

4. *Labour to "be strong in the grace" of faith that is in Christ Jesus.* (2 Tim. ii. 1.)—Not only for your own sakes, to avoid those anxieties which weakness of faith causeth; but for God's sake, that by strong faith ye may, with Abraham, the father of the faithful, give much glory to God, who hath annexed glory to believing. (Rom. iv. 16—20.)

5. *Pity them that do not believe, and labour to propagate your faith.*—Whose soul, that by faith are themselves secured, would not bleed in consideration of the dangerous, yea, certainly miserable, estate (as before described) of unbelieving friends, relations, acquaintance? Warn them; exhort them "while it is called to-day;" (Heb. iii. 13;) pray for them; yea, strengthen the weak in faith, and offend them not by going to the utmost bounds of your Christian liberty.

6. *Esteem them precious that have this precious faith; and "have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons."* (James ii. 1.)—Let "the poor of the world" that are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," be honourable in your esteem, as they are in God's. (James ii. 5.)

SERMON XXII.

BY THE REV. ZACHARY CROFTON, A.M.

REPENTANCE NOT TO BE REPENTED, PLAINLY ASSERTED, AND PRACTICALLY EXPLAINED.

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.
—Acts v. 31.

REPENTANCE being the subject of this day, in the course of this month's Exercise, to be discussed, I must wave the coherence and connexion of the text; only desire you to note, that the apostles assert the prerogative of Christ, as their apology for their disobedience to human commands. When they, forbidden, did proceed to preach, and a reason thereof is demanded, the answer is made in short: "Whether we ought to obey God or man, judge ye: Jesus Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to subdue his enemies by 'repentance,' and support his subjects by 'remission of sins.'" (Verses 29, 31.)

The text presents us with two parts considerable:—

1. *A Donor.*—Jesus Christ, "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour."
2. *The donation.*—And that is double: "Repentance;" "Remission of sins."

Answerable to the parts of the text, the DOCTRINES which might be inferred to our instruction, would be two.

DOCTRINE I. *Repentance and remission of sins are the especial acts and advantages of Jesus Christ's exaltation.*

DOCTRINE II. *It is the sole prerogative of the Lord Jesus to give repentance and remission of sins.*

But I must not insist on a formal discussion of either of these doctrines; my work and intention being to unfold, and practically explain, the nature of that most necessary (at all times, though now more especially) grace of true gospel-repentance; and therefore, premitting the doctrines, let me propound to your serious consideration these four things, namely, the,

I. *Nature*; II. *Necessity*; III. *Notes or characters*; IV. *Next way or means*; of gospel-repentance.

THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE.

I. First, then, *of the nature of repentance.*—And in opening it, I shall not trouble you with the curious and critical considerations of the word, or the various descriptions of the thing, set down by many sound and pious authors; * but briefly propound unto you this general description, as that which compriseth in it the nature and particular parts of true repentance; namely,

REPENTANCE DEFINED.

Repentance is a grace supernatural, whereby the believing sinner, sensibly affected with and afflicted for his sin as committed against God, freely confessing, and fervently begging pardon, turneth from all sin to God.

Instead of a logical division and discussion of this description, I shall distribute it into these theological conclusions, as most proper for your capacities, and profitable for your instruction:—

(I.) *“Repentance is a grace supernatural.”*

(II.) *The believing sinner is the subject of true gospel-repentance: “Whereby the believing sinner,” &c.*

(III.) *Sense of and sorrow for sin as committed against God, are the precursive acts of true repentance: “Sensibly affected with and afflicted for his,” &c.*

(IV.) *A “turning from all sin to God,” is the formality of true repentance.*

(V.) *Confession of guilt, and supplication for pardon, are constant concomitants of gospel-repentance.*

These several conclusions I shall briefly and distinctly explain, whereby I hope you will well understand the nature of repentance. And, first, of the First; namely,

CONCLUSION I.

(I.) *Repentance is a grace supernatural.*—It is a grace in its nature; supernatural in its Author, original, quality, and operation.

Repentance is a grace in its nature; not only as it is freely given

* AMBROSIIUS *De Pœnitentiâ*; ARETHI *Problem.* tom. i. lib. 3; DANIEL DYKE, STOCK, with many others.

us of God without the least merit of ours, but also as it is a gift animating and enabling unto action. That which I intend you especially to note, when we say repentance is a grace, is this; namely, that it is a habit, power, principle, spring, root, and disposition; not a bare, single, and transient action, as the Papists and some ignorant souls do imagine. Repentance is different and distinct from all penitential acts: sighing, self-castigation, and abstinence from all sinful actions, are fruits and expressions of repentance, but not the grace itself; for that diffuseth itself into the heart, and disposeth, habituateth, and enableth to all acts of sorrow for and cessation from sin. The repentance which is given of God, is not an action, but power, principle, and frame of spirit. The power and principle is divine; but act and exercise of repentance is human: God plants the root whereby man brings forth fruit worthy repentance. (Matt. iii. 8.) Repentance is no other but a spirit of grace, animating men to mourn. (Zech. xii. 10.) Repentance is not the work of an hour, or a day; but a constant frame, course, and bent of the soul, on all renewed guilt flowing afresh, and bringing forth renewed acts. When the mighty hand of God doth smite the flinty heart of man, it loseth its stone and hardness, becomes pliable to divine pleasure, is inclined to relent, and prone to distil its heavenly dew: and therefore it is called "a grace."

As in its nature repentance is a grace, so in its original and operation it is *supernatural*.—A grace freely given from above; not acquired by any means or merit of our own, but springing into the soul by the mere good-will of God, and immediate power of the Holy Ghost. However repentance must be acted, it cannot be acquired by man; it lieth out of the reach of human arm, and must be the effect of an Almighty hand, even the influence of God himself. There is not in man the least merit of condignity or congruity, that can engage Divine Justice to bestow it: No; it is a "good and perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." (James i. 17.) In vain do men seek repentance in any natural means; for birth, breeding, education, instruction, art, knowledge, moral suasion, friendly advice, and gospel-ministry itself, cannot work it, without the immediate operation of an Omnipotent Spirit: (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7:) that will, and that indeed only can, work above and contrary to the course of nature; God only can "take away the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) It is the sole and singular prerogative of Christ Jesus exalted "to give repentance:" all means and ministry are but a Moses's rod, a mere passive instrument: only the might of God's hand can make man's rocky heart relent. Ministers must indeed "preach in season" and "out of season," yet it is but a "peradventure" that "God will give repentance." (2 Tim. ii. 25; iv. 2.) In vain do men dally with and delay repentance, when God calleth, determining to themselves time wherein to repent; as if it were within the reach of their own arm, or at the command of corrupt nature; whilst (God knoweth) they may see their set time, (though that itself is doubtful,) and yet find "no place for repentance,

though they seek it with tears." (Heb. xii. 17.) Repentance is not the result of purest nature, nor yet the effect of the law; but a pure gospel-grace; preached by the gospel, promised in the covenant, sealed in baptism, produced by the Spirit, properly flowing from the blood of Christ; and so is every way supernatural; so that every returning sinner must pray to God: * "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned;" (Jer. xxxi. 18, 19;) and the praise of repentance obtained must be returned to God alone, as him from whom it hath been derived; (1 Peter i. 3;) for it is a grace supernatural. But, Secondly,

CONCLUSION II.

(II.) *The believing sinner is the subject of gospel-repentance.*—Whosoever repenteth, chargeth himself with guilt, and must needs be a sinner. Adam in innocency had no repentance, because no sin; and the Lord Jesus saith, he came not "to call the righteous, but the sinner to repentance." (Matt. ix. 13.) Returns do follow upon deviations, remorse upon disobedience; and repentance is the work of a transgressor.

But the subject of gospel-repentance must be a *believing sinner*; a sinner not only of sense, but also of hope; not only of conviction, but also of confidence, seeing a pardon procured for sin committed. Faith must be the formal qualification of a gospel-penitent, as the very foundation and fountain of true repentance; unbelief is the very ground of impenitency, and lock of obduracy. God's common complaint of impenitent Israel is, "They believed not." (Psalm lxxviii.) Then faith must needs unlock and release the soul unto its return to God; for *contrariorum eadem est ratio*, "the reason is the same to contraries." St. Ambrose calls faith *incendium penitentiae*, "the spur of repentance;" and the scripture doth suggest [it] to be the pump of repentance: "There is mercy with thee, that thou shouldest be feared." (Psalm cxxx. 4.) Hence it is that the objects of faith become arguments, and the promises of grace persuasions, to repentance. (Jer. iii. 13.) The approach of "the kingdom of God" is the only argument urged by John the Baptist, and our Saviour, to enforce repentance. (Matt. iii. 2; iv. 17.) Mercy apprehended animateth the miserable sinner to return to God. Israel mourned; but made no return until Shechaniah cried, "There is yet hope in Israel concerning this thing." (Ezra x. 2.) The Assyrians put halters on their necks, knowing that the "kings of Israel are merciful." (1 Kings xx. 31.) The law, shutting the door of hope, may stir up grief and horror; but it staveth off repentance. Sin, seeming unpardonable, sets the soul at a distance from God, and sinks it in despair; whilst the pardon proclaimed provoketh rebels' submission. *Nemo possit penitentiam agere nisi qui speraverit indulgentiam*; "No hope, no help to repentance," saith St. Ambrose. Repentance is argued from and effected by the death of Christ; Mount Calvary is the proper Bochim; the sufferings of a Saviour, the sad comments upon sin; the

* DYKE'S "Treatise of Repentance," pp. 3, 4.

sighs and groans of a Redeemer, most rending to regardless hearts ;* and the sweat and blood of the Lord, most soaking and suppling to an adamantine soul. But faith only apprehendeth and applieth a crucified Christ. Repentance, the soul's pump, is dry, and distils no water until faith pour in the blood of Christ, and water of gospel-promises. So that faith must precede repentance, as the cause to the effect, the mother before the daughter ; for it must qualify the true penitent. It is a mystery beyond the reach of nature, that a son should co-exist in time with the father ; but neither reason nor faith can allow a priority of the daughter before the mother.

I well know [that] many divines assert the precedency of repentance unto faith ; but, to my judgment, it is more than probable, yea, positively clear, that, in order of time, faith and repentance are infused together into the soul ; in order of sense and man's feeling, repentance is indeed before faith ; but, in divine method and the order of nature, faith is before repentance, as the fountain is before the stream.

