostles propounded that question unto our Saviour upon the observation [which] our Saviour had made (the rich young man having departed from him) of the very great difficulty in the salvation of a rich man. It is observable, that the disciples do not say, "What rich man can then be saved?" (Matt. xix. 25.) But, being conscious that every condition had its temptations, (as a rich man had his, so they had theirs,) they therefore propound the question more generally. To which, so far as my subject leads me, I answer,

ANSWER 1. *By concession, that certainly there will be but few saved.*—Christ's flock is a very little one, a little diminutive flock. (Luke xii. 32.) Of the many that came out of Egypt, how few entered Canaan! And if the apostles were so solicitous, when it was told them that one of them, though but one of the twelve, was the son of perdition, how careful should we be, when our Saviour tells us, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it!" (Matt. vii. 14.) Who that thinks seriously on this, will not make the apostles' solicitous question, "Is it I?" (Matt. xxvi. 22.)

2. *God does undertake for holiness too, to enable all that, in sense of their inability, come unto him in the name of Christ.*—Nay, God "knows them that are his," and draws them unto Christ, who hath "received gifts for the rebellious," (good news for the humbled, penitent sinner!) "that the Lord God might dwell amongst them." (Psalm lxxviii. 18.) Nay, Christ hath "all fulness," which it pleased

* "A vicious course of life is both tollsome and distressing."—EDIT.

the Father should be in him. (Col. i. 19.) And God hath promised to "take away the stony heart," and to "give them a heart of flesh." (Ezek. xi. 19.) As for others that perish in their blood and sin, God is righteous; for who of them does what he could do, and ought to do? And God may do with his own (all grace is his) as he pleases.

3. *A sincere endeavour to depart from iniquity, and to keep the commandments of God, shall be accepted at thy hand for Christ's sake.*—In the first covenant (according to the tenor of it) the person was accepted only for the works' sake; but in the covenant of grace, the works are accepted for the person's sake. If thou hast made thy peace with God through Jesus Christ, and art beloved in him, God will accept thee "according to what thou hast," and not reject thee for what thou "hast not." (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

But be not mistaken, as if some sorry wishes and faint endeavours after holiness were sufficient. Do men pursue so coldly and faintly things which they value? especially if it be for their lives. Therefore they shall be your judges.

But having exceeded in the foregoing particulars, (like those children that come first [who] have usually the biggest portion,) I must hasten to the fourth and last, and be brief in it; namely,

IV. FREE PARDON THE BEST MOTIVE TO BECOME HOLY.

This grace of the gospel, to wit, our justification through the name and merit of Jesus Christ, is the strongest motive toward our departing from iniquity.—Though departing from iniquity is in itself very good and necessary, yet the motive for such our departing does very much vary it. Our Saviour taxeth the scribes and Pharisees, that they did "all their works to be seen of men;" (Matt. xxiii. 5;) which was as a fly in the box of their precious ointments. Any good action ought to consist (*ex integris causis*) "of good causes in every respect." If the principle out of which it flows, or end to which it tends, be not good, the whole work is marred, it cannot be a good work. Our business at present is to inquire about the end which we propound in our obedience, in which,

1. *Meriting, or retaliating, may not move us.*

If it be to expiate for by-past offences, or to merit undeserved favours, it must needs be abominable in the sight of God, being the highest act of pride or presumption that can be imagined.—Let our works be what they will, though the best "are as filthy rags," (Isai. lxiv. 6,) if they be offered unto God by way of barter or exchange, they become most abominable: as if God stood in need of something that we have, or that we were so sufficient as to be able to benefit God too.

2. *But thankfulness to God excites us.*

To depart from iniquity, or to labour in holiness, in order to express our thankfulness unto God for his mercies in Jesus Christ, is most grateful and most forcible.

(1.) It must be most acceptable unto God, being [seeing] it speaks the soul truly affected with and sensible of God's free grace and mercy. It does not come to God with any purpose to deserve at God's hands; but with a "What shall I render?" (Psalm cxvi. 12;) with many blessings of God for his pardoning of his iniquity, and healing his diseases. (Psalm ciii. 1—3.)

(2.) Thankfulness, as low as sin hath sunk man, is yet left, as visibly engraven on the nature of man. Hence the Heathen could account unthankfulness as the sum of all vices; and scripture makes the unthankful man worse than a beast. (Isai. i. 3.) Now if thankfulness remain and be cogent, what can oblige more than the mercies of God in Christ? If we serve them that give us food and raiment, what service is too much for him that gives us all things? nay, that gives us Christ, and with him all things? O there is a vast difference in having Christ, the peace and love of God through him, in having Christ, his Spirit to enable us to improve what we have from God, and not having Christ with our present enjoyments. Methinks when we see our children or servants run or go where we would have them, do any thing to please or gratify us; we cannot but blush to think how little we do, and how awkward it is what we do, for God.

Who is it that considers the love of God in Jesus Christ, and can forbear crying out with the Psalmist, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant?" (Psalm cxvi. 16.) (Away with all formal fops!) It is ingeminated, because of our obligation to God's service, from our redemption as well as from our creation; and if thou dost say so, as thou dost in effect in every prayer, let not God find thee with a lie in thy mouth.

3. *God's and Christ's love constrains us.*

Love unto God for all his glorious excellencies, especially for his mercy in Christ Jesus, is the best principle of holiness and [of] our departing from iniquity.

God requires his children to give him their heart. (Prov. xxiii. 26.) And indeed, in all the acts of religion and devotion, what the heart does not do is looked upon by God as not done at all; nay, it were well for the hypocrite, that all his outside services and formal professions had never been. This made St. Paul to pray for the Thessalonians, that the Lord would "direct their hearts into the love of God." (2 Thess. iii. 5.)

Now love is as a fire which "many waters cannot quench." (Canticles viii. 7.) Difficulties will be overcome, and obedience will be permanent, where true love to God is. And this love in the soul to God is begun by and flows from God's love first unto the soul, as fire kindles fire: "He loved us first;" (1 John iv. 19;) and had it not been a very great flame, it could never have thawed and warmed our frozen hearts. We do but *αντιπελαργειν*, "love when we are beloved." But when we are made sensible of Christ's love, the freeness, efficacy, and usefulness of it, (I know not what to say, first or last, concerning it,) it passeth knowledge; then we are "constrained,"

(2 Cor. v. 14.) that is, as effectually, though inwardly, forced, as any strong man can by his strength force us to do any outward act.

He that acts according to any of God's commandments, out of hope to merit by them, may act out of love indeed, but it must be then self-love, to obtain, as he vainly thinks, by his obedience, eternal happiness. Our love of God should exceed self-love, as far as God himself exceeds us, which is infinitely. Our love of God is a virtue, and the foundation of all the rest. Our love of ourselves, thus taken, is a sin, and a mother-sin, the cause of all the rest of our sins.

To hear a penitent and believing sinner exulting in his praises unto God, professing his deep sense of his mercies, considering what returns he shall make unto God, (for the Spirit of God is a "free" and ingenuous "Spirit," Psalm li. 12,) it were the pleasantest and desirablest music on this side of the heavenly choir. Thou mayest set about it thyself, and make this "melody in thy own heart:" (Eph. v. 19 :) ruminates on what God hath done for thee, and what he daily does; what thou owest for the mercies of every day, and night, and moment; and what suitable sense thou oughtest to have of them; and, to thy poor power, (thy "little all,") what returns thou oughtest to make for them. But when thou settest thyself, as in the sight of God, to consider what thou shouldst return to thy God for his mercy in Christ Jesus, thou wilt find that thyself, thy service, thy all, is too little; but you must cry-out, with Mr. Herbert,—

"Alas! my God, I know not what!"

APPLICATION.

I cannot wholly omit application, though I have in a great measure prevented myself: take what remains in these few USES:—

USE I. INSTRUCTION.

1. *This justifies God.*—For no doctrine, no dispensation of his did ever countenance sin; nay, nothing does show so plainly God's hatred of sin, as the gospel does. If we take a walk in the garden where our Saviour sweat those drops of blood; (Luke xxii. 44;) or be within hearing of that lamentable cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46;) if we ask, "Why does the Son of God thus cry out? What makes him thus sweat?" the gospel informs us, that it was our sin that pressed this blood out of him, and forced this bitter cry from him; and if this be done "in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 31.)

2. *This discovers the groundless pretensions and vain confidence of most men, who live in sin, and yet hope (or would seem to hope) to live with God.*—O "know ye not your own selves?" Read the whole Testament over; either that is not the gospel, or you cannot receive comfort from it. Not one good word is there in it to any in whom sin reigns; unless those threatenings of hell and destruction may be called good, (O that they might prove so!) to awaken you to a due sense of your condition, and be as a "schoolmaster" to lead, or

drive you to Christ; to take him for your Lord as well as for your Saviour: if he be not both, he is neither unto you. (2 Peter i. 11; ii. 20.) You cannot be saved by your book, could you read it and understand it never so well, unless you practise it also. "Christ must be in you," his Spirit entertained in your heart, or there is no "hope of glory" for you. (Col. i. 27.) All "good hope" is "through grace." (2 Theas. ii. 16.) Thou flatterest thyself that God is thy Father, and so thou callest him in thy prayers; but if thou beest [art] not like him, if thou partakest not of his "Divine Nature," (2 Peter i. 4,) thou takest his "name in vain," and he "will not hold thee guiltless;" for thy prayers will be turned into sin unto thee. (Psalm cix. 7.) And yet pray thou must, or thou runnest into a greater iniquity; by neglecting to acknowledge thy dependence upon God, thou wilt at least border upon atheism. O what a miserable dilemma does thy wickedness betray thee unto!

If thou hadst a design to dishonour God, thou couldest not more effectually execute it than by saying, that thou art his servant or child, and by sin to disparage him thy Father, or Lord and Master: as *he* must needs provoke any great and noble person, *who*, in the livery of his servant, or garb of his child, acts filthiness and abominations.

And as for laying hold on Christ, and shrouding of thyself amongst his retinue, calling him thy Husband, or professing him to be thy Head, what a monster (pardon the expression, I tremble to mention it) wouldst [thou] make him! as if he were a Dagon, whose head was like a man, but his lower parts like stinking fish. The truth is, the pretensions of such unto salvation would make scripture a lie, and Christ the minister of unrighteousness; which God forbid. (Gal. ii. 17, 21.)

Dost thou think it will serve thy turn well enough, if thou canst but with Stephen say at last, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit?" (Acts vii. 59.) Unless thy spirit be sanctified, and [thy] sins washed away in his blood, thou wilt now soon hear him say unto thee, "Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire." (Matt. xxv. 41.)

Men, brethren, and fathers, hear our apology: if we be taxed, because we maintain free grace and free justification, that we make a way for free sinning, and free living, and doing what we please, and yet getting thus into heaven at last, and that we may be assured of it in the mean while; we justly abominate such inferences, and think they can least of all be inferred from such premisses. May we all agree to stand up for God, and to oppose sin to our utmost! which is the last and only use that remains, and the best and suitablest to the text that can be made.

USE II. EXHORTATION.

To depart from iniquity.—It is foretold concerning the times of the gospel, that "in the latter days" they should "fear the Lord and his goodness." (Hosea iii. 5.) O that these words might be now fulfilled! that men would fear to abuse "the goodness of God," which is designed to "lead them to repentance." (Rom. ii. 4.) The

richest and sweetest wines, they say, make the sharpest vinegar; I am sure, sweetest promises, when neglected or abused, issue in the severest torments: "Woe to thee, Chorazin! woe to thee, Bethsaida!" Why is so sad a woe denounced, beyond that on Tyre and Sidon? And Capernaum too is threatened with a more terrible destruction than that of Sodom and Gomorrah: because those miserable ones perished without having had the means of salvation declared in the gospel amongst them; these refused to come to be saved, though invited by Christ himself. (Matt. xi. 21—24.) The hotter the sun-beams are, the more they harden the clay that will not be softened by it.

If you keep your sins now, you do "despite unto the Spirit of grace," that in the gospel invites, persuades, and offers to enable you to forsake them: you trample "under foot the precious blood of the Son of God," which should wash you from all your impurities; you count it as a common thing, and let it be spilt in vain, as water on the ground. (Heb. x. 29; 1 Peter i. 19.) One brings-in Satan upbraiding our Saviour with the fewness of his followers, and true disciples: he (Satan) did never any good for man, he is man's enemy on all accounts; and yet, upon the offer of any foolish toy, profit, or pleasure, he is obeyed, and men yield themselves up to his service, though so hard and tyrannical a master. Our blessed Lord became man, lived meanly, died miserably, that he might gain obedience to such just precepts and commandments that are for our good, and yet hath so very few that will serve and obey him. "Be astonished, O ye heavens." (Jer. ii. 12.) Therefore "Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. xiv. 9.) "All things are put under his feet;" (1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 22;) and "by his power he ruleth" over all, (Psalm lxxvi. 7,) whether they will or no. But Christ died and suffered that he might obtain a "willing people," such as out of choice and love would obey him. (Psalm cx. 3.)

And do any of you pretend to be "bought with a price," even "with the precious blood of the Son of God?" Then you ought to glorify him with those bodies and spirits which are his. (1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23; 1 Peter i. 19.)

It is now sacrilege indeed to rob God; and he will bring thee into judgment, and indict thee, ay, and condemn thee too, without serious and timely repentance, for it. And, O how hot is that hell which is especially prepared for hypocrites and unbelievers!

Thy obligation is as strict, and, as you heard, stricter too, under the gospel, than it was to any under the law; and yet the transgressors of the law deserved then to perish "without mercy;" (Heb. x. 28;) and how shall we escape?

One difference there is indeed betwixt the law and the gospel: the law required the full "tale of brick," but afforded "no straw;" (Exod. v. 18;) it required obedience, but the law, as such, afforded no means to perform it. The means how thou mayest be enabled to do the will of God, and to depart from iniquity, are manifested in the

gospel; here thou art shown a "fulness" in Christ, out of which thou mayest have "grace for grace." (Col. i. 19; John i. 16.)

Thou art invited to come, thou art assured to be welcome; bring never so many empty vessels, thou mayest fill them freely. (Isai. lv. 1.) It is in vain to say thou canst not, but thou wilt not, be holy. Did any now, in a sense of their weakness and inability, beg strength and power from him to do his will, and walk in his commandments, there would be "joy in heaven" for such a petition, so readily would it be heard and granted. (Luke xv. 7, 10.)

You have heard, that every one that calls himself a Christian does it therefore, because he pretends to be married to Jesus Christ; but, in good earnest, to use the words of Rebekah's friends, "Wilt thou go with this man?" (Gen. xxiv. 58.) Wilt thou go with Christ, and be a follower of him? "Say, and do it;"* and God speed thee well: I cannot wish thee more joy than thou wilt find.

And O what advantages would this bring, would Christians be what they profess and would seem to be! were the precepts of Christ obeyed, and his life copied out by them, this would mend the world indeed. Pagans and Mahometans, Papists and Jews, would not be able to stand out against the power of godliness, when it once appears in the lives of men. Not only ministers may convert, but even women too: thus the husband, the apostle tells us, (1 Peter iii. 1.) may be gained to Christ by his wife; thus a servant, that does his service as to the Lord, may convert his master.

O! up and be doing; "your labour shall not be in vain;" (1 Cor. xv. 58;) no, but "great" shall be your "reward in heaven," when you shall be taken up to "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 3.)

But if you shall neglect or refuse, my soul shall mourn in secret for you, as knowing that the crying, "Lord, Lord," (Matt. xxv. 11.) will not avail you, nor any confident profession of Christ's name stand you in any stead. When the deluge came, how many perishing wretches ran to the ark, and laid hold on it, cried earnestly for to be admitted into it, but in vain! You know whom the ark represented, even this Christ, in whom alone is salvation. O get into him, by a true and living faith; and that to-day, "whilst it is called To-day," (Heb. iii. 13,) lest "swift destruction" come upon you. (2 Peter ii. 1.) May we all so know and consider "the terrors of the Lord," that we may be persuaded! (2 Cor. v. 11.)

* *Fac quod dicis, et fides est.* "Do what thou sayest, and it is faith."—EDIT.

SERMON VI.

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WHAT IS THAT FULNESS OF GOD EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN OUGHT
TO PRAY AND STRIVE TO BE FILLED WITH ?*And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye
might be filled with all the fulness of God.*—Ephesians iii. 19.Γινωαι τε την υπερβαλλουσαν της γνωσεως αγαπην του Χριστου, ινα
πληρωθητε εις παν το πληρωμα του Θεου.

THESE words are a considerable part of that excellent prayer put up to God by the apostle for his beloved Ephesians. (From verse 16 to the end.) And indeed prayer was his tried engine, by which he always could bring down supplies of grace from “the God of all grace,” for his own and the souls of others. In this branch of it, you will easily observe, he prays for *grace the end*, and *grace the mean to reach that end*.

1. He prays for *grace the end*: “That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” This, being the utmost of the soul’s perfection, ought to be the height of its ambition: beyond this we cannot reach, and therefore in the attainment of this we must rest.

2. He prays for *grace the mean to compass that end*: namely, “To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” As we grow up into a greater measure of the knowledge of the love of Christ to us, we shall enjoy more of the fulness of God in us.

But here we meet, in each of these parts of the text, with an *εναντιοφανες*, or “a seeming contradiction” in the terms. “To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,”—what is that, but to know what is unknowable? And to “be filled with all the fulness of God,”—what is that, but to comprehend what is incomprehensible? The narrow vessel of our heart can no more contain the boundless and bottomless ocean of the Divine fulness, than our weak intellectual eye can drink-in the glorious light of that knowledge.

And yet there are many such expressions in the holy scripture. Thus Moses “saw him that was invisible,” *τον αορατον ορων*. (Heb. xi. 27.) He saw him by the eye of faith in the glass of revelation, whom he could not see by the eye of reason in the glass of creation. And thus we are instructed in the gospel, how to approach that God who is unapproachable; (1 Tim. vi. 16;) to approach that God by Jesus Christ according to the terms of the new covenant, to whom, considered absolutely in himself, we could never approach.

Let us, therefore, first clear and remove the obscurity of the phrases, that we may more comfortably handle the divine matter con-

tained in them ; always taking along with us this useful caution,—that we run not away with a swelling metaphor, and from thence form in our minds rude, undigested notions of spiritual things ; nor fancy we see miracles, when we should content ourselves with marvels.

I. The former of these seeming repugnances is, “*To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.*”—If this love of Christ passeth knowledge, why do we pray, why should we strive, to know it? If it be our duty to pray that we may know it, how is it supposed to pass knowledge? Must we endeavour to reach that which is above all heights? to fathom that which is an abyss, and has no bottom? or to take the dimensions of that which is unmeasurable?

To remove this difficulty, there have been many expedients found out.

1. Some carry the sense thus: “To know the love of Christ, which passeth, or surpasseth, the knowledge of all other things.” There is an excellency, an usefulness in the knowledge of Christ’s love, which is not to be found in the knowledge of any thing else. A man may know, to his own pride, to the admiration of others; he may have the knowledge of all tongues and languages, may understand all arts and sciences, may dive deep into the secrets of nature, may be profound in worldly policies, may have the theory of all religions, true and false; and yet, when he comes to cast up his accounts, shall find himself never the better, never the holier, indeed never the wiser, never the nearer satisfaction, till he can reach this blessed knowledge of the love of Christ.

Only the excellency of the knowledge of the love of Christ consists herein:—

(1.) It must be a knowledge of Christ’s love by way of *appropriation*: to know, with the apostle, that “he loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*.” (Gal. ii. 20.)

(2.) By way of *efficacious operation*: that he “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” (Rev. i. 5.)

(3.) By way of *reflexion*: that his love has kindled a mutual love in our souls to him: “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John iv. 19.)

(4.) By way of *practical subjection*: when his love subdues our hearts to himself, and constrains us to new obedience: “The love of Christ constraineth us;” (2 Cor. v. 14;) it restrains us from sinning against him, and engages us to obey him. To know, that we may know, and make knowledge the end of itself, is nothing but vain curiosity; to know, that we may be known, is nothing but vain-glorious arrogancy; to know, that we may make others know, is indeed an edifying charity; but to know, that we may be transformed into the image and likeness of what we know of the love of Christ,—this is the true, the excellent, the transcendent way of knowledge. And this was that knowledge of Christ and of his love which the apostle set such a price upon, when he “determined not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;” (1 Cor. ii. 2;) that he

might there see the love of Christ streaming out of his heart, at his wounds, in his blood; and there see Divine Justice satisfied, the law fulfilled; and thence feel his conscience purified and pacified, and his soul engaged and quickened to walk in all new obedience. This is that *το ὑπερῶν της γνώσεως Χριστου*, "the transcendent knowledge of Christ," in comparison of which all other things were "loss and dross and dung;" that he might "know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." (Phil. iii. 8, 10.) And this is one way of clearing the difficulty, and reconciling the seeming contradiction.

2. Others have recourse to a *hyperbaton*, and would clear the thing by transposing the words; and they order the words thus: *Γινωσκειν την ὑπερβαλλουσαν αγαπην της γνώσεως του Χριστου*. "To know the surprising love of the knowledge of Christ." And then the sense will be this: "I pray that you may know that surpassing, that incomparable love of God, which appeared in giving you the knowledge of Christ." And it must be for ever acknowledged, that this was a marvellous instance of the love of God, that he was pleased to communicate to the world the knowledge of a Redeemer: but yet it seems rather to impoverish the sense, than to give us the full import of the expression.

3. There is no need to fly to critical niceties, nor to call in rhetoric and its figures to our relief. The words will be consistent, and freed from all appearance of self-contradiction, if we attend to these following positions:—

(1.) That which cannot be known by a mere human understanding, may yet be understood by the Spirit of Christ, which "searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." (1 Cor. ii. 10.) And the Spirit of God is given for this end, to "shed abroad the love of God," and so the love of Christ, "in our hearts." (Rom. v. 5.)

(2.) That which cannot be fully known of the love of Christ in this present state, where our understandings are very much clouded and our faith weak through the remainders of inward corruption, yet shall be more gloriously known when we come to see God in Christ face to face: "Now we know in part; but then we shall know even as also we are known." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.)

(3.) Although there be much of the love of Christ which passes all our present knowledge, yet there is enough of that love that may be known: enough to feed our knowledge, that it starve not in this life; and yet to whet the edge of the soul's appetite to know more in the life to come: enough to guide us and conduct us through our pilgrimage; and abundance more, reserved for our portion. The love of Christ has depths in it wherein the daring soul may drown, and yet those shallows wherein the humble soul may safely wade, and comfortably bathe itself, without danger of being swallowed up. And we have some parallel expressions in scripture, which may well illustrate this of the text. "The peace of God passes all understanding," *ὑπερχειουσα παντα νοου*. (Phil. iv. 7.) It "exceeds all conception;" and yet there is that in the peace of God which may be conceived and expressed too; even

something of that inward satisfaction which arises from a well-grounded hope that our peace is made with God, and that peace copied out upon and exemplified in a pure and quiet conscience. So, in the verse following my text, we read that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly," *ὑπερ ἐκ ᾠρισσοῦ*, "above all that we ask or think:" and yet we may conceive something of what God will do for us, and clothe those conceptions with suitable expressions, and make our humble addresses to him for what he has promised to give to us and do for us, in such a way as shall be acceptable to God through the interest of our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ. In a word: as Moses could "not see God's face, and live;" (Exod. xxxiii. 20;) and yet Moses could not live except he saw God's face; so is there a measure, a degree, of the knowledge of the love of Christ, which we cannot reach if we would die for it; and yet there is such a measure, such a degree, of the knowledge of that love of Christ, which we must reach, or we die for it. And hence I will briefly touch upon two PROPOSITIONS.

PROPOSITION I.

There is something in the love of Christ, which in this present state surpasses all perfect knowledge of it.

Something of which we may say, as one said of a learned book, "If that which I understand be so admirable, what is that which I do not understand!"

Take any one mystery of the gospel; and when we have pursued it as far as our faculties are able to trace it, we must be forced to make a stand, and, as Paul upon the shore of the ocean of God's unsearchable, untraceable counsels, to cry out, "O the depth!" (Rom. xi. 33;) or, as Job, "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him!" (Chap. xxvi. 14.)

There are two things that are unmeasurable,—*the evil of sin*, and *the love of a Saviour*; and the love of a Saviour must be therefore unmeasurable to the sinner, because the evil of sin is unmeasurable. He that knows not the exceeding greatness of his debt, can never fully know the exceeding greatness of *his* love that became a Surety for it; he that cannot measure the greatness of the curse [which] he lay under, can never measure the love of his Deliverer; and he that never could fully estimate the misery of his bondage, can never fully value or conceive aright of the love of his Redeemer.

1. *The evil of sin is unmeasurable.*—It is so, whether we consider the object against whom sin is committed, or the punishment which sin hath deserved, or the agonies which the Redeemer suffered to atone it.

(1.) If we consider *sin as committed against an infinite God*, so sin is infinite objectively, and therefore unmeasurable. The malignity of sin is unconceivable: it strikes at the authority, the glory, the very being of the Chiefest Good; every sin would in its tendency dethrone the Most High.

(2.) If we consider *the demerit of sin*, it is that which passes all understanding. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" (Psalm

xc. 11.) We cannot take the just and adequate measure of that wrath which is due to sin, by all the plagues and judgments by which God ever bore witness against the evil of sin. The fire of Sodom and Gomorrah was dreadful fire; but yet it was quenched, a little time extinguished it; but that fire of wrath which burns upon, but never burns up, sinners, is inextinguishable fire: *To πυρ ου σβεννυται.* "The fire is inextinguishable." (Mark ix. 44.) It is "everlasting punishment." (Matt. xxv. 46.) The deluge that drowned the old world argued great displeasure against sinners; yet neither was that a just measure of God's wrath that is due to sin. For the waters of the deluge were soon dried up; but so will not the floods of Divine Vengeance, poured out upon sinners to the uttermost: for "the breath," that is, the anger, "of the Lord, like a stream of" fire and "brimstone, doth kindle" and feed the matter of those flames. (Isai. xxx. 33.) The plagues of Egypt were exceeding great demonstrations of Divine Anger against sin; yet they were determinate for number and duration, and so could not give us a just measure of the demerits of sin.

(3.) If we consider *the sufferings of Christ*, they will prove that the evil of sin is unmeasurable. They were such as could not be expressed; and therefore the ancient Christians used, in their prayers, to beg of Christ that he would deliver them *δι' αγνωστων βασανων σου.* "By thy unknown torments, Lord, deliver us!" And hence we may infer, that the love of Christ must needs be unmeasurable, because he delivered us from unmeasurable wrath by unconceivable torments.

2. *The love of Christ to sinners is unmeasurable*, for these reasons:—

REASON I. *We have no scale in nature in which we can weigh, no line in created things by which we can measure, it.*—If we examine *the love of relations*, we find them all limited and bounded; and they ought to be so.

1. *The love of a father to a child* is an intense love; the love of a father to an undutiful child, a rebellious child, may stretch the line somewhat farther; yet this will fall vastly short of the love of Christ to sinners. The highest instance of this love that I remember, was that of David to his rebellious son Absalom, expressed in 2 Sam. xviii. 33: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Here is paternal love strained up to the highest pitch imaginable. That a king should desire to die for a rebellious subject; that a father should be willing to die for the most disingenuous and rebellious of sons; this was great. But yet we find, this love extended but to a natural death; he would have been unwilling to have "died a cursed death," to have been "made a curse for" him, to have been "made sin for" him. And yet the torrent of this impetuous love soon dried up: it was founded in passion rather than judgment; and perhaps, in cool blood, he would have been unwilling to have died that such a wretch might live. I question much whether David durst deliberately,

advisedly, and premeditatedly, have laid down his life to save that of a vicious, debauched son. Yet such was the love of Christ, who laid down his life for sinners, the greatest of sinners; (1 Tim. i. 15;) and laid it down voluntarily, when none could take it away; (John x. 18;) and not only died against the persuasions of his friends to save his life, (Mark viii. 32, 33,) but against that bitter malice of his enemies, which always sparkled, and at last flamed out in the most cruel, bloody, implacable fury that ever was in the world; nay, against the just displeasure of God as a Judge; all which he had a clear prospect into, and yet gave this great pregnant proof of his unconquerable love,—that he not only poured out his soul in tears, (Luke xix. 41,) his soul in prayers, “Father, forgive them,” (Luke xxiii. 34,) but his soul in sacrifice too, “unto the death.” (Isai. liii. 12.)

2. But if the love of the father to his son will not measure this love of Christ, perhaps *the love of a mother to her son* may. And this is, indeed, naturally the more soft and passionate sex; and of this love the case is put in Isai. xlix. 15: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” The case is put exceeding strong:—“Child,” a “sucking child,” that hangs upon the breast, and is always crying for pity in its natural dialect: “the son of the womb,”—that is more than the child of the breast; she can hardly forget that at any rate, which she brought forth at such a dear rate. Yet the circumstances may be such, that this tender mother may forsake and “forget,” nay, kill and destroy too, this innocent child. Such exigences they have been in, that nature has proved unnatural; or nature in one instance has overcome nature in another. A mother’s hunger has caused her to forget her pity to the child of her womb: “The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children.” (Lam. iv. 10.) To forsake, to forget, to kill, to cook, and at last to eat, is certainly the greatest stemming of the current and stream of natural affection that we can conceive of. But Christ’s love will not suffer him to forget, to forsake: he has often forgotten himself, to remember them; he has forgotten his own food, that he might provide for their souls; (John iv. 34;) he has forgotten his own approaching death, that he might provide for their life: “The same night in which he was betrayed he took bread,” &c. (1 Cor. xi. 23.)

3. And yet perhaps *the love of the husband to his wife* may come up to this example of love: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” (Eph. v. 25.) Here is an argument, indeed, to enforce that conjugal love; and here is a precedent for conjugal love to look upon: but that “as” is not a note of equality, but of some general similitude. For the husband gives himself to his wife; but will not, is not bound to, die for his wife; he cannot be persuaded to have her sins charged upon his soul. How short are all the loves, the affections of relations, to give us a pattern and example of the love of Christ!

4. But possibly we may find a love in nature more strong than any of these: and that, if any where, must be amongst some of *those*

great instances of love which have been amongst friends. It is indeed said, that "Jonathan loved David as his own soul;" (1 Sam. xviii. 1, 3;) and in Deut. xiii. 6, the friend is said to be as a man's "own soul." But yet, when we come to examine these expressions, they fade away, and signify nothing but "the life." Where is the friend that will "make his soul an offering for sin?" (Isai. liii. 10.) However, this is the highest flight that ever human love took, to lay down life for a friend; but Christ has put this quite out of countenance. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John xv. 13.) But a far greater love than this had Christ,—that he laid down his life for enemies. Christ laid down a better life for them that were worse. And this is proposed to our consideration, as that which has out-done all the love in the world. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die." (Rom. v. 7.) No, I think it is out of question that none will; for who would be so friendly to him that walks by the rules of strict justice; that will do no wrong, yet shows no mercy? "Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." If there be an instance found in the world of any that has laid down his life for another, it must be for a good man,—one that is a public blessing to the age wherein he lives. Some one may throw away his private life, which is not very useful, for so generous a person, that is a common good to his country; but if such an instance be found, (which is but a "peradventure,") we have that which will shut it out of all consideration, and eclipse that which otherwise might have had some lustre: "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Verse 8.)

REASON II. If the love of relations will not afford us a just measure for the love of Christ; let us see if there be any thing else *in the whole scale of nature* that may furnish us with a line commensurate to it.—And we can no sooner think of making the inquiry, but we propose to ourselves the height of heaven, the breadth of the earth. "The heaven for height, and the earth for depth." (Prov. xxv. 3.) But we must despair of finding any thing that may measure or circumscribe this love, since the apostle has assured us, that "the riches of Christ" are "unsearchable," *ανεξιχνιαστον πλουτον*, (Eph. iii. 8,) such as we must expect "no footsteps of" in the whole creation. The apostle might preach it, but could not fully reach it. The treasures of gold and silver which wise providence has hid so deep in the bowels of the earth, yet the vein may be pursued so far, till it is worn out; but this treasure of love in the heart of Christ is so deep, and is so rich, that we can neither find out nor exhaust the fulness of it. When God would give us some shadow of his love, he represents it by the height of the heavens; not that his love reaches no higher, but because there is nothing in created nature higher to represent it by. "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." (Psalm ciii. 11.) The love of God is only to be measured by itself, that is, by himself; for "God is love." (1 John iv. 8.) No creature, no saint, no angel,

can fathom the love of God's heart: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you." (Jer. xxix. 11.)

And we must say the same of Christ's love. There is one dimension more in the love of Christ than in the creation, "That you may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," &c., *πλατος, και μηκος, και βαθος, και υψος*. (Eph. iii. 18.)

We are taught to distinguish between the measure of a man and the measure of God. All bodies have but three dimensions: "He measured the city with a reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal, according to the measure of a man;" (Rev. xxi. 16, 17;) but in the measuring [of] spiritual, heavenly things, such as are the love of God and of Christ, there is one dimension more. So we have it in that sublime discourse of Zophar: "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." (Job xi. 7—9.) And thus we are taught modesty, and not to limit God, and his purposes of love, by our narrow conceptions: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isai. lv. 8, 9.)

1. And, First, for *THE BREADTH of the love of Christ*.—It reaches Jews and Gentiles, it extends to all ranks of men, high and low, rich and poor; it reaches all the cases of men's souls, the tempted, deserted, the backslider, and persecutor; it reaches "the bruised reed," "the smoking flax;" it extends to the pardon of all sins truly repented of: so that we may say, that his promises, which are the vehicles of truth and love, are "exceeding broad," (Psalm cxix. 96,) as well as his precepts, which are the indications of his authority and power. The love of Christ is wider than man's will. "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (Rom. x. 21.) It is wider than man's power: for, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John vi. 44.) And yet, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." (Verse 37.) It is wider than all our wants and necessities: there is more bread in his house than there are hungry souls to eat; more mansions in heaven than there are souls to fill. It is wider than our capacities; and we may sooner enter into our Master's joy, (Matt. xxv. 21,) than that joy can enter into us: it cannot "enter into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

2. *THE LENGTH of the love of Christ*.—An extent of grace and love that reaches souls at the greatest distance. It reached Paul when he was in the heat and height of his desperate fury; mad, and desperately mad, with an inveterate enmity against Christ. It reached Mary Magdalene, when she was possessed with seven devils. It reached the Gentiles when they were far off from God, estranged from

the light and life of God by their abominable idolatries: "Ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. ii. 13.) It reached the prodigal when he was far off. (Luke xv. 20.) And as it finds and reaches souls at the greatest distance of sin and enmity, so it reaches a length which we cannot with consistence of thought conceive of: "Able to save to the utmost," *εις το παντες*; (Heb. vii. 25 :) to the uttermost length of God's promise, and the believer's faith and hope; to the uttermost extent of God's purposes and our prayers; to the uttermost duration of this life and the next, through all time, beyond all time, to eternity.

3. *THE DEPTH of the love of Christ.*—And here, unless we could sound the depth of our misery, we can never fathom the depth of Christ's love; unless we could know the power of God's anger, (Psalm xc. 11,) we can never reach the power of Christ's love. The torments of hell are unknown torments; and those torments which Christ endured in his soul, to deliver us from thence, were unknown torments: the love of Christ does not only reach the depth of our misery by reason of sin, but those depths of sorrow into which sometimes even holy souls are plunged by desertion. The Psalmist "cried unto God out of the depth;" (Psalm cxxx. 1;) divine love heard him and reached him there. Jonah cried unto God "out of the belly of hell;" (Jonah ii. 2;) divine love heard him there, and delivered him thence. Heman was plunged "in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps;" (Psalm lxxxviii. 6;) yet love reached him in that sad and dismal condition.

4. *THE HEIGHT of the love of Christ.*—All the measure of the height of Christ's love we can take, is to say it is unmeasurable: "It is high, we cannot attain unto it:" (Psalm cxxxix. 6:) his love reaches the soul on earth, and never leaves it till it has conducted it to heaven. He loves grace into the soul, and loves the soul into glory. What that glory is, go and see; the taste of it is to be had here, the feast is reserved for hereafter. Wrath to come and life to come are unconceivable, and therefore unexpressible. We can neither order our speech, by reason of our inward darkness, nor of that ineffable light: thoughts fail us, words fail us; we are lost in the thoughts of future blessedness, as well as in those of our former misery. What therefore we cannot perfectly understand, let us silently and reverently admire and adore. What a prodigious height did man fall from when he fell from his God! What a desperate abyss of misery did he fall into when he fell into sin! And therefore what a stupendous height is that which love shall raise him to in glory! All we can do, is to put no bounds to our love to Christ. The true measure of our love to Christ should be, to love him without measure; and the true degree of our love to a Redeemer, is to love him in the highest degree. But, alas! where is our love to Christ? How weakly do we express our love to him, who has given us the fullest, clearest demonstrations of his to us, beyond all expressions! His was "stronger than death;" ours ready to die: the water-floods could not quench his; a few drops extinguish ours: he shed blood

for us with more freedom than we a few tears over him and his bleeding, almost dying, interest in the world. He loved sinners better than we can love saints; he died for us with more flame of zeal than we can live to and for him. Let us be ashamed that we can find a love so vehement for our perishing comforts, nay, for our killing corruptions, and yet have so indifferent affections for a Saviour. How shall we be able to love our enemies for his sake, when we can neither love him with an intense love for his sake nor our own? Let us mourn therefore bitterly that the love of Christ should be unconceivable and invisible, and that our love to him should be so too, upon such different accounts: his for the greatness of it, ours for its smallness.

PROPOSITION II.

There is a sufficiency of the love of Christ to us that may be known.
 —The love of Christ to sinners may be considered either in the cause, or as in the effects; in the spring and fountain, or in the streams that flow from thence into souls. Love, as it was in the heart of Christ, is unmeasurable; the spring, the original cause and reason of it, was his own unaccountable love; and can only be measured by the love of the Father to his Son, which is equally unmeasurable: "As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you." (John xv. 9.) But Christ's love, in the effects that it has been pleased to produce in and upon our souls, may be understood, and in some good measure apprehended: if we cannot fix our eyes immediately upon the body of the sun in its meridian glory, yet we may comfortably refresh ourselves with its beams, and feel the healing warmth of the Sun of Righteousness arising and shining upon our souls. If we cannot measure Christ's love when it dealt with God, in making "his soul an offering for sin;" nor what that love was wherewith he "loved" us, "and gave himself for" us; (Gal. ii. 20;) yet we may know that love wherewith "he loved us, and washed us from our sins." (Rev. i. 5.) The love of satisfaction passes knowledge, the love of sanctification may be known: as that poor man, John ix. 25, though he could not give a philosophical account to the scribes and Pharisees, how clay and spittle should contribute to the opening [of] his eyes, yet could say, This "one thing I know, that, whereas I was" born "blind, now I see;" so may a renewed soul say, "Though I know not from what unmeasurable fountain this grace and mercy did proceed; though I am ignorant of the manner of its working; yet this one thing I can say, Whereas I was a lover of sin, I now hate it; and whereas I have been a despiser of Christ, I now prize and love him as 'the chiefest of ten thousand:' I can say, that that vanity, that corruption which some time had a mighty power over me, is now subdued and conquered." More particularly,

1. Although we cannot perfectly know the love of Christ, *yet may we know so much of it as may raise our desires to know more.*—As he that meets with a vein of precious metal, though it be small, yet it gives him hopes of meeting with more, and those hopes encourage

his labours to dig deeper and search further; so that little we can attain of the knowledge of Christ's love in our wayfaring state makes the soul labour and strive, and hope and pray, that it may come to fuller knowledge of that love in its own country. As that sight which Moses had of God encouraged him to pray, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory;" (Exod. xxxiii. 18;) so that view we have of Christ "in a glass, darkly," serves to engage our endeavours and sharpen our desires to see him "face to face" in glory. "As we gain upon the knowledge of Christ, so we grow and, as it were, encroach upon him still. If God will condescend and come down to visit the soul, the soul will make an argument from thence, that he would take it up to himself. A taste of Christ's love whets the spiritual appetite after a feast: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (1 Peter ii. 2, 3.)

2. However our knowledge of Christ's love is imperfect, *yet we may know so much as may shame us that we have loved him no better.*—We know, the love of Christ carried him out to suffer most dreadful things upon our account; and may hence reflect upon ourselves, with great shame, that our love has been so weak as not to carry us out to suffer for his name: he "endured the cross," we are terrified at the sight of it. The argument is very strong, 1 John iii. 16. Thus:—If Christ "laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." But how weakly does it work upon us! How little a matter can this love constrain us to lay down for their sakes! And it is a most concluding argument, that we should "forbear and forgive one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, *as Christ forgave us.*" (Col. iii. 13.) But, alas! how little does this instance of the love of Christ prevail upon us! That love which prevailed with him to forgive us talents, will not, does not prevail with us to forgive our brethren a few pence. (Matt. xviii. 27—30.) The love of Christ was a conquering, a triumphant love; it bore down whatever stood in its way; it grappled with the displeasure of God, with the malice of devils, the fury of unreasonable men, and with the unkindness of his friends; it broke through all discouragements, and trampled upon all oppositions; the "waters" could not "quench it, the floods" could not "drown it." (Canticles viii. 7.) So much we know, and may blush that our love to Christ is so easily quenched, discouraged, and disheartened.

3. Although our knowledge of Christ be imperfect, *yet so much we may know as may serve to guide and encourage our obedience to him.*—All our knowledge of Christ is vain, all our love to him is a pretence, if we know him not that we may love him, and love him not that we may keep his commandments: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;" (1 John ii. 4;) for as that is not reputed with God to be any obedience which is not performed by a principle of love, so neither is that accepted as any love that is not productive of obedience. The authority of Christ over us is the reason of our obedience; but the love of Christ in us is the true principle of that

obedience. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (John xiv. 21.) Christ will not acknowledge any man to love him that does not serve him : and as the love of Christ was an universal love, it extended to all our spiritual necessities ; so must our love to Christ be as universal, and have a sincere respect to all his commandments. And upon lower terms than these, Christ will not own our love to be any thing. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John xv. 14.)

4. Although we cannot perfectly understand the love of Christ in this our present state, *yet may we know so much of his love as shall be of more true use and worth than all we know besides.*—We may know something of God, and know it to our terror and confusion : there may be such rays of divine knowledge let into a guilty soul, as may make it wish it could shut them out again. And hence it is that sinners say, "Depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job xxi. 14.) The most ungrateful, unwelcome thing to an impenitent sinner in the world, is to see God, and to be convinced that God sees him, that God's omniscience looks into his rotten heart ; and the sinner must needs sit very uneasy under this knowledge of God, till he can see God reconciled to him in Christ, and have the light of that knowledge comfortably "shining into his heart in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

There is no knowledge to be compared with the knowledge of God ; no knowledge of God comparable to the knowledge of God as reconciled in Christ ; no knowledge of Christ to be compared with the knowledge of his love ; nor any knowledge of his love to be compared with that knowledge of it which subdues our hearts to his obedience, transforms our souls into his likeness, and raises up the soul to aspire after his enjoyment. Thus it is that "we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." (Rom. v. 11.)

All other knowledge may swell the head sooner than better the heart or reform the life. A man may go silently down to hell by hypocrisy ; he may go triumphantly thither by open profaneness ; and he may go learnedly down to hell, with great pomp and ostentation, whatever he knows, if he knows not the love of Christ, ruling in him, and giving laws to him, and conforming him both to the death and resurrection of his Saviour.

And let this suffice to have spoken of the second proposition : that though the love of Christ in its highest elevation passes all perfect knowledge, in our present dark, imperfect state, yet there is enough of the love of Christ that may be known to engage our desires and endeavours to know more, to shame us that we know so little of what may be known, to engage our hearts to him, and make us confess, that whatever else we know without this is not worth the knowing.

II. Come we now to the second part of the text, namely, the apostle's prayer for grace the end : "*That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*"—Wherein we meet with a second *εναρτισθῆναι*, or "something that implies a contradiction in appearance."

The apostle prays that the Ephesians might, and certainly we

ought to add our prayers to his, that we may [be filled], and to second our prayers with endeavours that God would fill us with all his fulness. And yet we are here a-ground again. To be filled with God's fulness, with all his fulness, seems rather the object of our despair, than of our prayer; it is that which startles faith, discourages hope, which supersedes prayer and endeavour; for how can our finite grasp his infinite? our narrow vessel comprehend the sea of his divine perfections? We can no more comprehend the incomprehensible of God, than we can apprehend the unapprehensible love of Christ. Our hearts must needs be narrow, because our minds are so. We can see but little; we can love no more than we can see: what the eye cannot behold, the hand cannot hold.

For the solution of this, I shall only observe at the present, that as there is *το γνωστον του Θεου*, "that which may be known of God," (Rom. i. 19.) and the *αγνωστον του Θεου*, "that which cannot be known of God;" (in which respect we are like the Athenians, and erect our altar *Αγνωστω Θεω*, "to the unknown God," Acts xvii. 23;) so there is *το καταληπτον του Θεου*, "that which may be comprehended of God," and *το ακαταληπτον*, "that which cannot be comprehended," in which respects we are all sceptics, and must confess, *Ου καταλαμβανα*, "I cannot comprehend it."

For the clearing therefore of this difficulty, perhaps we may have some relief from the original: *Ἰνα πληρωθητε εις παν το πληρωμα του Θεου* which we may render thus: "That ye may be filled unto all that fulness of God." There is a measure of grace unto which the Divine Wisdom has appointed believers; unto that measure, that degree of fulness, we ought to aspire, and to pray that God would fill us with it; which seems to be the purport of that other prayer of this apostle for the Thessalonians: "We pray always for you, that our God would fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness;" *Ἰνα πληρωση πασαν ευδοκιαν αγαθωσυνης*. (2 Thess. i. 11.) God is the fountain, his saints are vessels. These vessels are of several capacities: God, according to his good pleasure, has gauged these vessels; now it is our duty to pray and strive, to strive and pray, that God, from the inexhaustible fountain of his goodness, would fill these vessels with grace up to the brim; and that, according to that capacity which God has graciously bestowed, he would graciously fill up that capacity. For if you should pour the whole ocean upon a vessel, yet it receives only according to its own dimensions. And this is the interpretation of Theophylact, who, when he had recited and rejected some other interpretations, fixes on this. *Κρειττον δε οιμαι νοεισθαι ούτως*: "I conceive," says he, "this to be the best interpretation:" *Ἰνα ητε τελειοι εν παση τη κατα Θεον τελειοτητι, παντα γνωσκοντες τα θεια, ὡς ενεστι*: "That ye may be perfect in every divine perfection, knowing all spiritual things as far as it is possible." Seeing, then, there is a fulness of God which we cannot comprehend, cannot receive, and yet there is something of the fulness of God which we may receive, it will be seasonable to propound that question which has been recommended to our consideration.

QUESTION.

What is that fulness of God which every true Christian ought to pray and strive to be filled with ?

This inquiry will oblige us to speak something *by way of supposition*, and then something further *by way of direct solution*.

(I.) That which is necessary to be spoken *by way of supposition* will fall under these two heads :

1. *That there is a fulness in God and of God, which we cannot be filled with.*

And, 2. *That there is a fulness of God with which we may, and therefore ought to pray and strive to, be filled with.*

SUPPOSITION I. It is presupposed to this inquiry, *that there is a fulness in God with which we cannot be filled, and therefore ought not to pray, ought not to strive, to be filled with it.*—It was the destructive suggestion and temptation of Satan, to persuade our first parents to be ambitious of being like to God : “Ye shall be as gods.” (Gen. iii. 5.) And the tempter never showed himself to be more a devil than when he prosecuted this design ; nor did man ever fall more below himself than when he was blown up to an ambition to be above himself. It is the perfection, the glory, the happiness of the rational creature to be like unto God in his communicable attributes ; it is the destruction, the ruin of the rational creatures to aspire after a likeness to God in his incommunicable ones. And it is a sinful ambition, too, to aspire after a likeness to God even in his communicable attributes and perfections in that way wherein they are in God ; so that it may be our destruction to aspire after a conformity to God, and it may be our perfection to aspire after a conformity to him.

For, First, *God is essentially full of all divine excellences.*—He is so by nature, by essence ; what we are, we are by grace. It is not much we have, and that little is [of] grace : “By the grace of God I am what I am.” (1 Cor. xv. 10.) Holiness is not our essence ; there was a time when we were not holy ; we were born without it, and may die without it ; but if we die as empty of grace as we were born, it had been good for us never to have been born.

Secondly. *The holiness of God is a self-holiness.*—God is not only full, but self-full, full with his own fulness : he lends to all, borrows of none. But the fulness of a believer is a borrowed, a precarious fulness. We depend on God for the beginning and begetting of grace ; for the increasing and nourishing of that grace [which] he has begotten and begun ; for the confirming and strengthening that grace [which] he has increased ; for the perfecting and completing of that grace [which] he has confirmed and strengthened ; and for the crowning of what he has so perfected and completed. Chrysostom, upon that, John i. 16, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,” informs us, that Christ is *Αυτοπηγη*, the “very Self-fountain :” believers must confess with David, that all our springs are in him. (Psalm lxxxvii. 7.) Again : that Christ is *Αυτορριζα*, the “very Self-root :” we must freely and thankfully own, that in him is our fruit found. (Hosea xiv. 8.)

Again : that Christ is *Αυτοζωη*, the “very Self-life :” he “has life in himself :” (John v. 26 :) that [which] we have, we acknowledge it to be from him, as our Principle, Spring, Root, with whom “is the fountain of life ;” (Psalm xxxvi. 9 ;) and that “the life which we live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God.” (Gal. ii. 20.) In a word : all our obedience is rooted in the habits of grace wrought in the soul, and those habits are all rooted in Christ ; who, as Chrysostom goes on, *εν εαυτω συνεχει των αγαθων τον πλουτον*, “contains in himself the treasures of all good things ;” and not only so, but *εις τους αλλους ακαντας υπερβλυζει*, “he overflows and ever flows with streams of grace to all the saints,” not only being full, but filling others ; not only rich, but enriching others ; a living Jesus, and giving life to others. And thus by faith engrafted into Christ, we “partake of the root and of the fatness of the olive-tree.” (Rom. xi. 17.)

Thirdly. *The fulness of holiness, of grace, of all perfections that are in God, is unlimited, boundless, and infinite.*—God is a sea without a shore ; an ocean of grace without a bottom. The fulness of believers is circumscribed within the bounds and limits of their narrow and finite beings ; and this finiteness of nature will for ever cleave to the saints, when they shall be enlarged in their souls to the utmost capacity. “Mortal shall put on immortality,” but finite shall never put on infiniteness ; “corruptible shall put on incorruption,” but our measured natures shall never put on immensity. (1 Cor. xv. 53.)

Fourthly. *And hence the fulness of God is inexhaustible.*—As all the lesser stars replenish their urns with light from the sun, and yet he is never the less full of light. Thus God is called “the Father of lights ;” (James i. 17 ;) by which, some think, is meant “the Father of spirits,” who, as so many lamps, are lighted up from the sun ; or else “the Father of all grace, comfort, peace,” each of which may be termed “light.” Now when all the saints in earth, all the angels in heaven, have filled up their vessels from this fountain, yet he is still the same infinitely blessed all-full God.

Fifthly. And the fore-mentioned father thinks that the similitude of the fountain and of the ocean do not fully express the fulness of God. For, if you take but one drop from the ocean, there is that drop less in the ocean than there had been if it had not been taken thence ; and therefore we add this last head, *that the fulness of goodness, grace, holiness, and all other divine perfections that are in him, is not only inexhaustible, but undiminishable.*—For, after all the derivations of grace from the God of grace, he remains “full,” and not only so, but, as he expresses it, *πληρης και ουδενι ελαττουμενος*, “not at all lessened by those communications.” Nor need we puzzle ourselves with this matter ; for our derivations from God are not essential, but influential ; the soul partakes not of the divine nature materially, but by way of efficiency. Believers are *θειας κοιινωνοι φυσικως*, “partakers of the divine nature,” (2 Peter i. 4.) not by substance, but resemblance ; for we must hold this as a fixed principle, that the divine nature, essentially considered, is not discernible nor divisible, and therefore not communicable.

This therefore is the first thing we must suppose, and take as granted, *that there is a fulness in God, (namely, his essential self-fulness,) which is infinite, inexhaustible, undiminishable, and therefore incommunicable.*

SUPPOSITION II. A second thing we must suppose, is, *that there is a fulness of God with which we may, and therefore ought to pray and labour that we may, be filled.*—We cannot reach the original fulness, but we may a borrowed, derivative fulness; though we cannot attain the fulness of the fountain, we may receive a fulness of the vessel from that fountain; and if we cannot partake any thing of God's essence, we may partake of his influence. We cannot be filled with the formal holiness of God, for that holiness is God; yet may we derive holiness from him as an efficient cause, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will." (Eph. i. 11.) The wisdom of God,—there is *principium dirigens* ["the directing principle"]; the will of God,—there is *principium imperans* ["the commanding principle"]; and he works according to these,—there is *principium exequens* ["the performing principle"]. His will commands, his wisdom guides, his power executes, the decrees and purposes of his wise counsel and holy will.

(II.) Having thus cleared the way, we proceed to *the direct solution of the question* :—

What is that fulness of God which every true Christian ought to pray and strive to be filled with?

For seeing we have supposed that there is a fulness of God which we cannot be filled with, we must lay aside all ambitions and vain aspirings after that fulness; and seeing we have supposed that there is a fulness of God wherewith we may be filled, (and the very prayer of the apostle supposes it,) we therefore are to take up this holy and humble ambition to be filled with it.

Now this question can be no sooner proposed, but our thoughts will suggest to us these two things: First, What is *the matter* of that fulness? and, Secondly, What is *the measure* of that fulness? With *what* of God, and with *how much* of God, ought we to pray and strive that we may be filled? And therefore of necessity we must divide the question into these two branches :—

FIRST BRANCH OF THE QUESTION.

"What is *the matter* of that fulness of God which we are to pray and strive to be filled with?"

When we speak of filling, we conceive immediately that, under that metaphor, there must be comprised these three things: *a fountain*, from whence that fulness is communicated; *a recipient, a vessel, a cistern*, into which that fulness is derived; and then of *something analogous to the matter which from that fountain is communicated, and by that vessel received.* Now, in the case before us, this *fountain* must needs be God, the Author of "every good and perfect gift." (James i. 17.) Souls are the *vessel* into which the fulness is received. But, "what we are to conceive and understand by 'the matter,' or the

quasi materia, with which these vessels from that fountain are filled," is the subject of our present inquiry.

And to this branch of the main inquiry I shall answer, First, more generally: Secondly, more particularly.

First. *To speak generally*:—That which we are to pray and strive to be filled with, is the Spirit of God: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit;" (Eph. v. 18;) where, first, the apostle dehorts against intemperance: we may have too much of the best outward things; it is easy to run into excess in these matters. The Psalmist assures us, that "wine maketh glad the heart of man;" (Psalm civ. 15;) and the prophet assures us too, that "wine takes away the heart." (Hosea iv. 11.) It is no more but this: the use is good, the abuse is sinful; and the danger is, lest from the lawfulness of the use we slide insensibly into the abuse. "Be not therefore filled with wine, wherein is excess:" but then he exhorts too, "But be ye filled with the Spirit." No fear of excess or intemperance in this case; when God fills the souls of his people with his Spirit, he fills them with all the spiritual good things that their hearts can fill their prayers with. Compare but these two places: "How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. vii. 11.) "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke xi. 13.) The comparing of these two scriptures evidently proves, that in praying for the Holy Spirit, we pray virtually for all good things; and that when God is graciously pleased to communicate his Spirit, he communicates all good things. When the Father gives his Son, he gives all things; so the apostle has taught us to believe and argue: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) And we have equal reason to believe, that he that spared his Spirit, and gave him to us, will in him and with him freely give us all things. But these "all things" are to be taken *in suo genere* ["in their several kinds"]: the gift of Christ comprehends "all things" that are to be done for us; the gift of the Spirit includes "all things" to be wrought in us: Christ is "all things" for justification; the Spirit is "all things" for sanctification and consolation. I shall touch at present upon some few things.

1. *Do you find an emptiness of grace, and do you long to have your souls replenished with it?*—You go to "the God of all grace," (1 Peter v. 10,) that he would give you more faith, more love, more patience, more self-denial, more heavenly-mindedness, &c.: you do well; but the compendious way is, to pray that God would fulfil that promise, and so fill your souls with his Spirit: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication." (Zech. xii. 10.) First, the Spirit of grace, that we may pray; and then the Spirit of prayer, that we may be filled with more grace. Can we be content with a few drops, when God has promised to pour out his Spirit? "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of

the Spirit." (John vii. 38.) Can we satisfy ourselves, that we have so much grace as just keeps us alive, when, if we would pray and strive for the Spirit, we might be more lively and vigorous Christians? Can we be content with a taste, when God has provided a feast? Some of the ancients who were anointed with material oil, were anointed with the cruse, others with the horn: O let us not be satisfied that we have a few drops from the cruse, when God is ready to pour out his grace "more abundantly!" (John x. 10.)

2. *Would you answer the glorious title of "a child of God" with a more glorious and suitable spirit, that you may pray as children, walk as dear children?*—Come to God, not as slaves, but as children; and walk before God, not under the resemblance of the spirit of bondage, but with an ingenuous liberty and freedom, as becomes the heirs of salvation. Pray for the Spirit of God, that he may be a Spirit of adoption to you, as well as of regeneration; pray in the Spirit for the Spirit, that you may have the frame of a child, [be] filled with zeal for the Father's name and interest. It is "the Spirit of adoption" that teaches us to "cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. viii. 15.) It is the Spirit of God that gives us an inward freedom and liberty: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. iii. 17.) This Spirit will not give you a liberty unto sin, but from it; nor from God, but with him. This Spirit will not break the bonds of the commandment, but tie up your hearts to it, and give you liberty and cheerfulness in it.

We read that the Son makes us free: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John viii. 36.) We read also that the Spirit makes us free too, but in different respects. The Son makes us free from the curse of the law, from the guilt of sin, from the wrath of God; but the Spirit makes us free too, from the reigning power of sin, from the bondage that is in the conscience. The authority of God has made his precepts necessary; what is necessary in the precept, the Spirit makes voluntary in the principle. God charges the conscience with duty; and the Spirit enlarges the heart to obedience: "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." (Psalm cxix. 32.)

3. *Pray for the Spirit, that he would perform his whole office to you, that you may not partake only of the work of the Spirit in some one or some few of his operations, but in all that are common to believers.*—And especially that he that has been an anointing Spirit to you, would be a sealing Spirit to you also; that he that has sealed you, may be a witnessing Spirit to his own work; and that he would be the earnest of your inheritance, a pledge of what God has further promised and purposed for you. "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i. 21, 22.)

Secondly. *To speak a little more particularly.*—What the apostle prays for his Ephesians in more general terms, he prays for the Colossians more particularly: "We do not cease to pray for you, and to

desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. i. 9, 10.) And when I have opened the particulars of this scripture, I shall not need to seek elsewhere for an answer to this inquiry : "What is the matter of the fulness of God, which we ought to pray and strive to be filled with ?"

1. *Let us pray and strive, and strive and pray again, adding endeavours to prayers, and prayers to endeavours, "that we may be filled with the knowledge of God's will."*—And we have need to make this an essential part of our prayer ; for,

First. We may haply do the will of God materially, when we do it not formally ; not under that formal and precise consideration, that what we do is the will of God, and that we do it under that consideration because it is the will of God. A man may perhaps stumble upon some practices that are commanded by the moral law, and yet in all this not do God's will, but his own. That which in all our obedience we are to eye and regard, is the authority, the will, of God : we cannot be said to observe a commandment, unless we observe God's authority in that commandment ; nor to keep God's statutes, unless we keep God in our eye as the great Legislator and Statute-maker. A blind obedience even to God is no more acceptable, than a blind obedience to men is justifiable.

Secondly. We ought to pray that we may be filled with the knowledge of God's will, that there may be more employment for the powers and faculties of the soul ; which, in every heart wherein the grace of God radically is, are in the general inclined to do the will of God. There are some well-disposed Christians, of strong affections, and good inclinations to do God's will, who are but slenderly furnished with knowledge what that will of God is which he would have them do. And thus those warm propensions of spirit either lie like dead stocks upon their hands, or else they lay out the zeal of their souls upon that which is not the will of God ; and when they have spent their vigour and strength of soul upon it, they come to God for a reward, who asks them, "Who hath required this at your hand?" (Isai. i. 12.) And thus even holy David's zeal was misled upon this account,—that God had not spoken a word, nor revealed his will in the case. (2 Sam. vii. 7.)

Thirdly. It is our great concern, that we may know the will of God, and be filled with that knowledge ; that the knowledge of God's will may be an operative principle of obedience. Thus David prays, "Teach me to do thy will," O God. (Psalm cxliii. 10.) We are to pray that God would teach us to know, and then teach us to do, his will. Knowledge without obedience is lame, obedience without knowledge is blind ; and we must never hope for acceptance if we offer the blind and the lame to God. "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii. 47.) As

therefore all our practice must be guided by knowledge, so must all our knowledge be referred to practice.

Fourthly, and lastly. We ought to pray that we may be filled with the knowledge of God's will; that, this knowledge being rooted and grounded in our souls, it may render that obedience easy and delightful, which is so necessary to its acceptation. When Satan had entered Judas's heart, he would not stick at any of the devil's commands; and when he had "filled" the heart of Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts v. 3,) how ready were they to "lie unto God!" If our hearts were more filled with the knowledge of God's will, that this Divine law were written there, duty would be our delight, obedience our meat and drink; nor would there be room left for those corruptions which hang upon us like dead weight, always encumbering us in our obedience.

2. *Let us pray again that we be "filled with all wisdom" in the doing of the will of God.*—We want knowledge much, we want wisdom more; we need more light into the will of God, and more judgment how to perform it. For,

First. It is one great instance of wisdom, to know the seasons of duty, and what every day calls for. As the providence of God disposes us under various circumstances, so it calls for the exercise of various duties: one circumstance calls for mourning, another for rejoicing; and yet neither ought our mourning to exclude a humble rejoicing in God, nor our rejoicing shut out a holy mourning. The men of Issachar are recorded as famous on this account, that they "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." (1 Chron. xii. 32.) And herein we are oftentimes at a great loss; like those children that complained of their fellows,—they had piped unto them, and yet not been answered with dancing; that they had mourned to them, but they had not lamented. (Matt. xi. 17.) Holy wisdom would teach us to accommodate the present frame of our hearts to God's present dispensations: providence does not teach us new duties, but how to single out those that God has made our duties.

Secondly. We need wisdom, that we be not deluded with shadows instead of substances, that we take not appearances for realities; for want of which, O how often are we cheated out of our interests, our real concerns, our integrity of heart, and peace of conscience! We account him a weak and foolish man who is imposed upon by copper for gold; that would warm his hands by painted fire, or hope to satisfy his craving appetite with painted food: yet such are we, who "spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which" profits us "not;" (Isai. lv. 2;) who set our affections on those things "that are not." (Prov. xxiii. 5.)

Thirdly. Another point of wisdom which we need to be instructed in, is the worth of time, and what a weight of eternity depends on these short and flitting moments. But we weak and silly ones count a day for no more than it stands for in the calendar, an hour no more than so much time measured by the hour-glass; when one hour

to repent in, a moment to "make our calling and election sure" in, may come to be more worth than all the world can be to us.

Fourthly. Wisdom would teach us the due order and method of all things; what first, what last, ought to be our study and our concern. Wisdom would teach us to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" (Matt. vi. 33;) and then, if there be time to spare, to bestow some small portion of it for those other things which God in his bounty will not deny, and in his wisdom knows in what measure to bestow.

Fifthly. Wisdom would teach us the true worth and value of all things; to labour, pray, and strive for them proportionably to their true intrinsic dignities; to think that heaven cannot be too dear, whatever we pay for it; nor hell cheap, how easily soever we come by it. Wisdom would instruct us, that we cannot lay out too much of our time, strength, contrivance upon eternal, nor too little upon these perishing temporals; that earth deserves very little of our hand, less of our head, and nothing at all of our heart; little of our pains, less of our plotting, and least of all of our love and affections.

3. *Let us pray and strive, strive in the due and diligent use of means, and pray for a blessing upon them, that we may be "filled with a spiritual understanding."*—A carnal heart will carnalize the most spiritual mercies, and a carnal mind will debase the most spiritual truths. The manna was designed to feed the souls as well as the bodies of the Jews; but they "ate the spiritual meat, and drank the spiritual drink," (1 Cor. x. 3, 4,) with very carnal heads and hearts; so that they needed the Spirit of God to instruct them in the right use of it. "Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth." (Neh. ix. 20.) They might then have eaten their own condemnation, as well as we under the gospel, by that symbol. Christ had delivered a great and necessary truth, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" (John iii. 3;) but Nicodemus, though a great rabbi, turns it into a gross and carnal interpretation: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (Verse 4.) And at the same pass were his rude and carnal hearers: "I am the living bread," says Christ, "which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, that I will give for the life of the world;" (John vi. 51;) but his Capernaical hearers conceive of nothing but a literal and oral manducation of his natural flesh: "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (Verse 52.) And yet Christ had said enough to obviate that gross mistake: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (Verse 35.)

One man hears the great duties of the gospel pressed upon his conscience, and either, sitting down, despondeth at the *το αδυνατον του νομου*,* or else undertakes them in his own strength, and the

* "The impossibility of the law."—EDIT.

power of his free-will ; not considering that there is covenant-grace to answer covenant-duties, and covenant-pardon for those imperfections that attend them. Another perhaps hears the curse thundered out against "every one that continues not in all things written in the law to do them:" (Gal. iii. 10;) he hears that the primitive end of the law was to justify a righteous person that had perfectly observed it; and he falls upon the observation of that law, as the condition of the covenant of works, hoping to drudge out a righteousness thereby that shall present him blameless before God; not knowing that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x. 4.) Let us therefore pray for a spiritual understanding, that we may know every "truth as it is in Jesus;" (Eph. iv. 21;) that every line, every letter, of the Old and New Testament has its centre in a Redeemer.

4. *Let us pray again, and strive, that "we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing."*—Knowing that all our services, all our sacrifices, are nothing unless our God smell a sweet savour in them; nor can we fill the sails of our souls with a more noble and generous ambition, than to be accepted of God. This was the height of the apostle's ambition: "We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him;" (2 Cor. v. 9;) which was the glorious frame of our blessed Saviour's heart, that "he always did the things that pleased his Father." (John viii. 29.) It is a common delusion of professors, that if they can get the work off their hands, not to regard whether ever it comes upon God's heart or no. But what are our prayers, if God receives them not? our praises, if God accepts them not? our obedience, if God regards it not? Now, that we may reach this great end, we "must walk worthy of the Lord," *περιπατησαι αξιωσ του Κυριου*. There ought to be a suitableness between the frame of our hearts and the tenor of our conversations to this God whom we serve. If there be not that exact and punctual walking up to what God in strict justice may expect, yet there must be that accuracy and circumspection which God in mercy will accept; we must be holy, as the Lord our God is holy; spiritual, because we walk before him that is a Spirit; sincere, as being always under his omniscient eye; acting our faith upon him that is faithful and true; casting our care and burden upon him that has undertaken to care for us; and in all things proving what is the will of God, and then approving that will, and practising what we have thus approved.

5. *Let us pray and strive, let us add holy endeavours to humble prayers, and second again those endeavours with our prayers, that we may "be fruitful in every good work."*—That there may be grace in the root, grace in the fruit, grace in the habit strengthened, grace in the exercise multiplied. Let us pray that our faith may not be a dead faith, for want of the grace of obedience; that our obedience be not a dead obedience, for want of a living faith, and a lively, active love; that our fruit may be of the right kind, new obedience from a new heart; that it may be right for its proportion; for "herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit;" (John

xv. 8;) that it be rightly directed; that we may bring forth fruit to God, and not to ourselves. And to all our prayers we must add this, that we may increase in the knowledge of God; that knowing God better, we may love him better; and loving him more, we may serve and glorify him more, and be riper every day for the enjoyment of him.

And thus much in answer to the first branch of the question: I proceed to the second.

SECOND BRANCH OF THE QUESTION.

“What is *the measure* of that fulness of God, with which every true Christian ought to pray and strive that he may be filled?”

There is *plenitudo fontis, et plenitudo vasis*; “the fulness of the fountain, and the fulness of the vessel.” There is, again, *plenitudo solis, et stelle*; “the fulness of light in the sun, and the fulness of light in a star.” Again, there is *plenitudo capitis, et membri*; “the fulness of the head, and the fulness of a member.” A fountain is full, a vessel may be full, but with different measures: Jesus Christ, as Head of the church, has the fulness of the Spirit without measure. (John iii. 34.) A gracious soul may be also full, but it is with the “residue of the Spirit” which Christ can spare for the use of those that are his. (Mal. ii. 15.)

God is full of all grace with the fulness of the fountain; he is full with his own fulness, but not filled from another. A believer may be full too; but he is filled from the fulness of God. Thus John the Baptist is said to be “filled with the Holy Ghost;” (Luke i. 15;) and so Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Ghost;” (verse 41;) so was Zechariah; (verse 67;) and thus were the disciples “all filled with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts ii. 4.) All these were full, but their fulness was borrowed; they were filled: it was of Christ’s fulness, that they received “grace for grace.” (John i. 16.) They were filled, but they could not fill others from their fulness; they had grace, but none to spare. And every believer must answer his brother that would borrow of him, as the wise virgins did: “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.” (Matt. xxv. 9.) There is an all-sufficiency of grace in Christ; it is well if believers have a sufficiency, according to Christ’s promise to the apostle: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” (2 Cor. xii. 9.)

And having premised this little, I shall give the direct answer to the question in these following particulars:—

1. *Every gracious soul ought to pray and strive to be filled with such a measure of the fulness of God, and of his grace, as the Holy Spirit, who is the proper Judge of that measure, shall see fit to communicate to us.*—The Holy Spirit has these parts in this matter: (1.) *He is the immediate Worker of grace.* (2.) *He is the Distributor of all grace.* (3.) *He is the Arbitrator of that quota and proportion of grace which every believer has need of.* “All these worketh one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally

as he will ;" (1 Cor. xii. 11 ;) where you may observe the several parts that the Spirit of God hath in this matter :—

(1.) *Ενεργει.* "*He works*" this grace.—It is by his energy, or powerful working that there is root or fruit, habit in us, or act of grace proceeding from us.

(2.) *Διαιρουν ιδια εκαστω.* *He divides, and distributes to every one severally.*—He is the great Steward of the household of Christ, and dispenses the measure of grace to individuals.

(3.) *Καθως βουλεται.* *This measure is distributed by his absolute power.*—It is "according to his will," "as he pleases ;" for, the grace being his own, he may do with and dispose of his own grace according to his own will ; and though he will be faithful in the discharge of his trust, yet will he be sought unto to do it for us. Thus, when there was a promise that God would "sprinkle clean water upon" his people, and "cleanse them from all their filthiness, and from all their idols ;" and that he would give them "a new heart, and a new spirit," and "take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh, and put his Spirit within" them, &c. ; yet still, "I will yet for all this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27, 37.)

2. *Every gracious soul ought to pray for such a measure of grace as may fit his capacity.*—None are so full, but they may receive more : we have so little of grace, because we ask no more : "Ye have not, because ye ask not." (James iv. 2.) We are but poor in ourselves, we might be enriched from Christ ; and if we were more poor in spirit, we should be more enriched with grace from him. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." (John xvi. 24.) We should not satisfy ourselves with the present measure of grace received ; but pray and strive that we may have "grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Eph. iv. 7.)

3. *We ought to pray and strive that our narrow vessels may be widened, our capacities enlarged, that we may be more capable of grace.*—The vessels of divine grace are of different sizes ; as "one star differs from another in glory," so one saint differs from another in grace. And as the Spirit enlarges the heart, he will enlarge his own hand : "I am the Lord," even "thy God : open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalm lxxxi. 10.) Our blessed Saviour may say to us, as the apostle to the Corinthians, "Ye are not straitened in me, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." (2 Cor. vi. 12.) Our hearts are narrow toward spiritual and heavenly things, because they are so enlarged toward earthly and visible things : when the "heart is enlarged as hell, and death, that cannot be satisfied," (Hab. ii. 5,) for these perishing things, no wonder if there be little room for the graces of the Spirit. This is therefore our great concern,—to pray that God would enlarge our desires, that he may satisfy and fill them.

4. *We ought to pray and strive, that all the powers and faculties of the whole man may be filled according to their measures.*—There is much room in our souls that is not furnished ; much waste ground there that is not cultivated and improved to its utmost. We might have more

light in the understanding, more tractableness in the will, more heat in our love, and a sharper edge set upon our zeal; and we have warrant to pray for this measure of the fulness of God: Now "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23.)

5. *Every gracious soul ought to pray and strive for such a measure of grace, that he may be qualified for any duty and service that God shall call him to, and engage him in.*—The Hebrew word, which we render "consecration, or separation to an office," is "filling the hand:" "Consecrate Aaron and his sons;" (Exod. xxix. 9;) in the Hebrew, מִלֵּא אֶת־יַד אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו "Fill the hand of Aaron and his sons." Where God employs the hand, he will fill the hand. We have ground to believe that he will send us about no errand, but he will bear our charges; wherever he gives a commission, he will bestow a competent qualification; when we go about his work, we may expect his presence and assistance in the work. And Moses seems to stand upon these terms with God: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." (Exod. xxxiii. 15.) As therefore there is great variety of duties in our Christian calling, we may in faith expect, and from that believing expectation pray, that we may be furnished with a suitable variety of grace for the discharge of them.

6. *Every true Christian ought to pray and strive for such a measure of grace, as may enable him to bear patiently, cheerfully, and creditably, those afflictions and sufferings, which either God's good pleasure shall lay upon us, or for his name's sake we may draw upon ourselves.*—We ought to pray, that either he will lay no more upon us than our present strength can bear; or if he increases our trials, he will increase our faith. There is no danger of excess in our prayers, when we confine them to the limits of his gracious promises. Now here we have encouragement from his word: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

7. *Every true Christian ought to pray and strive for such a measure of grace, as may bring the soul to a settlement and stability, that he be not soon shaken by the cross and adverse evils that he shall meet with in this life.*

And the apostle Peter has gone before us in this prayer: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Peter v. 10.) And herein especially let us keep an eye upon these particulars:—

1. *Pray that God would so stablish you in the truth, that ye may not be blown away with every wind of doctrine.*—A sorry, trivial error many times oversets and puzzles a weak understanding. Now it is our great interest to pray and strive that we may reach such a clear, distinct, coherent light into the doctrine of the gospel, that every small piece of sophistry may not perplex and stagger our belief of it.

So the apostle Paul would have believers "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Eph. iv. 14.)

2. *Pray also that God would so establish you in the truth of the promises, that your faith may not be shaken with every wind of providence.*—We are apt to have our hearts tossed by contrary dispensations. So, upon a rumour, the "heart of Asa was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." (Isai. vii. 2.) It argues great weakness of faith, that we cannot maintain an equality of mind under various providences; the only remedy of which evil is, to pray that God would increase and strengthen our faith; that we may be so firmly built upon the unmovable Rock, that we may "not be afraid of evil tidings," having our "hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord." (Psalm cxii. 7.) And this was the glory of Job's faith,—that though God should "slay" him, yet would he "trust in him." (Job xiii. 15.)

3. *Let us pray and strive that God would so settle and establish us in love to himself, that no blast of afflictions from his hand may cool the fire of divine love in our hearts.*—We want exceedingly the faith, that God carries on a design of love under all his various and seemingly contrary dealings with us. He can love and correct; why then cannot we love a correcting God? Whether he wounds or heals, his love is the same; and why not ours? Can we not love God upon the security of faith that he will do us good, as well as upon the experience that he has done us good?

4. *Pray we and strive that God would so settle and establish us in our inward peace, that no wind of temptation may overthrow it.*—It is a slender and ill-made peace which every assault of the tempter dissolves. The Psalmist stood upon a firmer bottom, when the terrifying onsets from without made him fly more confidently to his God: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." (Psalm lvi. 3.) And we have God's own promise to answer our faith: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isai. xxvi. 3.)

And thus I have returned some answer to the second branch of the question: "What is *the measure* of the fulness of God with which every true Christian ought to pray and strive to be filled?"

There will still remain an inquiry, "How we may reach to such a measure of the divine fulness as has been described." To which though the limits of this discourse will not allow a full and just answer, yet the importance of the question will oblige me to point at some few things, upon which your own meditations may find matter of enlargement.

1. And, first, *it is necessary that we be convinced that we are very far short of that fulness of God, which is attainable even in this life.*—Many might have had more grace, if they had not been under the delusion that they had grace enough already. The dream of perfection attained, has prejudiced the perfection which is attainable: as

Tully observes, *Multi ad sapientiam pervenissent, nisi eò jam se pervenisse putassent*: "Many men had arrived at a high degree of wisdom, had they not fondly conceived that they had already reached the top of it." The apostle's frame was most excellent and imitable: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after it, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 12, 13.) He considered more what was before, than what he had left behind; that is, he more looked forward to what he had not yet attained, than backward to what he had.

2. *Let us pray that we may know more of the love of Christ to us, as the proper mean to be filled more with the fulness of God in us.*—This is the expedient of the text; and what greater encouragement can there be to love, serve, obey, and glorify our God, than that he has so freely, wonderfully loved us in Christ?

3. *Let us strive to keep our vessels pure and clean, though they be small and narrow.*—That however they are of a narrow capacity, yet, being pure and clean, God may delight to fill us, and to enlarge our hearts, that we may receive more of his fulness. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt. v. 8.) The sight of God, which a pure and holy heart qualifies us for, is the enjoyment of God; that is, God's communicating his love in its sanctifying and saving effects. And so we shall find, if we compare John iii. 3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," with verse 5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

4. *Labour to experience poverty of spirit.*—The way to be rich in grace, is to be poor in spirit; which poverty of spirit does not consist in having little grace, but in a sense that, whatever we have, little or much, it is not of or from ourselves, but from the fulness of God.

The more we empty ourselves in that sense, the more God will fill us: "Every valley shall be filled." (Luke iii. 5.) The humble valleys are often fruitful, when the high hills are commonly barren: self-sufficiency discharges and disoblges the all-sufficiency of God: "The rich he sends empty away." (Luke i. 53.) Now as by "the rich" we are here to understand such as are rich in their own conceit, though they be really poor; so by "the poor in spirit" we are to understand them that are convinced of their own original indigency, though by the grace of God they are enriched, and their spiritual wants supplied. (Phil. iv. 19.) This poverty of spirit, though it pretend not to merit, yet has a meetness for the fulness of God: "I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." (Jer. xxxi. 25.)

5. *From this spiritual poverty arise a spiritual hunger and thirst after more of the grace of God.*—Which temper of soul lies directly in the way of that promise: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled:" (Matt. v. 6:) for it is "upon him that is thirsty" that God promises to "pour" out

“water;” and it is “the dry ground” that God promises to satisfy with the “floods.” (Isai. xliv. 3.)

6. *Attend, in conscience and faith, with constancy and perseverance, upon all the ordinances of the New Testament.*—You read, Zech. iv. 12, of “two olive-branches, which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves.” Let the two olive-branches be the person of Christ in two natures; the golden oil will then be his precious grace, and the golden pipes the ordinances of Christ, by which he empties out of himself that precious grace into holy and clean, though earthen, vessels. Amongst many other terms which the ancients gave to the Lord’s supper, they called it *το τελειον*, “the perfect,” or “the perfection.” So Zonaras: *Εις το τελειον ερχεσθαι, ηγουν εις αγιαν μεταληψιν* “To come to the perfection is to come to the holy eucharist.” And indeed where do believers find their choicest derivations from God, their sweetest communion with God, but in that sacred ordinance worthily received?

7. And, lastly, to all these we must add, and with all these we must join, *fervent and believing prayer.*—Which as it glorifies God, God will glorify it, and make it the means of conveying down to our souls such a measure of fulness as may serve us in the time of our need. We can never be poor whilst we can pray; he that is the Spirit of supplication in us will be the Spirit of grace to us. Let us therefore pray, with the apostle, that “the God of hope would fill us with all joy and peace in believing.” (Rom. xv. 13.) Let us pray, that “the God of all grace would make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us;” (1 Peter v. 10;) that “the very God of peace would sanctify us wholly.” (1 Thess. v. 23.) And let us pray, that the same God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, would give us “to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God.”

SERMON VII.

BY THE REV. RICHARD ADAMS, A.M.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF BRASEN-NOSE COLLEGE, OXFORD.

HOW ARE THE ORDINARY MEANS OF GRACE MORE CERTAINLY SUCCESSFUL FOR CONVERSION, THAN IF PERSONS FROM HEAVEN OR HELL SHOULD TELL US WHAT IS DONE THERE ?

And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.— Luke xvi. 31.

WHETHER the narrative of our Saviour, beginning at the 19th verse of this chapter, concerning the rich man and Lazarus, be a history, relating really matter of fact ; or a simple parable, representing the matter by way of similitude ; or an useful discourse by way of delineation partaking of both, namely, a *parabolical* history, or *historical* parable ; * hath been variously determined both by the ancients and moderns. † One ‡ indeed would go further, and have it to be a *prophetical* parable, representing by Dives *Judaism*, and by Lazarus *Gentilism*. This latter, as he thinks from the name Lazarus, imports one (before Christ came) “that had no help,” § forsaken of all, kept out of doors amongst the dogs. They who conceive it to be a history, argue it from the proper name of Lazarus. Others, who judge it to be a parable, || allege that the Talmudists do frequently use *לאָזָר לַחַיִּים* *Lahazar* contractly for Eleazar ; yet here not as a *proper* name, but *common*, denoting “a destitute beggar” indefinitely ; or “him who, of himself, is bereft of help ;” or “one to whom help should be showed :” as Rachel is used appellatively, (Jer. xxxi. 15, with Matt. ii. 18,) and as civil lawyers propose a case under the name of Titius : considering further, to speak properly, the rich man could have no tongue to cool when his body was in the cold grave, nor Lazarus a tip of a finger to dip in water whilst in a state of separation. But that which we are mostly to regard in this dialogue, is the main scope and design of our Saviour, which is, as to set forth *the misery* of the covetous, uncharitable rich, who died impenitently, and *the happiness* of the godly, charitable poor, who walked according to scripture canon : (Gal. vi. 16 :) so to teach us, there is no mercy to those who die in their sins unrepented of ; (there being a great gulf fixed betwixt them, and those in Abraham’s bosom, advanced to chief dignity in heaven, verse 26 ;) and that there are no revelations concerning eternal rewards and punishments, to be expected now from the other world for conversion in order to salvation, by those who do not really give credit to the written doctrine of Moses and the pro-

* ΤΡΟΠΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ.—JUSTINUS MARTYR.
 † LOMEIERUS. § ΑΒΟΛΗΘΥΤΟΣ.

† VOSSII *Theses*, Disput. 5.
 || DR. LIGHTFOOT, &c.

phets; Christ here intimating the approaching ruin of the unbelieving Jews, (not willing to come to him for life, John v. 40,) "though one," even he himself, "should rise again from the dead:" for this he aims at here in my text.

Wherein we have Abraham's concluding answer, to the rich man's request of one from the dead, in a hypothetical form, as it were, from the denial of the consequent, or that which doth necessarily follow from the antecedent, which is here, "having Moses and the prophets," whom they should have believed, but did not: and therefore, from more than a parity of reason, methinks, he doth infer, even as from the greater to the less it certainly follows by a sure sequel or consequence, that if they did not give credit to that which Peter calls "a surer word of prophecy," (2 Peter i. 19,) yea, "which cannot be shaken," *ασαλευτον*, (Heb. xii. 28,) they would not to that which could have no such appointment and attestation as the other already had, even [that] of divine authority, upon their own concession. If the ordinary means, which was granted by themselves to be of divine institution, was not effectual to conversion, it is not easy to imagine how a novel means extraordinary, which they had no proof of, (only in their own conceit,) should become successful. Which may be a sufficient ground to found the case upon, that I am desired, as I can practically, to resolve this morning, in the terms given me; namely,

How are the ordinary means of grace more certainly successful for conversion, than if persons from heaven or hell should tell us what is done there?

In resolving of which I shall endeavour to show,

I. That this proposition, *The ordinary means of grace are more certainly successful for conversion, than if persons from heaven or hell should tell us what is done there*, may be clearly deduced from the words, according to the purport of it, in a short explication.

II. *How or upon what grounds it so comes to pass.* And then,

III. *Make some improvement of it in a short application.*

I. To explain the proposition: *That the ordinary means of grace are more certainly successful for conversion, than if some from heaven or hell should tell us what is done there.*—That we may see it doth clearly result from the text, I shall speak to a few particulars.

1. *Concerning the ordinary means of grace.*—I understand what is here meant and prescribed by Moses and the prophets, which *εχουσι*, "they had," and were to observe, (verse 29, with 16, and elsewhere,*) namely, the *holy scriptures*; and what is thereby required, the true and saving doctrine contained in the oracles of God, which were committed to the Jews, (Rom. iii. 2; ix. 4; Psalm cxlvii. 19; Deut. iv. 10; xxxi. 9—13; Isai. ii. 3; Zech. viii. 13,) and admirably preserved by the diligence of the Masorites, who were very solicitous that one *iota*, or "tittle," of it might not perish. Neither hath the providence of God been less concerned in the preservation of the doctrine therein contained, than of the holy writings. And if, in

* Matt. xi. 11; Luke xxiv. 27.

preserving the whole entire, it hath suffered a variety of reading to creep in, about things of less or no importance, amongst the copies [which] we have, it may serve but as a spur to quicken us to "search the scriptures," (John v. 39,) most frequently put absolutely in the New Testament for "the written word of God," "the Bible:"* so "the holy scriptures," (Rom. i. 2,) and, "All scripture is of divine inspiration." (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) And though Christ here, by Abraham, doth expressly mention only "Moses and the Prophets;" yet he coucheth the historical books under the Prophets, according to the common acceptation of the Jews, and their usual manner of reading them in the synagogues; † canonizing them, as he doth elsewhere "the prophets and apostles:" (Luke xi. 49:) not only importing the law given by Moses's ministry and the writings of the prophets, but also the preachers of the same doctrine which Moses wrote, even of Christ, (John v. 46, with Gen. iii. 15; and xxii. 18; xlix. 10; Num. xxiv. 17, &c.; Deut. xviii. 15,) whose practice it was to demonstrate himself from Moses and the Prophets; (John v. 33; Luke xxiv. 44—47; Matt. xxi. 42; xxii. 43, 44;) which method the apostles also used. (Acts xviii. 28; xxiv. 14; xxviii. 23.) For Moses and the prophets spake of the person of the Messiah, and his natures, both Divine (Jer. xxiii. 5; Micah v. 2; Prov. viii. 12—22) and human; (Gen. iii. 15; Isai. vii. 14;) his offices, prophetic, (Deut. xviii. 15; John i. 45,) priestly, (Psalm cx. 4,) kingly, (Psalm ii. 6;) and states both of humiliation (Isai. lii. 2—15; Psalm xxii. 18) and exaltation, (Psalm xlvi. 2; lxviii. 18; cxviii. 22,) with the benefits thereof: (Psalm xxiii. 5;) I might add, that the whole scope of the ceremonial law was to prefigure Christ, coming to suffer for man's redemption, being "the end of the law to every one that believeth, for righteousness;" (Rom. x. 4; Gal. iii. 24; Acts vii. 2—37;) what was taught by Moses about sacrifices, having relation to the sacrifice of Christ, foretold by the prophet Isaiah. (Isai. liii. 1—12.) This was acknowledged by Tryphon the Jew in his discourse with Justin Martyr, though denied by the modern Jews. So that there is a harmony and identity, or sameness, of doctrine and rules of practice, for substance, in the Old and New Testament; the Old having in it the life and soul of the New, though different in degrees; the same object, Christ, "to whom all the prophets witnessed." (Acts x. 43.) And therefore, though the generality of the stiff-necked Jews did not give credit to the main importance of the Old, yet the sincere ones, who did believe the prophets, as the apostles exhorted, (Acts xxvi. 27; John xx. 31,) they, with Philip and Nathanael, "Israelites indeed," rejoiced they had "found him of whom Moses has written in the law," (John i. 41,) and whom the prophet foretold should be "the desire of all nations," (Haggai ii. 7,) "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people Israel." (Luke ii. 32.)

Wherefore I may very fairly hence under this first head in the explication deduce from my text:—

* Ἡ γραφή, αἱ γραφαί: (John ii. 22; Matt. xxi. 42;) and Βιβλίον, βιβλος. (Luke iv. 17; John xx. 30.)

† DR. LIGHTFOOT.

(1.) *That the holy scriptures, read, preached, and heard, accompanied with prayer, and other institutions of Christ, as the seals of the new covenant, and the ministry of reconciliation, are the means of grace ordained of God, to bring men and women to "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Acts xx. 21.)—That men, by the applying themselves sincerely to the use of these means, (which though they have no natural force, in and of themselves, to the effecting of a change,) may, by the efficacy of the Spirit exerting insuperable grace, be cleansed. (John xv. 3; xvii. 17; Eph. v. 26.) God, the great Efficient, may, in these helps of his own ordaining, reveal his own arm, (Isai. liii. 1,) draw them unto Christ, (John vi. 44, 45,) make the seed of the word fruitful, and, putting forth his own power, (Rev. i. 16,) bring them to salvation in the heavenly kingdom, and rest sweetly in "Abraham's bosom," where they shall not know trouble any more.

(2.) These are *ordinary* means, according to the order established by the Supreme Ruler, who knows what is best for those under his government; in opposition to *extraordinary*, which seldom happen, upon some singular work of judgment or mercy to a person or people. It is true, the most sovereign Agent, who is most free,—he may, if he pleaseth, without means, by an immediate impression of light and infusion of grace work on the soul, as he did on the apostles and Paul. (Acts ii. 4; ix. 1—22; Gal. i. 12.) But, generally and for the most part, God revealeth himself mediately, by the ordinary means [which] he hath settled to abide in his church to the end, there being an aptness and fitness in them under Divine influence for "converting the soul," (Psalm xix. 7,) when ambassadors come "in Christ's stead, beseeching men to be reconciled to God," (2 Cor. v. 20,) having a promise of his presence with them to the end of the world, (Matt. xxviii. 20,) in communicating of the mind of God, by writing or speaking, reading or interpreting, exhorting and directing; (2 Peter iii. 1; Acts xxi. 25; iv. 20—29; xv. 21; viii. 30—35; 1 Cor. xii. 28—30; Acts xv. 32; 1 Thess. ii. 11;) every way preaching for the begetting of faith; (Rom. x. 13, 15;) when the advice of Gregory Nazianzen is observed; namely, *Ευχου και σκοπου*, that is, "Pray and search;" having prayed with David, "Open thou mine eyes," (or "reveal,") "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Psalm cxix. 18.) It concerns us to be much in meditating upon it. (Psalm i. 2; John v. 39.) Gregory (called the Great) gives an account of an illiterate man, who bought a Bible, hired one to read to him out of it, and thereby became a great proficient in the school of Christianity. Luther,* by reading of it, was turned from Popery; so was John Huss, by reading of our Wickliff's books, proving his doctrine from it. We know, Augustine was converted by taking it up, and reading; † and it is said, Cyprian, by reading the prophet Jonas; ‡ as [was] Junius, by the first chapter of John's gospel; though it is supposed neither of them then had much skill in the originals,

* MELCHIOR ADAMUS in *Vind.*

† *Confessiones*, lib. 8, cap. viii. sec. 2.

‡ NICEPHORUS, pp. 5, 27.

but were beholden to translations. Thus we see how the scripture is the means, and the ordinary means.

The next thing in the explication is to show,

2. *That this means becomes more certainly successful, or effectual.*—“Certainly” is to be understood in opposition to that which happens uncertainly and peradventure: not as if, every where that “the immortal seed” of the word is sown, conversion did certainly and always follow; it being but a subservient instrument. Some seed meets with “bad ground;” (Matt. xiii. 4, 5;) some “reject the counsel of God against themselves;” (Luke vii. 30;) “they put it from them, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life;” (Acts xiii. 46;) that is, by contradicting of the word, they do as evidently deprive themselves of eternal life, as if the judge did pass that sentence upon the bench. So what is “the savour of life” to others, becomes “the savour of death” to them. (2 Cor. ii. 16.) The rich man, as he is brought-in here, conceits,—after the mode of the Jews, seeking for signs, (John iv. 48; vi. 30,) (which Christ gave check to, when, by his accomplishment of the prophecies, he had demonstrated himself to be the Messiah, and they would have him to be a political or temporal king, Matt. xii. 39,)—that one rising miraculously from the dead, and preaching, would keep others from hell. But Abraham, “the father of the faithful,” who knew what it was to repent, and believe, and be converted, was of another persuasion. He bids [them] hearken to the written word, read and preached; on which faith and repentance were to be grounded; God’s providential works, how admirable soever, not being the rule for men to go by, but his word; it being no good sense, that God’s extraordinary actings should be our ordinary rule. He that would not plough or sow till manna be rained from heaven, because it once did, may expect bread till he starve; and so may he that looks to be fed with ravens, as Elias once was. Man may be most certainly assured from God’s word what his mind is. God himself, indeed, doth principally make any means effectual or successful. Paul’s planting, and Apollo’s watering, come to nothing without him, his influence and blessing. (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.) Augustine said right, “Men may read and understand, behold and confess, not by the law and doctrine sounding outwardly, but by the inward and hidden, wonderful and ineffable, power of God, [which] doth not only work divine true revelations, but also good wills.”* Yet from the external preaching of the word of God, as a means of his appointment, there is a “godly sorrow” (or “a sorrowing after God”) wrought, which “worketh repentance to salvation.” (2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.) It proves successful to some, who are “not hearers only, but doers of the word.” (James i. 22.) It falls out prosperously and happily with them, using of the means. Solomon saith, “A good understanding giveth favour” and success. (Prov. xiii. 15.) Be sure, a good understanding of God’s mind from his word becomes ordinarily more successful, that “the soul may be in health and prosper,” (3 John 2,) than any expectation of that which can only give an uncertain sound, till evidenced to be from heaven, as the word is.

* *De Gratia Christi*, cap. 24.

3. [*It becomes effectual*] for conversion.—That is, from all sin to God; which imports a thorough change of heart and life, and that it is indeed from God the Author, by his Spirit, (2 Thess. ii. 13; Titus iii. 5,) above the creature's power and activity; (John i. 13;) yet God useth Christ's ambassadors in the ministry of reconciliation, (2 Cor. v. 19, 20; Acts xxvi. 18,) and those who are instructors in him, that we may be acquainted with God, (Job xxii. 21,) receive forgiveness, and be built up even "an habitation of God, through the Spirit," "upon the foundation" (doctrinal) "of the prophets and apostles, Christ" (personally) "being the chief corner-stone:" (Eph. ii. 20;) wherefore Paul urgeth Timothy to read the divinely inspired scriptures, in that they "were able," as an instrument in God's hands, "to make him wise to salvation," (2 Tim. iii. 15,) as they were a ground of "hope and comfort to others," (Rom. xv. 4,) by means of which we are begotten or born again. (James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23.) Yea, and from God's appointment and ordination, or (as it were) common law, we are not only first converted from sin to God, but are carried on in a state of grace, till we, in "exercising ourselves unto godliness," are afterwards brought unto glory.

It remains, before I leave the explication, that I touch upon,

4. *The persons whom the rich man is here represented to desire to come from heaven or hell, to give an information to his relatives how things go in those unchangeable states of happiness or misery.*—[They] are only brought in *ex hypothesi*, "upon supposition or condition," granting it were so: not that there is a ground for the expectation of any new messengers from the other world. We may yield the thing possible, though not probable. We are not to limit the Holy One, who is most perfect: He is not bounded as to his omnipotency, any more than his omniscieny. He could, if he would, reveal himself now, as he did to John in the isle of Patmos. (Rev. i. 9, 10.) He might, if he would, in the dispensation of his grace and providence, use the ministration of angels, (Heb. i. 14,) without giving any account of his matters, (Job xxxiii. 12, 13,) and put them upon obedience extraordinarily; for those heavenly spirits must be at his service, in the affairs of his kingdom. (Rev. xxii. 9.) Indeed the great instance of their ministry was about the person of Christ; yet he did use them afterwards to reveal his mind. (Rev. i. 1; xix. 10.) How far he is pleased to do it at this day in any rare instance, is not for me to determine: but some have pretended to have revelations from angels, which have proved delusions. There is, it is true, a ministry of them, (in this chapter where my text is, verse 22,) to carry holy souls to "Abraham's bosom," which is ordinary. But we will suppose there should be any extraordinary, yet that would not be any more (if so much) regarded than the ordinary means; and we should, "through the grace given," be careful not to be wise "above that which is written." (Rom. xii. 3.)

Having thus explained the sense of the answer to the case before me, I hope, according to the explication given, you will come to conclude with me, that it doth clearly result from my text, and is proved thence.

II. The Second general is to show *how, or upon what grounds, the*

ordinary means of grace are more certainly successful for conversion, than if persons from heaven or hell should tell us what is done there ; as hath been explained.

That I may do this as well as I can in a little room, I shall be concerned, like Bezaleel and Aholiab, (Exod. xxxvi. 1—7,) though not with the like wisdom, to lay-by much of the good “stuff” [which] would offer itself to me in this case. Somewhat methinks I should premise *in the general*, and then proceed to *particular grounds*.

1. Let me premise *in the general* these two or three things :

(1.) From my text, and in a Christian congregation, I am not necessitated, in showing how this comes about, which I have deduced from it, to prove Moses and the prophets, (or, which is all one for substance, more largely, the holy scriptures,) to be the word of God ; that being the hypothesis, or what is presupposed and not questioned, in this dialogue between the rich man and “the father of the faithful ;” as we find, verse 29, as well as in the words compared with verse 16 of this chapter. The Jews did acknowledge it, and never denied it, when our Saviour and his apostles did ever and anon show them how the scriptures were fulfilled, manifested, and accomplished. So that not to grant this, were to take away the *substratum* or “foundation” of the case ; which the Jews frankly yielded : “We know that God spake unto Moses.” (John ix. 29.) Indeed, it was evident enough when he refuted any objection against it, comforting of them by showing them that God was with him. (Exod. iii. 2, 6, 14 ; iv. 1—23 ; xiv. 31 ; xx. 1—26 ; Num. xi. 17.) We find, they did readily agree to it that God was the author of the Old Testament. Apollos, we read, “did mightily convince many of the Jews from the scriptures ;” (Acts xviii. 24—28 ;) that is, those books which they did own to be of divine inspiration. And, by consequence, if people be not worse than Jews, the New Testament should be owned to be so too, being [seeing] the Old directs to it. When Christ was transfigured, “Moses and Elias appeared talking with him,” (Matt. xvii. 2, 3,) and so gave their testimonies to the main subject and substance of the gospel, since in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. ii. 3.)

(2.) Man, in his innocent state, had an innate pure light, consisting in the knowledge of God the Creator, Lawgiver, Governor, and Rewarder ; presently enlarged by revelation from without, in the sacramental precept of the divine will under the first covenant : (Gen. ii. 17 :) and from the consideration of God’s works, which were all “very good ;” (Gen. i. 31 ;) and this was necessary to that state. But since man, being mutable, “sought out many inventions,” (Eccles. vii. 29,) and, hearkening to the serpent’s suggestion, (Gen. iii. 5,) had obscured this light, God, of his infinite goodness, pitying the vanity of fallen man as mortal, (not knowing how to “deliver his soul from the hand of the grave,” Psalm lxxxix. 47, 48,) did think it necessary to reveal himself, and magnify his grace, in condescending to enter into a new covenant with this fallen creature ; giving his word, or

first promise, that the seed of the woman should "bruise the serpent's head." (Gen. iii. 15.) Herein Christ was promised, and hence called "the Word;" being he indeed concerning whom that saving word of God, (John i. 14,) or word of promise, is made; as we say, "I will give you *my word* for it." We may easily conceive it requisite, from that natural light which remained in the reasonable creature, that God the Creator and Governor is to be worshipped; (Acts xvii. 23; Rom. i. 23, 25; 1 Kings xviii. 21;) and that no worship can be accepted of God, but what is instituted of himself: and since there abides in man, naturally, a strong desire of truth and immortality; of knowing how he "may be accepted of God," (2 Cor. v. 9; Psalm iv. 6; lxxiii. 24,) and enjoy communion with him; that there should be some assured revelation, (2 Tim. iii. 14; John i. 18; Deut. xix. 29,) (whereby he doth manifest himself and declare his will,) as the glass of his Divinity, (2 Cor. iii. 18; iv. 6,) and the rule of his worship, (Isai. i. 10—20; Matt. vii. 21; Col. ii. 23,) that we may not be guilty of worshipping we know not what or how, being [seeing] "he is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 22, 24.)

(3.) Though God, in infinite wisdom, during the time of the long-lived patriarchs, till some time after the flood, thought it sufficient (notwithstanding there was an early defection from his appointments, which yet in some measure came under the reformation of Enoch, Gen. iv. 26, Noah, Gen. viii. 20; ix. 5, and Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1—27) to continue that way of revelation from one to another, during the infancy of his church; however, when she grew up, it became necessary, for the due conservation, vindication, and propagation of his word, that as all nations by the light of nature are directed generally to the use of laws, (Deut. viii. 5—7; iv. 7, 8,) his own laws, reaching to the very motions of the heart, should be written. (Prov. xxii. 19, 20; Luke i. 3, 4; Rom. xv. 4.) This is found to be the most credible way of proposal; it being most fit [that] we should ascribe that to God which is really consonant to the greatest wisdom. That the certainty of the word of truth might be known and communicated, God himself wrote his laws, (Exod. xxiv. 12; Hosea viii. 12,) and commanded Moses and the prophets to write his will and oracles; (Exod. xxxiv. 1, 27; Hab. ii. 2; Jer. xxxvi. 2;) these coming as the credential letters of the supreme infallible Majesty, which are to remain inviolable,* not be rejected by any, who could never see any demonstrative evidence to weaken the authority thereof. So that it would be most injurious to the divine benignity, to suspect that the all-wise and most gracious God would be wanting to his church in so necessary a matter.† The great doctor of the Gentiles would argue, "He that spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.)

These things being premised, I shall proceed,

2. To the particular grounds of the assertion: so as, I would hope,

* *Scripta tabella manet.* "That which is marked by a style on a writing-tablet remains as a permanent memorial."—EDIT. † DR. TEMPLER.

they may not only satisfy real Christians, but such as are doubting of the divine authority of the holy scriptures, if not disposed to be anti-scripturists.

(1.) *The assent of divine faith, whereby a sinner is converted and brought nigh to God, is only built upon the authority of God the revealer; considering his infallible veracity, that he is a God of truth and cannot deceive or be deceived; having dominion over his creatures, who are therefore to submit to his word; penned upon his command, by those who were divinely inspired, as they vouched and proved themselves to be, and we have no solid reason to except against their proof.* (2 Tim. iii. 16; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3; Hosea xii. 10; 2 Peter i. 21; 1 Thess. ii. 13.)—Though the prophets and penmen of scripture were not always accompanied with miracles, when they delivered their messages from God; yet they required an attendance and obedience, under an eternal penalty to be inflicted upon those who did disobey the voice and message of God, which if they to whom it came did not receive with a divine faith, they did, in God's account, refuse to obey. There is no suspending our assent, when God expressly declares his will by himself, or his messengers coming in his name, as "in the last days he did by his Son," (Heb. i. 1, 2,) who spake "with authority, and not as the scribes." (Matt. vii. 29.) There was a divinity discerned in it by the hearers; and so there was, in some proportion, in the prophets of the Lord, "somewhat divine,"* which might be discerned by those unto whom it came; (as by Paul distinctly, Acts xxii. 9;) else it had been hard for God to have charged their eternal and temporal welfare or ruin upon their discerning or not discerning aright betwixt his word in the mouth of his own prophets, and that word which *pretended only so to be* in the mouths of the false prophets. We have a notable instance hereof, in opposition to those who pretended to prophecy in the name of the Lord, to gain credit to their lies. "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Is not my word like fire, saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. xxiii. 25, 28, 29.) The righteous God would not have required of men, under a dreadful penalty, to have assented to his word, in opposition to the impostors' dreams, had there not been most certain tokens for the differencing of it from that of the false prophets, whose words (as all others' beside his) were as "chaff," light and useless stuff for man's food; which "the wheat," the bread of life, might be easily known from, by those who had eyes to see, and did not, "because of their evil deeds, love darkness rather than light." (John iii. 19.) We know, they who by a good light are conversant in receiving and paying of moneys, do readily discern the genuine from counterfeit coin. Whereupon Gerson affirmed,† that the true coin of divine revelation may be known from the counterfeits of diabolical visions, as true gold is from its counterfeit, by its weight, flexibility, and durableness, (or coptinuity and incorruptibleness,) con-

* Ομοιον τι.

† *De Distinctione verarum Visionum a falsis, pars prima.*

figuration, and colour. God's holy word had light, and heat, and power proper to it, which made it evident, though prejudice and conceited interest hindered many to whom it came from giving entire credit to it, delivered by the Lord's true prophets, (Isai. liii. 1; Jer. xliii. 3,) and Christ himself, (John ix. 29; xii. 37, 38,) who will certainly "manifest himself," as in displeasure to those who reject him revealing the Father, so in favour to those who receive him. (John xiv. 21; Matt. xi. 20.) It is no way likely that one from the dead should so manifest himself, if he came to impart his experiences to his friends yet in the state of the living; who should in all reason consider, that "if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;" (1 John v. 9;) and consequently should be deemed more successful for conversion. Hence,

(2.) *The scriptures prove themselves by their own light to be from God, and appointed by him, to convince and convert sinners, and direct them to come to him for rest.*—If God do reveal himself, his attributes and will, by his "works which praise him," (Psalm cxlv. 9—15,) and manifest "his eternal power and Godhead," (Rom. i. 20,) to leave men inexcusable so far as that evidence goes;* and likewise by the voice of nature, or the innate light, those common principles left in the consciences of men exercised to discern betwixt good and evil; (Rom. ii. 14, 15;) then, he having "magnified his word above all his name," (Psalm cxxxviii. 2,) which is all that whereby he makes himself known, there be certainly more clear characters and glorious impressions of the Divine Majesty, his power, holiness, goodness, wisdom, and grace, to be discerned therein, than any where besides. It is rational to collect, that by the same counsel [by which] God did inscribe ensigns of himself in "the works of his own hands," he did impress documents of Divinity on the words of his mouth, wherein the lineaments of heavenly wisdom are as conspicuous as the sagacity of Joab in the speech of the woman of Tekoah unto David.† (2 Sam. xiv. 1—19.) Even as by the light of the sun in the firmament we may see the glorious body of the sun itself, so by the word of God, which "is pure, enlightening the eyes," (Psalm xix. 4—8,) we may discern clearly who is the Author of it. By the condescending beams and influences vouchsafed in that bright Sun, who is indeed "the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift descends," (James i. 17,) we may come to see our chief good, and the only way to enjoy it. "In him is the fountain of life, and in his light we shall see light." (Psalm xxxvi. 9.) God, who is the true invariable light, "in whom there is no darkness at all," (1 John i. 5—7,) can so shine upon the "glass" of his word, (James i. 23; 2 Cor. iii. 18,) that we may see therein a lively, spiritual portraiture of himself, and his pleasure toward us, with our duty unto him. For you know, by looking in a glass we see the glass itself, ourselves, and other things within reach in the room; and so, by the crystal glass of the word, we may see

* *Præsentemque refert qualibet herba Deum.* "Every herb, in its elegant and appropriate form, proclaims the presence of the Deity."—EDIT. † DR. TEMPLER *De Sacro Canone.*

God who speaks it, ourselves with our besmeared faces, and the emptiness of the creatures in the same room with us : which may well engage us to seek to the fountain of all fulness, God himself. But then we should remember, as an honourable person adviseth,* to consider the holy Bible as a harmonious system, though written by parts and piece-meal in several ages : it being like a fair suit of arras, of which, though a shred may assure us of the fineness of the colours and the richness of the stuff, yet the hangings never appear to their true advantage but when they are displayed to their full dimensions and seen together. Be sure, the scriptures ("to which we do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place," 2 Peter i. 19) will, in this prospect, clearly show their Author and original ; namely, that they came from Him who is "the Light of men, and shineth in darkness," (John i. 4, 5 ; 1 John i. 4, 5,) to the good satisfaction of the consciences of the honest beholders themselves, whatever objections may be made by carnal reasonings to the contrary ; hereby being far more effectual to "convert the soul and rejoice the heart," (Psalm xix. 7, 8,) than any appearances of prodigious spectres, giving some notice of what passes in the other world, could ever do ; since the real resurrection of Lazarus had no other influence on some of the Jews, than only to give them occasion of turning informers to the Pharisees against Christ, who had, just before their eyes, wrought that most notable miracle. (John xi. 46.) Hence,

(3.) *The power and efficacy [which] the scriptures have had in changing the minds and hearts of men, show that, as to any future expectations, they are more successful for conversion than any new revelations or appearances from the other world.*—The powerful effects of it proving the word of God to be a perpetual ordinance, or "covenant which God hath commanded for ever," (Psalm cxi. 9,) deriving virtue from him for this very end, and by "its powerfulness and quickness" evidencing him to be the undoubted Author of it, (Heb. iv. 12,) when "it is received," (though revealed to and by men immediately or mediately,) "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God, which worketh effectually in them that believe," (1 Thess. ii. 13,) yea, and brings men to believe who are not prepossessed with prejudices and corrupt affections, which cause a rage against divine appointments ; whereupon "the god of this world" (the prince of darkness) "blinds their minds, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of (the invisible) God, should shine into them." (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) Yet, in the dispensation of the word, there is an evidence of Divinity in it, commending itself to the consciences of unprejudiced men ; the ordinary means of grace being "mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong-holds," yea, "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," (2 Cor. x. 4, 5,) from whom it came, and unto whom it directs us. Even great ones have been "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord," (Acts xiii. 12 ; Psalm cxix. 111,) drawn from vicious courses

* The Honourable ROBERT BOYLE'S "Considerations upon the Style of Scripture," p. 72.

into virtuous and holy practices, "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God," (Acts xxvi. 18,) when little good, comparatively, was done by Christ himself preaching at Capernaum, (Matt. xi. 23 ; xiii. 58,) the magazine of his miracles, those extraordinary discoveries of their Author. In the use of the ordinary means of grace, even at one sermon of Peter's, we find three thousand converted ; (Acts ii. 41 ;) and afterwards, upon hearing of the word, we meet with "about five thousand" more that believed ; (Acts iv. 4 ;) which may well evidence who was the Author of it, and in whose hand it was an instrument. Many have been built upon this "foundation," (Eph. ii. 20,) enlightened and directed by this "light," (Psalm cxix. 105,) fed with this meat, (Heb. v. 13, 14,) regenerated by this seed, (1 Peter i. 23,) which, as a grain of mustard-seed, in a matter of sixty-six years' space after the sowing of it, grew into a great tree ; which Pliny, the proconsul in Bithynia, employed by Trajan to root-up Christianity, (which they accounted a crime,) did acknowledge.* Tertullian, and others, prove the spreading of it in the second and third centuries.† "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" in the primitive times, (Acts xix. 20,) ingenerating unconquered constancy of faith and godliness in the minds of the hearers, and always victoriously triumphing over the kingdom of Satan and false religions. (Isai. xlvi. 10 ; John x. 35 ; Acts i. 16.) In the beginning of the Reformation said Luther, "We do everywhere experience in the church, in the commonwealth, in the family, certain fruits of the word, which as leaven doth spread itself into all the parts of the commonwealth, the offices, and all the states." ‡

Afterwards we find how it did diffuse itself in England, Scotland, and Ireland, &c.§ Notwithstanding they of the antichristian state have laboured to keep up their superstition and idolatry, by feigned apparitions, as may be seen in later collections of Popish miracles, "The History of Jetzer," &c.

(4.) *The Holy Bible being the appointed instrument wherewith the Holy Spirit will work for "the sanctification of the soul ;"* (John xvii. 17 ; 1 Peter i. 22 ;) *it is indeed a "surer word of prophecy" (which "the Spirit of Christ," τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς, "that spake in the prophets themselves," did signify, 1 Peter i. 11,) than that which came from heaven at the transfiguration.* (2 Peter i. 18, 19 ; Matt. xvii. 5.)—Not in regard of the truth, (for therein they were both equal,) but in regard *that* at the transfiguration was more transient, being heard but by a few ; *this* of the scripture more firm and fixed, being written for an unalterable record ; just so as holy men had it brought to them at several times by the Holy Ghost. It was not of any private conception ; for "it came not by the will of man," but was brought into them "by the will of God," who hath strongly preserved it amongst

* *Mos ipso tractu, ut fieri solet, diffundente se crimine, &c.*—PLINIUS SECUNDUS, epist. xcvi. lib. 10. "But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same kind occurred."—MELMOTH'S Translation. † *Ipsa multitudine perturbatus.*—TERTUL. *Adversus Gentes.*

‡ *Ubique experimur in templo, in republica, &c.*—Tom. iv. p. 282. § See "The Fulfilling of Scriptures," pp. 401, 414.

his people, notwithstanding the endeavours of Antiochus to destroy it under the Old Testament; and afterwards, when the canon was completed, though several of the Roman emperors used their utmost power to burn it.* For rather than they whom the Spirit of God had wrought upon by it, in the communication of spiritual light and life, would become *traditores* (such "traitors" to God and their own soul, as) to deliver it up to Diocletian's officers, they in great numbers suffered themselves in Egypt to be bodily destroyed, in humble confidence [that] the Author of it would take their souls into "Abraham's bosom," to be for ever happy there. So successful a means is the word of God for the work of grace in the soul, that no marvel—upon the rich man's speaking his own conceit, or odd wish, for some one's prodigious † return from the other world; as if a preacher thence would bring his brethren to return to God!—father Abraham discovers himself to be of another mind; as it were, giving him a reprimand, shows that the written word, giving more clear evidence of its really coming from above, and so manifesting itself to be from God, should rather do it, as being the stated means which the Spirit useth in the conversion of others. And therefore the hankering after messengers to come anew from heaven or hell, argues those who are so disposed to be such (as our Saviour showed in confuting the Sadducees) who really "know not the scriptures, nor the power of God" therein. (Matt. xxii. 29.) For let us suppose, one who had been dead, and known to be so, for several years, should be wonderfully raised up by God, to warn his known friends here in this world to flee from the wrath to come, and to return to God; what new arguments could he use, that had not been used in the ministration of the word before, since therein he had been acquainted with the pure precepts of the Divine Majesty, and also his sure promises of heaven to the obedient, with the certain threatenings of hell to the disobedient, and the never-ceasing pains under the execution of them, felt by him who in this parable here would have warning given to his brethren? What can he, supposed to come from the other world, offer more to the serious consideration of his relatives? After a little startling of them, who, it may be, would be somewhat concerned a little while at the surprise; (as the drunkard, seeing his pot-companion fall down dead under the table, or others struck dead on every side in a dreadful pestilence;) yet the survivors remain unchanged in their minds, wills, and affections of love and hatred, hope and fear, all this while: though they have often heard the ministers of the word, even in Christ's stead, laying cogent arguments before them to gain their assent, powerful motives to work upon their wills and affections, from the sure word, universally suited to the cases of their several souls; when, it may be, they had some common motions of the Spirit which they have quenched, whereupon they may now be

* Τας δ' εὐθεοῦς καὶ ἱερὰς γραφὰς κατὰ μέσας ἀγορὰς πυρὶ παραδιδόμενας, &c.—EUSEBIJ *Ecclesiastica Historia*, lib. x. cap. 3. "The divinely-inspired and sacred writings were committed to the flames in the midst of vast multitudes."—EDIT. † In the sense of "marvellous," "after the manner of a prodigy."—EDIT.

prone to doubt, whether this supposed new and extraordinary messenger be indeed commissioned from God, unless he produce his credentials, and these be attested to by the Spirit. (Gal. iii. 1, 2.) For, upon the appearance of an angel, there might well be a suspicion, since, if a good one, his message would accord with God's word; if a bad one, he would endeavour to deceive by his lies.* When the angel did instruct Joseph by a vision, he forthwith adjoined a testimony from the prophetic scripture, (Matt. i. 23; Isai. vii. 14,) which Christ and his apostles had respect to, though they could work miracles to confirm their doctrine.

(5.) *God out of his infinite wisdom hath given us his oracles, and sent his ambassadors in the ministry of reconciliation, men like to ourselves, as more suitable to us in houses of clay than angels, which live out of the sphere of our commerce.* (2 Cor. v. 19, 20.)—God might think, now their testimonies to his church here below would not be so convenient for his government, and so consequently not so successful for the beginning of conversion. He could have had the use of the noblest spirits for his errand, and embodied them, if he would, for expedition; when he chose to employ Moses, notwithstanding his excuses, when the promise of God's presence with him on his embassy might answer all; (Exod. iii. 11, 12; iv. 10, 12;) so that he found he might say, with converted Paul, he could "do all things through Christ enstrengthening him." (Phil. iv. 13.) Man is best drawn in such a way as is most agreeable to his nature. The head, which is the governing part in the organical body, may move most uniformly with members of the same nature, (Deut. xviii. 15,) who have the irrefragable authority of God's word to back them, wherein they speak for God to stubborn ones; and though the "treasure" is presented in "earthen vessels," yet the "excellency of the power is of God." (2 Cor. iv. 7; 1 Cor. i. 18.) Converse with good angels is a dignity which our present state in the body cannot well bear, and therefore it is rare. There is indeed a story related in Bodin,† of one who had desired much the guidance and assistance of an angel; and from the thirty-seventh year of his age, he said, he had a spirit that assisted and followed him to his death. He would knock and awake him early in the morning; if he spake unwary words, he would reprove him for it by a dream in the night; if he was reading a bad book, the angel would strike on the book for him to leave it; and give some pre-notice to him in a dream when some accident was like to befall him, &c. This is related from the man as matter of fact. But it concerns us to be wary, and not to be wise "above that which is written." (1 Cor. iv. 6.) If we are not satisfied with the infallible testimony of God himself, how should the coming of a creature in a strange way give us satisfaction? The father of lies may impose on our simplicity, and deceive us in the habit of "an angel of light." (2 Cor. xi. 14.) Too many easy people have been imposed on by the Popish legends. Luther,‡ being acquainted with such impostures, said, "Satan indeed

* LAVATER *De Spectris.*

† *De Magorum cum Satanâ Commercio*, lib. 1.

‡ *In Gen. xxii.*

hath often tempted me, (even as Augustine, who deprecated, that an angel might not appear to him,) that I might ask a sign of God : but far be it from me that I should hearken to this temptation. The martyrs, without the apparition of angels, confirmed by the word alone, did meet death for the name of Christ ; and why should not we acquiesce in the same ?" It is said, when once he had kept a day of humiliation and prayer, he had a vision of Christ, when he said, " Away ! away ! I know no picture of Christ but the scripture." And elsewhere, " I have made a covenant with the Lord my God, that he may not send me visions, or dreams, or angels ; for I am content with this gift that I have, the holy scripture, which doth abundantly teach and supply all things that are necessary both to this and a future life."* Let us all then content ourselves with the ordinary means of grace, which are more successful for conversion to carry it on from first to last, rather than expect persons from heaven or hell to acquaint us what is done there.

EXCEPTION. " If some rare instance should be alleged of some atheistical persons, who, having been intimate companions in wickedness, had agreed that when either of them should depart this world, and find a joyful heaven, or dreadful hell, he would, if possible, acquaint the survivor with it ; and thereupon some spectre or voice hath been heard or seen, or fancied to be so ; upon such a discovery there hath been an inclination to return to God, and an amendment of life."

ANSWER. I fear, such an inclination and amendment have been but some temporary emotions upon such a prodigious occurrence, and have soon vanished like a blush ; or have occasioned only some fainter essays toward amendment of life, which have not come to a thorough change ; only to be an " almost Christian," as Agrippa, and not such an " altogether " Christian as Paul himself was, (Acts xvi. 28, 29,) when converted upon the call of Christ, by whom God spake to him, having ordained to reveal himself by the word. (Gal. i. 1 ; Heb. i. 2.) But we do not now find the revelation by angels, or the spirits of those who are departed this life, to be any stated ordinance of God for man's conversion, as the scriptures be. For should we suppose bad angels to come to us, they are enemies to man's conversion : good ones, as God's ministers, would confirm his word.

Should we suppose wandering spirits or spectres from the dead, according to Dives's conceit, to be monitors of the living, we must reckon them to be either the souls of *believers* or *unbelievers* : if of *believers*, they will, after the example of Christ their Head, send us to the holy scriptures ; as Augustine thought he heard a voice saying, " Take and read ! take and read !" They will say, with God the Father concerning his Son and our Saviour, " Hear ye him." (Matt. xvii. 5.) *If the souls of unbelievers and wicked miscreants*, who would hearken to them, or give credit to what they say ?

Further : what these supposed ones say does either *agree with the written word*, or *is contrary to it* : if the former, they are received,

* In Caput xxviii. Genes. Pactum feci cum Domino Deo meo, &c.

not because they are believed by them, but because contained in the word of God, which hath been found a successful means of God's own appointment for man's conversion. *If the latter*, that is, [if] they be contrary to the word, they ought by no means to be received, should we suppose, (that which is not possible,) an angel from heaven should speak to them.

But I fear I am become tedious; yet I beg your patience a little longer, while I touch upon,

III. Some short APPLICATION of this stated case, that *the ordinary means of grace are more certainly successful for conversion, than if some persons from heaven or hell should tell us what is done there.*—And it shall be for,

1. *The reproof of those who disvalue the scriptures, and discourage such as would search them in the language they understand, according to our Saviour's injunction to "search the scriptures;"* (John v. 39;) *which we find to be authentical, from God himself, as hath been evidenced, and might be further by other arguments which have been urged by others.**—The truth is, if God himself were not the Author of the Bible, it must be some creature, either good or bad. *If bad*, why forbids he evil so rigorously, and commands good so expressly, aiming at nothing but God's glory, and man's happiness? *If good*, why doth he challenge to himself that which is proper to God alone; as, to make laws for the heart, to punish and reward eternally? *If no creature*, God himself must be the Author. It is highly blameworthy then to have low thoughts of God's own book; yet such is the corruption of fallen man, that even the generality of those who make some profession of the truth, are too apt to set light by "Moses and the prophets," (Luke xvi. 31,) which Paul styles "the oracles of God." (Rom. iii. 2.) The Heathens were exceeding fond of their oracles, which were but riddles and cheats; but many under the Christian name do disregard the lively and true oracles of God: I mean, not only those who of old looked upon the Old Testament as not indited by the Spirit; † or of later days, as out of date under the New Testament, and all of it but as a dead letter; ‡ and those who forbid the reading of it to the laity; § but such as slight, and do not consult, these infallible oracles which really passed God's own hands, having his signature upon them, and being "able to make us wise unto salvation." (2 Tim. iii. 15.) Yea, are there not to be found those who, though they professedly renounce Popery, do yet droll upon the holy scriptures, burlesque them, and make a ridicule of them? (and such would deal so with monitors from the dead;) wherein, if we would indeed exercise our spiritual senses to discern, we might see the face of God and live. (Exod. xxxiii. 20.) Alas! how does the speech of many "bewray" them (Matt. xxvi. 73) (because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Matt. xii. 34) to have little value for the divine oracles, since they in all their talk seldom, if ever, discourse of them with reverence! Which would indeed dispose one to fear, that some under the name of Pro-

* See GROTIUS; MORNÆUS; MR. BAXTER'S "Saints' Rest;" SIR CHARLES WOLSELEY; MR. WHITE; &c.

† Manichees.

‡ Weigelians.

§ Papists.

testants have in reality no more value for the oracles of God than the Popes of Rome, who put their own canons and decrees not only in the same rank with the canonical scriptures, but above them.*

2. *We should not any of us tempt God in hankering after new revelations or extraordinary discoveries; but adhere to God, in the ordinary means [which] he hath appointed and allowed to us for conversion and confirmation.*—It is true, as a great man† hath well observed, all religion doth depend, or is presumed to depend, upon revelations from above. “Flesh and blood,” saith Christ, “hath not revealed it, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. xvi. 17.) But then when this is consigned in a sufficient and clear canon, undoubtedly attested, with an exclusion of additionals, under dreadful plagues, (Rev. xxii. 18,) we should rest satisfied, and not be reaching after novelties; yea, and we should heartily acknowledge our gratitude to our gracious God for his true light, which doth perpetually cast out his rays, and, as Polybius saith of truth, “Itself doth, by itself, prevail, and pulls down all the falsehood that perks up its head against it.”‡ O how thankful should we be for the liberty we do enjoy, for the good of our precious souls, to worship God as he hath prescribed in his word of eternal truth; (Matt. xi. 25, 26;) heartily waiting, as dependents upon him, that he would “open our eyes” to see the wonderful things contained in his law! (Psalm cxix. 18.) We should be well contented with the proposals that God himself makes to us in his unerring word, and not expect to have our curiosities gratified with strange relations from the dead. If the house of God amongst us be “built upon the foundation of the” true “prophets and apostles,” (Eph. ii. 20,) we shall not need, as a learned man saith,§ “daubing with such spurious visions and prophecies as the Romanists brag of.” Luther, vexed with their impositions, writes, “I am wont to pray God daily, that he may not send any angel to me, for any cause. If any should be offered, I would not hear; unless he should signify somewhat of political necessity; even as pleasant dreams and glad tidings are sometimes wont to cheer us up in civil matters. And yet I know not whether even in such a case I would hearken to him and believe him. But in spiritual things we do not desire angels.”|| The ordinary means of grace which I have been discoursing of, as being ordained of God to discover what he would have us to do, and what he will do for us, is that which the Holy Spirit joins himself to, and makes more effectual usually to a saving change of the heart, than prodigious and sensible alarms, which uneasy souls desire to pry into; whenas the holy angels desire to peep into the mysteries revealed to the church, and made known by the “manifold,” or *embroidered*, “wisdom of God.” (1 Peter i. 12; Eph. iii. 10.)

3. *There should be no seeking to familiar spirits, or consulting of conjurers and cunning men, as they would be thought to be, who converse with Satan, since we are called to the law and to the testimonies.*—If

* HONORATUS, lib. ii. epist. 16.

† MIRANDULA *De Fid. et Ord. Cred.*

‡ Αυτη δι' αυτης επικρατει και καταγωνιζεται το ψευδος.

§ DR. SPENCE, “Of

Prophecies.” || *In Gen. xxii. : Ego soleo Deum precari, &c.*

any pretenders to new lights, or discoveries from the other world, speak not "according to this word," that is already revealed and sealed, "it is because there is no light in them." (Isai. viii. 20.) Some expound it: If they be otherwise-minded than they have from God been advised, and will resolve to run after witches and wizards, there shall no day-light of prosperity befall them; but all darkness of affliction and misery shall betide them.* God allows not a going to the witch at Endor, having written laws by which he will rule and judge the world. His people of old were not to hearken unto the word of those false prophets that "gave a sign or a wonder," (Deut. xiii. 1—3,) though God permitted it to come to pass, for their trial, when pretended to be an attestation to that which God abhorred. (2 Thess. ii. 8, 9.) But they were to hearken unto the Prophet whom God would send, even Jesus Christ, (Deut. xviii. 15, 22; Matt. xvii. 5,) unto whom the true prophets under the Old Testament did refer, and who hath silenced all lying oracles; which the true oracles do caution us to take heed we be not deceived with. (Matt. x. 16; xxiv. 23, 24; 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2; 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.) Christ's apostles brought the conjurers, by the power of God's word, to confess their delusions, and bring their books to be burned openly, (Acts xix. 18, 19,) which were of the same kind in effect with some prognostications about future contingencies, that there can be no true foundation for in genuine astrology, though that be pretended, to the prejudice of the divine oracles. To which, whoever refuseth to give entire credit upon due deliberation, he gives ground of suspicion that he hath none of the Spirit of Christ, (1 Cor. xii. 3,) neither would he ever believe Christ himself returning in the flesh, and all the angels, or those from the dead. Hence we may take notice how the wonderful boldness of Satan bewrays itself; as well as the incredulity of men in receiving the truth, and their credulity in embracing of fables.† For how many are there who account, for such, those things concerning eternal punishment which are declared by the Son of God! And, on the other hand, how many, partly by mere fictions, partly by true nocturnal apparitions of unclean spirits assuming dead corpses but to deceive miserable men, have on purpose given themselves occasion to be deceived, (not heeding Paul's fear, "lest through the serpent's subtilty," their "minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 3;) to which impostures the Popish purgatory, prayer for the dead, invocation of saints, and that which they call "the adoration of relics," owe their original, when the Lord hath of old forbidden that the dead should be consulted or heard! (Deut. xviii. 11.) To conclude:

4. *Let us be exhorted to mind "Moses and the prophets."*—Let us labour in the light of the scriptures to see the Author of them, (Psalm xxxvi. 9; lxxxiv. 11,) that we may thereby, as the most successful means, be brought to repentance of our sins, avoid the torments of hell, and enjoy the pleasures of heaven. And if any of us, under temptation, as looking for somewhat more sensible and lively, fall into doubting concerning the divine writ, or word of God

* See "English Annotations."

† BEZA.

as written ;—which yet, I have showed, is more credible, for that it shows itself in a diviner way, being written ; as water in the fountain, or light in the sun ; which, while it is strained, passing through the pipes and instruments of mortals, in a traditional way, is defiled or obscured ;—let us then take off our eyes from curiosities, and not think to delight our senses with novelties ; and preter-evangelical doctrines, knowing the great apostle hath anathematized, or cursed, all them who bring another gospel, or doctrines beside the gospel, in the beginning of his epistle to the Galatians. (Chap. i. 6—9.) Christ here in my text represents Abraham as preferring the sacred scriptures, to be more worthy of credit, and beneficial to conversion, than the reports of those raised from the dead ; and Paul, by whom Christ himself speaks, not writing rashly and unadvisedly, when moved by the Holy Ghost, but upon mature deliberation, with a great deal of gravity, repeats : “ As we said before, so say I now again,” (confirming what he and others for substance had delivered,) for greater certainty : “ If any man preach any other gospel unto you ;” he doth not say, as some of the ancients have observed,* *any contrary*, but “ any the least thing beside that we have preached and ye have received, though he be an angel from heaven, let him be accursed.” (Verse 9.) He prefers the divine writ to the angels’ coming down with a message from heaven ; evangelical doctrines to angelical, could it be supposed ; and that deservedly : because, the angels, though great, yet are servants and ministers ; (Heb. i. 14 ;) whereas all the holy scriptures are not commanded and sent of servants to be written ; but of God himself, the Lord of all, as hath been showed. (2 Tim. iii. 16 ; 1 Peter i. 11, 12 ; 2 Peter i. 20, 21 ; John xx. 31.) Let us then depend solely upon the sure word, which is most effectual to convert and comfort us. Here is a firm support ; for if this earthly globe [which] we stand upon, though heavy and bulky, hang up, encompassed by the heavens, not stirring from its centre, though it hath no shores to uphold it but “ the word” of God, (Heb. i. 3,) certainly it concerns us to stay ourselves securely on the infallible promise of the eternal God, admiring the excellency of his holy writ ; “ which,” saith Augustine,† “ is a burning light, fit both to make bare those things which are covered with darkness, and to demonstrate itself to thine eyes.” For indeed it contains the purest precepts, the best counsels, the clearest examples, the strongest helps, and the most cogent motives and encouragements to duty, the most dreadful threatenings of wrath to the disobedient, and the surest and fullest promises of rest to the obedient.

* CHRYSOSTOMUS, THEOPHYLACTUS : [Ουχ] ὅτι εαν εναντια καταγγελλουσιν αλλα καν μικρον τι ευαγγελιζονται παρα δ ευγγελιζομεθα. † *Lucerna ardens est idonea, et alia quæ tenebris operiebuntur nudare, et seipsam tuis oculis demonstrare.*—*Tract. 35 in Johannem.*

SERMON VIII.

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HOW MAY IT CONVINCINGLY APPEAR, THAT THOSE WHO THINK
IT AN EASY MATTER TO BELIEVE, ARE YET DESTITUTE OF
SAVING FAITH ?

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.—Ephesians i. 19, 20.

THE design of this epistle is to set forth the free grace of God in man's salvation by Christ.

1. *More generally* : "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." (Verse 3.)

2. *By a particular enumeration of those eternal blessings which were decreed for us in Christ* ; namely, election and adoption. (Verses 4, 5.)

Having thus looked so far back before the foundation of the world, (verse 4,) the apostle sets down what Christ did in time for us in his own person, when he took our nature upon him, and entered into the office of a Mediator, as our Head, completing our redemption in himself by dying for us : "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Verse 7.) Then follow the blessings that we ourselves, as members of Christ, are partakers of in this life ; and they are all comprehended in faith, and in the certain consequents of it.

These Ephesians were called to this faith by the preaching of the gospel, which (the Spirit of God accompanying it) became effectual to beget faith in them. Paul was mightily affected with the success the gospel had among the Ephesians, gives God thanks for it, and prays heartily for a further increase of that faith in them, (verses 15—17,) and shows what a wonderful thing it is, that any are brought to believe in Jesus. It is as great a miracle as the resurrection of Christ from the dead : that was an effect of divine power, and so is this.

I have made what haste I could to bring down my discourse to the text, and to the point or question that I am desired to speak to this morning ; namely, *How it may convincingly appear that those who think it an easy matter to believe, are destitute of saving faith.*

In stating this case, I shall do these three things :—

I. *Show what a difficult thing it is to believe.*

II. *Give the reason why many professors count it an easy thing to believe.*

III. *Prove that those who count so, are destitute of saving faith.*

I. *The difficulty of believing.*

That which requires the greatest power and strength to effect it, is no easy thing: But believing requires the greatest power to effect it: Therefore it is no easy thing to believe.

I prove the assumption; namely, that the greatest power in heaven and earth is required to raise up faith in us:—

1. *Because faith deals with the power of God only about those things which it believes.*—Bears itself up upon that; and when God is about to persuade a sinner to believe his free grace, he first convinces him of his power, that he is able to perform his promises.

(1.) *God asserts his power.*—He declares himself to be an Almighty God. So to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1; and in the New Testament he often asserts his power, that all things are possible to him. Omnipotency sticks at nothing, knows no difficulties. What cannot the exceeding greatness of his power do?

(2.) *God doth exert and put forth his power in some visible exemplification of it, that fully demonstrates his omnipotency, and can signify nothing less.*—Such an instance we have in the text, in the resurrection of Christ. This overt act speaks-out his infinite power; it is matter of fact, and cannot be denied.

(3.) *God gives the saints some feeling and experience of the exceeding greatness of his power put forth in their own souls, by working faith in them.*—They see it is the Lord's doing; that nothing in man would ever lead him out to it, if God did not persuade him, and bring over his heart to believe the gospel.

Believers under the New Testament though they hear much of the power of God set forth in the letter of the word, and though they experience the efficacy of this power in their own hearts, yet that which puts the matter quite out of doubt with them, is this undeniable instance of divine power in the resurrection of Christ. Abraham wanted this: though he saw much of the power of God toward him, in calling him alone from his father's house, and greatly increasing him afterwards, when he became "two bands;" (Gen. xxxii. 10;)* and in giving him a son in his old age, &c.; yet the greatest proof of God's power to Abraham, was the inward efficacy of it upon his own heart, that he should be brought to believe a resurrection, when there was never any instance of such a thing in the world before. It is a sign he was satisfied in the almighty power of God; "accounted that God was able to raise him up," though "he received him from the dead in a figure." (Heb. xi. 19.) Isaac was not really slain; therefore Abraham's faith was more remarkable, that he should believe that God could raise his son from the dead; and that he would do it, rather than break his promise. He resolved to obey God for the present, and to trust him for the future. All that we believe now is but the consequent of Christ's resurrection, and

* This passage relates to Jacob, and not to Abraham.—EDIT.

follows upon it: the Head being risen, the members will also rise, every one in his own order; not only by a bodily resurrection at the last day, but by a spiritual resurrection in their souls here, when the time of their conversion and regeneration comes. That which convinces us of the almighty power of God to perform his promises, is the resurrection of Christ; but that which was the chiefest proof of God's power to Abraham, was the inward impression of it upon his heart when he was first called.

That he who as a man had this law written in his heart that "he should not kill," should so readily yield to the killing of his son; and, when he was resolved so to do,—had the knife in his hand ready stretched out, was under the highest impulse of faith to do what God commanded him,—that he should presently be taken off from it by a counter-command from heaven! How did God try Abraham, as if he had set himself to puzzle him! turns him and winds him this way and that way, backward and forward: he must not kill; and then he must kill; and by and by he must not kill. God was resolved his faith should move as he would have it, according to his will; and Abraham was as ready to comply. "He is my God," says Abraham, "and I will obey him; Isaac shall die, and Isaac shall live; what God will. He sees further than I do; I will follow him, though I know not whither I go, nor what I do: God knows; that is enough for me; I will trust him. Lord, what wilt thou have me do? Tell me, and I will do it. Shall I kill my son, or shall I spare my son? It shall be as thou wilt, Lord." Herein Abraham excelled all believers under the New Testament: though they have some experience of God's power put forth upon their souls in believing, yet they do not bear only upon this, as Abraham did; they have the resurrection of Christ to support their faith, which Abraham had not, and yet believes a resurrection-power as firmly as they who saw Christ risen from the grave. God appeared to Abraham, and made such immediate impressions of his power upon his heart, that he needs no sign, no visible instance, to confirm his faith: he was satisfied without it; he saw *that* in God himself that made him never to dispute his power afterwards.

Saints now, though they have experience of a Divine Power touching their hearts, and drawing them to Christ, yet they cannot so clearly discern this conquering, subduing power of God in themselves, as they may in Christ their Head; because they are under many infirmities not yet removed. They do not see sin and death, and the devil and the world, quite overcome in themselves; but they see all overcome in Christ; his resurrection proves all; and they are fain often to reflect upon that, to strengthen their faith and assurance of victory in their own persons at last. They know that Christ did not die for himself, nor rise for himself, but for them. They see Christ "crowned with glory and honour:" (Heb. ii. 9:) he suffers no more in his person, though he still suffers in his members; but they shall ere long be as free from suffering as the glorified person of Christ now is in heaven. Thus it will be when Christ mystical shall have all things put under his feet; then Christ and his saints will reign glo-

riously to all eternity; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes then; and this will as surely come to pass as Christ himself is risen from the dead. " 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;' (John xvi. 33;) I have, and you shall, overcome it. In me you already are 'more than conquerors;' and in your own persons you shall be when 'I come again.' "

2. *Because no natural principle in man can take in the objects of faith.*—Flesh and blood cannot reveal them to us. Faith is an act above reason. How is it possible for a man, as a man, to act above his reason? It is absurd and irrational to think so. Gospel-truths are so deep and mysterious, that they do transcend our human capacities, and cannot be discerned but by the light of a divine faith. What is human we may undertake, and count that easy to us; but what is divine is above us, quite out of our reach. Therefore faith is said to be the work of God, fulfilled by his power. (2 Thess. i. 11.) The knowledge of faith, by which we are persuaded of that which we conceive not, is higher than all rational understanding. We acknowledge the truth of that, as Christians, which as men we do not scientifically know by any logical demonstration. Faith gives us the certainty of those things which we comprehend not.

3. *That which makes believing so difficult, is the seeming contradictory acts of faith.*—It seems not to consist with itself. Here I take faith more generally, as it has for its object the whole word of God, the law and the gospel. The special object of faith, as saving, is the promise; saving faith seeks life, which is not to be found in commandments and threats, but in a promise of mercy. Faith, acting upon the whole word of God, seems to contradict itself; for faith believes, a sinner is to die according to the law, and that he shall live according to the gospel. Faith has the word of God for both, both for the death and life of a sinner; and both are true. The law must be executed, and the promise must be performed; but how to reconcile this is not so obvious and easy to every one. "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid." (Gal. iii. 21.) It is impossible both should be accomplished in the person of a sinner; he cannot die eternally, and live eternally: yet both are wonderfully brought about by Jesus Christ, according to the manifold wisdom of God, without any derogation to his law and justice. God and his law are satisfied, and the promise of salvation made good to the sinner; and so both law and gospel have their ends; not a tittle of either falls to the ground; heaven and earth may sooner pass away than this can be. O what a mystery is Christ! Flesh and blood cannot reveal this to us. Every believer assents to the truth of the law as well as the gospel. He knows that both must have their full course: the law is fulfilled in inflicting death, the gospel in giving life. The law contributes nothing to the eternal life of a sinner; but kills him, and leaves him weltering in his blood; is no more concerned about him for ever. If God will bring this dead sinner to life again, he may dispose of him as he pleases; the law has done its utmost against him. So the law did against Christ: [it] spared him not; but killed him out-

right, and left him for a time under the power of death. But having slain a man who was God as well as man, death was too weak to hold him: he swallows up death in victory. He whom the law slew as man, rises as God, by the power of his Godhead. The law contributed nothing to his resurrection: the law had the chief hand in his death, but none in his resurrection. And here begins our eternal life,—in the resurrection of him who dies no more, and is “the resurrection and life” to all who believe in him.

4. *The reigning unbelief that is among the generality of men.*—Even among those who are of greatest reputation for wisdom and learning; ay, and among those who carry the vogue for zeal and religion, [who] are counted the head and pillars of the church; some pretending to infallibility; others set up themselves, and are cried up by many, as such competent judges in all matters of faith, that their judgment is not to be questioned, but readily complied with by all who would not be counted singular and schismatical. So it was in our Saviour’s time: the Jews, who had been the only professors of the true religion for many ages, in opposition to all idolatry and false worship,—they stumble at the gospel; the Greeks, who were the more learned sort of the heathen world,—they counted it “foolishness.” And thus was the whole world set against Christ. Here was the greatest outward hinderance of the belief of the gospel that could be imagined. And add to this the indefatigable pains and industry of the devil to keep out the light of the gospel from shining in upon us. He blinds the eyes of men by a cursed influence upon their corrupt minds, that they should not believe. Is it not a hard matter under all these discouragements to embrace the gospel, and declare our belief of it? “‘Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.’ (John vii. 48, 49.) Why should any regard what a company of poor illiterate people do? Their following Christ is rather an argument why we should not follow him; they are all but fools and idiots that do so; a ‘cursed’ sort of people.” This is the judgment the men of the world have of believers. There is nothing, among too many self-conceited sceptics, [which] lies under a greater imputation of folly and madness, than faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. O, what a pass are things come to, that, after so many hundred years’ profession of Christianity, we should grow weary of Christ and the gospel!

5. *The notorious apostasy of many professors this day,* who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, (1 Tim. i. 19,) may convince you all, that it is no easy matter to believe; so to believe as to persevere in the faith.

6. *Believers themselves find it a difficult matter to act their faith.*—If their lives lie upon it, they cannot act it at their pleasure, without the special aid and assistance of the Spirit. It is God [that] must “work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. ii. 13.)

Believers are hardly put to it. Great is the labour and travail of their souls in believing; they meet with much opposition from flesh and blood in every act of faith they put forth; they are forced to cry

out for help in the midst of an act of faith, lest they should fail in it : "I believe ; Lord, help my unbelief." (Mark ix. 24.) As if he had said, "I am now under some light and power of faith ; but I see I cannot hold it, if thou dost not help me. I feel flesh and blood rising up against my faith ; I begin to stagger already. Lord, help me ! that I may not be run down by my carnal heart." Temptations shake our faith many times. There is a perpetual conflict between faith and diffidence ; yet faith fails not utterly ; there it is still. (Psalm xxxi. 22, 23 ; xlii. 6, 9.) Faith upholds the heart still. (Psalm cxvi. 7.) Unbelievers,—they tremble and turn away from God ; but true believers, in their greatest frights and fears, do run to God, make toward him still. (Psalm lvi. 3.) Were it an easy matter to believe, such sudden fits of unbelief would not come so strongly upon believers themselves.

II. *The reason why many professors count it an easy thing to believe.*

The main reason is this, and I will insist upon no other ; namely, *Because they mistake a formal profession of faith for real believing.*—This undoes thousands, who, because they are qualified, as national Protestants, for all worldly preferments,—here they rest, and make no other use of their religion ; as if the Articles of their faith obliged them to nothing. A formal profession is general ; takes-up religion in gross, but is not concerned in any one point of it. But real believing is particular ; brings down every gospel-truth to ourselves, shows us our concernment in it. "Save thyself," saith faith, "and 'work out thy own salvation ;' see you neglect it no longer." No man can save another man's soul by his faith ; his own he may. Faith busies itself about our own salvation, shows us what we must do to be saved. Were there more of this faith among professors, we should every one have work enough upon our hands, and not find it so easy a matter to secure our souls into eternity. General professors carry it as if they had nothing to do, were sure of heaven already. At this rate we may count it an easy matter to believe ; but when we come to die, we shall not find it so. Any faith may serve some men's turns to live by ; but every faith will not serve our turns to die by. When we are dying in good earnest, a feigned faith signifies little to our comfort ; we see through it, and sink under it.

If your faith do not often call upon you to look to your own souls, it cannot be saving faith. He that seeks not to save himself, let him talk what he will of his faith, it is not saving faith : that is intent upon the salvation of a believer, and finds enough to do in carrying on that work, "with fear and trembling" lest it should not go through with it. You who have been at this work in good earnest, do not find it so easy as some would make it. New doubts, new difficulties, new temptations do arise every day, that put the faith of the best Christians to it. If faith does not bestir itself, the devil may be too hard for you and your faith too ; if "the righteous are scarcely saved," surely, it is no easy matter to get to heaven. You must run, wrestle, strive, fight, contend earnestly, else you may miss

of heaven, and come short of all your expectation of eternal glory. I speak not this to discourage you; but to awaken you to that diligence and care that so weighty a business calls for.

Saving faith is to cast myself and my own soul upon Christ for salvation. Whatever your faith may be, it is not come to saving faith till you do this. You may carry all your knowledge and all your faith to hell with you. Any faith that is not saving, but remains separate from it, will prove a damning faith to you. It will greatly aggravate your condemnation, that you who knew such things, believed such things, assented to such truths and gospel-doctrines, should never put forth an act of saving faith for your own souls in particular, according to the import of those doctrines. It is strange to see how many professors do leave themselves quite out of their own faith: they will not be at the pains to act it for themselves; but, in general, they believe as the church believes. But, let me tell you, it is not the church, nor all the churches in the world, it is not all the angels in heaven, nor all the saints upon earth, [that] can believe for you; you must every one believe for yourselves, and act your own business, cast your own souls upon Christ for salvation, else they will be eternally lost. How many knowing historical believers are there in hell, who have prophesied in his name, prayed in his name, have written, disputed, argued strongly for the faith, have done every thing that belongs to a common faith, but could never be brought to put forth one act of saving faith upon Christ for the salvation of their own souls!

“Come unto me, all ye that are weary,” &c. (Matt. xi. 28.) Is this done, till you personally come to Christ for the pardon of your sins, and for the justification of your persons by name? John, Thomas, Mary, whatever your names are, he or she, I am sent this day to give you a particular call to come to Christ; and I do warn every one of you, and exhort every one, to go to Christ by a personal act of your own faith for eternal life. He has purchased it for all who come unto him: if you neglect it and will not go, your blood be upon your own heads; I have delivered my own soul.

Brethren, be persuaded to hearken to the invitation that is given you in the gospel, before it be too late. O, what ado is there to bring a sinner to Christ! O that you would bethink yourselves this day, and set about saving faith! Act that faith that will save you; and say, “Lord, after all my knowledge and long profession, after all my praying, hearing, reading, I now see these are but means in order to something else; the end of all is real believing in Christ; and I am now at last come to do that, to commit myself wholly to Christ, to cast my sinful soul upon him for righteousness and life. Lord, help me to do this; bring me to a thorough reliance upon Christ, and keep me in the frequent exercise and lively actings of this faith every day; that I may see myself safe in him, who is faithful, and will keep that which I so commit unto him.” “The just shall live by his” own “faith” which he acts for himself and for his own soul: if you do not thus commit yourselves to Christ every day, by a

renewed act of faith, you may lose the joy of your salvation ere you are aware.

If you say this is done, I will not ask you when you did it first ; that may seem too nice a question to some : but I will ask you when you did it last. I hope you do it every day. If you are at any stand in your thoughts about this, your wisest course is, to act over this saving faith more distinctly, more particularly, more frequently, for the salvation of your own soul ; then your faces will shine, and your hearts will rejoice ; we shall know you have been with Jesus.

It is impossible to experience the power and efficacy of saving faith till we act it in our own case, for our own souls ; then it comes home indeed to ourselves ; then we feel the comfort of it. We may own the general doctrine of faith, and be little affected with it, or concerned about it ; but when the grace of faith comes and makes a particular application of that doctrine to thy soul and my soul, then we believe for ourselves, and are " filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory," that we should be received unto mercy, have all our sins pardoned, our persons accepted, and our souls eternally saved. All this, faith makes out to us by name, from such undeniable grounds and reasons, that we cannot gainsay.

They count it easy to believe *who* shut all acts of self-denial quite out of their faith. They live as they did before ; it may be, walk on more securely in their evil courses, from a presumptuous persuasion of mercy at last. Pray God deliver us from such a faith that gives encouragement to sin ! If your faith do not strongly incline you to a holy life, you may be sure it is not right saving faith. It is a sad thing to consider how little influence the faith of some confident professors has upon their lives ; they are not, they will not be, governed by the faith which they profess. The devil allows of such a profession ; and it is all the religion he will admit of in his followers : provided they do not touch upon the power of godliness, all forms are alike to him ; and in some cases the purest and most scriptural serve his turn best, when separated from the power of godliness. Then he has some scripture on his side, to persuade them that all is well ; then he cries, " The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are ye ! " (Jer. vii. 4 ;) settled in a church-way, according to all the rules of discipline laid down in the word. And is not this religion enough to save you ? " Thus the devil will sometimes give the best form its due commendation from scripture, when it may serve as an argument to persuade a formal Christian to sit down short of the power of godliness. He knows, God's own form will not save us then, though he would make them believe otherwise. He put the Jews upon pleading this, and possessed them that all was well, while they held to the outward form of worship that God had appointed ; which made the Lord himself so often to declare against them, and the outward forms of worship that he had appointed, because he saw they rested in them, and played the hypocrites under them. Let us have a care in these gospel-times, that we do not rest in gospel-forms only, placing the whole of our religion in that which

God has made but a part of it ; and such a part, that should never be divided by us from the power and spirit of the gospel. We talk of "damnable heresies," and there are such : the Lord keep us from them ! But, let me tell you, you may pass (though more silently) into hell through a formal profession of the truth, and have your portion with hypocrites, who professed what you do, had the same form of godliness that you have, but denied the power of it. I do not say, as some of you do, "I hope otherwise of you all." But let every one examine himself, what powerful influence those gospel-truths have upon him, which he has lived so long under the profession of. You know this best ; and others may more than guess at it, by your lives and conversations. But I spare you ; having laid my finger upon the sore place, I take it off again, and leave every one to his own feeling.

OBJECTION. "You seem as if you would put us off from our profession."

ANSWER. It may be "better off than on," in some respects. But my design is to bring you up to your profession, that you may be real in it, and not mock the Lord, nor deceive yourselves. I have often thought that he who makes a solemn profession of his faith, and says, "I believe in God, and in Christ," had need consider well what he says, lest he "lie unto the Holy Ghost." Though what you profess be truth, yet your profession may be a lie, if you say you believe what you do not believe. "With the mouth confession is made, but with the heart man believes." Believing is heart-work, which the Searcher of hearts only can judge of ; therefore you should consult your hearts, whether you do indeed believe, before you tell God and man that you do. It is a sad thing, that the frequent repetition of our Creed, and the renewed profession we make of our faith, should be charged upon us as so many gross lies ; as, Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37.

III. *They who count it an easy matter to believe, are destitute of saving faith.*

I prove it thus,

1. They who have never found any conflict in themselves about believing, are destitute of saving faith :

But they who count it an easy matter to believe, have never found any conflict in themselves about believing :

Ergo.

If faith did not act in opposition to carnal reason, and carry it against all the strong reasonings of the flesh to the contrary, supernatural truths would never enter, never be admitted, never find acceptance in the soul ; we should never be brought over to assent to them, so as to make them the sure ground of our trust and confidence in God. But faith captivates all rebellious thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, (2 Cor. x. 5,) as if they could disprove all that the gospel says ; but the demonstrations of the Spirit are with that power, that we cannot resist them. Christ teaches "as one having authority :" beside the instructive evidence of truth in clear reasonings, and full demonstrations of it by the Spirit,

there is authority and power to back all this ; so that, having nothing to object that is not fully answered, we dare not but obey, because of his authority and power over us. Were it not for this authority and power, the proud flesh would pertinaciously stand out against all the reasonings of the Spirit ; but when the *rationale* of the gospel is made out by the Spirit beyond all contradiction from flesh and blood, the carnal heart "is nonplussed and silenced, cannot speak sense against the gospel ; yet however, it will be muttering and kicking against the truth. Here comes in the authoritative act and power of the Spirit, suppressing the insolence of the flesh, and commanding the soul in the name of God to obey, and not stand it out any longer against such clear evidence, resisting the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. You must know, that flesh and blood, that is, that carnal corrupt, part that is in every man, is never convinced, it is not capable of any such thing ; but the power of the Spirit of God brings on a conviction upon the soul from a higher light, notwithstanding all that the wisdom of the flesh can say to the contrary. Flesh is flesh still in all those who are born of the Spirit ; but it is overpowered and kept under by the stronger reasonings of the Spirit, which is the cause of that continual conflict that is between the flesh and spirit. To talk of easy believing, without any resistance from our own corrupt minds, is to talk of that that never was, nor can be, in any man whatever. Saints are inclined two contrary ways ; though one principle be predominant, yet the other is not extinct, has not yet lost all its power ; it will stir, and fight, and resist, though it cannot overcome ; and faith itself feels the strugglings of unbelief, and bears up with more courage against them.

2. They who were never convinced of the sinfulness of sin, and of the dreadfulness of God's wrath against sinners, are destitute of saving faith :

But they who count it an easy matter, &c. :

Ergo.

I do not mean that all must pass under the like terrors of conscience : some have a more easy passage from a state of nature to grace, from death to life, from terror to comfort ; they may sooner get over their tears, and attain to peace, than others may. But this I say, that all who have fled for refuge unto Christ, are sensible of this, that they have escaped eternal death, are delivered from the wrath of God ; they remain under this conviction ; and it adds much to their comfort, that they have escaped so great danger ; and glad they are to see themselves safe under the wing of Christ. They live in a constant admiration of the goodness of God to them, in bringing about so great salvation for them, who had no might nor power to do any thing for themselves. It was not their own arm that saved them. They who know not the nature of sin, may think it an easy matter to be saved : slight wounds are easily cured ; but old, putrefied sores require more sovereign remedies, and good skill to apply them. Sin is an old sore ; they who know the plague of their own hearts do count it so. It is more than a cut finger ; it has infected the very

vitals, and will prove mortal, if the blood of Christ be not applied as the only remedy in that case; nothing else will do. Slight thoughts of sin is the cause of all that neglect and contempt of Christ that is in the world: "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." (Matt. ix. 12.) It is a fatal symptom when the brain is affected, and the senses taken away; when the malignity of sin has quite stupified the conscience, and wrought a numbness and mortification, there is little hope of such an one. And thus it is with too, too many hardened, seared, senseless sinners, who think 'themselves safe, though they are at the brink of destruction; they bless themselves, and cry, "Peace, peace," when the curse of God lies upon them. (Deut. xxix. 19, 20; Jer. vi. 14.)

3. Those who have never been tempted to unbelief, are destitute of saving faith:

But those who count it an easy matter to believe, were never sensible of any temptation to unbelief:

Ergo.

No man ever got over temptations to unbelief without difficulty. Unbelief has much to say for itself; and it will be sure to say all it can to hinder the soul from closing-in with Christ. When we come to set our faith against all the strong reasons that flesh and blood urge to the contrary, then tell me whether it be an easy matter to believe. Here comes-in all the trouble the saints meet with in their way to heaven. The sinking of their faith discourages them, and lets-in the strength of the enemy upon them: they overcome the world by faith; but if that fail, every thing is too hard for them; *they* stumble at every straw, *who* before could remove mountains, and make nothing of them. "All things are possible to him who believes;" and every thing is next to impossible to him who believes not, is clouded and darkened in the apprehensions of his faith, is not under the clear evidence of things not seen: he must have good eyes who discerns things that are not seen.

4. He who is not much in prayer, much in the use of all means to increase and strengthen his faith, is destitute of saving faith:

But he who counts it an easy matter to believe, takes no pains this way, he can believe at any time: Then thou canst do that that flesh and blood never did, that no mortal man ever did in his own strength.

5. He who does not look upon a life of faith to be a careful, studious, laborious life, is destitute, &c. Faith hath new rules, counsels, and methods of living, that a man was never acquainted with before: he meets with many scruples, doubts, and intricate cases, that put him to it, to find out the right way of pleasing God; for that is the great design of faith, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing. Faith lives in a continual fear of offending God, is very circumspect and watchful, lest it should take a wrong step. The saints are busied much in building-up themselves on their most holy faith; (Jude 20;) they know, all will run to ruin, if the spiritual building be neglected. It must be often viewed; we must see what is lacking in our faith, what repairs are necessary; care must be

taken that we fall not from our own steadfastness ; when we begin to yield to a temptation, to move never so little from any point of truth formerly received, we may be quickly beside the foundation. Therefore be unmovable from the hope of the gospel. When once you begin to move from Christ, you know not whither you may be carried, as the Galatians were. (Gal. i. 6.) All this shows what a careful, laborious life a life of faith is.

QUESTION. "These may be convincing reasons to others, that those who count it an easy matter to believe, are destitute of saving faith ; but how shall we fasten a conviction of unbelief upon the persons themselves, who count it an easy matter ?"

ANSWER. Though we may not convince them, yet we may lay convincing arguments before them, that some time or other an awakened conscience may take notice of, and urge upon them, especially when they are not under any present urgent temptation to unbelief. A man may be convinced of a sin before the temptation, and yet cast-off all his convictions under a temptation ; because conscience is more disposed to judge impartially of the matter, when it is not biassed by any present temptation to the contrary. As Hazael : "What, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing ?" (2 Kings viii. 13.) Do you count me such a villain, such a wretch ?" And yet in an hour of temptation he acted-over all that wickedness. Though men may throw off all, and turn away from the light of their own consciences ; yet it is good to furnish conscience with arguments beforehand, that may be produced in a fit season, if not to the conviction, yet to the silencing, of those who talked so fast before against all they were charged with. Though you cannot convince a man of this or that sin that you know he is guilty of, yet it is good to charge him home, and to lay convincing arguments before him, that may be of great use when conscience is at leisure to consider them ; as it may be, and will be, when the temptation is ended. And let me add this : I do conceive it possible even by reason to convince a man of his unbelief, though not of the sin of unbelief ; that is a further work, a special work of the Spirit. But you may by reason convince a man of unbelief ; whether he do well or ill in not believing, that is another case ; but that so it is, that he does not believe ; such convincing evidences of this may be laid before him, that he cannot but own himself to be an unbeliever. I do not speak now of negative infidelity among Pagans, who never heard of the light of the gospel ; this needs no proof ; Heathens do own their infidelity, they openly profess it : but I speak of positive, wilful unbelief, in those who live under gospel-light, and under an outward profession of faith too, yet really do not believe. They say they have faith, but have it not. How to find out such men, and to convince them of their unbelief ; how to dig up this fox that is so deeply earthed under a specious profession of faith ; this requires some skill ; we shall find it difficult work : yet I conceive it may be done ; they may be so narrowed up, that, unless they deny their sense and their reason, they must own their unbelief.

Though we cannot by reason bring men to believe, yet we may by

reason convince them of their unbelief. Here we offer nothing new or surprising to them ; we only state the matter as it is in their own hearts, which they know to be so ; we do but bring them to reason, to their own reason ; we make them judges of themselves in a matter of fact, of their own doing : though they say they have faith, yet, being closely put to it, they must needs unsay that again ; the evidence of the thing itself overthrows all they can say against it.

I would argue thus with them,

1. *Let them, if they can, produce any of those fruits and effects of faith that are inseparable from it.*—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works ? can faith save him ? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body ; what doth it profit ? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James ii. 14—17.) To pretend to such an active principle as faith is, and yet do nothing by it, is very unreasonable. They say they have faith ; they may as well say they have wings and can fly, though they cannot bear up themselves one inch from the ground, unless some part of the body rest upon it. Indeed, if a man's feet be upon the ground, all the other parts of the body may be erect ; but for the whole body to carry all its weight upwards through the air, this is flying. It is equally absurd for men to say they have faith, are risen with Christ, are in an ascending posture, when they visibly rest upon the earth ; nay, when they lie flat upon it, are sunk into it, covered all over with it, are, as it were, buried alive in their carnal affections. Men may say what they will, it is apparently otherwise : upwards and downwards cannot be so confounded, that one should be taken for the other ; it is against common sense. Men may and must be convinced of this, that what is contrary to faith is not faith : "Faith without works is dead : " (James ii. 26 :) were there any thing of the true nature, life, and spirit of faith in them, they could not carry it as they do.

They make faith an easy thing who make just nothing of it, and do nothing by it ; nay, they do that which they might with far more colour of reason do, if they did not at all pretend to faith ; but to say they believe in Christ, and yet act in a direct opposition to him, and to their own faith also, is that which no man in his wits would give credit to.

2. *Let them try their skill in those indispensable acts of faith that Christ requires in all his followers.*—"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it : and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. xvi. 24, 25.) The reading of those words is enough to convince any considering man, that it is no easy matter to believe. That which is not easy to do, is not so easily believed.

3. *Let them consider the mysterious points of faith, that are above our reason and do transcend our human capacities.*—As the doctrine of

the Trinity, of the incarnation of Christ, of the resurrection, of justification by imputed righteousness. How have men stumbled at these things; could never come to any satisfaction in [them], by their own reason! And shall we say it is an easy matter to believe these things? They are stupidly ignorant of the mysteries of faith who say so. If this be easy, there is nothing hard or difficult in the world.

OBJECTION. "How comes it to pass that any do believe?"

ANSWER. Because God puts forth his power in some, and not in others. There is not a greater instance of the power of God in the whole world than this, in bringing over the heart of a sinner to believe in Christ. O "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe!" (Eph. i. 19.) This is the undoubted experience of every true believer. You who know not how you came by your faith, but slid into it by custom, education, and long continuance under the means of grace, and have always counted it an easy thing to believe; let me tell you, you know not what it is to believe to this day. It is true, God makes it easy to believe; but so that we still see it impossible to believe without his help. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 12.) "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) We may soar aloft when upon eagles' wings; we may move anywhere as we are carried; but all this while we know we are not the cause of our own motion; the spring of it is not in ourselves; *acti agimus*, "we act as we are acted;" the root bears us, not we the root; we feel Christ living in us; we live, because he lives in us. What we receive from another is ours when we receive it; but it is not from ourselves, because we receive it from another. God makes us so to work, in such a dependence upon him, that we see it is He that "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.) To ascribe the free acts of [our] own will to another, requires a humble mind, sensible of its own weakness, and of the secret ways of God's divine communications to his creature man, exactly suited to the rational nature of so free an agent as man is; the freedom of whose will is preserved under a constant dependence upon God in every thing he does. God that gave him this freedom, can cause him freely to act it as he pleases; otherwise man would not be a governable creature, if the natural freedom of his will did exempt him from a due subjection to God that made him; in which subjection he is as free, as he could be supposed to be, if left to himself to do what he list. A believer lists and wills what he does; and yet he does not do what he lists, but freely subjects his own will to the will of God, "whose service is perfect freedom." A saint keeps up the liberty of his will, by a voluntary obedience to the will of God; and this is his grace. Till our stubborn hearts are brought to this, they are, and will be, rebellious against God.

What I have said may be convincing to these easy believers, that they are void of true saving faith, unless they resolve not to be convinced; and though they do so resolve, yet they must be convinced, whether they will or no. Truth and reason, plainly proposed, never want a witness in the conscience of man, that will speak, some time or other, as the thing is.

SERMON IX.

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WHAT IS THE DANGER OF A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE?

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.—Luke xxiii. 42.

WE have, in this little history of the two thieves crucified with our Lord Jesus, a great instance both of man's wickedness, and of divine grace.

1. *Of man's wickedness* in both these thieves, who had spent all their time in sin, even to the last hour of their lives; but especially in the impenitent thief, whom neither bonds, nor trial, nor condemnation, had humbled or mollified, or brought to repentance; but, being still under the power of a hardened heart, we find him, at the last gasp, railing on a Saviour, instead of believing in him, and belching out his blasphemies in the very mouth of hell: "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." (Verse 39.)

2. *Of divine grace* in the penitent thief.

First. *Converting grace*.—And that,

(1.) In the *power and efficacy* of it: for how powerful must that grace needs be which had wrought so great a change; had supplanted that heart in an instant which had been hardening in sin for so many years; overcome so many stubborn, inveterate lusts at once; and made the man all on a sudden commence one of the most eminent saints the world had ever yet had, and act faith to such a height, as might not only have become the chiefest of the apostles, but did really exceed any they had hitherto shown! The disciples of Christ, who had sat so long at their Master's feet, yet were hardly induced to believe his resurrection, even after he was risen; (Luke xxiv. 25;) when this thief, who hitherto had been a stranger to him, and now saw him hanging on a cross and dying, yet by faith sees him in his kingdom, triumphing over his cross and death too.

(2.) In the *freeness* of it; for,

(i.) God's grace did not wait for his preparations, good moods, good dispositions; (these were all over, if ever he had any;) but it takes hold of him when at the height of sin, and not only was void of grace, but seemed past grace, that is, never likely to come to it by any ordinary methods.

(ii.) It seized on him, and passed-by the other, though no worse (that we know of) than himself. Grace makes a difference where none was before: of these two, in the like case, it takes one and leaves the other.

Secondly. *Pardoning grace.*—This appears in our Lord's answer and carriage to him. (Verse 43.) He doth not upbraid him with the abominations of his forepast life, his theft, or rapine, or violence, his hardness of heart; or long impenitence; but easily, readily, gently receives him; and is so far from denying him a pardon, that he assures him of a present salvation: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

The case of these two thieves doth in a good measure parallel the case of other dying sinners, though dying upon their beds. They were in the extremity of their lives, drawing their last breath; both full of pain and anguish in their bodies, and, very likely, full of shame and confusion in their minds, considering their death was not only cruel and grievous, but reproachful in the eyes of men, and accursed by the sentence of God. So that here was much to interrupt, disturb, and distract them in so great, so close, and serious a work as repentance is. And is it not so with others, who live in sin all their days, and pretend to repent at last? They are taking their leave of the world, groaning under their diseases, racked with pains; and have many things (though not the same the thieves had) to discompose, disquiet, and divert them from or hinder them in the like work. But if we look to the issue, the parallel will not reach so far. Here is man for man: one of the thieves humble, believing, repenting, and accordingly accepted; the other unbroken, unbelieving, impenitent, and dying like a reprobate. This equality is not to be found among other dying sinners, as hereafter we shall see. However, from the example of these two thieves we may safely infer this PROPOSITION:—

DOCTRINE.

That though a very late, even a death-bed, repentance may be sincere, yet it is not safe to run the hazard of it.

Two parts there are of this proposition:

I. *That even a death-bed repentance may be sincere.* This I shall speak to by way of concession.

II. *That yet it is dangerous running the hazard of it, by deferring repentance till such a time.* This I shall handle by way of assertion.

I. *It is possible that a death-bed repentance may be sincere.*

In speaking to this I shall briefly,

(I.) *Premise something in general concerning the nature of repentance.*

(II.) *Lay down the reasons of this concession.*

(I.) For the former: repentance may be considered either,

First. *In the act or exercise of it.*—Which the scripture usually expresses by "turning" or "returning;" implying that sinners are out of the way to God and their own happiness, till by repentance they return into it.

If we speak distinctly of it, we may consider,

1. *The essence of repentance.*—Which is the turning mentioned: a turning from sin to God; that is from all sin both of heart and life, as to the love and allowance of it, and subjection to it; and a turn-

ing to God, as our Sovereign Lord from whom we had revolted, to walk with him in all known ways of obedience and holiness. And though we cannot attain to a legal perfection in this life, either as to freedom from all sin, or the practice of all duty; yet there is not merely a temporary and transient, but a peremptory, fixed, and settled, purpose for the one, and against the other: which is more than a promise *de futuro*, ["for the future,"] and amounts to a present breach with all sin, and an actual will to engage in every duty; a "respect to all God's commandments," (Psalm cxix. 6,) in the degree of our obedience to which we notwithstanding may oftentimes fail.

2. *The causes from which it proceeds* :—

(1.) *A right sense of sin, as to the guilt, defilement, and dominion of it.*—Its being offensive and odious to God, (Jer. xlv. 4,) as well as hurtful to ourselves, in the danger to which it exposeth us, the blot it leaves upon us, and the tyranny it exerciseth over us.

(2.) *An apprehension and belief of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus to them that do repent.*—This is always the principle from which evangelical repentance proceeds. Though the terrors of the law may help to drive men from sin, yet there must be gospel-attractives to draw them to God, either in a way of faith or repentance. Who will dare to trust him from whom he expects no mercy, or care for serving him from whom he looks for no acceptance? Hence it is that God's mercy is used as the grand motive to persuade men to repentance: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. iii. 2.) And, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isai. lv. 7.)

From these proceed both that godly sorrow for sin, and that hatred of it, which always accompany gospel-repentance, and in a good measure promote it. Paul seems to place godly sorrow among the causes of repentance. (2 Cor. vii. 10.)

Secondly. If we consider *repentance in the habit*, I need say no more, but that it is that grace of the Holy Spirit which he infuseth into the soul, as the immediate standing principle of actual repentance, and whereby it is both enabled and disposed to it.

Now this repentance being a grace of God's Spirit, and yet inherent in man *as to the habit*, and exercised by him *as to its acts*; or, which is the same, being *God's work*, and yet *man's duty*; we are to consider what is God's part in it, and what is man's.

1. *God's work is,*

(1.) *To infuse the grace or principle, repentance in the habit.*—Which constantly is ascribed to God in scripture: "Granted repentance." (Acts xi. 18.) "If God will give them repentance." (2 Tim. ii. 25.)

(2.) *To actuate and enliven that principle when infused.*—As he doth other graces; (Phil. ii. 13;) not merely in a moral way, by suggesting such reasons and arguments as may excite and move the will to the exercise of repentance; but by the powerful and efficacious

influence of his grace drawing out the habit into that exercise, or causing the soul to act suitably to this divine principle infused into it.

2. *Man's duty is,*

(1.) *To seek and labour after repentance in the use of all means by which God is wont to work it in the hearts of men.*—Such as diligent attendance on the word, (repentance, no less than faith, comes by hearing, Rom. x. 17,) and what external means of grace are appointed in it; intension of the mind in that attendance on the means; men's applying the truths delivered to themselves, comparing their cases with it, examining themselves by it, considering their ways, &c.; which are but the actings of their reasonable faculties, and as much in their power as other moral actions are; and need not the supernatural influence of Divine Grace, but only those common assistances God affords to man in the ordinary actions of a rational life. And, in a word, these are but such kind of workings as show them to be men, not to be saints. (Isai. xlvi. 8.) To these means, in the use of which God is wont to work repentance, I refer prayer for it; which though by an unregenerate person it cannot be performed graciously, and unto acceptance; yet, we may say, it may be thus far performed successfully, as that those prayers may be heard and answered in relation to the grace they seek: and in the elect of God they are heard; though not with respect to the persons, (which, being graceless, faithless, cannot be accepted of God,) yet with respect to his own thoughts of love toward them, and his eternal purpose of conferring that grace upon them.

(2.) *To excite and stir up in himself the grace of repentance, when God hath wrought it in him, for the putting-forth acts agreeable to the principle he hath received, and to which by that principle he is both empowered and inclined.*—Unto the production of which acts he is no more to question the concurrence of God's special grace, than his common concurrence to the ordinary actings of his reason and will; it being God's usual method to work with his creatures according to their natures, and those principles of acting [which] he hath put into them. Though God quickens grace as well as works it, yet man is to use those means for the quickening [of] it in himself which God hath appointed, and with which he is wont to work.

(II.) *The reasons of this concession, or which prove that a death-bed repentance may be sincere.*

First. It appears, by the instance of this thief, *that a late repentance, and as late as one upon a dying bed, hath been sincere; and therefore the like may be again.*—He did truly repent, and therefore it is possible others may. And that his repentance was sincere, we have sufficient proof, not only from Christ's gracious acceptation of it, manifested by the preemphatic promise he gave him of admitting him into his kingdom, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;" but by the other graces [which] we here find him exercising, in concurrence with his repentance.

1. *Faith*, which is the principle of evangelical repentance, and which never fails to work it where it is itself sincere. He owns

Christ as a King, when he mentions his "kingdom," and prays him to "remember" him when he comes into it. This likewise implies his belief of and confidence in the grace and love, as well as power, of Christ, when he commits his departing soul into his hands, expecting his salvation from him. And indeed his faith was not only sincere, but strong and vigorous. God had put as much of the spirit of faith into a poor novice in religion at the very first, as he doth into many an old disciple at the last. It is a good argument of a strong faith, when it bears up against great discouragements; as we see in Abraham's faith; (Rom. iv. 19, 20;) and that of the woman of Canaan. (Matt. xv. 22—28.) Two great discouragements the thief had, which yet could not hinder his faith:

(1.) *The heinousness of his sins.*—Aggravated by long impenitence and perseverance in them to the last hour, in a manner, of his life. Well might he fear that God was so provoked by the continual rebellion of his wicked life, as totally to reject him now at his death.

(2.) *The low and despicable condition [which] he saw Christ in.*—Condemned as well as himself, and hanging upon a cross as well as himself; slighted and mocked at by so many [whom] he might look on as better and wiser than himself, no less than the governors of the church: "The rulers derided him." (Verse 35.) This might have made him think there was little hope of help from him. What was there in a crucified, dying man, that, to an eye of reason, could make him look like a Saviour? Mere nature would as soon have looked for life in death itself, nay, heaven in hell, as eternal salvation in one who not only had formerly been so mean, but now seemed so miserable.

2. *Several other graces* we find in him, as the fruits, at least the concomitants, of his repentance:—

(1.) *A free, ingenuous, and open confession of his sins* in the face of the world, and thereby giving glory to God: "We indeed justly." (Verse 41.) Nor can it be said that his confession was extorted from him by the torments he suffered, when we see his companion impenitent under the like.

(2.) *He owns the justice that had brought him to that end:* "We receive the due reward of our deeds." He neither murmurs against God, nor quarrels with men.

(3.) *He sharply taxeth the impiety and profaneness of his fellow-thief in reviling Christ, as well as his still continuing obstinate and impenitent.*—"Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" (Verse 40.) And hereby he shows his indignation against sin, when he so heinously resents it, not only in himself, but in another. Like David, he beholds a transgressor, and is grieved. (Psalm cxix. 158.)

(4.) *He doth what he can to bring his companion to repentance.*—"Dost not thou fear God?" The reproof implies an exhortation, as well as instruction. Now the communicativeness of grace is a good argument of the sincerity of it. Had he had none himself, he would not have been so much concerned for the other's want of it.

(5.) *He makes a public profession of his faith in Christ, and owns*

him to the very teeth of his enemies ; and that too when Peter had denied him, the other disciples forsaken him, and those that had rallied after their rout, and were now come to be the spectators of the most doleful object [that] had ever been presented before their eyes, were so far from making any such public confession of him, that their faith was ready to expire with him. (Luke xxiv. 21.)

Secondly. *Repentance being God's gift, and God being a Sovereign Agent, he may give it where and when he pleaseth.*—As to whom he will,—to one, and not to another ; so at what time he will,—to one sooner, to another later. He may give it to one early in the morning of his days : to another late, and when his sun is setting. And if the great Master of the vineyard shall call some into it, not only at the sixth or ninth hour, but even at the last minute of the eleventh hour, what is that to any ? who shall call him to an account for it ?

Thirdly. *God, being not only a Sovereign Agent, but an Almighty one, can, by his power, and that in an instant, remove all hinderances on the creature's part, and whatever might obstruct his work.*—And so, with one turn of an omnipotent hand, bring about the heart of the most obdurate sinner, work repentance in the most unlikely subject, and where there is most within to make head against him, and resist his grace, suppose the most obstinate and rooted habits of sin. Grace is an infused and supernatural habit, and the power that works it a supernatural and creating power ; and we are not to confine God in his working grace to those methods whereby men acquire natural or moral habits. In these, I grant, there may need time to unlearn and extirpate those vicious habits they have so long been contracting, and to acquire new ones by a long series of, and accustoming themselves to, better actions. Custom in men may be strong, and like another nature ; and they may not be able presently to overcome it, nor on the sudden to bring themselves to a readiness and easiness in doing those things which though their reason approves, yet their boisterous appetites (strengthened too by custom) hurry them against. But let the habit of sin be never so deeply radicated in the soul, and the heart of man never so averse to holy actions ; yet God can soon make a change, soon remove the sinful disposition, and enable and incline the soul to what it was most averse and impotent. He can, even in a moment, overcome that love of sin and hatred of holiness which is either natural to a man, or contracted by him ; and both abate, lessen, weaken the power of sin in the soul, whereby it was wont to resist the workings of his Spirit, and restrain and suspend any actual resistance it might make. Let the mind of a man be as dark as darkness itself ; yet he that caused "light to shine out of darkness," can enlighten that mind when he pleases. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) Let the soul be never so dead in sin, and destitute of all spiritual life ; yet he that "quickens the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were," (Rom. iv. 17,) can quicken it, and breathe the breath of spiritual life into it ; and whatever there be in the soul to oppose him in his working, yet the same power can at once quell the opposition, and produce the grace.

Fourthly. *God, having infused the habit, can as easily enliven it, and draw it out into act, in those that are capable of exercising grace wrought in them.*—As I suppose dying sinners to be, at least when they are capable of exercising their rational faculties. For there is less to make opposition against God than in the former case, the prevailing power of sin being broken; and something in the soul to take God's part in the work, namely, grace now begun; and some habitual promptness and disposedness of the heart to spiritual good, and compliance with the will of God. It doth not require more power to awaken a vital principle, though dormant, than to infuse it where there was none before.

Fifthly. *It may be for God's honour sometimes to give repentance to dying sinners.*—The honour of his sovereignty and free grace, in showing that "he hath mercy on whom he will," (Rom. ix. 18,) and that the deepest guilt even of an old hardened sinner cannot hinder the outgoings of his grace and mercy; and the honour of his power, when it prevails over the most settled habits of corruption. Should God work only upon lesser sinners, and who are not so confirmed in evil, man might be apt to think that he could not do it, and that men's lusts might be too hard for his power, and so reflect on his omnipotence; or to think he could not find in his heart to do it, and so reflect upon his mercy.

II. By way of position or assertion. *It is a very dangerous thing to run the hazard of a death-bed repentance, or defer repentance till the approach of death.*—That is, to neglect the doing a man's own part in order to the obtaining this grace, as was above premised; namely, the seeking it of God, and using all those means by which he ordinarily works it. The danger of this neglect may appear by the following considerations:—

1. *That no man knows the time of his death, any more than the manner of it, or means by which it shall be brought about.*—Our breath is in God's hands. (Dan. v. 23.) No man hath a lease of his earthly tabernacle, but is tenant-at-will to his great Landlord. Who knows when he shall die, or how? whether a natural death, or a violent one? To how many thousand unforeseen accidents are men subject! Not only swords and axes may dispatch them, but God can commission insects and vermin to be the executioners of his justice upon them. A great prelate may be eaten up of mice;* and a potent prince devoured by worms. (Acts xii. 23.) And who doth not carry the principles of his own dissolution perpetually within him? Death lies in ambush in every vein, in every member; and none know when it may assault them. It doth not always warn before it strikes. If some diseases are chronical, others are acute and less lingering; and some are as quick as lightning, kill in an instant. Men may be well in one moment, and dead in the next. God "shoots his arrows at them," they are "suddenly wounded." (Psalm lxxiv. 7.) How many are taken away, not only in the midst of their days, but in the midst of their sins! the lusty Israelites, with the "flesh between their

* Hatto, archbishop of Mentz.

teeth;" (Num. xi. 33;) Julian, if historians speak truth, with blasphemy in his mouth! And how many frequently with the wine in their heads! In such cases, what place, what time for repentance, for seeking it, for using means to attain it, when they have not room for so much as a thought of it?

2. Suppose, men have time and warning given them; death knocks at the door before it enters, and besieges them before it storms them; they lie by the brink of the grave before they fall into it: yet *they may want the means of grace by which God ordinarily works, when he brings men to repentance.*—Public ordinances in such a case they cannot have, and private ones they may not have. They may have none with them that have "the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season" to them. (Isai. l. 4.) They may lack oil, but have none that can tell them where they may buy it; none that understand the nature of repentance; none that can instruct them in it, or direct them how they may attain it. Friends may be as carnal and ignorant, and unacquainted with the things of God, as themselves; and so may ministers be sometimes. They may "seek a vision of the prophet, but the law may perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancient." (Ezek. vii. 26.) True indeed, God can work repentance in man or any grace without means, by his immediate power, or by some extraordinary means; but he never promisieth to do it; and therefore it is a bold presuming and tempting of him to expect he should. What, if God once stopped a sinner in the midst of his career, when not only running away from the means of salvation, but bidding defiance to them; and converted him in a miraculous way, by a glorious light shining about him, and the immediate voice of Christ to him? (Acts ix.) shall others hope for the like? live in sin all their days, and look for conversion by miracle at last?

3. If they have means when they come to die, yet *they may not have a heart to use them*:—

(1.) *By reason of bodily weakness, failing of natural spirits, racking and tormenting pains, which often afflict men in such a case.*—These may blunt and dull men's minds, or distract them, and draw away the intention of them from other things, and hold them only to the consideration of their present anguish. How unfit are men for [the] serious minding even of their worldly affairs when under bodily indispositions! and how much more than unfit for spiritual work! When the soul is wholly taken up with helping the body (with which it sympathizes) to bear its present burden, it is ill at leisure to think of any thing else. The Israelites "hearkened not to Moses," though sent of God to deliver them, "for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." (Exod. vi. 9.) And is it any wonder if a man, groaning under a distemper, scarce able to bear his pain, or think of any thing but his pain, be in an ill case to look into his heart, consider his ways, listen to the best counsel, join with the best prayers? &c. If God's children, that have grace in their hearts, yet in time of sickness may, through present weakness, find much indisposedness in them—

selves to the actings of grace, so that they are fain to bring forth their old store, and comfort themselves with their former experiences, rather than with the present frame of their hearts; what wonder is it if they that are altogether graceless be alike indisposed to seek for grace?

(2.) *By reason of contracted hardness.*—Men are naturally backward to good, but much more when habituated to evil. For the more inclined they are to evil, the more averse they are to good; and the more accustomed they are to sin, the more inclined they are to it. The practice of sin hardens the heart, and strengthens the sinning disposition; and still the longer men continue in sin, the stronger such dispositions grow. Hence the apostle's advice to the Hebrews: "Exhort one another, while it is called To-day, lest your hearts be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" (Heb. iii. 13;) implying that that would follow upon their continuance in sin. We see, even in natural things, that men's being accustomed to one sort of actions unfits them for another. When men have lived in the practice of sin all their days, and their natural disposition to sin is heightened into a habit, it is not strange if they be much more averse to the contrary good. How can you "that are accustomed to evil," learn "to do well?" (Jer. xiii. 23.) If one gross sin in a believer may so debilitate and enfeeble those gracious dispositions that were before in him, as to unfit him for, and deaden him to, spiritual duties, to what a superlative hardness may a thousand and a thousand repeated acts of wilful sin bring the heart of a carnal man! and to what not only averseness to any good, but confirmedness against all!