OBJECTION.

But it is objected, that the order of scripture doth set repentance before faith ; so in preaching. (Mark i. 15 ; Matt. iii. 2 ; Luke iii. 3 ; Acts ii. 38 ; iii. 19.) And repentance is required as the qualification which must entitle to the promises. Remission of sin is only offered to the penitent : so that repentance is the reason of faith, and ground on which we believe sin is pardoned.

ANSWER.

In answer to this objection I shall propound unto your observation three rules which make a full and ready resolution to it.

RULE I. *Order of scripture doth not always conclude order of nature.*—In 2 Peter i. 10, "calling" is mentioned before "election : " yet who will deny election to be first in nature ? For, "whom God predestinated, them he also called." (Rom. viii. 30.) Again : in 1 Tim. i. 5, the "pure heart and good conscience" are mentioned before "faith ; " yet none can deny them to be the effects of faith, which purifieth the heart ; (Acts xv. 9 ;) for to the unbelieving "nothing is pure, but their very mind and conscience is defiled." (Titus i. 15.)

RULE II. *Human sense is in many things the dictator of scripture-order.*—The Holy Ghost speaketh of things as they are obvious to our sense and capacity, rather than as they are in themselves and their own order. Hence it is that the promises of peace, pardon, and the like privileges are propounded unto repentance, as a qualification obvious to our sense, and evidencing our faith. Faith and election must be known *a posteriori*, "by their effects,"—repentance and vocation ; and therefore are mentioned after them. For though we believe before we repent, we repent before we know that we do believe.

RULE III. *Misapprehension of the nature of grace doth easily lead*

* GERHARDI *Meditat. secunda. Exercitium penitentiae ex Dominicâ passione.*

into a mistake of the order of grace.—Such as deem common illumination and conviction to be repentance, and assurance of pardon, joy and peace, to be the formality of faith, may very well place repentance before faith: but such as understand the acceptance of Christ, in order to pardon, to be true and saving faith; and a ceasing from sin, and serious application of ourselves to piety, to be the formality of repentance; will plainly see, that faith, uniting us to Christ, and deriving to us the efficacy of his death and sufferings, that we may be holy, doth precede, and must needs be the cause of, true repentance.

Let me then dismiss this rule with this NOTE, or OBSERVATION:—

NOTE.

Faith, in its existence and essential acts, but without its reflection, fruits, and effects, is the foundation and fountain of true repentance.

Such, therefore, on the one hand, as apprehend and assent unto the history of the gospel, and are sometimes affected with and afflicted for their sin, but do not accept of Jesus Christ as tendered to be Lord and Saviour, do fix their engine too low to force the waters of repentance into the soul. Yet this devil's faith may produce a Judas's repentance; for a hypocritical repentance is the result of a historical faith. And, on the other hand, he that seeks assurance of his sin pardoned as an argument of repentance, maketh the effect both cause and effect, and concludeth himself into a condition not needing repentance, whilst he pretendeth to enforce it. But the true frame of a gospel-penitent is, by saving faith to see salvation, through the satisfaction of Christ our Saviour, extended to sinners, himself not excluded; and so, closing with, accepting of, and appropriating to himself the general tenders of grace and terms of the covenant, to prostrate himself at the feet of mercy, and pursue his pardon, until, by acts of sincere repentance, he assure himself [that] his aimed-at happiness is attained, and shall with certainty be possessed: and so he experienceth in himself, and evidenceth unto all others, that the believing sinner is the subject of gospel-repentance. And now I pass to the third conclusion considerable in the nature of repentance.

CONCLUSION III.

(III.) *Sense of and sorrow for sin, as committed against God, are the precursive acts of true repentance.*

True repentance, as most divines determine, doth consist in two parts; namely, *humiliation*, and *conversion*: the casting down [of] the heart for sin, and the casting off sin: a repenting “for uncleanness,” *ἐπι τῇ ἀκαθάρσει*, (2 Cor. xii. 21,) and sin, with grief, shame, and anguish; and repenting “from iniquity,” *ἀπο κακίας*, (Acts viii. 22; Rev. ix. 20,) and “from dead works.” (Heb. vi. 1.) This distinction, or rather distribution, of repentance, is not only dictated by the denominations of repentance;—which in the Hebrew is called *נִחַם* *nocham*, “an irking of the soul;” and *תְּשׁוּבָה* *teshubbah*, “a turning from iniquity:” so in the Greek, *μεταμέλεια*, *metamelia*, “after-grief;” and *μετανοια*, *metanoia*, “after-wit:” and in the

Latin, *pœnitentia*, and *resipiscentia* ; the one expressing the sense and sorrow of the soul ; the other, the retrogradations and returns of it from sin ;—but the scripture also doth clearly suggest, nay, speak out, these distinct parts of repentance,—humiliation and conversion ; requiring sometimes the one, sometimes the other, when repentance is the duty to be discharged ; calling sometimes for fasting, weeping, and walking in sackcloth and ashes, nay, the rending of the heart, and not the garments ; (Joel ii. 12, 13 ;) and sometimes, and that very commonly, for turning to the Lord. Nay, the whole work of repentance is in scripture expressed by humiliation. In the promise of pardon to the penitent, their repentance is described to be an humbling of the uncircumcised heart, and acceptance of the punishment of their sin. (Lev. xxvi. 41.) So when Rehoboam and Manasseh repented, they are only said to humble themselves. (2 Chron. xii. 6 ; xxxiii. 12.) And under the gospel we read of repentance for sin, as well as from sin ; and it is denominated “godly sorrow,” which “worketh repentance :” (2 Cor. vii. 10 :) working not only as a cause, but complement ; perfecting, finishing, and completing repentance. And therefore the apostle James requires them that “draw nigh to God,” and cleanse their heart, and purify their hands,—that they “be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, and humble themselves under the hand of God.” (James iv. 8—10.) And the covenant of grace, promising repentance, doth express itself by these two acts : “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.” (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) “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.)

So that, according to the expressions of scripture, as well as the experiences of the saints, humiliation of the soul is an essential act, and eminent part, of repentance. And this is that which I in the description do denominate “sense of and sorrow for sin, as committed against God ;” thereby intending to note unto you, that the soul must be humbled that will be lifted up by the Lord ; and his humiliation doth and must consist of these two parts,—conviction and contrition, sight of and sorrow for sin.

FIRST PART OF HUMILIATION.

1. The first part of humiliation is, a *spirit of conviction, or sight of sin, in every penitent soul*.—Which is no other than the operation of the Holy Ghost, opening the blind eye to see the deviations of the soul, and the destruction inevitably attending the persistence in it. This act of repentance and humiliation is no other but the prodigal’s return “to himself,” in sense of his own starving condition, whilst his “father’s servants have bread enough ;” (Luke xv. 17 ;) the arrival of the law unto the reviving of sin, in Paul’s sense and feeling ; (Rom. vii. 9 ;) the communing with our hearts, that we may tremble, and not sin ; (Psalm iv. 4 ;) a searching and trying our ways, that we may return unto the Lord ; (Lam. iii. 40 ;) a smiting on the thigh,

with a "What have we done?" (Jer. xxxi. 19;) the smiting of David's heart, with an "I have sinned against the Lord;" (2 Sam. xxiv. 10;) the judging of ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord; the spirit of bondage, which goeth before the Spirit of adoption: in a word, it is the soul's serious erection of a court in its own breast, and setting conscience in the throne, and making a judicial process, to descry and determine its eternal condition. In order to which,

(1.) *It spreads before itself the law of God.*—As that which must be the rule of life, and reason of death and condemnation; the will of God dictating duty, and dissuading iniquity; awarding recompence according to obedience or disobedience: in a word, determining of men: "Thus do, and live," or, "Thus do, and die:" "Thus I will be worshipped, and you shall be rewarded; in this if you transgress, you shall be thus punished." The soul seeth clearly that "the law" is, in nature and necessity, a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," whilst, by serious consideration of its genuine sense and due extent, the soul standeth convinced,—“This is duty enjoined; this is sin inhibited: herein if I offend, not only in deed and word, but thought or imagination, I am a transgressor, bound under guilt and the expectation of judgment.” Thus the coming of the law into Paul's mind becomes the revival of sin; (Rom. vii. 9;) and Josiah's reading in the law of Moses led him to the tremblings of heart, and rending his garment before the Lord. (2 Chron. xxxiv. 18, 19.) For as indeed without the law there is no transgression, so without the knowledge of the law there can be no conviction. Ignorance of divine pleasure is the great obstruction of repentance; and therefore the prince of this world doth daily endeavour to blow out the light of the word, or to blind the eyes of the sons of men, that they may not see and be converted; but God sends his prophets, "rising up early, and sending them," (Jer. vii. 25,) to read the law in the ears of men, that Israel may see his sin, and Judah her transgression. The first act of repentance is the falling of the scales from off the sinner's eyes; the first language of a turning soul is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6, 18:) so that the soul, humbling, self-examinant, seeing the law to be "holy, and just, and good," that which must be the rule and reason of its condition, it being to arraign and condemn itself, becomes studious of the law in its full sense and due extent, in commands, prohibitions, promises, and threats, and sets before its eye every particular precept, and pondereth the righteousness of that God who hath declared a curse against every one that continueth not in the law to do it; and so by the justification of, and insight to, the law of God, exciteth the soul to self-reflection, and is constrained to cry out, "What have I done?" Whereupon it,

(2.) *Surveyeth the past course of his own life.*—Summoneth together all faculties, powers, and members of both soul and body, to make rehearsal of his past conversation, in word, thought, and deed, and to give an exact account of their conformity or disagreement with the law of God established, and [the] rule by which it must be judged.