4. *They cannot work repentance in themselves.*—Not make the means effectual for the enlightening of their minds, the changing, softening, spiritualizing their hearts, or working a vital principle in them. If they say they can, either they must assume to themselves a creating power, a power of making themselves new creatures, or creating this grace in their own hearts; there being nothing of it in them by nature, and antecedently to their making such a change; or they must say that there is some seed of grace in them beforehand, some root or stock which, being watered and cultivated by outward means, diligence, and industry, may be made fruitful: so that the working [of] repentance in them is not the infusing [of] a new principle into them, but a correcting of the old one; conversion [is] not the giving or creating in them a new nature, but only a freeing the old one from its former impediments, and setting it at liberty to its proper actions.

But this is,

(1.) *Contrary to the whole current of scripture.*—Which affirms man's will, since the fall of Adam, to be void of all saving good, and impotent to it till renewed by grace: "Without me ye can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) "When we were without strength." (Rom. v. 6.) We are "not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves:" (2 Cor. iii. 5;) and prone to evil. Man "drinks iniquity like water;" (Job xv. 16;) "rejoiceth to do evil." (Prov. ii. 14.) He is a "servant of sin." (Rom. vi. 17.) All the "imagi-

nations of his heart are only evil continually." (Gen. vi. 5.) He is "dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. ii. 1.) This is broadly to charge a lie upon the God of truth.

(2.) *To deprive God of the glory of one of his chiefest works, the new creation.*—In which he is said to put forth the same power which he did in creating the world at first, (2 Cor. iv. 6,) and in raising up Christ from the dead. (Eph. i. 19, 20, compared with ii. 1.) They are said to be "born of the Spirit;" (John iii. 5;) and "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John i. 13.) Whereas they that assert the contrary, take God's work out of his hands, and grudge him the honour of it.

(3.) *To go contrary to the common sense of the believing world.*—Believers generally know, as having found it by experience, that they are naturally impotent to spiritual good. They find much weakness in themselves, after grace is wrought in them; and nothing but weakness, before God work it. They acknowledge, they cannot work any degree of grace in themselves when some already they have; much less could they work it in themselves when they really had none. And how come others to have more strength than they? Did not they fall in Adam? Or had his apostasy a less malignant influence upon them than upon others? How come they to have such a reserve of spiritual strength when the rest of the world hath lost it?

(4.) *If they can work repentance in themselves, why do they not do it sooner?*—Why do they defer it so long, when they cannot deny but, one time or other, it must be wrought? Is it a fit return to God for the goodness he hath shown them all their days, to live in sin all their days, and turn to him when they can live no longer in it? Or will it be an acceptable answer to him, when he calls them to a reckoning, that they had not served sin long enough, nor had their fill of their lusts, or else they would have turned to him sooner?

(5.) *And how many be there who, to encourage themselves in their present impenitency, and the enjoyments of their sinful pleasures, fancy they can turn themselves when they please!*—Yet if God open their eyes, and awaken their consciences, and they begin in good earnest to set themselves to labour after repentance, they are soon convinced of the hardness and deadness of their hearts and their utter disabilities to such a work; and are fain, in spite of all their high thoughts and conceits of themselves, to look up to God, and implore his assistance, and depend upon him for the working of that grace in them which they fondly imagined they could work in themselves.

5. *God may not give them grace to repent when they come to die.*—Admit they have time and means, yet God may not give a blessing to the means. Let it be considered,

First. *To how few God ever gives repentance at the last, even of those who have as good means and helps as their weak and dying condition will admit of.*—It is one of the saddest parts of a minister's work, to visit dying sinners. How few do they leave any better than they find them! How few give any hopes of a thorough change

wrought in them! How few can they persuade to believe in Christ, when they have a hundred times before rejected him! How few can they bring to repentance then, when they never minded it before! Ministers, even the best, are but men and not God, flesh and not spirit; and means, instructions, exhortations, are but means, whose whole efficacy depends on God's co-operation with them; and when he withholds his blessing, they are altogether ineffectual. When they judge of man's eternal state, though their judgment is not to be rash nor peremptory, yet it should be reasonable; some good grounds they should have for it. But, alas! if they keep to scripture-rules, in how few of them that never repented before do they find, when dying, so much as a foundation for a charitable judgment of their spiritual state!

(1.) If we set aside *those that die in gross ignorance of the things of God*.—Of the very first principles of religion; the nature of God, the offices of Christ, the ends of his death, the necessity of satisfaction for sin, the nature and use of faith, the terms of the covenant, &c.: ignorant indeed of those truths, some knowledge of which is necessary to the very being of saving grace. How many such do we find! And what hope can we have of the truth of their repentance, and so of their salvation? How can their hearts be holy, when their minds are so blind? What heavenly heat can there be in their affections, when there is such a hellish darkness in their understandings? Such may read their doom in Isai. xxvii. 11.

(2.) Set aside *those that die stupid*.—Without any awakenings of conscience, any sense or concernedness about their spiritual state; and so die as much like beasts as they lived.

(3.) *Those that die despairing*.—Filled with horror, and void of hope; overwhelmed with the sense of sin, the thoughts of approaching vengeance, and a fearful expectation of appearing before the tribunal of that righteous God whom they cannot escape, and dare not trust. They have not hearts to pray to him, hope in him, or commit their souls into his hands when they die, having never loved, nor served, nor regarded him while they lived.

(4.) *Those that die presuming*.—Such are the ignorant before mentioned: such are formalists, moralists, proud Pharisees, conceited self-justifiers. The innocency of their conversation, the profession they make, or the duties they perform, are the righteousness by which they expect to be justified. Nay, how many, after a life of sin, hope to be saved merely by the mercy of God, without respect to any righteousness at all, either of justification or sanctification; either imputed to them, or inherent in them; either that whereby they may have a title to glory, or meetness for it! Sure I am, such as these are void of repentance; and when the greatest part of dying sinners may be reduced to one or other of these sorts, to how few doth God give repentance at the last, of those who did not before seek it of him!

Secondly. *With how many is the day of grace past, and the time of God's patience run out!*—And then we may be sure God will not

give them repentance: they have so many times "rejected the counsel of God against themselves," (Luke vii. 30,) refused the offers of grace, turned a deaf ear to the calls of the gospel, stiffened their necks, and refused to return, that now they are past it. God, that waited on them so long, will wait no longer. They had a time of acceptance, a "day of salvation;" (2 Cor. vi. 2;) but, that being over, they are to have no more. God was nigh to them, and might have been found of them; (Isai. lv. 7;) but is now withdrawn from them; and they may "seek Christ, and die in their sins;" (John viii. 21;) they may "seek, and not find," call, and God give them no answer. (Prov. i. 28.)

Thirdly. *God may have judicially hardened their hearts, when they had sinfully hardened them before.*—And this seems to be one great cause of that stupidity and insensibleness we so often find in sinners at the time of death. True, God infuseth no sin into them; yet he may wholly abandon them to the power of the hardness they have contracted; and give them up into the devil's hands, to delude and blind, to act and manage them according to his pleasure, and their own corrupt inclinations. They may not have so much as a heart to desire to repent, or pray to God for grace to enable them to do it; all those common assistances of God's Spirit [which] they sometimes had being wholly withdrawn from them and it.

(1.) *Partly as a punishment for their former wilful impenitency.*—It is one of the most dreadful judgments God ever executes upon any on this side hell, when he punishes one sin with another, one hardness with another; which yet sometimes he doth. "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." (Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12.)

(2.) *As a terror to others, and a warning too.*—That they that hear it may fear, and not dare to live impenitently, lest they should die impenitently; God not being bound to give them the grace [which] he denies to others, who perhaps were not greater sinners than themselves.

OBJECTION. The great encouragement men have to embolden them in sin, and yet to hope for repentance at last, is the instance of this poor thief; which they stretch beyond the intention of the Holy Ghost in leaving it upon record, when they use it as a means to strengthen their presumption, which was designed only to prevent despair. "The thief on the cross repented at last," saith a sinner; "and why may not I?"

ANSWER I. *Why should not the example of the other thief's impenitency affright them, and drive them to repentance, as well as the example of the good thief encourage them to sin?*—It is but setting one against the other. And if they argue, God gave repentance to one, and therefore may give it them; why may they not as well argue, God denied it to one, and therefore may deny it to them too?

ANSWER II. *It is but a single instance against thousands on the*

other side.—And though one instance is sufficient to evert the generality of a rule; (and therefore we cannot certainly conclude, from God's not giving repentance to thousands at the hour of death, that he will give it to none, because we have the example of this thief to the contrary;) yet with what reason can men expect that God should give that to them which he gave to one, rather than that he should deny that to them which he hath denied to thousands? If general rules are to be drawn from particulars, it is much more rational to ground them on a multitude of particulars, than on any single one. The most therefore any men can infer from this example is only, that it is not impossible but God may give them repentance.

ANSWER III. *Some things seem to be singular in the case of this thief.*—Which are not to be found in the case of others, who therefore cannot reasonably argue from it.

(1.) *He was one, so far as we can judge, that had never formerly rejected Christ.*—Never saw him before his sufferings, never heard his doctrine, never was a witness of his miracles, which might convince him of the truth of it. He was one that had otherwise employed himself, than in attending on Christ's ministry; and might more likely have been found robbing on the road, than worshipping in the temple; or breaking up houses, than hearing of sermons; and therefore, though he had sin enough in him for which God might have denied him repentance, and nothing in him which might move the Lord to give it him; yet it is very probable this was the first of his being brought to the knowledge of a Saviour; and so he was not guilty of the great gospel-sin of unbelief, and refusing the offer of Christ and salvation by him, which doth so often provoke the Lord to leave men to themselves, and deny them his grace. If it be said, "The same was the case of the other thief;" I grant it. But God being a sovereign Agent, and his gifts most free, he might make use of his prerogative in dispensing them; and so grant repentance to the one, and deny it to the other, admit their circumstances were every way the same. And why then may he not deny repentance to those now that are, in some respect, worse than either, in that they have so many times resisted his Spirit, stood out against his calls, and slighted the offers of his grace made to them? And where is the sinner that lives under the means without repentance, but as he hath daily-repeated calls from God, so he daily rejects them; and thereby abundantly justifies the Lord's refusing him that grace at the last, which he did before not only never seriously seek, but wilfully reject? I should have more charitable thoughts, and better hopes, of the veriest varlets upon earth, that were never called till the last hour, than of those that are otherwise guilty of much less sin, but have abused and resisted greater grace.

(2.) *The instance of this thief seems particularly designed by God for the honour of his suffering Son.*—God would have a witness even upon the cross; one to adore him when so many despised him. He would have his Son's death honoured by his giving life to a poor wretch even at the point of death; and make him known "to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins,"

(Acts v. 31,) by his giving both to such a sinner, and at such a time.

(3.) *Another end may be, to render them that crucified Christ inexorable, when this malefactor made so honourable a confession of him.*—To expose and shame the unbelief and hardness of the rulers and Pharisees, by the faith and repentance of a most flagitious offender; and therewithal confirm the word of Christ spoken formerly to them, that the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before them. (Matt. xxi. 31.)

6. Suppose God do give them repentance at the last, yet *they may have very little, it may be, no, comfort in it.*

(1.) *They may be ready to question the sincerity of it.*—And then they can have little comfort in it. Admit [that] their condition be safe; yet comfortable it cannot be, so long as the truth of their repentance, from which their comfort should proceed, is so uncertain and questionable. To say nothing of their ignorance of the nature of repentance, and the methods of the Spirit in working it, having never found the like in themselves before, nor been acquainted with what others have felt; many things there are which sometimes may make them call what they find in themselves in question.

(i.) *The experience they have already had of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and perhaps of others' in the like condition.*—It may be, they have known others upon a sick-bed look as like penitents as *they* now do; who yet, upon their recovery from their diseases, have relapsed into sin; and, by returning to their former lusts, have confuted their profession, and evidenced their repentance to have been unsound and hypocritical. And this may make them fear lest things may be no better with themselves, and their repentings no more real than their neighbours.' Or, it may be, they themselves formerly, when under a sentence of death, have had strong convictions of sin, been filled with horror of conscience, and dismal apprehensions of approaching damnation; it may be, they have grieved for sin, been vexed at themselves for their old follies; it may be, they have had good desires and purposes, made promises and vows of devoting themselves to the fear of God, and never again returning to their former sinful courses, if it should please the Lord to restore them; and yet no sooner were they raised up again, but they changed their purposes, brake their promises, stifled or wore-off their convictions, and grew worse than before. The devil that went out of them when they were sick, returned into them when well, and seven more with him. (Matt. xii. 43—45.) And they know not but things might be as bad with them now, if God should restore them, as they have heretofore been. They fear lest their hearts, which they have found so deceitful, fickle, slippery, should play tricks with them, and dissemble, and pretend what they never mean; and so, from the trial they have had of them, they dare not trust them, but suspect all their present relenting, mourning, confession, mortification, to be false and counterfeit.

(ii.) *It may be more difficult at such a time to discern the principle from which their repentance proceeds.*—Whether from faith in Christ,

love to God, and hatred of sin, or only from fear of wrath and hell ; whether they mourn as children under a father's hand, or only as slaves under a master's whip. When they lie upon the brink of the grave, and expect every moment to drop into it ; their souls are dislodging, leaving their bodies, and by-and-by to appear naked before their Judge ; this may affect them, fill them with fear, and fear [fill them] with sorrow for sin, whereby they have exposed themselves to the danger of damnation ; and both together put them upon resolutions against sin, which is usual in such cases. Now though there may be something else at the bottom, yet, this lying uppermost, and most obvious to their view, they may fear that it is the only prevailing argument and great cause of their repentance ; which can then be no better than merely legal, as having no better a foundation. Principles are usually latent, and discoverable only by their workings ; and that too more easily or difficultly in proportion to the inteness or weakness of these workings ; and, in this case, the more weak and feeble stirrings of faith or love may be so outdone and overtopped by the vehement and strong motions of fear, that themselves can hardly be perceived, much less the principles they flow from. A dying sinner may feel his fear when he cannot perceive his faith, and suspect he hath no faith because he is so full of fear ; and consequently question his repentance, which cannot be evangelical without an evangelical principle.

(iii.) *They are apt to doubt of the truth of their repentance, for want of seeing the fruit of it.*—And indeed, in their circumstances, when they have so little time to live, they cannot see much. The fruits of repentance in a holy, humble, mortified conversation, are the best proof of its sincerity, and so most likely to bring-in the comforts of it. But, their repentance being young, green, and unripe, they know not whether ever it might bring forth fruit ; and so may easily be induced to suspect the nature of it. How warm soever, for the present, their hearts are, yet they may question the continuance of such a frame if life should continue. As much as at present they are set against sin, yet they know not but, if they should again be in a capacity of committing it, they might be again reconciled to it. They have but newly entered upon the ways of God, and know not whether they should like them, upon further trial of them ; whether, as sickness and fear of death have begun to mortify their lusts, so the temptations of life and health might not again restore them. They never yet knew what it is to be godly in time of health and ease, in the midst of the snares and allurements of the world ; and so know not whether that appearance of godliness they now have be any more than an appearance, which, upon the approach of agreeable temptations, might easily vanish. Men seldom judge of trees but by the fruit they bear. A crab-tree may have as fair a blossom as the sweetest pippin. Here may be fair buds, and leaves, and blossoms, —sorrow for sin, resolutions against it, purposes of new obedience ; yet they may suspect all, for want of seeing the fruit of their repentance

in the acts of obedience, a settled course of walking with God, and progress in mortification.

(iv.) *The devil is most likely to be busy with them at such a time.*—He is a never-failing enemy to men's souls, and shows his enmity to their very death; and as he makes it his business to keep them from repentance, so, if he cannot do that, he labours to bereave them of the comfort of it, by making them question the truth of it. As, where it is false, he is ready to flatter them, and persuade them it is true, that he may draw them into presumption; so, where it is sincere, he labours to terrify them, by persuading them it is hypocritical, that he may run them into despair. Thus he doth with men while they live; and why may he not do the same when they die? He is likely at that time either for ever to have them, or for ever to lose them. His temptations then are his last efforts, and therefore most vigorous; and such they may be as, though, the grace of God preventing, they may not hinder the true repentance of a dying sinner, yet, the wisdom of God permitting, they may cloud and obscure it, and render it questionable, and thereby bereave him of the comfort of it.

(2.) *They may be ready to question God's acceptance of their repentance.*—And indeed that must needs be, if they question the sincerity of it, when God never accepts any but what is sincere. But besides, they may be ready to fear they have outstood their time; that the day of grace, which is the only time of God's accepting them, is at an end; or that God will not accept of them as his servants, when they cannot live to do him any service; or not accept of their returning to him now, who have forsaken him so long; not accept of their sorrow for formerly dishonouring him, when they are past time for glorifying him; and, in a word, not look upon them as his children at the last hour, who have been the devil's children all their days. Now if this be their case, how uncomfortable is a death-bed repentance, (admit it be sound,) when men know not that it is sound, but are wholly in the dark as to the sincerity and acceptance of it, and so set in a cloud and fear a storm! They may have even just so much hope as may keep them from despair, not what may cause any rejoicing in them; a secret and almost insensible support, but no enlargement. They do but (as was said of the penitent thief in the text) *steal* into heaven; and are so saved as that nobody in this world knows it, nor they themselves till they find it. And God may purposely conceal it, to prevent the folly and presumption of others. If God's children, after many years spent in serious and diligent serving him, yet, for reasons best known to the Divine Wisdom, have sometimes died in the dark; they then that spend their days in sin, and think to repent at last, should remember that the best they can reasonably expect, if God should give them repentance, must be to die between fear and hope, or, it may be, more full of fear than hope. No comfort they can expect in reflecting upon their forepast life, where they see nothing but sin; and little in the hopes of future glory, when they have not one clear evidence of their title to it.

(3.) To conclude : *May not the consideration of a man's repenting no sooner, abate his comfort in repenting at last ?*—May not, will not that gracious ingenuity God hath now wrought in such an one, make severe reflections upon his long impenitency, and not turning to God till he was past serving him ? And then may not the devil set in and maliciously aggravate it to the sinner's conscience, and hold the mind so fixed and intent upon the thoughts of repenting no sooner, as to divert it from the contemplation of that grace which hath now wrought repentance in him, and thereby diminish the comfort he might take in it ?

USE I.

FOR INFORMATION. If it be so dangerous to run the hazard of a death-bed repentance, how great is their folly that do so ! They that defer their repentance till they come to die, show themselves fools :—

1. *In putting off the greatest work till they have least time for the doing of it, if any at all.*—A man would be accounted a fool as to the concerns of this life, that should idle away the time of his youth and vigorous age, and defer seeking for an estate, and providing for his family, till he were old and decrepit, and past working. And is it not a greater work to provide for eternity than for time, to drive a spiritual trade than a civil one, and get a stock of grace than of riches ? And then what fools are they that put off such a work to the last, and leave themselves no time for it but that which is most unfit for it, as well as uncertain whether they shall enjoy it ! Repentance, as to the exercise of it, is not the work of a day, but should be the work of all a man's days ; and what folly is it to thrust that into a little corner of a man's life, which should be extended through the whole of it ! A Christian's work is not to be done all at once : it is a "walk," a "race," a "course" of holy, gracious actions ; and that requires time. Repentance, as it implies our first turning from sin to God, is but the entrance upon or beginning of that course ; and how foolish are they that think to run their race in an instant, to begin their course and finish it at once !

2. *It is a reckoning upon time which they cannot command.*—Men may, with Job, (chap. xxix. 2,) wish that they were "as in the months past ;" but they cannot make themselves [to] be so. And so likewise they may wish time back, but cannot bring it back, or stop its motion as it runs ; nor have they the least particle of it in their power. How foolish then is it to defer repentance while they have time for it, till they come to a sick-bed, where they are not secure of any ! Alas ! they can no more add one inch to their time than one cubit to their stature.

3. *It is a promising themselves the doing of that which is not in their own power to do.*—Though the exercise of repentance, as above was said, is man's duty, yet it is such a duty as he cannot practise without the grace of repentance wrought in him ; (the principle must be ere the act can be ;) and that grace is the gift of God ; and if he

do not give it, man cannot have it; and if he will not give it, who can force him to do it? They that would command God's grace, must command God himself; and they that defer their repentance till they die, must suppose either that they can work it in themselves, which hath already been disproved; or that God will be at their beck to do it for them, which needs no disproving.

4. *It is a thinking to do the work best when they have made it most difficult and painful.*—Though, as was before said, God can by his power in an instant remove all obstructions, and work repentance in the most obdurate sinner; yet in his ordinary method he works gradually, and in the way of means,—men's attendance upon ordinances, seeking and labouring after repentance, &c.; and men have no reason to expect that God should disuse his wonted manner of working, to gratify their sloth and loitering. Now it is certain that the longer men live in sin, the more their hearts will cleave to it, and be hardened in it; and then the more loath they will be to be divorced from it, and the more averse to the use of those means whereby such a separation might be effected. The more sweetness they have tasted in sin, the more bitter will the very thoughts of repentance be. Strong affections to their lusts will make prayers cold and endeavours faint against them. Hence we see, God handles old, stubborn sinners more roughly, when he reduces them, for the most part, than others upon whom he works more early. Indeed their case requires it. They need more of "the Lord's terrors" (2 Cor. v. 11) to drive them off from sin; more law-thunder to awaken their consciences, and rouse them out of their security; and more severe means to humble and break them, to embitter sin to them, and make them heartily willing to forsake it. What pangs and tortures, horrors of conscience, soul-convulsions, do foolish sinners procure to themselves, by their lingering and delaying, which, had they been more quick and speedy in their work, might have been prevented, at least very much mitigated!

USE II.

FOR EXHORTATION. Let sinners take heed of deferring their repentance at all, much more of putting it off to the end of their lives. Consider:—

1. *Can you have the face to put God off with the worst you can give him, and the least, too, of your time, and strength, and service, when he calls for the best, and deserves all?*—Hath God given you a life of many years, and can you afford him only the service of a few days, it may be hours, it may be minutes, nay, it may be none at all? Is it fair, ingenuous, reasonable, to give the devil your strength, and God your weakness? to give the devil and your lusts your health, and God your sickness? to serve sin with your might and vigour, and God with your distempers and infirmities? not to be willing to part with your sins till you are parting with your lives, nor begin your work till your time is ending? and, in a word, to begin then only to serve

God, when you can serve yourselves, your friends, nay, your lusts, no longer?

2. *The sooner you set about the work, the more easy you will find it.*—You will have fewer sins to repent of, and mourn over, and turn from; less guilt to terrify and dishearten you; less stupor in your consciences, less hardness in your hearts, less strength of sin to be wrestled with. The dominion of sin will not be so confirmed with a long tract of time, nor the cords of your iniquity hold you so fast. Though it be true, that, how soon soever you begin and set about the work, you cannot of yourselves effect it; (God's grace must do that;) yet the sooner you begin, the less sin there will be in you to resist his grace, and the more hope that God will afford you grace to overcome that resistance which is made. And though grace can subdue and conquer the most strong, old, overgrown lusts; yet still you will be more ready to hope it will do it, when you have not the guilt of a long impenitent life, and refusing former calls, to encourage your unbelief, and check your hopes, and sink your hearts.

3. *You may expect more comfort in it.*—For the more able you will be to discern its sincerity, as having less cause to doubt of it. To turn to God when you have something to deny for him, some time to spend in his service, and which might have been spent in the service of sin, looks much more like true repentance, than to turn to him when you are immediately to appear before him. The less force and fear there is in your repentance, the more likely it is to be kindly and evangelical; when tears flow, and are not squeezed; [when] you are rather drawn than driven; and [when] your obedience is freely yielded, rather than extorted. But the further ye apprehend yourselves from death and judgment, the less there usually is to force your repentance, and so the less to make it suspicious, and hinder your enjoying the comfort of it. And so the sooner you repent, the more time you will have to prove its sincerity by its fruits; and the more "fruit" you "bring forth meet for repentance," (Matt. iii. 8,) the better satisfied ye will be as to the truth of it, and have the more comfort in it. When you cannot so well judge of it by looking to it immediately in the principle, you may be better able to judge of it by its actings; as, though the root of a tree be hidden under ground, yet good fruit will show it to be good.

4. *Consider what you lose by putting repentance off to the last.*—Beside the comfort of your death, as was above intimated, ye lose no less than all the comfort of your lives; the comfort of all the good you might have done, all the grace you might have acted, all the glory you might have brought to God. A Christian's greatest comfort is the comfort of faith and holiness; the comfort of walking with God, and communion with him in duties and ordinances; the comfort of exercising his graces, and reflecting upon his graces; of seeing his privileges, his interest in the promises, his title to his inheritance, &c.: so that where no grace is, there no true comfort can be; and where repentance is not, there no other grace can be: no faith, for

that is always the cause of evangelical repentance ; and no holiness, for that always supposeth repentance as the beginning of it. There can be no walking in the "narrow way," if there be not first an entering in at the "strait gate." (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) Wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness ;" (Prov. iii. 17 ;) but they only experience that pleasantness that walk in that way : and walk in it you cannot, if you do not enter into it ; and that must be by repentance, which is your very first stepping into it. Think then what comforts the saints enjoy in their lives ; what it is that makes them cheerful in their duties, courageous against their enemies, strong against temptations, patient in sufferings ; what it is [that] makes them go on "singing in the ways of the Lord," (Psalm cxxxviii. 5,) and "glorying in tribulations." (Rom. v. 3.) And remember that all this comfort you lose, by being so late ere you come into the way wherein alone it is to be found.

5. *Think what others, beside yourselves, lose by your thus deferring your repentance.*—Every saint is a public good ; the world is the better for him. But while you go on in sin, and never think of repenting till the last, who is the better for you ? nay, who are not losers by you ? Angels in heaven lose the joy they might have had in your conversion ; ministers lose the comfort of being instrumental in it ; your families lose the instruction they might have had of you ; your neighbours, the provocation they might have had to holiness by your example ; the wicked lose the convictions they might have been brought under by the power of holiness appearing in your conversation ; saints, the comfort and refreshment they might have had by your society, discourse, experience ; and all generally, what good they might have got by your prayers. And, that which is more than all, doth not God lose the glory you might have given him, had that time, that life and strength, been spent in his service, which you have spent upon your lusts ?

I need not tell you over again what you hazard : even your never repenting at all ; your being forsaken of God, given up to the devil and your lusts ; and so having your hearts hardened, your minds blinded, your consciences seared, and your souls in conclusion damned. If it be not so, no thanks to yourselves. If God be merciful to you, (and nobody in this world knows whether he will or not,) yet you do your part to bereave yourselves of that mercy, and plunge yourselves into the abyss of eternal misery.

OBJECTION. If you say, you are *fully resolved* to repent of your sins when you come to die, and then ask pardon for them :

ANSWER. Do but seriously consider :—

1. *The vanity and folly of such resolutions.*—What is more uncertain, more fickle, more variable than man's mind ? You resolve upon this to-day ; and are you sure you shall not break that resolution to-morrow ? Do you know what will be your minds two or three days hence ? If not, how can you know twenty or thirty years beforehand ? Are you sure you shall never meet with any accident, any temptation, that may change your mind ? And if you do know

your mind, what it will certainly be when you are dying; yet do you know what God's mind will be then, whether he will give you repentance when you set about it, and give you a pardon when you seek it? If you do know it, I pray, how came you by that knowledge? When did God tell you so, and where? In what text of scripture hath he revealed it? Where doth he promise you repentance and pardon at the last, when you had never seriously sought either all your days?

2. *The wickedness and profaneness of them.*—You resolve you will repent when you die, and that implies, you will not repent till then; that is, you do and resolve still to love sin as long as you live; but you intend to leave it when you can live no longer in it. You hate God now, and resolve to hate him till you die; and then you will begin to love him. You will make work for repentance now, and seek for repentance at last; offend God and provoke him, and make work for pardoning mercy all your days, and then sue to him for it. You will persevere to affront the grace of Christ, and throw his blood back into his face; and then expect to be washed in it from your sins, and saved by it, when you go out of the world.

OBJECTION. It is to as little purpose to say, you will then send for the minister to instruct you, to pray with you, &c.

ANSWER. For, what, if you do? Your case may be such, that all the good men, good ministers, good instructions, good counsels, in the world may not help you, not save you. All may come too late; and signify no more to your souls than physicians and physic at that time do to your bodies. Alas! what can ministers do for you? Can their instructions enlighten your minds, when God hath blinded them? Can their counsels soften your hearts, when he hath hardened them? Can the breath of prayer waft your souls to heaven in the last moment of your life, when you have been steering toward hell all your days? What can your spiritual physicians do for the cure of your souls, when the great Physician of all hath left you as incurable, and will never any more visit you?

OBJECTION. Do not tell me, on the other side, that repentance is God's gift, and you cannot have it till he give it you, and therefore you must tarry till he do.

ANSWER 1. For, *it is as much God's gift at last as at first.*—And you can no more have it at your death, if he do not give it you, than you can have it now.

2. *Though it be God's gift, and you cannot work it in yourselves; yet cannot you seek it of God, desire him to work it in you?*—And can you not use the means by which he ordinarily works it? And are you not as capable of so doing when you live and are in health, as when you are sick and dying? When you are sick, you cannot heal yourselves: health is God's gift as well as grace is, though of another kind. But do you then use to lie still, and say you must wait till God restore you? Or do you not rather send for your physician, and betake yourselves to the use of means by which God is wont to work it? You cannot get an estate unless God give it you; riches are his

gift. (Prov. x. 22.) Do you therefore sit still, and fold your hands in your bosom, and say you must tarry till God give you an estate? Or do you not rather engage in some honest calling or trade, as the ordinary way [which] God is wont to bless to that end? "The diligent hand maketh rich." (Prov. x. 4.) And why do you not do so here too? If you will go on in sin, and say you wait till God give you repentance, you may wait long enough; when, every day you continue in sin, so much the farther off from repentance you are, and so much the more you provoke God to deny it you.

CONCLUSION.

To conclude: take heed especially of those things which are *the ordinary hinderances* of a timely repentance.

First. *Wrong notions of repentance.*

1. *That it is an easy thing, and so may be done at any time.*—That it is but sorrowing for sin, and crying "God-mercy" for having offended him. This prevails with too many that know not wherein the nature of it consists. Remember therefore that it is no easy thing to get a thorough change wrought in your hearts; to divorce your lusts to which you have been so long wedded; to part with those sins you love best, and engage in those ways of strict holiness which of all things in the world you hate most. The "old man" will fight hard ere he die. The flesh will never yield, and hardly be overcome. And if ever God work repentance to you, he will so work it as to make you work at it too, and labour after it, his grace using and employing your faculties. And what can you ever do either in seeking repentance before the infusion of the grace, or exercising it when infused, but you will find sin opposing you in it, and so creating difficulties in your work?

2. *That it is a sour and an unpleasant thing, made up of sorrow, and sadness, and inquietness of spirit.*—They know no delights but sensual ones; and think, if they part with the pleasure of sin, they part with the comfort of their lives. Do not therefore look merely on the dark side of repentance, or what may make it seem uneasy to you; look through it, and you will find that which will make it more pleasant. In the very sorrow you fear, if it be right, that is, godly sorrow, there will be such a mixture of love, as will make it in a good measure delightful to you. If it seem painful to you to strive against sin, and there be trouble in the combat; yet when you prevail over it, you will find comfort in the victory. You will be more pleased with having denied yourselves, than you could with having gratified yourselves. Our Saviour's promise, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted," (Matt. v. 4.) one would think, should reconcile you not only to any seeming trouble in the work of repentance, but to all the greatest difficulties and severities of the most strict and mortified life. If indeed your repentance be merely legal, proceeding from fear of wrath, or Popish, for the expiation of your sins, I grant, it may be a sad and unpleasant thing; but if it be a true Protestant

repentance, that is, an evangelical one, mixed with love to God, and proceeding from the faith of free grace and remission of sins through the blood of Christ, it need not be such a scarecrow to you as to make you hazard your salvation by shifting your duty.

Secondly. *Presumptuous thoughts of God's mercy.*—That God may be merciful to them, and give them repentance, and pardon their sins, at the very last. Consider therefore :—

1. As merciful as God is, yet *his will sets bounds even to that infinite mercy as to the actings and outgoings of it, and beyond those bounds it will never pass.*—There is a time, a day, a *now* of grace, which when it is once over, no mercy will be shown you. Offers of mercy, invitations made to sinners, and the acceptation of them, are but for a time. The door is open but for a time ; and when that is past, it will be “shut ;” (Matt. xxv. 10 ;) and all your calling and knocking will never prevail with God for the opening of it again. And what then shall you be the better, the nearer repentance, or nearer pardon, for all that ocean of mercy that is in God, if you seek it too late, and when he will not let out one drop of it to you ?

2. *God's justice is as great as his mercy.*—All his attributes are alike infinite ; one doth not overtop the other. And then if you delay and put-off repenting to your latter end, why may you not as reasonably fear lest he should in justice punish you for your long impenitency, as [expect that he will] in mercy give you repentance ?

SERMON X.

BY THE REV. THOMAS WOODCOCK, A.M.

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HOW DOTH PRACTICAL GODLINESS BETTER RECTIFY THE JUDGMENT THAN DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS ?

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.—Romans xiv. 1.

THIS epistle to the Romans is an epitome or body of divinity, containing faith and love in Christ Jesus; from which Rome degenerating, hath separated from herself and the scriptures of truth, the only grand charter of all Christianity.

In the beginning of the epistle the apostle discourseth about original sin, as having infected the whole nature of man with its guilt and filth, both Jews and Gentiles, all become abominable, fallen "short of the glory" and image "of God." (Rom. iii. 23.) For "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) Whence he inferreth, there is no possibility of our justification by the works either of the ceremonial or moral law; so that he concludeth a necessity of our being "justified by faith without the works of the law," (chap. iii. 28,) "through the redemption of Christ Jesus." (Verse 24.) But though we are "justified freely by his grace," yet we are not to live freely and licentiously in sin because grace abounds: "God forbid;" (chap. vi. 1, 2;) for holiness is inseparably entailed on our "most holy faith." (Jude 20.) Then he proceedeth to show the privileges of the adopted children of God;—that "there is no condemnation" due "to them; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the law of sin and death;" and that they are "heirs of God;" (Rom. viii. 1, 2, 17;) which is more than all the world;—till he arriveth at the head-spring of all grace, and that is eternal election, (chap. ix.,) without any foresight of faith or works. But as in time he chose first the Jews, rejecting them he chose the Gentiles, without any view of merit or eligibility in either of them before others; for the Jews were the smallest and meanest of all nations, (Deut. vii. 7,) and the Gentiles all overrun with idolatry and profaneness. Yet this conversion of the Gentiles was foreknown and therefore forewilled of God "from the beginning." (Acts xv. 18.) After these sublimer doctrines, he descends (Rom. xii.) to practical duties; and he who will understand the first eleven chapters of the epistle to the Romans, must practise the last five: be acquainted with the mysterious duties of love, and then you will better understand the mysteries of faith.

In chapter xiii. 8, he exhorteth them to "owe nobody any thing but love:" be in nobody's debt, yet owe every one love; a debt always to be paying, and yet always owing, yet still abiding our proper treasure.

This fourteenth chapter is a branch of some particular duties of love, and this verse is the sum of this whole chapter of charity; which words are said to have occasioned the conversion or confirmation of Alipius, as the foregoing words were of Augustine's: such is the authority and energy of the naked word of God upon the consciences of men, in the day of Christ's power. And the naked sword cuts better than when it is sheathed in a gaudy scabbard of the "enticing words of man's wisdom." (1 Cor. ii. 4.)

The apostles were frequently exercised with difficulties, how to compose the differences among Christians; the Jewish converts were eager to bring their circumcision, with their observation of times and meats, along with them into Christianity. (Gal. iv. 10.) The Gentiles were not accustomed to these things, and therefore opposed them; yet were as ready to bring a tang of their own old errors with them also; as their "doctrine of demons," (1 Tim. iv. 1,) and their "worshipping of angels," (Col. ii. 18,) and probably some of their heathenish festivals and customs. So that both parties were in an error, and neither of them fully understood that liberty [which] Christ had brought to them from these "beggarly elements," rudiments, and ordinances to which they were "in bondage." (Gal. iv. 9.) For if God saw good to free his church from those ceremonies which were instituted by himself, he would never allow them to be in a slavish subjection to the superstitions and ceremonies of worldly men's inventions, though never so dogmatically and magisterially imposed. For, as learned Davenant, on that, Col. ii. 18, observes, such injunctions are apt to grow upon men; forbidding first not to "touch" or eat such and such meats, then not to "taste," after not so much as to "handle" them. (Col. ii. 21.)

Now, to compose these differences, the apostles met at Jerusalem; (Acts xv. 2;) where they made no positive injunctions for the Christians to practise any ceremonies or observations of either party against their consciences, but limited the exercise of their liberty which they truly had by the gospel; but [advised] that they should "abstain from fornication," (which to explain is too great a digression,) "blood, things strangled," and what was "offered to idols." (Verses 20, 23.) These they would have them to avoid, that they may not offend those weak Jews who could not suddenly concoct these practices, till judgment should be brought to victory over these feeble fancies. And they laid this also as a burden on them for a time, till they could be brought to better understanding; and all this by way of advice from the apostles, elders, and the whole church; (verse 22;) their letter also was read to the whole multitude. (Verses 23—30.) So here, the apostle adviseth the Romans how to do in the like case with these weak ones: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

1. *Here is the description of the person who is to be considered, ασθενουντα* ["weak"].

(1.) *Not him that is weak and sick to death, erring in the foundation of faith.*—One who doth "not hold the Head," (Col. ii. 19,) who "denieth the Lord that bought him;" these are destructive heresies which bring on men swift damnation. (2 Peter ii. 1.) We are not to say to such, "God speed you:" (2 John 10:) their very breath is blasting to men's minds.

(2.) *Nor is it one who is sick about "questions."* (1 Tim. i. 4.)—"Foolish," endless, "unlearned," unedifying "questions," which only engender contention. Such are idle "busy-bodies," seekers, and disputatious quarrellers about some minute things, which hypocritical and vain minds trade in, to keep themselves buzzing about the borders of religion, that they may keep off from the more serious duties, and substantial parts thereof. (1 Tim. v. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 23.)

(3.) *But he is one who is "weak in the faith;" who, though he hath embraced the doctrine of our Saviour, yet is not of a mature, concocted judgment, clear enough about the abolition of ceremonial observations, things [which] he judgeth ought to be forborne or done.*—Now let things be never so indifferent in the general definition or thesis, yet when they come to be used and exercised in their individual circumstances, they will be determinately good, or determinately evil, in all moral agents and actions. And that which in general seemeth indifferent to one is not so to another: these Gentiles could freely eat things strangled, but the Jews could not. Therefore it is a very strong weakness or wilfulness in some who love to turn straws into trees, and feathers into birds, and not to leave things as Christ hath left them, and as they are in their own nature; but will *transpeciate*,* as others *transubstantiate*, by their own breath, in their own opinions; and more fiercely contend for their own laws than the commands of God; as Saul was more severe on Jonathan for tasting honey, than on himself for rebelling against God's express command. These heats indicate a hectic fever to be in the body, preternaturally eating up and preying on the vital heat,—love to God and our neighbour: the zeal for men's own chimneys eateth up the house of God.

2. *Here is the injunction of charity toward weak ones.*—Προσλαμβανετε. "Take them to you, receive them into your houses," use hospitality toward them, supply their necessities; (Rom. xii. 13;) not "magnificent receptions," such as Levi gave our Saviour, *δοχην μεγαλην*. (Luke v. 29.) But when they fly for their religion and lives, supply their wants, though they be not just of your size or opinion. Do not force him to practise what he cannot freely do, to buy your charity: this is a dear purchase and a cruel sale. Generous hospitality is a duty of another fashion: receive them into your arms, into your bosoms, into your love and converse, that you may instruct them and win upon them; receive them into your society, into your communion; treat this weak brother with all humility, condescension, love, and kindness; yea, with all the warm graces Christianity hath

* "Divide into a needless number of species," "minutely specify."—EDIT.

endued you with. Let not these least differences cause the greatest distances, as often they do: if he hath so much candour as [that] he will be received, and be not sullen and angry, receive him; and by strength of love bear with him, and forbear him, till by love you soften and overcome him, by "heaping coals of fire upon his head." (Rom. xii. 20.) For if he be weak, yet seriously and sincerely a lover of Christ, and beloved of him, the Lord hath received him; (Rom. xiv. 3;) therefore do you also receive him.

3. *The limitation of this exception.*—*Μη εις διακρσεις διαλογισμων.* "Not to doubtful disputations." Some would render it "discerning of thoughts;" and there was such an extraordinary gift as "the discerning of spirits;" (1 Cor. xii. 10;) so there may be an ordinary prying into men's thoughts; and what is *ενθυμησεις* in Matthew ix. 4, is *διαλογισμοι* in Luke v. 22: "Jesus seeing their thoughts;" and thoughts are but "men's dialoguing and discoursing with themselves;" and so the sense is thus,—"Receive him, but not to the discerning or judging of his opinion or thoughts; or that he should be hardened to judge others' thoughts to be altered because they receive him." But *receiving* is receiving him into their society; therefore *not receiving him* must be not to something which was apt to be in their society and among them; which was, not the discretion of the strong, but their disputes, which were not fit for these weak ones. And the word most commonly signifies, "disputing with others:" "Paul disputed daily in the school of Tyrannus;" (Acts xix. 9;) and "the disciples disputed who among them should be greatest." (Mark ix. 34.) But in Jude 9 both words are met together: "Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses."

DOCTRINE.

Christians are to receive such as are weak in the faith into their hearts by love, and not to trouble or heat their heads with cramping disputes.

For practical piety will sooner rectify the judgment of the weak, than fierce argumentations. Lay aside this heat about ceremonies on all hands, and "attend to reading" and hearing the word, "and exhortation." (1 Tim. iv. 13.) Pray and praise God together, and converse in holy ordinances in love to each others' souls; let but this fire live upon the altar of your hearts, and then all other strange fire and heats will die away.

I will show you,

- I. *That weak Christians cannot well judge of arguments.*
- II. *That the practice of known duties is the way to get more light.*
- III. *That Christian love will sooner win others from error than rigid arguments.*

IV. *The inferences from all for instruction and direction.*

I. First, then: *Disputations and arguments are not easily judged of by such as are weak in faith and knowledge of Christian liberty.*—Now this is evident from the first dispute that ever was in the world.

For Satan was a disputer from the beginning; and is still the father and author of all ensnaring and contentious disputations. The first thing he disputed was God's command. The prohibition and threatening were absolute: מוֹת תָּמוּת *moth tamuth*, ["Thou shalt surely die."] (Gen. ii. 17.) But the woman, who "was first in the transgression," faltereth in the recital of it, with a פֶּן "*Perhaps* we shall die." (Gen. iii. 3.)

1. But by this first dispute with the serpent, our first parents [were foiled], when in uprightness and strength of the image of God, newly stamped on them in knowledge and holiness; yet this father or fomentor of disputes foiled them: and so all mankind, being naturally and federally in them, was drawn into their guilt and filth. So that reason is ever since debased and deposed, and no man is able to rule himself, much less another; his rule and measures being broken, he hath only some fragments and splinters of the tree of knowledge, which he darts against God and himself; the holy lamp and flame is so extinguished, that now he only "compasseth himself about with" his own "sparks" till he "lie down in sorrow." (Isai. i. 11.) Creatures, as creatures, are fallible and failable, (witness men and angels,) especially by the impulse of false arguments. It is God's only prerogative to be intrinsically infallible and immutable; and it is a perfection incommunicable to men or angels. But now sinful man is in a much more dark and doleful state. For,

(1.) *He cannot form an idea of any thing, nor frame a true notion of any thing as it is in itself.*—But he conceives by the aid of metaphors, similitudes, and phantasms. He cannot see into things themselves, nor their essences. He is hardly put to it to tell what dull matter or body is; much more what nimble forms, motion, or spirits are; or what his own soul is, though so nigh to him and part of himself. He is so in the dark, [that] he cannot define what light itself is. If any be so confident as to "think he knoweth any thing," our apostle tells him, "he knoweth nothing as he ought to know;" (1 Cor. viii. 2;) he is "not sufficient" as of himself for one good or true thought; (2 Cor. iii. 5;) which cuts the top sinew of Pelagianism, and the champions of the power of nature.

(2.) *His judgment therefore must needs be dubious or wrong whereby he is to compare things that differ or agree together.*—If God leave him or give him up to himself, "the prophet is a fool," and "the spiritual man is mad;" (Hosea ix. 7;) so as he will "put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; call good evil, and evil good." (Isai. v. 20.) Conscience, the soul's taster, and common sense are so vitiated and defiled, (Titus i. 15,) that he hath no true judgment or discretion, having not his "senses exercised to discern" between "good and evil." (Heb. v. 14.)

(3.) *His conclusions therefore must needs be distorted from these premisses; and the errors in the first and second concoction are not corrected and amended by the third.*—He who cannot make one straight step, can never take three together. All the errors and fallacies in the world are but the products of his ratiocinations; namely, "I can go

to the tavern or exchange, I find therefore I can repent and believe, when I will ;” whereas these are actions of another life and nature, which he was never born to, unless regenerated by the Spirit of God. To repent and believe are God’s gift, (Acts v. 31,) his work in us ; (John vi. 65 ; Eph. ii. 8 ;) though for this very doctrine “many of his” ignoranter “disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” (John vi. 66.) And so men jog on in their sensuality presumptuously, as if there was something in the pleasures of sin which was sweeter and dearer to them than God or heaven ; and [as if] when they have no more strength to serve their lusts, nor any thing else to do but to die, they can in one quarter of an hour make their peace with God : as one of that herd said to me ; who, soon after, drawing water out of his own well, and being drunk, was by the weight of the bucket drawn into the well and drowned. Another saith, “I may sin, because grace aboundeth.” (Rom. vi. 1.) This is a most disingenuous and unnatural argument : “I may hate God and my Saviour, because he hath so loved me ;” when holy Herbert said, “Let me not love thee, if I love thee not ;” love being stronger than death or hell in the hearts of God’s beloved ones. So, “‘Without holiness none shall see God ;’” (Heb. xii. 14 ;) therefore we must be justified by our evangelical obedience and righteousness ;” whereas this is only a concomitant for the cause ; for God pronounceth and declareth none to be righteous but such as are righteous. Now “there is none righteous, no, not one,” (Rom. iii. 10,) but in the righteousness of Christ, “who of God is made wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” (1 Cor. i. 30.) In sound Davenant’s words : “An alderman sits in the court, not because he is to come in his gown, but because he is an alderman by election,” &c.* So, “You must obey the laws of the church,” if that wedge will drive ; if not “the laws of the state ;” both which are inconsequent if they be not according to the law of God. The establishing [of] perverseness by a law (Psalm xciv. 20) made neither David’s nor Christ’s sufferings the worse, but *their* sin the greater *who* twisted such a law. So that we need a new logic from ‘Ο Λογος, “the eternal Word,” as a directory to our reasonings, as well as the common logic which teacheth us the regulation of the operations of our minds.

2. As we are lame in our feet by our naturals, so *even those who by the light of the gospel and grace are brought over to better understanding, yet by virtue of the old craziness they are not thoroughly illuminated and refined.*—The very apostles themselves were plainly told by our Saviour, that he should suffer death, and rise again the third day ; yet “they understood none of these things ;” (Luke xviii. 33, 34 ;) these sayings were hid from them until he “opened their understandings” to “understand the scriptures.” (Luke xxiv. 45.) We have all a dark side ; and Paul says, We “know” but “in part,” (1 Cor. xiii. 12,) we see but one side of the globe ; we cannot view things round about, they are above our hemisphere. These weak Jews were zealous for their ceremonies, as being instituted by God ; the Gentiles, as hot for theirs : let no man think himself infallible, for these were all out and

* DAVENANTIUS *De Justif.*

mistaken. Form, custom, and education, do wonderfully confirm men in error. How hardly were people in our first Reformation drawn from their prayers in Latin to English ! yet they understood not Latin : as hardly would they still be weaned from little formalities, though it were to entertain the most real and reasonable service in the world. So great a tyrant is tough custom over phlegmatic souls ; so apt are men to heats for trifles, by which straw and stubble they turn the church into a brick-kiln.

These Jews had divine right to plead, and the usage and practice of all the seed of the faithful, enough to stagger a weak Christian. Errors, fairly set off, may pass for truths ; and, if but weakly confuted, may hang a doubt in men's minds : so truths ill-guarded may go for errors. Objections not well-cleared had better never have been started ; for they may puzzle a weak head and heart, and make them both ache with fear of mistakes. A sophistical disputant will prove there is no motion ; the best way to confute him is, in our Saviour's words, " Rise up and walk," (John v. 8,) which is a real silent demonstration of it.

3. *Nothing so convulseth men's reason as interest.*—As Hobbes saith, " Though there is no problem in mathematics more demonstrable than that all straight lines drawn from the centre to the circumference are equal, yet if this did but cross any man's interest it would be disputed." Now in 1 John ii. 16, the apostle reduceth the whole world to those three elements, " the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ; " a threefold cord, strong enough to pull any truth in pieces, as easily as Samson did his withes.

(1.) *The lust of the flesh*, modò hic sit benè.*—Pleasing the flesh goeth a great deal further than the monks' bellies, who yet have a lusty share in it ; as one of their own said, they had all things so complacent, that they wanted only a vicar † to go to hell for them when they should die. The bishop of Rome's kitchen and purgatory mutually support one another. Disorders of life hold up celibacy in men in orders. The lust of idleness inviteth to stage-plays, the nurseries of vanity and vice ; to cards and dice, in defiance of that canon which pronounceth them unlawful games. A lusty dinner makes the veins so strut, [that] they can leap or fly to heaven by their free-will, without the necessity of free-grace, so strong is flesh and blood without the Spirit of God. Surely he who hath an immortal soul within him, and a dubious state to himself as [to] that dreadful eternity before him, should never be sick of his time that lies upon his hand, one hour whereof millions of worlds cannot redeem.

(2.) *Covetousness is a weighty argument.*—Thousands are enough to break the loins of most men's minds, too heavy for the back of the strongest rationalist in the world ; the scale of judgment cannot turn while this beam is in the eye, nor any argument counterpoise this dead and deadly weight ; but " tithe of mint and cummin " will outweigh faith and the love of God. (Luke xi. 42.) " St. Bridget prophesied, the Roman clergy would ruin the church by their avarice ;

* " Provided this service be delightful."—EDIT.

† A substitute.—EDIT.

for she said, they had already reduced the Ten Commandments to two words, *Da pecuniam.*”* [“Give money.”]

(3.) *Pride of life swells men till they break all bonds and bounds.*—Like stum in the cask, [it] makes all the hoops fly off. The zeal of a party, and having declared for a way, make men [that] they cannot retreat; but will spur-on for honour and profit, though the angel of the Lord oppose them, till they are crushed to the wall. If Christian religion be founded in self-denial, mortification, and bearing the cross, they who seek their own glory are not of God: (John vii. 18 :) that is either no gospel, or these certainly are no disciples of Christ. We had need look to ourselves; for this lust of domination and glory, as Charron saith, “is the very shirt of the soul,—on from the first, but last put off.”

II. Secondly. I am to show you that *the practice of holy duties clearly commanded is the ready way to have our minds enlightened in the knowledge of principles.*—Reading the scriptures; discoursing about heaven, and about their souls’ everlasting welfare; reproofing one another, and admonishing; (Rom. xv. 14;) comforting and supporting the weak and dejected soul; (1 Thess. v. 14;) to exhort one another daily, “lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;” (Heb. iii. 13;)—duties so much out of fashion in these days, that it is not counted good manners or civility to practise them: friendly reproof is esteemed want of good-breeding. But are they not strange Christians who are strangers to scripture-duties?

1. *These practical duties performed would give us light.*—“He that doeth the truth cometh to the light,” (John iii. 21,) not only out of boldness, but [for] discovery of knowledge. Truth is nothing but goodness explained, and goodness is nothing but truth consolidated. Rudiments of knowledge are pre-requisite to practice, but examples clear all things to us. Demonstration by the compasses maketh the maxim evident. He that doeth best, knoweth best; for he seeth the actions as they are in themselves and circumstances. He doth *αναβαινειν κατω*, “he seeth the bottom by diving into them.” פתח פתח *Pethac pethaiim*: *The very entrance into the command giveth light*; (Psalm cxix. 130;) the door is a window to him that hath a weak sight: even those things [which] men have formerly ridiculed, practice hath reconciled them to be their Diana and great delight. As the Gnostic in Clemens Alexandrinus, who could not taste lewdness till he was “in all evil;” as it is, Prov. v. 14. If wicked practices darken the mind, (as all the works of darkness do,) then holy actions illuminate the soul.

2. *The exercise of holy duties advanceth light.*—Every step a man takes he goeth into a new horizon, and gets a further prospect into truth. Motion is promoted by motion, actions breed habits, habits fortify the powers, the new life grows stronger and fuller of spirit. The yoke of Christ is easier, smoother, and lighter, by often wearing it; this anoints us “with the oil of gladness,” and makes the ways of wisdom “pleasantness.” (Psalm xlv. 7; Prov. iii. 17.) Life and

* Fox’s “Acts and Monuments.”

light are nearly related: "The life was the light of men." (John i. 4.) These things Jesus first did, then taught; and so he "was mighty in deed and in word." (Acts i. 1; Luke xxiv. 19.) Very airing and motion heateth to a flame; this made his light burn and shine too. (Verse 32.) Truth incarnate in action, seems a lively resemblance of God in flesh; the unfolding a doubt to another hath often expounded and resolved it to the proponent.

3. *If any be in danger of error, or got into an ill way, keeping-up warm duties, meditation, and prayer will keep him in, or help him out.*—Communion with the saints is an admirable antidote against sin or error. As in a team of horses, if one lash out of the way, if the others hold their course, they will draw the former to the right path. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (1 John ii. 20.) When there are antichrists and great apostasies, keeping to duty, like keeping the road, preserveth us from by-paths. I remember, a snowy night, when many wandering homeward were frozen to death, a shepherd, feeling himself foiled by often falling, set down his crook in one point and beat a path round, and so preserved his life, and kept him out of precipices and ditches. And we have a promise of light, if we "press toward the mark for the prize of our high calling." (Phil. iii. 14.) Carry the goal in your eye, and it will direct you a path where there is none upon a plain. Sincerely aim at God's glory, and your soul's salvation, and you shall not miss your way. If in any thing you should miss it, and "be otherwise minded, God will reveal even this unto you." (Phil. iii. 15.) Yea, our great Lord and Master assureth us, "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John vii. 17.) But if men will make bold with God and conscience, and act for their own ends and glory, they rob God of his supremacy, and will lose both their way and their end. He that walketh uprightly hath God for his guard and guide; with devout Zachary, he is within the veil; and if he be in a mistake, God will reveal it to him: for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." (Psalm xxv. 14.) Go to thy oracle and pray, and a ray of heavenly light shall direct you, as the wise men's star, to the holy Jesus. Their minds are God's candles; (Prov. xx. 27;) and, as Father of lights, he will light them when they approach him with ardent supplication.

III. Thirdly. I am to show that *Christian charity and reception will sooner win weak ones to the truth than rigid arguments.*—For so the apostle adviseth them who were to deal with people weak in faith and strongly zealous for ceremonies: "Dispute not with them, but receive them first."

1. *In regard opposition breeds oppositions.*—A man will never believe that he loves his soul who cuts his purse, belies his actions, torments his body. Passion begets passion, but love only kindles love. When men do hotly dispute, they jumble for the way, and so one or both must needs leave the path of truth and peace. The saw

of contention reciprocated, with its keen teeth eateth up both truth and love; for such contentions are rather for victory than truth. Now passion doeth nothing well; which made one emperor say-over his alphabet, to get the dominion over his anger. Ahasuerus fanned himself in his garden; (Esther vii. 7;) and he in Plutarch would not smite his servant, because he was angry. Passionated persecution makes only hypocrites become proselytes; and in their breasts also lodge such a revenge as will be satisfied, one time or another, upon them who have made them offer violence to their consciences. Religion is a free choice upon judgment, or it is not religion; therefore it gets-in by persuasion, not persecution. Yet it is strangely true, they who are so tender of their own wills, that God must not touch them unless by argument, yet laxate themselves to club-law with their brethren, not content with a moral suasion.

2. *Loving converse taketh off those prejudices which hinder men's minds from a true knowledge of others' principles and practices.*—Which at a distance seem horrid and monstrous opinions and practices, whenas a little free course with them breedeth quite other apprehensions. The Papists picture the Protestants as brutes with tails, as devils with horns, to terrify the vulgar; but knowing merchants dare trust them. So some Protestants have represented the Puritans as pestilential and seditious persons, as mad and having a devil, as the scribes and Pharisees did John Baptist and Christ; but the plain-hearted people saw through those pious frauds and tricks, and were astonished at their doctrine and life, when they healed souls and bodies on the sabbath-day.

3. *Sincere love and converse breed a good opinion of persons who differ from us.*—They can taste humility, meekness, and kindness, better than the more speculative principles of religion. These get into men's affections, and so bore away into their judgments, and cause them to alter their minds. Two heads, like two globes, touch but in one point, the whole bodies [being] at a distance; but two hearts touch *in plano*, and fall-in with each other in all points. Love openeth the heart and ear to cooler consideration and second thoughts. The Spirit of God directed Elijah, not in the strong wind which rent rocks and mountains, nor in the earthquake, or fire, but in the silent whisper or tranquil voice. (1 Kings xix. 12.)

USE OF INSTRUCTION.

How to carry ourselves toward them who are weak in the faith, in these days.—And doubtless it is a sickly season when there are so many feverish heats among us. I will not say, what once a Romanist said to me, that these are the *spuria vitulina*, “the bastard friks” of our Reformation in Henry the Eighth's days; but I rather think the violent endeavours after *external* uniformity without the *inward*, the smothering of the industrious bees in one hive, was a great cause of their castling into several swarms. Threshing the corn hath driven it out of the floor; and the grasping so hard the grains, all into the hands and power of some, hath made them creep out through their

fingers. Rigid impositions, and violent prosecutions and exactions of conformity to things extra scriptural and [extra] divine institution, and without any manifest tendency to edification, have and will make fractions without end. As D. W. said, "Till men be infallible, and the world immutable, moderation becometh every man who is in his senses and considereth himself."

1. *There are some who have all faith, believe incredibly.*—As, That Catharina Senensis, praying for a new heart, she had her real heart cut out of her body, and after some days had a new heart, formed by Christ, put into her: That making a cross on the body with a finger driveth the devil away: That a priest by these words, "This is my body," transubstantiateth the bread into the body of Christ; and so he offereth that sacrifice to deliver souls out of prison, and then by his dirges conducteth them to paradise.

2. *Others have no faith at all.*—As that infallible one who said, "What vast wealth hath this fable of Christ acquired to the church!" so, when some had disputed about the immortality of the soul, most gravely determined in a verse,

Et redit in nihilum quod fuit ante nihil.

"That which is nothing must needs come to nothing." And I fear there are more atheists than Papists, who seem to believe all on the stage, nothing in their retiring thoughts. We are not bound to receive such into our bosoms or communion, lest we sting our own breasts; out of charity to our souls, we must take heed of receiving such.

3. *But there are others who seem seriously to believe the doctrine of the gospel, yet have a weakness in their judgments about little things.*—These we must receive, and instruct them, that "the kingdom of God is not meat or drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) Show them all kindness, pity them, pray for them, and let them see nothing but your "order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." (Col. ii. 5.)

1. *Stand fast and fixed in the good word of God.*—Which "is settled for ever in heaven," (Psalm cxix. 89,) as the copy of the divine nature and law. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having-on the breastplate of righteousness." (Eph. vi. 14.) This is the grand and perfect rule of faith, worship, and life. Keep within these trenches, and you have an assurance of protection. I know no other method possible to peace, but in an universal resolution to impose nothing upon others but what Christ himself hath imposed, what scripture commands: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) This is a minister-of-Christ's commission; and he cannot look for Christ to be with him, if he go either contrary to, beyond, or not according to, his instructions. Let this be first done, and then men may consider whether any thing further be necessary or convenient.

Let us therefore, in the name of God, beg his Holy Spirit, whom

Christ hath promised, and that "he shall lead us into all truth." (Psalm xxv. 5; John xvi. 13.) He is the only infallible interpreter of God's mind. "He shall receive of mine," says our Saviour, "and shall show it unto you." (John xvi. 14.) Then read the scriptures, as Christ himself did. "His custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read;" and when the book of God was delivered to him, he read Isaiah lxvi., a prophecy of himself; and so "he closed the book and gave it to the minister." Then he expounded and applied it to the present circumstances, that he came "to preach the gospel to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, give deliverance to the captives, open the eyes of the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Luke iv. 16—21.) O blessed pattern for every minister of Christ to follow! And sing the psalms or hymns, as we read he also did. (Matt. xxvi. 30.) And the ancient Christians, as Eusebius and Pliny also say, "used early to sing psalms and praises to Christ, administer the sacraments in the very words of Christ;" but guard the door that the grossly ignorant and profane may not come in. (1 Cor. v. 11.)

If any degenerate so as first and second admonition reclaim not, shut the door upon him, "let him be to you as an Heathen or a publican;" for so is the rule of Christ. (Matt. xviii. 17.) Every natural body, and civil body or society, hath a power to take in or cast out such as are for the benefit or damage of the community, to enfranchise or disfranchise when there is just cause. The church is Christ's body, and a society of visible saints. Most epistles to the churches in scripture were directed to the "saints" at Rome, (Rom. i. 7,) at Corinth, (1 Cor. i. 2,) and so on. Now, out of custom, carnal policy, flattery, or other ill motive, the whole world must come into the church; and the church, and the "world" which "lieth in wickedness," (1 John v. 19,) are one thing; then in cometh also the god of this world too: and will Christ have fellowship with devils? If swearers, drunkards, and unclean persons come in, it may be a market-house, or house for merchants, but not the Lord's house. (John ii. 16.) "A drunken saint, an unclean saint, a swearing saint," if they be not contradictions, yet they sound very harshly. No sin hath less temptation of gain or pleasure than swearing and cursing, and no sin more debaucheth the conscience, and strips it (even to atheism) of all reverence; and for men to have no more pity on them than to let them cram damnation down their throats, as soon as they have made the imprecation on themselves, is dreadful. I remember, an ear-witness told me he heard Dr. Hammond preach before king Charles I., at Oxford, when his affairs were at a low ebb; and he told him, while *God-damn-me* led the van, and *The-devil-confound-me* brought up the rear, he would be routed in all his designs. And *they* are very unlikely to be good subjects to princes *who* are open rebels to the laws of God, and men, and their own reason.

But let us keep to the rule: the principles of Christ's kingdom are rock and steel, not calculated for the soft meridians of this world, but can abide and stand in all times the same; they need not load the

secular arm to hold them up. Let us be faithful executors of our Lord's will, not law-makers or testament-makers; for "untempered mortar" will be always falling, and fouling them who daub it up. Let us "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free;" (Gal. v. 1;) he and his truth only can make us free from all errors and mistakes. (John viii. 36.) "Let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus;" (Phil. ii. 5;) then nothing will be done out of contention or vain-glory; but God will make good his own promise,—all his shall have "one heart and one way." (Jer. xxxii. 39.) Then our Lord's prayer shall be answered: that all his may be one, as he and his Father are one: (John x. 30; xvii. 21;) one in the world,—that is impossible; but "let them be one in us, in our appointments, and then the world will 'believe that thou hast sent me;'" otherwise divisions will breed such temptations, as if Christianity was no reality. Now what can any man say against this method? Who are they that make divisions, but they that make more duties in religion and worship than Christ hath made? they who build upright on the foundations, or they who will jet over and drop upon their neighbours?

2. *As we should keep to our rule, so practise accordingly.*—Let the one foot of the compass keep the centre, and the other walk the rounds; let us live so as Minutius Felix says: *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus*: "We do not talk great things, but live them." Exact walking would be as a miracle in this loose age, to confirm the faith we do profess. Catechise your children and servants as Abraham did, to walk in "the way of the Lord;" (Gen. xviii. 19;) so "most excellent Theophilus" was catechised and "instructed" in the things of Christ. (Luke i. 4.) Pray in your families: daily bread you have twice at least; then you are directed to daily prayer for it. If nations and kingdoms have God's wrath poured out upon them that call not on his name, (Psalm lxxix. 6,) then surely families much less can escape. We and our families need daily grace, daily pardon, as well as daily bread; therefore, unless we dare die in our sins, we should daily pray; for in God's hands is our breath, and his are all our ways; (Dan. v. 23;) who then dare breathe a day without compassing him about with prayer and praises?

And let us adorn our profession of godliness with honesty. (Titus ii. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 2.) Labour to think as near to the truth of things and actions as you can, and as they are in themselves; (Job xxvi. 3;) then speak and declare the thing as it is in your mind; (Joshua xiv. 7;) then do as you speak. (Psalm xv. 2.) *Ἀπλωσον σεαυτον*, "Simplify yourself," in Epictetus's phrase, "from all composition of frauds, policies, and hypocrisy;" then be sure you be just, and do as you would have others do to you,—the grand scale of righteousness. If men would but weigh their thoughts, words, and actions by this standard of equity, (Matt. vii. 12,) how would this make ministers, lawyers, physicians, and all others, take as much care of people's souls, bodies, and estates, as of their own! Then would come that golden age wherein they would have, if not so many dirty fees, yet

a cleaner and a greater reward of peace of conscience and joy in God.

Let us all be humble, meek, and patient, as our Lord; modest in apparel and all civil conversation, as those that resolve to walk in Christ as they have received him, (Col. ii. 6,) and to wear him as they have put him on. (Rom. xiii. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 9.) This primitive simplicity would revive charity, which is frozen to pieces in this cold age, this being "the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10.) All the commands of God must needs be broken, by the very want of it. When all is done, live so accurately, (Eph. v. 15,) as if you were to be justified by your works; and then, as unprofitable servants, cast yourselves wholly on free grace in Christ, (Luke xvii. 10,) lest, by the conceit of any merit, when you have anointed our Saviour's feet, you fling the box at his head, and rob him of his priestly office and crown.

As for disputing of controversies, let your discourses be rather in private, than before others; that you argue in love to the souls of your brethren, not for victory and triumphing over their infirmities. The Jewish rabbins say, "He deserveth hell-fire who putteth his brother to the blush." Therefore in meekness of wisdom argue with your weak brethren, that Christ was faithful in God's house or church, (Heb. iii. 2,) in commanding all things necessary for salvation, and the worshipping of God in spirit and truth; that Paul had declared to the Ephesians "all the counsel of God," and "kept back nothing that was profitable" to them; (Acts xx. 20, 27;) therefore we may safely venture in this bottom; and that those men *who* will venture to tender God a worship which he hath not commanded, *they* take upon them to be wiser than God, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, and can tell what will please God better than himself can. If, with Jeroboam, they will set up a worship of their own devising, to keep up his golden calves, (1 Kings xii. 33,) they must have very low thoughts of God; as if he was taken with our voluntary humility, in fancies and postures, rather than "the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. xi. 3.) When he hath told us, the words his Father had given him he had given to his disciples, (John xvii. 8,) all other traditions may very safely be rejected.

Yet neither must we altogether abandon all disputations; (our Saviour indeed never called for a sword but to cut his way to a miracle;) but remit them to the schools or the press; (honest men may wear swords, and learn to use them, because robbers ride armed;) but let such take heed they dispute not with God, his providence or grace. I remember a disputation publicly in the schools, where the respondent in divinity defended this question, "That the term of a man's life was movable." He was presently seized with a fever and died. I say not, that providence determined the question. But if *all* times, much more *ours*, are in God's hands, (Acts i. 7,) not our own. (Eccles. viii. 8.) When Ames was invited to be professor at Franeker, Episcopius, then at Leyden, in his lectures in the schools, read against Ames; who, hearing of it, sent a bold

challenge,—that he would come to Leyden, and before the University answer Episcopius's arguments, and oppose his determinations, if he pleased. I know not why truth may not be as bold as error. But Episcopius wisely refused and declined it, knowing that Ames had a scholastical head; and close arguments would rout loose harangues,—his fist would be too hard for his palm. Those doctrines are borne up in the world by looseness of manners. They who are so much for free will, are for free life too. Never more of that doctrine, and never more licentiousness; which argueth some kindred and relation to be betwixt them. But, as D. H. hath said of old, "If Arminians be not the most godly, holy, heavenly, every way the best of men, they are the very worst, since they assert they have so much power to be good." Sir William Temple observes, where this opinion was born, it was looked upon as a mid-way betwixt Papists and Protestants, the blue to that bow-dye. But I am sure God's word says, He "works in us to will and to do;" (Phil. ii. 13;) and the tenth Article is expressly against this doctrine of free-will.

When free-will and wit have got the ascendant over true reason and conscience, Satan will ride post his last stage; for they will convert men into foxes and wolves, to deceive and devour each other; yea, into devils, to torment and insult over one another's miseries. And whoever above ground will build upon these self-centred globes, shall find their foundation will soon roll and slide from under them. When the earth was corrupt, then came the flood of waters. (Gen. vi. 13.) Christendom is so corrupted from true Christianity, that these giants in wickedness and violence presage a deluge of blood. But if "when the Son of man cometh" he shall find no "faith on the earth," (Luke xviii. 8,) then his coming is near. Then, come Lord Jesus, and put an end to all violence, fraud, and wickedness; and shut up hell in hell, hypocrites and devils in the same cloisters; (Matt. xxiv. 51;) and gather thy saints together to worship thee "in the beauty of holiness." (1 Chron. xvi. 29; Psalm xxix. 2; xcvi. 9.) Be thou "the desire" and delight "of all nations;" (Haggai ii. 7;) build thy own Jerusalem, (for men cannot or will not,) and appear in thy glory, (Psalm li. 18; cii. 16,) shine in it as "the perfection of beauty," (Psalm l. 2,) make it a "habitation of justice," and a "mountain of holiness," (Jer. xxxi. 23,) and "a city of truth;" (Zech. viii. 3;) that it may be said, *Jehovah-shamma*, "The Lord is there," and hath the third time whipped the traders out of his temple, and set it upon everlasting foundations; all administrations being according to his own measure, that golden rule, and "the pattern in the mount."

SERMON XI.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM BATES, D.D.

HOW IS SIN THE MOST FORMIDABLE EVIL?

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

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

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

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

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

* *Regeramus ipsæ crimen, atque ultrò impiam*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* *Prius est hæc ultio quod, se
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur.*—*JUVENALIS Satyræ, sat. xiii. 2.*
† “ Man, wretched man, whene'er he stoops to sin,
Feels, with the act, a strong remorse within ;
'T is the first vengeance : Conscience tries the cause,
And vindicates the violated laws.”—*GIFFORD'S Translation.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

APPLICATION.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SERMON XII.

BY THE REV. GEORGE HAMOND, A. M.

HOW MAY PRIVATE CHRISTIANS BE MOST HELPFUL TO PROMOTE
THE ENTERTAINMENT OF THE GOSPEL ?*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.*—Colossians iv. 5.

THE case or question which comes to be spoken unto this morning is, *How may private Christians be most helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel ?*

We have heard the question ; and, as I conceive, a due attendance unto the words read may lead us far toward the resolution of it : “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.” And for that reason was this text chosen. I design not, therefore, to frame a set discourse upon it, but only to lay it as a ground-work to support that which I have to offer toward the answering of the question propounded.

We have before us then a serious exhortation : “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.” And therein we may observe,

1. *The persons to whom the apostle doth direct it.*—And they are private Christians. This is apparent, (1.) In that here is no intimation given that he intended any other. Not one of those characters are set upon them whereby the pastors or guides of the church use to be distinguished from the community of believers. (2.) The duties which he exhorts them unto may undoubtedly, and ought to, be performed by private Christians : as, to “continue” instant “in prayer,” and to “watch in the same with thanksgiving.” (Verse 2.) To pray in special for the apostle himself, that he might receive divine assistance, and be blessed with success in the ministry of the gospel. (Verses 3, 4.) To “walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” (Verse 5.) That their “speech be alway with grace.” (Verse 6.) With all which the same persons are charged. Now, to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without,” is a duty of a great latitude. And if it comprehend the promoting of their conversion and salvation, as certainly it doth, (having an aptitude, tendency, and efficacy to help it on,) then must private Christians take themselves to be concerned therein ; for to them is this exhortation directed. And so we have gained a very considerable point.

That we may, from this text, charge the duty upon the consciences of private Christians, in the name and authority of Jesus Christ,

2. *We have an account of the persons with respect to whom, in a special manner, private Christians are counselled to “walk wisely.”*—And they are described by this periphrasis : “Them that are without ;”

that is, such as had not as yet entertained the gospel, nor professed subjection to it, but still continued in a state of infidelity. This is clear from 1 Cor. v. 12, 13: "What have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth." The sum whereof is this: that scandalous Christians are to be corrected by church-censures, when milder remedies prove ineffectual. But those flagitious persons who are out of the pale of the church, are to be left to the judgment of God, and of the civil magistrates. Thus we are advanced one step farther; for we have discovered that those to whom private Christians may be very helpful may be such as "are without," that is, Heathen, or infidels; and therefore they must not cast off all care of them.

3. *We are to inquire, What is that special work and business in the disposal and management whereof private Christians are charged?—*To "walk wisely toward them that are without." I suppose, none are so weak as to surmise, that the apostle's intent and meaning was, to caution them to make sure and advantageous bargains when they traded with infidels, who, being false and crafty, might be likely to over-reach them. This was too low for the apostle's spirit. It was something of a more sublime import and tendency; namely, to admonish and excite private Christians so to demean themselves in all things, that they might beget, even in the Heathen themselves, a due veneration for the gospel, and a love and liking of that holy religion which they professed. And, to enforce this his counsel, the apostle did set them a fair example in his own practice: "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor. x. 33.) And hence we learn further, that private Christians, in their negotiations with Heathens and infidels, should not mind only the enriching of themselves, but chiefly the promoting of the conversion of those poor miserable souls to the faith of Jesus Christ.

4. *In order to the winning over of infidels to Christ, private Christians ought sedulously to endeavour to promote the admission of the gospel among them; (for the gospel is the glorious chariot in which Christ is carried about the world;) and, that it may be entertained among them, to procure the preaching of it to them.—*For that is God's method; and the apostle's way of reasoning is clear and strong: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 14, 15.) Here then are many things wherein private Christians may be very helpful: as in seeking out and procuring those who may preach the gospel among them; encouraging and supplying those who give up themselves to that blessed work; in disposing those poor creatures, as much as they may, toward the reception of the gospel, and preventing or removing all impediments that might obstruct their entertainment of it. This shows us in what private Christians should desire and endeavour to be helpful; namely, in promoting the entertainment of the gospel.

5. The last thing, the former four being established and admitted, is to inquire, *How private Christians may be most helpful herein.*—The text gives a general direction when it enjoins them to “walk in wisdom toward them that are without.” And this will administer to us occasion to lay-out this general direction more distinctly and particularly.

Thus, I hope, the opening of the text hath reflected some light upon the question; and all that I have to offer may be gathered up in this

OBSERVATION.

Private Christians, walking “in wisdom toward them that are without,” may be exceeding helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel among them.

This they may do, and more; for they may be helpful to promote their conversion and salvation. To further the entertainment of the gospel among them, is but the means; to promote their conversion and salvation, is the end; and the means are for the end. Now it is expressly affirmed, that a private believer may save an infidel: “For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or, how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?” (1 Cor. vii. 16.) That is, the believing party may be induced to cohabit with the unbeliever upon a hopeful prospect, that it is possible to conquer them by love, to attract them to have an esteem for holiness by an exemplary conversation, and to obtain God’s grace for them by ardent prayers, and so be the means of saving their souls. The apostle Peter exhorts Christian women who were yoked with unbelievers, to become eminent for their modesty, chastity, humility, and respectfulness to their husbands, by the same argument: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of their wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” (1 Peter iii. 1, 2.) Christian graces, being so exercised that they may be seen in their proper lustre, are excellent orators, and have a mighty power to persuade. It is more *to live* virtue, than *to commend* it. Let me have leave to say to “women professing godliness,” as the apostle styles them, (1 Tim. ii. 10,)—O, live to such an eminent pitch of holiness, that ye may raise an admiration of you in the judgments of such as otherwise would have no great reverence for religion, and give them occasion to say, as it is reported that Libanius, a Heathen philosopher, did, *Proh, quales feminas habent Christiani!* “O, what excellent women have these Christians!”

The correspondence between the text and the question having been, as I think, sufficiently insisted upon, I shall now apply myself to give a direct and satisfactory answer to the question propounded. And, that I may speak to it the more intelligibly and profitably, I shall consider,

I. *The persons mentioned in it.*—And they are private Christians.

II. *Their duty and work.*—And that is, to be helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel.

III. *The way that they are to take, and the means that they are to make use of, that they may be most helpful in the carrying on of that blessed work.*

I. *The persons specified.*—And they are private Christians. In which is intimated, 1. *Their general character, as Christians.* 2. *The restrictive term that is added to denote their special circumstance, as they are private Christians.*—Which limits our inquiries, or calls on us to speak more specially at least of the duty and work of private Christians in the undertaking mentioned in the question.

1. It is supposed, *that Christians only will be willing or proper to be made use of in this holy work.*—We may conclude, that they who reject the gospel, and put away salvation from them, (as those did who are mentioned, Acts xiii. 46,) will never, while they continue in that temper and disposition, promote the entertainment of the gospel, but will endeavour to obstruct and hinder it.

But all Christians, in the most comprehensive latitude, both stand obliged in point of duty, and may also eventually be helpful, to promote the spreading of the gospel, even every one who “nameth the name of Christ,” (2 Tim. ii. 19,) or that is “called by his name,” as, Jer. xiv. 9. Even those Christians as are such only by external profession, though they remain destitute of internal and real sanctification, may be helpful herein by their common gifts, their interests, their services, and by contributing their assistance and encouragement to those who are engaged in this holy work. And they may be influenced by such motives and inducements as may excite and engage them thereunto. Such as these, for aught I know, may be admitted to contribute their help to build the temple of the Lord, and are not to be excluded. For probably Christ’s aphorism, “He that is not against us is on our part,” (Mark ix. 40,) may be understood of such. But how far such may be accepted or rewarded, falls not under our present inquiry. This, I presume, will be admitted by all,—that such only as are Christians indeed (as Christ said of Nathanael, “Behold an Israelite indeed,” John i. 47) are the only persons who are rightly principled and will be found sincerely affected to this blessed work, and will be most vigorously active in carrying it on. This may suffice touching the persons under their general character as Christians.

2. *Their special circumstance, as they are private Christians.*—Whereby they are distinguished from such as are invested with public offices. Such are *Christian rulers and magistrates*, who are the ministers of God, who bear the sword; and such as are called to preach the gospel, who are *ministers of the word*. I confess, these come not directly within the compass of our question, for that concerns private Christians; neither yet ought they wholly to be excluded out of it, because they are Christians, and therefore are not silently to be passed over. And so I shall say something, yet but little, of them. Doubtless both Christian magistrates and ministers of the gospel are as much obliged, in point of duty, to promote the

entertainment of the gospel, as private Christians; and they may do more, because they have greater advantages put into their hands; for that is a rule laid down by our Saviour himself: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." (Luke xii. 48.)

(1.) *For Christian rulers.*—When their hearts are thoroughly knit to Christ in faith and love, and they act upon gospel-principles, and according to the rules thereof, what wonderful things may they perform toward the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ in the world! If a poor bond-slave, who lies in the lowest rank of men, may in his station "serve the Lord Christ," (Col. iii. 24,) what eminent services may princes and potentates do him, who are placed in the highest rank of men, and dignified with the title of "gods!" (Psalm lxxxii. 6.) The zeal of Constantine the Great for the Christian religion is praised by more than are disposed to imitate it; but when those who have given their strength and power to the beast shall hate the whore, and make her desolate, and devote their crowns and sceptres to the Lamb, we may hope for those blessed days wherein the light of the gospel shall shine forth so gloriously as to illustrate the whole world. This should excite all private Christians to pray hard, that God would put it into the hearts of kings, and those who are in authority, to "kiss the Son," by whom they reign.

(2.) *As for the ministers of the gospel.*—All they who understand and attend unto their office and duty, must acknowledge that they are under the strictest and most forcible engagements in the world to lay out themselves entirely, and to the uttermost of their capacity, to serve the Lord Jesus, and to help forward the enlargement of his kingdom. And yet it is not the duty and work of every ordinary minister to go up and down the world to preach the gospel for the conversion of the Heathen, as the apostles and evangelists did: "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation;" (Rom. xv. 20;) because they are commanded by Christ to attend upon their proper flocks. (Acts xx. 28; 1 Peter v. 1, 2.) But what measures they are to take farther, or what methods they are to pursue, to promote the spreading of the gospel, is indeed a very Christian and noble inquiry; at the debate whereof I should most gladly stand as a silent learner, and not presume to be a director. However, I hope it will be excusable, if I offer one thing to the consideration of those whose piety and learning may challenge a due esteem in the hearts of all that fear God. We have had among us committees for the encouragement and increase of trade. And what, if there were some to consult how the gospel might be propagated? The Papists have at Rome their *Congregatio de propagandâ Fide*. ["College for the Propagation of the Faith."] Their design may be very ill, while they contrive not how that "faith which was once delivered to the saints" may be propagated, but how the leaven of their own superstition may be diffused, and especially how the pope's kingdom may be enlarged. And yet to deliberate how the gospel of the grace of God may be carried into the dark corners of the earth, for the conversion and

salvation of them who are ready to perish, and so the kingdom of Christ get ground in the world, is, I am sure; a most holy and excellent design; and so I recommend this also to the prayers of godly, private Christians.

These few things being suggested touching those Christians who bear a public character, I now shall address myself to all godly, private Christians; and I must exhort and beseech them, with all the fervour I can, to set their hearts sincerely upon this glorious work, and to bestir themselves in it with all their might. This belongs to every Christian, as such, in what circumstances soever the providence of God doth dispose of them, whether they be high or low, noble or base, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, male or female: none are to be excluded or exempted.

But it is likely this may seem strange to many private Christians, that they should be charged, in the name of Christ, to be helpful to promote the spreading of the gospel all the world over. "Alas!" will one say, with the eunuch, "I am a dry tree;" (Isai. lvi. 3;) "and no such fruit is to be expected from me." "And I," will another say, "am but a cipher, and make no figure in the world, as the phrase goes; and therefore I can signify nothing." But let me beseech all private Christians to take heed of shifting off from themselves any duty or service that Christ calls them to, or would employ them in; and to suspend their determination a little, until I have showed them, as Christ shall enable me, how and wherein private Christians may be helpful in this great and good work. And then, I hope, they will see that they may do much more therein than possibly they have hitherto apprehended.

II. The Second thing mentioned is *their duty and work*.—Which is, to be helpful in promoting the entertainment of the gospel.

III. And the Third thing is, *how or in what ways and by what means they may be most helpful in it*.

But, for dispatch-sake, I shall speak to both these conjunctly.

Now, that I may proceed herein the more clearly and profitably, I think it may be useful to place private Christians, according to their several circumstances and capacities, as to the matter now under consideration, in three ranks or orders.

(I.) *There are many private Christians who live very remote from such places and people as have not the gospel preached unto them, or at least have not hitherto entertained it.*

(II.) *There are some private Christians who may occasionally go into, or may providentially be cast into, such places.*

(III.) *There are some private Christians who live among such people, in a more fixed or constant residence.*—As in our factories abroad, or in our plantations in the Indies, or other Heathen places.

Now, though it be the duty of all private Christians to promote the entertainment of the gospel; yet all cannot take the same measures, nor be active in the same ways. And therefore it may be to very good purpose to let each of them to see wherein their proper work doth lie, that they may contribute their assistance accordingly.

(I.) *Most of the private Christians among us live very remote from those people who have not as yet entertained the gospel.*—And so they cannot be helpful unto them by personal instruction or counsel; neither can they attract them by the example of their holy conversation. And yet they may greatly contribute toward the promoting of the entertainment of the gospel among them. And that they may do several ways: For instance:

1. *They may, and ought to, pray in faith, that the gospel may be sent among them, that it may be received by them, and be blessed to the conversion and salvation of all that are ordained to eternal life among them.*—For, such prayers being according to the will of God, they may be confident that he heareth them. (1 John v. 14.) And that God requireth and expecteth such prayers from them, cannot be unknown to any who acquaint themselves with the scriptures.

For, (1.) Our Lord Jesus Christ recommendeth this matter to the prayers of private Christians: “Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (Matt. ix. 37, 38.) Here we may take notice,

(i.) That by the metaphor or allegory of a harvest our Saviour would instruct us, that as, when the corn is ripe, men use to employ reapers to cut it down and gather it in; so there are some blessed seasons wherein God hath decreed to send the gospel among a people, and accordingly prepares and disposeth them for the reception of it, and raiseth in them a propensity and strong affection toward it. Thus it was when John the Baptist came and preached that “the kingdom of heaven” was “at hand;” (Matt. iii. 2;) and it follows, in verse 5, “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.” And our Saviour sets a special remark upon that time: “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” (Matt. xi. 12.) When therefore ye hear that the day of the gospel begins to dawn in any of the dark corners of the earth, then lift up a prayer that the grace and power of the Spirit may accompany it, and make it successful.

(ii.) Our Saviour teacheth you to pray that the labourers may be increased proportionably to the work; as when he saith, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.” Pray then that God would employ such as are skilful and industrious; such as Paul describes, 2 Tim. ii. 15: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth:” and pray that God would employ such a number of them as is sufficient for the work. A reverend person among us hath for many years complained, that in many places where there is but one to labour in the ministerial work; there is enough for three or four, though all of them be very industrious. But it seems that men either cannot or will not make better provision.

(iii.) Private Christians, when they perceive how the case stands, should be importunate with God, that he would “send forth labourers

into his harvest;" "send them" by the efficacious word of his power; *ὅπως εκβαλη, ut ejiciat, vel extrudat*, "thrust them out" by his grace working in them, and his providence ordering of circumstances concerning them. It is no wonder if flesh and blood shrink from the employment of carrying the Lord's message to a barbarous people. Moses would fain have been excused from going into Egypt; and he multiplied evasions and pretensions till the Lord was angry with him. (Exod. iii. 10—14; iv. 1, 10, 13, 14.) When the Lord sent Paul to preach the gospel among the Gentiles, that he might hearten him for that difficult and dangerous work, he promised him protection: "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts xxvi. 17, 18.) They stand in need of a mighty presence of God with them *who* have just cause to fear, that those people will seek their death to whom they bring the word of life and salvation. I thought this scripture so apposite to the matter in hand, and so directive to private Christians, that it may plead my excuse for this enlargement upon it.

(2.) That private Christians may be sure to mind it, our Saviour hath put it into the rule of prayer: "Thy kingdom come." (Matt. vi. 10.) I have read, that it is one of the Jews' maxims, touching prayer, *Ista oratio, in quâ non est memoria regni Dei, non est oratio*; "That prayer in which there is no mention made of the kingdom of God, is no prayer at all." When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we beg that the gospel, which is the rod of Christ's power and the sceptre of his government, may spread all the world over. For where the gospel is believed and obeyed, there doth Christ reign over fallen man as Mediator.

(3.) The saints, under the Old Testament, prayed for the calling and conversion of the Gentiles under the gospel-dispensation: "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee." (Psalm lxxvii. 2, 3.)

(4.) When, by the preaching of the gospel in any place, the people were wrought upon, and brought to believe in Christ, they were exhorted to pray that the word of the Lord might be carried to all other parts of the Gentile world: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." (2 Thess. iii. 1.) And such prayers are not to be thought to be lost, or put up to God in vain. That prediction or promise, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," (Rom. xvi. 20,) did doubtless excite many a prayer; and that promise was eminently accomplished, and those prayers which were grounded upon it, and put up to God in faith, took effect, when the kingdom of Satan, administered in the idolatries of the Gentiles, was laid waste, and the Christian profession was advanced, by Constantine the Great. Having now so inviting an occasion offered to me, give me leave to present a request to you; and it shall be in the words of

the apostle: "Brethren, pray for us," (1 Thess. v. 25,) for those "who labour" among you "in the word and doctrine." (1 Tim. v. 17.) And I hope I may without vanity enforce this request by the same apostle's argument or motive: "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly." (Heb. xiii. 18.) Many reflect upon us with disparagement; and we are very sensible of our own many and great infirmities. But help us with your prayers, that we may be better, live better, and preach better. It is no paradox, but a well-weighed truth, that a godly private Christian, upon his knees in his closet, may assist the minister in his study and in the pulpit. And that I may prevail in my request, I can assure you, that whatsoever gifts or graces ye obtain from God for your ministers by your prayers, they will come as blessings upon yourselves; like the vapours that rise from the earth, being concocted in the middle region, fall down upon it again in fruitful showers: "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." (1 Cor. xiii. 21, 22.) If any say, this is a digression from the case which I was to speak to, I would entreat them to consider what is the general scope and design of it, and they will find that it comports very well with it. Once I am sure,—that it is as much the duty and concernment of private Christians to pray for the success of the gospel, that it may be blessed to the conversion and salvation of souls in England, as that it may be preached, entertained, believed, and obeyed in the uttermost parts of the earth.

And so I will return to prosecute my discourse with two remarks:—

First. That, from what hath been said touching the prayers of private Christians for the spreading of the gospel, we may be assured, that *God hath determined to bestow those mercies for which he commands his people to pray.*—And more than that: He usually bestows them, in the disposal of his providence, upon the intervention of his people's prayers, as may be collected from Ezek. xxxvi. 25: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Verse 27.) "I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the Heathen;" (verse 30;) compared with verse 37: "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

Secondly. *That no godly private Christian can object against his duty, in praying that the gospel may be carried to all nations, and be entertained by them, nor allege any excuse or pretence why they should be exempted from it.*—If any hesitate, let me expostulate the matter with their consciences. Have ye received the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of grace and supplication? and can ye not pray? Do ye feel the love of Christ warming, stirring, and constraining your hearts? and will ye not pray? Ye dearly value the glory of God, and sincerely desire

that the "earth" may "be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" (Isai. xi. 9;) and can ye refrain from praying, that this may be performed? Ye tenderly compassionate the miserable condition of poor, perishing souls; and will ye not afford them so much as your prayers, that they may be relieved? Are ye not greatly affected with the distinguishing grace of God, in bringing the gospel to you, and opening your hearts to receive it? How then can ye offer up your praises to God for so signal a mercy, without making some reflection on the deplorable state of those who have not as yet obtained the like favour, without lifting up a prayer for them, that they may be made partakers of the same grace?

Or will ye reply, *that you do pray, indeed, that God would visit the Heathen world with the gospel of salvation; but ye cannot think that your prayers will contribute much toward so great and good a work?*—Suffer me to debate this also a little with you. Why will you reproach the spirit and grace of prayer in saying it can avail little or nothing? when God himself saith, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James v. 16.) Those prayers which can mount as high as heaven, are able also to reach the ends of the earth. Why will ye by your disobedience, as much as in you lies, make void the commandments of Christ? Doth not he expressly charge you to "pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest?" and to pray that his "kingdom" may "come?" And will ye say, that the Lord Christ doth enjoin his servants to do that which is insignificant and impertinent? Why will you, by your unbelief, go about to make the promises of God of none effect? Whenas he himself hath assured us, that "he will fulfil the" regular "desires of them that fear him;" (Psalm cxlv. 19;) and that whatsoever "we ask according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John v. 14.) For ever, then, beware of entertaining that temptation which is formed and cherished in the hearts of the ungodly, who say unto God, "What profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job xxi. 15.) I shall close this, when I have added, that were the prayers of private godly Christians more frequent, intense, and importunate for the spreading of the gospel, it would be a hopeful indication, that the gospel is about, through the blessing of God, to find better entertainment in the world than it hath done of later years.