And now he communeth with his heart, considereth his ways, examineth himself, makes an exact comparison of his life with God's law, layeth the line close to his carriage; and so convinceth himself of his deviations and irregularities; insomuch that sin reviveth, and he dieth; guilt appeareth, and grief and shame aboundeth; his own heart condemns him as disobedient and a transgressor of the law, that he is constrained to cry out, "What I should do, I have not done; and I have left undone what I ought to have done. (Rom. vii. 19.) I have sinned against the Lord. (2 Sam. xii. 13.) If God be severe to mark what is amiss, I cannot abide in his presence; for I have not only offended in part of his holy law, and broken the least of his commandments, but I have violated the whole law, and am a transgressor against every command." Nay, he cometh, on this consideration, to be convinced of his anomy and ataxy, the pravity of his nature, that enmity to the law which is implanted in his very being, and that irregularity whereby evil is ever present; but to do good he hath no mind; so that he must needs cry out, "I have sinned, and must return; or else I perish." Now reproof finds ready acceptance from him: the ministers of God shall meet with no murmuring, if they cry unto him, "Thou art the man;" for he is apt and ready to draw up a bill of indictment, and read a large accusation, against his own soul. His iniquity now finds him out, and followeth him every where, [so] that it becomes alive, and appears against him with vigour; not admitting of the least apology, but leading him to condemnation, and laying him open to the curse due unto them that break the law. And therefore he now,

(3.) *Sentenceth himself as accursed of God, and bound over to divine fury.*—The conscience [consciousness] of his guilt concludes him under the condemnation of the law, [so] that he seeth cause to wonder at his very being; concludeth himself unworthy the least of mercy, and God to be just in the greatest of judgments which lie upon him; and so proceedeth to judge himself, and seal up his own soul under the curse, standing under the continual expectation of God's fiery indignation to be revealed from heaven; determining itself a debtor to the law, and, as such, liable to justice, and in itself unable to make the least satisfaction. So that now the soul doth not only assent unto the law as true in all its threats, but applieth them unto himself; confessing [that] unto him belongs shame and confusion, hell and horror, woe and eternal misery; that he knoweth not how to escape; but if God proceed against him, he is most miserable and undone for ever; and so is constrained with anguish of soul to cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30.)

This is then the first part of humiliation, when the soul, in this due order and judicial method of conviction, is brought to a sight of sin, to see God offended, the law violated, the soul damned and destined to everlasting woe, if not redeemed by the mercy of a God, who hath established Jesus Christ his Son to be a Lord and Saviour, to give remission and repentance, and so it proceeds to the sorrow for his sin as committed against God.

SECOND PART OF HUMILIATION.

2. The second part, then, of penitential humiliation is *contrition, or sorrow for sin as committed against God*.—Herein the soul is not only acquainted with, but afflicted for, its guilt; seeth not only that it is a sinner, but sorroweth under, and is ashamed of, so sad and sinful an estate. The stony heart is broken, the adamant soul dissolved; he rends not his garment, but his heart, and goeth out and weepeth bitterly. He seeth with shame his many abominations; and readeth, with soul-distressing sorrow and anguish, the curse of the law that is due unto him; and considereth, with almost soul-distracting despair, the doleful estate into which his sin hath resolved him: for he seeth God, with whom he is not able to plead, to be highly offended; and therefore must, with Job, confess that he is not able to answer when God reproveth; he is vile, and must lay his hand on his mouth; though in his pride he hath once spoken, yet now he hath no answer; yea, twice, but he dare proceed no further. (Job xl. 4, 5.) Well, seeing that all contending with God is but a darkening [of] counsel “by words without knowledge;” (Job xxxviii. 2;) and so he becomes submissive and silent under the saddest of affliction inflicted by God; crying out, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.” (Psalm li. 4.) And, “Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” (Lam. iii. 39.) The soul is in itself confounded on the sense that God claps his hands against him for his sin: therefore his heart cannot endure, or his hands be strong. (Ezek. xxii. 13, 14.)

Compunction of spirit is the only condition of the convinced penitent; he seeth he is liable to the curse of the law, and his only outcry is, “What shall we do to be saved?” (Acts xvi. 30.) He, being convinced that he hath crucified the Lord of life, is “pricked at the heart;” (Acts ii. 36, 37;) and, in all approaches unto God, he is ashamed and amazed, because a man of polluted lips. Nay, sadly seeing that sin overspreads him, his very righteousness is as “a menstruous cloth,” (Isai. lxiv. 6; xxx. 22,) he, like the poor publican, stands afar off, and dares not “so much as lift up his eyes to heaven;” and his only note and echo is, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke xviii. 13.) He humbleth himself under the hand of God, as having deserved the most heavy of plagues. His haughty spirit is now laid low within him; he is wholly resolved into sorrow, even “godly sorrow:” (2 Cor. vii. 10:) it is his grief that guilt is on his spirit; but his greater grief, that his sin is gone out against God, a gracious and a holy God, a just and a holy law. His sorrow is a sorrow of candour and ingenuity; not so much that he is liable to the lash, and obnoxious to the curse, as that a Father is offended, the image of his God defaced. His grand complaint is, “I have sinned against God;” his soul-affliction and heart-trembling is, “God is offended.” The frowns of God sink deeper, and seize more sadly on his spirit, than the sharpest of his sufferings. His earnest cry is for the joy of God’s salvation. (Psalm li. 12.) He is not only afflicted with the terrors of the law, which he confesseth belong to him;

but is melted with merciful ministrations of the gospel, of which he is so unworthy. He cannot look unto Christ but with a spirit of mourning; (Zech. xii. 10;) moved by the strength of the remedy to see the height of his malady, and, by the dolour of a Saviour, made sensible of the depth of his misery, by the mercy and love manifested to so great a sinner he is led to mourn over a gracious Saviour: like Mary Magdalene, he loveth much, and manifesteth it by lamenting much, because much is forgiven. (Luke vii. 47.)

Thus then the believing sinner comes home by weeping-cross; finds conviction and contrition antecedaneous acts unto his conversion, a sense of and sorrow for his sin precursive parts of his repentance. And God holds this method in giving repentance for sundry wise and gracious ends which he hath propounded to be effected. As,

(1.) *To suit them for, and engage them to set an esteem on, Christ Jesus, and the remission of sin in him.*—“They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick;” and Christ came not to call the righteous to repentance, but the sinner. (Matt. ix. 12, 13.) The hunted beast flies to his den, and the pursued malefactor to the horns of the altar; the chased man-killer to his city of refuge: so the humbled sinner unto Jesus Christ. Like Paul, slain with the sense of sin, and constrained to cry out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin?” it soon seeth and saluteth Christ for his Saviour, with an “I thank God through Jesus Christ, I have gained the victory.” (Rom. vii. 24, 25.) The weary and heavy-laden are the men invited to Christ for ease and refreshment; (Matt. xi. 28;) for indeed such only seek him, and can be satisfied in him, and duly savour him. The full stomach of a proud Pharisee loathes the honey-comb of Christ’s righteousness; whilst to the hungry appetite of the humbled sinner, the bitterest passions of a Saviour are exceeding sweet. The deeper the sense of misery, the sweeter is the sense of mercy. How acceptable is the fountain of living waters to the chased, panting heart! and the blood of Christ to the thirsty soul and conscience, scorched with the sense of God’s wrath! The broken and the contrite heart is the only sacrifice acceptable to God.* (Psalm li. 17.) The wounded Samaritan is the fit object of his compassion. A Mary Magdalene cannot but love much, when, looking on her sins, she seeth much is forgiven.

(2.) *To set them at enmity with sin, and in due submission to his sacred will.*—Sin is natural to the sons of men; and only smart for it will make us sick, and willing to be rid, of it. Until God bring Israel into affliction, they regard him not; but then they seek him daily. (Hosea v. 15.) An unbroken sinner is as unfit for God’s instruction, as an unbroken colt for the saddle, or unfallowed ground for seed. Manasseh’s bonds brake in him the power of his sin; (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12;) and the shakings of the prison, to the heart-ache of the jailor, makes him pliable to divine pleasure: “What shall I do to be saved?” (Acts xvi. 30.) Sense of sin is a principle of

* *Deus oleum non infundit nisi in vas contritum.*—BERNARDUS. “God pours his oil of gladness and consolation only into a contrite vessel.”—EDIT.

submission under affliction : " Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ? " (Lam. iii. 39.) Sin's revival unto remorse of conscience, constrains Paul's outcry : " O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from this body of corruption ? "

The humbled heart gives a heedy ear to divine instruction : they are not stiff-necked, but give their hand to the Lord to be led by him ; (2 Chron. xxx. 8 ;) and therefore God will teach the humble his way. (Psalm xxv. 9.) A bruised heart is, like soft wax, prepared for divine impression ; so that, to the end [that] Christ may be of esteem as a Lord and Saviour, the penitent soul must on due conviction cry out : " Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? " (Micah vi. 6, 7.) And to the end [that] we may be set against sin, it must sting the conscience, and so work us into a willingness to do or suffer the will of God, making us, with earnestness and resolution, cry, when " pricked at the heart, " " What shall we do to be saved ? " So that a sight of and sorrow for sin as committed against God, are parts of, and essential to, true repentance. Only, before I pass from this conclusion, let it be noted, that they are precursive acts ; repentance cannot be constituted without them : but they are precursive, such as always go before ; sometimes, yea, too often, at least in show and appearance, without true repentance. Judas is convinced of and cast down for sin unto utter despair, crying out, " I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. " (Matt. xxvii. 4.) And Ahab may humble himself in all external expressions, and many internal operations of the soul ; and yet never be turned unto the Lord.

We may not indeed deny, that humiliation, especially in the external acts and expressions, goeth many times without conversion and completed repentance ; and so we must needs conclude, [that] conviction is not true grace, or an estate of saving holiness ; but that sad complaints of guilt may pass from reprobates and damned souls : yet we must remember, [that] repentance or conversion never goeth without humiliation, sight of and sorrow for sin. In the order of nature, men must be convinced of and confounded for the evil from which they are converted. We cannot hate and avoid the evil we do not know, and know to afflict us ; and the order of scripture doth always call to a communing with our hearts, that we may " stand in awe, and not sin ; " (Psalm iv. 4 ;) a searching and trying our ways, before we turn unto the Lord. The law must do its work, as " a schoolmaster, " to every soul that is brought to Christ ; and the gospel ever sends the prick into the heart of such as repent unto remission of sin, (Acts ii. 37, 38,) and " the spirit of bondage, " before " the Spirit of adoption, " " of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. " (Rom. viii. 15 ; 2 Tim. i. 7.)

Preaching repentance is the opening [of] the blind eye, and the

bringing [of] the prodigal into his right mind; that, in the sense of his sad estate, he may go unto his father and seek mercy. The work of the word is to make *them* sinners of sense, *that* shall come to Christ for cure; to cast down all proud imaginations, and every high thought which exalteth itself, and so to bring into obedience to Christ; (2 Cor. x. 5;) to affect men with guilt and danger, that they may with fervency cry, "What shall we do to be saved?" to convince, that the issues of death will be the end of the way in which they now walk, that they may flee with desire, and return without delay: in a word, to affect the heart with the high transgressions of God's holy law, the disobedience of a gracious Father, and offence done to infiniteness; that the soul may down on its knees, prostrate itself at the footstool of mercy, fly to Jesus Christ as its Redeemer, Surety, and alone satisfaction, and so sue out its pardon by a serious return to God. And these are, as it were, the pangs of the new birth, natural and necessary, though sometimes abortive and miscarriage; the first part of sincere repentance, though not always successful to perfect and complete it. For although we must not call the convinced conscience a gospel-convert, yet the convert is always convinced. Sense of and sorrow for sin is no infallible sign of saving grace; yet saving grace and sincere repentance are never wrought without a sight of and sorrow for sin as committed against God. For this is the precursive act of true repentance; and whenever God will seal up under impenitency, he stops the passage and possibility of humility; making the ear heavy, and the eye dim, and the heart hard, "lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears," and be of humbled hearts, and so be converted. (Matt. xiii. 15.) And so much for the third conclusion.

But again, in the nature of repentance we must note,

CONCLUSION IV.

(IV.) *Turning from all sin to God, is the formality of true repentance.*—Sincere conversion is the *summa totalis* and *ratio formalis* of a gospel-penitent. Remorse for sin, without a return from sin, will afford you no comfort. Sin is an aversion from God; and repentance a conversion to God. The common call of sinners unto repentance is, to "turn," and "return to God." (Isai. xlv. 22; lv. 7; Jer. iv. 1; xviii. 11; and many other places.) Whenever repentance is promised, or predicated and spoken of in scripture, it is ordinarily by this term, of "turning," and "returning to the Lord," (Isai. xix. 22; lix. 20;) and that not only in the Old, but also in the New, Testament: "We were as sheep going astray; but now are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." (1 Peter ii. 25.) Every sinner is, toward God, like Hagar, resisting the will, and then running from the presence, of her mistress; until by the Angel of the Covenant called to repentance, and caused to return by weeping-cross, and submit under his hand. Like travellers, we are out of the way, and running upon our ruin, and had need to call one on another, "Come, and let us return to our God." (Hosea vi. 1.) Like the

prodigal, we are out of our wits, until by a spirit of repentance we recover our sound mind, and return to our Father, from whom we have madly run away; so that the very formality of repentance is "returning."

All Judas-conviction and confession, nay, contrition and condemnation, will not constitute a gospel-penitent, for want of conversion. Repentance, when it is true and saving, makes the sinner sadly smite on his thigh, and say, "What have I done?" and speedily to face about and say, "I will do so no more." The gospel-penitent is a positive changeling; no more the same [that] he was: "Old things are done away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) He is really and thoroughly changed; not in his substance, as the Familists fondly fancy; nor in quantity, measure, and degree, as common Christians too commonly dream; but in quality, nature, frame, and disposition. The soul and body, in regard of their essence, powers, faculties, proper and natural actions, remain the same after that they were before repentance: sorrow, fear, joy, love, desire, natural passions and affections, are indeed altered, not annihilated; restrained, nay, regulated, not ruined: but the whole man is, in respect of property, bent, and disposition, no more the same, but a very changeling; [so] that it may be said of them, as of Onesimus, "In time past unprofitable, but now profitable;" (Phil. 11;) or as of the Corinthians, [that] they were thieves, fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, what not? but [that] they are washed, they are cleansed, they are sanctified. (1 Cor. vi. 9—11.) The very best of men, before the grace of God their Saviour appear, by the working of repentance and [the] renewing of the Holy Ghost, are, as the apostles themselves were, foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, rebellious to God's holy will, running from his gracious presence, and continually going astray; but when by the grace of repentance they see, and are saddened for, their aberrations and sinful course, they speedily return from all sin to God. So that turning is their general act and business.

And it consists of two parts, answerable to the terms about which it is conversant: and they are,

1. *Recession from sin.*
2. *Reversion to God.*

Or, as the prophet, in the name of the Lord, phraseth it, a ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well; (Isai. i. 16, 17;) or the wicked man's forsaking his evil way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and returning to the Lord; (Isai. lv. 7;) or, as the apostle James, a cleansing your hands, you sinners, and purging your hearts, you double-minded; and drawing nigh unto the Lord. (James iv. 8.) The work of regeneration doth consist in putting off the old, and putting on the new, man. It is not being conformed to the world, or fashioned according to the lust of ignorance; but being transformed by the renewing of our mind, to be holy as God is holy. (Rom. xii. 2; 1 Peter i. 14, 15.)

FIRST PART OF CONVERSION.

1. So that the first part of conversion is a *recession from all sin*.—Which the Psalmist calleth, “a departing from iniquity;” (Psalm xxxiv. 14; xxxvii. 27;) as the original word רָצוּ will bear it, “a subtracting from sin,” that the number and increase of it may be small, and at the length amount to just nothing. And as the prophet Isaiah: “a ceasing from evil;” as the Septuagint rendereth it, “a resting, and being quiet, from the practice of iniquity;” so in Isai. i. 16: $\text{Παυσασθε απο των πονηριων υμων}$ and, as after, “a forsaking of his evil ways, utterly deserting and relinquishing sin.” (Isai. lv. 7.) This is that which the apostle calleth “a casting off,” flinging from us with detestation and anger “the works of darkness,” (Rom. xiii. 12,) so as never more to “have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Eph. v. 11.) Nay, it is an apostasy from sin, to break league with, and violate all those bonds in which we stand bound to profaneness; and with rage and resolution rebel against the sovereignty of sin which it hath exercised over us. If we will call on the name of the Lord, and become his subjects, we must recede, rebel against sin, bid open defiance, and proclaim open war against it, notwithstanding all those engagements that lie upon us: “Let him depart [from iniquity],” saith our translation; in the original, $\text{αποστητω απο αδικιας}$, “apostatize from unrighteousness.” (2 Tim. ii. 19.)

Sin hath an interest in and engagement upon men. By nature they are obliged to follow it; and the whole man is too much devoted to pursue and obey the dictates of lust. But repentance dischargeth all, and turneth the whole man into an estrangedness to, nay, enmity against, sin; so that both soul and body in faculties and members do withdraw from sin. The thoughts are now no more engaged to contrive and devise iniquity, nor the heart to embrace it, or hands to act it; the members of the body are no longer yielded to be the instruments of unrighteousness; but the contrary is now effected by repentance. In a word, the penitent soul recedes and turns from all sin,

First. *By the apprehension of his mind*.—Seeing sin and its sinfulness, he discerns the contrariety of it to the image of God. By the law, which is, by the spirit of repentance, engraven on his heart, he now knows sin, which he never knew before; he discovereth abundance of evil, in what he deemed exceeding good. He now seeth he sinned to the damnation of his soul, in what he thought to have been good service to God. He is now freed from error, and readily disowns, and damneth as desperately wicked, what he sometimes allowed and argued for as eminently good. With Job's proud friends, when penitent, [he] seeth he hath need of God's pardon and Job's prayer for the very things he spake for God; and, like pharisaical Paul, seeth horrid unrighteousness in all his self-righteousness of which he had vaunted; so that sin shall no more impose on his judgment, but he will try all its dictates, and discover the falsehood that is therein.

Secondly. *By the alteration of his will and affections.*—That he shall not more disallow than detest the sinfulness of sin. He no sooner seeth his iniquity, but he loatheth himself because of his abominations. Sin was never so much the object of his affections, as now it is the object of his passions. What he before loved, desired, delighted in, he now by repentance hateth, feareth, envieth: with David, he hateth “every false way,” and the very workers of iniquity. (Psalm cxix. 104.) If he be surprised, by the difficulty of his estate, or distemper of his mind, with an act of sin, he loatheth himself because of it; and, with Paul, professeth, “I do the things that I would not do.” The very existency of sin in him is his intolerable burden: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of corruption?” is his outcry. Death is desired, because he would sin no more. He would rather be redeemed from his “vain conversation,” than from wrath to come; penitent Anselm had rather be in hell without, than in heaven with, his iniquity; and therefore he yet recedes,

Thirdly. *Into an abstinence from, nay, actual resistance of, sin.*—He puts away the evil of his doings, forsakes his way, abstains “from the appearances of evil.” He is now ashamed of what he hath sometimes acted with eagerness. He now preacheth the gospel [which] he some time destroyed, and blesseth the name he blasphemed. He is not only restrained himself, but he labours to reclaim others, from iniquity. Nay, not only is his hand withheld from sin, but his heart is set against it; his study is to “mortify” his earthly members; and his resolution, that sin shall not reign in his mortal body, that he should “obey it in the lust thereof.” He is careful to avoid all occasions and inducements unto evil. He feareth to “make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof:” his hearty prayer is, that he may not fall “into temptation,” but be delivered “from evil.” (Matt. vi. 13.) He resisteth all sinful assaults, striveth against sin unto very blood. His righteous soul is grieved for the sins of others. All his complaint under sorrows is against sin. His care is to be rid of sin; his fear, of falling into sin.

So that the gospel-penitent maketh a perfect recession from sin, all sin; sin in its kind, not in its species or degree; not only this and that sin, but sin, which is contrary to God’s law and image, be it sin small or great, natural and near allied unto him. It is his care to keep himself from his own iniquity; the sin of his complexion, calling, constitution, or condition. He will not indulge his “right eye,” or “right hand,” in opposition to God’s holiness. (Matt. v. 29, 30.) No pleasure, profit, or honour shall willingly hire him to the least iniquity. The penitent eye judgeth sin by its complexion, not its composition; by its colour, not by its weight. He determines of it, not by comparison with itself, but its non-conformity to God’s law; so that if you say of any thing, “There is sin in it,” you have said enough to set the gospel-penitent against it; for he is turned from all evil. Yet take along with you this cautionary note, that you run not into

sinful despair and despondency, in observing your penitent recession from sin ; namely,

CAUTION.