This may suffice to have been spoken touching the first way and means wherein private Christians, who live remote from those places where the gospel is not entertained, may be helpful to promote the spreading of it, that it may be brought to them; namely, by the prayers which they put up to God in faith for the propagation of it.

2. The second way and means whereby private Christians, who live remote from those places whither the gospel is not yet come, may promote the reception of it among them is, *by a ready, cheerful, and liberal contribution of supplies and encouragements to them who labour in that holy work.*—And here the different abilities and capacities of private Christians are to be considered. They who are rich may cast

in much into the Lord's treasury; and for the proportion, the apostle's rule and measure should be attended unto: "Every one, as God hath prospered him." (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) When the tabernacle was to be made, every one brought something. They who had gold, silver, and precious stones, offered them; they who could bring but rams' skins, and badgers' skins, were accepted. And those good women who had nothing to bring, did yet spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, and they also were accounted and recorded among the contributors. What private Christian is there who can afford nothing? They who subsist by the labour of their hands should spare something for works of piety and charity. (Eph. iv. 28.)

To excite and encourage you to comply with this direction, I shall lay before you several examples, which will show you how practical and acceptable a work this is.

(1.) Private Christians were helpful to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his preaching of the gospel, in the days of his flesh, upon earth. Though "all things were made by him," and he upholds them "by the word of his power," and so "the earth is his, and the fulness thereof;" "yet for our sakes he became poor," and was pleased to receive provisions for his subsistence from some godly women, "who ministered to him of their substance." (Luke viii. 1—3.)

(2.) The apostle Paul records it to the praise of the Philippians, that they were careful of him, and made provision for him, not only when he laboured among them, and when he was in bonds for preaching the gospel, (and I heartily wish, that all private Christians among us, yea, and such as glory in their profession, would keep pace with them so far,) but also when he was employed in the service of the Lord, among such as were then strangers to Christ and the gospel: "Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity." (Phil. iv. 15, 16.)

(3.) St. John, drawing up the fair character of Gaius, a private Christian, placeth this as a beautiful flower in his garland, that he was hospitable and liberal to those who, for Christ's "name's sake, went forth" preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, "taking nothing of them." (3 John 5—7.) Let private Christians take notice, that the name of Gaius and his charity are registered in the sacred scripture; and if their disposition and practice be like to his, theirs also shall be written in Christ's "book of remembrance:" "He that receiveth," and so he that encourageth, "a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." (Matt. x. 41, 42.)

(4.) Take notice, that it stands as a blot in the escutcheon of the Corinthians, that they were altogether for *εὐαγγέλιον ἀδαπανον*, *gratuitum evangelium*, "a gospel that should cost them nothing." Corinth was the most convenient, and so the most frequented, port for trade in all Greece. The inhabitants are said to have been very wealthy, proud, and voluptuous. They had abundance to spend upon themselves, but could find nothing for Paul, while he resided among them, and preached the gospel to them. For this the apostle makes a very mild, but a very close, reflection upon them; enough to make their consciences to start, if they had any spiritual life and sense, and their faces to blush, if they retained any sparks of ingenuity in them: "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." (2 Cor. xi. 8, 9.) It is a sad word, but too frequently experienced, that a faithful minister of Christ may labour, and yet live in want, in a wealthy city. And I think it cannot be rationally supposed, that such as suffer those to want who labour among them, will be very forward with their purses to assist them who preach the gospel to infidels, in the remote parts of the world.

Upon this head give me leave to say a little, as I did upon the former. London doth out-shine Corinth in trade. God grant that it may still flourish in wealth, and yet be preserved from those vices which are the usual attendants of it! May London ever have the Corinthians' advantages, and the Philippians' spirit! It will be, I hope, to the praise of God, and of many of London's citizens, to recollect what hath been done here to help-on the propagation of the gospel in New-England; and I hope also, that the care of that work is not extinct, but will revive as there may be a necessity and opportunity for it.

When I showed how private Christians might be helpful to promote the gospel by their prayers, I made a request to you, that ye would not fail to befriend those who preach it at home with your prayers, that they may receive grace and assistance from God, and be blessed with success. And now I shall take the liberty to present another to you, in the behalf of many who preach the gospel among us. Your contributions for Wales, and the collection made at Pinner's-Hall, for the encouragement of several poor ministers in the country, have afforded matter of rejoicing to many; and, I doubt not, have drawn forth many praises and prayers to God on your behalf; and let me beseech you, be not weary of well-doing, in this instance. The apostle found that professors are as likely to faint and tire in works of charity, (especially if they be frequent,) as in any Christian duty whatsoever; and therefore he fixeth his counsel and encouragement there: "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. vi. 9.) Bear with me, if, in special, I commend to your care those whom the providence of God hath disposed of in

good market-towns and corporations. Possibly some may think, that such are well enough provided for. But many find, that the Corinthian temper hath not left the world. Even in good towns, ministers may preach and want. I think I shall not speak beside the purpose, if I shut up this with, "If any provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8.)

This may suffice to have been spoken touching the second means whereby private Christians, who live remote from such places as have not entertained the gospel, may be helpful toward the bringing of it among them.

3. The third way wherein private Christians, who live far from those places where the gospel is not entertained, may be helpful to promote the admission of it among them, is *to use their interest in those who, on several occasions, may go to such places, by importunate persuasions and pertinent directions to excite them to carry a love and zeal for Christ in their own hearts, and from that principle to act, to the uttermost of their capacity, for the spreading of his gospel, and the enlargement of his kingdom.*—It was, I think, a good design of Hugo Grotius, who, as he tells us, wrote his book "Of the Verity of the Christian Religion" for the use of his countrymen who sail to the uttermost ends of the earth, to furnish them with proper arguments, which might leave a due impression thereof upon the hearts of the poor Heathen. Private Christians may also write to their friends who live abroad, to endeavour to convince the miserable captives of Satan, that their idols are vanities. This course did the prophet Jeremy take, to excite and direct the Jews who were in Babylon, how they should deal with those among whom the providence of God had cast them: "Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." (Jer. x. 11.) It is observed by learned men, that this verse is written in the Chaldee tongue, though the rest of the book be written in Hebrew; whereby he doth, as it were, put the words into their mouths, that they might speak to them in their own language, so as to be understood by them; and by this he doth instruct us, that it is not sufficient for the worshippers of the true God to keep themselves from the pollutions of idols, but they must do more; for they must make profession of the true God and his worship. The like course may private Christians take, to promote the conversion of the ignorant, earthly, and profane at home, with whom they have no personal converse; and that is, to stir up others who have that advantage, to deal with them about the everlasting concerns of their souls.

Thus I have spoken something touching the case of such private Christians as come within the first circumstance; namely, such as live remote from the places where the gospel is not entertained; and in what ways they may be helpful in order to their reception of it.

(II.) I proceed to consider the case of such private Christians as occasionally or providentially are brought among those people who have not entertained the gospel; and to show how they may be helpful in

bringing them into acquaintance with the doctrine of salvation.—Let none pretend, that because this work doth specially belong to the ministers of Christ, thereupon private Christians are exempted or discharged from that which God hath made their duty. Let none think to excuse themselves by saying, they are not learned; for *they* are a reproach to Christianity, *who* have not learned the essentials of their religion; and the enforcing and inculcating of these, must lead the way in the conversion of infidels. Let none say, they have enough to do to mind their own business; for I doubt not but if they minded the interest of Christ more, their own would prosper the better. But if they drive on any design that is contrary to the faith or precepts of the gospel, it will be found their duty and safety to extricate themselves out of it as soon as they can. If they suggest, that it would be a vain thing for them to expect or attempt to do any good among infidels, that will be found to be only the sluggard's plea: "There is a lion in the way." (Prov. xxvi. 13.) He who hath no heart to an undertaking, will not fail to lay in his own way huge mountains of insuperable difficulties. But, to prevent or remove all evasions, it shall be proved, that among private Christians, if we may judge by circumstances or visible appearance, few or none, if they really be such as they profess themselves, do labour under such disadvantages or improbabilities of succeeding in their attempts of recommending Christ and his gospel, as many of those were under, whom yet the Lord made use of, and eventually blessed, in communicating the knowledge of Himself to such as were before strangers to him.

To manifest this, I shall produce four examples,—two out of the holy scriptures, and two out of ecclesiastical history. Out of the holy scriptures, one shall be out of the Old Testament, the other out of the New.

1. *Out of the Old Testament.*—It is surprising and astonishing to observe what a glorious work the Lord brought about, by the instrumentality of a little captive maid, whom the Syrians had brought out of the land of Israel. Read 2 Kings v. 2—19, the brief summary whereof is this: The poor little girl, waiting on her lady, dropped a few words: "Would God my lord were with the prophet in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." Another takes up those words, and reports them to Naaman. Many such discourses are breathed and expire in the same moment. The more wonderful is the conduct of God's providence, who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will. I may accommodate to this case what was spoken upon a very different account: "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James iii. 5.) For, by various steps, the conversion of Naaman was at last accomplished; and, considering his character and interest, we may probably conjecture, that his example and counsel might prevail with others also to turn from idols, and to serve the living and true God. We cannot well pass by this strange and remarkable instance, without staying so long as to observe,

(1.) That this little girl appears to have been seasoned with the knowledge of the true God, and to have been acted, in what she said,

by a principle of faith. This she showed by her confidence, that God would work a miracle by his own prophet and servant, Elisha ; for it was he whom she intended, as the sequel discovers. Samaria was then, like Athens, a “ city wholly given to idolatry ;” therein had Ahab built an altar and an house for Baal, and he had four hundred and fifty priests to attend his worship. The inhabitants may well be supposed to have been generally of the court-religion : only some few resorted to Elisha, and they, it is likely, in a more private way. We read of the good woman of Shunem, (2 Kings iv. 22, 23,) that was one of his disciples ; and this girl seems to have been of that way. Happy are those young ones upon whom the fear of God makes early impressions !

(2.) God opened the way to Naaman’s conversion by a little maid. The weaker the means, the more is God’s power glorified.

(3.) A few good words, dropped occasionally, may operate very successfully, especially when they are suitable and seasonable. (Prov. xxv. 11.) Let private Christians mind this.

(4.) A poor little maid, carried into captivity, opened the way to the conversion of one of the greatest personages in the country. It is very lamentable to hear so frequently of men and women, boys and girls, carried away captives by Turks and Tartars. But who can tell whether God may not, in his own good time, by some or other of them, convey the knowledge of Christ to some perishing souls ? This may suffice touching the example produced out of the Old Testament.

2. *The example out of the New Testament shall be of those who were driven out of Jerusalem, in the persecution that followed the martyrdom of Stephen.*—Of whom ye may read, Acts viii. 4 : “ Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” in the strange countries whither Providence led them ; and a wonderful blessing went along with them, as ye may see, Acts xi. 19—21 : “ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them ; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” These were private Christians, for any thing that appears to the contrary. And what they did was no more than every private Christian regularly may, and in duty ought to, do, if the criticism of the late learned annotator be allowed, who saith, that “ though *ευαγγελιζεσθαι* and *κηρυσσειν* do materially signify the same thing, yet, perhaps, they differ in the manner. For *ευαγγελιζεσθαι* is a work that lies in common : any Christian may “ publish the glad tidings of the gospel,” and give a relation of our Lord Jesus Christ’s doctrine, miracles, sufferings, resurrection, &c., which was permitted to be done by women themselves. But *κηρυσσειν*, “ to proclaim the gospel as heralds” appointed and authorized thereunto by Jesus Christ ; this is proper to the ministers of the gospel, and belongs to their office.” Upon this, I shall leave one remark only,—that it were greatly to be wished, that

all such as for their adherence to the gospel are, by persecution, driven from their habitations and countries, were persons of the same spirit with those who were scattered abroad from Jerusalem, such as bring the grace and word of God with them whithersoever they come; so would they prove great blessings to all that receive them. This may suffice to have been spoken of the New-Testament instance.

To the examples taken out of the holy scriptures, I shall subjoin two also out of ecclesiastical history.

1. The one is related by Ruffinus, who gives this account of the conversion of the kingdom of the Iberians to the faith. "There was," saith he, "a certain poor woman, who had been taken captive, and lived among them. She was, at first, taken notice of for her sobriety and modesty; and then, for her spending so much time in prayer. These raised a great admiration of her in the minds of the barbarians. At last they brought to her a sick child, which, upon her prayers, was restored to health. This spread her fame abroad, so that the queen of the country was brought to her, and by her prayers recovered. Whereupon the king and kingdom were won over to Christ; and the king sent to Constantine the Great, for some to instruct them farther in the Christian religion."* The holy conversation and the ardent devotions of private Christians, are excellent means to recommend the gospel, and to represent it as most amiable and desirable.

2. The other is of Frumentius and Ædesius. These, being Christians, were left young in one of the kingdoms of the Inner India, and were, after some time, for their excellent parts and unspotted life, honoured and employed by the queen of the country, during the minority of her son. In process of time, some Roman merchants came to traffic among them. Then Frumentius, understanding that there were some Christians among them, invited them to reside with him, and provided a place for them where they might offer up their prayers to God, after the Christian manner; and himself, having obtained leave of the queen, went to Athanasius, in Alexandria, requesting him to send some bishop to that kingdom, to promote the farther entertainment of the gospel among them, to which they were well inclined, and disposed for the reception of it. Athanasius ordained Frumentius himself, who returned, and, by God's blessing, met with wonderful success.† If providence shall bring these lines to the view of Christian travellers, merchants, and mariners, who come among the poor Heathen, let the examples laid before them excite and encourage them to use their endeavours to bring them to the knowledge of Christ, and the entertainment of the gospel.

Thus much touching the case of those private Christians who occasionally or provisionally may come to, or be brought to, those places where the gospel is not entertained as yet.

(III.) *Such private Christians as live, in a more settled way, among the Indians and other heathen nations, and were placed in the third*

* RUFFINI *Hist. Eccl.* lib. i. cap. 10. † *Idem, ibid.* lib. i. cap. 9; SOCRATIS *Eccl. Hist.* lib. i. cap. 15; SOZOMENUS, lib. ii. cap. 23.

rank or order, come to have their case to be considered, *how they may be most helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel.*

To assist those whose hearts the Lord shall bow over to mind this excellent work, I shall lay before them two directions :—

First. *They must carefully avoid all those things that have a proper tendency to alienate their minds and affections from the gospel, or to exasperate them against it.*

Secondly. *They must endeavour to use such means, and to take such courses, as have an aptitude to beget in them an esteem and veneration for the gospel, and so dispose them to embrace it.*

First. They who design and endeavour to win upon others, and to dispose them for the reception of the gospel, *must carefully avoid all such things as have an aptitude to alienate them from it.* I shall exemplify this direction in some instances ; as,

1. *Private Christians must prevent or suppress all bitter contentions among themselves.*—It is sad to observe, that differences among brethren are usually managed with such mutual accusations and reproaches, as make the name of Christians despicable or odious, especially to those who are prejudiced against them. Contentions and animosities among Christians break out on two occasions :—

(1.) *There may quarrels arise about earthly things.*—What can Heathens think of them, when they see them to malign and worry one another, for such things as their own philosophy hath taught them to make little account of? Abraham was very apprehensive of the evil consequences that might have attended the strife between his and Lot's herdsmen, probably about their pasturage, or watering-places ; and therefore he would not insist upon such pleas as he might reasonably have alleged on his own side, but stifled the contention, and sought an amicable composure, because he dreaded the scandal which would have been given to the Heathen by their brabbles. This is suggested : "The Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt in the land." (Gen. xiii. 7—9.) The contentions and wranglings of the Corinthians, about things that appertain to this life, and their going to law for them, especially the bringing of their suits before heathen tribunals, was to cast reproach on the Christian religion, as the apostle intimates. (1 Cor. vi. 1, 2.) How can Christians, without blushing, and confuting themselves, persuade others to embrace the gospel, which teacheth them to "set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth?" (Col. iii. 2;) to have their hearts crucified toward the world ; and yet, for the sake thereof, to violate all the precepts, and to despise all the promises, of the gospel, and, like dogs that fight about a bone, to tear out one another's throats, in their rage and fury? We may, then, conclude, that men in whom a worldly spirit is predominant, are very unfit to recommend the gospel unto others.

(2.) *The cross sentiments which men espouse and vindicate in things wherein religion seems to be concerned, have begotten the widest breaches, and the most furious contentions, that were ever found among Christians.*—If we inquire, "What spark hath kindled this raging fire?" we shall often find, that this earnest contending is not for that "faith

which was once delivered to the saints ;” but a dispute “ who shall be greatest ;” (Jude 3 ; Mark ix. 34 ;) or, it may be, about something that is dark, doubtful, or unnecessary, or about some undetermined mode. Or, possibly, as in some great conflagrations, we see the fire preys upon and devours all, and yet we know not who kindled it, or how it began. This is and must be for a lamentation. Once I am sure,—the divisions among Christians, and the bitter zeal which manageth their controversies about religion, is a mighty impediment and obstruction, that stops the progress of the gospel. In the writings of the ancients we find that the Heathen fortified themselves in their infidelity, and resisted the arguments and persuasions of those who recommended the faith of the gospel to them, with this objection : “ Ye Christians are not agreed among yourselves. Ye are broken into many sects and factions. Ye confute and condemn one another : therefore it is more advisable for us to continue as we are, than to leave our present station, before we know where to fix with any assurance that we are in the right.” All that I am able to do at present, for the removal of this scandal, is to beseech private Christians in the bowels of Christ, to value, love, and “ follow after the things that make for peace.” (Rom. xiv. 19.) For I fear the gospel will hardly get ground in the world, until the Spirit of love, reigning, and acting the hearts of those that profess it, do open the way for it. In the first planting of it, the concord of believers did greatly contribute to its entertainment. (Acts ii. 42.) It became a proverbial speech touching Christians : *Ecce, quàm se diligunt invicem!* “ Behold, how they love one another !” This is a subject that cannot be too much insisted upon, nor too zealously enforced. I account them excellent and happy persons indeed, who have a right to bear that motto, *Beati pacifici* [“ Blessed are the peace-makers”].

This may suffice touching *the first obstruction* that hinders the entertainment of the gospel.

2. *It is apparent, that they do not promote but obstruct the entertainment of the gospel, who would obtrude on those whom they persuade to embrace it, such things to be believed, or practised, as a part of their religion, as are nowhere to be found in it ; much more, if they be directly contrary to it.*—For instance : the gospel doth expressly determine that God only is to be the object of religious worship. (Matt. iv. 10.) How then can *they* recommend the gospel, *who* tell their proselytes, that they may admit mere creatures to be sharers with God in that worship which is appropriated to him ? The gospel saith, that “ there is but one Lord, Mediator between God and man ;” (1 Cor. viii. 6 ; 1 Tim. ii. 5 ;) and yet, there are these, who pretend to win over men to the gospel, who tell them, they must conjoin angels and departed saints with Christ in his office and work of Mediator. The gospel severely chargeth all those who believe it, to “ flee from idolatry ;” (1 Cor. x. 14 ; 1 John v. 21 ;) which is the enforcement of the second commandment : “ Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image,” &c. (Exod. xx. 4.) What then can they whom they are to instruct think of it, when they see them, in profound

devotion, to creep to, fall down before, and worship, images? especially when, upon that very account, it is notorious, that Jews and Mahometans abhor the gospel, upon a supposition that the worship of images is either taught or allowed therein. If I may have leave to declare my apprehensions, I must say that the gospel, propounded in its own native purity and simplicity, as our Lord Jesus Christ delivered it, and as they who were divinely inspired have recorded it, without any additional supplements or foreign mixtures, is the most effectual way that God hath appointed, and promised to bless, for the subduing of the world to Jesus Christ. And I should beseech those who endeavour the conversion of Heathens, to press nothing upon them (except the pre-supposed light and law of nature, right reason and discipline, to cultivate, civilize, and prepare them) save the naked truths, ordinances, and rules of the gospel, in all plainness and simplicity.

So much for the *second obstruction*.

3. *To symbolize or comply with those whom we would persuade to embrace the gospel in their superstitious customs and observances, is not the way to promote the entertainment of it, but to obstruct it.*—Under the name of “customs,” I do not comprehend the using of the same diet, or wearing the same stuff or fashion in apparel; for possibly the temperature of the climate, and other considerations, may make them necessary. Nor do I mean merely political customs, which are subservient to public order, justice, and tranquillity. But I intend superstitious customs and observances, wherein somewhat of religion or sanctity is placed. There are some things which may pass in the rank of indifferent, in their own nature, which yet become superstitious, when men place religion or holiness in them. It is well known, that Tertullian wrote his book, *De Coronâ Militis*, to justify the practice of a Christian soldier, who refused to wear a crown or garland of leaves on his head, because the Gentiles were wont to go so adorned in their solemnities and processions, accounting it a religious rite. But, in regard that the Jesuits are reported to practise and applaud their method of compliance with their converts, as they call them, in India or China, and other places, so far as to allow them to retain their pa-gods, and to worship them, with some mental reservations, and the right direction of their intentions; it will be necessary to say something more of this, because I have mentioned it as an obstruction that hinders the entertainment of the gospel.

I shall therefore briefly set before you,

(1.) *What we may collect from the authority of the scripture touching the case we are upon.*

(2.) *What have been the sentiments of some in after-ages.*

(1.) *What the scripture hath determined touching the compliance of the people of God with the superstitious customs of the Heathen.*—Whether it be in the way of approbation or allowance of them, or of symbolizing and conforming to them, though under the pretence of taking that course to gain them over to the true religion. As an example: I suppose that none will deny, that it was the duty of the Jews, to endeavour to proselyte others to the faith and worship of the

true God. Let us then observe what God did prescribe in order thereunto. Did he allow them to imitate their rites or customs? No; but quite contrary: he severely chargeth, that in no wise they should symbolize with them, lest they should be entangled or corrupted with their manners. (Deut. xii. 30, 31.) Learned men have bestowed much study and diligence to find out the reasons of many injunctions and prescriptions which God appropriated to the Jews. In some of them, they have clearly discovered a typical use, that they prefigured Christ or his church. In others, they find virtue and morality to be instilled. In others, provision to be made for health, decency, &c. But for several of them, they have resolved that God imposed them on purpose to set them at a greater distance from idolaters; and to guard them from those evil impressions which the familiarizing of their customs might make upon them: as, they might not wear a garment of linen and woollen wrought together; (Deut. xxii. 11;) because, as is said, the Egyptians used such. So they were forbidden to "round the corners of their head," or to "mar the corners of their beard;" (Lev. xix. 27;) because idolaters, and particularly the Egyptians, were so trimmed. It seems also, that other nations, who offered up their hair to their demons, out of devotion, were polled after some such manner. It is undeniable, as might be argued from these and several other reasons, that it was utterly unlawful for the Jews to symbolize with the Heathen in their superstitious rites. Neither is there a greater latitude for Christians under the gospel. They are, certainly, obliged to fly as far from idolatry as the Jews were. Some, indeed, in the church of Corinth, took too great a liberty in their compliances with idolaters; for they went with their friends into the idols' temple, and feasted there with them on the remainders of the sacrifices which had been offered to the idols. And it is probable that they pretended, that by such a condescension in a thing indifferent, they designed to engage their friends' affections, the better to recommend the Christian religion to them. But the apostle doth severely censure such temporizing. (1 Cor. viii. 10, 11, with x. 20, 21.) Thus ye have had a short account of the scripture-authority resolving the case.

(2.) Let us now hear *what have been the sentiments of some in after-ages*.—They were of opinion, that, to adopt some heathenish observances into the Christian worship, was not only warrantable, but also commendable, provided that care should be first taken to deal with them as the Jews were to treat those captive heathen women whom they intended to marry; and that was, to shave their heads, and pare their nails. (Deut. xxi. 11, 12.) Thus they converted many heathenish rites into Christian ceremonies, when they had cleansed and varnished them, as by changing their object, end, or mode. For instance: a learned man of our own hath proved, that the invocation of departed saints was nothing else but the old doctrine of demons revived.* Let not any one surmise, that this is an undue reflection, or a false insinuation, seeing a very learned English prelate hath written a small tract, to show "that the ecclesiastical government

* Mr. JOSEPH MEDE'S "Apostasy of the latter Times."

observed by the British and ancient English Pagans, they being converted unto Christianity, many of the paganish ceremonies and usages, not contrary to the scripture, were still retained in their Christian policy. By means whereof, tranquillity and peace were preserved, and the alteration in the state less dangerous or sensible."* How far those reasons did influence some when we departed from Popery, I know not. But I suppose, some things were retained, which seem not to have been desirable upon any other account, than to make the change less sensible in itself, and less dangerous to the state. As for the thing itself, for some centuries before the Reformation, there was so much borrowed from Jews and Pagans, and lodged in the church, that at last the Christian religion became much like to that of the Samaritans, a compound of the worship of the true God and of idols blended together; (2 Kings xvii. 24—41;) so that the church of God groaned for a reformation. Much was done at first by our worthies, possibly as much as the times could then bear. What they could not do, they left to be completed by their successors. And what little reason we have now to think to ingratiate ourselves with the Pagan-Christians, as some think they have ground enough to style the Papists, I would rather ye should hear from a learned doctor than from me, who delivers this among his "documents" as he calls them: "Seeing we are so well assured, that the Papacy is the kingdom of antichrist, or that city of Babylon wherein the people of God were held captive, we should leave no string or tassel of our ancient captivity upon us; such, I mean, as whereby they may take hold on us, and pull us back again into our former bondage; but look upon ourselves as absolutely free from any tie to them, more than in endeavouring their conversion and salvation. Which we knowing so experimentally not to be compassed by needless symbolizings with them in any thing, I conceive our best policy is, studiously to imitate them in nothing; but, for all indifferent things, to think rather the worse of them for their using them; as no person of honour would willingly go in the known garb of any lewd and infamous persons. Whatsoever we court them in, they do but turn it to our scorn and contempt, and are the more hardened in their own wickedness."† How easily soever Pagan rites were admitted into the Christian church, I am sure many of them have taken such deep root, that it is very difficult to eradicate and purge them out.

So much for *the third obstruction*.

4. *They who desire to be helpful in promoting the entertainment of the gospel, must not unnecessarily provoke and exasperate those whom they would win over to it.*—Moses refused to permit the Israelites to sacrifice to the Lord before the faces of the Egyptians, lest they should be enraged thereupon, and stone them. (Exod. viii. 25, 26.) They must not indeed forbear to do that which, under all due circumstances, God hath made to be their present duty; yet even in such cases they should remember my text: "Walk in wisdom toward them

* BISHOP ANDREWS'S learned "Discourse of Ceremonies retained and used in the Christian Churches." † DR. HENRY MORRIS'S "Divine Dialogues," part ii. page 398.

that are without ;” and “learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” (Matt. ix. 13.) They must declare against their idolatry, and endeavour to convert them to the true God, as Paul did: “We preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God.” (Acts xiv. 15.) And his success therein was wonderful, as Demetrius testifies : “Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands.” (Acts xix. 26.) But this must not be done with revilings, reproaches, and insultations ; but with judgment, tenderness, and meekness : “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” (2 Tim. ii. 25.) We may conclude then, that it is none of God’s way, from whomsoever men have learned it, to convert Heathens by robbing them of their goods and estates, and butchering their persons, which was the method that the Spaniards took to gospelize the Indians ; or to send dragoons as missionaries, to torment those whom they call “heretics,” thereby to reduce them to their Catholic church.

That is the fourth obstruction.

5. *They must religiously avoid that which is the greatest obstruction of all, the profligate and flagitious lives of some that call themselves Christians.*—If men were prompted and employed by the devil himself, they could not take a more effectual course to make the gospel to be abhorred, than by living as some Christians do. How can it be expected, that the poor, ignorant Heathen should have any reverence for the great and sacred name of God, when they hear those who pretend that they have a deep veneration for him, to reproach and blaspheme it ? They will conclude, that men do but prevaricate, when they tell them that Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” (Titus ii. 14,) and yet live so, as if Christ died only to procure for them a licence to continue in sin, or to purchase impunity for them that do so. Will they believe those that tell them, “The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil,” (1 John iii. 8,) and that they act under him as the Captain of their salvation, (Heb. ii. 10,) while they employ all their time, parts, and power to establish and defend Satan’s kingdom ? Can ye persuade men that ye believe there is a hell and eternal flames prepared for the ungodly and impenitent, and that the wicked shall be cast into it, when they observe those that say they believe this, to run posting, sporting, and laughing unto it ? They will never apprehend, that the heaven which, they are told, the gospel promiseth to the faithful and holy, is any other than a poetical Elysiuim, or a Mahometan Paradise, while they perceive that such as call themselves Christians do prefer the world and sensual pleasures before it. Can any man convince them, that the saints are such excellent creatures, when they see those who call themselves so to live like brutes or devils ? It is a vain attempt to persuade others to believe and obey the gospel, until they who profess it have learned better what it teacheth them,

to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." (Titus ii. 11, 12.)

These are some of the stumbling-blocks which are to be removed out of the way, before any successful persuasions, motives, inducements, or other means will prevail, to dispose and incline those who have not received the gospel to embrace it.

Secondly. But, these obstructions being removed, *what ways are to be taken, to help-on the entertainment of the gospel?*—To answer that question, I shall recommend unto you some few, among many, which I conceive to be most obvious, practicable, and effectual. For instance:—

1. *Private Christians should endeavour to oblige those whom they would persuade, by civilities, kindness, and doing good offices for them, that they may be assured that they love them, and seek their real and eternal good.*—Our blessed Saviour, who best understood what attractives were most proper and powerful to draw men to receive him and his gospel, took this method: he "went about doing good." (Acts x. 38.) He did good to men's bodies, that he might do good to their souls. The miracles which he wrought were generally of beneficence and obligations; as, to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, &c. It is true, he had a superior aim and end in working miracles, which was, to show forth his glory, to confirm his doctrine, to strengthen the faith of his disciples, &c.; (John ii. 11; xx. 31;) yet, secondarily, it was to testify his kindness and compassion toward those whom he designed to persuade to believe on him: "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue now with me three days, and have nothing to eat;" and thereupon he wrought a miracle for their refreshment, feeding four thousand men, beside women and children, with seven loaves, and a few little fishes. (Matt. xv. 32—38.) And to this we may add the apostle's advice: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men;" even to such as are not of "the household of faith," (Gal. vi. 10,) that is, though they be infidels. Very pertinent hereto is that remarkable passage in Eusebius, who acquaints us, that the Christian religion gained a very high esteem among the infidels upon this occasion: when famine and pestilence raged extremely, in the reign of Maximinus, the Christians showed a tender compassion to the Pagans, when they were neglected by those of their own superstition; for they buried their dead, attended and ministered unto their sick, and every day distributed bread to those who were ready to perish; and so, by their works, declared themselves to be the true worshippers of God, through Jesus Christ.*

2. *Private Christians must be very just and punctual in their negotiations and traffic with those whom they would persuade to embrace the gospel.*—They must inviolably keep their word and promise with them, and take no advantage of their want of skill or experience, thereby to over-reach and defraud them. Mr. Terry, that was chaplain to Sir Thomas Roe, as I remember, ambassador at the court of the Great Mogul, and hath written of those countries, hath

* EUSEBIUS *Hist. Eccl.* lib. ix. cap. 8.

this passage, which cuts to the quick, that when the Indians offered a commodity in sale to a Christian, and he bade very disproportionably to the price demanded, they would usually reply, "Do you think that I am a Christian?" intimating thereby, that they made no conscience in buying and selling, but thought all gain lawful; which they stuck not to purchase by flattery, lying, and unrighteousness. If then they should measure the rules of the gospel by the practice of such as profess it, which is very ordinary, they would despise it, as falling short of their own philosophy or morality, which were greatly refined about matters of common right and justice.

3. *Private Christians should abound in the exercise of those amiable graces, the evidences and effects whereof fall under the notice and observation of others.*—Such as are mentioned, Gal. v. 22, 23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." They who are strangers to the gospel understand not the sublime mysteries of faith; but they can judge of things that fall under the perception of sense and reason. They understand not what a man's notions may be in speculation; but they can tell when a man is just, sober, humble, courteous, &c.; and when those excellent qualities do show themselves, they may be brought to inquire into, and to admire, those hidden causes that produce such rare and desirable effects.

4. *Private Christians should labour to maintain and discover an even and undisturbed frame of spirit, under various revolutions of providence; neither over-joying their comforts, nor over-grieving their crosses.*—"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it." (1 Cor. vii. 29—31.) What a convincing argument must this needs be, to one who is acted by no higher a principle than flesh or nature, to behold a Christian to live above the gaieties of the world, as having more pure, spiritual, and heavenly enjoyments to entertain his soul withal! and to observe, that crosses and afflictions do not abate his love to God, his reverence which he hath for God, or his joy in him!

5. *Private Christians should make themselves remarkable and considerable in the faithful discharge of relative duties.*—With these they are frequently and earnestly charged; and that upon this particular account, because the honour and interest of the gospel is so much concerned in them: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." (1 Tim. vi. 1.) It is evident, that heathen morality was greatly defective in the regulating of domestic offices; and therefore, the rules and directions given in the gospel concerning them must highly advance it in the esteem and judgment of all considering persons.

6. *Private Christians should order the whole course of their lives and conversations so "as it becometh the gospel of Christ,"* (Phil.

i. 27,) “*that thereby they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*” (Titus ii. 10.)—When men see such glorious rays of holiness sparkling and shining in the whole tenor of a Christian’s conversation, they must needs be convinced that the gospel doth furnish them with those principles of light and grace, that infinitely transcend those obscure and broken notices of good and evil that are found in lapsed but unrenewed nature.

These instances, among several others that might be mentioned, may direct private Christians how they may be helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel: which was the inquiry at first propounded to be answered.

APPLICATION.

And now, after that all this hath been spoken, it is likely that some private Christians, who mean well, may think this whole discourse very remote from their concerns, and that it tends but little to their edification; and thereupon infer, that the subject was ill chosen, and that something more profitable might have been pitched upon. But I would entreat those who have entertained any such prejudices, before they pass their censure, maturely to consider what it is that hath been insisted upon; and then I hope that they who are sincerely godly and prudent, will not think themselves unconcerned in that which so nearly relates to the glory of God, the sanctifying of his name, and the enlargement and prosperity of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such prejudices being removed, there are two things that I would earnestly recommend to godly private Christians:—

First. *Charge your consciences with this, as a necessary, excellent, honourable, and comfortable duty,—that ye stand obliged, in all ways prescribed by God, according to your circumstances, to be helpful toward the promoting of the entertainment of the gospel.*—Look upon your former failings as sinful, and to be repented of; and, for the future, apply yourselves more vigorously and cheerfully to this blessed work. To move and encourage you hereunto,

1. *Excite your faith to receive and realize those many glorious promises which are made to Christ as Mediator, touching the establishment and enlargement of his kingdom in the world.*—As, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;” (Psalm ii. 8;) with abundance more of the same import.

2. *Consider that the preaching of the gospel is the ordinary means whereby subjects are gained to Christ, and brought under his government.*—“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Rom. x. 14, 15, 17.) If ye then

promote the spreading of the gospel, ye enlarge the kingdom of Christ.

3. *Tenderly pity and compassionate the many millions of the sons and daughters of Adam, who were hewn out of the same rock, and digged out of the same hole of the pit, with yourselves, who, as yet, lie in thralldom under Satan, and are members of his visible kingdom.*—It would, doubtless, be very grateful to you, if your assistance might contribute any thing toward their deliverance out of that miserable bondage; and the means to procure it, is to help on, as far as ye may, the bringing of the gospel among them; for that is God's appointed way to effect it. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke iv. 18—20.) "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts xxvi. 16—18.)

4. *Remember, that grace, when it hath its freedom of exercise, will draw you off from centring in self, and raise in you a spirit of freedom and nobleness to seek the good of others, especially to advance the glory of God in the salvation of souls.*—Take heed that ye be not found in the number of those of whom the apostle speaks: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." (Phil. ii. 21.)

5. *I hope ye do not desire to be excused or excluded from bearing any part in that honourable and glorious work, of being employed by Christ (in your stations, and according to your capacities) in the affairs of his kingdom.*—But that it would grieve you at the very heart, to be laid aside as a despised, broken idol. When all this is recollected and maturely pondered, where is that godly private Christian that will deliberately say?—"I am not concerned to be helpful, in such ways as are proper for me, in promoting the entertainment of the gospel."

Secondly. As for those godly private Christians whose hearts are sincerely willing to be serviceable to the Lord Jesus Christ, and would exceedingly rejoice to contribute all the assistance that they are able to afford, for the conversion and salvation of perishing souls; but complain, *that the work in which this discourse would engage them lies a great way off, and is out of their reach; but, could they be employed about any thing of that nature within the compass of their sphere of activity, they would most gladly embrace it, and vigorously bestir themselves in it.*—If that be really the case of any, then I say to such, Up, and be doing, and the Lord be with you, to direct, help,

and succeed you; for ye will find enough to do at your own doors, and probably in your own houses.

Briefly and plainly, then, the matter stands thus: there are many who have entertained the gospel as far as a general, ignorant, customary profession will go; but are so far from admitting the spirit, life, and power of it into their hearts, that they are not only utter strangers to it, but are full of bitter enmity against it. Will ye be helpful now to prevail with them to receive it with faith, love, and obedience? It will be as acceptable (and, I fear, ye will find it as difficult) a work to bring a wicked, hard-hearted Christian to believe in Christ to the salvation of his soul, as an open infidel to make profession of the gospel. Ye will find many as ignorant of the very essentials of Christianity as the very Pagans; as froward, perverse, and opposite to all means of instruction, as Indians; many that love their lusts, and hold them as fast as any in the world. The barbarians are prejudiced against our religion, because they understand it not, or have had it misrepresented to them; but the more plainly and truly it is set forth before profane ones at home, the more bitterly do they hate it, and discover the greater aversion to it.

So ye see, that though the scene of the question seemed to be laid afar off, yet the purport and design of it reach us at home. And, I believe, no godly private Christian will say, that he is not concerned to seek the conversion and salvation of the ignorant, sensual, profane, and ungodly ones among whom they live.

If ye ask me then, "How may we be helpful thereunto?" I answer, that, generally, the same methods are to be made use of that have already been insisted upon: as, to endeavour, in our several stations and capacities, that such may be employed and encouraged to preach the gospel as are themselves seasoned with the spirit and grace of it, and zealously seek the conversion and salvation of souls; to pray more fervently for the pouring out of the Spirit, to make the preaching of the word successful; to remove all impediments and obstructions, as far as we can, out of their way; to assist them with what help we can, by obliging, instructing, and persuading, and walking exemplarily before them.

But I shall not proceed farther in this, because it would draw out the discourse to too great a length: and I think it would be for your edification to review over again what hath been already insisted upon; and then, upon second thoughts, ye may discover more than fell under your notice in the first cursory reading.

I shall conclude all with, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." (James v. 19, 20.)

SERMON XIII.

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HOW CHRIST IS TO BE FOLLOWED AS OUR EXAMPLE.

Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.—1 Peter ii. 21.

THE persons to whom the apostle wrote this epistle are, in the beginning of it, styled "strangers." So they were, because dispersed and "scattered" in several kingdoms of the Gentiles; and they were pilgrims and sojourners in the earth itself; being "regenerated and born from above;"* and minding "a better country" than was to be found here below. The apostle endeavours to strengthen their faith, to enliven their hope, to fix their hearts upon "the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance," and to keep them in the way that leads to it.

In this chapter, where my text lies, he admonishes them to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." He exhorts them to a "conversation" that would glorify God, convince the world, and adorn the gospel: their zeal ought to be so great of those works that are good, that they should not think much to suffer for "well-doing." *Bona agere, et mala pati*; "to do good, and to hold on in so doing, though very ill requited for it:" this is high and noble indeed; this is an honour not vouchsafed to "the elect angels," who are not capable of suffering. This is to be a Christian in truth and eminency; and to resemble Christ himself, "who suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps." (Verse 21.)

In the words which I have read, you may take notice,

1. *Of one end of Christ in suffering; and that is, that he might leave us an example.*—To say that this was the principal end of his passion, to deny his satisfaction as if it were impossible or needless, is heretical in a very high degree. To deny the blood of Christ to be the price of our redemption, is to "deny the Lord that bought us." And truly, the only propitiatory sacrifice for sin being rejected, there is no other remaining, "but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. x. 27.) And yet, though Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," (1 Peter ii. 24,) he is not only our Redeemer, but our example. He hath bequeathed blessings never enough to be valued, in his testament: he has also left us an incomparable example. The Greek word *ὑπογραμμος*, which signifies "example," is either taken from excellent writing-masters, who set a fair copy for their scholars to write after; or it is taken from painters, who draw a curious master-piece, for inferior artists' admiration and imitation.

* Δει ἑμας γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν. (John iii. 7.)

2. *They were remarkable steps that Christ took when he was here in the days of his flesh.*—And among them all he did not take one wrong one. He was “made of a woman, made under the law;” (Gal. iv. 4;) and he did not in the least transgress the law. He came upon this earth to do his Father’s will: “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God!” (Heb. x. 7.) And never did he any thing that was in any degree contrary to it.

3. *The steps of Christ are to be followed.*—Good men in scripture are our patterns, whose faith and patience we are to follow: “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (Heb. vi. 12.) “The cloud of witnesses” is to be minded; (Heb. xii. 1;) and the bright side of it gives a good light unto our feet. But there is a dark side of the cloud, which may make us cautious: we must take heed of resembling the best of men in that which is bad, in their falls and infirmities. Abraham is renowned for his faith; yet not to be imitated in the carnal shifts [which] he made for the saving of his life. Barnabas “was to be blamed,” for being “carried away by Peter’s dissimulation.” (Gal. ii. 13.) But Christ is such an example, as [that] to walk according to it, and to walk by the strictest rule, is all one; for our Lord did whatsoever became him, and exactly “fulfilled all righteousness.” (Matt. iii. 15.)

4. *Here is a special intimation (as appears by the context) of a Christian’s duty patiently to bear injuries, and to take up the cross.*—Though the gospel be the gladdest tidings, yet *suffering* is a word that sounds very harsh to flesh and blood. But the apostle bids us behold Christ in his sufferings, and not think much of our afflictions, which were but a drop compared with his, which were a vast ocean. The sufferings of Christ the Head were unconceivably greater than those which any of his members, at any time, are called to undergo. And, indeed, when he drank the cup [which] his Father gave him, he drank out the curse and bitterness of it; so that it is both blessed and sweetened to the Lamb’s followers who are to drink after him.

5. *The sufferings of Christ and his example being joined together in the text, here is a signification that by his death he has purchased grace to assist and enable us to follow his example.*—Our Lord knows our natural impotency, nay, averseness, to follow him, or so much as to look to him. His death is effectual therefore to kill our sin, and to heal our depraved nature. “His power rests upon us,” (2 Cor. xii. 9,) that we may tread the path in which he has gone before us. “I am able to do all things,” says the apostle, “through Christ strengthening me.” (Phil. iv. 13.)

I am desired this morning to speak of *Christ as our example*; and to show *how Christians are to follow him*.

This is a theme that commends itself to you, by its excellency, usefulness, and seasonableness, in such an age, wherein there is such a sinful, sad, and almost universal degenerating from true and real Christianity. Glorious Head! hadst thou ever on earth a body more

unlike thee than at this day? How few manifestly declare themselves the epistles of Christ, written by the Spirit of the living God! Few professors have his *image*, who yet bear his *superscription*.

In the handling of this subject, I shall,

I. *Premise some things by way of caution.*

II. *Show you in what respects Christ is an example to be followed.*

III. *Produce some arguments to persuade you to the imitation of him.*

IV. *Close with some directions how this duty may be done effectually.*

I. In the first place, I am to *premise some things by way of caution.*

1. *Think not, as long as you remain in this world, to be altogether free from sin, as Christ was.*—He indeed was, from his conception in the womb, to his ascension far above all visible heavens, altogether immaculate and “without blemish.” Some have fancied spots in the sun; but sure I am, in “the Sun of righteousness” there is none. The sins of all that are saved were “laid upon him;” but no sin was ever found in him, or done by him. The apostle tells us, that he was “holy, harmless, and undefiled.” (Heb. vii. 26.) You are indeed to imitate Christ in purity; but perfect holiness you cannot attain to, while you carry such a body of death about you, and are in such a world as this. It may comfort you to consider, after the fall of the first Adam, and the sad consequences of it, how the Second Adam stood and conquered, and kept himself unspotted from the world, all the while he conversed in it. But as long as you remain on earth, some defilement will cleave to you to admonish you where you are, and to make you long for the heavenly Jerusalem. More and more holy you may and ought to be; but to be completely holy, is the happiness not of earth, but heaven.

2. *Think not that Christ in all his actions is to be imitated.*—There are royalties belonging to our Lord Jesus, which none must invade. He alone is Judge and Lawgiver in Zion; and that worship is vain which “is taught by the precepts of men.” (Isai. xxix. 13.) Christ “is all in all.” He “fills all in all.” (Eph. i. 23.) When the fathers of the last Lateran council told Leo X., that “all power was given to him in heaven and earth;” as it was blasphemous flattery in them to give, so it was blasphemous pride and right anti-christian arrogancy in him to accept, the honour. When our Lord was upon earth, there were several acts of power which he exerted; as, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, and such-like; which Christians now must not think of doing. I grant, that the power of working miracles was communicated to the apostles and others; but it was *res unius ætatis*, “a thing that lasted little longer than one age.” These miracles were necessary when the gospel was first to be planted in the world;* but now they are ceased: and if there were

* *Elegit apostolos humiliter natos, inhonoratos, illiteratos; ut quicquid magnum essent et facerent; ipsi in eis esset et faceret.*—AUGUSTINUS *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xviii. cap. 49. “God chose men who were of humble origin, devoid of worldly honours, and illiterate,

but a general exactness of exemplariness in Christians' lives and practices, this might be *majus omni miraculo*, "a great deal more than miracles," toward the gospel's propagation.

3. *Think not that your obedience can be meritorious, as was the obedience of our Lord and Saviour.*—The apostle tells us, that "by the obedience of one," (that is, the Second Adam,) "many are made righteous;" and to this obedience is owing that "abundance of grace" which believers receive, "the gift of righteousness," and also "reigning in life eternal." (Rom. v. 17, 19.) The merit of our Lord Jesus is so every way sufficient, that believers' merit is as needless as, all things considered, it is impossible. It was very orthodox humility in Jacob, when he confessed he was "less than the least of all mercies;" (Gen. xxxii. 10;) and Nehemiah, though he speaks again and again of the good deeds he had done, was certainly very far from the opinion of merit, as appears, Neh. xiii. 22: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy."

4. *You must not imagine that your greatest sufferings for the sake of righteousness are in the least expiatory of sin, as Christ's sufferings were.*—"Christ was delivered for our offences," (Rom. iv. 25,) and "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) The offering was but one, the sacrifice of himself; and it was offered but once. Other sacrifices are unnecessary; it is unnecessary that this should be again offered. Our Lord upon the cross, with his last breath, cried out: *Τετέλεσται* "It is finished." (John xix. 30.) As if he had said, "All is done, all is undergone, that was needful for my church's acceptation with God, and the full remission of all their trespasses." Understand, that no sufferings that you can undergo for Christ's sake, are satisfactory for your iniquities. Do not, by such a thought, offer to derogate from Christ's complete satisfaction. We read of some "that came out of great tribulation." But did the blood of these martyrs justify them? No such matter: "They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.)

II. In the second place, I am to show you *in what respects Christ is an example to be followed.*

1. Christ is to be followed *in his great self-denial.*—It had been a great stoop in the Son of God, if his Deity had been veiled with the nature of angels. A greater stoop it would have been to be made flesh; though he had been born of an empress, and had been as glorious a temporal monarch as the Jews fancied he would be. But this is exceedingly amazing, to behold Him that "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, making himself of no reputation, and taking upon him the form of a servant." (Phil. ii. 7.) He "did not abhor a poor virgin's womb," nor afterwards to be laid in a manger; and

to be his apostles; that how great soever they might afterwards become, and however wonderful might be the enterprises in which they engaged and were successful, it might be apparent that He was with them and in them, and performed those mighty works by his own energy with which they were endowed."—EDIT.

though he was Lord of all, "yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) Thus "he pleased not himself;" (Rom. xv. 3;) neither did he seek himself and his own honour, but the honour and glory of him that sent him. (John vii. 18.)

How can he be a follower of Christ who is so utterly unlike him in being selfish? Our Lord knew the prevalency of self-love, and how opposite it is to the love of God, and [the] care of the soul; therefore he strictly requires self-denial: "If any man will come after me, *ἀπαρνησάτω ἑαυτόν*, let him deny himself:" (Luke ix. 23:) *seipsum abdicet*, as Beza translates it: "Self-abdication is called for." A man must have no regard to himself, to his own ends and inclinations, as they are opposite unto and lead him away from God, and from his duty. O, act as new creatures, and as those that are not your former selves! Seek not your "own things." (Phil. ii. 21.) "Let nothing be done through vain-glory." (Verse 3.) Be ever diffident and jealous of yourselves. Self is the enemy that is always present, and most within us, and that has the greatest power to sway us. "We are not our own, we are bought with a price;" we should "glorify" the Lord that has bought us, as those that are debtors, (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20,) not to ourselves, but of ourselves to him.

2. Christ is to be followed in *his patient enduring the world's hatred, and the slights and contradiction of sinners.*—It was the Father's and the Son's love to the world, that brought Christ into it: and he came "not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." (John iii. 17.) Yet what strange kind of usage from the world did he meet with! The world was mad upon sin, venturous upon hell and wrath, and with contempt and hatred rejected the only Saviour. His person they are prejudiced against; his doctrine they contradict; and his design they oppose, though their deliverance and salvation were designed.

Christians should not think it strange that they meet with hard and unworthy usage from the world. Cain did quickly show his enmity against Abel his brother, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." (1 John iii. 12.) "If the world hate you," says Christ, "ye know it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 18, 19.) Now as Christ was unmoved by the world's malice either from doing his work, or from looking to "the joy that was set before him;" (Heb. xii. 2;) so should Christians also be. Conquer the world by contempt of its fury. Overcome its evil with good. And as Christ "made intercession for the transgressors," that cried, "Crucify him, crucify him," so do ye "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matt. v. 44.)

3. Christ is to be followed in *his resisting and overcoming the prince of darkness.*—Satan assaulted the first Adam, and was too hard for

him. He was so bold as to set upon the Second Adam, but was foiled by "the Captain of our salvation." If you read the history of Christ's temptation, Matt. iv. 1—11, you may perceive that nothing from the tempter fastens upon our Lord Jesus. The subtlety of the old serpent was in vain; and by the sword of the Spirit all his force was repelled.

Christians are to look upon the evil one as an enemy that Christ has conquered; and this should encourage them in their conflicts with him. They are to despise his offers. They are not to be persuaded, by his misapplication of scripture, to any thing that is unjustifiable and irregular. "The word of God should abide in them;" that they may be "strong, and overcome the wicked one." (1 John ii. 14.) The Head always resisted: shall the members yield to this destroyer? Let not your hearts be filled with Satan; let not your heads and hands be employed by him who works in the children of disobedience.

4. Christ is to be followed in *his contempt of the world's glory, and contentment with a mean and low estate in it.*—Never was the world so set forth, in such an alluring dress, as when the god of it, "in a moment of time," showed unto our Lord Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them." (Luke iv. 5, 6.) Yet the heavenly mind of Christ is not taken with the sight. He knew he saw nothing but what was vanity; and his kingdom, which was not of this world, was a far better thing than the world's best kingdom. Instead of pursuing, he flees from, a crown, which the people were ready to force upon his head.

Ambition and covetousness after worldly grandeur and gain, which make us so unlike to Christ, should be far from us. If the world be the great thing with us, mammon will have us at command, and Christ will have but little service from us. Why should that be high in the esteem and affection of your hearts, which Christ so little minded? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." (1 John ii. 15.) "Set your affection on things above, not on things that are on the earth." (Col. iii. 2.) If you have the world's riches, let not your minds be high, "nor your hearts set upon them;" (Psalm lxii. 10;) and "be rich in good works." (1 Tim. vi. 18.) If you are in a meaner estate, be satisfied; remember who said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The best men in the world, that have done most good in the world, have least cared for the world; and have been most willing to leave the world, and go to a better.

5. Christ is to be followed in *his living a life so very beneficial, doing good being his perpetual business.*—The apostle Peter, who was one of his greatest and most constant attendants, says, that "he went about doing good." (Acts x. 38.) To do thus, was meat and drink to him. How great were his kindness and compassion to souls! How much mercy does he show to the bodies of men!

You that are Christians, be very active, in the best sense. The true members of Christ have the Spirit of the Head in them, whose "fruit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." (Eph. v. 9.) What

have you faith for, but that it may work by love? Why are you "created in Christ Jesus," but that you may be employed in "good works, which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them?" (Eph. ii. 10.) Be sure to "do justly:" be injurious to none: render unto all their dues. And do not only consult *the dues* of others, but *their needs* also; and "love to be merciful;" (Micah vi. 8;) and let the perishing souls, as well as the distressed bodies, of others have a great share in your compassions. "As you have opportunity, do good unto all men," and good of as many sorts as may be, "especially to the household of faith." (Gal. vi. 10.) The apostle speaks with great authority and asseveration, when he presses Christian practice; "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." (Titus iii. 8.) A Christian by profession, who lives wickedly, is not a true member, but a monster in the church; and will not be endured long, but is near to be cut off and destroyed. It is a true saying, *Ψυχὴν θανάτου οὐκ ἀπολλύσιν, ἀλλὰ κακὸς βίος*. "Death does not destroy the soul; but it is an ill life that ruins it."

6. Christ is to be followed in *his most profitable and edifying communication*.—We read, that "grace was poured into his lips." (Psalm xlv. 2.) "The gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," were the wonder of the hearers. (Luke iv. 22.) Exact truth always accompanied his speeches: he never spake a word that was offensive to God, or injurious to any man. Was he chargeable with "guile?" Or "when he was reviled, did he revile again?" (1 Peter ii. 22, 23.) No, no: he gave a better example: he speaks words to awaken sinners; to search hypocrites. And how does he comfort the mourners! calling "all the weary and heavy laden to come to him for rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) He takes occasion almost from every thing to discourse of the heavenly kingdom. His parables of the sower, of leaven, of the merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, and such-like, plainly show that the most ordinary things may spiritually be improved unto great usefulness.

All professors, and especially you of London, "set a watch before the door of your lips;" (Psalm cxli. 3;) and let your words be like the words of Christ Jesus. Your lying and corrupt communication, your slanderous and backbiting words, your passionate and angry speeches and revilings,—are these like Christ's language? "An unbridled tongue," though it utters many a falsehood, yet it speaks one certain truth,—that "your religion is but vain." (James i. 26.) Let conscience be tender; and purpose, with the Psalmist, "that your mouths shall not transgress." (Psalm xvii. 3.) Let the word of Christ be more in your hearts; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "Let your speech be always with grace." (Col. iv. 6.) Discourse as those who do believe [that] you are debtors of edifying words one to another; that "idle words" are heard by Him that is in heaven, and "an account must be given of them in the day of judgment." (Matt. xii. 36.)

7. Christ is to be followed in *his manner of performing holy duties*.—Never was he negligent in an ordinance. His “cries” were “strong,” his “tears many.” (Heb. v. 7.) And how does he wrestle with his heavenly Father!

Christians should take heed of doing the work of God deceitfully. (Jer. xlviii. 10.) They should be “fervent in spirit,” when “serving the Lord.” (Rom. xii. 11.) Look to your hearts in all your performances; for God’s eye is fixed upon them; and if they are not present and right with him, your duties are but dead duties; and dead duties are really dead works; so far from being acceptable, that they are an abomination. When Christ was here upon the earth, as he taught in other places, so he went to the temple, and to the synagogues; though there was much corruption in the Jewish church. Christians should learn so much moderation, as to own what is good even in them in whom there are mixtures of much that is bad; and there should be a cause that will pass for just and sufficient at the great day, before they resolve upon a total separation from their brethren.

8. Christ is to be followed in *his great humility and meekness*.—“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. xi. 29.) Pride overcame the first man: he affected Divinity, and would needs be as God. But, behold the Lord Jesus, who is the Eternal God; and he humbled himself and became man. Humility was the constant attire and ornament of the man Christ Jesus.

Though this great Redeemer be “the chief of all the ways of God;” (Job xl. 19;) though more of God is visible in him than in the whole creation besides; though he glorifies his Father more than all the creatures in heaven and earth put together; and though he is exalted “far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come;” (Eph. i. 21;) yet our Lord never was in the least high-minded.

Humility is one most remarkable feature in the image of Christ; therefore resemble him in being humble. Be not proud of habit, hair, and ornaments. *Την ταπεινοφροσύνην εγκομβώσαθε.* (1 Peter v. 5.) Etymologists derive the word from *κομβος*, which signifies *nodus*, “a knot.” “Be clothed,” or “be knotted,” “with humility.” I wish that other knots were less, and this, which is incomparably most becoming, were more, in fashion. Let not your estates puff you up. “Riches are not always to men of understanding;” (Eccles. ix. 11;) and there may be a great deal of gold in the purse where there is no true wisdom in the head, no grace at all in the heart. Let not your natural parts, your acquired endowments, your spiritual gifts, though never so excellent, make you to look upon others with contempt, upon yourselves with admiration. You owe all glory to that God from whom you have received all. Let humility look out at your eyes. “A proud look” is one of the “seven things which the Lord doth hate.” (Prov. vi. 16, 17.) Let

humility express itself at your lips ; let it attend you in all your addresses to God, and beautify your whole behaviour and converses with men. The more humble you are, the more of every other grace will be imparted to you, the more rest and peace you will have within yourselves ; and, since you will be ready to give him all the praise, the Lord is ready to put the more honour upon you in making you useful unto others.

9. Christ is to be followed *in his love to God, great care to please him, and fervent zeal for his name and glory.*—"That the world may know," says Christ, "that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." (John xiv. 31.) He obeyed that "first and great commandment," and "loved the Lord his God, with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Christ's love made him do whatever his Father pleased : "He that sent me is with me : the Father hath not left me alone ; for I do always those things that please him." (John viii. 29.) Christ's love was stronger than death : "no waters, no floods, could drown it ;" neither could the baptism of blood "quench it." (Canticles viii. 7 ; Matt. xx. 22.) Christ was "consumed" with divine and holy "zeal ;" (John ii. 17 ;) and he matters not what [might] befall him, so he might but "glorify his Father," and "finish the work which was given him to do." (John xvii. 4.)

O let us bring our cold and careless hearts hither to the consideration of this Great Example ! that the frost may melt, care may be awakened, and there may be something in us, that may deserve the name of "warm zeal for God." Let us be importunate in prayer, and restless till we feel the constraints of the love of God forcible ; till we find really the greatest delight and pleasure in doing that which pleases him ; and, aiming at his glory, we think not much of labour, difficulty, and hazard, that this our end may be attained.

10. Christ is to be followed *in his sufferings and death.*—And unto this my text has a more particular reference. Christ's "faith was strong," though he was under a dismal desertion. "The Sun of Righteousness" did set in a dark cloud. He submitted to his Father's will ; and, being confident of a joyful resurrection, he "endured the cross, and despised the shame." (Heb. xii. 2.)

When Christians come to die, their faith should be most lively, as being near finishing. It should by no means fail when there is most need of it. "Though he slay me," says Job, "yet will I trust in him." (Job xiii. 15.) Christians should submit, when the Lord of time will grant no more time to them ; and they should gladly enter upon a holy and blessed eternity. When the body is about to be "sown in corruption," by faith they should see that its lying there will be to advantage ; for it will be "raised in incorruption and glory." (1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.) Let death be more natural or violent, it is yours in the covenant, if you are true believers. (1 Cor. iii. 22.) Fear not to follow our Lord Jesus through that dark passage into the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.) And, all the while you remain on earth, study a conformity to your

Lord's death, by crucifying the flesh, and dying to the world: the more dead you are with Christ in this sense, you will live to the better purpose, and die in the greater peace.

III. In the third place, I am to produce *some arguments to persuade to the imitation of our Lord Jesus.*

1. *Consider the greatness of the Person that gives you the example.*—Christ has this “name written on his vesture, and on his thigh; KING of kings, and LORD of lords.” (Rev. xix. 16.) A Roman historian * commends a prince who is *maximus imperio, exemplo major*, “greatest in authority, and yet greater by his example.” “Every thing in heaven, and earth, and under the earth does bow” and is subject to the Lord Jesus; (Phil. ii. 10;) and yet whose obedience ever was so exact as his was? He gives us precepts, and he himself is the great Pattern of performance. Claudian, the poet, has a notable passage concerning the examples of monarchs, and what a mighty influence they have:—

*Tunc observantior æqui
Fuit populus; nec ferre negat, cum viderit ipsum
Autorem parere sibi. Componitur orbis
Regis ad exemplum. Nec sic inflectere sensus
Humanos edicta valent, ut vita regentis.
Mobile mutatur semper cum principe vulgus.†—
De quarto Consul. Honorii Aug. Panegyris, 296—301.*

Kings have many observers, who very much eye them; and their high estate both awes and allures their subjects to the imitation of them. If they keep within the bounds of their own laws, their subjects will be the more unwilling to transgress them. Christ is the universal Sovereign, who commands both heaven and earth, and has the whole creation at his beck. He has kept the laws [which] he gives his church. It is duty, it is interest, it is reasonable, it is honourable, to resemble him in obedience.

2. *Remember the relation wherein you that are saints do stand unto the Lord Jesus.*—You are espoused to him: and should you not consent to be like to him, “who has betrothed you unto himself in loving-kindness, mercy, and faithfulness for ever?” (Hosea ii. 19, 20.) Nay, “you are members of his body.” (Eph. v. 30.) Therefore you “should grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.” (Eph. iv. 15.) You should discover such a mind as Christ had; you should manifest the same spirit; and act as he acted when he was here in the world.

3. *Consider, that God did fore-ordain you that are believers to a conformity to the Lord Jesus.*—“For whom he did foreknow, he also

* VELLEIUS PATERCULUS, lib. ii.

† “Be first thyself obedience to observe,
And none will from thy laws attempt to swerve.
To mandates of their own if monarchs bow,
The people readily their force allow.
The sovereign's actions modify the whole:
No powers the human mind so well control,
As bright examples beaming from the throne:
The prince to copy, are the vulgar prone.”—HAWKINS'S Translation.

did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. viii. 29.) If you would appear with Christ in glory, you must be now changed into his image. Holiness and patient suffering will make you like him, and is the decreed way unto his kingdom.

4. *Walking as Christ walked will make it evident that you are indeed in him.*—"He that saith he abideth in him, ought" to prove what he saith, and "himself so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John ii. 6.) To be in Christ, is to be a new creature: and these new creatures do all resemble him; for he is "formed in them." (Gal. iv. 19.) Naming the name of Christ will never demonstrate your Christianity, unless you "depart from iniquity," which makes you so unlike unto your Lord.

But likeness to him will prove you his in truth. And an evidence of this,—what strong consolation will it afford! If you are in Christ, how safe are you! You are secured from the curse of the law; the stroke of vindictive justice; the wrath of the destroyer; the bondage of corruption and sin; the sting of the first death, and the power of the second. If you are in Christ, his God is your God, his Father your Father. (John xx. 17.) You are loved as he is loved: "That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 23.) And, "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (Verse 26.) You "are joint-heirs with Christ" unto the same "incorruptible inheritance." (Rom. viii. 17; 1 Peter i. 4.) How firm and sure is your title! How certain and soon will be your possession! And, after possession is taken, you shall not be dispossessed unto eternity.

5. *Your following the example of Christ very much honours him, and credits Christianity.*—It is a sign that Christ's death has a mighty virtue in it, when it makes you to die to sin, and to be unmoved by the biggest offers that mammon makes to you. It is an argument that he is truly Christ, when you are truly Christians; that he is indeed alive, when he lives in you, and makes you to live to him and like him. It is a demonstration that our Lord is risen indeed, when you "rise with him, and seek those things which are above." (Col. iii. 1.)

Christ is very much unknown, and, being unknown, is undesired and neglected, because so little of him is seen in Christians' conversation. How few deserve *digito monstrari*, "to be pointed at," and to have such a character given them [as this]!—"There go the persons who discover such a spirit, who talk and walk, too, after such a manner, that it is evident Christ dwells, and speaks, and walks, and works in them."

Be all of you prevailed with to honour your Lord Jesus, by showing the world what he was when here upon earth, and how powerfully he works in you, though now he is in heaven. Chrysostom, with great reason, does call good works *συλλογισμούς αναντιβήτους*, "unanswerable syllogisms," and demonstrations to confute and con-

vince infidels. The world would flock into the church, being struck with the majesty and glory shining forth in her, if she were but more like unto her glorious Head. But when they who are called Christians are so like unto the world, it is no wonder if the men of the world continue still as they are.

6. *Christ frequently speaks to you to follow him, and observes whether and how you do it.*—His word is plain, that you should learn his doctrine, and live after his example. And “his eyes,” which “are as a flaming fire,” are upon professors’ ways. (Rev. i. 14.) His omniscience should be more firmly believed, and seriously considered, by the church itself: “All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one of you according to your works.” (Rev. ii. 23.) I shall here, by a prosopopœia, bring-in our Lord Jesus speaking to you, and himself propounding his own example, that you may hear, and heed, and follow the Lamb of God. To this effect Christ speaks to you:—

“‘Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.’ Look unto me, and become like me, all you that profess yourselves to be my members. What do you see in me, that in any reason should turn away your faces or your hearts from me? ‘Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.’ (Matt. xi. 6.) The Father is well-pleased in me, and so should you; as you value his favour, and would consult your own interest. I never took so much as one step in the ways of misery and destruction; be you sure to avoid them. I always trod in those paths which to you will prove pleasantness and peace; though, to satisfy for your deviations and going astray, I was fain myself to be ‘a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’ (Isai. liii. 3.) Consider your Lord and Master, you that call yourselves my disciples. Many look upon you that will not look into my word, and will judge of me by your practices. Be not so injurious to me, by misrepresenting me; as if I allowed those evils which you allow yourselves in. Why should I be ‘wounded’ in my honour ‘in the house of my friends?’ (Zech. xiii. 6.) Why should you ‘crucify me afresh, and put me to an open shame?’ (Heb. vi. 6.)

“When you yield to Satan’s temptations, are you like to me? When you are eager after worldly wealth, the applause of men, and flesh-pleasing delights, are you like to me? When you are proud and haughty, bitter, envious, and revengeful, do you at all resemble me? When you seek yourselves, and please yourselves, and matter not how much God is forgotten and displeased, am I in this your example? O, all you upon whom my name is called, content not yourselves with an empty name! Be my disciples in truth; and ‘let the same mind that was in me be in you also.’ (Phil. ii. 5.) Be my disciples indeed. Live as I did in the world: to honour God, and to do good to man, let it be your business; for ‘I have left you an example, that you should follow my steps.’” (1 Peter ii. 21.)

7. *Follow Christ’s example, that you may enter into his glory.*—“For if we be dead with him,” says the apostle, “we shall live with him: if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.” (2 Tim.

ii. 11, 12.) Be of good courage; and conflict (but do it in his strength) with your spiritual enemies; and you shall be conquerors, nay, "more than conquerors," over them: and hark what Christ promises to them that overcome; nay, to every one of them: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. iii. 21.) Conformity to Christ in his humiliation will end in a conformity to him in his exaltation: all in the next world shall resemble in glory, whom grace in this world has made to resemble him: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4.)

8. *One word farther I would speak to myself and my brethren in the ministry of the gospel.*—We are under special obligations to follow Christ's example. All the flock should be like the Great Shepherd; but especially the under-shepherds should resemble him, that they may be able to say with the apostle: "Be ye followers of us," for "we are followers of Christ." (1 Cor. xi. 1.) How clear should be the light in our heads, who have special instruction from Him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!" (Col. ii. 3.) With what authority should we speak, who speak in his name; who speak his words, and preach his everlasting gospel! and what we bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what we loose on earth is loosed in heaven! (Matt. xviii. 18.)

How should we "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way!" (Heb. v. 2.) How faithfully should we warn the secure to flee from wrath! (Matt. iii. 7.) How earnestly should we entreat sinners "to be reconciled!" (2 Cor. v. 20.) How should we "long after souls in the bowels of Jesus Christ!" (Phil. i. 8.) And since He thought not his blood too dear to redeem them, we should not think much of our prayers, tears, study, sweat, and labour for their salvation.

How self-denying should we be, counting it far greater wisdom "to win souls," than to "seek great things for ourselves!" (Prov. xi. 30; Jer. xlv. 5.) How exemplary should we be "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity!" (1 Tim. iv. 12.) In all things we should "show ourselves patterns of good works," (Titus ii. 7.) that our sermons, being practised by ourselves as well as preached, may be with greater efficacy upon others.*

And since our Lord Jesus, after he had preached the kingdom of God, was himself a sacrifice; we should not be unwilling to confirm the doctrine we deliver with our blood; nor refuse, if called to it, to "be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the church's faith."

* *Memento voci tuæ dare vocem virtutis; ut opera tua verbis concinant. Cures prius facere quàm docere. Sermo quidem vivus et efficax exemplum est operis, facile faciens suadibile quod dicitur, dum monstrat factibile quod suadetur.*—BERNARDUS, *Epist.* 201. "Remember to impart to thy words the tone of virtue, that thy works may be in perfect unison with them. Be careful first to practise that thyself which thou art desirous of teaching to others. Indeed an example in actual exercise operates as a living and efficacious discourse, easily rendering that potent and persuasive to which its exhortations are directed, while it demonstrates the practicability of that to which it persuades."—EDIT.

(Phil. ii. 17.)* This kind of spirit made the apostle like to Christ indeed: "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts xx. 24.)

IV. In the fourth and last place, I am to conclude with *some directions how you may be able to follow the example of our Lord Jesus.*

1. *Let your unlikeness to Christ be matter of your great humiliation.*—It should be your trouble, that you have been so long learning, and have learned Christ no better; "that so much of "the old man" remains to be "put off;" that no more of "the new man is put on." (Eph. iv. 22—24.) Look upon the passions and lusts of the flesh as so many foul blemishes, as so many deforming wrinkles, of the old Adam: the more of these there is in you, they make you the more unlike to Him who "is altogether lovely." (Canticles v. 16.) Be humbled for your sin, and hate it: that is the way to be rid of it. Sin cannot stand before a perfect hatred, but languishes and dies away; whereas love to it is the life and strength of it.

2. *Study more the admirable excellency and fairness of the copy [which] Christ has set you, and how desirable it is still to be growing up more and more into him in all things.*—The beauty of men and angels is black to Christ's fairness. To be like him, is to have that which truly deserves the name of excellency. "With open face" and intente eyes, "behold, as in a glass, the glory of your Lord," that you may be "changed into the same image," and become glorious yourselves. (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

3. *Being sensible of your own impotency, live by faith on the Son of God.*—Remember, it is "in him that you have both righteousness and strength." (Isai. xlv. 24.) Grace to be like Christ is from him. He strengthens the weak hands, he confirms the feeble knees, that we may work and walk after his example. If you should attempt to do this in your own might, that attempt would be, not only vain, but an argument of your pride and ignorance. Can the branch bear fruit of itself? It is from the vine that sap is communicated to it, to make it fruitful. You must *be* and *abide* in Christ, and ever be deriving life and virtue from him, that you may bear fruit worthy of him. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John xv. 4, 5.)

4. *Give up yourselves to the conduct of Christ's own Spirit.*—How often is it said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches!" (Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29, &c.) The Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus; represents his amiableness, "and anoints

* *Passiones ostendit quid pro veritate sustinere; resurrectione, quid in aternitate sperare debeamus.*—AUGUSTINUS *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xviii. cap. 49. "By his passion our Lord shows us what it is our duty to endure for the cause of truth; and by his resurrection, what ought to be our hopes respecting eternity."—EDIT.

the eyes with eye-salve, that it may be seen." (Rev. iii. 18.) And wherever the image of Christ is, it is this Spirit that has instamped it upon the soul. "Live in the Spirit," and "walk in the Spirit;" so your feet shall not decline from the steps of Christ; "you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." (Gal. v. 16, 25.) He will cause you to look unto Jesus; and enable you to follow him, without turning aside, or drawing back; till you come to be where he is, and behold his glory: and then "you will be satisfied with his likeness," and be for "ever with the Lord." (Psalm xvii. 15; 1 Thess. iv. 17.)

SERMON XIV.

BY THE REV. MATTHEW SYLVESTER,

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The case proposed :

"HOW MAY A LUKEWARM TEMPER BE EFFECTUALLY CURED?"

I add,

"IN OURSELVES, AND IN ONE ANOTHER?"

The resolution given :

Και κατανοωμεν αλληλους εις παροξυσμον αγαπης και καλων εργαων· μη εγκαταλειποντες την επισυναγωγην εαυτων, καθως εθος τισιν, αλλα παρακαλουντες· και τοσοιτω μαλλον οσα βλεπετε εγγιζουσαν την ημεραν.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day (to be) approaching.—Hebrews x. 24, 25.

THE inspired author of this profound, sublime, nervous epistle (whether St. Luke, or Barnabas, or Clement, or Apollos, or the apostle Paul, as I most think, I here dispute not) is evidently walking in the searches of the great excellency of Christianity, as it was brought unto us by, and took its denomination from, and serves the purposes and speaks the eminence, unction, and prerogatives, and designs of, Christ the Son of God. And this discourse he here directeth to "the Hebrews;" by whom we may understand those Christian Jews that were in Syria, Judea, and principally at Jerusalem; for those that were dispersed through the provinces of the Roman empire, were commonly called "Greeks." And those, indeed, who were converted to the Christian faith were terribly persecuted by the Jews their brethren, and assaulted by seducers to work them back again to their deserted Judaism; and much ado they had to stand their ground. Whereupon this author (mindful of what his Lord had said in Matt.

xxiv. 9—13) attempts to show the eminences of their state, and that Judaism was every way transcended by Christianity:—The Author of it was a greater and better person than Moses, Aaron, or Melchizedec. The doctrines were more mysterious and sublime; the laws more spiritual, and most accurately suited to the completing and perpetuating of the divine life and nature in them; and to the advancing them unto all conformities to God, imitations of him, and intimacies with him. The promises were more glorious, rich, and full; and all the constitutions, furniture, services, ministry, and advantages of the gospel-polity and temple, carried more glorious signatures of God upon them, and were more eminently attested, patronized, and succeeded by God, than ever Judaism was, or than it could pretend unto. Why, therefore, should it be deserted, or coldly owned, or improved negligently or defectively?

This author having, therefore, gained his point, and thoroughly proved the dignity of the Christian state and calling, beyond all possibility of grounded cavils or competition; he next proceeds to show these Hebrews the genuine and just improvement of what he had demonstrated. (Chap. x. 19—39; xi.; xii.; xiii. 1—19.)

The casuistical consideration of the text best serves the stated purpose of this hour. And that I may be evidently pertinent, clear, succinct, and profitable, let me now lay the case and text together, and consider them in their relative aspects each toward the other.

1. Lukewarmness is the remissness or defectiveness of heat, *χλιασσις* or *χλιαροτης*, “a middle thing betwixt cold and heat;” when there is not heat enough in *subjecto capaci*, [“in a capable subject,”] to serve the purposes that such a thing under such circumstances should subserve. Now God and Christ expect a fervent spirit, burning and flaming love; and in the text love is here represented as needing provocation. Heart-warmth is nothing else but love suiting and accommodating itself to worthy objects, according to their apprehended dignity, usefulness, or concerns. Love is the endearing to ourselves of apprehended excellence or goodness, and our letting out ourselves, or the issuings forth of our pleased wills, in correspondent motions toward, repose in, obsequiousness to, and engagements for, what we admire and affect; for worth or excellence discerned makes us accommodate ourselves unto the pleasure and concerns thereof, according to its nature, place, and posture toward us, and our affairs therewith. When, therefore, this affection, principle, or grace, (or passion, if love may properly be called so,) is grown too weak to fix the will and to influence the life so as to please its God, and turns indifferent, and unconcerned, and variable, as the winds and weather change; this languor of the heart and will, and its easiness and proneness to be drawn off from God and things divine, we call “lukewarmness;” which is nothing else, indeed, but the sluggishness and dulness of the heart and will to such a degree, as that it is not duly affected with, nor startled at, nor concerned intimately about, what is truly excellent and of great consequence and importance to us. And hence our author phrases it by *παροξυσμος αγαπης* in that love may

and ought to be smart and keen, heating and urging all the powers of the soul to excite all their vigours, and to perform all their functions with strength and pleasure. Consider well Canticles viii. 6, 7; 2 Cor. v. 14; 1 Thess. ii. 8. Heart-unaffectedness, unconcernedness, and inactivity, let souls and their concerns, God's interest and the matters of Christ's kingdom, go and be as they will. (Phil. ii. 20, 21.) This is the malady to be cured.

2. It is not so much a single instance of lukewarmness, as a temper, that the case speaks of. Nor doth the text intend an intermittent fever in the heart; it is not a transient paroxysm, by fits and starts for hearts to burn: but it is a stated frame, that must be changed and fixed. The malady is a lukewarm temper; a frame and constitution of the inward man, too weakly bent and biassed toward God and heavenly things, to make them stately its predominant ambition, business, and delight; (Acts xi. 23; 2 Cor. v. 9;) a frame of soul that sits too loose toward God, to do, to bear, to be, to hope, to wait much for him in the stormy and dark day.

3. It is the effectual cure hereof that the case aims at; and in this "paroxysm of love and of good works" the cure consists. Hence, "Labour of love;" (Heb. vi. 10; 1 Thess. i. 3;) "Love abounding more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Phil. i. 9—11.) When love is fervent, fixed, and genuinely fruitful, then is this lukewarm temper cured indeed. Hence, "Zealous of good works." (See Titus ii. 11—14.)

4. How this cure of such a temper may be effectually wrought, is the next thing to be inquired into, and the great import of the case before us; and a great cluster of apt and pertinent expedients doth the text here entertain us with: such as, (1.) *Determining and designing to enterprise the thing*: here called, "provocation unto love and to good works," *παραξυσμος αγαπης και καλων εργαων*. This is the great concern to be espoused, and the great scope of our intentions, resolutions, and endeavours. Love and good works are the great cure of this distemper; to which we must direct our thoughts, words, deeds, provokingly. (Col. iv. 5, 6.) Such a distemper must not be ordinarily expected to be cured by accident; nor are their labours likely to be prosperous, who do not cordially design this cure. (2.) *The mutual considerations of persons*: "Consider one another to a provocation." So the Greek. We must take into serious, deep, and frequent thoughts, the quality, capacity, spirits, courses, and concerns of one another; and see wherein they are defective, or exemplary and proficient, in these things; as also how to qualify ourselves, and how to manage our spirits, speeches, and behaviour, to the procurement of this end; and how to provoke ourselves to love and to good works, by what we see in others, and hear from them or concerning them. (Phil. iv. 8, 9; Rom. xv. 14; 1 Thess. v. 14, 15.) For we are all of us obnoxious unto very great

decays in Christian affections and behaviour, (and who is free throughout from guilt herein?) and equally concerned in this healthful exercise and temper. (3.) *Actual endeavours, upon consideration, to fix the temper and behaviour right* :—for thoughts and purposes are vain things, till they be put in execution :—such as mutual exhortation, attending on assembling of ourselves together, and our growthful progress in these things, under the re-inforcements and frequent representations of the approaching day. Hence, then, consider we, I. THE TEXT; II. THE CASE.

I. THE TEXT.

And here we have, 1. *The objects to be considered* : “One another.” 2. *The duty here required as conversant about these objects* : “Consider.” 3. *The end* : “Provocation to love and to good works.” 4. *The means and manner of performing it to purpose, and with good success* : “Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another.” 5. *The great inducement hereunto* : “So much the more, as ye see the day approaching;” improving the thoughts, belief, and expectations of this approaching solemn day, and, consequently, our concerns therein, as the most awful motive and quickening encouragement of our preparatory state and work.

And here I must premise, that the case here proposed to our present thoughts may and must be resolved into two : 1. How a lukewarm temper may be cured by us *in ourselves* : 2. How to be cured *in each other*. Now, seeing we are all related to the same God, and under the same circumstances as to our capacity of pleasing or displeasing God, of deserting or adhering to our Christian state and work ; and all of us, as Christians, [are] under the same powerful and manifold obligations to be found right and faithful in this “day ;” and as all of us are determined to solemn judgment and an eternal state, according to the temper of our spirits and tenor of our lives, as found to be when that day comes ; what can we say to one another, to “provoke each other to love and to good works,” that will not equally concern ourselves ? Whatever, then, we consider in each other, is as considerable in ourselves. Whatever we design hereby to provoke others regularly to, is to be equally designed and enterprised and promoted upon ourselves. Whatever we speak to others, or plead with others, hath the same errand to, and ought deservedly to be as cogent and prevailing with, ourselves. We are all concerned in the helpfulness of present assemblies, and in the process and results of the last general assembly ; and what we propose or press by way of counsel, request, encouragement, &c., must be as spoken to ourselves.

Taking it, then, for granted and concluded, and needless to be proved and demonstrated, 1. That lukewarmness is a heart-distemper ; 2. And that the formal nature of it lies in the remissness of due affections unto their proper, worthy objects ; and so in too mean resentments and distastings of whatever is contrary thereunto ; 3. That the cure of this distemper formally consists in the due fervour of provoked love, invigorating and producing its congenial operations and

effects; (here called "good works," which are but answerableness of practice and behaviour to this principle or grace;) 4. And that all these means and courses which genuinely and stately relate hereto, as divinely instituted by Him whose blessing is entailed hereon to make them prosperous and successful hereunto, are the most likely means to work this cure; 5. And that the purport of my text amounts to this, and is itself of Divine inspiration, and so of God's appointment for this end:—Taking, I say, these things for granted, for brevity's sake, I shall dispatch the text and case together, in the close consideration of these three general heads or topics of discourse:—

I. *The things to be provoked to*: "Love and good works;" for herein the CURE consists.

II. *The things that are most likely and prepared to provoke hereto*; and so the REMEDY, or means, will be directed to.

III. *The course and method of improving these most regularly*; and so the skilful, faithful MANAGEMENT thereof will be considered.

I. *The things to be provoked to*.—"Love and good works." Ferour and vigour in the heart, to and for its proper objects, productive of their right effects, are the soul's health indeed, the very *esse formale* ["formal entity"] of this cure in hand: for knowledge ministers to faith in its production and proficiency, and in all its exercises and designs. Hence, "Established in the faith, as ye have been taught." (Col. ii. 7; 1 John v. 9—15.) For we must know whom to believe, in what, and why: the credibility of a witness, the trustiness of a promiser and undertaker, the valuableness and certainty of things promised, and the way of acquisition and attaining what is promised, if promises be attended with and ordered to depend upon any thing commanded by the promiser to be done by us;—these must be duly known ere faith can fasten on them. Faith is no blind, no inconsiderate, no rash, no groundless act: "I know whom I have believed." (2 Tim. i. 12.) And it is "the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi. 1.) And "faith worketh by love," or it is "inwrought and becomes energetical by love:" ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΔΙ' ΑΓΑΠΗΣ ΕΝΕΡΓΟΥΜΕΝΗ. (Gal. v. 6.) "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God." (Jude 20, 21.) Faith's proper work and great design upon the heart or will is, to kindle, feed, and keep this holy flame of love within, and to direct and keep it to its due expressions and employments. Thus truths and hearts are brought together, and fixed in their reciprocal endearments. (2 Tim. i. 13.) And then God, and the image, interest, saints, and things of God, are like the king upon his throne, with all his lovely train about him. And then this faith makes Christ upon the heart, and dwelling there, like Manoah's angel, working "wondrously" in these flames of love: (Judges xiii. 19:) for now no faculty, sense, or member, can be idle, languid, or indifferent, amidst such glorious and lovely objects; when urged and provoked by such powerful and busy principles, as faith and love, to be employed for God, truths, duty, soula, and glory.

Let us, then, consider it in its, 1. *Objects*; 2. *Actings*; and, 3. *Effects*.

1. *The objects of this love, toward which it is to move, for which it is to act, wherewith it must converse, and wherein at last it is to rest and to repose itself for ever.*—And these are, the name, the things, the children of God, the good of men ; or rather,

(1.) *God as in himself the essential source and abyss of perfection, bliss, and glory.*—“Of, and through, and to whom all things are ;” (Rom. xi. 36 ;) “who is God blessed for evermore.” (2 Cor. xi. 31.) Here study well these following texts, as shadowing forth that only Holy One ; of whom, comparatively, the universe (how vast in its expansions, how gloriously rich in furniture and treasures, how variously replenished with inhabitants, and how accurately framed and governed, who knows ?) is but as one small hint. See, I say, Exod. xv. 11 ; xxxiv. 6, 7 ; 1 Chron. xxix. 10—13 ; Job xi. 7—9 ; Isai. vi. 3 ; 1 Tim. i. 17 ; vi. 15, 16 ; 1 John i. 5 : to name no more, save only one, that pertinently tells us that “God is love.” (1 John iv. 16.) Here love and goodness are essentially in their incomprehensible and immense perfection ; from hence are all the communications of derived goodness, and all the issuings forth thereof, that all the creatures can any way receive ; and of this boundless ocean are they all swallowed up eternally at last.

(2.) *God in the sallyings forth of his communicative and endearing name, and in all those mirrors and testimonies of himself which he affords us.* (Rom. i. 20 ; Acts xvii. 24—29 ; 1 Tim. iii. 16 ; Heb. i. 3 ; Eph. iv. 6—24.)—O what a mirror of divine perfection is the vast fabric of the universe ! How far doth it extend itself ! How richly hath its Maker furnished it with glorious luminaries ! vast in their bulk, beautiful in their orderly situations, constant and regular in their courses, and highly useful, and as liberal, in their dispensings of those influences which serve more glorious and various purposes than any man can reach at present, or perhaps in all the proficiencies of eternity, if such things may with modesty be supposed to be there. O wonderful power in its production ! wonderful wisdom in its harmonious contrivance and compagination ! and as great goodness in those stores and magazines, which are so generously provided for and accommodated to all the capacities and necessities and concerns of the whole frame, and of every part thereof ! Is not God’s glorious name here legible, and his kind heart and hand as fully and even sensibly discernible herein ? We are hereby both rendered and constrained to be his witnesses that he is God, and the best object of our love. Here, therefore, must our love both look and fix.

Should I here speak of God-Redeemer, in all the glorious appearances, performances, and dispensations of his indwelling Deity in our nature ; or of what the Spirit is and doeth ; of all the scenes and systems of common and special providence ; of all the constitutions and administrations of the upper and lower world, and of the church militant and triumphant : or should I show you man in his natural state, as the workmanship of the God of nature ; or in his Christian state, as in his renovation by the God of grace ; or in his glorified state at last, as the eternal temple of the Spirit of grace : should I

show you the angelical state, or all the excellences of the end, and of the orderly means and instruments which relate thereto; the name, seed, things of God:—you would see, with whom and what love hath to do. But, to sum up all:—

(1.) *God* is the object of this love, as considered, (i.) In his essential perfections,—Trinity of persons; (ii.) In his creation of the universe of beings; (iii.) In his relations consequent upon creation, and avouchedly assumed by him; (iv.) In those various signatures and explications of his name, that are upon the whole and every part of his creation, according to the various habitudes and states thereof; (v.) And in his relative deportments toward them, and communications to them, as they are capable of receiving them.

(2.) *Jesus Christ*; in all his mediatorial excellences, dignities, and prerogatives; in his relations, offices, unction, performances, and acquests, both *for himself*, as one exalted now to his Father's right hand; and *for us*, as our exalted and engaged Head in all his sympathies and endearments.

(3.) *The Holy Ghost*, as God our Sanctifier; in all those counsels, quickenings, comforts, which he provideth for us, offereth to us, and succeedeth in us and upon us. And,

(4.) *Those that are near and dear to God*, according to the various measures of their unction, stations, and serviceableness unto God. And here comes-in the main design both of my text and case; namely, that we Christians be so considered each by other, as that Christian excellences be observed to mutual inflammations of endearments, where they are; that Christian principles and affections may be awakened, invigorated, and advanced, where they are dormant, idle, or decayed; and that accordingly those gospel-means and helps be valued duly, and pertinently applied and improved, which may reduce us to and keep us in the fervours and vigours of our Christian love; that 'so the love of our espousals may fix and centre in the God of love, and have its orderly and kindly circulations and diffusions through the whole body; and every thing [may be] abhorred, resisted, and rejected, that shall or would attempt a rape thereon.

For, toward these glorious and lovely objects there should be no indifference nor cold affections, nor the least possibility of a divorce therefrom, that we by any diligence, providence, or resolution can prevent. Whatever, as to things and persons, is really and evidently of God and for him, be it in us, with us, or about us, must not sit loosely on our hearts; for it is the Christian religion, as it imprinciples souls for God and Christ, and forms them after God and Christ, and keeps them faithful and proficient in their practical devotedness to the Divine design upon us, that fits us for and keeps us in the state and spirit of endearment unto God, (2 Peter i. 2—11,) and that must imprinciple and actuate our reciprocal affections and endearments each toward other. See 1 Cor. vii. 19; Gal. vi. 15; v. 6; 2 Cor. v. 16—18. Parties and persons, no, nor eccentrical opinions, nor magisterial impositions of dividing terms of concord in pretence and show, nor multitudes of proselytes to our novel, darling, self-

conceited notions;—such things as these cannot commend us unto God: why should *they*, then, be thought lukewarm, *whose* fervours draw not forth themselves upon such pitiful, mean, unworthy things? “The kingdom of God” and Christ must be endeared to us, with all subjects of that kingdom, in all their universally-holding principles and interests. (Rom. xiv. 17—19.) And the great fervours, vigours, and effects of love must be directed to and settled upon these objects, proportionably to their excellences and postures toward us, and our concerns with them, and relations to them. This for the objects.

2. *The formal nature of this love.*—And here I shall premise, that it is best understood and known by its own exercised and experienced vigour. Sensation helps us to the clearest and most lively apprehensions: the most accurate definitions and descriptions that can be given us by the most sagacious and exact persons, can never tell you, to such degrees of satisfaction in your information, what health or sickness, hunger or thirst, pain or ease, light or darkness, sweetness or bitterness, &c., are, as one hour’s experience of your own will do. Men that are born blind have not, by all the advantages of reading to them, or discoursing with them, such clear discerning of light, as a little opening of their own eyes will help them to. Beauty and melody are and must be seen and heard, before they can be duly understood. But, as far as I am able, I shall adventure to describe it, thus:—

Love is the pleasure of the heart or will in the discerned and valued excellency of its object; so as delightfully to make it accommodate itself unto the nature, pleasure, and concerns thereof. Or, it is the endearment of apprehended excellence; so as to sweeten all our contemplations and esteem thereof, our motions toward it, our reposes in it, our sufferings and adventures for it, and our reposes and abode therein. Here we may briefly note these things:—

(1.) When its object doth evidently transcend our reach and pitch in excellence, then the formal act of love is a delightful admiration of perfection. Infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, cast us upon the heights and depths of wonder and astonishment, and entertain us with the highest satisfactions in our severest and most awful contemplations thereof. These ravishing views or thoughts of the incomprehensible source and abyss of perfection, which is Essential Goodness, and the very height thereof, (for what is goodness but the height of excellency?) affect us with the most reverend sense thereof.

(2.) Where Excellency appears as capable of being shadowed forth by imitations and resemblances, and challenges our conformities thereunto, the formal act of love is a pleased attempering of itself unto its much-valued and endeared object; joyfully loving and endeavouring a correspondency and agreement with all the communicable excellences and allurements of such a valuable and admired pattern and exemplar. Thus love is an ambitious imitation of admired worth, pleasing itself in all its gradual approaches to its object, in its attainments of what most resembles Him, whose mirrors we so much long and please ourselves to be. Thus our Christian love, (our love to God, and unto

Christ, his image,) in its nature, its operations, and attainments, is but the impress of Divine perfections upon ourselves, with all the solaces which arise in and from our thus transformed selves.