Sin's existency, and sometimes prevalency, is consistent with a penitent recession and turning from it.—Sin may remain, though it doth not reign, in a gracious soul. Who is there that lives, and sins not? (1 Kings viii. 46.) “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John i. 8.) The righteous themselves often fall. Noah, the preacher of repentance to the old world, becomes the sad pattern of impiety to the new world. Penitent Paul hath cause to complain, “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” (Rom. vii. 21.) Sin abides in our souls, whilst our souls abide in our bodies. So long as we live, we must expect to bear the burden of corruption. Sin exists in the best of saints, by way of suggestion, natural inclination, and violent instigation and enforcement of evil ; and so, taking advantage of the difficulty of our estate, and distemper of our minds, it drives us sometimes into most horrid actions, even David's adultery, or Peter's denial of Christ. Which of the saints have not had a sad experience hereof? Nor must it seem to us strange ; for repentance doth not cut down sin at a blow ; no, it is a constant militation, and course of mortification ; a habit and principle of perpetual use ; not action of an hour or little time, as we have noted before ; it is a recession from sin all our days, though sin run after us. If once we be perfectly freed from sin's assaults, we shake hands with repentance ; for we need it no more. So that let it not be the trouble of any, that sin is in them ; but let it be their comfort, that it is shunned by them : that you fall into sin, fail not in your spirits ; let this be your support, that you fly from, fall out with, and fight against sin.

The true penitent doth evidence the truth and strength of his repentance, by not admitting sin's dictates without resistance ; not acting sin's precepts without reluctance. When he deviseth evil, his mind is to serve the law of God ; and he approveth of that as good. He doeth what he would not : the law in his members rebels against the law of his mind, and leadeth him captive ; and therefore he abides not under sin's guilt or power without remorse. If he be drawn to deny his Master, he goeth out, and weepeth bitterly. He is in his own eye a wretched man, whilst oppressed with a body of corruption. Nay, he retireth not into sinful society without repining ; his soul soon thinks he hath dwelt too long “in Mesech,” and “in the tents of Kedar.” (Psalm cxx. 5.) The wicked are to him an abomination. Whilst then any soul maintaineth this conflict, and so visibly disalloweth what he sometimes doeth, he may safely say, “It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me ;” (for “his servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves servants ;” Rom. vi. 16 ;) and comfortably conclude, that as a gospel-penitent he turneth from all sin. And that is the first part of the formality of repentance. The second naturally followeth, and that is,

SECOND PART OF CONVERSION.

2. *Reversion to God.*—A reception of God. God, and God only, becomes the adequate object of gospel-repentance: man by sin hath his back on God; by repentance he faceth about. All sin doth agree in this, that it is an aversion from God; and the cure of it by repentance must be conversion to God. When God calls for true repentance, it is with an “If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me.” (Jer. iv. 1.) And when repentance is promised, it is promised that “the children of Israel shall return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness.” (Hosea iii. 5.) And when they provoke one another to repentance, it is with a “Come, let us return unto the Lord;” (Hosea vi. 1;) and when provoked by others, it is to “return to the Lord their God.” (Hosea xiv. 1.) And when God calleth, and chargeth their repentance with hypocrisy, it is with this complaint: “They cried, but not unto me; and they returned, but not unto the Most High.” (Hosea vii. 14, 16.) The gospel-penitent turneth not from sin to sin, as do the profane; not from sinful rudeness to common civility, or only moral honesty, as do the civil honest men; but unto piety, acts of religion, unto God. God is the sole object of his affection and adoration. The true penitent is prostrate at the feet of God, as him only “that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin;” and pliable to the pleasure of God, as him only that hath prerogative over him. The whole man, soul and body, is bent for God; and pursueth communion with and conformity to God.

Not only doth repentance turn us from what is grievous and contrary to God; but unto that which is agreeable and acceptable to God. The mind returneth from the devising of evil, to the review of the mind and will of God; from sitting “in the seat of the scornful,” unto meditating on the law of God night and day. (Psalm i. 1, 2.) His earnest outcry is, “Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?” (Acts ix. 6.) For he is transformed in the spirit of his mind to “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of the Lord;” (Rom. xii. 2;) and full well knoweth [that] it “is life eternal to know God, and Jesus Christ.” (John xvii. 3.) And therefore, having once “tasted that the Lord is gracious,” he “as a new-born babe desireth the sincere milk of the word.” (1 Peter ii. 2, 3.) God’s word is his great delight; and beautiful in his eyes are their feet that bring glad tidings from Zion. (Rom. x. 15.)

The will and affections return from all evil, unto a resolution, and ready acceptance of the good and acceptable will of God. Not only doth the gospel-penitent pray, “Wherein I have done amiss, do thou show it me: I will do so no more;” but also, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.” (1 Sam. iii. 10.) For it is wholly resolved into the will of God, approving what is good, prizing every act of worship, and purposing an exact observance of it; sincerely praying, “Let thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;” (Matt. vi. 10;) and accounting it his meat and drink to do the will of God.

(John iv. 34.) His desires and affections run out to God, and God alone; there is nothing in all the earth to be compared with God, nor any in heaven acceptable to the soul beside God. (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) The Lord becomes his very dread and delight: he rejoiceth in the Lord, and continually feareth before him. Such are his affections now toward God, that he can leave all to follow him, father, mother, sisters, brethren, wife, children, lands, houses; nay, life itself becomes nothing in respect of God. (Luke xiv. 26.)

A gospel-penitent stands convinced, that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" (1 John ii. 15;) and if any man love any thing better than Christ, he is not worthy of him; (Matt. x. 37;) and so he accounteth all things dross and "dung" in comparison of Christ. (Phil. iii. 8.) The Lord is his "chiefest among ten thousand," (Canticles v. 10,) his "all in all;" (1 Cor. xv. 28;) and so his outward man is ready in the utmost of endeavours to do the will of God. He is wholly resigned to Divine pleasure, to do or suffer any thing: God shall not enjoin what his attempts and utmost industry shall not be to perform; or inflict what he shall not in patience and silent submission endure. Repentance is no other than the "obedience of faith." (1 Peter i. 2.) The penitent Romans do obey from the heart the form of sound words unto them delivered; or, as the Greek bears it, *εις ον παρεδοθητε τυπον διδαχης*, "into which they are delivered;" as in a mould which leaves its shape and impression on that which passed through it: (Rom. vi. 17:) for, the stony heart removed, the law of God is imprinted in the soul. The spirit of repentance maketh us walk in God's way, and to do his statutes. (Ezek. xi. 20.) The command of God carrieth the truly penitent contrary to the commands of men; nay, corrupt dictates of their own soul. Joseph dare not sin against God for all Potiphar's possession; nor Daniel slack his devotion for fear of a lion's den. Nay, it is irksome to a penitent Peter, to be once and again provoked to obedience; as half angry, he cannot but cry out, "Why, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." (John xxi. 17.) He is ready to execute divine prescription against the utmost of opposition; he never desireth other apology than, "Whether we obey God or man, judge ye;" for Christ is exalted to be Lord and King, "to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." (Acts v. 29, 31.)

Not only doth he believe, but is also ready to suffer for the sake of Christ: he is contented to be at God's carving, as unworthy any thing. Under sharpest sorrows, he is dumb, and openeth not his mouth; because God did it. (Psalm xxxix. 9.) In saddest disasters he complains not, because he hath sinned against the Lord. Let Shimei curse him, he is quiet; nay, grieved at the instigations of revenge; for that God hath bid Shimei curse. In all his actions and enjoyments, he is awed by, and argueth not against, God. (2 Sam. xvi. 8, 10.) However he may, with Hezekiah, slip and fall in his life-time, yet the support of his soul at death is, "Lord, remember, I have walked before thee with an upright and perfect heart, and have done that which was right in thine eyes." (Isai. xxxviii. 3.) And,

with Paul, he may find a law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind; yet can thank God, that with his mind he serves the law of God. (Rom. vii. 25.)

So that true gospel-repentance doth not only convince and cast down, but change and convert, a sinner. Sense of and sorrow for sin as committed against God, are necessary and essential parts, but not the whole or formality, of repentance: no; that is a turning from sin, all sin, unto God, only unto God. It indulgeth not the least iniquity, nor taketh up short of the Lord. It stayeth not, with Jehu, at the extirpation of Baal; but, with Hezekiah and Josiah, restoreth the passover, the worship of the Lord. And that is the fourth thing considerable in the nature of repentance.

CONCLUSION V.

(V.) The fifth and last conclusion is, *Confession of sin, and prayer for its pardon, are constant concomitants of true repentance.*—The true penitent is not only the sinner of sense, but of hope; and therefore a suppliant at the throne of grace, prostrate at the footstool of mercy, confessing sin, and suing for pardon, freely accusing and fully condemning itself before God. Every penitent soul comes to God, like Benhadad to the king of Israel, with a halter about his neck, praying, "Forgive us our trespasses." (1 Kings xx. 31; Matt. vi. 12.) David is no sooner brought to repentance by Nathan, but he is brought on his knees before the Lord, with an "I have sinned before the Lord." (2 Sam. xii. 13.) Returning Israel must take with them words, and say, "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." (Hosea xiv. 2, 3.) When the Prodigal comes to himself, he goeth to his father, and crieth, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." (Luke xv. 19, 21.)

Confession of and prayer for sin's pardon are such inseparable concomitants of repentance, that the whole work of repentance is expressed by them, as if they were the formality thereof. Thus when repentance is the result of God's chastisements, God observes, "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 be merciful." (Lev. xxvi. 40; Deut. xxxii. 43.) When Achan is called to repentance, he is required to "give glory to God," and confess his iniquity: (Joshua vii. 19:) and so Israel is required "only to acknowledge her iniquity, that she hath transgressed against the Lord her God, and hath scattered her ways to the strangers," &c. (Jer. iii. 13.) Nay, the very promise of pardon to the penitent is entailed on an humble, suppliant confession of sin: "If we confess" our iniquity, he is merciful and gracious, ready "to forgive us our sins." (1 John i. 9.) So that there is no coming to God but with confession of sin, and prayer for

its pardon ; and indeed there is great reason that these should accompany true repentance, because confession and supplication are,

First. *The vent of grief.*—They give ease and quiet to the penitent, perplexed soul. Conviction concealed is like a burning boil, in which the ill humours in a man's body do rancour and swell, burn and pain the whole body, as willing to be gone ; and only giveth ease by being lanced, opened, and let out, by confession and supplication. Guilt concealed is like the wind confined in the bowels of the earth ; making roaring ruptures and dreadful earthquakes. Unconfessed sin is the spring of horror, and principle of all amazement. David found it so on his sad experience : “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. But I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” (Psalm xxxii. 3, 5.) Until then he could find no comfort.

Secondly. *The vomit of sin.*—So Origen did usually call confession ; for it is the loathsome rejection of sin ; an easing of the soul by evacuation of what burdened it ; casting up with grief and pain what we cast off with detestation. Confession is the emptying [of] the soul of sin, by [the] expression of all passion against itself. Accusation and condemnation turn the heart and whole man against sin. Shame makes us shun evil. The penitents in the primitive times did confess their iniquities to God in the sight of the church ; and if they again relapsed into the same sin, and apostatized to their old course, were said to “return with the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” (2 Peter ii. 22.)

Thirdly. *The vindication of God's justice in all the afflictions by him inflicted.*—David acknowledgeth, and crieth out, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight : that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” (Psalm li. 4.) And therefore confession is said to be a giving [of] glory to God. (Joshua vii. 19 ; Jer. xiii. 16.) It quells all quarrelling passions against God : “Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?” (Lam. iii. 39.) The language of a confessing penitent is, “Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities do deserve.” (Ezra ix. 13.) And, “To us belong confusion of face ; but to the Lord belongeth righteousness.” (Dan. ix. 7—9.)

Fourthly. *The voice in which God is well-pleased.*—God loves to see his people with ropes about their necks. “Only acknowledge thine iniquity,” is God's demand : (Jer. iii. 13 :) this soon meeteth with acceptance. “I have sinned,” is no sooner spoken by David, but, “The Lord also hath taken away thine iniquity,” is replied by the prophet. (2 Sam. xii. 13.) Nay, David can witness, “I *but* said, I will confess ; and thou forgavest mine iniquity.” (Psalm xxxii. 5.) God will not stay his correcting hand until the stubborn heart acknowledge his iniquity ; but then he will do it. (Lev. xxvi. 40—42.) The compassions of God give an affectionate check to the sharpest corrections of his children, if but moved by their confession and

complaint. Ephraim cannot sooner relent under God's hand, than he repent of his anger. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: I was ashamed, I was confounded: turn me, and I shall be turned," moves God's very bowels to pity: "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." (Jer. xxxi. 18—20.)

We see then that there is much reason why the gospel-penitent must be a confessing suppliant. But before I pass this conclusion, let me briefly propound unto you the RULES which must guide our confession, evidencing and accompanying our repentance: and they are these:—

RULE I. *Confession must spring from conviction, and spread itself unto condemnation.*—Soul-sense of guilt unto sighing must make the tongue speak of it unto shame; compunction of spirit must be expressed by supplication. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves" (our common translation reads it; but "shall judge yourselves not worthy to live," as other and better translations read) "for your iniquities, and your abominations," is the promise of the covenant of grace. (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) Confession of sin which springs not from sensible conviction, and spreads not to self-condemnation, is a historical narration and verbal recitation of sin, like the cursory reading of an ordinary indictment; no penitential confession of sin. The penitent Prodigal begins with, "I have sinned," and ends with, "I am not worthy." (Luke xv. 18, 19.) It is an easy matter for Saul to say, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord;" but still he staves off the sense of it; and not only disputeth against reproof, but at length diverts his conviction by an apology: "I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." (1 Sam. xv. 24.) Conscience is placed in us, the law spread before us, and self-scrutiny imposed on us, as precursive to our repenting confessions. We are required to judge ourselves, which imports, "to be convinced;" we deserve to die, and so to put halters on our own necks.

RULE II. *God always, and men ordinarily, must be the object of our confessions and supplications.*—Whatever sin is committed, God is the object of it; his holy law is violated by it. Though some sins are committed against God immediately, and extend not unto men, as all breach of the first table of the law, and miscarryings of acts of religion; yet all sins against men are also against God, who is no less concerned in the second than the first table of the law. If David sin against Bathsheba's chastity, or Uriah's life, yet he must confess unto God: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and wrought this wickedness in thy sight." (Psalm li. 4.) However the trespass is against man, the transgression is against God. The sin which is committed against God, is to be only confessed unto God, not unto

man; but the sin which is committed against man, must be confessed unto God, and likewise unto men. To God always, who can pardon the eternal punishment: to men ordinarily; as when the church is scandalized, or the particular person is offended and damnified. (James v. 16.) And in this last case, restitution must be added to our confession: Zaccheus-like, where we have wronged any, we must make acknowledgment and reparation. (Luke xix. 8.) And in all offences to men, when we come before God, we must consider whether our brother hath "ought against" us, "and go and be reconciled." (Matt. v. 23, 24.) The God that bids men to forgive "till seventy times seven" times, binds the offender so often to return and say, "I have offended." (Matt. xviii. 22; Luke xvii. 4.) The auricular confession of the Papist is vanity, superstition, and evil; but particular acknowledgments of sin to God, and sometimes to men, is duty indispensable. In vain doth Saul say to Samuel, "I have sinned," whilst he never seeks to God for the pardon.

RULE III. *Confession of sin and prayer for pardon must be free, and not extorted.*—The natural, not forced, language of the penitent. The confession of constraint falleth equally under suspicion with the unrequired accusations of malice; both which are frequently false. True repentance doth convince of the sinfulness of sin, and constrain the soul to confess it with candour, ingenuity, and freedom, as weary of it; as the stomach of nauseous matter, that it naturally, without any co-action, casts up. Confession springs from the saints, as Elihu's plea for God against Job: "I am full of matter, the Spirit of the Lord within me constraineth me," saith he to Job. "Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer." (Job xxxii. 18—20.) The confession of the wicked is constrained; and no longer doth he cry to God, than he is under the cudgel of his judgments, or on the rack of his own conscience. So Pharaoh's plagues and Judah's anxiety may extort an "I have sinned." However, the children of God must be sometimes pinched and whipped into their complaints; yet their cry is natural, and confessions free and voluntary, a ready echo to the least reproof, and desiring that the righteous may smite, and God show them their iniquity. (Psalm cxli. 5.)

RULE IV. *Confession and supplication must not be more free than full; not straitened any more than extorted.*—Sin must be confessed, not only in general and in the lump, with a "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners;" but in its particular species and parts. As Israel: "We have forsaken the Lord, and served Baal." (Judges x. 10.) And, "We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king," to go about to change our government. (1 Sam. xii. 19.) Not only open, known, heinous, and flagitious offences; but even secret and particular lusts. David bewails and confesseth not only his murder, executed on Uriah, but his self-revenge intended against Nabal, and the very cutting off the lap of Saul's garment. (2 Sam. xii. 13; 1 Sam. xxiv. 15; xxv. 39.) Not only sin simply in itself, but

with all its aggravations of time, place, manner, occasion. Sin must be taken up by the roots, and spread before God in all its branches: "In iniquity was I conceived, in sin brought forth;" as well as, "Against thee have I sinned." In vain doth Cain confess his cruelty to Abel, and conceal his irreligion to God; or Judas complain of "betraying innocent blood," whilst he makes no mention of his covetousness. (Psalm li. 4, 5; Gen. iv. 9—15; Matt. xxvii. 4.)

RULE V. *Shame and sorrow must seize on the confessing suppliant for sin's pardon.*—Contrition of heart, and confusion of face, must be the result of confession; days of atonement were days of soul-affliction, because of confession of sin. (Lev. xxiii. 27—29.) David's complaints make him water his couch, and mingle his bread, with tears. Lying in the dust, and rending of garments, were required from such as came to confess iniquity: the spirit of repentance is a spirit of mourning.

RULE VI. *Confession must be made with confidence and supplication, in hope of pardon.*—The true penitent is prostrate before God as a Father, not as a Judge. Men may confess, and be hanged; but the children of God cry with Shechaniah: "We have trespassed against our God: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing." (Ezra x. 2.) They pray in faith, "Father, forgive us our trespasses;" not in fear, "Mercy, my Lord, mercy!" Judas's confession was therefore false, because fearful; and flying to his own destruction, not the innocent blood by him betrayed, that he might have been saved. We have showed you [that] the subject of repentance must be the believing sinner. Hopes of mercy puts halters on our necks; confidence of pardon seats us in God's chair to condemn ourselves. The confessions of despair are the outcries of the damned in hell.

Thus then, beloved, I have laid before you the true nature of true repentance. I well know it is a common theme, and much treated of; but little practised; nay indeed, little considered and understood. How many pretenders are there among us, that may yet ponder the nature of gospel-repentance! which, if it be well understood, will neither appear to be so lightly come by, nor slightly performed, as it is deemed. We must know that every common repentance will not serve our turn unto the remission of sin; but that repentance which Christ gives, is, in respect of [its] nature,

1. "A grace supernatural," without the reach of man's arm or acquirement;

2. "Whereby the believing sinner," apprehensive of his own guilt, and God's grace in and through Jesus Christ;

3. "Sensibly affected with and afflicted for his sin as committed against God," under conviction and contrition for all his sin as sin;

4. Doth "return from sin, all sin, unto God," and God only, as his "all in all;"

5. "Freely confessing, and frequently begging pardon for, his iniquity."

Consider, my brethren, this description of repentance [which] you have had unfolded, and the nature of the grace discovered; for it will

be very useful to you as a touchstone of doctrine and practice, for the confutation of all false notions about repentance; as that, 1. Repentance is the result of nature, and at man's command; we may repent when we will, as the Arminians teach: but you must remember, it is "supernatural." 2. That penance is a transient act of confession and self-castigation, as the Papists teach; you must know [that] it is a grace or habit. 3. That repentance is before faith, and not the result of the gospel, and effect of the blood of Christ, as some divines suggest. 4. That conviction, contrition, and confession, are not necessary to repentance, as the antinomians teach; or sufficient repentance, as the legalist and Pharisee teach; that a turning from sin to sin, or at least not to God and holiness, as the Quakers and our sinful age suggest, is the formality of repentance: but you may find and make it specially useful to conviction and discovery of false repentance, with which men are apt to take up and content themselves. And if this which you have heard be the nature of true repentance, then these are false repentances; with which take heed you be not deceived.

THE FIRST FALSE REPENTANCE.