(3.) When Excellency appears upon the theatre, showing its lustre in exquisite performances and productions, bearing the signatures of that name whose works they are ; (as, "The invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," Rom. i. 20;) then the formal act of love is pleasure in our notices and observations of the eminencies of the Cause appearing in the effects thereof, and in our delightful searches thereinto.

(4.) When Excellency appears upon the throne of government, the formal act of love is our delightful acquiescence and satisfaction in, and our cheerful comporting with, all the laws and interests of such government. Thus, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Psalm xl. 8.) And, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." (1 John v. 3.) And, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work:" (John iv. 34 :) authority owned, laws obeyed, disposals rested in, and all with cheerfulness. And then,

(5.) When Goodness appears communicative, designing and dispensing kindnesses, directed and designed to the benefit and welfare of the recipients of its communications ; the formal act of love in the thus-befriended persons is, their thankful acceptances, cheerful acknowledgments, and faithful improvement of what they thus receive in the service, according to the pleasure and order, and to the praise, of Him that gives them. And as these favours are of several sorts and sizes ;—such as our beings, and their receptiveness of Divine kindnesses ; and the kindness showed us to make us good, to do us good, and to capacitate us to do good to others, and to receive further good from God, according to our different capacities, stations, relations, opportunities and advantages, conditions, and other circumstances ;—so hath our love its diversified actings, expressions, and effects, according to its various objects, considered in their own proper excellences, their several relations to us, their postures toward us, and their concerns with us, and ours with them ; which I here cannot mention, much less enlarge upon, even as they and we are related and concerned with the essential Source of all communicative excellence or goodness ; and therefore I leave it to the deeper thoughts and further searches of better heads and hearts than mine.

(6.) When Excellence espouses evidently some great interests and designs ; such as the recovery of lost souls, the reparation of declined holiness, the shaming and abandoning of all sin, the utter extirpation of Satan's interest and kingdom, the erecting of His gospel, house, and kingdom, the exaltation of His Son, and the edification of His children in Christian knowledge, holiness, and comfort, and in all things fit to make them acceptable to Himself and approved of men, and to make them regular and easy in themselves : when God designs and prosecutes the spreading of the gospel, the sanctification of his name

in and before the eyes of all, and the completing [of] the Divine life and nature in his own: what then can be the formal act of love hereto in us, but the endearment and espousal of these things to us, as matters of the highest consequence and importance to the world, the church, and us; and as things more valuable and delightful to us, in our contemplations and pursuits thereof, than all our personal interests and pleasures in this world?

(7.) When Excellence communicates itself discernibly to others, then love rejoices in this gift and grace to them.

(8.) When Excellence appears communicable to others, and *that* through one another as appointed means and instruments for this end; then love is so far thankful; and it covets, enterprises, designs, and prosecutes the thing; and so it grieves, or joyfully triumphs, as it discerns the matter to succeed or to be defeated or delayed; and it forms and cherishes and exerts its sympathies accordingly.

(9.) When Excellence is rivalled, confronted, and opposed, then love turns jealous and enraged; and puts-on fortitude and resolution to stand by its darling object and concerns, in all the agonies of contention for them which they need, and notwithstanding all the hazards, cost, and difficulties which attend them. And,

(10.) It accounts and uses all as friends or enemies, as they appear against or for its object.

3. *The genuine practice and productions of this love.*—Here they are called “good works;” a correspondent practice with this divine and active and diffusive principle. All instances and effects of this delightful conversation with God and man, according to the rules and principles of Christianity, must savour of, illustrate, and subservise this principle and grace. Thus, “Love God, and keep his commandments:” (1 John v. 2;) think and speak of him, address yourselves in your devotions to him, serve him and walk before him, trust him and depend upon him; all that you are and have, design and do, let it be suited to, and worthy of, that glorious and fearful name, “the Lord your God,” whose eminent and perfect name you love so well. (Heb. xii. 28; 1 Thess. ii. 10—12; Rom. xii. 1, 2; Matt. v. 16; John xv. 8; 1 Peter iv. 11.) Away with such mean things and actions, such flat devotions, and such *tantum non* [“all but”] offensive conversations, and such lean and stingy offerings to God or actings for him, as must put charity upon the rack to observers of you, for to conclude or think you love him! (Mal. i. 13, 14; 2 Peter iii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 58.) Nothing below that cluster in Phil. iv. 8, and that in Titus ii. 10—14, can escape its “*Mene, Tekel*,” in this balance of the sanctuary: (Dan. v. 25;) “Rich in good works,” (1 Tim. vi. 18,) and “rich toward God,” (Luke xii. 21,) and “fruitful in every good work;” (Col. i. 10;) actings continually toward God and for him; facing the eyes and consciences of all observers with such illustrious and large characters and signatures of this Divine principle of love, as to convince even the most critical observers of you, and to extort confessions from them, that none could act and live as you do, did they not love God dearly, and most entirely and

constantly live to him and upon him, as their all. (1 Peter ii. 12 ; iv. 16 ; Heb. xi. 13—16.) For I take not καλος here to import what may be barely "good;" but something generous, and fit to strike the beholder's eye and conscience with some astonishing convictions, that what you do for God looks too majestically great to come from any ordinary principle, yea, from any thing below your God enthroned in your best affections.

Love is the very soul of godliness, the very heart of the new man ; a principle so impetuous and charming, as that it scorns, where it is regent, to be confined to or signalized by any thing mean or base. Such objects and concerns in its most intimate and close embraces and in its stated prospect ; and yet act sparingly, sordidly, or sneakingly for God ? love burns and blushes at the thought. And heaven itself ere long will irritate, exert, and show the purity and generous vigours of this grace, in such a stated and inviolable series of great and generous actions, so full of God, and every way so fully for him, and so worthy of him, as that the life of God in glory shall evidence the force and excellence of that spring and principle whence it proceeds. And yet even here, even in this its infant and imperfect state, it groans and labours to have God's will "done on earth as it is in heaven."

Well, in a word, such must your actions and your conversations be, as that (whatever you are conversant about or with,—the temper of your spirits, and the fervours and vigours of your love to God, his image, interest, Son, Spirit, gospel, and all that do profess and own respects hereto) every step you take, and every thing you do, ought to be great and exemplary, and impregnated with what may speak the greatness, largeness, cheerfulness, and energies of your inflamed, exalted, and invigorated souls, through love to God, Christ, souls, and Christianity. O, to be exemplary in all conversation ; to live [quicken] each other into awakened considerations of spiritual concerns ; to dart forth all those glorious rays of Christian wisdom of which we are told in James iii. 17, 18 ; to make men feel, as well as see, the force and flames of Christian love ; to charm exasperated passions down by all the sweetnesss of true wisdom, patience, meekness, gentleness, and every way endearing conversation with them ; to have the law of kindness always in your mouths, the notices of true friendliness in your looks, the gifts and proofs of generous charity in your hands, in constant readiness to minister to the necessities of the saints, as God shall prosper your endeavours in your lawful and regularly-managed occupations and employments ; to have your dealings and commerces each with other accurately and severely just, and yet sufficiently securing the credit and concerns of Christianity ; and, in a word, to "be blameless and harmless," as "the sons of God, without rebuke ; shining as lights, and holding forth the word of life," (Phil. ii. 15, 16,) to universal satisfaction and advantage, wherever groundless prejudice and partiality do not prevail and govern ; and to fill up every relation, step, and station with the fruits of goodness, righteousness, and truth:—these are the good and generous works of love, whereto

we are to be "provoked;" for thus we do "not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1 John iii. 18.)

4. *The intenseness of the principle, and vigour of the practice.*—Called here (as the designed effect of the prescribed means) *παροξυσμος*, "a provocation;" the warmth and vigour wherewith love and good works are, as it were, to be inspired: "Zealously affected in a good thing;" (Gal. iv. 18;) "zealous of good works;" (Titus ii. 14;) the motive so effectually cogent as to fix and fortify the principle, and the principle so powerful as to go through with its great enterprise and concern. Principles are the springs of action; and love importeth intimacy. It is a principle rooted in the heart, and it lays its beloved objects deep therein. Warmth,—it is essential to it; and where it is perfect or considerably grown, it is serious and fervent. It is a commanding thing, and affects regency over all the actions, faculties, and passions. It is peremptory in its precepts, fixed in the purposes and concerns which it espouses. It is powerful in its influences, pressing in its claims, diffusive of itself through all that is performed by us; impatient of resistances, denials, or delays; and moved to jealousies, indignation, and vigorous contentions, when any injury, affront, or rape, is threatened, attempted, or pursued, that any way is prejudicial to its object, and its concerns therewith. It claims and pleads, it urges and provokes to diligence, and to all eager prosecutions of what it aims at, and endears unto itself; and it entirely reconciles the whole man to all the cost and difficulties of its divine pursuits. It is never well but in its motions toward, its acting for, its conversation with, and its repose in, its "pearl of price." And hence its actions are invigorated: it gives no faint blows in its holy war, it runs not [tardily] in its race, it deals not triflingly in its merchandise, for God and heaven; it is all mettle, fortitude, patience, action, desire, and delight in every thing relating to its grand affair and scope; and it makes all its actions and performances to bear their testimony to its own fortitude and fervours. And this is the "paroxysm of love and good works."

II. *The things provoking hereto.*—And here behold "a troop," as it was said of Gad. (Gen. xlix. 11.) How do inducements and incentives spring up in manifold and mighty clusters! What can we mention or fix our thoughts upon, that may not kindle and increase this flame of love, and its eruptions in good works? The things which we might pertinently and copiously insist upon, might be reduced to these heads:—

1. *The objects of this central grace or principle:—*

(1.) *Things in heaven:* as God, Christ, the Spirit, angels, the spirits of just men there made perfect; the glorious furniture, laws, and orders, the visions, services, ministrations, and fruitions, of that state; all the perfections, prerogatives, and employments of that blessed world above; with all the accomplishments and accommodations which relate immediately thereto, and all the satisfactions and advantages that result therefrom.

(2.) *Things from heaven:* "God manifest in the flesh;" (1 Tim.

iii. 16;) the Spirit, works, and word of God; the great provisions and engagements of Divine Providence for us; all that we are, or have, or meet with; express God's merciful regards to us, and his compassionate concernness for our universal welfare.

(3.) *Things for heaven*: the Spirit of grace, the word of grace, all the ministers and means of grace; with all the discipline and encouragements which Providence sensibly affords us; the good and evil things of time, as ordered by God to fit us for, and help us to, the glory which we look for; the very sons of men themselves, considered in the relations which they bear to God, and their expressiveness of his endearing name, and all those marks and notices which they bear and give us—in the frame, capacity, and management of human nature—of God's incomprehensible wisdom, power, goodness, &c. O who can think hereon, and yet be unprovoked to love and to good works, whenas God is so eminently and endearingly discernible in all? for God by all this courts our love. And should I speak of the sons of God and heirs of glory; that Divine workmanship which is in them and upon them; the impressions, reflections, and refractions of the Divine nature and life; their capacity of growing up to all the fulness of God, and to be eternally the beautiful and delightful temple of the Holy Ghost; all their relations to the Holy Trinity; with all their obligations to him, their interest in him, their business with him and for him, and all their imitations and resemblances of him in their actual and possible motions and advances toward him, and their great expectations from him: should I insist upon their membership, with all the duties and advantages and pleasures which arise therefrom; and pertinently illustrate and apply (as I could easily and quickly do) what doth so copiously occur in Eph. iv. 4—6, as the central articles and holding bonds of union and endearments:—would you and I consider all these things, and all the loveliness that would then be communicable or observable, could our love want its provocation?

2. *The formal nature of this love.*—It is fit to be a provocation to itself. (1 John iv. 16—21, 7—12.) This is the beauty, health, strength, pleasure, safety, and renown of human nature. Love is the aim and scope [of] knowledge, the end of faith, the spirit of hope, the life of practice and devotion, and “the bond of perfectness,” (Col. iii. 14,) and the true transformation of the soul into the image of its God. No pleasing thoughts of God, Christ, heaven, or heavenly things, no cheerful motions toward eternity, no foretastes of the highest bliss, no warrantable claims thereto, nor confident expectations of unseen realities, no true and lasting bonds of friendliness in service and affections, without this spirit and state of love. This only faces God in his own beautiful and delightful image; this only turns the notions of divinity into substantial realities, and so exalts the man above the pageantries of mere formal, outside service and devotions. And the truth is, [without this love] all that we say and do for God or with him, and all our expectations from him, are but the tricks and forgeries of deceitful and deceived fools, and the most provoking

profanation of the tremendous, holy name of God, and an abuse of holy things.

3. *The services which love must do, and the fruits it must produce, to God, to Christ, unto the Spirit, unto ourselves, and others.*—God himself must be revered, addressed unto, served, and entertained, like himself; and walked-with in all required and fit imitations of himself. And all these cannot be without just valuings of and complacency in his eminent perfections, near relations, and the admirable constitutions and administrations of his kingdom. Christ must be duly thought on, heartily entertained, gratefully acknowledged, and cheerfully obeyed, submitted [to] and improved unto the great and gracious purposes of his appearances, performances, and kingdom, and minded most delightfully in all the grandeurs of his grace and throne. *The Holy Spirit* must possess his temple to his full satisfaction; and have the pure incense of his graces in their fragrant, liberal, and continual ascents; (“Praying in the Holy Ghost,” Jude 20;) and be feasted with the growthful and constant productions of his graces, both in their blossoms and full fruits: and we must be continually sowing to him, if we hope to reap eternal life of him. (Gal. vi. 8.)

We must possess *ourselves* in God and for him, in our full devotedness and resignations of our entire selves to him; pleasing ourselves in this,—that we are not by far so much and so delightfully our own as his, and that we cannot love ourselves so well as when we find God infinitely dearer to us than we are to ourselves. And as for *others*, much must we cheerfully do, and bear, and be, to bring poor renegadoes back again to God, to testify our great respects unto and pleasure in the grace of God in our fellow-Christians, to accommodate ourselves to their edification and concerns, and to make our best advantage of every thing discernible in them; helping ourselves and them in spirit, speech, and practice. And can these things be brought to pass, or ourselves reconciled and suited to all our Christian duties and interests, without provoked love? And for the solemnities, transactions, and results of “the approaching day,” what is that day to those who have no love, or very great declensions of it? For all that come with Christ from heaven, come in the flames of love to God, to godliness and godly ones; and a cold heart will no way be endured there. And as to fellow-Christians, the duties and counsels of the text,—consideration, adhering to the assembling of ourselves together, mutual exhortations in the encouraging and quickening prospect of this “day,”—can these things be without love?

III. *The management of these “provoking” things.*—And here let us follow the method of the text itself; where we have these topics to insist upon:—

1. *Persons must be “considered,”—each other, and ourselves.*
2. *We are not to desert “the assemblings of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”*
3. *We must “exhort” each other.*—And so, what one proposes, the other must consider, entertain, accommodate, and improve, to the great ends and benefit of the exhortation given.

4. *And the actuated knowledge of the approaching day must quicken us to and in the more serious and intense performance of these duties: "Exhorting, by so much the more, by how much the more ye see the day approaching." Let me but touch a little upon these things.*

1. *Let us "consider one another" for this provoking work, or "in order to this provocation."*—The word here in the text, *κατανοωμεν*, imports strict observation of, and great solicitousness of thoughts about, each other, as to great matters, for their good. So that we have, (1.) *The objects: each other.* (2.) *The act or duty toward them: "Let us consider."* (3.) *The end and scope: "To a provocation unto love and to good works."*

(1.) *The objects: "One another."*

(i.) *As to the great and stated ends of our creation and redemption.*—Such as the divine nature and life and joy; God's image in us, service from us, and the delightful, blissful (and that eternal) presence with us, in the glorious discoveries and communications of himself to us in heaven; and as we are recovered and redeemed by Jesus Christ, so our loyalty, gratitude, and faithfulness to him, in all acknowledgments and improvements of his kind conduct, government, providence, and grace, unto the Father's glory through him. As we are related to the Holy Ghost, it is our correspondent temper and practice with, improvement of, and our fit returns unto, the offered, accepted, and professed relations of the Spirit, and his communications to us, his operations in us, and his effects upon our spirits; that he might thereby suit us to the concerns and privileges of our Christian state, and that we might be built-up, furnished, and possessed, as the eternal temple of the living God; linked and laid together, and so related and obliged to each other; dependent each on other, and consequently useful and delightful in being heartily and practically faithful each to other unto the edification of the whole in love; that so God (Three in One) may be eternally and evidently all, to universal satisfaction. For we were made and bought, and are committed to the care of Christ and of the Spirit; and we are, accordingly, intrusted with gospel-helps and means, that we might hereby be the mirrors of divine communicable excellences and perfections, the monuments of prosperous and rich grace, and instruments of special service. For these ends God created and redeemed us, and in respect hereto are we to be considered each by other.

(ii.) *As to our capacity of serving and reaching such great ends and purposes.*—The powers of our souls, the members of our bodies, and all our natural accommodations for these ends. For we are men, and so have faculties and powers naturally capable of and formed to a propenseness and appetite to the Supreme Good, and thereupon receptive of all the attractive influences of the First Cause: and were it not for our moral depravations and corruptions and alienations of heart herefrom, which we have sinfully contracted, espoused, and indulged; considering divine discoveries, assistances, and encouragements, procured for us and dispensed to us by Jesus Christ; what

hinders our return to God, and unto those reciprocations of endearments betwixt him and us to which by our rational frame and constitution we are so admirably suited? Are we not capable of discerning what may excite, inflame, preserve, and regulate our love, and of the fixing and managing it accordingly? We are capable of judgment, choice, and motion, and reposes, right objects being set before us in their apt illustrations and addresses, so that we cannot speak to brutes and stones as we may do to men. For nothing but sinful ignorance, prejudice, negligence, and malignity, or sad delusions and mistakes, through inconsiderateness, and unreasonable avocations and diversions, can prevent the return of our first love; and all these things may be redressed by our judicious, well-advised, and warm discourses about these things, duly attended to, impartially considered, and prudently and pertinently applied unto ourselves. Thus mistakes may be rectified, known truths and notions actuated, hearts affected, lives reformed, and love restored to its regular fervours and productions of good works. He that is capable of knowing what he is to do, and why, and of doing and being what most concerns and best becomes him, deserves to be accordingly considered by us.

(iii.) *As to our obligations and advantages, as we are creatures, subjects, favourites.*—As we are redeemed to God by Christ, so our obligations to the returns of gratitude should be considered by us. (2 Cor. v. 14, 15.) We are Christ's, and God's by him; and so he must be glorified in the whole man. (1 Cor. vi. 20.) And all the vast advantages of our gospel-day, as they are talents and encouraging advantages put into our hands, must be considered by us too, and ourselves and one another as stewards intrusted and accountable. (2 Peter i. 3, 4; 1 Peter iv. 11.) So that we must regard each other as under ties and bonds to God and Christ, and as greatly helped and furnished to be provoked thus, if well-considered, and managed accordingly.

(iv.) *As to our spirits and behaviour according to our Christian claims and helps, relations, obligations, and professions.*—Whether we foot it right, or not; (Gal. ii. 14;) whether professors value their souls to their just worth, or not, in keeping them intent upon their great concern; and whether their furniture, discipline, temper, and behaviour bear evidently their fit and full proportion hereunto; how gospel transforming and reforming work goes on with them; whether the Christian name and interest, the gospel and its Patron, be credited and promoted, or disgraced and hindered, by us; and whether our proficiency and improvements be answerable indeed to our advantages, obligations, and professions.

(v.) *Wherein our helps and helpfulness, or our dangers, mainly lie.*—Their gifts and graces, and encouragements and advantages, on the one hand; and their constitutions, customs, callings, company, temptations, and secular concerns, and hinderances, on the other hand; are all to be considered.

(2.) *The act or duty toward these objects:* Κατανοωμεν, "Let us consider."

(i.) *Bend your minds to observation of one another, that ye may understand how matters are with one another.*—Concern yourselves about the right knowledge of the principles, tempers, actions, circumstances, and concerns of persons, so far as your duty toward them calls you to it. For this injunction doth not countenance what we find elsewhere forbidden. (2 Thess. iii. 11, 12; 1 Tim. v. 13; 1 Peter iv. 15.) So far as you may do or get good, prevent, redress, or allay evil, under such circumstances, relations, and advantages as may notify that God then calls you to it, and so encourages your expectations and endeavours of doing good, or preventing the sin and mischief which God would have prevented by you; so far may others be inspected, inquired after, and observed by you. But when it is, and evidently appears to be, to no purpose, to ill purposes, or to needless purpose, you must not do it.

(ii.) *And then seriously pause upon and duly weigh what you discern by your inquiry or your more immediate observation.*—And do not partially, passionately, rashly, and censoriously, form and fix your measures. Give what you hear or see concerning one another, your second, serious, and impartial thoughts; that so, matters of fact being duly and truly stated, measures of prudence may be advisedly and safely taken up and fixed upon: so that, when persons, matters of fact, your Christian rules and work, and way of managing this great concern, are duly laid in the balance of the sanctuary, and all this fixed in its just reference to this weighty end, you may proceed accordingly in the sincerity, tenderness, and wisdom of the right Christian spirit. And then,

(iii.) *Be well advised about the most taking way of managing what you thus instruct yourselves about.*—The humour of the person, your ways and seasons of addressing your discourses to him, and the preserving or managing of your interest in him; or, at least, your own abilities to prove what you accuse him of, to demonstrate what arguments you advance and use, and to enforce the motives that you would press him with. And study yourselves into a just measure of your own abilities, a thorough mastery and command of your own passions, and good and clear discerning of and insight into the fittest seasons and occasions. And well observe, as far as may be, men's tempers, interests, ends, and intimates; that you may hereby charm them, win and govern them. And if you would know men thoroughly, mind them strictly in their trusts, their passions, interests, companions, surprises, and necessities; and let each other have serious thoughts herein.

(iv.) *And overlook no good in others, to lessen it, despise it, disgrace it, or neglect it; but think distinctly upon all you see.*

(3.) *The end and scope of all must be this "provocation unto love and to good works."* (Eph. iv. 29, 15, 16; 1 Thess. v. 11.) "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright." (Prov. xv. 2.) Therefore the mind and heart must be intent upon right ends: (Rom. xiv. 19:) not to let others know the reaches of our thoughts, the furniture of our minds, the nimbleness of our tongues, the neatness of

our words, or the briskness of our parts or fancies; nor to spy faults or weaknesses, for our discursive entertainments; "as the manner of some is;" much less to make them proselytes to our opinions, parties, or persuasions in lower matters, or votaries to our particular interests or humours. (Phil. i. 27; ii. 19—21.) I wish professors, ministers, and others, would read these texts, and well consider them.

We must inspect, observe, and well consider one another; that where we observe warm hearts and fruitful lives, we might by our commendations provoke them unto perseverance and proficiency therein; that where we discern a mixture of things commendable and blameworthy, what is divine may not be overlooked because of what is culpable, nor what is faulty [be] imitated and commended because of what is there praiseworthy; and that where we find our brethren overtaken with their infirmities and defects, they may be dealt with "in the spirit of meekness," (Gal. vi. 1,) and so recovered from their declensions and defects, and so return to their first love; and that we ourselves may be provoked to and by their excellences, and grow more effectually careful to avoid all that did assuage their holy warmth and vigour. He that considers others, to glory over their defections and neglects, to aggravate their slips and falls more, to expose their persons to rage and scorn, doth what the devil would advise him to, were he consulted with. The truths of God and soul-concerns are fixed things; and fervent hearts and fruitful lives are the soul's grand affair; and he that minds his brother in the neglect hereof, hath a corrupted and cold heart to purpose. To make each other all light about the things of God and Christ, all fervour in our love thereto, and all regular and cheerful vigour in the pursuit thereof, is what we must design, and direct our personal considerations to.

2. *Let us "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."*—Here note,

(1.) *The thing not here to be deserted,* is the *ἐπισυναγωγή αὐτῶν*, "our assembling."

(2.) *The thing relating hereunto forbidden,* is our "forsaking" it.

(3.) *The tempting instance hereof, proposed by way of warning to us,* is, that "the manner of some is" thus to do.

(1.) *The thing not to be forsaken* imports either,

(i.) Our own conventions for public worship: in the general, our open meeting together, as an organized congregation or assembly, wherein pastors and their flocks assemble stately to speak to God, and to hear from him, and sacramentally to eat and drink before him; and so to recognise and represent our Christian state with all solemnity in open view together. Or,

(ii.) Doing this without dividing distances and separations each from other, under the notion of Jew and Gentile, or of persons differing each from other about difficult or trifling things.

(iii.) Or our gathering others unto the church of Christ, by our orderly and alluring carriage in this and other points of Christianity; and so, the additions which hereafter God will make hereto. Or,

(iv.) The great assembly of the completed and triumphant church of Christ in the great day of his appearance and kingdom. See 2 Thess. ii. 1 ; the only place, that I remember, in the New Testament, beside my text, that this noun occurs [in]. And in that place the word (as here it is) being a decompound, it fitly may be rendered "an after-synagogue or gathering ;" and how far thus rendering it in the text is countenanced by the last clause, "that day," I here determine not.

But I will here consider it in the first sense, wave or lightly touch upon the other two, and transfer the last to the consideration of the last clause of the text ; where it will be freer from exceptions than here perhaps it would be.

(2.) *The thing here given in charge concerning it*, is that we "for-sake it not :"

(i.) *In thought* ; as judging it to be no help or duty.

(ii.) *In heart* ; as not attempered and reconciled to the solemnity, seriousness, and great concerns thereof.

(iii.) *In presence* ; as abandoning or neglecting our personal presence and attendance there.

(3.) *The snare that we are warned of here*, is our being influenced into a deserting such assemblies by the practical declensions and neglects of others. Others do so ; they use to do it ; it is evidently their custom and practice : it is possible for you to do the same, and to be drawn thereto by their example. But their example cannot justify this practice, and therefore should not influence you hereinto : and this caution may prevent it ; and therefore should accordingly be considered and improved by you, as being of such manifest and mighty consequence to your love and practice, both as to the warmth and strength thereof.

(4.) *The usefulness of the worshipping assemblies of saints and Christians to this great and needful "provocation,"* must quicken us unto and keep us in these "courts of God." (Psalm xcii. 13—15 ; Exod. xx. 24.) "There the Lord commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalm cxxxiii. 3.) There you have the openings of the gospel-treasury : there are these golden candlesticks, which bear the burning, shining tapers, whose light and heat diffuse themselves through all within their reach who are receptive of them ; the gifts and graces, the affections and experiences, of gospel-ministers are in their communicative exercises. There God the Father sets and keeps his heart and eye : there the Lord-Redcemer walks by and amongst his commissioned officers and representatives, dispensing warmth and vigour through their ministry to hearts presented to him at his altar : there doth the Holy Spirit fill heads with knowledge, hearts with grace, and all our faculties and Christian principles with vigour. There mysteries are unfolded, precepts explained and enforced, promises fulfilled, in soul-improvements ; incense is offered up in golden censers, and federal concernments are solemnly transacted and confirmed in open court. And there, through the Angel-of-the-Covenant's moving upon the waters of the sanctuary, are soul-dis-

tempers and consumptions healed. And there you are informed, acquainted with, and confirmed in, what may instruct you in, and encourage you unto, this "provocation unto love and to good works." And there prayer gets fuel, and gives vent to love, drawing forth all the energies of souls and thoughts toward God. And thus fervent prayers, and love-quickening returns thereto, are, like the angels of God, ascending and descending from and upon the heart; while the deserters hereof grow cold thereto, and starve their love and practical godliness thereby.

All there is known, obtained, and exercised. There you may fill your heads with knowledge, your hearts with grace, your mouths with arguments, your lives with fruitfulness, your consciences with consolations, and your whole selves with those experiences of divine regards to soul-concerns, which may inflame your hearts with love to God and Christ, to holiness and heaven, and fit you both to kindle and increase this holy flame both in yourselves and in each other. And, indeed, what greater advantages can be derived into our souls, to make our altars burn, than what our Christian assemblies, duly managed, will entertain us with? What understanding do the inspirations of the Almighty here afford! Such curious explications of the name and counsels of your God! such large and full accounts of all the endearing grace of Christ! such critical dissections and anatomizings of the state of souls! such over-shadowings of the Spirit of God! such clear and full descriptions and accounts of the divine life and nature in all their strength and glory! How are desires invigorated and twisted, to make them more effectual to ourselves and others! This sanctuary-love is "like the best wine, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips even of those that are asleep to speak." (Canticles vii. 9.)

Keep, then, to these assemblies; that you may duly know whom, what, how, and why to love; and how to suit yourselves, in spirit, speech, and practice toward God, yourselves, and toward each other, unto this generous and noble principle. Thus will you grow exceedingly both in the knowledge and savour of what is most considerable and most deservingly affecting, both as to things and persons: for Christianity is contrived for love and godliness in all its doctrines, laws, and ordinances; and in assemblies you have the explications and enforcements of those truths which will complete the man of God, as to his principles, disposition, and behaviour. Here you may know your most holy faith, as to its matter, evidences, and designs upon you, and its improbability by you to its determined and declared ends and services; that faith which is to illuminate your eyes, to exercise your thoughts, to fix your holy purposes, to form and cherish expectations, to raise desires, to embolden prayer, to fire your affections, and regulate them, as to their objects, ends, and measures, and expressions.

And when you there attend, you are in the way of blessings. How oft and evidently are divine truths there sensibly sharpened and succeeded by the God of truth! (Rom. i. 16.) Paul and Barnabas

“so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.” (Acts xiv. 1.) And thither must you and I resort, and there attend, for doctrine, exhortation, and instruction in righteousness. “The priest’s lips must preserve knowledge,” (Mal. ii. 7,) how to speak of God, with him, and for him. There gospel-luminaries are to diffuse their light; and there must we receive it, and know what is considerable, eligible, practicable, and encouraging to love and to good works. Why, then, should we forsake that?

3. *But let us “exhort” each other.*—For consideration and attendance on assemblies are for our own and others’ good, for personal and mutual quickenings “to love and to good works.” I know that *παρακαλουντες*, and thence *παρακλησις*, is sometimes used more largely, for any pleading of and pressing home a thing pursuant to its import and design, whether by counsel, comfort; or sometimes it imports “consolation or encouragement.” This is too well seen and known to need its scriptural instances and quotations. That which is here intended, I offer in this paraphrase: “Draw forth all the spirit and strength of what you know and have advisedly considered as to yourselves and others; of what you have seen and heard, in your assembling of yourselves together, concerning your obligations to attend them, their fitness to advantage you, and all the benefit derived or derivable therefrom. Draw forth the vigour of all your received discoveries, directions, assistances, and inducements to do and be what is required and expected from you, professed by you, and of eternal consequence and concernment to you. Plead this thoroughly with yourselves and one another; that so your Christian love be not extinguished or abated, but wrought and kept up to its genuine and just pitch of fervour and effectual operations and eruptions in good works. Drive home upon yourselves (by deep and serious thoughts, and pertinent applications of them to yourselves, and warm debates about them with yourselves) the things which God hath manifested and proposed to you as credible, acceptable, and practically improvable.”

He that expects this flame upon his heart must be a thoughtful man, severely contemplative and solicitous about the things of the kingdom of God, and the name and interest and servants of the Lord-Redeemer. How can that man be warm and active, or “zealous of good works,” whose knowledge is not actuated by self-awakening meditations, and whose furniture, principles, and spirit are commonly neglected by himself? What! are divine truths, laws, promises, and institutions only to be with us or in us as empty speculations or thin notions? Have divine revelations and endearings no errand to our hearts and consciences, and no business there, and no practical vigours to be exerted thence? That thoughtless, idle souls should be lukewarm, is no such wonder or strange thing. The contrary would be stranger, even to a miracle.

And being thus awakened and prepared yourselves, drive all things home upon each other, and plead the cause of every duty, truth, and motive thoroughly, in free and frequent conversation each with other. (Mal. iii. 16; Luke xxiv. 32; 1 Thess. v. 11—15; Rom. xv. 13—

16; Col. iii. 16; 1 Thess. iv. 18.) Christian conference well managed makes and speaks warm hearts, and leads and helps to better lives. Men that rarely, transiently, or triflingly think upon or talk about the things of God, must needs be cold within; and when such pray that God should warm them, can they expect returns to prayer, when neither hearts nor pains are after them? And here how many heart-warming topics of discourse and edifying conference might I now entertain you with! But let the text speak for itself; and though it here offer but one, yet is that one impregnated with many:—(1.) It is “the day.” (2.) It is an “approaching” day; and, (3.) They “saw” it thus approaching. (4.) The sight ought (because so fit) to quicken them to growthful care and diligence in this heart-warming course and work. Whence,

4. *Preserve, and practically answer and improve a quick, deep, constant sense of the approaching day.* (1 Thess. v. 1—11; 2 Peter iii. 1—14; Jude 20, 21; Col. iii. 2—5; Luke xxi. 34—36; xii. 35—40.)—Perhaps the reader will not lose his time and labour in perusing and pausing upon these cited texts; nor find them impertinent nor inexpedient as to the case in hand. See also 1 Peter i. 5—13. How copiously and closely might all these passages be insisted on, did not the press stay for me, and the stated confines of a short discourse restrain me, and the fruits and labours of abler heads and better pens and hearts urge me severely, because deservedly, to give place thereto!

Well, sirs, consider “the approaching day,” and represent it to your thoughtful and concerned selves in all its grandeurs and solemnities of process and results; and try then if it do not warm your hearts, and urge you pungently and severely to good works. As to the persons here most immediately concerned,—these Christian Hebrews; there was a day of reckoning with their malignant enemies by providential controversies and rebukes, which also was a day of great redemption and establishment to the persecuted faithful Christians. There was to be a day of great conversion and divine attestations to the Christian faith and to its proselytes; and what was more congenial herewith than this endeavoured provocation to love and to good works? And they that are provoked hereto are also fittest for a day of trial. But I shall here consider it as the great day of Christ’s appearance and his kingdom; (2 Tim. iv. 1, 8; i. 18;) “that day” of God, of Christ, of judgment and perdition of ungodly men; “that day” of revelation of God and Christ in their majestic glory; “that day” of searches, sentence, and full execution and adjustments, in all the accuracies of governing wisdom, holiness, and grace. Who can contemplate this, and yet be cold and barren?

Then, in the glorious splendours, solemnities, and proceedings of that day, shall it be evident who, and whose Son, Christ is; what cost and care he hath been at to bring men to this warm and active course and temper; and what an estimate he and his Father set hereon, by what they then dispense and testify by way of recompence of reward thereto. Christ in his threefold glory; (Luke ix. 26;) God sending him forth, and appearing in him, by him, and for him, as his own

dear Son, the Son of such a King; (1 Tim. vi. 13—16;) Father and Son making so vast a difference amongst the sons of men by everlasting punishments and rewards, as they are differently found as to Christian love and practice; (Rom. ii. 6—10; 2 Cor. v. 9—11; Matt. xxv. 34—46;) and all that vast assembly and convention applauding God's proceedings, and joyfully congratulating the great endeavours and rewards of our provoked and successful love:—are not these warming thoughts?

II. THE CASE.

And of this I have given you this textual resolution. You have seen,

1. *The seat* of this distemper,—of a lukewarm frame or temper; that it is in the heart or will.

2. *The formal nature* of it: it is a defect or chiliness of practical love and zeal to and for God,* and their concerns with us, and ours with them.

The things which claim and merit the highest place in, and that should engage and exercise, our best affections and most active zeal, are, (1.) God's glory in the church and world. (2.) The life and growth, and the vivid exercises, profession, and effects of godliness in ourselves. (Titus ii. 11—14; Rom. xiv. 17—19; Jude 20, 21; 2 Peter i. 3—11.) For we must begin at home, and set our all in order there. (3.) The power, peace, and progress of the gospel in the world; (Phil. i. 3—11; ii. 19—21;) that it may "have its free course, and be glorified." (4.) The harmony and prosperity of the church of Christ, wherever this gospel is accepted and professed. (5.) The case and circumstances of particular professors, as they variously are, and are evidently considerable, as to their growth, trials, duties, dangers, decays, wants, or weaknesses, &c. (6.) And the sons of men, as strangers, enemies, persecutors, or any ways endeavouring to supplant the gospel-interest, or to obstruct it or discourage it; and these considered as reducible or incorrigible. Now heartlessness, neutrality, or sluggishness of our affectionate concernedness about these things, is what we call "lukewarmness."

3. *The cure* hereof doth formally consist in our inflamed love, exercised and expressed unto the life by constant activity, congenial with this principle; the practical accommodating of all the regency and vigours of this principle of love to the concerns of Christian godliness, and of those that are concerned therewith, pursuant to the growth and prosperousness thereof. When we so value these concerns, and have such sympathizing with, and such genuine adherence to, resolutions and activity for, and satisfaction in, the prosperousness of the things of God and Christ and souls and Christian churches, as that nothing can stand before us, nor be regarded or dreaded by us, that rivals or opposes them; then are we indeed effectually cured. Here our thoughts naturally fix and work; here our hearts cleave and flame; and hereunto our vigours, time, interest, and treasures, are most entirely and cheerfully devoted. Where is there, then, the least

* Some word requires to be supplied, to render the subsequent part of the sentence intelligible.—EDIT.

remainder of a lukewarm temper, when we are wrought up to this frame and pitch ?

4. *The way and means of working this great cure are, (1.) Persons considered. (2.) Assemblies attended on. (3.) What there and thence and otherwise is or may be derived, improved by mutual exhortation. (4.) And all this under the powerful influences of, and in fit and full proportion to, a quick and constant apprehensiveness and apprehension of "the approaching day."*

Now, seeing the text is hortatory, directive, and encouraging hereto ; and hath, as such, been treated on accordingly ; I will wave all further application, and only give you the directions and prescriptions for the curing of a lukewarm temper.

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Love-quickening and abating principles, interests, and practices are to be exploded and avoided.*—If once you entertain hard thoughts of God, as if he were morose and captious, a barren "wilderness," or "land of darkness;" (Jer. ii. 31;) and only careful to ruin and distress his creatures, upon the mere accounts of sovereignty, and the prerogative of dominion ; though a poor penitent lie prostrate at his feet for mercy, in tears and shame and self-abhorrence ; or [be] in a readiness to do so, were there but any hopes of merciful acceptance : if you shall represent him to yourselves, as if he were so tenacious of revengeful purposes, and of advantages put into his hands for the full executions of such deserved revenges, through former crimes provoking thereunto :—alas ! how can you think upon him, or address yourselves to him, with hope and pleasure ?

We find grace represented to us as God's image in his creatures. We find that holiness in creatures makes them the sweetest of all persons in their dispositions and deportments, and readiest to be charitable and abundant in benign and alluring and obliging remissions, constructions, and dispensations. Such are most backward to make rigid interpretations and constructions of men's miscarriages and neglects, when they arise from rather infirmity than malignity, and from ignorance and surprise [rather] than from contrivance or perverse resolution. They hate, above all men, every thing that savours of stinginess and of a sordid spirit ; and they like not to retain revengeful purposes to ruin or disturb those criminals who seriously and pathetically implore their pardon, and beg admission to their now much-valued favour. And doth grace make such persons better than their Maker ? and is that God's image in them, which hath nothing in God correspondent herewith ? or can we think that the image can exceed its Grand Exemplar ?

Such black and dismal thoughts of God can never kindle love in us to him. Did I not know and think that "God is love," how could I seek to him in hope, and love him ? For my part, I verily believe God sent his Son into the world, to convince us of his love and goodness, and to invite us to himself, under the power of this alluring principle of truth,—that God loves us dearly, and that he will reject

no sinner whose heart is touched with such love to him as makes it restless and uneasy in itself, till it obtain his pardon, image, fellowship, and presence. (See Heb. xi. 6.) And as for Jesus Christ, the liveliest image and the truest and most glorious mirror of the Invisible God that ever any eye beheld, or can behold; how sweet, indulgent, humble, gracious, and endearing, was he unto all! and how ready to receive all that come to God through him! O, do not, then, mistake his grace, design, or temper! Love cannot live and do its work, where Christ is not duly represented in his lovely excellences.

And yet, on the other hand, represent not God below himself, as fond in his respects, partial in his dealings, slack and easy in his proceedings, apt to favour us, though neglected by us; as one ready to indulge us in our sins, and to connive and wink at our miscarriages; or one that we may trifle with; and fondly think that we can at any time procure his favour, and extinguish or evade his anger and displeasure, by some trifling applications to him, or flattering eulogies of his name upon the knee, or a copious, verbose declaiming against our sins and selves in our stated or occasional addressings of ourselves to him, when pangs of death, horrors of conscience, or the tastes and expectations of his wrath make us uneasy to ourselves; as if, by compliments, and petty observances of God in lower matters, we could turn and toss a ductile nature into any aspect, shape, or posture, that may serve our private turns, and please our arrogant and presumptuous humours; and court God to strip himself of all the glories of his name and throne, and prostitute his interest and honour, laws and majesty, unto the fond conceits of fools and sinners. For this is blasphemy and presumption to the height, both fit and sure to be punished by the Judge. Could God be love, or lovely in the eyes of sober and discerning men, were he thus facile, so as to be influenced by the conceits and humours of sinners in their dotages? He that would not signify one thought of mercy to our revolted parents, before he had represented himself most awful in his judiciary process; and that so guarded both his laws and throne with awful majesty and sanctions; and that exacted so severe a satisfaction from his Son;—he, surely, neither will nor can debase himself, and tempt his creatures, by unfit relaxations of his laws and courses, to think him despicable, even by such unfit deportments of himself toward them. That fool which takes God's mercies and indulgences to be at his commands, so as to sin and pray; and that makes such easy pardons and redresses the continual encouragements of sinful practices and hopes;—that fool, I say again, that is of this persuasion and deportment, is no way likely to be cured of his lukewarm temper. (Deut. xxix. 19, 20.) For so easy pardons and redresses would evidently and effectually mortify the Spirit, and defeat the glorious designs of divine government amongst men. (See Heb. xii. 25, 28, 29; x. 26—31; Rom. ii. 6—10; Gal. vi. 7—9; 1 Sam. ii. 2, 3, 29, 30; 2 Chron. xv. 2.)

And if you take your Christianity to be a state of drudgery and disconsolateness; if you degenerate into worldliness, luxury, or voluptuousness; (as in John ii. 15—17; James iv. 4;) if you grow so

tender of yourselves as to be swayed more by what affects the outward, than the inward, man; if you give way to partiality, to jealousies, heats, and ferments, to a censorious, jealous, and detracting spirit, or to the spirit of domination and division; or if you form your principles, interests, and actions, according to the measures and concerns of this vain, transient world and of the animal life: this malady will prove incurable.

DIRECT. II. *Heart-warming objects are to be contemplated.*—Such as, the glories of God's name, the grandeurs of his majesty and throne, the accuracies of his government in all its constitutions and administrations; the stores and treasures of his goodness, with all their provident and yet generous distributions unto all his creatures; the riches of his grace, in his kindness to us by Jesus Christ, the exhibition of his Son, and all the amiable excellences and endearing aspects and addresses made to us by him; the life that is in Christ; the grace and promises that are given us by him, so "great and precious;" all the fellowship and intimacies that we are hereby called and admitted to; gospel treasures and provisions, to bring and keep our God and us together, in order to all the solaces and satisfactions of steady, full, eternal friendship; the eminent importance of his gospel, interest, and kingdom, in and to the world, the church, and us; the loveliness and vigours of his interest and image in us, as formed, fixed, and actuated, and possessed, by his eternal Spirit, to his eternal praise by Jesus Christ; the solid pleasures, peace, and usefulness of regular zeal for God, Christ, Christianity, and all that are near and dear to God; with all the comforts and renown which this well-fixed and ordered zeal prepares us for; all that we are saved from, by, to, through the effectual cure of this disease; all the solemnities of Christ's approaching day, and our great concerns therein; all the good that is in, that attends upon, and that issues from, the prosperous successes of the gospel, the holiness and peace of the church, and the health, the usefulness, the possession, the conflicts, and conquests of a well-cured soul; and all the honours, ease, and blessings that attend our glorious gospel.

All this, and much more, deserves deep thoughts, and all the fervours and acknowledgments and services of love. And the plain truth is this:—we are both constituted of, and surrounded with, inflaming objects of this love; and the great object and attractive shines even most gloriously in all:—nature, in all its harmonies, stores, and beauties; Providence, in all its illustrations of its excellences and exactness, suiting itself in all the articles thereof to every thing and being and concern in heaven and earth; the sacred scriptures, every way entertaining us with what may exercise and enrich the mind of man, heal and compose his conscience, enthroning it as God's vicegerent to inspect the principles, designs, and practices, and state of men, to make and keep them orderly, safe, and easy, and so to affect the heart and life, as that we may be lovely in the sight of God, the blessings of our stations in our generations, and a most comfortable entertainment to ourselves. Our very selves are most provoking

objects unto love. So many faculties in our souls! so many passions and affections to be ordered and exercised aright! so many senses for reception! so many organs and instruments for the commodious promoting and securing of our own good! so many objects, employments, and acquests, to be engaged vigorously about, and orderly conversant with all continually! And God in all this eminently beaming forth those perfections which are so fit and worthy to take endearingly with us! How inexcusable is cold-heartedness, whenas it may so easily be cured by serious contemplations of these objects! Light and colours and beautiful proportions to the eye, words and melodies to the ears, food to the taste, and all the objects, exercises, and entertainments of every sense, afford our very minds and hearts their delicacies to feed on, and urge us to love God and man.

And let me add this also,—the beauties and delightfulness of holiness and practical religion, as exemplified in holy persons; those “excellent ones, in whom is all my delight,” saith David. (Psalm xvi. 3.) O to observe them in all their curious imitations and resemblances of their God; in the wisdom of their conduct, the fervours of their spirits, the steadiness of their purposes, the evenness of their tempers, the usefulness and blamelessness of their lives, the loftiness of their aims, the placid gravity of their looks, the savour and obligingness of their speeches, the generous largeness of their hearts, the openness of their hands, the impartiality of their thoughts, the tenderness of their bowels, and all the sweetnesses of their deportments toward all! Such things are really where Christian godliness obtains indeed; though mere pretenders, or real Christians in their decays and swoons, may represent religion under its eclipses to its great disadvantage and reproach.

When, therefore, we contemplate all these excellences, (and many more, not mentioned,) will not our hearts take fire, and burn with love of complacency, where these things are visible; and with the love of benevolence and beneficence, to that degree, toward those that are receptive of, but want, them, which shall enrage desires and prayers, and quicken us to diligent endeavours after what by such may be attained unto, were they but closely and warmly followed by us, and brought to the diligent pursuits thereof? Thus, you see, deep thoughts about lovely objects will get up love and cure lukewarmness in us to the purpose. Let this, then, be done.

DIRECT. III. *Heart-awakening and love-quickening truths are to be duly and intimately considered.*—And this is, indeed, in part, to “truthify in love;” if I may make an English word to express the *valor* of the Greek word, *αληθευοντες εν αγαπη*. (Eph. iv. 15.) [We must duly consider] the existence and excellence of the great Jehovah, the Trine-One Holy One; the care which he hath taken, and the expensive cost [which] he hath been at, to cure this malady by the fore-mentioned means and helps; the critical inspections of his eye into the heart of man; and his making this the test and balance of the sanctuary to try us by; counting and judging us more or less fit for mercies and judgments, heaven or hell, service or to be thrown

aside as refuse, as our *hearts* stand affected. No exact soundness in our spirits, no safety in our state, no real ease and cheerfulness in our souls, no evidence of our acceptance with our God, no duty well performed toward God or man, no sins subdued, no trial bravely managed and resulted, no talents used fully to the Master's satisfaction and advantage, nothing professed, performed, endured, or obtained, without this love. And according to its ebbs and flows, its inflammations and abatements, so doth it fare and go with all our Christianity and concerns. The truth is, all the concerns of souls and persons, in life, death, judgment, heaven, and hell, are hereupon depending. These articles of truth, considered well, will make us serious, fervent, resolute, and industrious in the things of God.

DIRECT. IV. *Heart-warming duties are to be performed thoroughly, in public, private, and in secret.* (Eccles. ix. 10; Rom. xii. 11, 12.)—Pray hard, read frequently and seriously, hear diligently and impartially; meditate closely and concernedly upon all you read or hear relating to the great concern. Be much in Christian conference, in the due spirit and to the genuine design and purposes thereof. Be much in praise, thanks, self-observation, government, and discipline. Look up to heaven for help, and improve faithfully what you thence obtain. And I do take the Supreme, essentially Infinite Good to be dishonoured and degraded by us in our thoughts and walk, if any creature-interests or excellences do ultimately terminate our affections and intentions.

For my part, I take converses, employments, ingenious recreations, and even sensitive entertainments, to be most delicious and grateful, when they occasion or provoke me to those observations of God in all, which carry up my thoughts through and from them to him, with thanks and holy wonder. And when these thoughts do, as it were, return again from heaven, to set us more delightfully and strenuously to our needful work on earth, for heaven and for the most generous and true services, to the great benefit of the church and world; O what a sea of pleasures and advantages do love and good works cast us then into, and keep us in!

How often have the delicate composes of grave and sprightly music, well managed by the sweet and skilful voice or touch, provoked and urged my soul to admire the Chief Good, and the Eternal Source of all communicated and communicable ingenuity and expertness in that, and in all sorts of arts and sciences! The delicate composure of the ear, to render it receptive of melodious sounds; the usefulness of the air for the conveyance of them to the prepared ear; the pregnantencies of human souls and fancies for the endlessness of various compositions; the command that the soul hath over the animal spirits, to order and command the voice or fingers; the rules of harmony, and the particular gracefulness of relishes and flourishings and humourings of some particular notes and touches; and the different tempers that God hath made, whereto the varieties of sounds have their as various degrees and ways of gratefulness;—these things, with all the mysteries of sounds and numbers, O what is their cry?—“How lovely is the Eternal God, that gives us such abilities and

entertainments! How lovely are the souls of men, that are receptive of such things! How lovely are those labours and designs, that are, with wisdom, diligence, and faithfulness, directed to the cultivation and salvations of such souls! O how beautiful and lovely are the feet of those, and how deserving of our prayers and universal helpfulness are they themselves, who lay-out all their time and strength, to get each other, and as many as they can, in readiness to bear their parts and take their share in the melodies and entertainments of that triumphant state of love and holiness in the heavenly glory!" The cry of all is, "Love! love!"

These are things and objects that require and deserve our love, in its most urgent vehemencies, to promote their interests. This noble flame is desecrated and profaned by us, and used to its own prejudice and reproach, when it is not directed to, and diligently conversant about, objects and services truly worthy of itself. (Gal. iv. 18.) I should have thought my thoughts and heart, not only feculent, but in a sort profane, had I applied my studies, or this sacred directory in my text, to the promoting of fervour, noise, and stir about things much below, or repugnant to, the weightier things and matters of Christ's gospel-kingdom,—judgment, mercy, and love; (Matt. xxiii. 23;) "the love of God," saith Luke. (xi. 42.)

Woe worth that *Papal* zeal and diligence, that is for the promotion of an universal visible headship! wherein they pretend that all the church militant must be united, into whose arbitrary and bold dictates it must resolve its faith, according to whose edicts it must form all its practices, and to the supports whereof, in all its secular grandeurs, pageantries, and usurped prerogatives, it must devote and sacrifice its all. Is he lukewarm in God's account, that will not anathematize, traduce, distress, destroy, souls, persons, families, churches, kingdoms, and the choicest and most useful persons; who will not absolutely devote himself hereto, and show his zeal in desolating flames and slaughters? Such zeal, we know by whom it was called "madness." (Acts xxvi. 9—11; Phil. iii. 6.)

Woe worth *malignant and censorious* zeal, that overlooks much excellence in others, and that envies or despises all deserving services, gifts, and graces, if not seated in and performed by themselves!

Woe worth *dividing* zeal, that intimately espouses particular opinions, modes, forms, and humours; and then makes these the main, or the only, terms of peace and concord; that lays out all its time, strength, interest, and fervours, to gain proselytes and votaries hereto, and to defend their own fictions; and quarrel with, and keep at sinful distances from, persons better (perhaps) than themselves, because their Shibboleth is not pronounced by them!

Woe worth *partial* zeal, that measures things and persons by their discords and agreements with our own interests, parties, or persuasions! Every thing is idolatry, superstition, and rigorously to be dealt withal, that falls not even with our sentiments and ways!

Woe worth *self-conceited* zeal, that lays its quarrels upon this cause and bottom,—that others will not reverence and yield to us, as wiser and better than themselves!

And woe worth all zeal, that lays the Christian interest, peace, and welfare, on covenants, subscriptions, or any terms too mean and narrow to sustain them! I shall never value, vindicate, practise, nor endure that zeal which bears not all those characters of God mentioned in James iii. 17, 18.

POSTSCRIPT.

And now, reader, let me bespeak thy candour. I am very sensible of very great inaccuracies and defects in this resolution of so great a case: it became my work under unusual disadvantages, not fit to be mentioned here. I have exposed my first draught to an observant generation. The truths contained therein are God's; and the directions offered are, for the substance of them, according to the doctrine of the scripture of truth. May they but prosper to the cure of lukewarm hearts, I can the better spare the praise of men, and bear their censures and contempt. It is the desire, endeavour, and design of my poor soul to think as meanly of myself as others can. I have no time (and, through the infirmity of my right hand, writing is the most tedious part of my work) to correct my first copy; which entertains me, in the perusal thereof, with many superfluous expressions to be retrenched; many inaccuracies of phrase and method to be rectified; many defects to be made up, as to that matter which the full resolution of the case requires; many hints and heads which might more copiously have been insisted on: yea, and some passages in the text itself, I find, upon review, might have been more fully and nervously improved to the exacter resolution of the case. Much more I could have said; and much more than *that* can a multitude of my brethren speak, were they to undertake the subject, and handle it according to the grace and wisdom which God hath more copiously given unto them than unto me: though I will leave this testimony to his great and gracious name upon record,—that he hath ever helped me; and had done more for me, had I not unworthily obstructed the current of his kindnesses to me. My books and helps are nothing to me without him. It is ignorance of ourselves and of God, that makes us proud; but our sensible approaches to eternity and to himself will make us sneak and lay us in the dust before him; we being hereby made to see how little [that which] we know can signify, obtain, or do, without him.

Some may perhaps object my mistake and misapplication of this text, in that men, our fellow-Christians, are the object of this love and service here to be provoked unto. And I deny it not; but it is God's image, interest, and service, in and by them, in reference to the pleasing of his will, so "good," so "acceptable," and so "perfect," (Rom. xii. 1, 2,) that is the great inducement to this love. And as these things are discernible in them, communicable to them, and followed or neglected by them, so are they related to, and all of us concerned in, this love and good works, either as agents or objects, or both: and of this love and service is God the original Dirigent, and ultimate End.

SERMON XV.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL SLATER, A.M.

WHAT IS THE DUTY OF MAGISTRATES, FROM THE HIGHEST TO THE LOWEST, FOR THE SUPPRESSING OF PROFANENESS?

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.—Romans xiii. 3.

RELIGION, if right, doth excel all other things in the world, upon the account of its universal usefulness, and the powerful influences [which] it hath upon them that are true to it, for the promoting of their present, future, and everlasting happiness. Of all other, the Christian religion, which we own and profess, is the best and most worthy of our engaging in and immovable cleaving to, being "pure and undefiled before God and the Father," as the apostle James speaks. (Chap. i. 27.) Unspeakably profitable it is and advantageous to the kingdoms that receive it, and to the persons who are sincere in it, and studious of conforming themselves to its holy precepts and rules. The sacred scriptures, drawn up and left by men divinely inspired and infallibly assisted, from which alone we fetch it, (not from fathers or councils, whatever esteem and veneration we have for them,) do commend themselves unto the judgments and consciences of men who have not shaken hands with reason; and fetch so great a compass as to contain and reveal, either in particular or general directions, all that which is necessary for us to believe or do, in order to our full satisfaction and endless felicity in the next world, and our present safety, peace, and comfort in this foolish and troublesome one. David tells us, "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." (Psalm cxix. 96.) It is *long* for its duration, being *æternæ veritatis*, "of everlasting truth," not any thing shall be diminished or cut off from it, not any thing shall be changed or altered in it; and it is *broad* for its usefulness, extending to and spreading itself over all the occasions of men: for it hath comforts sovereign and proper in all distresses, though never so pinching, together with directions adapted to and fitted for all conditions and affairs, though never so difficult and abstruse.

The blessed word of God will teach you how to order and demean yourselves in your personal capacities, and in your relative too; how to walk alone, and how to draw in the yoke. It presents us with the best ethics, economics, and politics in the world: Aristotle's and Machiavel's are fooleries, if compared with it. This precious word, being well attended to and obeyed, will make comfortable families, flourishing kingdoms and states. O that all those unto whom the Lord hath in his goodness vouchsafed these oracles, would be so wise as to

make them their "delight and counsellors!" (Psalm cxix. 24.) Sure I am, we should then be blessed with better husbands and wives, better parents and children, better masters and servants, better friends and neighbours, better ministers and people, better magistrates and subjects. "The beauty of the Lord our God" would "be upon us," (Psalm xc. 17,) and that would make our faces shine.

Of the last-mentioned relation, namely, that between magistrates and subjects, the holy apostle Paul treats at the beginning of this chapter, and so on to verse 8. In the first verse he issueth out his precept; from which it appears that Christ is no enemy to Cæsar, and the principles of Christian religion not inconsistent with those of loyalty. The best Christians will be found (at long run, to be sure) the best subjects. None so true to their prince as those that are most faithful to their God. For what saith our apostle? "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." (Verse 1.) Every one, man, woman, and child, that is capable of understanding what subjection means, and of expressing it; be he of what rank and in what station he will, high or low, noble or base, rich or poor, of the clergy (by the Pope's leave!) or of the laity, as some love to speak; let him be subject—not overtop, not "exalt himself over that which is called God," but "be subject—to the higher powers." "Who are they?" The civil magistrates. Antichrist hath put-in his claim here; but he is justly non-suited by Protestants. It is the civil magistrate whose interest and right our apostle here asserts and pleads; "kings," as he speaks in another epistle, "and all that are in authority." (1 Tim. ii. 2.) These we are to pray for; to these we ought to be subject; to these we must pay tribute; these we must honour, support, and assist; these we are bound to obey, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake," and that in all things in which obedience to them doth not carry in the bowels of it disobedience unto God, whom the greatest and highest of them are infinitely below. (1 Tim. ii. 2; Rom. xiii. 1, 5, 7; Matt. xvii. 27; 1 Peter ii. 17.) This precept he backs and binds upon Christians with sundry arguments, drawn,

1. *From the institution of magistracy.*—Of what kind soever the government be, whether monarchical, or aristocratical, &c., still government is of divine institution. It is God's ordinance and appointment: "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." (Verse 1.) It is not of the devil, who is an enemy to order, and delights in confusion; nor is it only by the will of man, whatsoever they may and do contribute toward it; nor is it only of those who possess the throne and sway the sceptre: but it is of God, who, in his infinite wisdom and goodness to mankind, hath determined and ordered it should be so; who, according to the pleasure of his will, without giving account of his matters, "putteth down one, and setteth up another;" (Psalm lxxv. 7;) and who hath infused such an instinct and principle into men living together in a community, as powerfully and effectually leads to the electing of one or more, and setting him or them over them, arming and intrusting

them with power and authority, for the administration of justice and public affairs; that by them common safety and good may be both secured and promoted, and from them, as from the head, vital and comfortable influences may be conveyed to the whole politic body, yea, to the meanest and lowest of its members who grind at the mill and handle the distaff.

2. *From the sin of those who refuse this required subjection, and oppose and resist the magistrate.*—“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God;” (verse 2;) he doth herein run counter and cross to the all-wise God, and his declared will; he doth, as it were, set his wisdom and will against God’s: *bellum cum Deo suscipit*, whatever he fancies to himself, he “undertakes and wages war with God.” This man sinneth against God as well as against man; is a rebel against the Majesty of heaven, as well as his prince upon earth, refusing the obedience he owes to his ordinance and command.

3. *From the evil and fatal consequence or effect of rebellion and resistance.*—Of which in the same verse: “They that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation.” They commit such a crime as shall most certainly and severely be revenged. They had better never have done it; for punishment will surely follow it, and, it may be, with a quick and speedy pace, either from the hand of the magistrate, to whom the sword is committed, with which he is to animadvert upon all disobedience; or by the hand of God, who will plead the cause and vindicate the honour of his lieutenants and vicegerents. So that such delinquents are never safe, but [are] in danger of a temporal punishment here, (as Korah and his accomplices experienced, and so did that unnatural wretch, Absalom,) or an eternal one in hell, in case hearty repentance do not by a happy interposal prevent it.

4. *From the end of the office, and the business incumbent upon persons called to it.*—Which is singularly good and greatly necessary, being designed for and tending to the preventing of vice, and promoting of virtue. And this is the argument used in my text: “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” *Oi αρχοντες*, “princes, magistrates,” they into whose hand the sceptre is put, or the sword of justice; whether they be supreme or subordinate, whatsoever place they hold in the political body. These are not *φοβος*, a “terror, a scare, a fright;” they ought not to be, it doth not become them to be, it is no part of their office and place to be. And so long as they act conscientiously; wisely, so long as they observe the rules given them, and carry in their several stations as they should; they will not be a terror *αγαθων εργαων*, “to good works,” or to them that do them, whom they ought to defend by their power, and encourage with their smiles; but only *των κακων*, “to those which are evil.”

It is the latter part of these words which falls under my present consideration. My work is to take a view of magistrates, and to discourse about them, as they ought to be terrors unto evil works,—all

of them, so far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cognizance; the question which I am desired to speak unto being this:—

QUESTION.

What is the duty of magistrates, from the highest to the lowest, for the suppressing of profaneness?

In the handling hereof I shall observe this method:—

I. First. *Inquire what is meant by “profaneness.”*

II. Secondly. *What is intended by “the suppression of profaneness.”*

III. Thirdly. *Prove it to be the duty of all magistrates to employ their authority and power for that great and excellent end.*

IV. Fourthly. *Propound and offer sundry means which they may and should make use of in order thereunto.*

V. Lastly. *Shut up our whole discourse with application.*

And the great God assist in the work, and bless that which shall be done! Amen.

I. Our first inquiry then will be, *What are we to understand by “profaneness?”*—In answer whereunto we will consider the word, which in Latin is *profanus*, and, as some learned critics observe, is as much as *procul a fano*, “far from the temple or holy place,” far from God: that which is far from the mind and will of God, that which God doth not approve, will have nothing to do with, which speaks those that love and practise it a company of persons at a distance from God. The word in the Greek is *βεβηλος*. “Now,” saith Aretius, “*βηλον* signifieth ‘pure,’ such a purity as is in the stars of heaven, or a serene sky; and the syllable *βε* doth change the signification and import of the word; and accordingly we do well understand by it that which is ‘unclean, impure, polluted, filthy.’” So that profaneness is uncleanness, of which there are two sorts:—

1. *A ceremonial uncleanness.*—Thus we read of defiled hands, and common meats. Of the former: “There came together unto him certain of the Pharisees and scribes. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault:” (Mark vii. 1, 2:) *κοιναις χερσι*, “with common hands, impure ones.” That was counted by them a profane action, which polluted the person that did it. And so you read of common meats: Peter “saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is” *κοινωνη ακαθαρτων*, “common or unclean.” (Acts x. 11—14.) There “common” is opposed to “holy;” it was a thing not fit for that holy people whom God had called out from the rest of the world, and made his own peculiar. That was common, unclean, or profane, which was lawful to the Gentiles, but prohibited the Jews by the ceremonial law; as, to instance, swine’s flesh. That law is

now abolished: with this sort of uncleanness we at present have nothing to do, as not being intended in the question.

2. *There is a moral uncleanness.*—And that is it here meant. That is said to be profane which is impure, polluted, foul, loathsome, and defiling; and so it may be, and, as we find in scripture, it is, applied both *to persons* and *to things*.

(1.) *To persons.*—Thus in Ezek. xxi. 25, when the Lord by the prophet spake to Zedekiah, it was in this language: “Thou profane, wicked prince of Israel.” His profaneness did arise from, or rather consist in, his wickedness; for he had grievously polluted himself with idolatry and perjury, with cursed persecutions, and the blood of the innocents. He was both a stranger and enemy to all piety and purity; he ingulfed himself in wickedness, and laboured with all his might to draw others of his subjects, both noble and base, into the same practices, and to plunge them as deep as himself. Esau hath the same brand set upon him: “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right:” (Heb. xii. 16:) a “profane person,” *qui nihil habet sacri*, “who hath in him nothing sacred,” nothing of holiness; who violates, neglects, tramples under foot holy things; who so pleaseth himself in filthiness as to wallow in it; in whom the love of the world is so predominant, and to pleasures, riches, and honours he is so addicted, that he prefers them before the grace of God, and the kingdom of Christ, in himself and in the world: such an one as values carnal things above spiritual, earthly above heavenly, and a small fleshly enjoyment above so great and advantageous a privilege as the primogeniture.

(2.) *Profaneness is attributed to things.*—Thus in 1 Tim. iv. 7: “Refuse profane and old wives’ fables;” by which we are, according to learned men, to understand, either the absurd Jewish stories, or some superstitious persons forbidding to marry, and the use of sundry sorts of meats; or those idle and foolish doctrines which place the worship of God in such low and pitiful things as external, sapless rites and ceremonies, forms, modes, and gestures. But, further: those things are plainly and notoriously profane which are sinful and wicked. Debauchery is profaneness in grain: a wicked life is a profane life. To lie, and swear, and curse, and whore, are acts of profaneness. For people to drive-on their worldly trades, to buy and sell, in houses, shops, or streets, upon the sabbath-day, are acts of profaneness: this is a profaning of that day which God hath separated from the rest of the days, and sanctified and set apart for holy use, his own worship and service, and the good of souls. In short: all that which is contrary to the divine law, those excellent and blessed rules which God hath been pleased in his word to give out unto us, for the right management of ourselves, and ordering of our lives and conversations in the world—all that, I say, is profaneness, whether it be impiety or immorality.

II. Our second work is to inquire *what we are to understand by “the suppressing of profaneness.”*—To this I answer in general: The

suppressing of it doth signify the keeping of it under. If profaneness be not carefully looked to, but let alone, it will quickly grow to a head, and soon overspread and overtop all. It must therefore be kept down; and if, through the negligence of some, and the impudence of others, it be got to a height, it must be knocked down. Such tough humours in the body politic need, and call for, strong purges; and civil magistrates, who are the state-physicians, cannot be better employed than about such works as that. More particularly, I shall mention two things which the suppression of profaneness doth carry in it: *a prevention of*, 1. *The acts of profaneness*: 2. *The growth of it*.

1. *There must be a prevention of the acts of profaneness*.—Profane principles in the heart of a man, lying still and, as it were, dormant, not breaking forth, are out of the reach of others; neither the magistrate's sword, be it never so long, nor the minister's word, if alone, and unaccompanied with the Divine Spirit, can reach it, or prevail against it. That is the mighty and glorious work of the great Jehovah, who alone knoweth the heart and searcheth it, and can change, alter, and mend it. None but he that made the heart at first can mould it anew; none but he can cast salt into that spring; none but he can graft such holy principles as to make a corrupt tree good. But [such] wicked and profane practices in the lives of men, as are the wretched products, fruits, and issues of base and cursed principles, may be curbed, restrained, and prevented: so that though the wickedness of the wicked will not depart from him, yet it shall not be committed with that frequency and boldness and openness as it hath been, and to this very day is,—with shame and sorrow be it spoken! In the [epistle to the] Hebrews, xii. 15: "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you:" you may understand it both of unsound and abominable practices; but I am now only to deal with the latter. Sin, lust, corruption in the heart, is a root of bitterness, yielding that which is bitter to God: his soul hates and abhors it. And it is bitter to man in the sad, direful consequences and effects of it, which, when the foolish, self-humouring sinner comes to taste, he will certainly find worse than gall. Sin is his dainties, he rolls it as a delicious morsel under his tongue; (Job xx. 12;) but it will prove the poison of asps within him. Now it nearly concerns every one to endeavour the pulling up of this root in his own heart; let him set both his hands to the work, let him lay the axe to it, and call God in to his assistance. It is ten thousand thousand times more desirable to have in you that "root of the matter" which holy Job spake of, (Job xix. 28,) than to have this "root of bitterness" in you. (Heb. xii. 15.) But then it ought to be the care of all, (specially governors, both in families, churches, kingdoms, and nations,—they should look diligently to it,) that this root do not *pullulare*, "spring up:" if at any time it begins to peep and show its head, oppose it with might and main, trample upon it with the foot of just indignation, never suffer it to shoot up, bud, and bring forth. Though men

will not be so good as they should, do not give them leave to be as bad as they would. It is not in your power to dry up the fountain, but it is a part of your duty to dam up the streams; and though you cannot eradicate men's vicious habits, yet you must restrain their outward acts. "Of whom are Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme:" (1 Tim. i. 20 :) a strange way of cure, to prevent sin by giving men up to the devil; yet such as God prescribed and prospered. After the same manner, let flagitious persons be delivered up to punishment, that so, though they will not, *virtutis amore*, "for the love of virtue," yet *formidine pœnæ*, "for fear of punishment," they may learn to bridle themselves, and not to do any more so wickedly as they have done; one great end of punishment being the reclaiming and amending the offender, if he be not past hope.

2. *There must be a suppression of the growth and spreading of profaneness.*—I shall hereafter show you a little more fully how that sin is like some unhappy weeds, that if once they get into a ground, and be not timely dealt with, will in a little while run far and near, and overspread the whole: they do not need any encouragement; it is enough for them to be let alone. Of all weeds this wickedness is the worst and most diffusive of itself. A profane wretch is like one that hath the plague; he is indeed a pest, or common plague, in the place where he is; his very breath and touch, his discourses and actions, are infectious; he goeth up and down tainting those with whom he doth converse, who are not of healthful constitutions of souls, and well antidoted with the fear and awe of God. And this was one reason that the apostle Paul gives, in the fore-mentioned, Heb. xii. 15, why he would have such special care taken to prevent the "springing up of any root of bitterness:" "Lest thereby many be defiled," *μιανθωσι*, "polluted, bespattered," made as filthy and nasty as the beasts themselves. If such a "root of bitterness" be suffered to spring up, many will be troubled at it, and many will be defiled by it. It is the design and delight of wicked men to make others as bad as themselves, and to draw both acquaintance and strangers to cast-in their lot among them, and to walk hand in hand with them in their crooked ways that lead down to the chambers of death. O that the saints and people of God were as desirous and industrious for the promoting of true piety, as the emissaries of hell are for the propagating of profaneness! O that they would be as diligent to persuade men and women into the faith and obedience of the gospel, as these are to make devilish proselytes! In a word: that they would take as much care and pains for the carrying others along with them to heaven, as these are [taking] to allure and hurry others to hell! But, to our shame be it spoken, we are too dull, heavy, and unactive; we are greatly out-done by them; we are not a quarter so zealous for the rescuing of poor sinners out of the clutches of "the destroyer," (Psalm xvii. 4,) as they are for the bringing [of] them under his power.

But sure I am, it is the duty of all, specially the concernment of those who are by God invested with power, to reckon it, and accord-

ingly to mind it, as a very considerable part of their work, to look to it, that this noisome plague be stayed. And to that purpose, I desire them to consider what was the resolution of David, the man after God's own heart: "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land:" it should be one of the first things he did, to destroy them, not corporally, by taking away their lives, but civilly, by a due and strict discipline; and so "cut off all evil-doers from the city of the Lord." (Psalm ci. 8.) Where this is not attended to, sad and doleful experience hath made it evident to the world, that hell will immediately break loose, the flood-gates of wickedness will be all drawn up, and an inundation of the blackest villanies will follow and drown a land. "In those days there was no king in Israel;" none that could effectually hinder idolatry or any thing else, none that had a sufficient coercive power; for the judges did deal with the people rather by counsel and persuasion, than by commands and punishments; and then, saith the text, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes;" (Judges xvii. 6;) and you need not doubt but a great deal of that was wrong and odious in God's eyes.

But magistrates, by their diligence in their places, acting up to their trust, and a due execution of justice, may secure our banks, and set up a standard against wickedness, even then when it cometh in upon us swelling and roaring like a flood. God, in Deut. xiii. 6—10, made this law,—that if any one should offer to tempt another to idolatry, though the person doing it were his "brother, the son of his mother, or his son, or his daughter, or the wife of his bosom, or a friend, that was as his own soul," let him be never so near, and never so dear, yet if he should say, "Let us go and serve other gods," his friend and most intimate relation, being thus tempted, should "surely kill him; his hand should be first upon him; and afterward the hand of all the people, and they should stone him with stones till he died." And now observe what was the end and design hereof; you have it set down in verse 11: "All Israel shall hear and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you." This will be *in terrorem*, it will "scare and fright" the wretches: such an act of justice will ring and grow famous, it will be talked of both in town and country; and wheresoever the report comes, it will strike an awe upon men, so that they shall not add [dare] to do the like.

III. The third thing which, according to the method I propounded, I have to do, is *to make it plain and evident, that it is the indispensable duty of magistrates, from the highest to the lowest, to mind the suppression of profaneness as their business.*—For when I do in this case speak of magistrates, we are to understand it in the utmost extent, of "kings, and all that are in authority." (1 Tim. ii. 2.) All of them, one and other, who have the sword of justice put into their hands, must not drowse and loiter, nor suffer that sword to lie rusting in the scabbard; but are obliged to draw it, and run it to the very hilts into the bowels of profaneness. This I shall endeavour to prove unto you by sundry particulars. Though I have

looked upon a sermon of this nature as more fit for another auditory, than this which consists of private persons ; only my thoughts have been, that what in the preaching did not reach some men's ears, may in the print come to their view ; and if there were, as peradventure there were, any inferior officers present, they might consider what was delivered, and carry it home with them, and be thereby excited to their duty, and do much toward the filling up of their places. But we proceed :

First. *Magistrates are God's vicegerents, his representatives ; they stand in his place.*—As God teacheth by ministers, so he rules by magistrates ; not that he needs either the one or the other, but it pleaseth him to make use of both. He that at first, as the great Creator of the world, instamped upon man that "image" of his which consists "in knowledge," "righteousness, and true holiness," (Col. iii. 10 ; Eph. iv. 24,) hath since the fall, as the wise Governor of the world, impressed upon princes and rulers that image of his which consists in honour, authority, and power. This is plain from the names and titles given them. They are called "his ministers :"
 "He is the minister of God unto thee ;" (Rom. xiii. 4 ;) a minister of God's choosing, a minister of God's appointing and advancing ; it was God that seated him in the throne, that committed to him the trust, that gave him his office, and put the power in his hand. And saith Paul, "He is a minister of God for good ;" that is, according to Pareus, 1. For natural good, to preserve men's lives, liberties, and properties. 2. For moral good, to keep men from vice and flagitious, self-ruining courses. 3. For civil good, to hold up societies, and to promote righteousness and honesty. 4. For spiritual good, to establish and uphold the true religion and pure worship of God. So that they are appointed for a great deal of good ; all which you may comfortably expect, and with some good confidence promise to yourselves, whensoever you see good men in the place of magistracy. Brambles will rend and tear, fire will go out of them to devour ; but the fruit of the vine is cheering, and with delight we may sit under its comfortable shadow.

Yea, they are not only called "the ministers of God," but because they are in so great place, and set about so good work, God hath been pleased to put upon them his own name, as we find in sundry places of scripture. "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people:" (Exod. xxii. 28 :) where the latter expression, "the ruler of thy people," is exegetical and explanative of the former, "the gods ;" and accordingly the Chaldee translation renders it, "the judges." So again : "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth among the gods," מְלִיחִים (Psalm lxxxii. 1 :) by which some indeed understand "the angels ;" as when the witch had raised up the devil, a fallen angel, in the shape of Samuel, she said to Saul, "I saw gods ascending out of the earth." (1 Sam. xxviii. 13.) And so Psalm lxxxvi. 8 : "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord:" though the holy angels are noble creatures, excellent in wisdom, and mighty in strength, yet among

that innumerable company not one can be found like God. But others better understand hereby, princes, judges, and civil magistrates. And not only David, a good man, a king, called them by this name, but Jehovah himself hath given it them, he hath vouchsafed to honour them with this name: "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High;" (Psalm lxxxii. 6;) you are my commissioners; you do *locum tenere*, 'hold my place' with my leave, and by my appointment. Your throne is the throne of God, and your tribunal the tribunal of God. I have given you an inviolable authority: take heed how you use it. I have made it your work to do justice, and to distribute rewards and punishments: see that you do it." Now what shall we infer from hence? Certainly, thus much: that magistrates being God's vicegerents, they ought to act like him, and according to his will. Having their commission from him, they should study it and conform to it; bearing his name, they should be expressive of his nature; being clothed with his power, they ought to employ it for his honour and the promoting of his interest, and against his enemies, of whom sin is the worst; for men are said to be "enemies in their minds through wicked works." (Col. i. 21.) Are they "children of the Most High?" and as such admitted to a part of his judiciary power? then it becomes them to "be followers of him as dear children," (Eph. v. 1,) and, as well as they can, to imitate him in the discharge of that trust which they have received from him, who is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. The foolish shall not stand in his sight: for he hateth all the workers of iniquity." (Psalm v. 4, 5.) But let us pursue this a little further.

Secondly. We have seen what is the place of magistrates; it is very high and honourable, but not supreme; there is One in heaven that is higher than they. Great men in authority are still, as the good centurion said, "under authority:" (Matt. viii. 9;) their place is a vicegerency. Now let us, but specially *let them, consider and remember what is the work and business of their place.*—For that they ought to do, endeavouring to stand complete in all the will of God, as men, as Christians, and as magistrates, or men in office. It will by no means be found enough for men to hold such or such a place in church or state, but it ought to be their desire and endeavour to fill up the place they hold. Which if men would seriously think upon, there would not be that seeking of and hunting after places as there generally is. Places then would rather seek men than men places. And as persons in authority and power do, and will, and justly may, expect and require that honour, revenue, and salary which doth of right belong to them upon the account of their place; (the prince will not part with his crown, sceptre, and throne, so long as he can hold them; nor the lord mayor with his sword and mace; no, nor the constable with his staff, which is the badge of his office;) so they and all others ought to fill up, as I said, their places with the performance of that duty which is inseparably annexed to them. A man had a great deal better never have been advanced to a place of

trust, than to be careless, negligent, and remiss in it. He that, so advanced, is not a public good, is no better than a common nuisance. *Honos* and *onus* go together, "honour" and "burden;" and *he* doth not deserve to meddle with the honour, *who* is not willing to take up the burden. Well, these places carry great work along with them, and that work must be done.

Now if the question be, "What is that work to the doing whereof magistrates are by their places obliged?" I answer: To appear for God, and to act for God. As God is the Author of their power, so his interest and honour ought to be the matter of their designs, and the end of their government. This that good king Jehoshaphat did full well understand: accordingly, when he had "set judges in the land, through all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city," he spake thus unto them: "Take heed what ye do; for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment." (2 Chron. xix. 5, 6.) An excellent speech it was, a charge fit to be given to judges, when [about] to go their circuits. Judges, yea, and others too, as well as they, had need be very cautious and wary men, exceeding prudent and circumspect. It concerns them to ponder and weigh actions, how they carry [themselves], what laws they make, how they execute them, what judgments they give, and what sentences they pass. "But what is the reason hereof?" Because they "judge not for men, but for the Lord;" and so they rule not for men, but [for] the Lord; and when they meet in parliament they should consult not for men, but for the Lord. Though indeed they do manage all most prudently for men, when they act most faithfully for the Lord. And it is certain, it is not officers' own advancement and enrichment, not their own honour and grandeur, at which they should level and direct their actions: none of these is the end of government, or of their being called to any part or share of it; but the honour of God and his glory as supreme, and the good of men as subordinate. And let not that be forgotten which Jehoshaphat added: "The Lord is with you in the judgment." When you do well, and act according to the law of righteousness; God is with you to own you, to justify you, to stand by you, to comfort and encourage you, to protect and defend you, to reward and bless you, as persons that have been faithful. And you may be sure, he is at all times with you, in the throne, and in the senate, and upon the bench, and elsewhere, curiously to observe and take notice of that which you do; for "by him actions are weighed." (1 Sam. ii. 3.) Magistrates and officers of all sorts have many eyes upon them; more see them than they themselves see. There are upon them the eyes of good men and bad, of friends and foes, of subjects and strangers: and they have upon them one eye more than, as I fear, some of them think of so much as they should; and that is the eye of the great and most holy God. He sees what is done upon the throne, and at the council-board; what in the parliament-houses, and what in the courts of judicature; what bills are drawn, and what do obtain the royal assent; what laws are enacted, and how they are executed.

Now, that the punishment of vice and suppression of profaneness is a special part of the work and duty of their place, is evident from this: "He is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Rom. xiii. 4.) Let the man be what and who he will,—let him be clothed with what circumstances he will, let him make what figure he will,—if he will do evil, he must suffer for the evil that he doeth. If men will take a lawless liberty, the ruler must take vengeance; if they will do the evil of sin, he must see to it that they suffer the evil of punishment. This is the work of his office; he is the minister of God for this purpose; being *ultor iræ divinæ*, and "having a vial of wrath put into his hand by the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth;" which he is to open and pour out upon "the children of disobedience," who are, for their being such, meritoriously *filiî iræ*, "the children of wrath." (Eph. ii. 2, 3; v. 6.)

Thirdly. *Profaneness is of that cursed nature and tendency, that it is not to be tolerated.*—Being contrary to the light and law of nature; and therefore hath been condemned and punished among heathen nations; specially such of them as have been civilized, and made any improvement of those *κοινὰς εννοίας*, "common notions and principles" that had been impressed upon their souls, and taken any care to demean and carry themselves according to the ducture and guidance of them. How much more contrary is it to the greater and more excellent light of scripture and gospel-revelation, which God hath caused to so eminent a degree to shine among us, and which doth so expressly and abundantly condemn, and denounce the wrath of God against, all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men! Who can sufficiently tell how odious it is to persons who are moralized; and, yet more, to all them who have been savingly enlightened, and had their blindness cured by some of Christ's eye-salve? And by consequence how greatly ought it to be abhorred, and totally abandoned, in all those places, countries, and nations, unto whom God hath sent the *magnalia legis*, "the great things of his law," and also the precious things of the everlasting gospel! "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.) Without all peradventure, this is a work of darkness, and that is not a fit employment for them that dwell in a land of light. In Eph. iv. 18, 19, the "giving of themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," is spoken of by the apostle, as the work of those who "have their understandings darkened, and are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," and altogether indecorous and unbecoming them who have learned Christ, and been trained up in the gospel-school. Shall then such things be winked at, allowed, or countenanced in a valley of vision? "No, no," say I; for as these are the sins, so they are the ignominy and shame, both of those that do them, and of those that suffer them. As gospel-truths and ordinances, and the ordering of a conversation aright in suitableness to them, are, as the dying wife of Phinehas said of the ark, "the glory of Israel,"

(1 Sam. iv. 21,) so immorality is its disgrace. Both these we are assured of by Solomon in one verse: "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (Prov. xiv. 34.) The common opinion of men is, that the exaltation of a nation is from the prudence of its prince, the wisdom of its counsellors, the valour of its commanders and soldiers, the success of its armies, victory over its enemies, (foreign, domestic,) flourishing of trade, abundance of riches, the stateliness of its palaces, and such-like; and it will easily be yielded, that every one of these doth make its contribution; but know, that righteousness alone doth more toward it than all them put together. This, this was it that made "the faithful city," "princess of the provinces;" and the land of Canaan in Israel's possession, so long as Israel walked with God, "a land of desire, an heritage of glory." (Isai. i. 21, 26; Lam. i. 1; Jer. iii. 19.) Plato, a great and excellent Heathen, could say, *Nemo rectè honorat animam suam, nisi qui vitiis fugatis justitiam colit*; "None truly honours his own soul but he that, bidding defiance to vice, loves and embraceth virtue." The same may as truly be said of a nation: righteousness, religion, is its glory and defence. But,

"Sin is a reproach to any people." Mark that! "any people." Let a people be never so low, abject, contemptible, sin will make them lower yet. And let a people be never so great, famous, and renowned, sin will be a blot in their escutcheon. It is a reproach to a heathen people, to Turks, Pagans, Indians; but much more so to a Christian people, to a people that profess themselves Protestants and Reformed, that call themselves "the people of God." O England! what cause then hast thou to blush! How great is thy shame, O London! who hast had so many of Christ's ambassadors sent unto thee with the counsels of his will, so many bright stars of the first magnitude shining in thine orb, such plenty and abundance of means and spiritual mercies afforded to thee, as no nation hath had more, if any so much! Thou hast been exalted indeed, and lifted up to heaven, like Capernaum, by these precious and inestimable enjoyments; and yet, I fear, it may be said, no place hath acted at a higher rate of contrariety and desperate opposition to the gospel; no place hath expressed a greater enmity to reformation and the power of godliness; no place hath so superabounded with profaneness; in no place hath profaneness been more impudent and daring than in thee. Thy lewdness is in thy skirts. O how great is thy reproach! Now it is unquestionably the duty of all among us to endeavour the honour of the nation, and to "roll away" this its reproach. And if there be any magistrates, higher or lower, that will not heartily set both their hands to that work, let them know, and think of it again and again, that that very thing will be to their reproach; yea, fall out as much to their reproach, as it was to the honour of "the angel of the church of Ephesus," to have such a testimony given of him by "the faithful and true Witness," who holdeth "the seven stars in his right hand,"—that "he could not bear them that were evil," (Rev. ii. 2,) that is, not with any patience; but reproveth them, and did what belonged to

his office ; either reducing them from their extravagancies, and bringing them to repentance and amendment of life ; or otherwise, if incurable, cutting them off from the body, and casting them out of communion.

Fourthly. *Let men neglect or be remiss about the suppression of profaneness, and they will soon see the increase of it.*—For ill weeds will grow apace, shoot and spread incredibly. Men do not need to bestow time, and pains, and care to house them in winter, and water them in summer ; for by a bare connivance and permission they will flourish and abound. It is indeed a piece of great difficulty, and requires skill and labour, to make that take and thrive which is good and excellent ; such is the nature of the soil since the fall. The sin of man brought upon the very ground the curse of God, so that thorns and thistles it will send up by wholesale ; but if a man will eat bread, he must do it in the sweat of his brows. So here, the heart of man is so miserably corrupt and depraved, that there is scarce any thing good that will prosper in it. That “goodness” which sometimes seems to be in some, as to instance in Ephraim, is “like the morning cloud, and early dew that passeth away ;” (Hosea vi. 4 ;) that which is lasting and abiding in persons regenerate, is for its continuance beholden to the mighty power and special influences of the Divine Spirit.

We see it often and often,—the experience of too many years, of some generations, doth sadly prove how difficult a thing it is to bring about a reformation, which, one would think, should commend itself to the consciences of men that understand any thing of the mind and will of God ; nay, to do any thing toward it, or to reconcile most persons to the naming thereof, to persuade them to break off from unwarrantable customs, to put off old rags which are rotten and defiling, and to throw away those things which have neither marrow in them nor flesh upon them, but are mere bones of contention, and to prevail with them to make a further remove from Rome, and advance toward Sion, I mean, a gospel-worship and gospel-order. How difficult a thing is it to bring the debauched person to a sober life, or the sapless, empty formalist to the power of godliness, and a real, hearty, thorough closure with the Lord Jesus Christ and his laws !

But as for sin and wickedness, it needs not any endeavours to promote it in the world, and commend it to the practice of men ; it needs no encouragement, not because it is so good, but because men are so bad. The devil himself may sit still and let his servants alone ; they will be sure to follow his work hard without having his eye upon them. He might forbear and give over his temptations ; for they can and will go, yea, run alone, in those down-hill ways of folly : their connate principles of enmity to God, and rebellion against him, will of themselves break out into hostile actions, as naturally as hay, stacked or laid up when green or moist, will fire of itself, and proceed to rage more and more. Sin is like to a fire in a town or city, which, if it be not extinguished, or at least kept down and stopped in its furious career, will march from house to house, and step from one side of the

street to the other, and never desist so long as there is any combustible matter for it to fasten upon, and so till it set all on a flame, and bury the whole in its own ruin and ashes. Let but a profane wretch alone, and I dare confidently say, you shall not find him long alone. He will, like a decoy, soon gather company to him, and multiply them too : "One sinner destroyeth much good." (Eccles. ix. 18.) And so, being "of his father the devil," (John viii. 44,) and doing the works of his father, let him enjoy his name : call him Abaddon, Apollyon, "a destroyer." (Rev. ix. 11.) He will call himself, a hundred to one else, "a good subject," "a good churchman ;" but he is "a destroyer ;" that is his right name.

If you would know how he doth destroy much good, I answer, In these two things :—

1. He doth it *impia vitæ meritis*, "by the demerits and high provocations of his impious, ungodly life." He "draweth iniquity with the cords of vanity, and so judgment as with cart-ropes." (Isai. v. 18.) He is as a Jonah in the ship, who raiseth the storms that threaten us ; and as an Achan in the camp, that arms and succeeds the enemies that come out against us. To whom do we owe the plague that hath consumed our inhabitants, and the fires that have devoured our houses, towns, and cities, but to him and his fraternity? Ahab spake very unhandsomely to one of the Lord's prophets when he said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" But Elijah answered him truly and bravely : "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." (1 Kings xviii. 17, 18.) It is the idolaters, superstitious, and profane, that troubled Israel, and that trouble England, and will trouble the whole world ; for they provoke God to trouble us, and to distribute sorrows in his anger.

2. They destroy much good *impiis consiliis et exemplis*, "by their wicked counsels and examples," while they allure, entice, and persuade, and by their practices draw, others into the same courses, the same excess of riot. These are like Samson's foxes with fire-brands fastened to their tails, that spoil the harvest we hoped for as the joyful reward of our labours. How comes our youth to be tainted as they are? Who fills the eyes of parents with tears, and their hearts with sorrow who travailed in birth for them that Christ might be formed in them, but now mourn and weep bitterly over them as lost, because vicious and extravagant? Whence is it that our hopes as to the succeeding generation are so exceedingly enfeebled, but by means of many among us so notorious for profaneness, who make it both their work and sport to render others as bad as themselves? And if timely care be not taken to prevent it, we can rationally expect nothing else but the leaving [of] this pleasant land, the land of our nativity, to be possessed by sons of Belial, who will make it mourn and groan, and sick to the spewing of them out. I desire you to lay this to your hearts, if you have any bowels of mercy and compassion. A little spark is to be narrowly watched, where there is so much tinder ready to catch.

Fifthly. Let this be seriously considered: *If magistrates, superior and inferior, do not put forth their power and endeavours for the suppressing of profaneness, they will pull down upon their own heads the guilt of all that profaneness which is committed.*—And this I dare say,—There is no man that liveth in the world, no, not the best and most holy, but he hath sins enough of his own, too, too many, more than he is able to bear or to answer for. His own follies and miscarriages, if bound upon him, will be found sufficient to break his back, and sink him into the bottomless pit of misery. So David tells us: (and he spake no more than what his own sense and feeling did suggest and dictate to him:) “Mine iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden; they” (that is, his own iniquities, his own head-, heart-, and life-sins) “are too heavy for me.” (Psalm xxxviii. 4.) And as it was with him, so it is with every one; and therefore no man hath need to add to the load, by heaping upon himself the guilt of other men’s sins too. Though it must be confessed, that notwithstanding all which the wisest and most circumspect person can do, notwithstanding all the care he can take, he will hardly be found altogether innocent as to this. Holy Austin, one of the best of the fathers, saw sufficient, yea, abundant reason for the putting-up this humble petition, “Lord, deliver me from my other-men’s sins;” and it may be feared that no small number of great men who have been, yea, and are, in place of power and authority, will, when the all-seeing God comes to search them, be found deeply culpable and dreadfully chargeable upon this account; and therefore others that do at this day possess the same or like places, are very nearly concerned to look to themselves. *Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum*: “Happy the man whom other men’s sins and dangers, falls and hurts, make to beware.”