1. *Popish penance.*—Which is indeed screwed very high by the church of Rome, unto a detracting from the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, and making man's own sufferings partners and peers to Christ's satisfaction. Wherein it is not only heretical, but blasphemous; but indeed in itself is very low and weak, not able to afford us the least of comfort, because a false and feigned repentance, consisting in auricular confession to the priest, never instituted by God, and self-castigation in a most cruel and violent manner, or pilgrimages, interdicted by the very light of nature, and never enjoined by the Lord: and is different from true repentance, in that it is merely external on the body, not at all seizing on the soul; chastisements of the outward, without any serious conviction or contrition of the inward, man; tearing the flesh without rending the heart; nay, and that in a way of superstition and will-worship, like the self-cuttings and torments of the priests of Baal, and likely to find the same acceptance; (1 Kings xviii. 27—29;) and a transient action, without any inward principle, habit, and disposition; and too often under the purpose of continuing in sin; nay, many times making way to sin, as the Popish conspirators in the gunpowder treason confessed and did penance for the wickedness they intended. So that it is every way inconsistent to the nature of true repentance, for it hath man, not God, for its object; nature, nay, lust, for its principle; action, not frame and disposition, for its form; is external in its property; and [has] intention of sin for its end; and so must needs be sinful and soul-damning repentance in its quality.

THE SECOND FALSE REPENTANCE.

Pagans' repentance.—Which is effected in men as men, without any the least respect unto religion. All men have a natural con-

science, and some remainders of the law of God, discovering a Deity, and directing duties of preservation to themselves and human society. By this they are checked on all miscarriages and gross exorbitancies; and not only grieved and offended at the present, but also curbed and restrained for the future. Thus Alexander, when sober, repents the slaughter of his friend Clitus in a drunken humour; and consults the philosophers as so many ministers for the pacification of his conscience. And so Polemo, though in his drunken fit he came to the school of Xenocrates, and heard him read of sobriety, yet went home, and, repenting his drunkenness, became sober ever after. Yet this is no other than a false repentance, effected only by the power of nature, whose best things are but *splendida peccata*, "shining sins;" and is merely a restraint of action, no renewing of disposition: it wants both principle and power to make it saving. This light within them, without supernatural grace, doth but lead them a smoother way to hell; for, at the best, virtue contrary to their natural vice, not God and his will, is the object of their conversion.

THE THIRD FALSE REPENTANCE.

The profane man's repentance.—Pharaoh-like, repenting of good, and returning to evil; having let Israel go, [he] pursueth them to bring them again to bondage. And like the children of Israel, who let every man his servant go free, and then fetch them back again. (Exod. xxi. 2; Jer. xxxiv. 8—16.) Like the repentance of Ananias and Sapphira; who run as far as others in selling their estates for the common good of the church; but soon repent to the retaining [of] some part, and lying to the Holy Ghost. (Acts v. 1—11.) How many amongst us do now repent their sighing and sad thoughts that their sin hath cost them, and the serious discharges of holy duties, fasting, praying, reading, hearing, and the like, which they have done; bewailing themselves that ever they looked toward heaven, or left the way of hell! This is a most sad and sinful repentance, in every respect opposite to the nature of repentance, being an inversion of the very terms;—instead of turning from sin to God, a turning from God to sin. These men's latter end must needs be worse than their beginning; because, having begun in the Spirit, they end in the flesh; and "it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter ii. 22.)

THE FOURTH FALSE REPENTANCE.

The formalists' and legal repentance.—These men are eminent and exact in the external and precursive acts of repentance; they humble themselves before God, and confess iniquity, and seek for pardon of sin; rend their garments, and lie in sackcloth. Ahab-like, they are alarmed by the prophet Elijah for their sin; and therefore humble themselves before the Lord. (1 Kings xxi. 27.) They are full of conviction and seeming contrition; but never reach unto conversion. They lament sin; but lie in sin: like Herod, hear John gladly;

but retain their Herodias : (Mark vi. 20 :) and, like Felix, tremble to hear of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come ; but yet look for a bribe, and dismiss Paul till some other time ; that so they may quiet conscience, and grant a truce to the devil. (Acts xxiv. 25—27.) Those, like the young man in the gospel, are not far from the kingdom of God ; but yet fall short ; they never come at repentance. (Mark xii. 34.)

THE FIFTH FALSE REPENTANCE.

The slave's repentance.—Which is extorted and extenuated, neither free nor full. Like the repentance of Saul or Pharaoh ; so long as they are constrained, they confess their guilt ; when they can no longer hide their villany, they own it, though with an endeavour to extenuate it. Thus Saul, by the dint of argument, is at length driven to confess to Samuel, “ I have sinned ; ” yet he that staved off the prophet's reproof as long as he could, at last stifled his conscience, by pleading the fear of the people, whom he pretended to fear and obey ; and seeks no more than to avoid the present blow : “ Honour me,” saith he to Samuel, “ in the sight of the people.” (1 Sam. xv. 30.) So Pharaoh, when under the cudgel, will confess he hath sinned, and will let Israel go ; but God's hand is no sooner stayed, but his obduracy returns. (Exod. ix. 27 ; xiv. 5.) It were well for many penitents, if they could go from a sick bed, a prison, an anxious conscience, to heaven ; for so long as they are in this condition, they are in a good mood, but no longer : these men, like flint stones, fly in sunder by the hammer, but still retain their hardness ; there is in them no principle that may make them candid in confession, or free in the forsaking, of sin.

THE SIXTH FALSE REPENTANCE.

A sullen and self-destructive repentance.—These men, in an angry humour, and by the anxiety of conscience, are constrained to repent (f their miscarriage ; like Shimei's repentance for cursing David, occasioned only by the change of David's condition, and cross of his own expectation ; which yet at length leads him to sin against his soul, and break his bounds unto his own ruin. (2 Sam. xix. 20 ; 1 Kings ii. 39, 40.) And, like Judas, in a dogged humour, deploring his sin unto self-destruction. Many men turn out of sin, because 't turns wife and children out of doors, deprives them of expected preferment, disposeth them into distress and anguish of soul or body, or both. These men have no natural enmity to sin, but are like a bowl turned out of its bias by some more than ordinary rub to their desires.

THE SEVENTH FALSE REPENTANCE.

Give me leave to add one more ; and that is *the Quaker's repentance* ; not fit to be mentioned, nor worthy the least refutation, it is so notoriously profane and ridiculous, were it not too much successful in these sad times, in which God hath given us up to a spirit of delusion, so as that the most palpable of errors find entertainment. This is the repentance whereby men, following the pretended light within

them, are suddenly converted from extreme looseness to extreme strictness of behaviour. It is to be wondered at, to see what a sudden leap the lowdest men make by this rude spirit, from the most horrid lewdness, to the most strange, solitary, and self-affected way of behaviour. These men we must not deny to be changed, unless we will deny our senses; nor own to be gospel-penitents, unless we deny our religion and very reason; for themselves profess it to be from no other principle than the light within them; which, they say also, is common to all men; and so is at the best but natural, though in them plainly visible to be diabolical; whilst it carrieth not so far as the light of nature, but is contrary to the dictates thereof in natural and civil society; darkening, nay, declaiming against, those very notes of distinction which God and nature have in all nations made between man and man; being violent, sudden, and precipitate, by some obsession or enthusiastic impulse, as from the devil, not by any moral suasion or intellectual conviction, which is proper to a reasonable soul; and therefore acts wilfully, with rage and rabid expressions; not able, and so refusing, to render a reason of their actions or persuasions; but with obduracy persisting in their own self-affected profession, without the least possibility of conviction, or capacity of discourse; reducing them into a direct bedlam-temper, fit for nothing but bedlam-discipline. So that, in the very form thereof, men of reason and the least measure of religion must needs conclude their conversion devilish, not divine; yet, in the effect of it, their repentance must needs appear not to be true gospel and saving repentance, as being dissonant to the nature in the very formality thereof. For, however it turns them from sin, yet not with due contrition and confession; or, on due conviction, not from sin as sin. They retain pride, railing, disrespect to men; are void of "natural affection," "despise dominion, sneak evil of dignities;" (Rom. i. 31; Jude 8;) whilst they damn drunkenness, swearing, and other the like abominations. But it never turns them unto God; nay, it keeps them at an equal, nay, a greater distance from God than from the devil, from heaven than hell; whilst they deny civility, and the common reverence [which] children owe to parents, servants to masters, and all inferiors to superiors; decline God, disown and declaim against holiness. Praying, hearing, sabbath, and sacraments are to them as the vices they do detest; gospel-ministers and ministrations are to them an abomination. Whilst they refuse to swear, they refuse to pray. Drunkenness and devotion are equal in their account; if, with Jehu, they drive furiously against Baal and Ahab, yet they mind not to walk with God, but follow the way of Jeroboam; both for rebellion toward men, and confusion in the church. So that they appear far from gospel-penitents.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

II. I have done with the first general part considerable, namely, the nature of repentance; and shall now proceed to the second; and that is, *the necessity of repentance.*

Repentance, in the very nature of it, which hath been explained, doth appear useful and necessary. It is not a thing base and vile, to be despised, neglected, and contemned; but admirably excellent, and to be prized and pursued by every soul that is studious of true excellency. For, however proud men profanely deem and damn it as a puling property, and pusillanimous temper of spirit, below a man, on every ordinary action, to sit drooping and pensive, and not dare to do as nature dictates, and good company requires; yet the children of wisdom, well pondering what hath already been spoken of it, cannot but see it sparkle with such splendid notes, as engage them to esteem it, and employ themselves in it night and day; making it their work and business, saying, as Tertullian, *Nulli rei natus nisi penitentia*: "I am born for nothing but repentance." For from what hath already been spoken, it is apparently excellent in its,

First. *Nature*.—Being a remorse for guilt, and return from sin; which who even among the Heathen did not esteem? Remorse for guilt is the rejoicing of heaven; returns are the delights of God; in Luke xv. 7, 10. "The tears of sinners is the wine of angels," saith Bernard.

Secondly. *Author and original*.—A grace supernatural grows not in nature's garden; cannot be acquired by the most accurate industry or endowments of nature. It is from heaven by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit. Christ himself "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance." Shall divine works, celestial influences, lose their esteem?

Thirdly. *Ground and principle*.—It flows from faith, and is the result of hope: it is not the lamentation of despair, but complaint of candour and confidence, affording comfort, streaming with pleasure from the soul; the privilege of the gospel, and covenant of grace. It flows from the fountain of Divine favour.

Fourthly. *Concomitants*.—Confession and supplication; access to God, with assurance of acceptance. "Confession is the soul's physic," saith Nazianzen; "and supplication is the child's portion."

And, indeed, what is there in the nature of repentance which rendereth it not desirable by every gracious heart or good nature? So that to men that seek excellent endowments, and are for high and honourable achievements, I must say, "Repent, repent." This is Alexander's honour; this is the only ornament of nature. The way to highest preferment, is to be humbled under the hand of God.