That hath gone for current as a certain truth: *Qui non prohibet, cum potest, jubet*: “He that doth not forbid and prevent the commission of sin when it is in the power of his hand to do it, doth interpretatively command the doing of it.” He allows it *who* winks at it; he doth encourage it *who* stops it not: he doth so in the account of God, who is a righteous Judge. He had as good command it, as stand by and see it done, and say nothing. And if men will in this or any other way contract guilt, they may expect to taste the bitter effects of it. If rulers will spare offenders, let not them think that God will spare them. Ahab, in a foolish kindness and pity, let Benhadad go, whom God had “appointed to utter destruction.” Now observe what a thundering message the prophet brought him thereupon: “Thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.” (1 Kings xx. 42.) So that this kindness of Ahab to Benhadad was desperate cruelty to himself and Israel. And the case of Eli is very pertinent to this purpose, and most worthy of observation. He was not only priest, but judge, armed with both parental and magistratical power. His sons did not write after that copy which he had set them, but “were sons of Belial,” wicked and profane to a prodigy; for they sacrilegiously robbed God, and filthily abused “the women that were assembled at

the door of the tabernacle ;” and by these means made the offering of the Lord to stink, turned it to an abomination. For this, Eli their father reprovèd them, but it was with very soft and silken words : “ Why do ye such things ? for I hear of your evil doings by all this people. Nay, my sons ; for it is no good report that I hear : ye make the Lord’s people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him : but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him ? ” (1 Sam. ii. 12—17, 22—25.) And here was all he did. But, O, how angry was God hereupon ! It made his fury come up into his face. Though Eli was a good man, a priest, one that God had caused to draw near to him ; though he had reprovèd his sons, and given them good advice ; yet this was not enough, it would not serve his turn ; God was greatly provokèd because he did proceed no further. And see how dreadfully he threatèd him : “ I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father’s house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel : and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine that I shall not cut off from my altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart : and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas ; in one day tkey shall die both of them.” (1 Sam. ii. 31—34.) And the dream is doubled, the resolution of God is fixed ; this one threatèning, that carrieth sorrow and anguish enough in the bowels of it, is followed with another : “ I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. I will perform against Eli all that I have sworn concerning his house : when I begin, I will also make an end.” (1 Sam. iii. 11, 12.) God would go through with the work, and not only be diligent in the beginning of it, but likewise constant in the performance, and complete in the finishing, of it : “ For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever,” such a punishment shall be inflicted, such a burden laid upon him, as shall never be taken off, “ for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.” (Verse 13.) Set a mark upon these last words, in which indeed the accent and emphasis lies : there was the provocation, that was it that exposèd him to the divine displeasure, and brought him under so severe a judgment,—“ His sons made themselves vile ;” they defiled, debased, and dishonoured themselves ; by their sins and abominable practices, they had rendered themselves odious and loathsome in the eyes of God, and in the eyes of the people. Eli was not ignorant of this, but was told of it ; it raisèd a great cry, many complaints thereof were brought to him : but “ he restrained them not.” He did not curb them. He was too mild, and tender, and gentle ; he carried the matter as one that was not zealous for his God, but afraid to offend them, and unwilling to grieve them. He did not affright and ferret them out of their profaneness ; they still continued what they were, and held on their former course ; and yet he did not draw the sword of justice, he

did not inflict upon them grievous punishments, though they persevered in the commission of grievous sins ; he forgot to act up to the authority of a father, a high-priest, a judge ; and therefore God will severely punish him. Eli's sons run deep in score ; and because he thus let them alone, God would make Eli himself to pay the reckoning. Consider of this, and tremble, you indulgent, fond parents, that hear and see your children's lying, swearing, looseness, and debaucheries, but let them alone ; and you timorous, slothful magistrates, that will not make profane persons smart, know and be assured that yourselves shall. You let them go, but vengeance will hold you.

But I proceed : for though rulers' own concerns should awaken and rouse them up, yet that is not all ; therefore,

Sixthly. *If rulers will not take due, that is, utmost, care to suppress profaneness in a nation where their power lieth, they take a direct course to pull down the wrath of God upon that whole nation, as well as upon themselves.*—Solomon hath these passages : “ If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself : but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.” (Prov. ix. 12.) But we cannot say, If a magistrate will not discharge his duty, but suffer wickedness to pass without control, he alone shall bear it ; no, no ; the burden may light, and lie heavy, upon more shoulders than his own. His remissness and neglect may turn to the smart of the land and people over whom he is set ; the not shutting the flood-gates of sin, which let-in a deluge of wickedness below, is no other than the opening of the windows of heaven above, for the letting down [of] showers and storms of wrath that shall drown and swallow up all. For want of this, as you heard under the last particular, God did not only with great severity judge the house of Eli, but also threatened to “ do a thing in Israel,” (or “ unto Israel,” as some read it,) “ at which both the ears of every one that heard it should tingle.” (1 Sam. iii. 11.) If any inquire what that terrible thing was, I answer : It was no less than the delivering of the army of Israel into the hands of the accursed Philistines ; so that thirty thousand of them fell in battle before those their enemies, and, which was yet worse, “ the ark of God was taken,” before which they worshipped, and which was the special and delightful symbol of the divine presence with them. (1 Sam. iv. 10, 11.) When the sword of magistracy lieth still and dormant in the midst of crying abominations, then God thinks it fit and high time to awake himself to the judgment which he commanded and man neglected, and to draw his own : and how doth he then lay about him ! what blows doth he give ! what stupendous work doth he make ! When one Jonah—that had been disobedient to his God, and, being sent by him upon a message to Nineveh, took him to his heels and ran another way ; when he, I say—was in the ship, and lay in peace, and at ease, the whole was in danger : nor did the storm cease, though the heathen mariners called every one to his god, till the guilty criminal received his deserved punishment, in being cast into the sea. That is a notable saying of Solomon : “ The king by judgment establisheth the land ; ” when it shakes and totters, he shores it up, he settles and confirms it

again, and makes all sure: "but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it." (Prov. xxix. 4.) These do blind the eyes of men in place, and bind or tie their hands, so that they shall not do the things they should. And he that receives them, that will take bribes to stop the course of justice, doth overthrow the land, he turns it upside down, he destroyeth the very foundations of it; and when he hath once done that, where is the wise man that can tell me what he will do himself? I can expect no other, but his own being buried in its ruins; yea, probably he shall go first, and not live long enough to be a mourner at its funeral. Whereas, on the other side,

Seventhly. *Magistrates, by a vigorous suppression of profaneness, may most happily both prevent the coming of those judgments which are impending over a nation, and remove those which are incumbent and heavy upon it.*—They may stay the hand of revenging justice, when it is lifted up, as Abraham's was, and ready to give the fatal stroke; and also they may take off the hand of God, when it lies heavy upon a people, and presseth them sore; or, to use David's expression, they may "remove the stroke away from it," and hold his hand when it is about repeating of the blow. (Psalm xxxix. 10.) I shall speak to both these under this head.

They may *prevent a judgment, and dispel that cloud which threatens a storm.*—Hence it was that when the people had most grievously offended and provoked God, by making a golden calf, and then worshipping it after the manner of Egypt, Moses said unto the sons of Levi, who had gathered themselves together unto him as persons resolved to be on the Lord's side: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." (Exod. xxxii. 27, 28.) Observe his temper: he was the meekest man in the earth, of a most sweet and loving disposition, knowing how to bear and forbear; but now he was all on a flame, the lamb was turned into a lion. He was nearly and greatly concerned for the name and honour of his God, and he accordingly set upon the doing of justice, and therefore made many a sacrifice; and when that was done, "he said unto the people upon the morrow, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin:" (verse 30:) "Now that I have done the duty of my place, now that I have vindicated the honour of God, now that there hath been this due execution of justice, *now* I will go up unto the Lord; and I will go up in hope, now I have a *peradventure* to encourage me to think, that I shall make an atonement for you." And let us not pass over in silence that which you have in verse 29 of the same chapter: "Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." The shedding of blood, of the blood of man, the blood of an Israelite, by the hand of justice, in a cause

deserving death, did not defile them, but consecrate them. Acts of justice are as acceptable to God as sacrifice, the blood of sinners as the fat of rams, and abundantly more; and saith Moses, "Upon your doing this, the Lord 'may bestow a blessing upon you.'" Levi before, by using a sword of injustice and cruelty against the Shechemites, lost the blessing. When their father Jacob called all his sons together, speaking of Simeon and Levi, he speaks of their "instruments of cruelty," calls to mind their sin, cursed their anger and wrath, divided them in Jacob, scattered them in Israel; (Gen. xlix. 5;) but not a word of blessing: that they had lost. "Now," saith Moses, "do you quit yourselves in this great piece of justice, and you may get a blessing." And so they did; for God chose the tribe of Levi for himself above all the tribes of Israel, and appointed and employed them about his sanctuary and service: "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death." (Num. iii. 6—10.) And, "Thou shalt take the Levites for me, (I am the Lord,) instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel." (Verse 41.)

And as this is the way to prevent judgments when upon their way, so to *remove them when they are already come*.—For the proof hereof you have a famous instance, in Numbers xxv. The case was this: the people did double their transgression, in committing idolatry and whoredom at once. It is indeed no cause of wonder to see spiritual and corporal uncleanness going together in company. This kindled the wrath of God against them, which rose to that height that it brake out into a plague. The plague did not stop the sin: wicked men will harden themselves against God, and run upon the mouth of the cannon, "on the bosses of his buckler." (Job xv. 26.) Notwithstanding the judgment, Zimri, one of the children of Israel, a prince too, that should have set a better example, impudently and daringly "brought a Midianitish woman, in the sight of Moses, and of all the congregation of Israel, while they were weeping before the door of the tabernacle:" while the congregation was drowned in tears, these two wretches burned in lust. Phinehas was an eye-witness of it, and his heart was hot within him: upon the sight thereof, he took a javelin in his hand, entered their tent, and ran both of them through. With this remarkable act of justice and holy revenge God was exceedingly pleased, as appeared by the happy consequences, which were two: healing mercy upon Israel, with a blessing upon himself and his posterity. You may read what God himself said upon this occasion: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the

son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel." (Verses 10—13.) Do you stem the tide of profaneness, and in so doing you will stop the bottles of Divine wrath. And then hereupon it followeth,

Eighthly. The suppression of profaneness is an excellent way for the making rulers an eminent and choice blessing unto the people over whom the providence of God hath set them.—By this means they will indeed prove, as our holy apostle speaks in the verse immediately following our text, Θεου διακονοι εις το αγαθον "ministers of God to them for good." For it is a great deal of good that is ministered and conveyed by them; "golden oil" that is communicated by and through these "golden pipes;" (Zech. iv. 12;) the whole land is the better for them; every mother's child hath reason to rise up and call them blessed. Briefly thus:

By this means they *confirm and establish it.*—They are strong supporters, while others are wicked and cursed underminers, Psalm lxxv. 2, 3: "When I shall receive the congregation," that is, the government of it, when I shall be once seated upon the throne, "I will judge uprightly," or righteousness; a vein of righteousness shall run through every one of my actions, they shall be done according to the rule of equity. "The earth and all the inhabitants of it are dissolved:" the reins are now let loose; there is a visible, apparent disorder both in church and state; all things are for the present in confusion, and therefore running apace to ruin and dissolution. "I bear up the pillars thereof." Some do look upon religion and righteousness as the Jachin and Boaz, (2 Chron. iii. 17,) those great and mighty pillars which uphold a nation; and magistrates are the persons appointed to bear up those pillars. If those be the pillars, these are the basis upon which they stand; and these bear up them by judging uprightly. In this way it is they bear up the fabric, and keep it from crumbling into pieces, and falling to nothing.

And, further: as by this means they bring unto a nation the blessing of stability, so they also yield that other lovely and very desirable blessing of peace.—So that all good men "shall sit under their own vines and fig-trees," without others "making them afraid;" (Micah iv. 4;) they shall have a quiet and comfortable enjoyment of themselves, and the good things which God hath graciously vouchsafed to them. Unto this, I say, magistrates, both supreme and subordinate, the higher and inferior officers in a kingdom, do very much contribute, by the diligent and faithful discharge of the work and duty of their several places. This is evident from that, Psalm lxxii. 3: "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." That word "peace" is very comprehensive, carrying in it not only a freedom from war, commotions, quarrels, and dis-

turbances, but prosperity, too, and happiness, plenty and abundance of all good things, so that there shall "be no complaining in our streets." (Psalm cxliv. 14.) This is to be brought to a people; and, sure, when it is, they will bid it welcome. But who shall bring it? "The mountains and little hills;" that is, the metaphorical ones, the magistrates, the king and all that are in authority under him. But it will come only in a way of righteousness: God's peace always keeps God's way. This you learn from that of the prophet: "Righteousness and peace kiss each other:" (Psalm lxxxv. 10:) they meet, and embrace, and so go hand in hand. Righteousness in the throne, in the senate, and courts of judicature, is accompanied with peace in the city, yea, and all the country over.

Lastly. *A conscientious care for the suppression of profaneness in a land, is the way to engage the great and holy God on the behalf and for the good of those rulers in whom that care is found.*—And this argument will, I am sure, signify much with all those with whom God signifieth any thing. As the place of rulers is high, so the work of their place is hard: it carrieth a great deal of difficulty and of danger along with it. As wicked men are very filthy, so the Psalmist tells us, they "are always grievous." (Psalm x. 5.) They are like the raging sea which is continually casting up mire and dirt, specially when there is a storm upon it. Let there be endeavours used to put a stop to them in their sinful course, by a vigorous execution of righteous laws, their hearts do presently swell against those that restrain and punish them, and they break out into a rage; whereupon they often study to avenge the quarrel of their sordid and impetuous lusts, upon those worthies who would promote the cleanness of their lives, and the welfare of their souls.

Upon this account, it is no more than necessary for the omnipotent God to *stand at their right hand, for the encouragement of their hearts, and the preservation of their persons.*—Now see Psalm vii. 10: "My defence is of God, who saveth the upright in heart." When men are upright in their hearts, and also in their way, they may be confident. Solomon saith, "The righteous is as bold as a lion." (Prov. xxviii. 1.) And well he may; for though he may be faced and environed by many dangers from men, yet his defence is of God: and *that* may well be reckoned enough to secure him from sinkings and discomposures of mind. What matters it, though poisoned arrows and fiery darts fly thick? So long as God is a man's shield, he will quench them all.

And as God will defend them, so *he will put a glory upon them, and maintain their glory.*—"Them that honour me I will honour." (1 Sam. ii. 30.) He is resolved upon it. Those persons that honour him by the holiness of their walking; those professors that honour him, by owning him and his truths and ways in times of furious opposition and persecution; and those rulers that honour him, by a faithful execution of justice, punishing those that dishonour him;—them God will honour; and he will make them great and honourable in the eyes of others. Their government shall be highly com-

mended, their persons shall be greatly esteemed, and their memory shall be blessed: whereas in the same place He tells us, they "that despise him shall be lightly esteemed," not only by himself, but by all.

Yea, and God will see to it, that *things shall go well with them*.—As he said, when speaking of Jehoiakim, that wicked son of famous Josiah: "Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?" (Jer. xxii. 15.) He began to reign betimes, when he was very young; but he began and went on well; he was a religious, gracious, and righteous prince. In his days religion was in its beauty, and the righteous did flourish; and "it was well with him," good for him; he tasted the sweetness of it, and reaped the advantage. He did eat and drink, not to gluttony and drunkenness, as is the fashion of too many; but he did reign in peace and plenty. God furnished his table, and filled his cup. The Lord blessed him; so that there was nothing wanting to the comfort of his life, or the supporting of his royal state. He was not negligent in his duty, nor God sparing of his mercy and kindness to him.

Thus I have given many reasons why magistrates should be careful to suppress profaneness.

IV. I proceed to the last thing propounded, namely, *to show what means ought to be used in order hereunto*.—In general, I would say this, Those that go about it, will certainly find that a little matter will not do. Wickedness is so natural to fallen man, and his heart is so set in him to do evil, and oftentimes sin is grown to such a prodigious height in a land, and so exceedingly overspreads the face of it, and those who take pleasure in committing it are arrived at that pitch of resolution and daring boldness, that it is no easy thing to give an effectual check. As the doing of it will be greatly acceptable to God, and issue in the everlasting honour of rulers, so to set upon it and go through with it doth necessarily require height of courage, fixedness of resolution, strength of zeal, utmost industry, and constant care. And when they set heart and hand to it, they will find both heart and hands full. But for the answering of this question, I shall humbly propound and offer to the serious consideration and due practice of all those that are in authority,—from our dread and dear sovereigns the king and queen who sit upon the throne, to the petty constables and headboroughs who walk up and down the streets,—these following particulars, which I desire may be minded and done by all according to their several places, and those various parts of power and government with which they are intrusted.

First. *It will be highly conducing hereunto, if they all would in their own persons and conversations make it their business to set good examples*.—For that old saying doth carry a great deal of truth in it:

—Componitur orbis
Regis ad exemplum totus.*

CLAUDIANI *Panegyris De Quarto Consul. Honorii*, 300.

"The manners of the people are much squared by, and conformed to,

* For the whole passage, and a translation, see p. 446.—EDIT.

those of the prince." The experiences of most, if not all, ages and countries do afford abundant proofs of this ; though you need go no further than the sacred history of the kings of Israel and Judah. We see it to be thus in smaller societies : children will not question the doing of that which they have known done by their parents before them ; and usually servants will conclude that lawful which they have seen practised by their masters ; and so the generality of subjects will not stick at what they observe in the life and carriage of their sovereign, so that it be not too high for them, and out of their reach, as perhaps some have found in these cities to their cost and ruin. *Ex-empla cogunt* : " All examples have certainly in them a very attractive power," specially those that are bad. The worst have the strongest influence ; because they meet in others, that see or hear of them, with a wretched principle of corruption that likes and approves of them, a vile nature which delights *sequi deteriorem partem*, " to follow the worst part." But of all bad examples, those that are set by great persons are the most prevalent ; and therefore it becomes them to walk circumspectly, and be very curious.

The Lord Jesus was, without controversy, the greatest person that ever the world had ; for he " thought it not robbery to be equal with God," (Phil. ii. 6,) which thought was no error or mistake ; and St. John, in Rev. i. 5, calls him " the Prince of the kings of the earth." Now his whole life was no other than the setting of a most exact and excellent copy for the children of men to write after, more particularly all those that are called by his name, and profess themselves to be in the number of his disciples. And surely the great men of the earth, chiefly those that are and would be counted Christians, are obliged, as in other his imitable actions, so in this, to resemble him ; that they may be able without any stinging reflection to say to others in a lower sphere, " Do as you see me do, and live as you see I live. Why will you profane the name of God by your oaths and curses, or the day of God by your pastimes and sports, or abuse the mercies and good creatures of God to gluttony and drunkenness ? Do you see any such thing in me ?" It was a brave and noble resolution that holy David took up betimes, when he was ready to ascend the royal throne, or newly seated in it : " I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. I will walk within mine house with a perfect heart." (Psalm ci. 2.) Observe how extensive his care was, reaching both to his heart and way : to his heart, as one that had to do with God, who searched it ; and to his way, as one that had to do with men, who observed it. He would do this, that, if it were possible, he might allure and draw others to walk in the same way of wisdom and holiness as himself had chosen ; but, however, he would do this, that none of them might have his pattern to justify and embolden any of them in their ways of wickedness. Of all persons, parents in a family, ministers in the church, and magistrates in a kingdom, ought to be very careful and curious ; they should *ορθοδοξουν*, " take heed to their way, and foot it right ;" for those that do not, prove public pests and mischiefs, going up and down to the infecting of many.

Secondly. As such should make it their business to live profaneness down, so *it will be an excellent thing for them to frown it down.*—Let them not bestow their smiles upon those that practise it, for those smiles are misplaced. Princes will do well not to admit them into their courts, nor to make them the objects of their special favour. We find the Lord speaking thus: “When I would have healed Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the sin of Samaria.” (Hosea vii. 1.) I find, some expositors do by “Ephraim” there understand the court; for certain, after the revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David in the days of Rehoboam, Samaria was the metropolis or capital city of the kingdom of Israel. This being so, we may by warrant of that text lay down this position:—If there be iniquity in Ephraim, no man hath any reason to wonder that he finds wickedness in Samaria. Sins in the court will diffuse themselves, and not be kept out of the city, no, nor the country neither. Therefore holy David did not only resolve to take special care of himself, (though it was his wisdom to begin there; that was beginning at the right end; but he did not shut up his care within so narrow bounds, he did not limit it to himself,) but would look about him, and have an eye upon his domestics, all those that should live with him: “‘A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.’ (Psalm ci. 4.) As soon as I have discovered such an one, and found him to be of an evil temper and life, he shall away, he must depart from me, if he be a worker of iniquity. I will cast him and turn him out of doors; my palace shall be no place for such vermin. I will not know him. He shall be none of my acquaintance or retinue.” And indeed there is very good reason why *they* should be out of credit at court, *who* are a discredit to the God they own, and the religion they profess. Marks of special favour are at all times and in all places very unhappily bestowed upon such as do by their lewdness and debauchery deserve the blackest brands of infamy. And, whatever other abilities and accomplishments they may have, I think it is very hard and hazardous to trust them who do not fear God. None are before the throne of God in heaven but holy angels, and the saints “who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Rev. vii. 14.) “Evil shall not dwell with him, nor shall the workers of iniquity stand in his sight.” And then will things be well indeed, when none but such are suffered to stand before the thrones of earthly princes, his substitutes and vicegerents. The way of profaneness would not be so beaten a road as it hath been, but have far fewer travellers, when all shall see that it doth not lead to preferment. To be severe against the wicked, is a convincing argument of a prince’s wisdom: “A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.” (Prov. xx. 26.) And in this way he doth provide for his own security: “Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.” (Prov. xxv. 5.) When cardinal Julian was commended to Sigismund, he answered, *Tamen Romanus est* [“Yet he is a Roman”]. Let such or such a man be commended for never so much, if it may be said, *Tamen profanus est*, [“But he is a

profane and wicked person,"] that should be enough for a bar in his way.

Thirdly. Another excellent way for the suppressing of profaneness is *an opposition made to it by severe laws*.—Yea, to every sin that falls within the cognizance of the civil magistrate, and runs upon the point of his sword. And by those laws let punishment be provided for it according to its nature and demerit. For all sins are not equal in themselves, and therefore there ought to be a diversity in the punishment. Let rulers thunder most terribly against those abominations that have the loudest cry in the ears of heaven; make the strongest fence against that sin which above all others threatens the land with an inundation; and be sure to spend the most angry and formidable frowns upon the boldest and most daring outrages. Let laws, kingdoms, and commonwealths be sure to look those sins out of countenance which are of all other most impudent, and look men in the face without a blush, and walk up and down in our streets at noon-day. This to do is one part of the work belonging to our king and parliament, with whom alone is lodged the legislative power, whose meetings are to be for the public good, with which they are intrusted, and for the promoting whereof they were chosen and sent. And as they will answer for it to the holy, righteous, and eternal God, who is "a consuming fire," they are strictly obliged, and that at their peril, to take care that those laws which they make be not grievous, but righteous, have not a malignant, but benign, influence, and that by them every man's property may be secured; that religion which is warranted by scripture, and so, "pure and undefiled before God and the Father," be not discouraged, punished, and first driven into corners, and then ferreted out of them, but countenanced and promoted; and that all that, whatsoever it be, that is contrary to godliness and sound doctrine, as well as that which disturbs the public peace, and creates uncivil disorders, may be kept down, and, as far as is possible, banished out of a land. We read, Psalm xciv. 20, of "a throne of iniquity that frameth mischief by a law." If there never had been such thrones in the world, there would not have been that mention made of them in the scripture. But such there have been. That of Jeroboam was one, who would not suffer the people, according to the divine command, to go up to Jerusalem to worship God, who had there placed his name; but spread, for them that went, nets upon Mizpah, and set snares upon Mount Tabor. (Hosea v. 1.) And such thrones there have been since, too many of them. Well saith the Psalmist, "Shall they have fellowship with thee?" No, no: God keeps his distance from them. Those that we call "stinking dunghills" are not [so] offensive to God as thrones of iniquity are, which shall neither be approved by him nor secured. Stay a while, Christians, and "in patience possess your souls;" for the world shall see that in due time he will overturn them all. That, yea, that throne shall have fellowship with God, which doth punish mischief by a law.

We have had for some considerable time a great deal of discourse about penal laws, and men have been much divided in their sentiments and apprehensions concerning them; for my part, I think that nation is

extremely deficient which is altogether without them: the hedge of it is taken away, the wall of it is broken, and it will easily be trodden down. But I heartily wish and pray, that all penal laws may be framed according to the mind of the Supreme Lawgiver; let the axe be whetted as sharp as it should be, so that its edge be once turned and always kept the right way. Spare neither odious idolatry, nor unso- ciable Popery, nor damnable heresy, nor destructive profaneness; but under your shadow let religion, truth, and the power of godliness live, and a scriptural reformation grow and be carried on toward its perfection.

Fourthly. *Let righteous and good laws that are made have their free course*, and the sword of justice be drawn, and not suffered to lie rusting in the scabbard; as it will certainly do when put into the hand of a careless Gallio, or of persons that allow themselves in the commission of those sins which the law condemns, or in the hand of those that have not something of courage and a greatness of spirit. Justice at all times is not to be expected from a wicked and debauched person, or a coward. A fearful magistrate or civil officer in a city, town, or country, is as bad and as great an absurdity as a timorous and white-livered soldier in the field: for as the one will fly before a bullet, so will the other fall before a frown; and so while his heart fails him, the hand of justice grows feeble. His fear will sometimes keep him from doing of that which is right, and at other times it will put him upon the doing of that which is wrong. This was the cause of Pilate's miscarriage, and made way for the unjust condemnation and crucifixion of the best and holiest, the greatest and most glorious, person in the world, our dear Lord Jesus. The Jews indeed were madly set for his death; but Pilate's wife sent him this message, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." He himself said that he "found no fault in him," which he thrice repeated; and when he saw the Jews were resolved, "he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude," (if that would have done,) "saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just man." But when the people "cried out, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend," he was afraid, and delivered him up to sufferings. (Matt. xxvii. 19, 24; John xviii. 38; xix. 4, 6, 12, 16.) But I am guilty of digressing. That which we were speaking of is the execution of righteous laws. For to what purpose are they made? Surely not only to be read, or talked of, and lie by, or be set up as mere scare-crows in trees to keep birds from cherries; but to be made use of as occasion requires. There must be not only speaking against sin, but striking at it, else it will not down. In Rom. xiii. 4, the apostle tells us that rulers "bear not the sword in vain." By "the sword," he means that of authority and power, good laws, together with all the means and instruments of punishment; and they are not to bear this sword in vain. It must be brandished, wielded, and sheathed in the bowels of sin. What are the best laws but a company of dead things, unless magistrates put life into them by a vigorous execution? And it is very sad at any time when there is cause given of saying, "There is a law against profaning of the Lord's day, a law against swearing, a law against drunk-

eness and whoredom : but where is the man that doth put these laws in execution ? There are many wretches that break the laws ; but where are those that will make them feel the penalty ?” This is the honour of a city and the comfort of a people, when it may be said, “ Here is a good law against such a vice, and such a vice ; and here is a good mayor, a good justice of peace, a good constable, that will execute it.” Good laws without good magistrates and officers, will never make a people happy.

But, further : As there must be an execution of righteous laws, so an impartiality in that execution.—“ Judgment” should “ run down as water, and righteousness as a mighty stream,” (Amos v. 24,) in a constant current, without interruption, bearing down all before it, all private and little considerations that would break it off. As to those, justice ought to be blind, not seeing nor taking notice of them. And laws ought not to be cobwebs, that catch the little flies, and let the great ones make their way through. The greater the person is that offends, the greater and more heinous upon that very account is the offence which he commits. His greatness is an aggravation, and renders his sin of a much deeper dye. The nearer the offender is to the magistrate, the greater is the magistrate’s honour in punishing him. It was the honour of Levi, and as such it is set and left upon record, that he “ said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him ; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children : for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.” (Deut. xxxiii. 9.) This refers to that execution which had been by them done upon those who had worshipped the golden calf. And as this is a great honour to the magistrate, so will it strike a great terror upon by-standers. Whereas that officer who is known to pardon a malefactor, upon this, or that, or the other by-respect, will not himself know how to punish it in another. The very remembrance of that remissness and neglect would make his hand tremble, when he draws his warrant or makes his mittimus. “ Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times ;” (Psalm cvi. 3 ;) *non abreptus affectibus, periculis, spe lucri, &c.* : “ not biassed, nor diverted by affections, fear of danger, hope of gain,” or any thing of like nature. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum* : “ Let who will be displeased, and what will follow, justice ought to be done.” For want of this, profaneness and all manner of abominations will greatly increase and abound, according to that in Eccles. viii. 11 : “ 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.” They grow audacious and desperate ; they are resolved upon their way ; they go on with a full sail to the commission of sin. And if the mere deferring of judgment will produce so bad an effect, what will not the total neglect of it, or partiality in it, do ?

Fifthly. An excellent way, therefore, for the attainment of this excellent end, the suppression of profaneness, is the putting of the sword of justice into the hands of good and faithful men.—I do not go about to make parties in the nation : God forbid ! it is contrary to my principles ; there hath been too much of it in the nation, and in

the world ; and O that there may be no more ! O that God would, in the greatness of his goodness, heal all our breaches, and compose all our unbrotherly differences, and grant that we may all “serve him in the beauties of holiness,” “with one shoulder and one consent.” (Psalm cx. 3 ; Zeph. iii. 9.) O that I might see it done ! In the mean time I am verily persuaded, that among every one of the different parties in the land, who “hold the Head,” and are sound in the vitals of Christianity, the main fundamental points of our religion, there are to be found persons fearing God. And if I may have leave humbly to speak my thoughts, I count it a great pity that any of them should be laid aside “as vessels in which there is no pleasure,” as persons altogether useless and unfit to be trusted and employed, (merely because they dissent from others of their brethren in those things which are acknowledged to be indifferent, but cannot be by them complied with, lest they should sin against God, and wound their own consciences,) so long as they are sound in the faith, set for the glory of God, and for the honour of the king, and for the public good. Why, O why may not such men be owned and encouraged, and employed in those things of which they are capable ? Are they fit for nothing because there is something that they cannot do ? I know, and all men must yield it, that there have been, and will be, as well as are, diversities of judgments, and, by consequence, of practice. No man hath his judgment, faith, and reason at his command ; and it is as possible to make all men of a stature as of a mind. But I must and do humbly submit this to our superiors ; withal leaving particular persons to their several sentiments, and to walk accordingly to that light which they have received ; and begging of God the hastening of that day prophesied of in Zech. xiv. 9, wherein “the Lord shall be King over all the earth,” and wherein there “shall be one Lord, and his name one.” *Una fides, et una Deum colendi ratio* : “One faith and one worship.”

This I take for certain, that ungodliness is very unlikely to be suppressed in a nation, when the ungodly and wicked men of that nation are the men intrusted with and employed about the suppression thereof. It is not probable that a swearing and cursing magistrate will punish another for his oaths ; or a drunken magistrate will inflict the legal penalty upon another for the like brutishness ; or an unclean officer make another smart for his whoredom. While he is going about it, a hundred to one, there will be a bitter reflection ; the man will find a sting within himself : his own conscience, if it be not seared or in a profound sleep, cannot forbear flying in his face, and asking him in his ear this pinching question : “How canst thou punish *that* in this person *which* thou knowest to be thine own practice ?” “Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery ? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege ? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God ?” (Rom. ii. 22, 23.) Upon this account it was that holy David resolved, his “eye should be upon the faithful of the land.” He would express his special favour upon

those that were of known integrity; that would faithfully mind and perform the duty of their place, and be true to their God and to their trust. And, saith he, "He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me;" (Psalm ci. 6;) namely, in governing the nation, and in seeing to it, that good orders be kept. And I look upon that as a good saying of one: *Melior est respublica et tutior, &c.*: "That commonwealth or kingdom is safer and in a much better condition in which there is a bad prince, than that which hath in it bad magistrates, officers, and ministers of state."

Sixthly. In order to the effectual suppression of profaneness, it cannot but be owned as absolutely necessary, to *watch diligently and deal severely with the nurseries of it.*—For as our Lord Jesus, who is the King of Sion and saints, hath his schools and nurseries for the instructing and training up of persons in sound knowledge and true holiness; (such are the assemblies and congregations of his people: "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," Isai. ii. 3;) so Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," (Eph. ii. 2,) hath his nurseries, which he fills with cursed temptations, and his instruments with venomous examples, in order to the alluring of men to flagitious courses, and rendering them expert, ready, and complete artists in sin. And do not all men see how our youths are tainted and corrupted there, and how many of those that once were hopeful, and thought to be plants of righteousness, have been there blasted, and turned into the degenerate plants of a strange vine, bringing forth the grapes of Sodom and the clusters of Gomorrah? All that read these lines may easily understand my meaning, what houses they are at which I now point. And I would ask, Are stews and brothel-houses fit to be suffered among us? I have not at all wondered, when I have read and heard how many of them are allowed in Rome, that mother of harlots, who holds in her hand a cup of fornication; we must expect the great whore will not fall out with the little ones, specially when they are profitable to her. *Bonus odor lucri ex re quolibet*: "In her nostrils the money smells well, come it from whence it will." But it is an arrant shame, that any of them should be found in a land of light, in a nation of Protestants, in a city of righteousness, in a place where that religion is professed and established that condemns all such filthy practices. And as for ale-houses and victualling-houses, though some of them, possibly, are useful, yea, and necessary, yet is there need of such multitudes, in which so many sit many hours together, fuddling, and drinking away their money, their wits, their health, and their souls, while their poor wives sit at home mourning, and their children crying, and perhaps all of them wanting, and ready to starve? I am sure, none ought to have licences for the keeping [of] such houses, who will suffer them to be places of licentiousness, and not be careful to observe good hours and orders.

Seventhly. *Let all inferior officers be very careful and diligent in*

their places.—For their places are not dormitories, places to idle and sleep in, but to watch and work in. Churchwardens, constables, and others have a very considerable power, and without doubt they have it not for nothing. And as it is given them for good ends, so for those ends they ought to employ it. That power is in vain which is not reduced into act. The staff which you constables carry up and down with you is for something more than a bare and empty sign, and to tell people what you are; and though you do frequently leave your staff at home, yet, I pray, be sure to carry your eyes and ears along with you to the farthest bounds of your jurisdiction. What a great deal of good may be done, and what abundance of wickedness may be prevented, by one active person! And I think I am not mistaken, when I reckon upon a curious inquisition as one part of the work of your office. Surely it is not for you to sit still at home till you are alarmed and called forth by riots and uproars in the streets, or have men come with their complaints rapping at your doors; but you should take your walks, and make inquiry after evil-doers, find out their nests and haunts; see what companies meet in public-houses for entertainment, and what they do, how they behave themselves when they are together; and be sure to dissolve their wicked clubs, and debauched meetings, and carry the persons whom you find so transgressing before those superior magistrates whom you know most hearty and active in their places. For, verily, when there are good and excellent laws in a land for the regulating of things, and correcting that which is amiss, and yet sin grows because of a mal-administration, much, very much, of the guilt will be chargeable upon, and lie at the doors of, inferior officers, more than they will be able to answer for.

Eighthly. Let those officers who are faithful in their places have their due and full encouragement.—And not be snibbed, and brow-beaten, and taken up short, and treated with abusive language and frowns, as they have been in the late times, when practices of religion were hated and punished as the worst of crimes, and a company of wretched informers, that neither had a dram of honesty, nor were worth a groat, were hugged and entertained with welcome and applause, beside their part in the fines, which they gaped for as the wages of their unrighteousness. Honest, vigilant, and active officers, who are in the discharge of their duty, and proceed no farther than the law empowers them, ought to be commended; they that do well deserve to hear well, and not be counted or called “busy fellows,” so long as they are employed about their own business. Yea, and they ought to be assisted too. Where the constable’s staff will not do the work, let the justice of peace draw his sword. And when they have brought the matter as far as they can, let them that have higher power set their hands to it and carry it on further. It cannot but be a great discouragement to honest men, when they have found out and seized upon ranting, roaring debauchees, and brought them, notwithstanding their cursing and storming, their heats and huffs, before their superior, and then he shall receive them with one compliment, and, after the speaking [of] a few words of course, dismiss them with

another. Such men as these may be assaulted by a temptation to grow cold and remiss; but I do advise and desire them not to yield to that temptation; for still this may be their comfort,—that they have not been wanting unto their duty; and the other must and shall answer for his neglect, possibly to the higher powers below; or, if not to them, yet, for certain at last, to that God who is higher than the highest, and sits in the throne judging right, and from whom every one shall receive according as his work hath been.

Ninthly. *An orthodox and godly ministry is a very choice and excellent means for the suppression of profaneness.*—Surely this ill-favoured monster, though grown up to a gigantic stature and bigness, is most likely to fall when it is opposed and set upon by the magistrate who bears the sword of civil power, and by the minister too who bears and draws against it the sword of the Spirit, which hath been by God committed to him, and those other weapons with which he is furnished out of the divine armoury, and which, according to that of the apostle, he hath or ought to have “in a readiness for the revenging of all disobedience.” (2 Cor. x. 6.) And therefore I heartily wish that as a learned (and so much the better by how much the more learned) ministry may be kept up in the land, both in cities and countries, and, in order to that, sufficient liberal provision made for them; so such and only such may be employed in that high and sacred function, as in the judgment of rational charity may be looked upon as being indeed the ministers of Christ.

And the two *χρῆσιμα*, “marks or characters,” by which such may be known, are *the preaching of Christ and his doctrine; their living of Christ and according to his rules*: and their doing of both these will conduce and contribute very much to this great end.

1. *This will be singularly promoted by their preaching of Christ.*—Not ceremonies, but Christ; not imposed forms of prayer, but the power of godliness; not only morality, but true piety; not the cross in baptism, but “crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts;” (Gal. v. 24;) not bowing to the name of Jesus, but to the authority, and government, and law of Jesus; not a white garment, but the linen of saints, righteousness and holiness. I do not at all deny but civility and morality are duties, very goodly pearls, necessary and becoming. O that there were more of them to be found among us! It is beyond all question that they who would be saints must not be beasts: I cannot think any fit matter for a visible church who are devils incarnate. Nor do I deny but that many useful sayings, good precepts and rules, may be fetched from heathen authors, Plato, Seneca, Tully, Plutarch, &c. But we need not borrow jewels of Egyptians, blessed be God! nor go down to the Philistines for the sharpening of our mattocks. It is the gospel of Christ which is the power of God to salvation. There is no need of quoting a philosopher when we have a Paul. What examples can we produce and propound so exact and curious as is that of Christ, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth?” He spake so as “never man spake,” and he walked so as never man walked. What arguments can we find

more convincing than those of the scripture, which are mighty for casting down the λογισμοις, "imaginings, conceits, reasonings," of a carnal, vain, and proud mind? What motives more persuasive and alluring than those of the gospel, which are indeed "the cords of a man?" What thunder-claps can be thought of more terrible, or what terrors more amazing and affrighting, than "the terrors of the Lord?" What promises more inviting and encouraging than those he hath given us, which "are exceeding great and precious?" Where,—if any one can, let him tell us,—where shall we see sin so clearly and fully in its deformity and ugliness, in order to a real and thorough aversation from it, or religion, godliness, and a conversation ordered aright, more in its loveliness and enamouring beauty, in order to our setting our hearts upon it, than we do or, at least, may see it in the gospel? When all is said and done that can be, it is "the grace of God," the doctrine, the gospel of grace, "which bringeth salvation, and hath appeared to all men," Jews and Gentiles, men of all sorts and ranks; it is that, yea, it is that which "teacheth us," and all that sit under it, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." (Titus ii. 10—12.) O, therefore, that this precious and everlasting gospel of God our Saviour may be the main object of ministers' study, and the principal theme upon which they insist in their several congregations! therein imitating the great apostle of the Gentiles, who told the Corinthians, he "determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.)

2. But this is not all. Ministers ought not only to preach Christ, *but likewise to live him.*—What good are those pretended ministers likely to do, in whatever place, country, or nation they are to be found, who are scandalous and profane? Grant that some of them preach well, I would fain know whether that be enough either to save themselves or those that hear them. What such men seem to build up by their doctrine, they pull down by their practice. Let any rational man judge, whether *they* are likely to convince and persuade others, *who* do lead self-contradicting lives. How can *they* prevail with others to be sober, *who* will sit and quaff, and be drunk themselves? With what face can *they* persuade others to possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, *who* are unclean and filthy themselves? In short: how are *they* likely to lead others in the way everlasting, *who* do themselves turn aside to crooked paths with the workers of iniquity? O that, therefore, care might be taken by all those who are invested with power, and have the oversight of such things as these, that those and none but those, may be set as spiritual guides and leaders over the several flocks and congregations in the land, as may without blushing say to their hearers, "Walk so as ye have us for an example, and be ye followers of us even as we are of Christ!" (Phil. iii. 17.)

Tenthly, and lastly. In order to the effectual suppression of profaneness, *I would and do heartily commend to all those that are in authority over us, diligent, yea, and utmost, care for the strict observation of the first day of the week.*—Which is, in Rev. i. 10, called

ἡμέρα Κυριακή, "the Lord's day;" and ought to be kept as the Christian sabbath to the end of time: a day sanctified and set apart for the solemn public and private worship of God both in churches, families, and retirements, and for a sweet, close, and intimate communion with him, while we are delivered and taken off from those secular affairs that, upon the other days of the week, do necessarily engage us, and cannot but divert us: a day not to be spent in any thing, no, not any, the most minute part of it, but the duties of religion and works of godliness; except those works of necessity and mercy which God, out of his goodness and pity to man, doth allow; for he "will have mercy rather than sacrifice," so that when acts of mercy are of absolute necessity, sacrifice shall give place to it. This is a day which God hath seen fit to usher in with a Memento in the fourth commandment: "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day." (Exod. xx. 8.) As if the Lord should have said: "I know your frailty, that you have slippery and treacherous memories, and possibly may, yea, certainly will, forget some, nay, many other things in which you are concerned; but let this be fastened as a nail in a sure place, be sure to think of this, to be mindful of this, I charge and command you to remember it: remember the sabbath-day before it comes, so as to rejoice in the thoughts of it, to long for it, and to prepare for it, that upon the day of praise you may have on your 'garments of praise,' souls in a right frame; and remember to sanctify and keep it holy when it is come."

We find the sabbath was given unto Israel for a sign between God and them. So you have it in Ezek. xx. 12: "I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." By this they were distinguished from all other nations. These were a plain and evident proof that they were the Lord's people, and that Jehovah was their God. This did loudly proclaim God's choosing and calling them out from the rest of the world, and gracious setting them apart for himself, as his peculiar portion and inheritance. And indeed, where there is no care of sanctifying the sabbath by nations, families, or persons, it is a plain case, it amounts to a demonstration, that they are unsanctified nations, families, and persons. It is an evident sign of a people estranged and alienated from the life of God; of a wicked people, that savour not the things of God, but only those things that be of men; of a people that have not the fear of God before their eyes; that are not carried out in desires of honouring him and lifting up his name, or of enjoying communion with him in the world. To profane sabbaths is a very great and notorious piece of profaneness. Sins wilfully and out of choice committed upon a sabbath are sins in grain, scarlet and crimson sins. To mind worldly affairs, to sit brooding upon worldly thoughts, to follow the trades and callings of the world, to open shops, and buy and sell, upon a sabbath-day, are God-provoking sins, acts of profaneness. These are lawful upon other days, in which God hath given you leave, nay, more, he hath made it your duty, to labour and do all that you have to do of this nature; but they are very sinful upon the sabbath.

Let me propound Nehemiah to the consideration of magistrates and inferior officers, and his care and activity in this point, as an example richly worth their imitation. Take the account of him as it is drawn up by himself, in Neh. xiii. 15—22: He “saw some treading wine-presses upon the sabbath-day, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem upon the sabbath-day; the men of Tyre also dwelt there, who brought fish and all manner of wares, and sold on the sabbath to the children of Judah and in Jerusalem.” This was exceeding evil, and one would wonder it should be found among a people but a little before come back to their own country out of a sore and tedious captivity. Yet thus it was. But let us see what good Nehemiah, that excellent governor, did hereupon, and how he bestirred himself. He “testified against them in the day whereon they sold victuals,” and he “contended with the elders of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? And yet ye bring more evil upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.” And after this, he shut the gates, and set his servants to watch, and would not suffer the merchants and sellers of wares to lodge about the walls, but threatened to lay hold upon them, and did not desist nor give over till he had prevented their coming any more upon the sabbath-day. O that there were many such Nehemiahs in the world among Christian nations! Shall I gather up what this scripture affords, and show you what is to be learned from it? Briefly thus: 1. Trading upon the sabbath-day is a violation and profaning of it. 2. It is such a profaning of it as is highly displeasing unto God, and will bring down his wrath upon a people that are guilty. 3. It is the proper work of the civil magistrate, not unbecoming the supreme, to punish and prevent it. 4. In order therunto, he will find it necessary to be very vigilant and active. 5. It is not enough to begin well and do something, but there must be a going on till there be a thorough reformation. And let not any say, “Such care as this would be Judaizing, and the gospel brings along with it a greater liberty;” for though we have a blessed liberty, yet not a sinful one. We are delivered from the ceremonial law, which was a heavy and oppressing yoke, but not from the observation and obedience to the moral law as it is; and still it is, and to the end of the world it will be, a rule of life. And God’s abounding in his goodness to us, whose lines are cast in New-Testament times, is a very bad argument for an abating in our care of sanctifying his name and his day.

Time, my beloved, hath been when England, as well as our neighbour-nation of Scotland, was famous for the sanctifying of the sabbath; and truly for these many years it hath been, and to this day it is, as infamous for the breaking of it; and upon that account and by that means it hath lost much of its pristine glory. Do you not see, (I am sure, with grief of heart I do,) how vile and wretched persons set forth their wares to sale upon that holy day in our fields

and streets? Do you not see how the victualling and ale-houses are frequented and filled upon that day? Do you not see, or at least hear of, plays and pastimes upon that day? as if "the Book of Sports" were revived and allowed. How many among us do make that their gaming-day, and their fuddling-day, which God hath made his holy day! What, O what, is the matter? Where doth the fault lie? We have something of law against this, blessed be God! and what! have we no officers to put the law that is into execution? I earnestly beseech all those who are concerned, as they fear God, and as they have any affection, good-will, and kindness for the land of their nativity, that they would put on strength, and appear vigorously on this behalf. For if you will tolerate the profanation of the sabbath, you can rationally promise to yourselves no other but a tremendous overflowing of wickedness all the week after; it will be so through the corruption of man, and the most righteous judgment of God, with whom it is far from unusual to punish sin with sin. Do but read histories, and, if you have minded things, consult your own observations, and you will find that, according to a people's holy care, or vile neglect, of keeping holy the sabbath-day, religion doth flourish, or wickedness abounds, and grows rank and rampant, among them.

Having finished the doctrinal part, I proceed to the APPLICATION, and therein direct my speech to all sorts of persons among us. And O that it may be acceptable to them, and come upon their souls with power, that so there may be some stop put to these crying abominations, and the "wickedness of the wicked" among us may "come to an end," and they may come over, upon this call from God, to a temperate, sober, and religious life; or if not so, yet at least their wickedness may not make such prodigious advances, nor rise up to that height, as it hath done for so many years, to the dishonour and provoking of God, the grief of all good men, and almost the ruin of the nation, and the pleasing of none but a cursed company of the anti-christian brood, who made it their design and business to introduce Popery at the door of debauchery: which indeed was the most likely way; for when persons and a people have cast off the fear of God, and run cross to the principles of that religion which they profess, and, by leading flagitious lives, offered violence to their consciences, they are in a frame ready for the basest impressions, and to follow that devil who shall first tempt them. And, however it comes to pass through the all-ordering and over-ruling providence of a wise God, who, when he pleaseth, and as he pleaseth, chains the sea, and restrains the lusts of men, so that though they go thus far, they shall go no farther, I shall not at all wonder to see a practical atheist become a doctrinal Papist, that so his religion itself may spread its wing over his profaneness.

But I come to the

APPLICATION.

USE I. Let me not by any be counted too bold, and going out of my place, while I turn me to the great men of the nation, and speak

to them as persons not too high for the counsels, commands, and exhortations of the word of God; I mean, the king as supreme, nobles, gentlemen, and all under him to whom any part of the government in this nation is committed: and these, all these, from the highest to the lowest, I do, with all due humility, as knowing my distance from many of them, yet with utmost earnestness, I do beseech that they would awake unto righteousness, and see to it that they be found faithful in their place and to their trust; filling up every one the province which God hath set them in, and trading every one with their talents, whether more or fewer, five or two; nay, let not him that hath but one hide it "in a napkin," and bury it in sloth; (Matt. xxv. 15; Luke xix. 20;) but be abounding in this work of the Lord, that, through your care and industry, justice may run down among us like a flood, and judgment like a mighty water, for the washing away [of] that loathsome filth which is in our streets.

1. All that know you, may it please your most excellent majesty, know that you have a great deal of important and weighty work continually before you, which must necessarily fill your royal head with thoughts, and your heart with cares, that keeps your eyes waking while others sleep without interruption or disturbance. There is abundant reason for us all to pity your burdens, and to pray that you may be counselled by the God of wisdom, and supported by the God of power, and have "the arms of your hands made strong by the everlasting arms of the God of Jacob;" (Gen. xlix. 24;) but no reason for any Protestant among us to envy your honour and other pre-eminences, which are just, though too small, recompences for the hazards you have run, and the kindness you have shown, and the thoughts, cares, and pains you have taken, for the saving of a people, looked upon as being within a very few steps of ruin. None knows the weight of a crown but he that wears it. While it glisters, it sits heavy. Yet, great sir, among those other affairs which do incessantly engage you, let the promoting of morality and piety, the beating down of ungodliness and profaneness, put-in for and obtain a principal share; for they do deserve it.

2. And O that other magistrates would contribute what in them is to the promoting of the true religion, the power of godliness, and a scriptural reformation, together with a hearty and vigorous suppression of profaneness! remembering that it is the great and holy God who hath, by the hand of his providence, put into your hand the sword of justice, which ought not to rust there: you must not bear it in vain, but draw it when, and use it as, need requires. And if the making of good laws, and denouncing of judgments in the penalties contained in them, be not sufficient to curb vice, and to keep men within compass, lift up yourselves as those that know it is your part, as the "ministers of God, to execute wrath upon them that do evil." (Rom. xiii. 4.) If menaces will not do, there must be a proceeding to execution; and if shaking the rod over the head doth not reach the end, there must be a laying of it upon the back; only be sure that it is indeed upon the back of them that do evil. And unto such it doth concern you to be

“a terror ;” for that is the will of God, as my text tells you. It must and will be readily granted, that a pleasant and smiling aspect is very grateful, because lovely, and an affable, obliging carriage doth exceedingly become and adorn great ones ; but sometimes it is needful for them to clothe themselves with terror, that they might make the most stout-hearted sinners to tremble. Magistrates should not be like Jupiter’s blocks, for vermin to skip upon and play with. An undue and foolish lenity will render them contemptible, and the wicked more audacious, so as to lift up their horn on high, and “declare their sin as Sodom.” (Isai. iii. 9.) When justice and mercy are mingled with a judicious and skilful hand, they will constitute a government of a most excellent temper.

USE II. I shall also be free to speak a few words to my reverend fathers and brethren in the ministry, of what judgment and persuasion soever they are, about those things which have been and are matters of difference and controversy among us. You would, all of you, be received, honoured, and attended unto as the ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. My request unto you is, that you would approve yourselves, and convince all, that you are such, by your preaching Christ up and sin down, all manner of sin, all sorts of filthiness, both of the flesh and of the spirit. Spare none, neither small nor great. Be sure, that what offends you doth offend God as well as you ; and then bend your bow and level your arrows at it. But as for the over-grown profaneness of the age, which you cannot but know doth so greatly abound in the midst of us, set yourselves with all your might, not only to lop off its luxuriant branches, but, if possible, to pull it up by the very roots. Do not, in the bowels of love I beseech you, do not rend and tear one another ; do not waste and spend your precious and swiftly-flying time, your heat and strength, about those things which your consciences tell you are adiabourous, or “indifferent,” and [which] some of you have by word of mouth and in your writings owned and acknowledged to be so ; and a zealous contending for them and stiff upholding of them will break the peace both of church and state, as it hath done ever since the beginning of the Reformation ; but will never afford you solid comfort and a well-grounded peace, when you come to lie upon a death-bed, and [when] the king of terrors, with his grim and ghastly countenance, shall look you in the face. But labour with might and main against that “root of bitterness,” profaneness ; which, if you know any thing as you ought to know, you cannot but know is of a damnable nature, and will, if not prevented, and heartily repented of, cast and sink particular persons into the bottomless pit of eternal perdition, and also bring ruin upon a whole nation ; so that though Noah, Samuel, and Job should stand before God and plead for them, yet his mind could not be toward them. (Ezek. xiv. 14, 20.)

Do not you admit to the table of your Lord filthy swine, that wallow in the mire of all profaneness : swearers, drunkards, and others of that black guard do not look like guests meet for such a solemnity, not like such as the holy Jesus will bid welcome. Do not

you seal to them an interest in all the blessings of that covenant which they wickedly violate ; nor in the saving benefits of that most precious blood, which was indeed shed for sinners, but is by them trampled under foot as if it were "an unholy thing," (Heb. x. 29,) and had purchased for them a lawless liberty or licence to be unholy. Do not you receive *them* to a distinguishing ordinance *who* run with the herd, and are not by their lives and actions distinguished from the worst and vilest. Remember that old saying, and very good one, *Sancta sanctis*, "Holy things for holy persons." And consider what our Lord said to the prophet : "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." (Jer. xv. 19.) He will have his servants sever the good and the bad ; giving his promises and seals to the former, denying them to the latter. He will have his stewards to be faithful ; feasting his children with the dainties of his house, but not throwing them away to dogs. And those that do so he will own. Thus do ye ; and, by so doing, you will come forth to the help of the civil magistrate against those mighty abominations which domineer and reign among us. Considering the place you are in, and that solemn work you have engaged in, one would expect that all of you should be holy, not only by dedication, but by a real inward sanctification ; at least, of unblamable conversations, free from scandal, being without offence, though not before God, yet before men. A profane, wicked minister is a gross solecism, and deserves to be counted a monster, and to be driven from among men, as Nebuchadnezzar was when brutified. (Dan. iv. 25.)

But while you do shine with the bright beams of holiness, and walk according to the blessed rules of the everlasting gospel, which you ought to preach, you may boldly and comfortably, without any severe gripes within, and without any reproaches cast upon you from without, bend your utmost force against those extravagants who walk contrary to them. Therefore, my brethren, let us all study the gospel we preach, and live it as well as know it ; for knowledge will not be saving until it influence heart and life, and be reduced into practice ;—let us, I say, think with ourselves, and repeat the thought often and often, "what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness ;" (2 Peter iii. 11 ;) and then may we lift up our voices like trumpets, and decry all the wickedness we know to be acted. Herein will you do singularly good service both to the great God in heaven, and to our king and magistrates upon earth, and to the whole land. We read, that, in the fight with Amalek, while Israel was in the valley, Moses was in the Mount with the rod of God in his hand, which he lifted up ; and when his hands were weary, and ready to flag, Aaron and Hur were by, to sustain and uphold them. (Exod. xvii. 8—13.) Aaron was the priest of the Lord, and Hur was a prince of the tribe of Judah. Let this example teach all their duty, and excite and quicken them to the performance of it. When the hand of Moses, the supreme magistrate, I mean, is lifted up with the rod of God against the sins of the times, let both Aaron and Hur, magistrates and ministers, come in cheerfully and

strenuously to his assistance. For it is a thousand pities that the magistrate should work alone, when set about so great and good a work as this. Do you back him, and afford unto him all the assistance that you can.

USE III. I shall now in the last place direct my discourse unto those who are placed in a lower sphere, for the present, not put into any office, nor clothed with any thing of magistratical power and authority, but altogether in a private capacity. I would have you to consider what you have to do: for there is a duty incumbent upon every one. Though you are not to reach out your hands to works or acts of office either in the state or in the church, yet you are not to lay aside or neglect any part of that work which belongs to you as members of both. And as there is not the least and meanest person in a kingdom but may do a great deal of mischief, so there is not the meanest but, if he have a heart, may do some good. Solomon tells us of a little city that had but few men, and was besieged by a great king. And "there was found in it a poor wise man, who by his wisdom delivered the city." (Eccles. ix. 14, 15.) And, in 2 Sam. xx., when Sheba rose up in rebellion against David, and, being pursued, went to Abel, Joab with his host "cast up a bank against it, and battered the wall;" but a woman saved it from ruin. Every one may be instrumental for good.

Since it is, then, the duty of magistrates, from the highest to the lowest, to act what they can toward the suppression of profaneness, there are these two things unto which I would exhort you who are in private stations:—

First. *Set a high value and esteem upon every one of those magistrates whom you know or hear to be herein true to their trust, and careful to perform their duty.*—You may be sure of this, that they will find discouragement enough and opposition from the ranting crew. The wicked themselves, at whose lusts they strike, will hate them with an implacable hatred, and curse them, and drink to their confusion, and, with longing, desire to be rid of them, and do whatever they can in order thereunto. I do not wonder to hear of the plottings and combinations both of atheists and Papists in such a case. There is nothing that they hate more than reformation and religion; nothing they will be more impatient under than a restraint laid upon their lusts. Therefore those that are pious and sober, that fear God, and are friends to the nation, should be exceeding dear over them, and prize them at a high rate, and love them with their hearts, and honour them, and willingly pay tribute, and bless God for them. We are less than the least of mercies; and ought to own *them*, much more, greater mercies. A good servant in a family is a blessing to it. Laban confessed it to Jacob: "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake." (Gen. xxx. 27.) How great a blessing then is a good king upon the throne, a good lord-mayor in the chair, good justices upon the bench! Certainly, these are blessings with all thankfulness to be owned; they are mercies, among temporal ones, of the first magnitude; they do

make a happy nation and a happy people, unless that people will be so vile and froward as to stand in the way of their own happiness. Those that are Protestants in their hearts, who, while they verbally profess that religion, are sincere in that profession, cannot but with delight look upon it as a choice and singular mercy, for our gracious God, in a day wherein there were great searchings and sinkings of heart, to set over us our king and queen, a Protestant king and queen, whose hearts, we persuade ourselves, are set for the maintenance of the true Reformed religion, and, we hope, for the pulling down whatsoever is contrary and bids defiance thereunto in its principles and precepts. Love them for this; let them be our dear, as well as our dread, sovereigns; and let us be sure to be subject to them, not only for wrath, but likewise for conscience' sake, yea, and out of choice. And let us pray for them, and plead for them, and strive both together and apart with God for them, and bring down upon them from heaven all the blessings we can. This was done by the Jewish church: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel;" and "hear thee from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand." (Psalm xx. 1—4, 6.) Thus they did bless their king in his exploits, and thus let us bless our king in his. Yea, let the blessing of Joseph come upon him: Let "the Almighty bless him with the blessings of heaven above, and blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb." Let his "blessings prevail above the blessings of all his progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills:" let them be upon his head, and the head of his dearest consort. (Gen. xlix. 25, 26.) For, I hope, time will make it further evident, that he is a singular instrument, raised up by God for the effecting of great and glorious things in the world, and for the church of Christ, which hath been in so many places for so many years "afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted;" (Isai. liv. 11;) yea, that he is designed for an avenger to execute wrath upon him and them who have been the plague of the Christian world, and have made it their work and delight to destroy the earth, and their design to erect to themselves a monument of glory out of the ruins of kingdoms and the Protestant religion.

Secondly. Let me desire you to *facilitate the work of magistrates, and make it as easy to them as you can.*—You that are masters of families, having children and servants under you, and understand your work, and desire to go through with it, find, that you have enough to do in your narrow and little spheres; your small cock-boats call for much care and pains. We that are pastors of churches have a great deal more, even so much as makes our heads and hearts to ache; and we cry out, with holy Paul, *Τις ικανος*; "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. ii. 16.) People do little think [of] those many thoughts which gracious and faithful ministers have both day and

night; the multitude of those cares which they take; the burdens which often lie upon their spirits; and the many bitter sighs and groans which, upon various accounts, they do utter in their private recesses, when they are alone with God. But yet, what is this, all this, to that load which lieth upon the shoulders of our sovereign, who sits as pilot at the helm of so great a ship, and upon whom cometh daily, not only the care of three kingdoms, but, as doubtless I may safely add, of the whole Protestant interest, which hath been so desperately struck at; yea, and of all the churches who have felt the fury of oppressors, that have put yokes of iron upon their necks? And not only the king, whose place is highest, and province hardest, but others also who are employed by and under him, do find they have enough to do. The lord mayor, the justices of peace, the petty constables, beadles, watchmen, have enough to do. How many avocations have they from their own callings and particular affairs, which for their own and families' good must be attended to! and how many troubles and vexations have they in the management of their places! I would therefore prevail with you to pity them, and to help them, and to take off from their burden all that you can. This will be an argument of your being acted by a spirit truly Christian; and it doth very well become all good subjects.

When Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came to the camp of Israel in the wilderness, and saw all that Moses did to the people, he spake thus to him: "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee, thou art not able to perform it thyself alone." (Exod. xviii. 18.) So I say, Our king will wear away. He is but a man; his strength is not the strength of stones, nor is his flesh of brass: he is made of flesh and blood as well as others; and is subject to the same infirmities, decays, and strokes that others are: and truly his life deserves to be exceeding precious in our eyes. He is the breath of our nostrils; and our life and peace, our comfort and happiness, is very much bound up in him. And therefore we have, and I hope we shall more and more see that we have, a great deal of reason to contribute all that we can to the lengthening out of his days, and making his life comfortable. But the weight of government is too heavy for him; I mean, as good old Jethro did, he is not able to perform it himself alone. To deal with England's enraged enemies abroad, and with England's daring sins at home, is too much for him alone: nay, may I not go farther? It is too much for his privy council and parliament too; yea, and for all inferior magistrates and officers too. Take them all together, and it is too much for them alone.

I do therefore earnestly beseech you all to put your helping hand to the work, and yield them all the assistance that you can. We have, as my experience and constant observation tell me, a spirit of discontent and complaining very busy and active, though indeed oftentimes not without too much cause: and the Lord grant [that] those who are now our rulers may have such a spirit of wisdom and government plentifully poured-out from heaven upon them, that they may never

give good men any [cause],—that those who have an interest in God, and will certainly be heard at the throne of grace, may never be constrained—to go with their just complaints! But how many are there that do without cause fill their mouths with complaints, and call those faults which are not, and throw dirt in the faces of persons in place! But I will ask this one question: What do these complainers do in order to the amending of that which is amiss? Our streets would be clearer than they are, if every one would sweep before his own door; and reformation would happily become universal, if every one would be a self-reformer. And O that you would be so! O that others would be so! O that all would say, what Elihu doth, in Job, tell us is meet to be said, unto God: “What I know not, teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more!” (Job xxxiv. 32.)

I shall yet divide this my exhortation into two branches:—

First. I shall speak unto those who are *governors of families, and have children and servants under their inspection*.—Apply to your duty there. Would you gladly see all things well abroad, as far as you can, every one of you take care that they be so at home. You that are parents must know and consider, that that God who gave you children, hath committed to you the care and charge of their souls. And you that have apprentices ought likewise to know and consider, that the souls as well as the bodies of your apprentices are committed to your care by their parents or friends, and are your charge likewise. And the same is true as to your other menial servants, so long as they shall continue under your roof as such: and accordingly you are under a strict obligation for looking after them. That is not a thing which you may do or leave undone, as you please; but you are bound to it. You ought to be their keepers, for you are responsible for them; and if, through your neglect and carelessness, any of them do eternally miscarry, they will die in their sins, but their blood will be required at your hands.

Whereas your holy care as to them will be very pleasing and acceptable unto God, as is clear from his former dealings in this very case. He took this so kindly at the hand of Abraham, that upon the account thereof he would reveal unto him his purpose: “The Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Gen. xviii. 17.) Shall I not communicate my secrets to Abraham? shall I do such a work as I am now resolved upon, and not let Abraham know it?” But why did the Lord ask such a question? Why might he not hide that, or any thing else, from him or another, if he pleased, being *Agens liberrimum*, “a most free Agent,” and giving no account of his matters? But what was the reason of this his so great condescension? Or what was Abraham, that God’s cabinet-council should be, as to any one particular, unlocked and opened unto him? God himself gives two reasons of it; one in verse 18: “Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.” I have promised him great mercies and blessings, such as I have not promised to any man besides in the whole world; and shall I after that conceal this from

him, which is a great deal less?" But the other reason to which I now refer you, followeth in verse 19: "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.' I know him: I am sure he is my friend; he loves me dearly; his heart is set for my honour and interest; he will commend me and my way to all that are under his charge; and he will lay his command upon them to love, fear, and serve me, and keep my way." God will manifest himself unto, and set a special mark of favour upon, those that are studious of promoting and posteritizing religion and the worship of God in their families. These are men and women according to his heart.

Will you then study and heartily apply to your duty to this purpose? Will you teach your children and servants the good knowledge and fear of the Lord? Labour to instil betimes into them right principles, and be dropping as they are capable of receiving. Will you be provoking and spurring them on to their duty by your warm counsels and exhortations? Will you lay your strict commands upon them to do it, as they would have your love and avoid your displeasure? Allure them by your own example; that is a strong silken cord, which draws sweetly. The way to have them write well, is for you to set them good copies. O let them not see irreligion in you, and profaneness in you; for, a hundred to one but, if they do, that will do them more mischief than all your precepts and counsels will do them good. Are you in good earnest when you tell them you would have them good? Then take care that you be good yourselves. Be sure to set up and keep up in your families the worship of God. There were indeed saints in Nero's house; and an Ahijah in Jeroboam's, in whom there was some good thing toward the Lord God of hosts, who can make flowers grow in dunghills and wildernesses, as well as springs of water in deserts: but these are rarities: there is no great reason to expect them; such soils do not usually afford them. Therefore do you worship God, and pray with your families morning and evening; a duty, I fear, too much neglected by some who know better. Follow you the pattern of good Joshua, in that excellent resolution, that he and his house would serve the Lord; (Joshua xxiv. 15;) not he alone, nor they alone, but all in a conjunction. Company is comfortable and desirable in that which is good. Keep a watchful eye upon them, do not trust them with themselves; for the scripture tells you, that "childhood and youth are vanity," (Eccles. xi. 10,) and that "folly is bound up in the hearts" of young ones: (Prov. xxii. 15:) there is a whole pack of folly in them; and if you do not look to them, they will both add to the pack and open it. They bring into the world with them a great deal of corruption; and that is just like tinder and touchwood, that will quickly catch and be fired by those sparks of temptation which fly up and down thick in the world. Give unto them all the encouragement that is fit for them. Children should have ingenuous and liberal education; and servants not be used like slaves, not dispirited and discouraged, chid and beaten into mopes. Command mingled with kindness and love will be found to

do best and go furthest: but never let loose the reins of government; hold them strait; for where too much liberty is given, a great deal more will be taken; by which means, if there be not care taken to prevent it, that liberty will soon degenerate into licentiousness, for it borders upon it already. I beseech you, therefore, fathers and masters, mothers and mistresses, study you to be good in your places; and since you are to govern others, be sure rightly to govern yourselves. National-reformation will easily follow, when family-reformation leads the way.

Secondly. I shall direct my exhortation to *particular persons*.—Every one of you to whom I now speak, and every one of those to whom this discourse shall come, from the highest to the lowest, of what rank and quality soever they are, and in what place and station soever the hand of Divine Providence hath set them. It is not so much matter what you are for greatness, as what you are for goodness; not so much in what orb you are fixed, (if we may speak of such a thing as a fixation in a tumbling and rolling world,) as with what beams you shine. I beseech you all, one and other, to look to yourselves, and be very circumspect and careful of yourselves, what you are, what you do, and how you carry [yourselves] in the world. Every man is charged with himself; though not only with himself, yet with himself: “Every man is to give an account of himself to God.” (Rom. xiv. 12.) None of you are so high as to be unaccountable. It is your unquestionable duty to “keep your hearts with all diligence,” and to “ponder the path of your feet.” (Prov. iv. 23, 26.) You ought to be considerate men, and curious, and exact; and to weigh things propounded to you before you close with them, and actions before you do them.

Will you be persuaded to apply to this duty? Will you do it? Will you “walk circumspectly,” accurately, “not as fools but as wise,” (Eph. v. 15,) not as beasts but as men, not as heathen-men but as Christians, as those that have been under gospel divine teachings? Will you endeavour to lead such a conversation as becomes those who do really believe there is a God, another life and state after this, a resurrection from the dead, a judgment, a heaven, and a hell, unspeakable glory and happiness for them that obey the gospel, and conform themselves to the law and rule of the new creature, and everlasting shame, contempt, and torment for those that are workers of iniquity? Know, such a life hath admirable delights to sweeten it in the way, and inconceivable rewards to crown it in the end. I earnestly beseech you to propound such serious and weighty questions as these to yourselves, when you do either feel the stirrings and motions of sin, or are assaulted by temptations to it from without:—“Doth such an action become me? Whether will it contribute to or detract from my honour, interest, or comfort? Is a life of debauchery and profaneness worthy of a man that hath an immortal soul, and doth expect, when I die and leave this world, to launch into the ocean of eternity? Would I have ‘my Lord, when he cometh, find me so doing?’ Is not this that I am now enticed and inclined to, con-

trary to the law and end of my creation, to the gospel-law, and to the dictates of right reason? Will this be for my advantage, either now or hereafter? If this be the seed I sow, what will be the harvest that I shall reap? Will sin ever pay me for the cost I am at upon it, and for the pains that I take about it? The scripture tells us, the 'wages' it gives its servants are 'death:' (Rom. vi. 23 :) and what wise man will do hard work for no better wages? Suppose that it doth afford present pleasure that tickles a vain, carnal mind; will that pleasure last? Is there not a sting to follow that honey? will it not be bitterness in the latter end? Certainly it will issue in shame and sorrow. And who will choose to walk in that way, though it be a carpet one, that will go down to, and lodge the traveller at last in, the chambers of death, and the bed of flames?"

As for those of you who have been hitherto vain and loose and wicked, (and, God knows, there are too many of you,) do not stop your ears "to the voice of the charmers," (Psalm lviii. 5,) do not, O do not hate to be reformed. It is better for you to break off your sins by a timely and speedy repentance, than to go on; because none of you can tell but the very next step that you take you may tumble into hell, since every step in sin's way "takes hold" of it. (Prov. v. 5.) What Daniel therefore said to that proud and haughty monarch Nebuchadnezzar, I will say to you: "Let my counsel be acceptable to you, break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of your tranquillity;" or, as you have it in the margin of your Bibles, "an healing of your error." (Dan. iv. 27.) If every one would mend one, how soon should we see a lovely face and excellent beauty upon the whole! Nay, if the generality or major part of the inhabitants of England and London would be prevailed with to come over to a sober and religious life; if princes, nobles, and gentlemen will be exemplary therein; sin and debauchery would learn to abate something of its impudence, and grow more modest than it is. Instead of walking up and down with a brasen face at noon-day in our streets, as it hath done, it would seek corners, and hide itself under the covert of darkness, as in the apostles' times, when "they that were drunk were drunk in the night." (1 Thess. v. 7.)

Now, that I might promote in all persons, according to their several spheres and capacities, a conscientious care and endeavour to suppress profaneness, I shall close this discourse with these few following

DIRECTIONS.

First. *Pray for some of Christ's eye-salve, that, your eyes being thereby opened, you may see the ugliness and deformity of profaneness.*—Do not give credit to that report which sin makes of itself; no, nor to theirs neither who are its sworn slaves and vassals. For what true information can you expect to receive from them, who are under the power of strong delusions, who are self-deceived, and have their minds blinded by the god of this world, and run away with a lie in their right hand? But do you sit down and take the word of God for your

guide and counsellor, and from thence your measures; and seriously consider, What beauty can there be in that which hath defaced the whole creation, that was at first a most exquisite and curious piece, and "every thing in it very good?" What excellency can there be, after the most diligent inquiry, found in that which is in itself contrary to the best and supreme good, and makes every thing else so that is so? What desirableness can there be in that from whence have come all those stings with which man is tormented, and all the poisons by which he is endangered?

O that you could look upon it with such an eye as the infinitely wise and holy God doth; and then I am sure you would see it to be out of measure sinful, and so, hate it with a perfect hatred, and flee from it more than from the devil; for it made him what he is; and is worse than he, who, had it not been for sin, would still have continued a glorious angel! O that you would take a view of it as it is represented to you in the glass of scripture-precepts which do expressly forbid it, and in the glass of scripture-threatenings which are most dreadfully thundered out against it, and in the glass of those many tremendous and amazing judgments which have been executed up and down in the world, by which God hath revealed his wrath from heaven against all the ungodliness, unrighteousness, and wickedness of men; sparing neither people nor princes, but hanging up some of both sorts, as it were, in chains, that they might be for the admonition and warning of them that do survive! Once more: look upon it in the glass of our Saviour's blood, which had never been shed, no, not a drop of it, had it not been for sin; but that caused the shedding of it all, even his heart-, life-blood. And it was absolutely necessary, according to the divine determination, in order to man's salvation, that it should be so; for "without the shedding of blood there would have been no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) Had not the blood of Jesus, God-man, been shed, and made satisfaction, as a propitiatory sacrifice, to Divine Justice, infinitely provoked by the sin of man, the offence and displeasure caused by sin would have, to all everlasting, remained without any hope or, as far as we know, any possibility, of a reconciliation. The least sin is such an anomy or "transgression of the divine law," such an affront to the Divine Majesty, gives such a blow at the sovereignty and government of God, and carrieth in it so much of malignity and provocation, that there needs no more than it to sink the guilty person into the bottomless pit of endless misery. I leave it then to you to consider, what there is in that profaneness, and numberless number of God-daring abominations, which are to be found in the midst of us. In short: this is that which I propound and desire of you: Judge of sin by its utter contrariety to the great, holy, and ever-blessed God, and by the sufferings of Christ, who was his people's Surety, and died a sacrifice, the iniquities of them all being laid upon him; (Isai. liii. 6;) and by the fatal consequences of sin upon men and devils, yea, upon the whole world, upon the face whereof it hath thrown dirt and deformity, and in the bowels whereof it hath caused afflictive, painful agonies and convulsions.

Secondly. *Be sure that all of you get your hearts filled and awed with the true fear of God.*—In which you ought and are commanded to “be all the day.” (Prov. xxiii. 17.) Lie down at night in it; awake and rise in the morning in it; and so walk up and down in all places and companies, and about all your businesses and affairs. No persons in the world are so audaciously and impudently vile as those who have their hearts hardened from this fear. That passage is very observable which you find in Psalm xxxvi. 1: “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.” Sin hath a voice: it cries aloud in the ears of God, and it speaks loud to men, to the hearts of good men. It speaks that which grieves and saddens them; it speaks that which informs them. So here: “The transgression of the wicked, his visible and open transgression, the life he leads, which is flagitious, the course he takes, which is lewd, the villainies he commits: these speak within my heart,” saith David; “they speak to my mind and understanding.” But what do they say? “Enough: so much as amounts to a plain and full evidence, so much as is to me a sufficient and firm foundation, to build this conclusion upon, that ‘there is no fear of God before his eyes.’ Either he doth not believe that there is a God; or else he believes that he is not a terrible God, a consuming fire, and everlasting burnings; but ‘such an one as himself;’ (Psalm l. 21;) a God not to be trembled before, but to be trifled and played with; one that did not mind what is done here below, or that hath pleasure in wickedness, as he hath himself.”

What was the reason that Abraham, though a good man, eminently good and strong in faith, yet was not willing to have it publicly known that Sarah was his wife, when he sojourned in Gerar? You have the account thereof given in Gen. xx. 12: “‘I thought, Surely, the fear of God is not in this place.’ Here is not the worship of God, therefore here is not the fear of God.” But what did he gather from thence? “What, if there be not the fear of God? Then there is the fear of nothing, they will stick at nothing; they will have their will: they will slay me for my wife’s sake. This is indeed a sweet place, a lovely and pleasant country, it wants for no earthly accommodations; but, as I conjecture, and that not without reason, the best and principal thing is wanting: here is none of the fear of God; and where there is not that curb to restrain men, they will certainly run wild, and their impetuous lusts will hurry them into the vilest and most monstrous practices.” *Ubi non est timor Dei, ibi regnant omnia vitia.* “All vices reign and rage in those places where the fear of God hath not a commanding power.” Whereas, on the other side, no persons do hate and oppose sin so much as those who do fear God most; for this is that which doth teach men, and that effectually, to depart from evil. “Former governors” did so and so; but, said good Nehemiah, “so did not I, because of the fear of God.” (Neh. v. 15.) There was none like Job in all the earth; and it is said of him by the Lord himself, that “he feared God, and eschewed evil:” (Job i. 8;) he avoided and resisted it. This fear will set the heart of a man against sin, and constrain him to lift up his hand against it, or his voice at least, when

there is not any power in his hand. Wheresoever there is the fear of God as the greatest and best good, there will inseparably accompany it the fear of sin as the basest and worst of evils, and that person will be sure to make an universal opposition to it, wheresoever it is to be found, both in himself and in others, at home and abroad, in enemies and in friends too, yea, in them most: as a man that hath a natural antipathy to a viper, cannot endure it lying in his bosom, nor lurking in his chamber, no, nor creeping in the highway.

Thirdly. *Pray that your souls may be filled and fixed with a holy zeal for God.*—A zeal for his name and honour, for his law and interest. Cold, lukewarm, and basely indifferent persons will never be famous and renowned upon the account of any vigorous appearings for God or against sin. A sordid spirit of indifferency, greatly unworthy of every one that is honoured with the Christian name, doth evermore carry along with it a spirit of slothfulness and inactivity, let the matter be never so important, the concern never so great. In Acts xviii. you read that the blind and hardened Jews “with one accord made insurrection against Paul;” and “the Greeks took Sosthenes,” the apostle’s friend and companion, “and beat him before the judgment-seat.” But Gallio appeared neither against the one nor the other; he “cared for none of those things.” He thought, What were those things to him? I believe, this wretched spirit influenceth and acts many, a great many, among us. God is greatly dishonoured; his name is taken in vain; his precious sabbaths are openly and wickedly profaned; religion suffers in its honour and interest; the nation is endangered, and exposed to the dismal effects of divine indignation; young ones are corrupted, perverted, and drawn aside to their destruction; and wrath is pulling down apace: and who can tell how soon a holy, jealous, provoked God may unstop his vials, and “distribute sorrows in his anger?” (Job xxi. 17.) But what is all this to them, so long as they can follow their callings; and enjoy themselves; and gratify their proud, vain, wanton humours; and go fine, and fare well, and lay up money, and live in quiet, and mirth, and plenty? But let me be believed by you whilst I tell you, that if there were in you a zeal for the honour and interest of God, you would judge and conclude that this is something to you, and this concerns you; and accordingly it would go to your very hearts, and be as a sword in your bones, as it was in the holy prophet’s, which extorted from him that passionate exclamation: “Is it not enough for you to weary men, but you will weary my God also?” (Isai. vii. 13.) It was this holy zeal that put *Eleazar* [Phinehas] upon that heroic act of taking such speedy revenge as he did upon Zimri and Cosbi. God himself took notice of it, and imputed it to his zeal, and was highly pleased with it, and mentioned it twice: Num. xv. 11: “He was zealous for my sake among them.” And again, verse 13: “He was zealous for his God:” his heart did burn within him, he was all in a flame, and could not with any patience endure to see his God so unworthily dealt with and dishonoured. While I am writing of this, I am informed of that excellent precept against the profaning of the Lord’s day, sent out by the Right

Honourable Sir Thomas Pilkington, our present Lord Mayor ; which being of a more than ordinary strain, I look not upon as a matter of custom, but an effect of his zeal ; and let it be for his honour to succeeding generations, and an embalming of his name ; and let God himself remember it for good to him both in time and to eternity ! One thing more :—

Lastly. *Frequently and seriously call to mind that account which you are at the last and great day to give of yourselves, and your power, and all your actions, to a better, greater, and higher than any of you, even to God himself.*—He will, for certain, he will call you all to a strict account ; therefore awe and quicken your souls with the thoughts of it. It is but a little, very little time that the youngest and strongest of you have to spend in the world ; death will certainly come and summon you hence. And when it comes, it will not stay for you till you have mended faults, and supplied defects ; possibly it will not allow you time enough to say : “ Lord, have mercy upon me ! ” And then your places will know you no more, and your power will know you no more, and your comforts and enjoyments will know you no more. You that now sit upon thrones, and in parliament-houses, and courts of judicature, must then stand before the divine tribunal, upon an equal level with the meanest of the people, and every one of you give an account of himself to God, and of his trust and power, and how he did carry himself, and manage and improve his power. And therefore, if you have any kindness for yourselves, make it appear by your care so to live now, so to act and rule, as that you may give up a good account with boldness and comfort, and hear the Judge say, “ Well done, good and faithful servants ; you have been faithful in your little, you have done your duty, and filled up your places : now enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Matt. xxv. 21, 23.) I shall conclude this sermon with that of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11 : “ We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ” so to live in the world, so to order their conversations, so to trade with those talents of interest and estates, of parts and power, for the present, that then they may be found “ faultless and presented with exceeding joy.” (Jude 24.)

SERMON XVI.

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HOW MAY WE INQUIRE AFTER NEWS, NOT AS ATHENIANS, BUT AS CHRISTIANS, FOR THE BETTER MANAGEMENT OF OUR PRAYERS AND PRAISES FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD?

For all the Athenians and strangers that were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.—
Acts xvii. 21.

IN the text chosen for me to speak of, and for you to hear, I do observe, and would have you also consider, [that] we meet with a concourse of people who pretended to be the *virtuosi* of that age; and, for aught I do discern, may as well deserve the character, as *they* do in our age *who* spend their time in inquiring into useless novelties.

If our learned men equal the learning of these Athenians; if students from foreign parts flock to us to perfect their course of studies, as to Athens; if merchants in equal numbers, but with unequal riches, attend the custom-houses, and fill the exchanges, with us as with them; if there were some travellers who came only to see and talk, who were *οι επιδημουντες ξενοι*, “the strangers there;” if each sort had business of [no?] greater importance to mind than to spend their time in hearing what others could tell, or telling what others would be pleased with hearing; (which was the folly and distemper of those Athenians and strangers;) the same is the epidemical folly and disease of our age, and of all sorts of the *beaux-esprits*, “refined spirits,” with us. The cure of this disease is the design of this discourse in this case:—

How may we inquire after news, not as Athenians, but as Christians, for the better management of our prayers and praises for the church of God?

He that inquires, to satisfy his curiosity or his sinful prejudices or malicious wishes, and to boast and triumph in the sorrows of the church of God; and he that inquires not at all, nor concerneth himself with these works of God; do both highly offend. The one rejoices in the destruction of Zion; (as it is, Obad. 12;) the other is “at ease in Zion,” (Amos vi. 1,) and “is not grieved for the affliction of Joseph:” (verse 6;) and each does provoke the displeasure of the Lord against themselves. Amos pronounceth a woe against the one; (verse 1;) and an utter extirpation is threatened against the other. (Obad. 18.) Such “careless ones” as neither fear the evil, nor hope for the good, of Zion; neither pray for its deliverance, nor do praise God for his salvation to Zion; greatly sin, and are likely to

be deeply punished. (Isai. xxxii. 9—12.) That we may escape both, the case warns us not to inquire Athenian-like, but to inquire as becomes Christians, and suitably pray for a *distressed*, or praise God for a *delivered*, church.

In stating this unusual case, it will, I think, be best to draw it out into some previous propositions, which shall make way for the clearer resolution of it.

PROPOSITIONS.

PROPOSITION I.—*The casuist doth grant that in some cases we may inquire what is the news that is abroad.*—Whosoever asketh direction how to do an action, is first persuaded of the lawfulness of the thing he would do. “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?” (Micah vii. 6,) implieth that I may, yea, ought to, come before him. So here the casuist is of opinion [that] we may inquire, but is solicitous lest you should, with the most, inquire amiss; and therefore would direct you the best way of doing what is lawful to be done. If there were a doubt, the case should be first, “May it be done?” not, “How is it to be done?”

PROP. II. *News which spreads abroad in the world is of very different nature.*

1. *Some, trifling reports.*—Below the gravity and prudence of a man to receive from a reporter, or to communicate to any hearer.

2. *Others, of a very particular, private, personal concern, and among such as are of mean and abject state.*—Which as they rise among them, so it is fit they should die amongst them; or, if reported, are of no more concern to a judge or magistrate or the public, than a counter-scuffle of boys in their sports to a general and his army.

3. *There are other news of a public nature, and which concern the state or church.*—Which import some threatening danger, or some smiling providence; the approaches of somewhat more than ordinary for the *good* of mankind or the church of Christ. Such was the news of Joseph,—that he was alive, lord of Egypt; and that he had sent to fetch Jacob and his family, (the church of God in that day,) to preserve a seed alive. Such was the news of Cyrus’s coming to the throne, favouring the Jews, and issuing-out the edict of their return; which made the Jews, dreamers-like, think it was too good to be true. Or when *sad* news alarms the world; as when rumours of wars come one upon another, and threaten the world with an universal deluge of blood.

In such cases, it is yet considerable, how certain, or how dubious, the reports are which we hear; how near at hand, or how far off, the effects are which attend the good or bad news we hear; how likely it is the evil may be diverted, lessened, or removed, or whether inevitable and growing great; how probable, or sure, the hoped good accompanying the providences of God in such cases is, &c. Of such-like news this case speaketh. Tidings which do import great good or great evil to the church of God, call upon every member of the church to inquire into [them].

PROP. III. *In such cases the persons are of very different capacity, who (as they ought) do inquire.*—And according to the different capacity each is in, so each ought to inquire what may be done by himself to prevent, lessen, or remove afflicting evils; or what may be done to hasten, increase, and secure hoped or enjoyed good. This by such persons ought to be seasonably and effectually done.

The Divine Providence doth advance some to places of the highest power and authority; and intrusteth them with advantages of being “shields of the earth,” (Psalm xlvii. 9,) “nursing fathers and nursing mothers” to his church, (Isai. xlix. 23,) “saviours upon Mount Zion.” (Obad. 21.) They that are “defenders of the faith,”—they should inquire, what tidings for or against the church; that they may know what they are to do in repelling violence and injustice, or in promoting the welfare and safety of the public. The inquiry such make is, and ought to be, much more exact, constant, and solicitous. These should not only receive intelligence, but seek it; maintain such as from abroad are fit to give account what is framing against the public good of the civil state, or against the good of the church of God: neither of which will be long in safety, peace, or prosperity, if those who are watchmen, and like shepherds, should neglect to inquire what ravening beasts usually haunt the adjoining woods or wildernesses. (Ezek. xxxiv. 2.)

Now, because it would be too tedious to mention the several ranks of men concerned to inquire into news of a public nature;—as counsellors and lawgivers, judges and inferior magistrates, martial and fighting men, who are to “turn the battle in the gate;”—ministers of the word, and spiritual guides of the church, yea, and all the members of the church, are to inquire into what God is doing for or against his church, as they have in their present station opportunity to do; as Nehemiah did, who inquired of them that came from Jerusalem, what condition that city and people of God were in. (Chap. i. 2.)

They who have any ability and power in their hand to do good, to help the church of God, or any part of it under distress; proportionably every one of them are to awaken their inquiries after the state of the church, and set themselves with diligence to relieve it: and since we may (as it is our duty) praise God for his mercy shown to the church, and pray for mercy when wanted, we should know by inquiry what is our duty herein. So then by this we may see [that] it is the particular office of some to inquire, and ought to be the care of all in their places to know, what the church needs, and they ought to do for it.

I. *But none may inquire like the Athenians.*—Into which we must inquire now, and pray the liberty of making discovery of this, by what helps we can meet with, both from human and sacred testimony,—*what they were, &c.*

1. “These Athenians began to be a people about the year of the world 2496, about 1558 years before Christ’s birth;” * and when

* *Incepit regnum Atheniensium anno mundi 2496, ante Christum natum 1558.*—HOTTOMANNI *Lexicon Universale, ad vocem, Athenæ.*

this was written, it was the fifty-first year of Christ. It was at that time a city one thousand six hundred and nine years old under various changes, and grew up to great trade for merchants, and as great learning; for it was, through a long course of years, the university of the world, and a place that wandering wits delighted to visit. Now, among such *capriccios*, so many "curious and inquisitive humours," succeeding one another, and inventing new things, and glorying in the invention; no wonder that their inquiries were vain, or ridiculous, or mischievous to others. If sad, threatening news were reported, they inquired into it; they betook themselves to their antiquity, their power, wisdom, and their idols, &c. So did Nineveh of old; (Nahum ii. 8—10;) so did a city more ancient than Nineveh. If tidings affrighted Rome, the *Palladium*, the duration of the city, *Roma æternum duratura*, and such-like, are inquired after, as the security they trust in. Jerusalem, though better taught, yet became so brutish as to inquire after vain and helpless refuges against bad news: "The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these:" (Jer. vii. 4:) or else they condemn the rod, and Him that useth it: "Can the ancient city, the glory of the world, be destroyed? Or shall the course of its prosperity, after many hundred years, be changed into misery?" This were, Athenian-like, to inquire into the effects of new causes. If new judgments threaten us for our old sins, and we hear that they approach, a Christian inquiry should be, "How we may prevent the execution by a speedy return unto God."

2. *The temper* the Athenians are represented to us in, will help us to guess what inquiries they would make upon new emergencies: and our own reason will tell us that all such inquiries unbeseem a Christian. Let us view the Athenians in their temper, as Plutarch, Varro, Polybius, Aristophanes, and Aristotle, &c., give it us.

(1.) *Very suspicious and jealous*.—Now, whatever other abilities a man may have to make right inquiries of new occurrences, this one vice or distemper is enough to disturb all. Jealousy will take amiss all that is good, and suspect it is evil: it will aggravate evil, and make it worse than it is. No right judgment is made; or if a man of such temper stumble upon the right nature, tendency, and importance of unusual things reported, yet he cannot fix or be constant in it.

(2.) The Athenians were naturally *prone to anger*.—[They] soon took fire upon what they heard, or saw, and thought to be worthy of their anger; and this was "a perpetual anger," *οργη αιμνηστος*. Now jealousy, like a dark cloud, darkens our thoughts and judgments: anger, like the lightning that breaks out of that cloud, is of more destructive fire than of directing light, and too quick and impetuous to allow us time of thinking aright or inquiring aright. If the news, then, displease this passion, the man cannot judge aright, till he hath mastered his anger, and can debate the whole calmly with himself. Where this double rage prevailed, none could inquire into new occurrences in right manner, nor be an example for us to imitate.

(3.) They were "*close dissemblers, very deceitful.*"*—Like wounds healed outwardly, but festering; in whose mind, seemingly healed of their anger and disgusts, there is undiscerned enmity, and resolutions to revenge. Italianated men can smile when they intend to cut your throat; [are] affable to enemies, and disguise their hatred in the commendations of you to your face; salute with mortal embraces, and clasp you with the arms they unexpectedly will imbrue in your blood. Now what inquiry will such-tempered men entertain you with, upon any news they meet with? They inquire into particulars which may facilitate their revenges, that may satisfy their malice, and endanger an innocent, which an honest, plain-hearted reporter never dreamt of: like Joab inquiring the news at court,—how Abner was entertained, how long since, and which way he went, what company with him, &c.; which inquiries an honest heart would never have mistrusted [that they] came from a bloody heart, if Joab's bloody hand had not at last appeared. (2 Sam. iii. 23—27.)

(4.) They were generally a *people of an unblushing countenance.*—Seldom dashed out of countenance, or discovered by a change of it; men of a great confidence, which in our plainer dialect we should be apt to call "impudence;" that dare ask any question, and attempt to pry into closets and cabinet-councils; that fear no rebuke for any saucy carriage, or for any false lies they spread; that could either disguise, lessen, or deny any good news they heard, or could add to and increase the bad; could "perversely discourse and comment on all occurrences."† It was grown up into a proverb, and so used by the ingenious poet, when he would express a shameless and bold fellow, ready to contrive and execute any mischief.‡ Such a tempered people were the Jews; (Jer. vi. 15;) who rightly interpreted nothing the prophet told them; who inquired, indeed, "What news?" but never inquired with a humbled, repenting, reforming mind.

(5.) They were *very great lovers of praise, proud, and contemners of others.*—They accounted all other people unjust intruders into other men's proprieties. They boasted themselves to be the only nation against which no lease of ejection might be sealed.|| All other were Barbarians to them; as if they only were the men of wisdom, humanity, and arts, and all others were fools, ill-natured, and as ill-bred. The rank smell of this you have in the philosopher, who gave thanks to the gods that he was a man, not a woman; a Grecian, not a Barbarian; and, among Grecians, that he was a philosopher, that is, bred at Athens, and born there. Of such proud ones we may say, as David said of them of his time, "God is not in all their thoughts. As for all their enemies they puff at them." (Psalm x. 4—6.) All new occurrences of providence are slighted or perverted by these men.

* *Ἵπουλοι, subdoli, fallaces, perſidi.*—PLATO, PLUTARCHUS; ZACHARY BOGAN'S *Archæologia Attica.* † *Κακῶς ἀγορευεῖν ἐκ πρῶτος τροπῶν.* ‡ *Ἐπὶ τοῦ προσώπου τ' ἐστὶν Ἀττικὸν βλέπον.*—ARISTOPHANIS *Nubes*, 1176. *Id est, κακουργὸν βλέμμα καὶ δραστηκόν,* as the scholiast. "Upon thy face appears the Attic look."—WHEELWRIGHT'S Translation. That is, "a mischievous and impudent aspect," according to the interpretation which the scholiast gives.—EDIT. || *Ἀυτοχθόνες.* ["The genuine sons of the soil."] *Vide BUDÆUM in verbum.*

They cannot inquire aright into the works of God nor into the works of men. All with such men is turned into an advancing of their own praise and disdain of others. In the Athenians' answer to Gelon, offering them assistance against Xerxes, provided he might command either by sea or land; a modest proposal for a king to make, who offered two hundred ships, twenty-eight thousand armed men, and provision for his own and all the Grecian soldiers during the wars: but "the Athenians will not yield, who were ever esteemed best at sea, and for this praised by Homer."* Thus the pride of these self-conceited ones lost the benefit of a good offer, and turned away the news of such help from themselves, assailed with an army reckoned up to be two million six hundred and forty-one thousand, six hundred and ten, beside victuallers, eunuchs, and loose women that followed the camp.

(6.) They were such as were full of "enmity," (Αττική εχθρα,) and very prone to speak contemptuously one of another; scurrilous and abusive discourses of persons or things.—Hence many quarrels within themselves, and wars with their neighbours.† These Athenians took a liberty in this abusive way of speaking against any; but more particularly against the chief, the *optimates*, or "nobles," among them; and took this liberty at the Eleusinian feasts kept in honour to Ceres, when, with a veil cast over their faces, these lewd scoffers did bespatter all that passed by them, and reproached them with all they had by chance or inquiry heard of their betters.‡

(7.) They were unruly and terrible to their governors.—Which may easily find credit with you, if you consult the various changes of governments among them. § And Aristotle, when he mentions some of their rights as extorted, forced from their kings, sufficiently intimates this fierceness of the people and their terribleness to the rulers. But when kings were turned into rulers for ten years and "made accountable," || and this decennial rule after seventy years dwindled into an annual rule, the people grew more unruly in their deportment, and more terrible in their discontents; and in their rage many times punished their best governors with the ostracism, that is, with ten years' banishment; which exile was "not a punishment for crimes, but an appeasing of the envy of the common people." ¶ When the Athenian discontents employed them[selves] in discovering news of the government and governors, you will not need to be told how they inquired, or why; to be sure, so as neither you nor I may inquire.

(8.) They were, as is observed, malicious observers of the deportment of the strangers who sojourned among them.—So that strangers were never secure in their persons, name, or affairs. Quick-sighted malice, prying into the temper, designs, and actions of students, merchants, and travellers, sojourning among them, either did misrepresent all to

* *Athenienses non assentientur, utpote qui semper aliis Græcis navali apparatu antecelluerunt.*—PEZELII *Mellificium Historicum.* † *Bellandi cupidiore quam eat esset.* "They were more than enough desirous of fighting."—EDIT. ‡ PLUTARCHUS in *Vita Sylla.* HESYCHIUS. § *Vide SIGONIUM De Republicâ Atheniensi*, lib. 1. cap. 1. || *Referendis rationibus obnoxium.*—PAUSANIAS *Rerum Atticarum Liber.* ¶ *Non improbitalis castigatio, sed vulgaribus animis insita invidiæ placatio.*—ERASMI *Chilides.*

others, or received all misrepresented by others; and if malice attained its ends herein, it ended either in the ruin or great danger of the innocent, who were as far from fear, as they were far from giving cause of fear to any. To sum up all in brief: since we are from good testimony assured that the Athenians were suspicious, angry, dissemblers, boldly impudent, lovers of their own praise, and as much vilifiers of others, quarrelsome and contentious, unruly, terrible to their governors, and disingenuous to the height of malice against strangers sojourning with them, (though some were better among them,) we may not fetch our copy from such persons, nor inquire as the most of such kind of men would inquire. Such cannot but offend in the matter, rules, ends, and manner, of inquiring after new things.

Hitherto we have consulted *men* in their reports of the Athenian temper: let us now see what *the text and context* will afford us; for these will be a most sure rule, by which we may know how news-mongers there did pump one another. These inquired,

(1.) *With strong prejudices against truth, and with as inveterate opinion and inclination to their own errors.*—So here citizens and philosophers entertain the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa; hold this polytheism, and will not see into the truth [which] the apostle preached,—one God,—and their own altar fully owned by its inscription: “To the unknown God.” In this they might have seen St. Paul’s orthodoxy, and their own error, in a matter of great concern to all mankind.

(2.) *With curiosity more to know what other men believe and do in religion, than serious purpose to know what they themselves should believe and do.*—Had these Athenians inquired with sober and considerate resolutions to receive truth, it might have been a happy opportunity of conversion “from dumb idols to the living and true God.” These inquiries came with *Τι αν θελοι*; “What would this babbler have?” (Verse 18;) and, *Δυναμιστα γινωσκειν*; “May we know?” (Verse 19.) Here is not one word of inquiry that they might be saved. “Their foolish hearts were darkened,” while they inquire after knowledge; as Rom. i. 21.

(3.) They inquire *with pride and contempt of the persons of whom they inquire.*—So did these philosophers. Before they thoroughly considered what the apostle preached, and how he confirmed his assertions, they do censure him as an empty fellow, who talked much, nimbly, and smoothly; but that was all with them; as if there were no weight in his arguments, nor any thing of moment in his doctrines. They despise him, and give him the most contemptible name of a “babbling.” (Verse 18.)

(4.) *With unreasonable partiality, they confess their own ignorance.*—There is a God unknown to them, to whom they had erected an altar, and offered sacrifices. Now here comes a man of a sober deportment, of quick and ready parts, clear judgment, and a close disputer, who offers to instruct them, and tell them who this unknown God is, and how he ought to be worshipped: but, brutes as they were, they will rather be ignorant still, than learn by the

apostle. And though a patient and attentive hearing of the apostle would have filled Athens with greater and better news than ever was brought to their ears; yet they, who made it their business to hear all news, make it their sin and folly to refuse this news.

(5.) *With resolutions not to be persuaded, though they were silenced or convinced.*—This appeareth partly from their contempt of his person, before they heard his doctrine and the reasons of it; partly from their obstinate adhering to idols and worship of them, though the apostle had by clearest reason discovered the absurdity thereof in his excellent discourse of the nature of God and his worship, &c.; and partly by the effect [which] his reasoning had upon Dionysius the Areopagite, who believed. (Verse 34.) Now Dionysius was of the number of those whose fame was great at Athens for wisdom, integrity, and justice. For want of these qualities, these philosophers reject the apostle, and the new doctrine which he preached.

(6.) These Athenians did *with tumult and violence* make their inquiry after the new things [which] St. Paul preached.—So the word in the original seems to signify, and is so used in Luke xxiii. 26, [respecting] Simon of Cyrene, compelled to bear the cross of Christ; and when the captain of the castle took Paul out of the Jews' hands. (Acts xxi. 30, 33; in which places the same word is used.) They “apprehended” him, or “laid hands on him as on a guilty person.”* They inquire not as became learners or sober disputers: but,

(7.) *They hurry him before the Areopagites' court.*—To answer it with his life, for either denying the Athenians' gods, or endeavouring to “bring-in new gods” without the approbation of the Areopagites; † both which were capital by the law, and had endangered many heads, cost some their life; as Socrates, condemned to death by this court, in which two hundred eighty and one votes concurred in the sentence against him.

All these particulars last mentioned are evident in this context, from verses 17—32; and I leave it to you to judge, whether this way of inquiry becometh a Christian. Many Christians begin their inquiry into new things with prejudices, carry them on in curiosity, pride, and partiality, and close them with obstinate adhering to old errors, and refusing truth new-discovered; and in the tumultuousness of a rabble bring the publishers of truth and godliness into apparent danger of their lives. This [is] the whole progress of the Athenian dispute with the apostle. If you remember these things, you will know what you ought not to do; and I have hopes you will forbear doing that which you know too evil in a Heathen, and more evil in a Christian, and would be most evil in us who have seen bloody effects of news raised, abetted, witnessed, and sworn by profligate, perjured persons, not before Areopagites, but before judges; raised to take away the life of innocents, and to condemn such whose love and care,

* *Non sine manuum injectione tanquam in reum.*—LORINUS in loc.
 † *Quis ingeret nova daemonia.*—Idem.

† *Quis*

whose power and resolution, qualified them to be patriots to their country and the church.

(8.) *The Athenians spent too much time in telling and hearing news of any sort, whether important or a trifle, certain or doubtful.*—So be it is news, it is that [which] pleaseth them; they ever have leisure to hear it; nothing cometh more acceptably to them. This disease hath descended from age to age, and been most pernicious to the great, rich, voluptuous, and proud ports, cities, and academies of the world; a disease the wisest and most serious have complained of, but the vain and foolish would not be sensible of or cured.

The waste of time never to be recalled, neglect of our necessary affairs, loss in trades and employments, spreading of false stories of others, provoking displeasure against others and ourselves on such occasions, endangering ourselves and others by engaging in parties and quarrels, increasing discontents amongst those [whom] we should endeavour to unite, giving occasions to enemies and false accusers to lay to our charge things we know not, falling under suspicion of plotters and conspirators against the public weal,—all these and much more might be arguments against an immoderate attendance on public places of news amongst us; where wise men come and stay whilst their necessary business calls and requires, and prating fools continue till they fall. [They are the] pest of the nation and bane of tradesmen, common nuisances and public mischiefs, in the opinion of some wise and good men: but when the places are blamed, they that come there too often, and stay there too long, are in the fault, and should, I think, be punished. I could wish there were a redress of all the inconveniences and vices that spring up in coffee-houses; but I believe that every man who frequents them must mend his own faults herein, and not expect directions from a pulpit, how often or seldom, how long or short a time, what business with friends and chapmen to wait for or meet there. Go not thither but on business [which] thou canst best do there; stay but till it is done; and though many complain of the coffee-houses, they cannot condemn thee.

II. But I pass on, to tell you *how* (in these places which seem to be *Athenæ redivivæ*, and the company we meet there like Athenian news-mongers, all inquiring what is newest) *you may, as Christians ought, inquire, what news of church-affairs; that you may the better manage your prayers for the church in trouble, or praise God for good wrought for it; which is the second part, and positive part, of the case before us.*

First, then, *a Christian ought to make inquiry into news that concerns the church, according to the advantage and capacity he hath, more fully to know both the good and welfare of the people of God, or to know the sorrows and dangers that lie upon the church.*—Some lie under an incapacity of knowing much of the affairs of their own country and the church in it, who never heard any thing so much as the name of some of the churches of Christ, nor are they any way likely to know much of them; yet these ought to inquire what they

ern, that their prayers and praises for the church may be suitable to what they know of the church. Jerusalem must not be forgotten; she must be prayed for. (Psalm cxxxii. 6.)

Such who know few but their Christian relations or neighbours, may know the sorrows, dangers, wants of these; and ought to pray for them, as they are members of the church; and consider [that] the like state other Christians are in, and must be prayed for, &c. We are to mourn with those that mourn, and rejoice with those that rejoice: (Rom. xii. 15:) that we may the better do this, we should inquire, the most we can, into the present state of the church. But, *more especially,*

1. *Christian kings, princes, and supreme magistrates*, as nursing fathers, defenders, and promoters of Christ's kingdom and people, ought to inquire, and maintain intelligences whereby they may understand, what is the state of all the churches of God with which they and their subjects hold a commerce; that so either public prayers or praises may be made for the church. Moses hath given us example of this kind; who did deliberately conclude with himself, that he would "visit his brethren the children of Israel," and with his own eyes survey their condition, that he might suitably address himself to help them; supposing they would know [that] God would deliver Israel by Moses. (Acts vii. 23—25.) Some few we meet in history, who have concerned themselves for the church of Christ abroad, without their own dominions, now and then. A Constantine appears, to defend the church, and to mind a Licinius to forbear persecuting the church; or an Elizabeth, to support a neighbour-church; or a Gustavus Adolphus, to rescue oppressed churches; or such as we have in our day seen raised to be a father and a mother to his people in this kingdom. It was well for us that God awakened them to inquire what state the church was in here, and how it might be rescued.

2. *Nobles and counsellors about Christian princes and kings*, who have opportunity to know public concerns of churches abroad above other men, ought to inquire more particularly and fully; that they may the better advise inferior ones to pray for the church, or praise God, as the seasons require; and that they may employ their interest at home with their own king, or abroad in foreign courts, for the good of the church. Which way soever Mordecai first scented Haman's plot, he acquitted himself in this point; gave not over the inquiry, till he had done his best to rescue the Jews. Much of the same temper was Nehemiah; who, at court, in fulness of honour, riches, and ease, could not forget Jerusalem, nor let slip an opportunity of acquainting himself with the condition of the Jews there, and addresseth himself to rebuild and repair it. (Neh. i. 2, 3.) Had not king James I. and his nobles about him inquired into the Plot, the church and kingdom had been ruined, though the lord Mounteagle discovered what he knew of it.

3. *Ambassadors in the courts of princes that are enemies to the truth and church, and ready to extirpate both*, have advantage of inquiring what dangers threaten the churches under such prince's

dominions : and, in such case, they are fittest to acquaint the prince who sent them, that loves the church, and is foster-father to it ; that, by his mediation and interest, the design of enemy-princes and persecutors may be stopped, and endangered subjects and Christians may be secured. The French tyrant had been at his dragooning conversions some years sooner, (as I have heard,) if, on the news of his design, (communicated by [an] ambassador to his master, a neighbouring conqueror,) express orders had not been sent to the ambassador to require present and peremptory orders to recall the marching troops : so much the safety of the church may sometimes depend upon the vigilance and zeal of such public ministers of state. Wise ambassadors of our neighbours, I doubt not, informed their masters and our friends, what dangerous plots were laid against us and them, and all the churches of Christ : so that now “the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” (Psalm cxxiv. 7.) For the one, many prayed ; for the other, more gave praise to God.

4. *Chief commanders in martial affairs who are Christians*, are concerned to inquire what state the church is in among those on whom they are commanded to make war. Sometimes [a] multitude of Christians may be within the quarters, under the power of the enemy : sometimes Christians of an eminent character, and highly valued by all that know the truth and love it, may be threatened to be destroyed by the enemy. In such case a plain, brave, and peremptory message, that the enemy's violence shall be retaliated, may save many lives : so, many Christians have been preserved from Turkish fury, many Protestants from Popish rage, both in days past and of late. So Jeremiah's case was weighed by the chief captain of the Assyrian army. (Jer. xxxix. 11—14.)

5. *Merchants who travel into far remote parts for their trade, and gentlemen who travel for their pleasure and to satisfy themselves by an ocular survey of countries and cities, of which they often heard reports scarce to be believed on hearsay* ; these have some greater advantages to see and hear the low and sinking state, or the rising and flourishing condition, of those churches which are planted in such countries ; and, as Christians, they are bound to observe, inform themselves, and tell others, how it is with the churches, that prayers and praises may be offered unto God for them. But this is very little minded by merchants, when abroad ; and less minded by them, when returned home with wealth, greater than ever they hoped. Though religion decay, and churches lessen in number, knowledge, faith, and holiness ; yet who of them, out of their abundance, settle a tribute of thankfulness to God, making provision for the sending and maintaining preachers and schoolmasters among them ? Would the enriched merchants remember their duty to God, and what thanks they owe to the people who were so kind to them in travels and trading, there would be some settlements made, to encourage such as are fit and willing to employ themselves in promoting the welfare of the churches ; but poverty and low condition in the world forbids them to do it on their own estate, and no due provision is made by others to support them in such a

work. Some few of this travelling disposition, though poor, do go abroad tutors to some young raw gentlemen; who being so unexperienced and imprudent among strangers, and ever endangering themselves if the tutor be absent, he can do little but attend them in every place, and spend his time in viewing things that please young fancies, and profit none but those that are door-keepers or officers about the places. One short tour of a learned man, now a great prelate among us,* gives us assurance that travels might give us good intelligence of the state of the church; were there due care taken in this by persons who could bear the expenses of prudent, experienced, and diligent persons, lovers of the truth and church, as well as lovers of knowledge, we might in a short time have a good account of the true state of all, or most, of the churches of Christ, and our praises would be more seasonable and suitable.

6. There are *the whole tribe of Levi*,—ecclesiastical persons, who live upon the emoluments of the church: these, above others, should concern themselves for the church. These are to manage public prayers and praises for the church; these are to be examples to others, to kindle the affections of their people to pray and praise, as occasions require. They are or should be able to take account of the church-affairs written and published to the world in several languages: they should be diligent readers of such books. They, more than others, should understand the times and seasons of the prophecies; and how the wilderness-state ends, or the state of return out of the wilderness begins; especially under such revolutions as we now are; as, whether the witnesses are rising, or whether any vials, or how many, are poured forth; whether we are to encourage the people of God to hope for a speedy deliverance, or to advise them to expect and prepare for sorer and longer troubles. These and such-like inquiries the learned clergy are much more fit to make than the laity; and, I think, they are bound to it more than others; but, in a more particular manner, those of the clergy who have preferments which will bear the charges of,

(1.) All sorts of books that concern this.

(2.) All sorts of amanuenses and helps to read and give account to them.

(3.) All sorts of intelligences and correspondences with bishops and pastors of the churches abroad.

(4.) Entertaining and conversing with all exiles, refugees, and travellers, that come from foreign churches.

(5.) Sending, if need be, particular messengers to know the truth or falsehood of what is reported to them.

Rich archbishops, bishops, and deans might and ought to do thus, or more, for the church of Christ. I do not know how much of this work is set on foot, or whether none. I can hardly think [that], among so many and learned men as have great and rich preferments in the church of England, it is wholly omitted. They do, I believe, receive intelligences from abroad; and if these be as true as those

* DR. BURNET, bishop of Sarum.

that some of them have sent abroad concerning the state of God's church here in England, no wonder they all grow "worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," as the apostle said of some other men. (2 Tim. iii. 13.) In giving all intelligences to others, let us keep—and, in receiving all from them, let us desire them to keep—to the apostle's direction: Inform, *αληθευοντες εν αγαπη*, "speaking the truth in love." (Eph. iv. 15.) It is an inexcusable crime to be malicious slanderers one of another: and since the doctrine of the church of England in points of faith and good manners, the renunciation of Popery, as fully as is required, are both subscribed, and allegiance to the government assured by oath or subscription, let none such be any more misrepresented as of no principles in religion, friends to Popery, and enemies to monarchy and government. Ingenuity [ingenuousness] and truth are much wanting both in words and writings of men that should describe their brethren to foreigners; instead of which, they decipher a monster of their own making, and set it up to be abhorred by all that see or hear it. A famous professor of divinity in a university and city (with which the whole dissenting party are often upbraided) knew not our state or cause for many years; who, when he was informed aright, wondered extremely at our ill-usage at home, and worse representation abroad.

I am, I confess, tempted to suspect very great partiality and falsehood in ecclesiastical historians, both ancient and modern; who have written with the prejudice, enmity, and partiality of sworn vassals to a party. Were there a college of judicious, impartial, diligent, and able historians, employed and encouraged to search out the truth of all misrepresented parties, and tell the world their best, as well as their worst hath been told by others; it would, I think, be an ecclesiastical history far more desirable than any I yet have seen. *Quis dabit Thuanum ecclesiasticum?** After so long a discourse on the first direction, *Inquire as fully as your capacity and opportunity can enable you;*

Secondly. If you would inquire as Christians ought, to affect your hearts, in order to pray or praise God for the church, *let your thoughts be much upon the importance of what is reported to you.*—Weigh well what influence the new things are likely to have on the good or evil, to the comfort or the discomfort, of the church-catholic, or any particular churches near to or far from you. Nehemiah, no doubt, weighed the importance of the news brought to him from Jerusalem; and it was thought reasonable that Israel in Egypt, on the first appearance of Moses, should have considered what importance it was to see such a man as Moses was,—how likely he might be to bring them out. When the edict for Israel's return out of captivity was first spread as good news to the Jews, none of them resented it aright who considered only his personal advantage by it. *They prayed and praised God right, who looked into the import of it to the whole church.* The news of the death of Ahaz, and succession of Hezekiah,

* "Who will give us such a history of ecclesiastical matters as Thuanus has given of civil affairs?"—EDIT.

is not inquired after, till the certainty of the reformation of religion, and the great change for the better in the church, is looked into.

Julian's death was great and good news to the church, and called for praise to God ; but those that considered not the influence it would have upon the church for good, if God raised up a Christian successor, must needs fall very far short in their prayer and praise. When the news of the death of Edward VI. afflicted the hearts of God's children in England, and they mourned and prayed as apprehensive of the consequences of the death of a pious prince, a zealous Reformer, a hearty lover of truth, and professor of it ; whilst he lay sick, these considerations quickened them of that age to beg his life. So, when the sickness of queen Mary was the news on the stage, and her death would be the safety of the church ; no wise Protestant inquired after the news, without a thought how much it would benefit the church to lose her.

Thirdly. [He] who inquires as a Christian, in order to manage prayer and praise, should, I think, *inquire of those who can and will inform him the best, most truly and sincerely, of any news he knoweth.*—There ever have been, and now are, persons who abuse the world with false reports : to amuse the more simple-hearted, they dare coin lies, and cry out, "Woe, woe!" or, "Peace, peace!" very unagreeably to the nature and aspect of affairs. If you have a friend, who dares not wittingly spread a lie nor deny a truth, and knows much of public occurrences, thou mayest rely somewhat on his word ; thou mayest with greater confidence pray for the church in deep distress, and praise God for bringing it out of its distress. When we know [that] the church needs our prayers, it is most agreeable to God that we do pray. If, when we praise God for the church in any particular, afterwards it appear [that] we were deceived by false reports, the enemy scoffs at us. We should, to the best of our knowledge, pray and praise suitably to the real state of the church. It was a common practice in our late civil wars, upon a fight, that both parties kept thanksgiving-days, when it was not possible both should have the victory : this was highly scandalous, and each upbraided others with hypocrisy. Let us, as much as in us lieth, prevent such a reproof : what we cannot be eye-witness of, but must take on hearsay, let us endeavour to be truly informed [of] ; that both prayer and praises may be grounded on the truth of things, as they proceed from truth of heart. Tragical stories of Catholics prosecuted in England, when Garnet and some few others were executed for their unparalleled hellish Powder-Plot and Treason, set many a deceived Papist into tears and prayers ; who, had they known the truth of things, would have praised God for preserving their king and country, condemned the traitors, and owned the hand of God in the discovery of the plot and punishment of plotters. On the other side, when bloody men imbrued their hands in blood of many thousand innocents in the Parisian massacre, and [in] the Irish rebellion destroyed innocent Protestants by hundreds of thousands, it is palliated with false rumours, to lessen the horror of the fact, the barbarous cruelty of the actors ; as if a few turbulent persons had been pre-

vented, and fallen by the hands of self-defenders: which had it been a truth, who could have found in their hearts to pray for such? But with respect to all such bloody usage of the innocent church in all ages past, and in this of ours, we will pray, with the Psalmist, "Let God be known by the revenging of the blood of his saints." (Psalm lxxix. 10.)

Fourthly. [He] who inquires as a Christian, must *inquire with a compassionate affection to the suffering churches of Christ.*—Or, feeling their wounds as living members feel the griefs and wounds of the body in what part soever, preparing to help the whole and bear his own part; as one who "prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy," and can heartily rejoice in her prosperity; as one whose heart is wounded with the same sword that woundeth Jerusalem, and therefore bitterly bemoaneth and heartily prayeth for the bleeding church. Give us a Nehemiah, who "sat down and wept," when he heard sad tidings, great distress, and long desolations of Jerusalem. (Neh. i. 4.) When you inquire with Jeremiah's wish, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" (Jer. ix. 1;) such a heart doth as naturally pour out itself in prayers as it doth into tears, and doth as naturally rejoice with the rejoicing church as it either wept or prayed before. When Christ foresaw and foretold the doleful state that Jerusalem should fall into, he wept over her; and so must every Christian weep over desolate and disconsolate Jerusalem, when he hears her sorrows, and prays for her relief. Among natural relations, few there are who are not affected with grief for the sorrows and troubles of a brother: there should not be one among spiritual relations, but should with hearty grief entertain the news of sorrows and distress upon the church, and give God no rest till he make her a quiet habitation, till he turn her mourning into joy, till he take away the garments of her widowhood, and clothe her with the garments of his salvation. When we hear the sad tidings with such a heart as [that with which] Josiah heard the threats of the law read in his presence, then we are likely to do as he did,—to seek the Lord, to return to him, and make a covenant with him to serve him, that he may turn away his displeasure and spare his people. Josiah heard the news with a "tender heart," (2 Chron. xxxiv. 27,) a melting heart; and sent to inquire of the Lord, that he might know what was to be done by him and his people, to prevent or defer or lessen the threatened evil.

Fifthly. When you inquire into the present news that concerns the church, that you may the better pray for the church, or praise God on behalf of the church, *inquire into the sins of the church with an humble, mourning, and repenting heart.*—So did Josiah, in reading the law, and comparing Judah's former behaviour,—how that people had sinned against the law of God; and by this he discovered what sins,

1. Brought them into the danger of captivity and utter desolation;
2. Which were likely to increase their danger or continue it;

3. [Which] were likely to lessen the deliverance expected and prayed for ;

4. Which God hath long borne with, and at last pardoned ; that he might deliver a sinful and unworthy people, though his own.

This will in all probability bring the inquirers on their knees, to confess their own and their fathers' sins ; to be thoroughly apprehensive what need [there is] of earnest prayers, that the Lord would purge, pardon, deliver, and fully save his churches. This will make them admire the Lord's long-suffering, justify his righteous judgments, and give him praise due to him for leaving us a remnant that at last shall see his full salvation.

Sixthly. Would you as Christians inquire into the news of the present times, the better to manage prayer and praises for the church ? *Inquire, then, what are the effects of either good and welcome, or of sad and mournful, news upon such as are nearest concerned in both.*—Do judgments awaken and frighten sinners in Zion from their sins ? Do the punishments of their sins work them to deep humiliation, to public repenting and reforming ? Do they return to the Lord that smiteth them ? Or are they as sinful, secure, and as fearless as ever ? What effect have God's mercies upon his churches ? Do his mercies prevail with them "not to conform to the present evil world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds ?" (Rom. xii. 1, 2.) Doth prosperity make them now (as it did, between 1647 and 1660, make professors) worldly, proud, quarrelsome, unjust, persecuting one another, irreconcilably divided one from another, enraged one against another with that mad, unreasonable fury as to venture the ruining of the whole church to satisfy the revenges of a party ? When I think on these and such-like sad miscarriages, I can see little cause given by the church to rejoice, but much to mourn. Here is need of prayer, little matter of thanksgiving, in the deportment of the church. Indeed, we ever ought to praise the Lord for his mercies to his people ; but we still want that proper subject of praise to God which a reformed, united, holy, and heavenly church would be to us. When unexpected and stupendous revolutions make the generality of Christians to leave their sins, and return to God, and live more suitably to their heavenly calling, and love one another, as Christ commandeth ; then we have abundant cause to bless and praise our God, and continue our prayers for a people near to a full salvation.

Seventhly. Would you as Christians better manage your prayers and praises for the church on any new occurrences ? Then *inquire what is the temper and deportment of the church's enemies.*—Are the enemies of the church,

1. *Atheistical and blasphemous ?*—As he was, who spake as contemptuously of the Lord of hosts, as of the idols of the nations whom his father had destroyed. Are they grown up to Sennacherib's height of atheism and blasphemy ? Do, then, as Hezekiah, Isaiah, and the people of Judah did. It is probable the enemy is near his fall ; you, near to the answer of your prayers ; and the church, near to the days of thanksgiving and praise to God. Read the story in

2 Kings xviii., and 2 Chron. xxxii., and Isai. xxxvi., xxxvii. Atheism and blasphemy are the temper and deportment of the antichrist which, we expect, shall be destroyed. (Rev. xiii. 1—6.)

2. *Combined and confederate against the church?*—So were Moab, Ammon, and Amalek, to “cut off the name of Israel.” (Psalm lxxxiii. 3—7.) So did Gog and Magog; (Ezek. xxxviii. ;) if that refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, or to any other already past. So will the Gog and Magog mentioned in Rev. xx. So hath the antichristian Papal kingdom done against the church; and it is probable, such a confederacy may be again made against the church of God. Now, when rooting-out of Israel is the end of the confederacy, the church is furnished with many prevailing arguments to use in prayer for the church.

3. *Confident and proud, promising themselves an assured success, answerable to their preparations and resolutions?*—So Sennacherib: “As I have done, so I will do;” (2 Chron. xxxii. ;) and Gog and Magog: “I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn mine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.” (Ezek. xxxviii. 11, 12.)

So will [be] the pride and confidence of Babylon, the enemy of the church; Babylon, that will say, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.” (Rev. xviii. 7.) How seasonably may the church plead with the Lord to execute his just threats upon her, and bring her sorrows on her in a moment!

4. *Cruel and merciless?*—So was Babylon of old; so is Babylon at this day. This ministered occasion to the captive Jew to pray, and move the God of mercy to remember their low and sad condition, and rescue them from those cruel hands which delight in blood. In the temper of those who have for many ages wasted the church of Christ, and in these last three or four years have laboured to destroy it in France, most unparalleled cruelty hath been practised upon the members of Christ. “How long, O Lord, holy and true?” (Rev. vi. 10.)

Eighthly, and lastly. Would you as Christians inquire, in order to the better management of your prayers and praises? Then, *whatever news of moment you hear concerning the state of the churches of Christ, be sure, to your best knowledge, compare those news with these things that are signs of approaching deliverance and fuller salvation from its own sins and self-created troubles, and from the furious rage of enemies.*

1. *Compare the state of the church, and your news of it, with the divine providences over the church in the like circumstances in times past.*—Find out some instance parallel to your present case in the scriptures; and in prayer plead it with God for the like, nay, for greater, help. The various cases of the church recorded in scripture, are glasses in which we may see what troubles we must expect; and

God's providences to his people are exemplaries for us to conform our hope and confidence unto. We may read his deliverances, and in like cases say, "This God is our God, as theirs; he will lead us, preserve, and deliver us, as them." Hence it is [that] you do so often find the people of God concluding and expecting relief, because he did in like case hear prayer, and give his people matter of praise, in times past.

2. *Compare the news you hear with the expectations of the generality of the observant, praying, meditating, scripture-wise Christians.*—Consider well what the body of these look for; whether good, or evil. A single man, or a few of them, may easily mistake in their conjecture; but it is seldom that the whole body of them mistime their expectation. Deliverance out of Egypt was expected by the best and wisest, by those who knew the promise to Abraham, much about the time that God sent Moses; and therefore it is observed of Moses, that, when he vindicated the injured Hebrew and slew the Egyptian, he supposed they would have known him to be the person [whom] God had sent to deliver them. Near the time of the return from the Babylonish captivity, many of the Jews expected their deliverance: some that were very aged could reckon the number of years by their own age: and Daniel searched into the nearness of it "by books." (Dan. ix. 2.) And we may now hope [that] some great (perhaps the last and full) deliverance from antichristianism is near at hand; the generality of God's people do expect as well as pray for it. Pray ye as they do.

3. *Compare your great news abroad, when kingdoms and states are shaken, with the threats that are denounced against the enemies of the church.*—Consult the word of God in this thing. You may discover much of the approaches of mercy in deliverance of the church by the executions of threats against the enemy. When Moses and Aaron began to execute judgments upon Egypt, Israel might well conclude their deliverance was near at hand: when the rivers were turned into blood, Israel might hope their God was coming to avenge their blood. The Jews had good ground to conclude, when the Medes and Persians began the war against Babylon, that their captivity drew on to an end: and when they read the man's name who was the great commander in that expedition, Cyrus, by name foretold the deliverer of God's captives and builder of the temple; if then they did not pray earnestly and praise God heartily, they were inexcusably stupid, and wanting to their own release. It will much help you in prayer at this day, if you will look into the several menaces pronounced in the book of the Revelation against Babylon, and observe which of them are in part executed, which are now executing; which of the trumpets we are under, and which of the three woes are now executing, &c. By this we might conclude the sounding of the seventh trumpet near, and [that] the kingdoms of the world ere long are likely to be the kingdoms of Christ.

4. *Look to promises made to the church for her deliverance, when you hear of or inquire after any great news among the states and kingdoms of the world, among which the churches of Christ sojourn, and*

among which the saints of God have and still do suffer.—It needs not a particular proof, that there are many express promises that the church shall be delivered; that there is a fixed time for the beginning, progress, and full accomplishment of these promises; that their accomplishment shall be gradual, and such as will clear itself; and though we cannot say when the full accomplishment [will take place] to a day or month or year, yet, by comparing transactions and occurrences with promises, we may without doubt discover somewhat of the promise made good to the church, for which we ought to praise the Lord; and all the rest of the promises shall be fulfilled, and for this we should earnestly pray to the Lord.

5. *Compare the great news in the present revolutions, with the times [which] God hath been pleased to make known to us in his word.*—By this you may discern what encouragement and awakening considerations are given to us to pray and praise our God for what is already done, and for what is doing, and what ere long is to be finished. Here is work for learned men, for ministers, for understanding saints. There are in the Revelation two distinct numbers mentioned, which, were they clearly unfolded, would enable us, as very wise Christians, to receive, seek, and improve the great news that is abroad in the world.

The *first* period is that in Rev. ix. 15: They—that is, the four angels bound at Euphrates, that is, the Turkish power—“were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year;” that is, for three hundred and ninety-six years, and a very little more. Now, from 1300, in which Osman, or Ottoman, was elected king of the Turks, they have been the destruction of the Christians; and were to be, until three hundred and ninety-six years were expired; that is, till 1696, which will in likelihood end their empire: and how great hope of this now! This calls us to pray for their ruin.

The *second* great period is of the forty-two months, (Rev. xiii. 5,) that is, one thousand two hundred and sixty years,—the time the beast was to persecute the church; and then the beast was to perish, that is, the Papal kingdom shall be destroyed. Now, these one thousand two hundred and sixty years in likelihood began about 475, or somewhat sooner; and by this account, you may suppose, the news you still hear of both Turk and Papacy will encourage you to hope for a speedy deliverance of the church from both.

It will be worth your while to read those excellent pieces—of Mr. Joseph Mede, who wrote his “Key of the Revelation” above three-score years ago in Latin: I cannot say whether it be translated into English, having always kept myself to the Latin copy; but it is a thousand pities it should be confined to Latin,—a book fit to be published in all languages:—of Mr. Jurieu, “Accomplishment of Prophecies,” translated out of French into English:—of a nameless author, newly written in French, and translated into English, printed lately under the title of “A New System of the Apocalypse,” &c.

I commend to you who would know the importance of public news,—how to pray and praise God on hearing it, how to wait for

deliverances,—to read diligently those books in which are greater and better news than any packets, than all gazettes or coffee-houses, can yet afford to you. When you have read these books, then long for 1696, or 1700; and hope, if you live to that day, to hear Mahometanism in the Turkish empire destroyed with that empire. Wish for 1735, or 1740; and remember, I do not pretend to prophesy, but I do dismiss with a conjecture that, between this time and that, you will see great deliverances to the churches of Christ, and as great distresses and judgments executed on the antichristian kingdom; it may be, the total ruin of that kingdom, which was to last but one thousand two hundred and sixty years, and, I think, will have outlasted that period before 1740.

SERMON XVII.

BY THE REV. DANIEL BURGESS,

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WHEREIN MAY WE MORE HOPEFULLY ATTEMPT THE CONVERSION
OF YOUNGER PEOPLE, THAN OF OTHERS?

OMNIPOTENCE can suffer no difficulty, and that which is immense can admit no limits. Unto the Divine power all things are as perfectly easy, as they are certainly possible: and the heavenly grace is fruitful equally of all things consistent with its spotless purity. God-Creator did strain no harder to make this great world, than to make the smallest atom of it. And God-Redeemer saveth Mary-Magdalenes, as well as Virgin-Marys: very Samson, we are sure, is in heaven. (Heb. xi. 32.)

But, in respect of things themselves, and of their appearances unto us, all effects be [are] not of equal facility, nor all events to be alike hoped for. Much easier is the bending of a green twig, than of an old oak; more hopeful the cure of a green wound, than of an old putrefied sore. There is more to be done to convert a man of Belial, than a child of Belial; and to convert an old man, than any other man: and we may justly expect better success when we call unto God the boys and girls playing in the streets, than when we call old men and women that can scarcely walk in them.

This I am desired to show: and I shall endeavour it in the best way, unto the best end; to wit, the promoting of early piety. I have fair and full occasion given me, if I can take it, from the text; which I therefore commend to your observation:—

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth: or, as some read it, Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy choice.—
Ecclesiastes xii. 1.

THE words are a stricture of an excellent sermon. It was preached (as mine is to be) unto childhood and youth. It begins at the ninth verse of the former chapter, and ends at the eighth verse of this. The Spirit of God preached it by the wisest of men, and not the least of kings; and hath thereby taught a pair of truths, that I must wish better learnt:—

1. *The God of heaven takes great care of our children; and sends the Holy Ghost unto young school-boys, as well as old church-members.*

We have him here, in his sacred oracles, preaching unto boys and girls. Yea, and blessed bishop Usher was neither the first nor the last that was converted by him at ten years of age, or earlier.

2. *The greatest doctors need not think scorn in Christ's school to be ushers, and to teach children the A B C of religion.*

Solomon thought not himself undervalued by it: and he that will look on it as a work below him,—he ought to prove that a greater than Solomon is he. Immortal Luther preferred his Catechism above all his works. But I return.

This sermon, fore-praised, consists of two parts:—

1. *A dehortation from sinful passions and pleasures.*—Which is edged with a most emphatic irony, or derision; pressed with a threat of God's damnatory judgment; and shut up with a cooling consideration of both the feathery lightness and the winged transitoriness of youthful enjoyments. (Eccles. xi. 9, 10.)

2. *An exhortation unto the choice and prosecution of saving religion.*—This is in my text: wherein it is guarded with an admirable *prolepsis*, preventive of all shifts and procrastinations; and in the next words and verses is re-inforced with numerous arguments; arguments as many as old age hath maladies, and as unprepared death hath terrors; and these all clothed with language hardly to be matched in all the sacred writings. But I must confine me to my text; wherein are obvious,

1. *The duty commanded to be done.*

2. *The parties commanded to do it.*

3. *The time wherein they are commanded to do it.*

1. *The duty* is conversion unto God; inchoative and progressive conversion; entrance into, continuance and progress in, the state of holiness; the state of reconciliation unto, and communion with, God; with God the Father, Son, and Spirit; all jointly, as one God; and each distinctly, as three Persons. Learned men do judge this latter to be here designed by the plural number of the Hebrew word. All interpreters acknowledge, that the required remembrance imports no less than the foresaid conversion: and it will be evident, if these things be considered:—

Words of knowledge, affection, and practice do ever connote one the other; because the faculties of our souls be like the links of a chain,—so united, that they go all together; draw one, all come. Wherefore, when the Holy Ghost summons all, he useth to name but one of them. He never commands us to know, remember, love, or serve God, but he commands us to do them all. Now, to do all

these, is to convert unto God : and to do less, is not to "remember our Creator," as he doth require.

Besides, the connexion of end and means is indispensable. Where any means are required, it is certain the end of these means is also required. And it is very plain that the mere historical remembrance of God, is but a mean : conversion foresaid is the end of it ; that end without which the remembrance of God could only make us the more like unto the devil ; who, indeed, doth never forget, but doth still hate, his Creator. And no mind can bear the thought of God's requiring such a remembrance. It must therefore be one efficacious unto its end, that is here meant.

Nor is it unworthy of our notice, that the word "Creator" here is big with argument ; and such as carries obligation unto the very utmost of the foresaid conversion : for it speaks God's interest in us. Were we made *by* him ? then were we also made *for* him, and are his and not our own. It expresseth also his speciality of interest in us ; being [seeing], as we are elsewhere told, he made us "in his own image : " (Gen. i. 27 :) if so, he made us unquestionably for his especial service. It no less setteth forth his preservation of us too : for who, but he who made us, should have power or will to maintain us ? Briefly, it manifests his power to destroy us ; and his very good reason so to do, if we do less, after our apostasy and his provision for our recovery, than thus convert unto him.

2. *The parties here commanded to convert*, are the same as are nominated in Eccles. xi. 9 ; possessors of "childhood and youth." Learned Mercer saith all in a word : "By 'childhood and youth' the Holy Ghost intends the whole flourishing age of life."* The same Hebrew word signifying "youth" and "choice," we take them all to be comprehended who are yet in the best and most desirable fore-part of their days ; all, from them whose morning doth but yet dawn, to those whose clock hath struck twelve and with whom it is noon :—*the little creatures*, whose twilight doth but just serve them to read the first principles of religion ; *the bigger children*, whose sun is risen higher, and who can see, and are set to learn secular arts and trades, and are capable of learning farther the art of living unto God ; *the youth*, eminently so called, whose day is come on, and their light, heat, and activity much exceed childhood. Nor exclude I them whose sun is at [the] highest, and who are (as men will speak) in their prime ; upon whom the afternoon begins to draw apace, though they yet retain morning-vigour, and preserve the name of "young." The original words of age are of so large signification. And as, on the other hand, all the periods of breaking, declining old age must be judged to come under the name of "evil days ;" no reason appears, why all the periods of the contrary age should not be put under the name of "youthful," or "choice," "days." All young gamesters are here called to God :—*Children*, from their playing for pins ; *boys*, from their playing for pence ; *young men*, from their playing for money and land : all from their several games of equal folly ; the

* *Totam aetatem florentem complectitur.*

games in which invaluable souls be lost, and the best that is got is but yellow dust. These sprightly, sportive people are all called to play wiser parts, and lay out their various degrees of strength for the good that in weak old age (in the last and worst childhood) they will be as unable, as now they are unwilling, to seek.

3. *The time wherein these tribes are all of them commanded to convert*, is the present. "Remember" hath its "now" expressly added; forbidding both your delay until the afternoon of your life-day, and your delay unto any other day, hour, or minute of your forenoon; requiring that God's tribute be paid, as the king's tax is, upon sight; and that not the least distance of time be admitted between your discerning, and your doing, your duty.

The doctrine thus offers now itself:—

DOCTRINE.

Present conversion is the duty of youths and children, even the very youngest that are come to understanding. Or thus:—

It is not for young men and maidens, for school-boys and girls, or very children in hanging-sleeves, to put off their conversion to God so much as a minute of an hour.

This I shall competently demonstrate, if I make good these two assertions; namely,

1. *That these young folk are really bound to convert presently.*

2. *That they are singularly engaged and encouraged by God so to do; and are advantaged more for it than older people are, and than they themselves can be when they are older.*

And this I essay by these following very intelligible and invincible reasons. Hear them as for your lives, O you young ones, to whom I direct them! If you hear aright, you live, and joy will be in heaven by-and-by for your new birth. If not, we despised preachers shall shortly hear you accursing your closed ears; exclaiming much like unto Joseph's brethren: "We are verily guilty concerning our ministers, in that we saw the anguish of their souls, when they besought us to convert presently, and we would not hear; therefore is distress (and, it may be, remediless damnation) come upon us." (Gen. xlii. 21.) However, in duty unto all, and in hope of gaining some, in God's fear I tell you:—

REASONS.

REASON I. *You are commanded, as truly as the oldest people living, to turn unto God presently.*—Therefore it is your duty. The king of Babylon would have young men stand before him: so would the King of heaven. He calls you, the youngest of you; and as expressly and frequently, and more frequently, than he calls old people. For he calls you conjunctly with them in most or all texts in the Bible; and he calls you apart, here and in other portions of scripture, by yourselves. "Turn ye, turn ye:" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11:) it is not, "Turn ye, O ye old, decrepit folk;" but, "Turn ye," indefinitely, that is, universally, "O ye of all ages that hear the word." In Psalm cxlviii.

12, 13, "young men, and maidens," and (as "old men") "children," are called to praise the Lord: נַגְרִים *nagnarim*, "little children." The word indeed is put for Joseph in Egypt, (Gen. xli. 12,) and Gideon's son. (Judges viii. 20.) But (as the etymology carries it) it is most frequently used to signify new-born children, just shaken out of the womb; and is very often put to signify children just able to speak, and run up and down. (2 Kings ii. 23.)

You, the children of believing parents, have a holiness of covenant-relation before you are born: (1 Cor. vii. 14 :) you have a holiness of solemn dedication, by-and-by after you are born, in holy baptism: (Col. ii. 11, 12 :) and God requires your parents and ministers to be dealing with you, as soon as you come to understanding, for holiness of inhesion and qualification. He saith, there is a way of holiness in which every נַגַר *nagnar*, "little child," should go; and commands us to "catechise and train you up in" it. (Prov. xxii. 6; Eph. vi. 4.) Nor doth he allow you to delay the little that you can do for your souls, any more than he allows the oldest people to delay any thing that is in their power to do. "Now, now," is his word unto all sinners; (2 Cor. vi. 2;) and, "Now, now," is his word unto you. His command for duty, and for haste of duty, equally binds children of tender years and people of fourscore. Remember it, young people: if you be not commanded to come unto God and to abide with him, there is no sinner in the world commanded to convert, nor any saint in the church commanded to persevere.

Need I tell you what an authority *his* is, *who* doth so command? and how infinitely obliging? It is such an one as cannot be told you by man or angel. Should God command you to cut off your right hands, or to run into the fire, it would be infinitely your duty and interest presently to do it. For so supreme and absolute is his authority, that he cannot command beyond his right. And it is an authority so constantly governed by infinite goodness, that he cannot command us against our interest: so that it is as perfectly impossible for us to obey him, and not benefit ourselves; as to disobey him, and not hurt ourselves. In a word: could you see this Sovereign Commander but as Moses saw him, (Exod. xxxiv.,) or as Isaiah, (Isai. vi.,) or as Job, (Job xlii.,) or as St. Paul, (Acts ix.,) or as St. John, (Rev. i.,) it would be no question with you, whether he were to be obeyed, or no; or to be obeyed presently, or no. You would then think no obedience great enough, no haste swift enough, no grief for converting no sooner heavy enough. "O how late did I love thee!" St. Austin exclaimed. "Twenty years was I a bond-slave to the devil," cried Mr. John Machin, who was converted in his twentieth year. "Remember not the sins of my youth," saith the man who knew God's heart better than to imagine that youth was lawless. (Psalm xxv. 7.) But,

REASON II. *You are threatened just as old people be, if you turn not unto God presently.*—Therefore it is your duty. Sirs, as you are not lawless, so neither are you less under the menaces and threats of the Lawgiver than other folk be. "The wicked shall be turned into

hell." (Psalm ix. 17.) It is not said, "Old sinners shall into the place of devils:" no; it is unlimitedly "the wicked," all of them; wicked parents, and wicked children; wicked masters, and wicked scholars or apprentices; every thing wicked. Every minute that you delay your conversion, that threat stands ready charged against your breasts. And who knows but God will shoot it off this very moment, if you convert not this very moment? "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sin." (Rom. i. 18.) It is not said, "against all old folks' sin:" no; but, without any restriction, "against all people's sin." And, alas for you! did you never with your own eyes see God's wrath cut off young sinners? Did you never hear that, in the flood of old, children and young people were drowned with the old? and in Sodom the young and old folk burned together? and that bears tore in pieces two-and-forty little bodies, for mocking a holy prophet? (2 Kings ii. 23, 24.) The Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament saith expressly, that for all your (unrepented) follies "God will bring" you young ones "into judgment" of condemnation. (Eccles. xi. 9.) And, in the New Testament, he doth not tell you that, "except an old body be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:" no; but that, "except a man," any man, "be born again, he cannot." (John iii. 3.) Now, in scripture-language, whatever is born of a woman is a man, though he be but a span long. Vengeance must be taken on all "that know not God, and that obey not the gospel;" all such must "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power:" nor hath childhood or youth any exemption. (2 Thess. i. 8, 9.)

Come, read ye, then, the terrible handwritings of God against you: so shall your malapert countenances fall, your marble hearts break, the joints of your loins be loosed, your knees smite one against another; and your doubt be fully resolved, whether present conversion be your duty, or not.

The threat of a fiery furnace made by Nebuchadnezzar, made all the country, save three children of God, to bow to an idol. What would God's threat of such a furnace as hell is do, if it were but duly considered! A furnace of worse fire,—fire of extremity and eternity; a threat of it by a mightier power and more unchangeable resolution: were these in your eye, you would have much to do to hold your backs turned on God; your conversion must be hastened, or your unregeneracy embittered; you must be grievously tormented till changed; you would soon, for your ease, crave annihilation, or a contrary posture to that [which] your souls now stand in toward God. You are fain to wink hard, and make yourselves blind, to be so bold as to put off your conversion. Divine threats would bore through your hearts, if your lusts did not first bore out your eyes.

Rises now any thought within you, that God is very hard thus to press upon you; and to deny you the pleasures of sin, for such a moment as is your childhood, and youth itself? Beside what will follow to shame it, I tell you here right. I have heard of a devout soul, that used to thank God for hell: the thoughts of it had done

him so much good, so much good service against sin; it was to him a wall of fire against sin,—a worse evil than hell, the worst thing in hell. No sooner shall your eyes be opened,—to see what sin is, and what need you have of being by fear driven from sin, and what need of God's threats to make you fear it,—but you shall straightway think God infinitely kind in the earliness of his calls, and in the terribleness of his threats. Ay, and your hearts shall tell you, that the worst, and all, that God threatens, is vastly less than a minute's delay of conversion doth deserve from him.*

REASON III. *You have the promises of as good things as the oldest people have, if you do convert presently.*—Therefore it is your duty. The very command of God, without a threat, would have made it your duty: and so would his threats, if no one promise had been super-added. But what think you that *all* do make it? Consider ye here, God promises you spiritual, temporal, and eternal blessings; and the very same that he promises to converts of the fullest age; and also with as well-confirmed promises; as well-confirmed by his oath, and by outward, visible signs and seals, or “holy sacraments,” as the church hath long called them:—a consideration enough to make the least intelligent babies sing Hosannas! With reverence to the Father of mercies I will say it: He hath no better or greater blessings to give, than he doth this morning offer to bestow on all that will convert this morning, and on the very least of you all; neither will he think eternity too long for your reward, if you will not think your life-time too long for his service. A single minute's aversion from it deserveth hell: but, such is his grace through our Redeemer, that in the very minute of your sincere conversion he gives you a title to heaven.

Young people, whatever is done by old adders, pray, do not you stop your ears! I would fain have this day to be your coronation-day; so it will be, if it be your conversion-day. In scripture-dialect, you are kings and queens the first minute that ye be converts; yea, and more glorious ones than any unsanctified heads that bear those names. If the greatest earthly kings and queens knew the vanity of their thrones, they would gladly part with them for one evidence of interest at the heavenly one. But wot it: if any convert upon the earthly globe did but know his interest in heaven, he must presently live by miracle, or die for joy: so weighty is the crown of grace itself; so overwhelming a glory unto us in the body.

You are ready to think, “This is too good to be true.” But hear ye, then, the most “sure word of prophecy.” “The promise is unto you, and to your children.” (Acts ii. 39.) The self-same promise is to fathers and children: the covenant of grace is but one for both; of the same promises to them, as of the same demands from them. And ask ye, “What in this covenant is promised?” I tell you, God promises to be the God of every convert; (2 Cor. vi. 16;) that “all things” desirable shall be theirs. (1 Cor. iii. 21.) It is his own word, and as large an one as infinite bounty itself can speak: “All that I

* *Omnis peccator citra condignum plectitur.*—SCH. “Every sinner receives less punishment than he deserves.”—EDIT.

have is thine." (Luke xv. 31.) Pardoning grace and purifying is promised; (Heb. viii. 10, 12;) "an inheritance incorruptible, reserved in heaven," is promised; (1 Peter i. 4;) the necessaries of the life that now is are promised, enough to bear your charge to heaven; (1 Tim. iv. 8;) an entail of blessing on your dearest ones is promised. (Exod. xx. 6; Rom. xi. 28.)

The promises of all these are by God confirmed unto you in your baptism. You have them signed and sealed by God's hand, before you know your right hand from your left: so very early God encourages you to hope in him, and convert unto him. By signed, sealed promise, David says, God "did make him hope when he was upon his mother's breasts, and was his God from his mother's belly." (Psalm xxii. 9, 10.) I can understand him no otherwise. God forestalled the world and devil; bound David so to him before they could come at him to entice him away, laid-in that superabundant ground of hope and engagement unto all duty beforehand, that, as soon as he came to capacity of understanding, he should not want for attractives of his affection to convert and cleave to God. And no otherwise doth God deal with you: you that know what your baptism means, do know so much. Now, no sooner do you understand, consent unto, and profess the imports of your baptism, but God calls you to his holy table; there to confirm, again and again with great frequency, all the fore-said promises. O the height, length, breadth, and depth of the divine munificence and kindness! The blessing of Abraham, and every *iota* of it, comes on every sincere convert. (Gal. iii. 13, 14.)

Speak, sirs: is God so ill a Master, that no offer can persuade you to return unto him? Or what is there more than God has offered, that you desire? Or what further confirmation and ratification of his promises than he gives, do you crave? Or (which is that I listen after) will you now straightway turn unto him? And here right; take-on the spiritual robe, the ring, and the shoes; and make joy in heaven and in this congregation. (Luke xv. 10, 22.) I do hope, the sun shall not go down, before some of you are reconciled to God.

I have heard of a sinful boy, that offered to convert presently, if a friend of his could make it out to him, that he should fare the better for it in his body and things of this life: which being done, he did convert, and lived and died an eminent saint. I am aware, there is much of that boy's spirit in all young people; and it likes me to try whether I may so draw you with the considerations that drew him. Hear, then, what I say, to evince that conversion is a very friend unto good health, estate, mirth, and name; that the state of grace is, in respect of these, like the city Triocala,—one of water-springs sweetest, vineyards choicest, and rocks most impregnable; that when you once enter into covenant with God, your wants will be of nothing but things worse than nothing; and wherever you are lodged, the worst of your wounds will be but flea-bites; or however ye are wounded, ye can never be hurt.

Health is the salt and sweetest sauce of life. It is sin (people's own, or their ancestors', or both) that ordinarily is the working

cause, as well as deserving cause, of sickness. The Spirit and grace and service of God every way make for health. Particularly, temperance and good conscience are the most benign of all things unto your blood and spirits; and converting grace is not itself without them. Go, ask physicians; they will tell you, luxury and lechery do make them a hundred patients, for every one that is made them by fasting and prayer. No precept of Christ is for any duty (fasting itself) unto sickness; if his precepts were observed, they would prevent more than ever his miracles healed. If a good man be at any time so weak as to "hate his own flesh," he is not led to it by God's Spirit. He ought, indeed, to beat it down, and keep it in subjection to God's law, and from the usurpation of sinful lusts: but withal, it is those lusts [that] he is to mortify, and not his body. A convert's body is the Holy Ghost's temple: and if so, be sure, God will be kind unto it, and his servants ought to be duly careful of it.

An estate is a very useful hedge about you, to keep off those many proud that will be trampling upon all that is poor. And nothing raises or keeps up this hedge like the grace of God. For it spirits you with diligence, which gets riches; with humility, which hates superfluity, and saveth what is got; with charity, which puts out all to use, and unto that Lord who never pays less than a hundred-fold in this life itself. Sin is this hedge-breaker: rags are mostly sin's livery. When it is otherwise, and sin makes you a hedge, it will be full of snakes and snares. "In the fulness of" sinful "sufficiency you will be in straits:" (Job xx. 22:) and it is odds, but "the straits" will be long, and "the fulness" a very little while. On the other hand, when a convert's duty to God makes him poor, it makes him rather a martyr than a beggar. For he thereby testifies God's truth; and through the truth of God to his covenant, he abounds in the middle of his wants. For God doth but prune his vines; he burns up none but thorns. By poverty he may undo sinners, but he still enricheth saints. Do but convert; you can never want what is truly good for you, while God has it. The first minute that a great estate begins to be good for you, you shall have it: and if you never have a great one, you shall still have a good one. Whereas, unconverts can have but one of these two,—a vexing adversity, or (what is worse) a slaying prosperity; one made of thick clay and deeper carcasses.

Mirth and comfort are the honey and sweetness of your beings. Now, conversion makes "exchange," but "no robbery," of these. There is in Africa a honey lusciously sweet; but the bees gather it from poisonous weeds, and it affects with madness and frenzy all that eat of it. He were no thief that should take that sort of honey from you, and give the most wholesome to you. Conversion deals no otherwise by you. Only, what it gives, is more sweet, as more wholesome; and the quantity greater, as well as the quality better. For, observe ye, God forbids not any one kind or degree of pleasures, but what is injurious, and what your very nature, reason, and interest do forbid you. I deny it not, [that] converts have valleys of troubles; but then they have doors of hope. They are in wildernesses; but

God prepares them tables therein : driest rocks yield them water, and in darkest dungeons they have shining lights. They receive here their evil things, and have their hell upon earth ; but then it is a heaven upon earth, to think [that] this is all the hell they shall ever endure. And as for the ways he commandeth converts to walk in, they are all "of pleasantness." (Prov. iii. 17.) Mysteriously, yet most certainly, godly sorrow is made a sweet thing. Every week almost have I people crying for more of it than I think God allows them. O youth, *scies cum fies* ; "when thou art a convert, thou shalt feel what I tell thee!" No such manna falls in Calabria, none falls from heaven, like that which feasteth the camps of sincere converts. The convert-state hath of the joy, as well as of the purity, of heaven ; unthought-of delights ; such as do not die in the enjoyment ; no, but be stronger than death, as well as sweeter than life ; such as none of the busy-bodies of this world ever found in the mills of their business, or the circles of their pleasure. Gilboa's mountains had not rain or dew : unconvert youths have not joy or peace. Madness is theirs ; mirth they know not. The three Hebrew martyrs were merrier in the fiery furnace, than their persecutor was in his palace.

Good name and honour be your "precious ointments ;" (Eccles. vii. 1 ;) the things that make you cheerful in yourselves, grateful and useful unto others. True, I would rather my own heart should commend me, than all the world's mouth besides. Next to God's own praise of us, the praise of a well-informed conscience is the most desirable. Nevertheless, men's good esteem, good men's especially, is useful to the foresaid purposes. And your conversion is requisite thereto : for it is the King of heaven is the true fountain of honour ; and he maketh converts, and no others, "vessels of honour ;" honour both below and above. Hypocrites know this ; and therefore, for the praise of men, they make an outside conversion to God. Converts do know this ; and therefore, by all the reproaches of men, will not be beaten off from the way of God. Plato could say, a wicked man was the earth's vilest dunghill ; and a religious one, its most sacred temple. Under the law, we know that God would have those that touched a dead man to be held unclean seven times as long as those that touched a dead beast : so teaching, how debased and defiled a thing an ill man is, more than a brute creature. What need words ? Who be those that you see earthly potentates advance to honours, but their true, zealous, and active friends ? Turn you truly, zealously, actively to "the King immortal ;" he shall forthwith love you more than any of his angels can love him. And that love itself shall be a crown of honour enough to make all the devils in hell envy you, many of the world's hypocrites wish themselves in your state, and all the saints of God, with holy angels, to prize you beyond expression and without flattery. Every convert, whether he consider it or no, hath a name greater than of earls and dukes. God writeth them, that give up their names unto him, "princes in all" lands, and "kings and priests unto him" for ever. (Psalm xlv. 16 ; Rev. i. 6.) Indeed the world counts them and tramples on them as dirt ; but God calls

them and will make them up as jewels. See 1 Cor. iv. 13 ; with Mal. iii. 17. The world's dusts be God's diamonds. If, then, the best things of both worlds can oblige, you see yourselves obliged to turn presently unto God.

REASON IV. *You are convinced by your own consciences, as truly as other people be, that you ought presently to turn unto God.*—Therefore it is [your] duty. Young people, God's commands, threats, and promises do oblige, whether you learn and know and mind them, or not. Your negligence and unbelief cannot make them of no effect ; though to yourselves they may easily make them of very ill effect. But when the kindness of God brings them unto your knowledge and thoughts ; when he sets conscience, which is his viceroy and deputy in your souls, to the work ; and makes it in your very heart and reins to command his commands, to promise his promises, and to threaten his threats ; what think you then ? Believe it : then he accounts your engagement to be heightened with your advantage. And he stands up for the honour and reverence of conscience ; the honour of which he takes for your utmost honour of himself, and contempt of which he takes for your utmost contempt of him. And, if now it appear that his vicegerent, conscience, hath been contemned, and you have sinned against the edicts and commands thereof ; your sin then is "exceeding sinful" in his eyes. Then have you broken many, yea, all, his bonds ; and must be beaten with many, yea, the worst of his stripes. The conscience then which you would not have to be your ruler, shall be your tormentor : sooner or later, it shall.

What plead you, therefore ? Which of you all can look me in the face, and say that your consciences are convinced of no such thing ; and therefore, whatever witnesses I do bring, your consciences are none, unto the truth of my doctrine ? You are men, and not brutes. You are English people, too : you live where the gospel shines ; and I must tell you, I nothing doubt but the Holy Ghost beams-in light very early into English children ; light, convincing them of the necessity of conversion, and of the malignity of procrastination. I would be understood especially of the children of religious parents, and such as are carried to hear ministers that do understand and preach Christianity, and not scoff at all regeneration beside baptismal ; and do not dispense stones for bread, and serpents for fish ; but do give babes "sincere milk ;" designing to edify, not to amuse, them.

[Of] all such as are likely to hear or read my labours, I would ask these questions :—

1. Think you not, that your minds, wills, and practic powers, were given to you to know, love, and serve your God ?

2. That you are bound from your first capacity to exercise them thereunto ?

3. That, in order to your so exercising them, it is incumbent on you to go [and] learn the gospel-covenant, and accept its gracious offers, and rely on its promises, and purpose, promise, and vow, by the grace of Jesus Christ, from this time for ever to be the Lord's ?

4. That haste hereto is your duty, and delay is sin, very manifold
 + sin?

5. That present conversion will be unto the present pardon and mortification of all sin? but the delay of it will keep every sin unpardoned; mortify no sin, but give a growing strength unto all?

6. That present conversion is most honour to God, benefit unto yourselves, joy to your pious friends, &c.?

I am so far from suspecting the more grown of you, that I have satisfactory grounds to believe that most of five, six, and seven years old do, in their hearts, believe all; yea, and have their consciences oft-times telling them these things, as parents and ministers are inculking [inculcating] of them. As St. Austin said of Seneca, I dare say of most of you youngest ones: You "make much of what you think nothing worth, and declaim against that which you do above all prefer in your heart."

However, can you choose but see, that you all, who are convinced, are all extraordinarily obliged to convert presently? It is infinitely the duty of all; but yours it would be, if possible, more than infinitely. No man must tell me, regeneration is a great mystery, above children's reach; and therefore, for all my confidence, I do mistake them. Well I know, regeneration is a mystery, of the greatest; but I deny, that the necessity of it is a mystery; that is of the plainest principles. And I utterly deny, that so young children as I have named, are incapable of understanding as much of conversion as God will accept of from them. Know it, O little ones: give God your all; he will not reject it as little: give him your best; he will accept it, as little good as is in it.

But, O greater and lesser of you, hear and fear! Hell gapes for all delaying unconverts; and, of any, is likeliest to swallow up those whose delays are against convictions. Peter Martyr says, St. Paul dealt more severely with the Galatians than the Romans for the same fault, because the Galatians had been fore-instructed, and sinned against more light. In all the Bible, though it be a history of more than four thousand years, we read of but one that converted just before his death; and we do believe that he also did convert at his first convincing call. Rarely do any savingly convert, who do not upon their first convictions convert. St. Austin's stifled convictions cost him dear. You that will make so bold with conscience as Spira did, should expect to roar for it here as he did; or hereafter to fare worse than many hope him to do. They are considerable divines who are not hopeless of his salvation.

REASON V. *You die, and go to judgment, as ordinarily in your young days, as others in their older.*—Therefore it is your duty to convert presently. Come, stand forth, the liveliest spark of you all; and tell us, if you can, that nobody was ever known to die at your years; or, if there did, your life is no such "vapour," your flesh no such "grass," as theirs. You know, our weekly Bills of Mortality would shame you, and the great multitudes of graves of all sorts every where. You do know your own vanity in putting far from

your minds the fatal day that cannot be thrust off one minute from your persons.

It is an undeniable truth : The day of life and [the day] of grace be not always of a length ; and that, if they were, that could be no warrant for delaying the work of your salvation. But, one would think, your life's uncertainty itself, if considered, should be of weight enough to press you unto haste, and make your wilful delay as impossible unto you as it is impious. For, you are not Papists ; and if you were, prayers for you after death you could not think regularly to obtain. They do not hold it lawful to pray for any after their death, that do not repent and convert in their life. If you die unconverted, your fathers and mothers are taught to consent to your being damned ; and the best friends you have be forbidden to pray for your being taken out of hell, or your being cooled in it. You do not imagine, I hope, that a cold crying, " God be merciful to " you, just before death, is a saving conversion. If it were, we might say, " Heaven is the receptacle of the most and worst of men ; and a great part of the scripture is taken up in requiring our needless labour." But we are well sure of the contrary : though you ought to be told, also, that if it were really so, yet were your delay still a prodigious folly ; being [seeing] of your ability to utter those words at your death you are as uncertain as of any thing ; and you have little reason to think that your present obstinacy shall not then be punished with (at least) impotency.

O death ! O judgment ! come, look you in the faces of these secure young folks ! Show yourselves unto them : ask them, whether, upon sight of you, they can think two or three broken words preparation enough for your terrors ; and that it can be time enough to think of peace with God, when pain will not let men be able to think three thoughts together of him ? I knew an excellent person that used to exclaim, " O Lord, pain will not let one think upon thee."

REASON VI. *You, as much as elder people, are absurd in your promises to convert hereafter.*—Therefore it is your duty to convert presently. It is no easy thing to ascend to the height of atheism ; in which alone you can dare [to] say, " There is no God," or none that you are bound penitently to convert unto ; or [that] you will not, whatever follows, ever turn to him. Wherefore, you must be dumb, or find somewhat else to say. Very many I suspect to harbour in them a dumb devil, and to say little to themselves about matters between God and their souls. But many there are, in whom conscience will not be so easily muzzled ; but will have somewhat said, or else give no quiet. For want of all things besides, this is said : " Hereafter I will convert."

But who has bewitched hearers of the gospel ? Neither law nor gospel itself knows any way to heaven by a delayed conversion. The law requires continuing, the gospel requires beginning and persevering ; neither admits of delaying. " Cursed be every one," young and old, " that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) Did you not only

intend, but begin,—and *that* this present minute,—not only to wish, but to do, not only some, but all, things of the law; the law, for all this, would damn you without mercy, for having ever ceased to do all. “Glory be to God in the highest for the blessed gospel!” And what says that? Why, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts xvi. 31.) Thou art a sinner; a sinner grievous against law, gospel, and conscience. But what then? “Believe” now “on the Lord Jesus;” turn to God by him dutifully; God will draw nigh to thee graciously: but neither there nor any where is it said, “If thou art not minded to believe presently, do but promise hereafter to do it; thou shalt be saved.” And for your lives, young people, consider (after law and gospel) but example and precedents. When Christ called his disciples, all followed him presently. When the three thousand were preached to, and were convinced, they were converted presently. So the jailor converted “straightway.” (Acts xvi. 25—33.)

But look we a little into these your words,—you “will convert hereafter.” Fall they not into these two parts?—1. “We will not convert now.” 2. “We will hereafter.”

1. *You will not convert now.*—That is, you will abide rebels to God, devils to yourselves, vassals to the devil, idolizers of this vain world, &c. This you will do, though you know it unjust, unsafe, unprofitable, ungrateful, and all that is worst; and though you would think it hard, if God should hold you in such a state against your wills, or suffer Satan to keep you in it by force. This you will do, though you know [that] if God should now use you like yourselves, (that is, like unreconcilable enemies, even against his very entreaties,) you must be sent quick to hell. Though you know, too, that every sin you commit makes conversion harder, if ever it be made; and hell hotter for you, if it be not made; this ye will do; of choice you will, and because you will; without any reasons that you dare to produce, or let mortal men hear you speak.

2. *You will convert hereafter.*—Thy power, foolish creature, thy power! where is thy power, thy will, or thy reason? Thy power, man! Canst thou live as long as thou wilt? Or canst thou keep what ability God has now given thee for conversion, and make it more when thou wilt? Canst thou save thyself from distraction, delusions of Satan, &c.? Art thou able thyself to supply thyself with necessaries, natural and supernatural, now and hereafter? Well; if thou couldest, say plainly, What is thy will? It is a will not moved by God’s threats or promises to fear or love him. If it were so, thou wouldest convert now. And if it be not so, what is thy purpose, for all thy fair promise? Dost [thou] intend hereafter to turn unto a God neither feared nor loved? Surely thou dost not. Thinkest thou that thou shalt hereafter fear and love him? I ask, What should make thee so think? He will for ever be the same God that now he is. Lay to thy heart what I tell thee:—If God be not just now worthy of fear and love, then he never was or will be so; for he changes not. In a word: what, if thou hadst both power to convert

when thou wouldest, and hadst a real will to convert hereafter to God! where is the reason for staying without and against God all the while? Thou art servant, he is Lord; thou the child, he the Father. When servants run away, and will not return to their masters; and very children run away, and will not come back to their fathers; no, though the masters and fathers call and send and promise, and do not need them, while they all the while need their masters and fathers: all people conclude there is a cause of this, and a fault must lie somewhere in one of the parties. Either the father is unnatural, and the master cruel; or else the child is a viper, and the servant a monster. Speak, man, and say now: where is the fault? what is the cause that thou canst not yet be prevailed with to return to thy Lord and Father? Thou must charge him or thyself with most black and bloody faults. If thou layest it on God, thou makest him worse than the devil, and proclaimest Satan the better master and father of the two. If thou takest the blame on thyself, I ask thee, how thou canst endure to see, hear, or think of thyself! a creature hating its God, that is all love and all loveliness! No words, I think,—no words of mine, I am sure,—can express how blasphemous or how self-condemned they are, all that put off conversion to another time.

Alas! here is life and all in the case. Conversion is the life of thy soul, man: it is dying, till it convert; it is in hell, till thou convert. And is this a fit word?—"I will then convert hereafter." Thy darling child drops into the fire, and thou promisest to come [and] help it out to-morrow: a very kind creature thou wilt be thought, and as wise an one! Upon every account I may say of these promises of turning hereafter, as was said of Judas:—It had been better they had never been born. And they be Judases indeed; for, though they flatter and kiss, they betray and kill poor souls.

REASON VII. *You, as plainly as elder people, do dare God to damn you, all the while you delay your conversion.*—Therefore it is your duty to convert presently. I have heard of a man much accustomed to cursing in his health, that could not utter any word but a curse in his sickness; could not pronounce "Yes" or "No;" but as oft as he spoke, in several months' time, he bid God to damn him. "A most frightful thing!" you will say. And yet, young people, I take you to be in very like condition, all that delay your conversion.

For the language of practice is, with God and men, as significant as any; if not more. If you practically bid God damn you, you are of the same spirit with them who verbally bid him so do: and, if I know any thing, delayers do bid him in deeds, as certainly as any sinners do in their words. I appeal to your very own thoughts in the case:—

You are corrupted with sin, and condemned for it. The grace of God calls you to come [and] take your pardon and your cure; but tells you, "*Now* is your time;" promises you no breath of life but what is in your nostrils, nor any offer of cure or pardon after the first; in every precept, requires present coming. Your delaying, therefore, is running the venture. And that adventuring is plain

saying, "Lord, if now, *just now*, be the time, I shall not take hold of it. Though I burn, I will not yet turn. Thou dost not promise to stay longer for me; but, if thou wilt not, damn and do thy worst with me. I would rather thou wouldest change thy word. Blot, 'Now in the days of thy youth,' out of the Bible: write, 'Remember thy Creator when thou art old and bed-ridden.' But, if this thou wilt not do, I will live under thy threatening wrath; and let its vials fall on me, if they must: I am set against present conversion for thy peace."

Let me add but this, sirs:—There is but one way possible to hell; which is by sin. For nothing else can incense God against you; he cannot be in the least displeased for aught besides: but sin is that which he cannot but hate and punish. Now, to go on wilfully, delightfully, and resolutely in sin, is in effect as if you should kneel down on your knees, and beg and pray, with tears in your eyes, that you may never be saved, but may be assured of a place in the lowest hell. The former is interpretatively the latter. O madness beyond compare! though not admired, because so much practised.

REASON VIII. *You, as well as elder people, do hate and rob God, and imitate and obey Satan, till you do convert.*—Therefore it is your duty presently to convert. Young people, it may be, you know not what you do; but, knowingly or ignorantly, these things you do do, till you convert. You hate God. *Interpretatively* you hate him: by your actions, no other can be judged of you. If you desired to express hatred of him, you could not take a more direct way for it, than that [which] you are in: for you walk contrary unto him. *Comparatively* you hate him: if you have any love to him, sure it is nothing, and less than nothing, in comparison of that which you bear unto your idolized things and persons. Yea, *absolutely* you hate him, as a holy and just Ruler and Judge. *In his government* you hate him, and wish you could dethrone him: deny it, if you dare. *In his children and friends* you hate him: their company is an eyesore and burden unto you; his image on them you cannot bear. If it were otherwise, you could not but convert unto him. You rob him, yea, and all his. You rob him of a child, Christ of a member, the Holy Ghost of a temple, the heavenly host of a joy, the church of a star, the world of a pillar. And in the mean time, what do you? Why, Satan is the god of every unconvert creature. Him, in your spiritual impurities, you imitate; in your bodily, you obey; in both, you serve and gratify. Horrid servitude! unendurable by souls any jot less senseless than plants, or less wild than brutes!

REASON IX. *You, as elder people, do out-sin Satan himself, till you do convert.*—Therefore it must needs be your duty to convert presently. Sirs, muse on it. It is sin, and the highest, to slight the richest offers of Divine Grace. You that convert not, do slight such offers as be the kindest [that] God ever made to men, and such as he never did offer unto fallen angels. Ye do not believe, that the devils and damned ghosts in hell would slight them so, if God should make the same offer unto them: I mean, provided they were not under irre-

vocable damnatory sentence, and also final obduration and implacable malice ; the which you are not under. You would then think, that, if the gospel were preached unto them, they would not say, as you do virtually say every day of the week ; namely, " Lord, we cannot hearken at present to thy proposals : we will, at some more convenient season. Or, if thou wilt not wait that leisure of ours, then will we go without thy offered kindness." No ; I suppose you would think, that they would rather answer thus, which you have not yet done : " Lord, our astonished minds never heard so ravishing news. Our inflamed hearts cannot contain their praise or thanks. We are not able to utter fast enough our acceptance of thy offers, or our consent unto thy demands. We would celebrate the grace of both ; but who can express things infinite ? The eloquence of heaven is exceeded by its King's mercy," &c.

Sirs, I must have you convert presently, or must have leave to say, " You are of your father the devil, and the works of your father you will do ;" (John viii. 44 ;) and worse, if worse can be. But though I thus speak, I would by no means have you think any good to be in the devil. Only I would have you know, there is much more evil in yourselves than you are aware of ; and that you can never know your sin too much, if you do not know your Saviour too little. Wherefore I add,

REASON X. *You, young people, do sin beyond the measure of all old ones that convert not, if you put off your conversion.*—Therefore it is your duty, and you are singularly obliged, to convert presently.

This reason gives me opportunity to slide into the very heart of the case propounded unto me. I do consider with whom I have to do, and shall thus plainly and even rudely make my way :—

The measure of their sin is far greatest, who do then sin, when the lions in the way of their duty be fewest, and their helps be most, and their encouragements greatest :

But young people, not converting unto God, have this to be said concerning their sin,—that it is committed then, when fewest lions be in the way of their duty, when their helps to it be the most of any men's, and their encouragements greatest :

Therefore the sin of young people not converting is far greatest ; and so far from being to be extenuated and thought less of than old people's, that it ought to be held, of the two, the greater.

I shall suppose my work here requisite to be only this ; namely, to show that young people have ordinarily fewer discouragements from going about to convert, than old ones have ; and have more helps than they ; and greater encouragements than old people now have, and than they themselves can have when they become old. I say, *ordinarily*. For which service, I advance these seven considerations ; directing them unto yourselves, my young folk :—

CONSIDERATIONS.

CONSIDERATION I. *Your God is not so angry with you, as he is with older people, and will be with you, if you convert not before you*

are older.—He is indeed angry with you for sin original and actual. Go, roll you in the dust before him. Yet know for your comfort, he is less angry, as I have said. For, these two assertions are most true; namely,

1. Every day continued in refusal of subjection to his authority, and every wilful refusal of obedience unto his gospel-precepts, do increase the fire of God's indignation.

2. Every last day of unsubmission, and every last act of disobedience, do increase that fire of God's indignation more than the former.

As for *the first*: though it be self-evident, and granted of all men, let me add this:—A command supposes authority in the commander, and subjection in the commanded. Obedience unto a command supposes acknowledgment of authority in him that gives, and subjection in him that receives, it. God is Sovereign; we are subjects. He first publishes his authority, and requires our subjection; then enacts laws, and requires our obedience. Our orderly duty is, to submit us first to his authority, and own him for our God and King; and then to perform his commands, for expressing that submission. The sin of the world, that incenses God, is denial of this submission to him, and of this expression of it. Of this denial the first rise and beginning kindles his wrath; but the continuance, against his means of reducing us unto subjection and obedience, doth more than continue it,—even greatly increase it. Nor is it wonder, being [seeing] that the sinful denial, continued under such constant means aforesaid, daily increaseth. And accordingly, barren trees have it counted to them, how many years they have cumbered the ground.

But then, as to *the second* particular: therefore doth every last day's unsubmission and disobedience more exasperate than the former, because they are against more means used and patience exercised than the former; and they are, as it were, a justifying and an approving of all former sin also; a virtual acting of all again.

There can, therefore, be no doubt but the degree of God's displeasure is less against you, than against those who have many more years disowned and disobeyed him. And you have less reason to fear making of your peace with him, if you go [and] seek it, than they have; and more ground of hope to get it made now, than you can have hereafter, if you delay. For you to say, "I will not seek my peace till I am older," is as if a condemned man should say, "I will not go [and] try to get my pardon, till the king is a hundred-fold more angry with me than yet he is." Matchless frenzy!

CONSIDER. II. *Your enemy Satan has not so much power over you, as he hath over older people, and will have over you, if you convert not before you are older.*—Sirs, Satan is an enemy that you must conquer, or be destroyed by. His power to deceive is very great. It was so from the beginning; and shown in Paradise to be so, when he slew all mankind in their first parents. Besides, it is now much greater. In more than five thousand years, he has learned much: and being now an "old," he is a more subtle, "serpent." (Rev. xii. 9.) But it

is not his natural and acquired power, without that which is judicial, that is the matter of our just fear. The lion in chains scareth no child : it is the lion let loose that frightens the town, and doeth the mischief. All Satan's power is no power as to us, if God doth not judiciously [judicially] let him loose on us. God, as he is more or less angry with men, holds up Satan in a longer or shorter chain. Being less angry with you, young people, he suffers him not to fall upon you with such strength of fraud or force, as upon old transgressors. So much reach at you God doth allow him, as maketh needful your watching and prayer, and wariness of his devices. But God allows him so very much less at you than at others, that he may be repelled more easily by you than others : and you have less reason to doubt of victory, when you fight against him, than others have ; and may be certain, that if you abide unconvert in your sins, and go on to incense God more against you, you shall then have a much more powerful enemy of him than now you have.

Now would any general of an army delay to fight with his enemy, till he himself were weaker, and his enemy stronger ? O do not any of you say practically, "I will not yet fight for my translation out of the kingdom of darkness ; I will have the prince of darkness get a hundred times more forces against me, and more advantageous ground, before I will encounter him !" How kind to Satan are delaying children !

CONSIDER. III. *Your hearts, which are your rulers under God, be not yet so bad within you, as old people's be ; and as they will themselves be sure to be, if you now convert not.*—Your hearts (the Lord show it you !) are they that do most under God for your conquering, or your being conquered by, sin, death, and hell. These hearts of yours be blind and foolish, proud and perverse enough ; they be sufficiently unteachable, untractable, unfaithful. The Lord humble you deeply in the deepest sense of it ! But still, they be not near so bad as old sinners' hearts be. Believe it : there is a sense in which Nicodemus's words be smart : "How can a man be born when he is old ?" (John iii. 4.) God has, in his offence, departed farther from old men than [from] you ; Satan, in his long stay in them, has hammered them into a greater hardness than he has yet brought you into ; *actual* sins have put more strength into their *habitual*, than into yours ; and they have more mill-stones about the neck of their souls, than yet are about yours : insomuch that you have as much the better of them, as those who have in war a less unqualified commander, have of them whose leader is most blind, most lame, and most lunatic itself. Your work is more easy, and your encouragement to expect victory is more ample, than old sinners' ; and both such as they will not continue unto you, unless you now convert unto God : which if you do not, you do like soldiers that should say, "We will have no battles with our enemy as yet. The leader, whose conduct and action are our life or death, will shortly be stone-blind, and under the dead palsy : and we will stay till he be so, before we employ him." O plotted self-destruction ! O chosen ruin ! If this consideration go for

nothing with you, ye are blind against sunshine, and deaf unto thunder.

CONSIDER. IV. *Your bodies, the instruments of your souls' action, be not yet so sorry as old people's be ; and as yours will be most certainly, if you convert not presently.*—Sirs, an unsanctified body is a soul's unknown enemy, a Trojan horse, a Pandora's box, a forge of mischiefs. Your young ones are such, that (almost proverbially) the blood of youth is Satan's tinder and match. It is seen, you have warm bosoms for all snakes. Legions of devils are a less formidable army, than your own five senses unhallowed. Beware of the flesh.

But withal know ye, an unruly horse is more desirable than a dead one : he may be bridled, and made serviceable. It is better with you than with old folk, if you will but well use that whereof they want the use :—health and strength in general ; reading eyes, and hearing ears, and walking feet, in particular. “Old age is itself,” say some, “a disease,—a very hospital of all [diseases].” Many are deprived of the means of grace by blindness and deafness : most do use them with much pain and great disadvantage : none have so few clogs about them as you. So that great is your advantage for working out your salvation. Your labour is less to read or hear a hundred sermons, than theirs to hear or read one ; and to go twenty miles for advice, than theirs to go twenty steps. Being [seeing] that sin, and so death, came in at the eye and ear ; and it is God's will to drive them out at the same, and to transmit the wisdom that saves our souls through those bodily senses ; these are not inconsiderable things.

O that you had heard but what I have done of poor old creatures' outcries ! cursing the courses and companies that devoured their strength ; wailing with sighs and tears their disability to read, difficulty of hearing, and utterly-lost faculty of remembering. The memory ought to cut my heart ; may the notice sway yours ! If you will yet put off your conversion, this is the language which that delay utters : “I have a work given me to do that is for my life eternal. I have yet eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet : I have ease and strength. But these all have wings, and will shortly fly and be gone, as others' be. When gone, I cannot work ; or, if I do, it must be in the fire, as it were. Nevertheless, I will not set to my work, till my sun and moon and stars be darkened. (Eccles. xii. 2.) I will not stir one foot for heaven, till my other foot is in the grave. If my peace be ever made with God, it shall be even at the grave's brink. When I am just come to the mouth of hell, and can scarce open my own mouth to deprecate it, I will bestow a wish for heaven, if that may possess me of it.” Senseless creature, that wantest nothing of a brute, but hair, and two feet more !

CONSIDER. V. *The world, another back-friend of yours, hath not yet laid so many loads on your backs, as upon old people's ; and as it will lay on yours, if you live longer, and live under its power, and unsubjected and unconvert unto God.*—This I speak to you especially of the younger sort, children, and next to children. I hope you have heard what an enemy the world and the things of it do make to conver-

sion and sanctification. Read the texts in the margin.* "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii. 15, 16.) "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4.) "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. vi. 24.) Read Ecclesiastes; a whole book of sacred scripture taken up in warning us against this said enemy. More or less woe is to every dweller in it, because of the avocations, the distractions, and interruptions of this Old Adam's world. But here also you have the better, ordinarily, of old people. For themselves, or (their more beloved selves) their children, they are swallowed up of designs, bargains, &c. Gains and losses make their souls a sea of tempestuous cares, knowing little calm or quietness. You are yet free, comparatively, and unladen. You may contemplate and act for [the] next world, without the weights of this depressing you; and go to Jesus Christ, without farms and oxen and wives haling you back; haling you, as they do hale away multitudes before your eyes, and as they will ere long be haling yourselves.

If now "ye will not come to Him, that ye may have life;" (John v. 40;) if you will not now begin running your race toward the Redeemer; what do you do? Truly, just as a man that is to run for his life, but cannot be persuaded to stir a foot, till he has gotten many more sheets of lead upon his back, and many more fetters upon his feet. Rise, sinner, rise! if not, these words shall be thy soul's eternal loads.

CONSIDER. VI. *The providence of God lendeth you more physicians and kinder ones, than it doth lend old diseased sinners; and than it will lend you, if you live much longer; especially, if you live unconvert.*—True it is, God's love and mercy unto all is wonderful. God sends abundance of helpers unto all poor sinful creatures. Every baptized professor is obliged to be his "brother's keeper." All believers are bound to be charitable ministers unto each other; ministers of reproof, counsel, comfort. In Christ's body, no member should be all for himself, or for less than the good of all.

But a double portion of spiritual help is ordinarily vouchsafed unto you young people. Of soul-physicians, you have more than two, for old people's one. They have ministers; so have you, or may have if you please. They have religious friends; so have you, I hope. But then, you have parents, which they have not: you have masters and tutors, which they have not. And be it considered, the aged people have few or none that will deal so boldly with them as almost all

* In this paragraph, and in other two in this sermon, I have quoted in full the passages of scripture, instead of inserting the mere references. I have pursued the same plan in a few instances, in the succeeding sermon by Dr. Daniel Williams.—EDIT.

deal with you. Ministers and friends do mostly either fear to offend, or despair and think it impossible to benefit, old sinners with any counsels. They think it the same thing to give advice to an old body, and physic to a dead one; and if they give any, it is as cold as Eli's rebukes. But both come more courageously upon you. They less fear your displeasure, and more hope your reformation; and therefore with more frequency and acrimony deal with you. Besides, your parents' love, and your masters' and tutors' interest, and the comfort and credit of both, do engage them to follow you close, and to do more than ministers and friends are ordinarily capable of doing, for the conversion of your souls. Upon all hands it is best with you. You have the help of most physicians, in number; and of all the number, you have most of their help; incomparably more than old folk have, and than you must look to have in your "evil days" approaching.

But you will still delay; will you not? I doubt, many will; and will, as it were in so many words, show us [that] this is their mind. Sick they think themselves; sinners, they confess it, they are. A store of spiritual physicians now they have,—they own it: but, of these physicians and helpers, some will by-and-by die, others decay, and none be so helpful hereafter as now. Nevertheless, live soul or die, they will not, till hereafter, engage in any serious care of their spiritual cure and recovery. They will stay till they have helpers fewer in number, more chill in their affection and care, and less capable of taking pains for their salvation. Sad infatuation! a wondrous will to get out of probability, unto bare possibility, of life; if so much!

CONSIDER. VII. *You have special encouragements to convert now, from all general observation and experience; such as old people are past, and you will ere long be past.*—I must remember my bounds; and therefore will name but three. One would think they should be enough to move any thing not twice dead; and to pull out your folly, unless it be extraordinarily bound up in you. Young people,

1. *God regenerates the most of his chosen in early years.*—If that early risers were mostly the men that grew rich, and lived long in the world, who of you would not leave lying late in bed? Truly, they that rise in the morning of their days, and turn unto God, be mostly the men that ever overcome the devil. They that continue in the bed of their security late, are in danger of having their bed in hell for ever. "A young saint, and an old devil," is a proverb which was certainly hatched in hell. God and men break colts when they are young.

2. *God doth regenerate most easily those souls whom he turneth early.*—Know it, sirs; pain is necessary,—thank sin for it. Had not sin entered, never had we known pain, grief, fear, or shame; but now there is a very natural necessity for it. Sin is a painful, grievous, fearful, shameful thing: nor can I see how the honour of God's justice could possibly have excused repentance. Spiritually, as well as naturally, we are born in sorrow. Both sorts of children cry before

they laugh : all new creatures be first mourners. But all are not in the same degree so ; nor are all equally long sowing in tears, before they do reap in joy. Some sinners are lanced more deeply than others ; and God keeps open the wounds of some of his children longer than others', as he pleaseth. But ordinarily we see, young Timothys be not struck down like Sauls ; or, if they be, they be not kept so many days in frightful darkness.

And is this a small thing ? Think of it, and say, " If my body had a sore, of easy and speedy cure if the surgeon were applied quickly unto ; I should not suffer a little matter to hold me from him. My soul and body is all spiritual wounds. God alone can heal them. Those [which] he doth heal easiest and soonest, they be [those] of first comers most commonly. Tardy and late comers are healed rarely, and so as by fire when they be. What should ail me ? Why should I not presently arise, and go to my Father ? Why should I buy dearly God's hardest blows ? "

3. *God doth honour singularly, and reward with grace extraordinary, his early converts.*—If any, *they* be those that have two heavens ; great service and sweet assurance on earth, and greater degrees of glory also than others above. Most divines think so. Late converts too much imitate the Indians, that eat the honey themselves, and offer but the wax unto their deities. " They give God but the bran of their life, when Satan has had the flour," as some have expressed themselves. None so much honour God, and none are so honoured by him, as those who give honour to him, and accept it from him, in your early days. Infer you, then, my young folk,—

You must convert presently, or delay with loss ; even with certain danger of hell, and certain loss of much of heaven. And may I not now suppose the objections of your minds against my doctrine in good measure removed ? O that the oppositions of your wills were but as much overpowered ! I conclude that your own hearts do tell you by this time, (unless they be unpenetrable as the leviathan's skin,)

1. Conversion is your duty and wisdom.

2. Conversion this very minute made, is so.

3. Conversion now made, is most easy, most hopeful, most honourable.

4. Conversion, therefore, is, of all people, most unexcusably neglected, and most encouragedly attempted, by you.

Yet before I make application, I would prevent or remove a pestilent exception.

EXCEPTION. Too many may be ready to say, I talk as if conversion were a man's own work ; yea, every child's itself : and so grace and glory were very cheap things ; not the peculiarities of the elect, but every body's that will but lift up their hands and take them.

ANSWER. I humbly desire to speak agreeably unto the holy scripture. Thence I learn conversion to be both God's work, and ours, and our children's too : " Thou hast wrought all our works in us." (Isai. xxvi. 12.) It is *God's* work ; and he promises it : " But this

shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord : for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.) It is *ours* ; and he commands it : " Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways : for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) It is *His*, we say, as to its rise ; he gives to will and to do : it is *ours* as to the act itself ; we do it, and move, by him moved. The holy word is the ministration of the Holy Spirit : gospel-light is accompanied always with some spiritual strength and ability to turn toward God. It is true that only special light and strength from the Spirit avail to thorough and effectual conversion : but the lesser and common are talents given to profit with, and may be put to use ; and when they are so, though God be not bound to give the special, yet the goodness of his nature and the usage of his grace make it expectable, especially considered conjunctly with the general promise of it unto some seekers. All I add is this :—Act you up to the light and power you have received, not daring to dream that conversion is not the duty of children, because it is the work of God. And let not Satan make you think God a tyrant in his laws, or a niggard of his aids ; until you have diligently used all his means prescribed, and implored his blessing requisite, and failed of his grace when you have done.

We are indeed certified from the divine oracles that God has his *segullahs*, his "peculiar chosen ones." (Exod. xix. 5.) We ascribe to himself, and no other, the grace that "makes us to differ." (1 Cor. iv. 7.) But it is also made as certain, that God is not wanting to the happiness of any souls : unblemished goodness governs his absolute sovereignty itself. His decrees be as firm as though no man had a liberty of will ; yet we are all at our choice as truly as if there were no fore-determining decree. *Vult Deus nos liberè velle* : "God suffers men to make a free choice," and gives all men that which they do supremely and finally choose. He gives not to his elect either grace or glory without their knowledge and against their consent : and he doth not utterly desert or destroy others, till they harden their hearts, and choose darkness rather than life ; till they "hate" their Saviour, and "love death." (Prov. viii. 36.) The culpable cause of men's damnation is certainly stark wilful unconversion : the outcries of every sinner in hell are of his own will. I offer grace and glory but at Christ's own rates, to my best understanding.

I am bold to call young people thus to think :—How justifiable would God be in their destruction, if in their childhood he had taken them up to heaven, and down to hell ; had shown them both, and offered them their choice ; advising them to choose heaven, and conversion,

the way to it; assuring them, that hell and unconversion should never be theirs against their wills: and they should never here or hereafter be able to cry out, "O Lord, fain would I have grace, rather than all the world! I cry, pray, wait, do all and the utmost I can; and yet thou wilt not give me my longing! Grace and heaven are my choice; but thou deniest them to me." The truth is,—and one day will appear,—God doth all this in effect. In his word he sets heaven and hell before you; shows you what they are; bids you choose whether you please; advises you to choose the best; points out the ways that lead unto both; assures you that the worst home and way unto it shall never be yours against your wills; and if you long for the best home and way, you shall not lose your longing: in a word, assures you that his arbitrary will shall never be your ruin, if your own sinful, obstinate will be not; charging you of all enemies to beware of yourselves, and of all in yourselves to beware of your wills.

These your wills are inaccessible and unmovable but through your minds: unto which I therefore proceed to commend some of the truths which result from our preceding discourse. Young people, you are those to whom I continue speaking, and whose regards I call for unto these ten inferences; even *present* regards; *now*, while time has opportunity, and you have ability. Delay never knew weal; and haste unto God never knew woe. Never did the youngest saint lament his being one so soon: but every true convert all his days lamenteth his converting so late; and if they have any trouble in heaven, it is this,—that they did not come sooner into the way of heaven. If nothing can make you know what delay's poison is, but the draughts of it; and what the swords be, but the stabs of them; you must take your way, and God will take his: and ministers and parents must be for God's glory in your damnation, if you will not be for it in your conversion. But come, I have a hope and very confidence [that] I shall prevail with some of you; yea, all; save such as say in their hearts, "God is not; God cares not; God cannot destroy unconverts." Yea, and I would hope to prevail with such too, if I could make them but look upon the frame of the world, look into the Holy Bible, and look what is become of the most daring atheists of former ages. This would loosen the cords of death and hell, and make even such spirits less furious downward, and more tractable upward. However, I declare it: I cast the net in a sweet hope of a good draught. I do not believe my prayers and pains will be all lost this time. Some of you will so suck the pipes of knowledge now, that they will draw the breasts of mercy for ever. Some will drink in these following truths, and drink therein their souls' everlasting health.

INFERENCES.

INFERENCE I. *Your unconvert state is a miserable one.*—It is not requisite to one's being a miserable creature, that one should be an old one. Young ones, that forget or unconvertively remember God,

are truly miserable as the devil : yea, and are much liker to the devil than wicked old people. For Satan is not a cold, dull, feeble, decrepit, unactive enemy of God : no ; he is, as youthful sinners be, spritful, quick, strong, full of activity, and unwearied. A young sinner is the devil's most lively picture. You see in my text, your state is one that God judges an ill one, and calls you out of, and charges you to make all possible speed out of. Many wish themselves in a state of God's wrath, when they say, "O that I were in but so good a condition as this or that child!" *They* know less than many catechised little children, *who* know not this :—Such is an unconvert state, that Christ himself cannot save a soul in it. The Lord make you all to *feel* the words that I can make you but *hear* ! My father in all his letters to me used to write, "O child, better never born, than not new-born!"

INFER. II. *Your miserable state is one alterable.*—Would God call you out of your damning forgetfulness, if there were no return possible? Would he call you to a saving remembrance, if there were a fixed gulf and unpassable between you and blessedness? It is sin and madness for the worst of sinners to say they are reprobates. No man alive can know himself to be so ; and the worst man living must make himself still worse by concluding so. Young people, your unconversion hitherto has kept you unreconciled to God but hitherto. You are not now unreconcilable, if now ye be not obstinate and unpersuadable. I praise him who, when Satan tempted him to despair of salvation, thus answered : "For shame, Satan! say not there is no hope of me ; thou mightest be saved thyself, if thou couldest repent."

INFER. III. *God is willing your miserable state should be altered, and that speedily too.*—Would he otherwise call you, and so call you as you have heard? Or can you tell what should make him unwilling? True, he needs you not : but you need him ; and he delights in mercy, if you will believe him. Forget not this of God and his Son :—God swears by his life, he desires not a sinner's death : (Ezek. xxxiii. 11 :) consequently, he must desire their conversion. And as for his Son, your blessed Redeemer : as he shed his blood to save sinners, so he sheds tears over them when they refuse his salvation. It is Satan, not God, that is the Herod desirous to slay you, children. And be confident of this : if he now moves you to duty, he surely means you mercy.

INFER. IV. *You yourselves can do more toward your conversion and perfective alteration, than all the world can do.*—This is hence gathered,—from God's setting his ministers, and your parents and friends, all upon yourselves. He bids us not go to any others, and tell them they must go [and] new-form your hearts : no ; but charges us to apply unto you, and call on you to make you new hearts and new spirits, and convert unto him, and "remember" him to right purpose. It is therefore certainly most in the power of your own hand, next to God's. God has committed you more to your own keeping, than unto any mere creature's ; and given you more power

over yourselves, than any other creature hath. Wherefore, neither can best angels benefit you, nor worst devils injure you, as you can benefit or injure yourselves : and it less concerns you daily to inquire, what all the world has done for you, or against you ; than what you yourselves have done for or against yourselves. Would you know what is the just extent of this power,—what it is you can do, and what it is you cannot do, toward your conversion ? Others have answered more largely ; I say this briefly:—Try ; and you shall know : do all the good you can ; and you shall know what good you can do. To lie idle and do nothing, because you know not how much you can do, were a folly ; like Ezekiel's infant wallowing in its own blood. (Ezek. xvi. 6.)

INFER. V. Your tempters from present conversion are hell's black legion.—I infer it thus:—It is only hell that opposeth heaven ; devils, that fight against the command of God ; black devils, that withstand his express commands : But it is his command, and most express one, that you now presently do convert : Wherefore, as oft as any man dissuades you from it, tell him, you find by his lip [that] he has a cloven foot ; and you see, Satan is grown idle and impudent, and leaves off the trouble of transforming himself into an angel of light. Tempting company is the openest mouth of hell in all this world.

INFER. VI. Your way unto salvation is one and the self-same with other folk's.—If not, why should it be prescribed in the self-same words that the way of all others is prescribed in ; namely, “remembering” God. (Deut. viii. 18 ; Jer. li. 50.) There be many about you, that will show you, young people, a shorter cut to heaven ; and there is much within you, that will catch at it greedily enough. But the Lord give you to receive your sight ! You will then as easily believe there is one God for you, and another for old people, as that there is one religion for you, and another for them. Verily there is but one narrow gate for the entrance, and one strait way for the progress, of both of you. Blessed are both that find it ! miserable, both that miss it ! I know not how he himself shall be saved, that prompts young people that they may be so, without understanding, owning, and living sincerely according unto, their baptismal engagement. May the weight of Matt. v. 19 never lie upon any soul dear unto me !—“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.”

INFER. VII. Your greatest danger is of delaying to convert.—Why else are you twice warned thereof in the text ? Why required to convert in your youth, before you are old ? and just now, before you are a minute older ? Death stands before old men's faces ; and one would think they should not venture to put it off. It is somewhat farther out of your sight, indeed ; but so swiftly it oft comes, that it is [matter] of wonder [that] you yourselves should be so daring as to do it. But, alas ! both of you are daily seen full of your delays. Full often in my pulpit I think, “What a number should I convert this time,

but that my old folk think they may as well convert next week, and my young ones think they may convert next year! both think they may convert another time." And what says my trembling heart? Plainly thus: "O delay, delay! thou bond of iniquity, thou bane of piety, thou bar of conversion, Satan's great barge into 'the lake of fire and brimstone!' begone, and destroy not this congregation!" Sirs, remember it: downright denial of conversion is nothing near so likely to ruin you as dallying delay of it. It is delay [that] is the element of unregeneracy, as unregeneracy is the element of hell.

INFER. VIII. *Youthful unconverts are the worst of demoniacs, and break most bonds of God.*—For, as you have heard, you have special obligations on you. Though God makes your days choice and good, yet cleave you will unto the worst evil. Though you have on you the restraints which old sinners have long ago had taken off from them, you sin as they. The Spirit of God, that has done striving with many of them, strives still with you. Conscience, that is seared in them, is yet of some sense in you. Parents and other reprovers, that have done long ago with them, are still plying you. And yet, as they, you say unto God, "Depart from us; we desire no communion with thee." With more violence than they, you take the kingdom of hell by force. The path to hell is harder unto your feet than theirs.

INFER. IX. *It is your duty to shame your unconvert fathers and mothers.*—For, observe you: you shame them, if you remember, and they forget, God; if you come to Christ, and they either come not, or come behind after you: God, angels, and men will pronounce you wise, and them fools. But what then? Would God have you stay for them, and not convert until they do? By no means. He commands you to convert just now; and consequently to shame them, if they have not [converted], and do not. By so shaming them, some children have been the blessed instruments of converting their parents, of spiritually begetting their natural fathers. The only way this seems, wherein a child can requite a parent. For if a beggar's child win a kingdom, and give it his father, his debt to him is too big to be so paid: but if he converts him, he pays him in broad gold, methinks. Parents, think ye of this. And children, this know ye: it is therefore I do not caution you against all sinful ways of shaming your parents, because well I know, becoming dutiful to God, you cannot but honour and love your parents next unto God himself. That which I see of many parents in city and country hath extorted this inference from me.

INFER. X. *Your present days are your precious and best.*—So the word in the text, and words following, speak plainly. Sirs, your young days be but days, and of short continuance; yea, and dubious. Some are old, as we speak, sooner than others: their flowers sooner fade, and their grass more quickly withers. But whenever your evening falls, you shall wish it again morning with you. If nothing else will do it, old age will convince you of the excellence of youth. It was wittily that, by some, Time was thus pictured of old:—*Time to*

come had the head of a fawning dog; *Time present*, the head of a stirring lion; *Time past*, the head of a biting wolf: so teaching, that though silly souls fancy still that their best days are to come; yet, if they bestir not well themselves in their *present* ones, they will be very miserably bitten and torn in their *future*. I sadly remember sometimes the tears and words of a very ancient gentleman to myself and my school-fellows in our childhood. "Children," said he, "your age is good for every thing that you can desire to get; mine is good for nothing but to spend whatever one has got. A thousand worlds I would give for a few of your learning-getting days again. Of all things, prize your time; and of all time, your young, which is your sowing-, time." It is upon eternity's account that any thing can be judged excellent: nor doth aught make for our blessed eternity, but vital piety. And surely, for that, there is no season like to life's morning. Poets say, it is a friend to the muses; divines must proclaim it the friend of graces.

For why? As incongruous as atheistic vermin do conceit youth and religion, it is plain as noon-day light, that religion is specially framed for youth and youth for religion. Let shame be their portion who are ready to drop the Italian proverb upon every religious young head: *Tanto buon*—"This puritan youth is so good, that he is good for nothing." Young people, remember the seven stars in your firmament; and tell me how fit they are for religion, and religion for them:—

Quick wit and fruitful invention.—What are these for, but religion? and what appearance makes religion without these! Age will make you lame and barren in mind as in body.

Tenacious and prompt memory.—What is this treasury for, but religion? and how poor must religion live (if live) without it? Age will dry your brains, and make sieves of your memories.

Lively and stirring affections.—What are these horses for, but the chariot of religion? and how heavily must the wheels move (if move) without them! Age keeps no such horses; nor travel old souls but upon crutches, and [at] the pace of snails.

Flexibleness and self-denial.—What are these spiritual joints for, but religious bowings? and how little can the most profoundly religious soul stoop to its Maker without them! Old age has stiff joints of soul as well as body.

Amatoriousness, and love of love.—What is this soul of the soul for, but religion? and how is religion herself, if her soul has lost itself? Love is all the religion that I know of. But old age lays your souls in frost and snow.

Alacrity and cheerfulness.—What is this God-like quality for, but religion toward God? and what likeness has religion to itself without it? For God taketh all things not cheerfully given, as forced spoils, rather than free gifts. Now old age's clouds do so return after the rain, that it admits little of this sunshine. Rarely it is that old Sarahs bear Isaacs.

Vigour and strength of body.—What is this for, but religious ser-

vice to Him whose the body is, as well as the soul? and how little can the soul while it is in this body do without it! But where is the old body can let the wind blow on it? at least, where is the head of gray hairs that has a body of brass for a soul of gold?

Sirs, in a word, the truth [which] I beg deepest engravement of upon your hearts, is this of the matchless excellence of your present days. Verily, so fit is youth, the best of life, for religion, the best of employments; and so useless, yea, harmful, are the endowments of youth without religion; and so poor and unlovely an aspect has religion without the use of youth's endowments; that it is a pity but youth and religion should marry and unite. All time is too good for Satan; but if he must have any, let him not have the best, which is your youth. But,

Cynthia aurem vellit, &c.—VIRGILII *Bucol.* Ecl. vi. 5.*

I was minded to wave all particular exhortation, and remit you unto my "Call unto Sinners;" in which I have said the things which you do most of all need, and with more plainness and brevity than I have discerned any where else. But second thoughts bid me give you these DIRECTIONS to improve my doctrine. And the rather, because they are of experienced usefulness.

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Choose each of you a spiritual guide in the affairs of your souls.*—There are men ordained by God to be "eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and fathers to" all that would be God's children. (Job xxix. 15, 16.) Refuse not eyes and feet for your souls; nor live you orphans, when you may have fathers. Go unto some one or another of them: tell him, you hear that Christ's ministers are his representatives; and that Christ's word, without his appointed ministry of it, may not be expected to cleanse a young man's way, nor any other's. Get a promise from him, to lend you his best direction to thorough conversion. A youth without a pastor is a child without a nurse.

DIRECT. II. *Use him whom you choose your guide for your soul; and follow him as far as he follows Jesus Christ.*—Hear him ordinarily: a child's own parent's milk is commonly best for it. Write after him; the heads of his sermon, I mean, and his chief notes.—Incomparable king Edward VI. used to write sermon-notes.—Go often to his house, and always to ask things worth his time and your own. Little rest give him, till grace has blessed his labours to fit you for the Lord's table. Plainly tell him, you shall count small good gotten by the word, till you are qualified for the sacrament; and that it is to you a dolorous thing, to have but a place in God's house, and no room at his table; it looks as if you were but a dog, and not a child.

DIRECT. III. *Look alway and adhere closely unto God's Son and*

* "With friendly caution Phœbus touch'd my ear," &c. — WRANGHAM'S Translation.

Spirit.—Without these, the Holy Bible can no more make you wise unto salvation, than the Fables of Æsop, that Papists dare compare it to. The word of life is a word of death to you, without these to make it beneficial; these, without whom you can expect no more edification from the best minister than from a blind harper. In all things, ye want Jesus Christ for acceptance; in all, you want the Holy Ghost for assistance; in all things, and at all times. Without right use of them, no soul can fetch a breath of divine life, or take a step of holy walk. Nature, indeed, shows you a Heavenly Father,* and ties all of you unto him: but it is only special revelation [that] reveals a redeeming Son of God, and a Holy, sanctifying Spirit of God. And it is much grace, and that much used too, that can keep you close unto these: without which, you may be great Socinians, but no Christians.

DIRECT. IV. *Beware of setting against each other, God's mercy, Christ's merits, holy faith, and good works.*—We cannot say to either of them, “We have no need of thee.” All are truly necessary, and unspeakably. But,—in the country I saw it, and in this city I see it,—most people do fix on some one of them, and cry it up, to the exclusion of the rest; to the virtual exclusion. Of so epidemical and fatal a hinderance of conversion, beware you.

The mercy of God all the rhetoric of heaven cannot praise enough: but woe be to you, if you expect the pardon of the least sin by it, otherwise than through Christ's merits!

The merits of Christ: these, without question, are infinite. But you are undone, if you dream you shall have the saving benefit of them, living and dying without marriage unto him by faith.

Holy faith is a grace most precious; by God most highly honoured; and, of all, most honouring God; honouring him, in some respects, more than Adam's personal obedience did before the fall. But mortally you err, if you look to put off God with it, without obedience; and slight good works, as super-erogations.

Good works are the blessed fruit of God's indwelling Spirit, and the very end of our election, redemption, and conversion. But what then? They be neither acceptable to God nor profitable to us, but through the gift of the mercy, the purchase of the merits, and the means of the faith aforesaid. If you rest on works, and imagine them otherwise good, your eternal lodging will be among evil-workers.

Young people, make your pastor set you well at rights about these things: and let the excellency, connexion, order, and necessity of them, be judged worthy of your frequent and serious thoughts.

DIRECT. V. *Be very critical in the choice of your company.*—Be sour and unkind unto none, affable to all, but pleased with few; to wit, the best; who are those that will either best teach you, or best learn from you. “Companions of fools” are doomed to destruction: but wherever you are “walking with wise men,” you are on your way to heaven. (Prov. xiii. 20.) Souls the most thoughtful of eternity,

* *Jupiter, quasi Juvans Pater.* [“As if he were a helping father.”]

are still the most careful of their company. And it is certain, the company of your choice in this world is both that which you would have and shall have in the next.

DIRECT. VI. *Beside the holy scriptures, read ye such good books as shall be commended to you by your pastors.*—It is not every good book that is *for you* good; nor every one that will hereafter be good for you, that is good *now*. Your pastors can judge best which are most suitable.

I think it soul-felony for you to be without the Westminster Assembly's Catechisms. And I should think it as little needful to commend Mr. Baxter's "Call," or Mr. Alleine's; or Mr. Howe's very jewel "Of yielding unto God;" or Mr. F. Fuller's "Words to give Wisdom," with his piece of "Repentance and Faith;" or Mr. Lawson's "*Magna Charta*." England is blessed with the best in this world; and I do not light upon any that excel, or equal, them in England. You must search farther than I have done, young people, if you find things better worth your most careful reading. Books be dead things; but God makes them oftentimes lively preachers. These several last years, many have acknowledged to me, that they have been blessed stars to lead them unto Christ.

Yet do not, for your lives, ever neglect reading the scriptures. Take some portion of God's word, as daily as you eat of his bread. It is very honourably that I do remember a poor soul who sometimes burned the thatch of her house, to read her Bible by the light of it: and no less a saint than Mr. Richard Fairclough told me, she died a glorious one. It was Luther's saying, "The reading of the scriptures is the terror of devils."

DIRECT. VII. *Examine often the state of your souls.*—Scrupulousness itself is as much more safe, as it is less sweet, than audaciousness. But humble and careful inquisitiveness is (*sine nævo Venus*) as "unspotted a virtue" as the state of grace is adorned with. Humility one calls "the violet of graces;" of sweetest scent, though lowest place. And care is the commanded "fear" of falling short of God's rest. (Heb. iv. 1.) The exertion of humble care in heart-searches doth answer many gospel-precepts. And when it is much and often, it is not the least evidence of truest grace. For bankrupts can no more endure much looking into their account-books, than sore eyes can bear long beholding of sunshine: and as impatient be hypocrites of very much conning the scriptures and their hearts.

But I conclude. Young people, Mahomet gat the Turkish empire by making extraordinary haste; and Alexander conquered the world by the same policy,—never delaying. Go you and outdo them: conquer world, flesh, and devil, and take by violence the kingdom of heaven, by your hasting to remember and convert just now. With great reason our law makes it death to conceal high treason so much as four and twenty hours. I am sure, God's law requires you to confess and forsake your higher treason against Christ's crown, without so much as a minute's delay; and with much more reason and equity.

I thought I had done. But I am sensible how little I have done: and therefore, before I make an end, I must try to set two sorts of people a-doing more for poor unconvert young ones;—two very concerned ones in the case; two that my text hath surely somewhat to do with. I mean, PARENTS and MINISTERS. Surely natural and ecclesiastical fathers are all bound to join me in preaching of this portion of scripture.

1. To you, NATURAL PARENTS, I first address; beseeching you, that you go [and] study what you have to do, and do all that you shall know, for your children's early conversion. I am of the mind, that "gallant language never did God's work;" and do find it what you call "wild note," rather than "set music," that I can ever move you by. Wherefore plainly I tell you, We may thank you for earth's becoming thus unlike heaven, and like to hell. We may thank your negligence, and worse, for the ruin of more children than ever Herod slew, or the liar and murderer of France himself. We may thank you, that children be so generally beasts, before they are young men; and young devils, before they are old men. We may thank you for vitiating the most numerous, the most ductile, and the most hopeful part of the world; for robbing God of his first-fruits in the world.

I beseech you by God's tender mercies, repent of your cruelties. And I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, reform ye straightway, and do as aforesaid. The light of nature, that guides you to help your children to go, and to speak, and to do what is necessary for this life, guides you also to help them for the divine life. Nor can you doubt but God's ordinance in the old church for the appearance of the male children before him thrice in the year, was to bring them to an early acquaintance with himself: and there is still both need and obligation to keep the substance of that precept now under the gospel. O let it not be said any longer, that your care is more for your children's clothes, than their souls! For shame, sirs, for shame! let them not be wicked without your pity, nor converted without your pains! Think ye daily of both the advantages and engagements to do it.

Your advantages.—You do love your children best; do you not? and you are best-beloved by them. You are nearest unto them, and have most authority over them. You do know their capacities and their tempers. Who can suit them as you?

Your engagements.—Their sore needs do engage you: and so do the sore evils that (however undesignedly) you have done them. Who brought Adam's sin upon them and into them, but you? And who dares say, that your own personal sins have done them no wrong?

Dying Dr. Harris said, he had made his peace with God, and told his children, that his sins should not hurt them therefore, unless they made them their own. Can you say so, if you were now to die? Well; very nature also engages you. Ay, and equity binds you: for your children are God's, more than yours: and, surely it is to him,

and for him, that you should educate his children. Truth also engages you. For you promised you would so educate them, when you had them baptized; did you not? *

The fear and love of God, if any be in you, do engage you. And so doth your own interest also. Yea, lastly, shame engages you. For it is a shame—is it not?—to teach children to honour and serve you, and not to honour and serve their God and yours. I have bid many children ask you, whether, if they were too young to be bound to keep God's commands, they were not also too young to be bound to keep yours. Listen not to the white devils that will suggest, "If your children take not to religion of themselves without your a-do, your pains will do but little good." Do horses or camels tame themselves? Do men tame beasts of the wilderness? and do you not tame the children of your own bodies and families? But, all in a word: does God set you a work, and promise you success; and [do] you dream it to no purpose to set about it? Read you Prov. xxii. 6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." (Prov. xxiii. 13, 14.) "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." (Prov. xxix. 15, 17.)

2. As for you, CHURCH-FATHERS, may I humbly assume to stir up your minds but in way of remembrance? You know, if the lambs be lost, the Lord of the flock will with great anger ask, "Where were the shepherds all the while? What were they doing?" Nor will our highest feeding of the sheep compound for the loss of his lambs. And I doubt, it will not suffice to say, "Lord, we were the while digging for profound notions, or disputing nice questions, or studying polite sermons, for people whose peace and whose praise we could not have cheaper."

Brethren, for the Lord's sake, let us all do somewhat weekly, and set the parents of our congregations doing somewhat daily, for young people's souls. And let both set to it hopefully, for the reasons foresaid. The difficulty and impossibility, as to our endeavours, be left but to drive us to diligence, and dependence on Him to whom nothing is difficult or impossible. The more we do look for success, the more it will come. Let not catechising, that is praised by all, be unpractised by any. And in preaching, let none of us make need, where we find none, to shoot over young folk's heads, and use a language [which] we must needs know they understand not. Love of God and of them would make us willing rather to be trampled under scornors' feet for our faithfulness, than to ride over their heads in

* A minister of the church of England told me, he had refused to baptize some of his parishioners' children, because, as he saw, they would not afterward breed them up to Christianity.

figures of vain-glorious impertinence ; the which, wise hearers do no more commend, than weak hearers do understand. Neither be it any more grievous to us than it was to St. Austin, to have now and then an *Ad vos, juvenes* ; to call and tell them, "Young people, this is for you." I would be glad to see wanton wits have less sauce, and weak souls have more meat, in all our sermons ; and to discern that our pains in making converts did exceed the Papists' in making proselytes. For it must be owned, it is an uncolourable profaneness, to baptize infancy and not teach youth, or but slightly : because otherwise we shall starve the nursery ; and then what becomes of Jesus Christ's family ?

The good Lord awaken us all, and set ministers, parents, young people themselves, all a-doing, and well-doing ! Our churches then shall be beautified, and joyed, and strengthened with abundance of young meditating Isaacs ; young Jacobs, seeking the blessing ; young Solomons, choosing wisdom ; young Obadiahs, fearing the Lord ; young Johns, lying in Christ's bosom ; yea, young children, crying "Hosanna ;" stilling, or shaming at least, and balking, God's enemies and ours. Origen's father, Leonides, would sometimes uncover his breast as he lay asleep, and solemnly kiss it ; blessing God, that had given him to be a father to so excellent a child. And so shall many of us have warrant to do. Upon our houses, schools, and churches, it shall be writ and read of all, *Jehovah-shammah*, "The Lord is there." Amen and Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

BY THE REV. DANIEL WILLIAMS, D.D.

WHAT REPENTANCE OF NATIONAL SINS DOETH GOD REQUIRE, AS
EVER WE EXPECT NATIONAL MERCIES?

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.—Hosea x. 12.

THE prophet joineth counsel with threatenings. Amendment is that he calleth them to, as a means to save them. That he might induce them to this, he represents their aggravated sins, and the dangers to which they were exposed by their provocations: yet lest this call should still be uneffectual, through an opinion that repentance could avail little to a people so guilty, he addeth, that if they returned to God, their sins, though great, should not prevent mercy, and the threatened judgments, though near, might be diverted.

By this text God proclaims, not only to particular persons, but to nations, how desirable it is to him to execute his goodness; and his extreme backwardness to avenge himself on the most provoking kingdoms, unless they add impenitency under solemn warnings unto their rebellion.

God seems to address himself to Ephraim to this purpose: "Thou art a very guilty people; yet turn, that I may forgive. Thou art on the very brink of ruin. Thy obstinateness is so notorious, that it will not consist with the rules or credit of my government to spare thee longer. O, yet be persuaded to render thyself a subject capable of my kindness! I have long pleaded, and thou seemest even unpersuadable. Yet I will make one further essay; I will try thee once more. 'Sow to yourselves in righteousness.'"

First. *The words contain some of the essentials of repentance, and suppose the rest.*—Under a metaphor from tillage, God applieth himself in the description of this duty. As if he were to say,

1. *He that will repent must deal with his indisposed heart.*—"Break up the fallow ground:" whatever pain or difficulty attends so barren or obstinate a frame of soul, you must strive with yourselves; pluck up those weeds, strike at the root of your lusts, which render the fruits of righteousness impossible. This sense of that clause is more evident from those words of another prophet: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." (Jer. iv. 3.)

2. When the heart is thus prepared, *we must proceed to proper acts of reformation.*—"Sow to yourselves in righteousness," *לְצַדִּיקָה אֲדַבְרֶה אֲדַבְרֶה אֲדַבְרֶה* *ad justitiam*, ["to righteousness"]. Let the rule of righteousness be observed in your hearts and ways; be just to God and men; return to

God in sincerity; be and do what may argue you to be "trees of righteousness." (Isai. lxi. 3.) Do thus "to yourselves;" that is, Leave it not to others: or, You shall reap the advantage of it yourselves, if you repent.

3. *You must also "seek the Lord."*—That is, worship God, and not idols, as hath been your way. Follow after him, who is departed from you; call upon him; crave his grace to help you. But be not satisfied with faint and short attempts; persist in this work till you find his favour in the blessed effects of it, even "till he come and rain righteousness upon you."

These heads of repentance this text affords.

Secondly. *This repentance is urged from a variety of arguments: but principally from this, that national mercies would certainly follow this national repentance.*

"Reap in mercy." לְפָנֵי חַסְדֵּי "Reap at the face of mercy, or immediately." It is promised more strongly, than if it had been said indicatively, "You shall reap," in the future tense. Being put thus imperatively, the import of it is this: "You have no more to do; but possess your mercies upon your repentance; mercy will of itself grow from that root. God hath provided all antecedent causes; he hath ordained the connexion; and it lies on him to make a repenting people happy. You may be assured of this; for that which was mere mercy in making the promise, is become an act of righteousness by the promise. You may now expect it from God as just;" in which sense I take that clause, "Till he come and rain righteousness upon you." That which was "mercy" in the first part of the verse, is "righteousness" in the last part. I know it is true doctrine to say, "Till God bestow on you holy inclinations, and ability to perform;" but that is not the most designed sense. He further argues from the plenty of those blessings which God would afford on their repentance: "Till he come and rain righteousness." The returns of God to a repenting people are in a fulness of blessing: "And there shall be showers of blessings." (Ezek. xxxiv. 26.)

There is one motive more, namely, the seasonableness. "It is time to seek the Lord." It is high time, and but barely so: you cannot say, "There is no hope;" (Isai. lvii. 10;) though you must repent soon, or not at all. The consideration of this paraphrase must lead any one to the case that I am to handle: Can any serious spirit think it vain to ask, "What is that national repentance, which may give a sinful people hope of mercy?" Which is the same with the case as it is given me:—

What repentance of national sins doth God require, as ever we may expect national mercies?

I have led you to it by this text, that it may not seem a melancholy fancy, a mystery not to be handled, or a needless inquiry.

It is an awful case. It is not put to satisfy your curiosity, but to guide your fears and hopes. It is not only to direct your minds to a right judgment of the matter, but to excite your hearts to that repentance which may afford us hope in the midst of our dangers and

guiltiness. It is the happiness or misery of nations [that] is concerned in it. It is the only remedy that a sinful nation can use or turn to: God is peremptory: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," ἀπολεισθε, "utterly be destroyed." (Luke xiii. 5.)

My work is, I. *To resolve the case in general.* II. *To apply the case resolved to our own nation.*

I. I shall use this method as to the first:

(I.) *Show you what is supposed in the case as stated.*

(II.) *Explain the terms, "national sins and mercies."*

(III.) *State the case itself.*

(IV.) *Propose the difficulties that attend the resolution of it.*

(V.) *Resolve the case, which the fore-mentioned particulars will much conduce to.*

I shall, as proof to this resolution of the case,

1. *Evidence that the repentance expressed in the fifth head, doth ordinarily afford ground of our expectation of national mercies, notwithstanding national sins.*

2. *That when this repentance is not in a nation, we cannot ordinarily expect national mercies.*

(I.) *These things are supposed in the case as stated.*—Where there is sin, there ought to be repentance. There are national sins as well as personal sins: that a nation, as such, becomes guilty by national sins. There are mercies which attend a people as a community. Our national sins have removed national mercies, or at least prevent and suspend the bestowing of these mercies. God requires a repentance for national sins, and that as a means of national mercies. There may be a repentance which may be defective to this end, and from which we cannot groundedly expect such mercies. That there is a repentance for national sins, which, if we arrive at, may warrant our expectation of national mercies. These and such-like are supposed as the case is stated, and therefore I pass them by.

(II.) *I shall inquire what national sins are, and what national mercies are.*—The rest of the terms in the case will be handled under other heads.

QUESTION. "What are national sins in the question?"

ANSWER. Such gross sins as render a nation guilty, and expose it to national judgments, and forfeit national mercies. "When the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously," לַעֲוֹן לַעֲוֹן לְ "wilfully and repeatedly" against God's covenant, "then will I stretch out my hand." (Ezek. xiv. 13.) Whatsoever sins God hath threatened to destroy a body of people for, are in the question.

The answer directs us to consider these several parts of it.

First. *These sins are gross in their nature.*—They are not sins of infirmity, or sins which ordinary care, labour, and watchfulness could not prevent. They are called "bloody crimes." (Ezek. vii. 23.) You may find them enumerated, when God arraigns nations in the testimony of his prophets, when calling them to repentance; and when God justifieth the severity of his judgments against a people. I shall name some of them which defile a land:—idolatry, perjury, breaking

of covenant, blood, uncleanness, apostasy, oppression, profaneness. I need not bring proof hereof, the scriptures are full. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field." (Hosea x. 1, 4.) "For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right." (Jer. xxiii. 10.) "He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence." (Psalm lxxviii. 50.) "What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts." (Isai. iiii. 15.) "And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand." (Ezek. xxi. 23, 24.) "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." (Isai. i. 21, 23.) Yea, among such provocations are reckoned men's refusal of the gospel, silencing and obstructing the ministry, malignity against good men, divisions and enmity, lying, pride, abuse of mercies, gross formality, hypocrisy, great decays among saints, and gross backslidings. (Luke x. 10—14; 1 Thess. ii. 16; Rev. ii. 2, 3; Hosea xi. 7; Isai. lix. 13—15; Ezek. xxxv. 15; Amos viii. 9.)

Secondly. *These sins must be national.*—Such as denominate a kingdom sinful. We consider them not as the sins of particular persons, but as they affect a community, as united among themselves, and distinguished from others, by some special bonds.

We will inquire, for the clearing of this,

QUESTION. "How sins become national."

ANSWER 1. *By all, or the generality of a people, being personally transgressors, as to those crimes.*—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it." (Isai. i. 5, 6.) Thus Sodom could not afford ten innocent persons. The infection is oft propagated to the whole body, though begun in a few: as, "From the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land." (Jer. xxiii. 15.) This doth not mean, that every individual is corrupted, but the generality of all sorts: magistrates, priests, and people were profane; (Jer. xxxii. 32;) "Ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." (Mal. iii. 9.)

2. *When the governors, representatives, and influencing persons are*

transgressors.—"I will love them no more: all their princes are revolters." (Hosea ix. 15.) Israel is become vile by the sins of Jeroboam; wrath against Judah remained, "because of the provocations that Manasseh had provoked God withal." (2 Kings xxiii. 26.) Provoking abominations by the rulers of a people, and cursed laws, defile a land and expose it. Saul brings a famine on Israel by violating the covenant with the Gibeonites. (2 Sam. xxi. 1.) What governors do may be said to be done by a nation; though, I think, when judgments take their express rise from the sins of rulers, there is some other guilt among the people ripening them for judgment, or a compliance with their rulers' sins. (Hab. iii. 8.)

3. *By the generality of a nation making itself partaker of other men's sins, though it do not actually commit them.*—Some that do not personally commit the sins, may become guilty of them, by not hindering those sins according to their power; by rejoicing in those iniquities or pleading for them; by not mourning for them; by contributing to those enormities. These ways a land may be guilty, though a few chief men act the sin. "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." (1 Sam. iii. 13.) "In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." (Zeph. iii. 11—13.) "And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth." (Isai. xxii. 12.) "In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners." (Hosea vii. 5.)

Thirdly. *These sins are such as expose to judgments and forfeit national mercies.*—These are here intended, and reference to both the former heads must be had; but besides, the grossness of the sins as to the nature of them, and their extent as national; on both which accounts they become national provocations.

The case requires our observing further:—

1. *That more refined sins may expose one nation to judgments, which may not expose another land.*—This depends on the variety of advantages some people are under above others. A nation that hath gospel-helps, and professeth holiness, and worshippeth the true God, may be exposed to judgments by formality, backsliding, and more spiritual evils than other lands not so circumstantiated. Sins below gross immoralities may as truly forfeit their mercies, as injustice, blood, or idolatry, amongst ignorant Paganish countries.

2. *The provoking sins of one and the same nation may be made up by various kinds of offences, according to the different condition of the*

offenders.—Sometimes a land is polluted by the same sort of sins propagated through the body of the people. But it is not always so: the offences vary, and the national guilt results from the several offences. The sins of magistrates are of one kind, and the sins of the subjects another, according to their different talents and station. The profane part of a nation transgress by enormous crimes; and the professing part are polluted with more spiritual wickedness, as barrenness, deadness, censoriousness. The offences of the gentry and commonalty may be several. Ministers and people may fill up the measure of iniquity in a different manner. “Woe to them that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.” (Amos vi. 4, 6.) “For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord.” (Jer. xxiii. 11.) “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” (Isai. lvi. 10, 11.) “And it came to pass the same year, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon,” &c. (Jer. xxviii. 1—17.) “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Jer. v. 31.) “Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.” (Micah vi. 11, 12.) “The best of them is a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.” (Micah vii. 4, 6.) Hence you see, that a nation may be guilty, though some remarkable villany may not be universal: it is enough if the different sorts of inhabitants grossly offend in their several kinds.

3. *Usually the sins of a nation do not bring judgments, or forfeit mercies, by the simple commission of them; but as attended with some additional aggravations.*—A land rarely is destroyed, unless sins are committed after warnings. Utter destruction comes not before lesser judgments have been tried, and prove unsuccessful. (Amos iv. 1—13.) Security and impenitency is added to rebellion before God proceeds against a people. The Lord’s goodness displays itself in his calls, and patience waiteth an answer ere he takes the advantage

against a land. Oft beside the grossness of sins, there is boldness and shamefulness: "They declare their sin as Sodom." (Isai. iii. 9.) I shall not mention antecedent aggravations, as light, convictions, covenant-bonds, &c., which add a weight to sin while committing.

You see what national sins are in the question, and when they become such as hazard the ruin of a people.

QUESTION. "What are 'national mercies' in the case before us?"

ANSWER. Such blessings as truly and considerably affect the good of a community.

They must be blessings in their nature, and national in their extent; they must have an aptitude to the common weal: the more they conduce to make a land happy, the greater the mercy is. Neither is the gracious design of God to bless a land thereby to be disregarded; for sometimes he rains snares, and gives quails in judgment. (Psalm lxxviii. 29, 31.)

These mercies regard our souls, or our bodies, or both. I shall enumerate some of them:—the pardon* of past sins, and help against the like offences; the presence of God as effective of spiritual and temporal good; gospel-ordinances; a holy, judicious, faithful ministry; a pure worship; the Spirit's energy in the gospel to the conversion of many sinners, and real edification of saints, whereby the estate of believers may be flourishing; a godly discipline, and communion of saints founded on plain gospel-terms; love and peace among churches, grounded on essential, not disputable, notions, and expressed in all the fruits of Christian love; freedom from persecution and malignity; a godly magistracy, using its power to restrain sin and promote godliness; peace in our borders; justice in our courts; learning in the schools; wisdom and sincere designs for public good among counsellors; plenty, by a blessing on our trades and labours; health in our streets; credit and influence among neighbouring countries; freedom from such judgments as waste and debase a land. These and the like constitute a happy nation: they are mercies which national sins forfeit, and without which the aspect of a land is mournful. Greater or less degrees of all or any of these are within the question, as the object of our expectations; and the sorts and degrees are oft proportioned to a nation's repentance, and determined by it.

(III.) *The case stated and distinguished from what seems like it.*—

It is not, What repentance God requireth of particular persons in order to eternal life? nor, What repentance God requireth of a sinful nation as its duty? nor, What is that repentance without which a nation shall never enjoy national mercies? nor, What repentance is that on which every nation, in all cases, shall partake of national mercies? nor, What shall limit our prayers, nor yet altogether our hopes, as to the state of a land? much less, What is that repentance which will best secure national mercies? But the question connects our repentance and warrantable expectations. The scope of it is: "What is the lowest sort or degree of repentance for national sins which is requisite to warrant, and *ordinarily* direct, our expectations of national mercies?"

* By *pardon* I mean "an exemption from temporal punishments for those sins."

The reason why I add "ordinarily" will appear after: the indefiniteness of the term "national mercies," whether of this kind or of that, to this or that degree, I insist not upon; supposing that it imports at least so much and many mercies as render a nation tolerably happy, and exempted from what it esteems calamitous.

(IV.) *The difficulties of the case.*—It is not only hard to determine it, as the *minimum quod sic* * in any qualification for mercy; nor yet as a thing depending on multitudes, and relating to the providence of God as to what is future; but there are these other things that make it difficult:—

1. *Other nations are not under such express rules, with respect to God's outward dealings, as the Jewish nation was.*—That people was under a theocracy, God was their King; (1 Sam. xii. 12;) on this account the Lord chargeth them, when they were for a king, that "they rejected me that I should not reign over them." (1 Sam. viii. 7.) Idolatry also was high treason in that state: they were God's peculiar nation, and thereby to live in a more immediate dependence on him, even in civil respects, than other people. (Isai. li. 4.) The rules of their external privileges, both church and national, were express in that covenant of peculiarity whereinto they were admitted. This covenant easily determined men's expectations of God's dealings with them. But, I think, we cannot always conclude, from God's methods toward them, how he will deal with other nations that are not under the same law.

2. *There have been always great displays of sovereignty in God's dispensation of judgments and mercy toward nations.*—He waits longer on some people than on others, though no more guilty. Sometimes he granteth favour to a nation, though its sins be many; and punisheth it, when its provocations appear less. The sins of multitudes are connived at sometimes; and at other times he afflicteth for the offences of a few, as in the case of Achan. (Joshua vii. 1.)

He hath diverted judgments at the prayer of one Moses; but sometimes, "though Noah, Daniel, and Job be there, they shall deliver no more than themselves." (Exod. xxxii. 11—14; Ezek. xiv. 14.) Yea, he hath forbid his servants to pray for a people, as a thing to no purpose. (Jer. vii. 16.) God hath sorely rebuked small sins in particular persons, (as Moses, Uzzah, &c.,) to let men see, it is patience in God, not innocency in men, that he still destroys not.

There is exact wisdom and righteousness in all this variety, which the light of a higher state will discover; though now, by reason of darkness, his ways seem perplexed to us. However, this sovereign unaccountableness must abate our positiveness in judging what will be the way of God toward a people, though it hinders not the determining [of] our ordinary expectations.

3. *There are prophetic periods wherein national mercies shall not be obstructed by impenitence, but repentance shall follow them.*—Israel was not remarkably penitent, when the time of redemption from Egypt was come; yet God keeps his day. Their release from

* "The least relative proportion" of repentance.—EDIT.

Babylon found them in the like unfit posture; yet God is pacified, and brings them to repentance by their return. (Ezek. xvi. 63.) "This people is unclean, and what they offer is unclean;" yet he makes them prosper, and build the temple, even though they had not turned to him. (Haggai ii. 14, 16—18.) And it seems to be not much otherwise with the church, when it sings the praises of God for the consummating stroke against antichrist; she is not ready, nor clothed with eminent holiness. (Rev. xix. 1, 7, 8.)

4. *The desolation of a land is sometimes absolutely determined.*—When it is thus, a blessing is withheld from means that tend to make a people penitent; and what of repentance there is, becomes uneffectual to divert the misery. Manasseh repented, Josiah and the people with some solemnity humble themselves; but notwithstanding this, "the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal," &c. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13; 2 Kings xxiii. 25—27.) When the utmost limits of the time of God's patience is over, ruin is unavoidable. God bemoaneth a land in this condition; as our Saviour in his tears over Jerusalem: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."* (Luke xix. 42.)

5. *God sometimes moderateth and refrains his judgments, from other considerations beside repentance.*—If executing judgments upon his people will occasion blasphemy and reproach to his name, he oft forbearth his people, though impenitent: "I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men; were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this." (Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.) Joshua and others knew it was a strong plea: "What wilt thou do for thy great name?" (Joshua vii. 9.) Again: when his people have been so obstinate under judgments, that if he proceeded in his wrath, they must be utterly destroyed,—rather than do so, he hath eased his hand. If the sins of his enemies be full, he conniveth at his church, while he avengeth himself on his adversaries; especially if his servants are to be executioners of his wrath. Sometimes God hath had respect to some ancestor, or some particular action, of a people, that hath been pleasing to him; and on that account, hath been favourable, though they have been otherwise obnoxious to judgments: "Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off." (Isai. xlvi. 8, 9.) "Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places

* The figure *aposiopesis* is twice used in this verse: "Thou hadst been happy, hadst thou known in thy day;" "Thou art now undone, because they are hid from thy eyes."

are ours in possession : therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God ; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the Heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people : therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God ; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the Heathen that are round about ; therefore thus saith the Lord God ; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the Heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the Heathen : therefore thus saith the Lord God ; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the Heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel : for they are at hand to come. But I had pity for mine holy Name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the Heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God ; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the Heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the Heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them ; and the Heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." (Ezek. xxxvi. 2—8, 21—23.)

6. *It is not very easy, at all times, to judge of national judgments or mercies.*—God may afflict in order to mercy ; he may take away lesser mercies, to make way for greater blessings : he oft lays a foundation of lasting good, by delays and astonishing struggles. On the other hand, he may forbear judgments, and bestow good things, whereby a nation is ripened for sorer plagues. He may destroy the gentry to save the vulgar ; or level his stroke against evil magistrates or ministers, and so shake the state, to make the body of a people, or his own people, at least, prosperous. Many such ways are with him. Each of these affects a community ; and yet the aspect of them is so intricate and clouded, that deep thoughts are needful to determine when we see the mercy we expect, or the judgment which we fear.

You may perceive that the case before me, though it seemeth so popular, is not so easily decided. But the greatest difficulty is, to adjust the nature of repentance, as accommodated to our expectation of national mercies : which will fall under the next head.

(V.) *The case resolved.*—And somewhat concerning the rule by which it is resolved.

THE RULE TO DECIDE THE CASE BY.

The rule by which we must determine this is hinted in the case itself, under those words, "What repentance doth God require?" Some expression of the Divine Will must guide us; we must not judge by second causes, or by vain fancy, as we are too apt to do. Neither too rigid nor yet too compassionate inclinations must decide the matter, or lead our expectations. The directions of the Sovereign Ruler of kingdoms must alone take place; what notices he hath vouchsafed must be regarded with reverence: natural principles, due inferences from his essential perfections, the nature, order, ends, and methods of his government, well considered, and an observation of his dealings with ourselves in past times, and also with other countries, do all contribute some light in the matter before us.

But our chiefest regard must be to the scriptures; especially to such parts of them as urge repentance on a people, with promises of good in case of compliance; and threatenings of ruin upon their obstinacy. Also such parts should be observed as contain instances of national repentance, which have been succeeded or accompanied with national mercies. By this rule we must determine what that repentance for national sins is, whereupon we may expect national mercies. Here we must consider repentance modified as a means to this proper end, namely, national mercies; and it is to be considered as to that lowest degree which will support our expectations of those mercies.

Having premised this, I think it may thus be determined:—

First. *A repentance short of that which is enjoined in order to eternal salvation, will suffice to warrant our expectations of national mercies.*—Eternal issues are not determined by the same rules as temporal blessings. Unregenerate persons may repent, so as to divert present judgments, and secure mercies. This is evident in Ahab and Nineveh. (1 Kings xxi. 29; Jonah iii.) If it were not so, we could not expect national mercies before the generality of a land became true converts yea, active converts; for, regenerate persons that shall possess heaven may come short in that repentance which secures blessings to a nation.

Saving repentance is the grace [which] we call sinners to by our ministry; the more of this prevaileth in a land, the more sure are the mercies of that people. Without it, a nation will soon run into new forfeitures, and bring plagues on itself at last; as Nineveh did. (Nahum ii., iii.) This saving repentance is a change of heart, as well as practice; it strikes at the root, and excludeth the dominion, of all sin, as well as national provocations. It hath a mixture of divine love reigning in the heart, as well as fear; it is excited by a sense of pardoning mercy through the blood of Christ, as well as [by] God's wrathful displeasure; it is an effect of the Spirit indwelling, and not only of its common operations; it is the fruit of the divine life, and not merely of natural principles excited by foreign impressions.

In these and the like, saving repentance exceeds that repentance of a land, which yet may afford expectations of national mercies.

Secondly. *The repentance which yields us ground to expect national mercies*, I shall describe in these following particulars:—

1. *It hath several things wherein it partakes of the nature and sincerity of a true repentance.* 2. *It must be for national sins.* 3. *The repentance must usually be national.* 4. *It must be suited to the different condition and circumstances of such as make up a nation.*

1. *It must have so much of the nature and sincerity of a true repentance as is included in these following heads:—*

(1.) *Clear convictions of the guilt and offences of a nation.*—We must believe those things to be sins, which God chargeth us with; and truly own, that we are chargeable with the faults for which God reproveth us. This God enjoineth: “Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God.” (Jer. iii. 13.) They cannot be said to repent, who plead guiltless. This plea God reproveth Israel for: “Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me.” (Jer. ii. 35.) While men plead for sin as no sin, or acquit themselves when they are criminals, sins bind on them the wrath of God, and stand in the way of a people’s good; but there is hope of a land, when it poureth out its confessions with them: “We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.” (Jer. xiv. 20.)

(2.) *Shame, fear, and deep humblings of soul under the sense of the wrath of God, as provoked by our sins.*—Ahab humbled himself. “Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?” (Joel ii. 12—14.) God will embitter sin to us, or avenge it. (1 Sam. vii. 6.) Provocations shall prevent mercy, when they are easy and pleasing; but this remorse must reach to the heart, though it do not savingly change it. The heart must tremble at the threatened wrath: God will have his anger awful to men, and their abominations shall cause a blush, at least in a sense of what miseries they expose to. Therefore while people make a mock of sin, as harmless; while they sport with the wrath kindled thereby, as a scarecrow; God will go on to strip a kingdom of its blessings, and load it with judgments: “They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down.” (Jer. vi. 15.) But this humiliation, fear, and shame, must be from an affected soul, not bare bodily appearances, in a day of humiliation, or hanging down the head like a bulrush for a day; these the Lord despiseth, for such things he will not turn away his anger. (Isai. lviii. 3—7.) Whereas there is hope, when a people “lie down in their shame, and confusion covers them,” because they “have sinned against the Lord.” (Jer. iii. 25.) It bodes well, when men “tremble at the words of the God of Israel because of transgression.” (Ezra ix. 4.)

(3.) *Such a compliance with God's warnings and rebukes, as to put men on seeking God's favour, and resolving to forsake the national pollutions.*—There must be supplications, as well as weeping: "A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way." (Jer. iii. 21.) This is God's advice to a land, and it is the constant way of a repenting people. Thus Nineveh "cried mightily unto God." (Jonah iii. 8.) Herein the dominion of God is owned, and so far men acknowledge a dependence upon him. But this must not be only with the mouth; no, it must be with the heart as to this act and occasion. A slight cry will not prevail. It is a brand on a people, that "they cried not unto me with their heart." (Hosea vii. 14.) With our prayers there should be a justification of God's threats and punishments. (Neh. ix. 33.) How hopeless, then, is the condition of a people, when that is true of them!—"We made not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth:" (Daniel ix. 13.) and as sad, whilst they arraign his ways as unequal. (Ezek. xviii. 29, 30.)

But good resolves must attend prayer; a full purpose under present convictions, though it may not always prove effectual, through want of a principle in sinners, and remains of corruption in saints. We are led to this by that place: "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hosea xiv. 2, 3, 8.) Expressive hereof was Ezra's and Nehemiah's entering the people into a covenant with God against national sins. (Ezra x. 3; Neh. ix. 38; x. 29.)

Now what hopes can there be of a land, if it neglect the Lord, as if he had nothing to do with them? yea, [if it] continue resolute in its sins? Thus did they who said, "After our idols will we go." "We will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine." (Jer. xlv. 17, 18.) Alas! such a people may lie down in fear, and look at the mercies they want as impossible; yea, consider the blessings they yet enjoy as soon to be removed.

I added, that prayer and resolves should be in compliance with God's warnings: God will have a regard to his threatenings, and some tribute of obedience rendered to him by them whom he spares. Thus Ahab yielded to Elijah's message; and Nineveh regarded the threatenings of the Lord by Jonah. Therefore it is an awful sign,

when nations "refuse to hearken," draw "away the shoulder," and "make their heart as an adamant; lest they should hear the law, and the words" of God by the prophets. When this is the frame and carriage of a people toward God, what effects follow, the following words acquaint you: "Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts." (Zech. vii. 11, 12.) Whether the warnings are sent by the word in the mouth of his servants, or by his wonders, or by lesser afflictions, the disregard of them makes the bands of a people strong; whereas attentiveness and compliance therewith afford encouragement.

(4.) *There must be a reformation.*—All the former, without this, are too insufficient to be a prognostic of good; the other things tend to this, and must terminate therein, or repentance wants its aptitude to the designed end: "I have also sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers:" a gracious offer; but behold the obstacle to their benefit thereby: "But ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me." (Jer. xxxv. 15.) In the same manner God leaves it on this issue: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isai. i. 16—20.)

It is no repentance while gross evils are continued in, if our sins be sins of commission; it is no repentance while an express duty be not complied with, when the offence is a sin of omission: "This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles." (Zech. xiv. 19.) Let there be never so much mourning, though it rise to the covering the altar with tears; it yields but vain hopes, when men continue unreformed. (Isai. lviii. 3—8.)

But amendment carrieth with it a happy presage: it restraineth the bitter effects of past provocations; and God in mercy encourageth it in a people, though on the brink of ruin. We see an instance in Judges x.: the people, having confessed their sin, (verse 10,) accepted of their punishment, and called upon God; (verse 15;) "they put away their strange gods, and served the Lord:" then the soul of God "was grieved for their misery," and he delivered them. (Verse 16.) A parallel you have in Nineveh: the charge given by the king (which was complied with) was: "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence

that is in their hands." Then they conclude a possibility of escape, according to the tacit reserve in the prophet's message: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah iii. 6—9.)

2. But yet further: *the repentance in these acts must be for national sins.*—If it be for other sins, and not for the sins of the land, it will not warrant our expectations of national mercies. God will have men direct their repentance to that which his wrath is kindled for, and which his testimony is against. It is not enough that you bewail your own personal, private sins; but these public faults. People are loathe to own, bewail, and leave these national offences. Custom fixeth them; they are commonly reputable, and by the generality of transgressors thought innocent: they are supported by interest and power; there is danger by repenting thereof. If you reform as to these, there is oft a loss of places. Men are subject to shame by leaving faults in fashion; or the reproach of having long offended in those things: and how backward are our proud hearts to acknowledge we have been in an error! But let it be never so hard, the arrow of God is levelled against these very sins; and even these shall be bewailed and forsaken, or he will proceed to embitter them.

People may think to commute with God, and amend in other matters; but this is a vain attempt, to their own delusion and ruin: "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people." (Micah vi. 15, 16.) This leads me to answer one objection.

OBJECTION. "How may we know which be the national sins?"

ANSWER. If the same particular sins be universal. Consider the carriage of a people in general, and compare it with the word: national sins are too gross not to be seen, when the rule of a people's walking is set before us. But if you would know which are more eminently the national sins, observe what sins have the greatest influence in corrupting the land; which cleaveth fastest to a people, and [which] most (especially leading) persons are guilty of; which have been longest continued in, and in their nature and consequences are most grievous; which seem the judgments of God most directed against; what sins do the best ministers and people witness most against. By these rules you may discern what are those national sins, which the nation agree in the commission of, or connivance at. But if the national sins be by accumulation of several sorts of sins, according to the different state of people who constitute that community; you then must distinguish a nation into its constituent, or remarkably differing, parties; as magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, rich and poor, infidels and believers, &c. Compare the frame and carriage of each of these, with that which God hath

made their peculiar duty ; and, adding the former helps, those national sins will appear which are made up by complication, though the same individual crimes are not entertained by the several parties in a nation.

3. *The repentance must usually be national.*—I do not mean that every individual must repent ; but the generality, or at least some very considerable number ; and those, of such men that most represent and influence the body. A small number of private penitents may save themselves, but seldom secure a nation. I confess here I must be wary ; considering how graciously God is pleased to admit sometimes a few to personate a body, and give-in blessings for many on their mediation. Phinehas's zeal turns away wrath from all his people. (Num. xxv. 11.) God seems to conclude the unavoidable-ness of Israel's woe, from the want of one man to divert it : " I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it : but I found none." (Ezek. xxii. 30.) This the desolate church complains of : " There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." (Isai. lxiv. 7.)

But though Sovereignty admits a very few penitents to profit many transgressors ; yet we are not usually to expect this, (whatever in extremity we may hope,) for want of better grounds : usually *a few* are called " none " as to this effect : " No man repented him of his wickedness." (Jer. viii. 6.) " When I called, none did answer." " He wondered there was no intercessor." (Isai. lxvi. 4 ; lix. 16.) There were the prophets themselves, and some others, that repented ; yet *so few* were as good as none to secure the good, which multitudes concurred to remove. His call is to the generality to return, and on that he promiseth favour : " Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place." (Jer. vii. 2, 3.) And the failure by the refusal he affixeth to the body of them : " Thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord, nor receiveth correction : truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth." (Verse 28.) We can hardly look for good to a land, unless the repenting persons be numerous enough to vindicate the glory of God, and influence the land to reformation. The assembly of penitents must be " solemn." (Joel i. 14, 15.) How general was the repentance of Nineveh : from the greatest to the least ; from the king and nobles to the most abject ! (Jonah iii. 5, 6.)

Some farther light may arise from the next head.

4. *The repentance should be suited to the different condition and circumstances of those that make up a nation.*—Each must repent of the sins common to all ; yea, the gross trespasses of each sort must be bewailed by every sort. But yet there is a repentance peculiar to each, which ought eminently to appear, or at least really to be ; and this exerted according to their respective abilities. Magistrates ought to mourn for the sins of the people ; and also to repent of their own ill examples, bad laws, &c. And they must express their repentance,

by exerting that power which they have above others: they should enact good laws, restrain and punish sin, command days of humiliation, appoint good ministers, &c. So Ezra did: (Ezra x. 8, 9:) the same did Nehemiah. (Neh. xiii.) Magistrates do not repent if they do not so; and a land may perish for their neglect.

Suppose a land dividable into unbelievers and believers: these believers must repent of their own sins, as well as the sins of unbelievers; they must be humbled for their own decays, contentions, worldliness, barrenness, vanity, pride, though less gross than others', as well as for the idolatry and profaneness of the irreligious. The reason is, that these sins of theirs contribute to the bringing down [of] judgments, and obstructing of mercies, as well as the grosser sins of unbelievers; nay, in some sense, more, because they ought to be witnesses for God in a degenerate land. Their examples encourage the grosser villainies of others: they have more light and strength to keep themselves pure: yea, if the number of good men be considerable in a land, the lot of a nation is mostly determined by them; and God's regards are much more to them than others.

If you take the epistles to the seven churches to be so particular as most do, you may see how God reproveth and threatens them, though small portions of those states of which they were members in civil respects.

I think I may say, that the repentance of believers for their sins must exceed the repentance of unbelievers, in some proportion to that life, grace, and aids which they have above those unbelievers: their humiliation must be deeper and more ingenuous; their resolves stronger; their return more universal; their prayers more fervent; their reformation more extensive, spiritual, and vigorous than other men's. In this it is true, "As a man is, so too his strength." If their repentance be no greater than others', they may expose a nation, and prove its ruin.

I might proceed to gentry and commonalty, to ministers and people, but time prevents me; and the same rules may guide you in these as in the instances before described. I shall only add, that supposing a part of the land persecutors, and the other persecuted for truth's sake; these latter must be humbled for the sins of persecutors, and repent of their own sins; and that according to the advantage which their afflictions give for their humiliation and amendment.

While men throw repenting-work off from themselves to others, (as if they could acquit themselves of God's challenge: "Are there not also sins among you? are you no way guilty?") the land is likely to suffer, and the common condition to be deplorable.

It is true, if the design of God be to single out any one sort of a nation to suffer by themselves, the impenitence of that sort may not damage the body of the nation, further than their struggles with, or their loss of, that part may affect the residue. As, if God resolve to punish professors of religion only, their impenitence may affect the whole no further than the distress of such professors amounts to, except as it is an awful omen; because judgment seldom begins at

God's house, but it reacheth in woful issues to others afterwards. Or, if God hath a controversy with the gentry of a land, their impenitency may not fatally reach the ordinary people, if penitent. Or if God resolves to punish ravenous, domineering pastors or persecutors, their neglect of repentance shall not hurt the whole that repents; nay, it will be their advantage to have them blasted, if they remain impenitent, as the kingdom's plagues. It is much more so as to particular families, whether the highest, or less influencing the corruption of a commonwealth. But where God designs not a distinct respect in his judgments, the stubbornness of any one sort doth threaten the nation. Their not repenting in a way proper to them, may plunge the whole into a loss of mercies.

Thus I have, according to my small light, resolved the case.

The decision of the case proved,

1. *The described repentance doth ordinarily afford a people national mercies, notwithstanding national sins.*—In the resolution of the case, there occurred some reasons, and many scriptures, to evidence this; so that I shall need to say little more for proof: there seems to be an express rule in this matter: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." (Jer. xviii. 7, 8.)

The repentance which God hath accepted, so as to prolong the welfare of nations, was of this sort; as you see in Nineveh, and other places. (2 Chron. xii. 7.) Should we examine the repentance of any land, it hath rarely arrived to a greater height. A defect of the repentance enjoined in the covenant of grace, is obvious in that repentance which hath yet been effectual as to national mercies. This repentance answers the great methods and ends of God's general government, as to the temporal weal of nations; and provides a foundation to proceed upon in those methods whereby his spiritual kingdom is advanced, and the eternal welfare of souls is promoted. We may expect God will continue national mercies to a people who come up to that repentance which hath preserved other nations. We have great encouragement to our hopes from many texts. (2 Chron. vii. 14; xxx. 8, 9; Jer. xxvi. 3, 13.)

2. *Where this repentance obtains not, a people cannot justly expect national mercies.*—Let a nation seem never so safe, its security is vain, and all its supports shall be blasted by impenitency. (Isai. viii. 9, 10.) What, though a people are related to God?—"I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their evil ways." (Jer. xv. 7.) May not their privileges, and pledges of God's presence, secure them? No: "Trust not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by

my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim." (Jer. vii. 4, 9—15.) Mock shadows of your repentance, and weak, uneffectual attempts for it, will leave men under disappointments. (Jer. xiv. 4, 7, 12; xlv. 1, 10, 11.)

When a people is given up to impenitency, and God withholds a blessing from the methods that tend to their repentance, there is just cause of fear that judgments are determined against that land: "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate." (Isai. vi. 9—11.)

God is so positive against a land refusing to return, that their felicity is impossible: "Wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you." (2 Chron. xxiv. 18—20.) Were it otherwise, God's name would not be sanctified, no order in this lower world would be kept. But, further:

Impenitence is not only a *moral* obstacle to good, as it provokes God to withhold it, but it is a *natural* obstacle: the wickedness of men is efficient of woe to a people, and is in many senses destructive of mercies, and inconsistent therewith. Many enormities of a nation are its plagues; as bad laws, wickedness in magistrates, a corrupt ministry, oppression, &c. Its iniquity is even *materially* its ruin.

APPLICATION.

Many inferences are obvious: as, How dreadful an evil is sin! How dangerous to a land are multitudes of offenders! A nation is foolish that discountenances piety, and destroyeth the godly party; whereby it strikes at its own refuge. How good and long-suffering is God, that calls the vilest nations to return, waits long for their answer, and

destroys not till their repentance be even hopeless! What enemies to themselves, neighbours, and posterity, (bound up in their doom,) are an impenitent people! What sottish and atheistical men are they, that guide their hopes and fears of a nation's welfare by fancies or second causes, but without regard to God's favour or anger, or the influence that repentance or impenitence have upon the ways of God toward a people! What a dismal prospect is a wicked nation, sporting with their provocations and warnings! How uncertain a tenure do most nations hold their mercies by!

But I have not time to insist on these.

II. *I shall briefly apply the resolution of the case to our own nation.*—We are a nation; we have national sins; repentance of these sins is a presage of our future state, as well as others'. I know no exemption, or peculiar allowance, [that] we can expect at the hands of the Righteous Governor of the world. O that our hearts were under the power of this awful truth, that our iniquity may not be our ruin! (Ezek. xviii. 30.)

In order to this,

(I.) *I shall insist on some things in order to our repentance;*

(II.) *Inquire whether we may groundedly expect national mercies from our present frame;*

(III.) *Conclude with an use of lamentation of our national impenitency and dangers.*

(I.) *In order to our repentance,* I shall represent to you,

1. *The national sins we ought to repent of.*—Hereby you will know what we should be humbled for, resolve against, and reform. What a terror ought it to be but to mention our provocations! O, that a land of light should be chargeable with such enormities, and yet be secure, and hate to be reformed!

Where shall I begin the charge? We and our fathers for some ages have been guilty of the same sins, yet unrepented of. Against whom shall I level the indictment? Alas! we have all sinned and done wickedly as we could, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, the unbelievers and believers. To what sorts of sins shall I confine myself? Woe is us! what sins did God ever destroy a land for, that are not national with us?

But, that the sound may not appear uncertain, I account myself bound in conscience to be more particular. My subject forceth me, not any uncharitable design. O that my own heart were more filled with zeal for God, and deepest sorrows for the nation's sin, while I am recording what may offend the guilty, though the charge be too plain to admit a denial! Let us inquire:—

Is England altogether innocent as to its laws? Do not we see that some of the terms of conformity are far other than our blessed Lord hath instituted? Are they not remote from a tendency to advance real piety, and exclusive of some things that would much conduce thereto?

Is not a diocesan bishop set up, whose sole jurisdiction bars all the other ministers from the exercise of a great part of their office; while

the bishop is utterly unable to perform it, through the largeness of his diocess ?

Is there not more than an umbrage of lying and perjury imposed on all ministers, when they must assent, subscribe, and swear to what is more than suspicious, yea, utterly false ?

Are not a heap of ceremonies and corrupt usages re-assumed, (though once cast out,) to the facilitating of the return of Popery, dividing of Protestants, and the scandal of the weak, who are too apt to place religion, yea, all their religion, in those vanities ?

How many severe laws were made against dissenters, and severely executed to the ruin of thousands !

Was it no provocation, to silence two thousand faithful ministers, when their labours were so necessary, and their places were to be filled up with many young men, who have proved fatal to serious religion ? The sacrament is made a politic engine, to further the damnation of unworthy receivers ; that all such may be kept out, whom they suspect any way hazardous to excessive pomp, and ecclesiastic pageantry.

Can the land be innocent where atheism is so professed, the most blasphemous oaths are fashionable, perjury, uncleanness, drunkenness, malignity against all credible holiness, so common, and consistent with reputation ? Was it not among us that the Covenant was burnt by the hands of the common hangman, and horrid murders committed as legal executions ?

Is not that Christian nation guilty where profanation of sabbaths is so notorious, yea, pleaded for as warrantable ? [where] most families have nothing of God's worship, the plainest essentials of religion [are] by few understood ? [where] the operations of the Spirit turned into ridicule, and religion placed in things that bear not a faint resemblance of the very form of it ; while sobriety itself is mere matter of scoff, and the fountains of learning send forth many more fitted to infect than reform the age ?

Is it to be concealed, that men enter on the ministry as apprentices on a trade, and use it as a mere means for a livelihood ? How many are pastors without the people's consent ! And too many preach, while unacquainted with the gospel as a law of faith, and rule of the recovery of apostate sinners. The labours of such have no tendency to convert or edify their hearers ; yea, alas ! conversion is judged a foolish thing to urge. All the most debauched and profane are regenerate, if they were baptized, and come to church. Many souls eternally perish by the influence of this one principle, and the ministry is diverted from its greatest end.

Have we not seen the ministry too much laid out to serve the late governments in designs of enslaving the nations, and ruining the life of the Protestant religion ? though amazing was the providence which, almost too late, opened some men's eyes, by a close attempt against their own places, and so swayed their minds, that they contributed to save the land from that ruin, which a few more sermons of non-resistance (if believed by the nation) had rendered unavoidable.

The good Lord continue that impulse, lest our miseries become greater by the beginnings of our deliverance!

I design not this account of all our public ministers. Blessed be God, there are many to whom the interests of Christ were more valuable, than to allow their labours to serve any base design. But this of late was found the way of church-preferments; wherewith too many complied, and made the pulpit a stage for a poor oration, rather than a place to testify for God, or bring souls nigher to him.

Are believers and serious Christians (whom I confine not to any sect or party) free from contributing to fill up the measure of our iniquity? O that they were! then should my soul rejoice in hope; but it is otherwise. Alas! how much have they made the vilest abominations their own, by not mourning for them, and by their carnal liberty contributing to them! "Our gold is become dross." (Isai. i. 22.) How unedifying are their discourses! How unexemplary is their walking! Each one seeks himself, and none the things of Christ: circumspectness is laid by as unfashionable: the virgins all slumber and sleep. (Matt. xxv. 5.) How few dare plead the cause of God, or do express his image! What heartless duties, froward passions, notorious pride, and neglect of education of children! Fast-days are kept without humiliation; sacraments and sermons are become lifeless; God is sensibly withdrawn, and none bemoan it; religion is dying, and none uphold it.

What a chilness on the love of saints to each other! What sordid divisions and distances! A new standard of godliness is erected, namely, a zeal for parties and selfish interests, under pretence of Christ's interests; while what is essentially and undoubtedly his recommends men little. How little do good men rely on that life, light, and love which is purely divine?

Can I excuse dissenters, as such? No: to say nothing of some of them immersed in destructive errors; alas! the more orthodox have a share in polluting and exposing the nation. A vain itch hath seized much of our ministry; we study to please, rather than [to] profit. We envy one another, run into extremes, because others come not up to divine institutions. We overlook the mercy of our ease and liberty, because we abound not as others do.

Tremble, O my soul! to think, how many, even of them, persecute, by railing, lying reports, non-communion, and censuring the state of souls for non-compliance with doubtful notions.

Too many set up uninstituted terms of communion, destroy the pastoral office, promote little designs with base tricks and grossest lying, under the covert of equivocation and surmises!

Were it not that some breathe another spirit, and more suitable to the Divine nature and the gospel of Christ, I should sit down with horror, and give up the land for lost. The shadow hath sensibly eaten up the substance; we have fancied, talked, and disputed a gospel-frame, and practical holiness, almost out of the land. A dead form is that which most are content with, and carnally plead for; while they profess more purity and power than others.

Are these evils in the land, or no? Are they sins? Are they not general? Arise, O God! and convince us; embitter them to us. O, was there ever more need to crave the pourings out of thy Spirit, now its recesses are so manifest? How discernible will be its pourings out, if thou bless us therewith!

2. *I do, in the name of God, call you to this true repentance for these national sins.*—We have nothing else left to relieve us: our begun deliverance will be abortive, yea, more destructive, without repentance. What nation ever needed repentance more? Whom hath God oftener called and more expressly warned?

He hath long waited to be gracious: and must he destroy us at last, when weary of repenting? The ruins of all our neighbours cry to us, "Repent; or you will be more miserable than we are: God seems to be on his way to you with the dregs of the cup." Our sins are of the grossest nature, the longest continuance, and sorest aggravations.

How oft has God punished this land for them! and yet we hold them fast. (Jer. viii. 5.) What variety of judgments hath he essayed our reformation by, but in vain! Thou London's plague and flames, shall not they reform thee? Will not former streams of blood extinguish our lusts and divisions? shall we force God to repeat them? We were lately on the brink of ruin; and yet the same malignant, formal, and irreligious temper revives.

God hath by a train of miracles respited our woe, and begun our deliverance; but what are any sort of men amended? Methinks we should have passed our own doom, with Ezra: "Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?" (Ezra ix. 14.)

These abominations are yet more odious by our profession and advantages. To be acted by such a nation, wearing a Christian name! These villanies were tolerable among Pagans, in comparison of us; but in a place of light we have thus transgressed, in a land of uprightness we have been thus vile. (Isai. xxvi. 10.)

O the convictions, struggles, and helps we must have trampled on! the many vows we have broken in all these transgressions! Yet in the midst of our rebellion God renews his call: "Repent, O sinful nation!" Let the cry of mourners be heard in our streets! O let shame cover our face! If you have any pity for yourselves or posterity, truly repent at last.

View the national mercies you may enjoy by repenting, and that you are sure to lose by hardening your hearts against it. Read them over again where I named them: are they not valuable enough to excite your reformation? O that all would concur in their places to reform! When will magistrates restrain sin, disannul all bad laws, and state the terms of our ministry and communion; so that all may be useful, and not spoil their efficacy by guilt contracted at their admission; nor perpetuate our divisions, the consequences whereof have

been so dismal, and are likely to be more so? When will ministers engage in the reformation of the land, by faithful warnings, sharp reproofs, good examples, plain and importunate pleadings? Will the grossly scandalous gentry and people abhor their enormities, and put away their great provocations, whose cry is gone up to the heavens? Shall England's mercy be secured by a revival of strictness of life, more love and power, among professors? Will you be your country's and church's plagues? That great good, which primitive saints rejoiced in the hope of; or overwhelming judgments, which posterity will be astonished at; do depend upon the return we shall make to God's present call. Mercies of the most glorious nature are in the birth; and shall your, even your, impenitence stifle them? O return! and "if you will return, let it be to the Lord your God." (Jer. iv. 1.) All changes that amount not to this, will avail us nothing. Your prayers, your fast-days, are as water spilt on the ground, without reformation.

How can I cease till the generality be persuaded to do this, which is so necessary to our common weal? Let us all cry, "Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall" or will "be turned." (Lam. v. 21.) "Frame your doings," as men determined to turn unto the Lord. (Hosea v. 4.) Set heartily to it with all your might, for it is hard work; delay it not a moment. O God, bow our wills, that the land may jointly answer: "Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God!" (Jer. iii. 22.)

Can you pretend, "Wherein shall we return?" (Mal. iii. 7.) Alas! wherein have we not departed from him? All in a manner is out of frame; every thing, every person, considerably needs amendment. Let us all unite in this, and God will bless us with light and love for union in other things. This work needs all our hands: let us make up that wherein others will be defective; all striving to begin and outdo each other. O that all emulation and strife were reduced to this,—which of us shall first and most reform!

3. *If the generality will not be persuaded to repent of national sins, let not particular persons neglect it.*—I am loath to descend so low, yet this is better than none. Who knows how many may be convinced by the repentance of a few? At least you may preserve yourselves, and view the public calamity with more composure than other men, as having done your utmost to prevent them. (Ezra ix. 4, 6.) We know not but God may delay judgments for the sake of a few remarkable penitents; though we may not commonly expect it. Shall there be so great cause, and none set themselves to it? Hath God none among us that regard his loudest calls? Can there be so little love to his name and honour in England, that even a few will not afflict their souls; that he is so provoked, that a few will not testify against this common apostasy? Poor nation, that hast none that love thy welfare! that all will lose showers of mercy for thee, rather than sow in righteousness!

O that some would resolve this day! Let not God say, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand

in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." (Ezek. xxii. 30.) Repent of your personal sins, otherwise how can you repent of national sins? Examine thyself, how far thou art infected with the national provocations. What hast thou contributed thereto? Charge thy soul therewith: say, "The measure is so much the fuller for my sake." Bewail thy share; mourn over the faults of others. Thou mayest grieve for what thou canst not reform; but be sure to reform thyself to thy utmost; reform thy family; yea, set thyself to bring all (thou art in thy place capable) to amendment.

Do not judge of faults by the common opinion; let not the example of others be thy standard; but set the divine rule before thee, and review things thereby. Resolve to stem the tide, and to judge and act in the face of it. What, though the multitude be against thee? what, though bigots rail? what, though many professors, yea, men of thy own party, condemn thee? All is nothing, while God will accept and approve thee. A man must be singular that will reform himself in a degenerate age; *he* must be resolved, *that* will attempt to reform others.

(II.) *Let us inquire, whether we may expect national mercies from our present frame and state.*—I believe, God will not forsake us, but in time he will do us good. But the inquiry is meant thus: whether mercy will be immediately enjoyed. Is the wrath of God turned away? and will his progress in a way of judgments be stopped?

Can we reasonably conclude, though the sword hath been furnished, it shall not destroy? our "warfare is accomplished;" the clouds are past; the bitterness of death is over? Dare I say?—"Rejoice, O land, in the favour of a reconciled God: for good, only good, shall presently be unto thee."

OBJECTIONS.

I shall, by way of OBJECTIONS, give you what is matter of hopes; and, in the ANSWER to those objections, give you the ground of my fears; and, in the end, declare my thoughts.

OBJECTION 1. "Are there not some testimonies of national repentance, from whence we may hope mercy is toward us? As,

"1. *Penal laws against the worship of God are as good as disannulled, and persecution is at a stop.*"

ANSWER 1. I wish the general remains of malignity argue not a sorrow for that liberty.

2. I find most of them that were guilty of persecution, instead of repenting of it, do justify it as a just prosecution; though it was an usurpation of the rights of people, as men, and as Christians.

3. Are the Sacrament-Test and Act of Uniformity removed?

"2. *We had a public fast-day, kept with outward solemnity.*"

ANSWER. I will judge of no man's heart; yet I cannot but observe,

1. The most polluting sins of the land were not solemnly owned, much less bewailed. Where was a public acknowledgment of the sinful silencing [of] two thousand ministers, because they durst not

profane their office, and plainly lie and perjure themselves? I might name many such other sins. Alas! general confessions avail little.

2. What public reformation in life and manners appears since that day? what fewer oaths? Profaneness is no way abated; men are returned with the dog to the vomit. Now, fastings without amendment are but a mockery with God, and profit not a people.

3. Men are so far from repentance, that they cannot endure to be reprov'd for their sins. They say, you irritate, if you mention their offences. They like to hear others accused; but abhor the least hint against their own faults. Tell the imposer on the church, that un-instituted terms of communion are sinful; and rage is awakened. Persuade the bitter spirit to be peaceable; and his tongue is soon envenomed; and you shall be railed on, as the great disturber.

OBJECTION II. "But a great part of the land is innocent of some of the most notorious crimes; the sober persons are many, who share not in the profaneness of the land; the persecuted and ejected cannot be guilty of the oppressions they were under; and many of the church of England never agreed thereto."

ANSWER 1. How little do such truly mourn for those sins of other men! How much more common is it to hear the better sort scoff and laugh at profaneness, than bewail it! Persecutors are more railed at, than mourned for. By this we become guilty.

2. Are not there iniquities with the soberer part of the nation, impenitently continued in to this day? Do we see backslidings healed? How much more mortified, heavenly, circumspect, charitable, or fruitful, are the hopefulest persons in the land, by all our calls? Yea, our complaints, though so general, little tend to alter us: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." (Isai. lxiv. 6, 7.)

OBJECTION III. "But if we consider the sovereign dealings of God with us, may not we expect mercy, though we see not repentance? As,

"1. *God hath lately wrought a great deliverance, when we were on the brink of ruin, and that by a series of miracles, when we were as unworthy as we are now.*"

ANSWER 1. Such deliverances are never completed, and seldom long continue, where repentance doth not immediately follow. Though God may command deliverance first, yet he annexeth holiness to it; and where that fails, the beginnings of safety prove a snare, and do expose to greater distress. "But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." (Obad. 17.) When he saved from Babylon, he cleanseth them from iniquity: "And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the Heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them: and the Heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their

eyes. For I will take you from among the Heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 23—27.)

2. Do not we find that deliverance is at a sensible stop, for want of our amendment? Instruments to save us seem less apt; our enemies are in better heart, and a much more threatening posture. The hand of God is at a stop: those hopeful touches on the minds of men are much defaced: they that mean well are less spirited and intrusted; they who design ill are more vigorous and countenanced. What a change have a few months made in our hopes, though they were raised by the highest displays of divine power and goodness! It is almost true, "You shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you." (Isai. xxxiii. 11.) "This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth." (2 Kings xix. 3.) "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen." (Isai. xxvi. 17, 18.)

"2. *May not we hope that God will finish our salvation for his own honour; and not suffer a work, wherein he hath so immediately appeared, to be imperfect; notwithstanding we reform not?*"

ANSWER 1. God hath his honour concerned in giving national mercies to an impenitent people, as well as in not perfecting a begun deliverance. He is sanctified in afflicting a sinful land; his government is exposed in sparing an unpersuadable people. "But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness." (Isai. v. 16.) "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou

shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." (Ezek. xviii. 15—19.) Nay, we oftener find him bear the reproach of not delivering his afflicted people, than of not punishing a rebellious people. "O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name." (Psalm lxxiv. 10, 18.)

2. God can secure his honour in both these respects, with great consistency. He may ruin Popery in other places, while he exposeth Protestants to it here. He may perfect this begun deliverance in England as to Papists, that they may not blaspheme; and yet distress Protestants by each other, and so still punish the land for its impenitency.

OBJECTION IV. "God seems to single out some particular families for judgments, who have been most accessory to the sins of our land. He hath altered the succession; and so it is probable, he may not punish the nation for the iniquity of the throne."

ANSWER 1. God may punish a land for the sins of a former king, though the government be transferred into another family. God punished Israel with three years' famine in David's reign, "for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." (2 Sam. xxi. 1.)

2. If others do not take warning by such judgments as are levelled against particular persons, and repent, judgments will extend beyond those persons or families. Successors, by the same neglects and provocations, will expose a land to miseries; though their title be not derived by descent from former offenders. Yea, if a new government and people purge not the land of the crimes which had their rise in a former court, the vengeance will follow to the extent of the infection, and the guilty at least be in danger of misery. David righted the injured Gibeonites, before the famine ceased.

3. How little is profaneness or irreligion restrained! How faint and few are the attempts for reforming the nation since God hath blessed us with a prognostic of good, in the change of our government! Are men spirited for this, as Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, &c.? To be infected by others seems easier than to reform them.

OBJECTION V. "Are we not under such accomplishment of prophecies, as may argue [that] a Protestant kingdom, begun to be delivered, shall have its deliverance perfected, notwithstanding its sinful distempers? Is not the Philadelphian state beginning, the witnesses rising, the Ottoman empire falling, and antichrist's ruin just reviving and perfecting, even to the utmost of the judgments determined against him?"

ANSWER. I am well persuaded of all this, and have declared it many years, when the contrary was more probable as to the posture of affairs here, and in the rest of Europe; yet let me tell you,

1. That, in the accomplishment of these prophecies, the Spirit will be abundantly poured out, in order to the eminent holiness of such places as share in these blessings. All the promises that refer to these

latter days are full of peace, purity of doctrine and worship, and true godliness. With the song for antichrist's fall, the church is made ready, and "clean linen, which is the righteousness of the saints," is given to her. (Rev. xix. 2, 7, 8.)

2. Almost at the entrance of fulfilling these prophecies, there will be the most shaking and astonishing dispensation toward the churches as ever befell them. Then is the "great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." (Rev. xvi. 18.) This is that "hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." (Rev. iii. 10.) These epistles I take to be prophetic of the most eminent periods of the church-state, from Christ's time to the end of the world; and this trial is in the beginning of the Philadelphian state. It is true indeed, this will benefit the church at last, and be fatal to its enemies and false members; but it will be terrible to all.

3. Such an awful dispensation seems necessary to purge the church, and lay a good foundation of its real and lasting glory. This will be a means to convince false and irreligious Protestants, that "said they were Jews, and were not." (Rev. iii. 9.) It will pluck up every plant out of the church which God hath not planted. Hereby all constitutions repugnant to Christ's interests will be overthrown. Without such a paroxysm, how should degenerated Christianity recover itself? how shall the power of reforming the church be rescued out of the hands of such who hate its purity and spiritual welfare?

It is next to impossible, by any calmer means, to settle peace in the church, or awaken Protestants out of that formal temper which is the epidemic crime of the Sardinian* interval. You have it expressed in those words: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (Rev. iii. 1.) Many are really dead, as unregenerate; others dead, in opposition to spiritual liveliness.

Thus I have represented to you what seems most considerable as to the posture of our land, with respect to national mercies.

I shall offer my own thoughts upon the whole.

I think, the repentance of England for national sins is short of that which may give us grounds to expect national mercies.

The methods of God indeed seem designed to make us a happy people; but it must be in the proper way and season. The great things God hath begun to work, the liberty he hath settled, the disposition in many young ones to return to God and comply with his designs, his manifest exposing such who were likely to obstruct a reformation,—support my hopes, that blessings are in reserve for this sinful land. But yet it is probable, that some extraordinary storm will fall upon the nation, as a means to bring us to amendment, and a testimony from heaven against our crying evils and shameful impenitency. By terrible things, God will prepare us for blessings; and introduce our happiness by that which will try our utmost faith. I can hardly account our foundations sure while men justify their sins,

* I suppose this word to be a misprint for *Sardian* or *Sardic*.—EDIT.

and persist in them. Our very reformation is impossible, while men of most influence have no heart to it; yea, hate and fear it.

Whenever I see magistrates engage in reforming us, as their great duty, and with their whole might; when men of power esteem repentance to be the truest interest of the nation; when the ministry is awakened to cry aloud, and doth impartially represent to the land all its sins and dangers, not mistaking or palliating our offences; when the body of the land, at least a considerable part of it, do crave and approve of reformation, and concur with the means [which] God shall prepare for it:—then, and not till then, shall I account our repentance hopeful, and consequently expect the blessings to be established which God seems earnest to bestow.

But “who shall live when God doeth this?” (Num. xxiv. 23.) What overturnings will effect it, when so many have failed to do us any good? It is something very amazing which can alter minds so averse, or remove men unchangeably obstinate; yet the providences of God toward England are likely to be terrible in proportion to all this.

I do not herein “limit the Holy One,” but humbly propose my thoughts, as to the usual aptitude of means to their end; not wholly neglecting the indications of present providences as to this matter; much less would I overlook scripture-prophecies.

(III.) USE OF LAMENTATION.

Let us lament the impenitency of the nation, and its forfeiture of mercies, and hazard of judgments hereby. (Jer. viii. 6.)

What can be cause of mourning equal to our obstinateness? We are guilty of bloody crimes; and most regard it not. We seem reconciled to our abominations, as if they were innocent; and are as secure as if God had not threatened to punish a people for them.

The land is full of sin, after all the means which were sent to cleanse us. The fire hath devoured, yet our dross remains. The plague hath in its rage swept away thousands, yet the provocations of England abate not. How oft hath the Lord cried, “Wilt thou not be clean? when shall it once be?” (Jer. xiii. 27.) But we have held fast our several iniquities.

It is but lately, that Popery and slavery were coming on us like a deluge, to the amazement of all that could with any zeal consider it; but the nation now seems sorry that it was at all convinced, and repents that there was the least motion in it toward amendment.

O the ferment, that hastily succeeded our fears, lest sobriety or holiness should obtain! God hath followed his rebukes with undeserved, yea, unexpected mercies; but this sunshine hath made weeds to grow, instead of rendering judgments effectual to make us holy.

What methods have been untried? But none succeed. Which is the nation that ever withstood so many and various calls to repentance? Nineveh is England’s reproach; she repented at the first warning. Sodom would have condemned us, had it been trusted with half our advantages. Can the earth show an instance of per-

verseness equal to ours? as if the gospel had extinguished natural conscience, or a Christian profession did make us more regardless than Pagans. Every thing seems to harden us; we grow worse by those things that recover others.

Alas! we have few that bemoan our want of mourning. Are all our Jeremiahs asleep, that none drop a tear for England's security? Do all think it needless, or hopeless, to return unto the Lord, that so few seem to set themselves in earnest about it? How very few symptoms have we, that we are not under a judicial hardness! Many are convinced they ought to repent, yea, many resolve it; but how abortive doth all prove! Our iniquities baffle our resolves, and Satan triumphs over the vanity of our purposes. What a hateful prospect doth our nation afford to God and angels! We are a wonder to ourselves, when a drowsy mind allows us to entertain any serious considerations.

Lord! what will the end of these things be? Wilt thou always bear, and seem to observe, our provocations, as slightly as we do? Alas! this would make us more miserable than God's sorest rebukes. Judgments more awful than any we have yet felt, are become even necessary to our happiness; but though they be needful, what heart can endure them? What terror must attend those dispensations which will separate the precious from the vile; pluck up constitutions so rooted by interest, custom, malignity, and ignorance; disable the irreligious from settling church or state; and embitter our reigning sins to careless, scornful, and resolute offenders!

How dreadful is that storm that will drive all good men together, when they are cantoned into so many parties, embittered by mutual prejudices, fond of, and valuing themselves by, fond opinions, and distances from others; especially while self-conceit and ignorance so prevail!

How hot is that fire which will purge out the dross among churches, when it is eaten even into our hearts! What is that which can awaken drowsy saints, make the selfish public-spirited; bring the careless to holy watchfulness; and revive that simplicity, savouriness, and heavenly-mindedness, which is become such a mystery, and so unfashionable?

Surely, we may expect a complication of woes, and each filled with unusual degrees of God's avenging skill and power.

What may not we awfully expect? Disappointment by the likeliest men, dissolution of the most conceited churches, a shaking of the nation's pillars, a successive change of instruments, frequent blasts on begun deliverances, revivals by the most improbable instruments, many entire overturnings and changes, opposition among the best friends, very near approaches of the most dreaded mischiefs, men's minds struck with tremblings, all carnal refuge failing us, reason put to a nonplus, probable and improbable confounded beyond conjecture, counsel hid from the wise, force and power baffled, authority become weak, all order disturbed, men at a loss what to wish or deprecate, uncertain what to hope or fear, whom to distrust, or confide in!

These and many such things seem obvious, in the constitution of

that "day of the Lord" that is likely to be upon us. And how many more awful things are in his treasures, to fill up that dispensation of which he hath so long warned the world, as strange and unusual! We cannot judge of this "great earthquake" (which will affect us as well as other nations) by what hath been; for it is to exceed all that is past.

Who knows what new sights, strange strokes upon the spirits of men, and unheard-of judgments, may be reserved for this season?

Can we love our nation, and be unmoved? Can we hate ourselves so as not to lament, that these awful things should find us impenitent; yea, carry in them displeasing rebukes for that impenitency?

Should not we all wish, that each of our eyes were fountains of tears, to bewail at once the obstinateness, and the impending dangers, of the land of our nativity? "Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains." (Isai. xxii. 4, 5.)

THE END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.