But not only is it in itself excellent, and to be esteemed by such as can and do obtain it, but also necessary; not of indifferency, but of absolute and indispensable necessity. Men may not choose whether or no they will repent; but must do it with all care and diligence, with all speed and alacrity. And amongst the many demonstrations which might be urged, I shall enforce the necessity of repentance from these two grounds:—

(I.) *The anticipation and removal of God's wrath and judgments.*

(II.) *The answer unto the call of the gospel.*

(I.) First, then, *repentance is necessary to anticipate and remove the wrath and judgments of God.*

1. *Repentance is the only fence to be made against feared judgments.*—There is no way to appease divine fury but by repentance: judgments threatened may be thus diverted and prevented, and evil inflicted may be thus removed. The Lord threatens before he striketh, that the fear of approaching evil might force men to repentance. Thus God sent Jonah to cry to Nineveh, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown;” (Jonah iii. 4;) and so the Lord sent his prophets, “rising up early, and sending them,” to Judah and to Samaria. (Jer. vii. 25.) The threatenings of God are but summons unto repentance, that his hand might be stayed; and therefore every threat doth either express or imply a promise of escape on the condition of repentance; and an assurance is given by the Lord, that repentance shall appease his anger, and anticipate the denounced judgments: Behold, “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.) Accordingly God’s hand is stayed by the but-seeming repentance of men; Ahab’s formal repentance procureth a reprieve of the judgment, though not a remission of sin: “Because Ahab humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days,” saith the Lord to the prophet. (1 Kings xxi. 29.) And so Nineveh, repenting at the preaching of Jonah, were spared: “God saw their works, that they” repented, and “turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” (Jonah iii. 10.)

Impenitency is the enforcement of divine plagues; for all denunciations run with an “Unless ye repent, ye shall likewise perish.” (Luke xiii. 3, 5.) Repentance is the main errand of God’s judgments; and if it will be effected by reproof and threatening, God will never handle the rod, or inflict evil. The judgments of God thunder not over Jerusalem, until “they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his word, and misused his prophets;” and then “the wrath of the Lord” was kindled, and “arose against his people, until there was no remedy.” (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.) God is so solicitous of repentance, that, like the lord of the vineyard, he sends his servants one after another to the rebellious husbandmen,—and at length his Son, whom he expects they should reverence,—to call them to repentance, before he come with force and arms to subdue them. (Matt. xxi. 34—41.) God’s judgments are never inflicted, until men’s impenitency be upbraided; he always begins his corrections with a “How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not!” (Matt. xxiii. 37;) and aggravates the affliction with a “Thy destruction is of thyself;” (Hosea xiii. 9;) and enforceth his utter rejection with an “O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.” (Luke ix. 42.) He drowns not the old world without the warnings

of "an hundred and twenty years." (Gen. vi. 3.) He damned not the souls which are now in prison, until by Noah, the preacher of righteousness, he had called them to repentance, and sealed them up under disobedience. (1 Peter iii. 19, 20 ; ii. 5.)

We are now the subjects of sin, and that stirs up God's wrath : if we will escape *this*, we must return from *that* : sin kindleth, and repentance quencheth, God's fury. Man is not bound to pardon and pretermitt an offence, but on repentance of the offender ; neither nature nor scripture doth require it : how much less is the Lord thereunto obliged ! Therefore "agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles 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 officer, and thou be cast into prison." (Matt. v. 25.) How many plagues are there impending over our nation, families, persons ! How high are the provocations of our sins ! Have we any heart to escape evil, and fear of the judgments impending, deserved, and ready to fall on our heads ? Let us humble ourselves under God's hand ; let the nation repent, every family repent, and every particular soul repent ; for repentance is our only remedy of absolute necessity to divert the denounced judgments, and anticipate impending plagues.

2. Repentance is not only a means to prevent judgments threatened, but *to remove them when inflicted*.—Impenitency kindles God's fury, but obduracy maketh it flame. Impenitency pulls the judgments of God on us ; but obduracy sealeth us under them to our ruin. It is the very height of obduracy not to repent under the rod ; they that fear not, yet cannot but relent when they feel, the smart of God's anger : the proudest Pharaoh that can out-face a threat with a "What is the Lord, that I should let Israel go ?" (Exod. v. 2,) is yet apt to cry under his plagues poured out, "I have sinned against the Lord." (Exod. x. 16.) God's wrath is never so severe, or his hand so smarting, but it will be stayed by sincere repentance ; but never without it. Repentance is the errand of his rod, as well as of his reproof : where *this* prevaieth not, *that* must walk : "I will go and return unto my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face : in their affliction they will seek me early." (Hosea v. 15.) The least remorse of a repenting Ephraim moves God to pity and repentance, and stayeth his correcting hand ; but stubbornness in sin must meet with bitterness and severity in God. When God takes stubborn hearts to task, he adds to the number and nature of his chastisements, until their sturdy stomachs are taken down : he walks contrary unto them that walk contrary unto him, and comes on them with seven times more plagues, until the uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they confess their iniquities. (Lev. xxvi. 40, 41.) This God will effect, or he will break in pieces : none must strive against him, and prosper ; they that are hardened under his hands, he handleth to their utter ruin.

Repentance is the natural, genuine result of the rod,—of heart-rending plagues. It is a note of the highest impiety to persist in sin under punishment. Of all the kings of Israel, Ahaz is marked with

this brand of incorrigibility: "This is that king Ahaz, who in the time of his distress did trespass yet more against the Lord." (2 Chron. xxviii. 22.) Where there is any ingenuity [ingenuousness], there will be a repenting under the rod by them that resisted the word. It is the ordinary note of most obstinate Israel: "When he slew them, then they sought him." (Psalm lxxviii. 34.) Though they were not good any longer than whilst they were beaten; yet they were indeed exceeding bad, when they resisted correction. The worst tale that ever was told against God's children, is that by the prophet Jeremy: "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return." (Jer. v. 3.) Well may the prophet conclude: "Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God:" (verse 4:) for even iron and steel are soft whilst in the fire.

And impenitency under the rod exposeth unto inevitable ruin: *they* are reprobate from God's favour *who* repent not in the time of his fury. The saddest symptom of displeasure is, to hear God determine, "You shall be smitten no more; for ye will revolt still more and more." (Isai. i. 5.) God sealeth up to everlasting vengeance by a spirit of impenitency: "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.) The proud Pharaoh, that is not melted by and repents not under God's many judgments, is raised for this very purpose,—that God might show his power, and make known his mind unto the ends of the earth by their certain and severe destruction. (Rom. ix. 17.) Whilst then the sons of men are by nature the children of wrath, subjects of sin, and liable to sorrows, obnoxious to God's chastising hand and land-destroying judgments, provoking divine displeasure, and repentance [is] the only means to divert or remove the same, must they not call one upon another?—"Come, let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. 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. 1—3.) And for us in this land and nation, are we not the subjects of sin, and most horrid, God-provoking sins, which God cannot but punish?—pride and perfidiousness, profaneness and perjury, blasphemy and base contempt of his ordinances, and what not? iniquity unto the very despising [of] the word of the Lord, and mocking [of] his messengers; that his wrath could no longer forbear, but hath made us the subjects of shame and sorrow! The furious footsteps of an angry God are to be found among us: God hath smitten us with "pestilence, after the manner of Egypt; our young men have been slain with the edge of the sword," and yet "for all this his *wrath* is not turned away, but his

hand is stretched out still." (Amos iv. 10; Isai. v. 25, &c.) Our foundations are removed, laws violated, and liberties invaded; his name and truth blasphemed, his church laid waste, and his people sadly subjected to a spirit of delusion. And what confusions, commotions, sad (because sinful) revolutions compass us about, making us a shame among the nations, and a burden to ourselves: and yet "for all this his *wrath* is not turned away, but his *anger* is stretched out still;" because we "have not returned unto the Lord." (Isai. ix. 9—21; x. 1—4; Amos iv. 10.) How many and heavy judgments hang over our heads, threatening the extirpation of the church, eradication of the gospel, and desolation of our nations! And what is our remedy to remove what we feel, or prevent what we fear? Is it not repentance? Is not this England's *unum necessarium*, "one thing necessary?" Should not all the ministers of God cry?—"Repent, England! repent! repent!" Must not all conclude in this respect, [that] repentance is a grace of absolute necessity? But,

(II.) Secondly. *Repentance is necessary to answer the call of the gospel.*—We are called Christians, and do profess subjection to the gospel of Jesus Christ: our care must be in all things to walk "as becometh the gospel." (Phil. i. 27.) Hippocrates took an oath of his followers, to keep their profession unstained, and their lives unblamable: sure I am, that in our baptism we are dedicated and engaged to yield obedience to the gospel, and show forth its holiness and power by due acts of repentance, renouncing the flesh, the world, and the devil. For, indeed, repentance is the great duty imposed by the gospel; and all such as will conform unto the commands of the gospel must repent: "Now God commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts xvii. 30.) The light of nature and of the law did direct men unto repentance; but the light of the gospel is a loud call unto "all men to repent." Times of past ignorance were times of divine indulgence; but these gospel-days are seasons of imperious injunction: "God now commandeth all men." Not pity or patience must now be expected without serious penance.

There are many things considerable in the gospel, whereby it calls to repentance, which doth evidence the indispensable necessity thereof, and binds all men to answer: namely,

1. *The positive duty directed in and required by the gospel, is repentance.*—This is the main matter prescribed in it, and preached by it. John the Baptist, the harbinger of the Messiah, and first publisher of the gospel, came preaching repentance; and therefore his whole doctrine and administration is called "the baptism of repentance." (Mark i. 4.) And the Lord Jesus, the great Prophet and Apostle of the gospel, made his first appearance in the world, at the imprisonment of John, preaching repentance, for that the kingdom of God was at hand. (Matt. iii. 2.) And the great disrespect he chargeth on the Jews, was, that they repented not, either at the preaching of John, or himself, though both differently administered, to anticipate their caption. So that the great work of both appeareth to have been to bring men to repentance. The first sermon that ever Peter preached after

Christ's ascension, was to persuade repentance. (Acts ii. 38.) This was and is the matter of all preaching, and the main end of all ministry; for the sole errand of the gospel is to "open the blind eyes, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." (Acts xxvi. 18.) And hence "repentance from dead works" is reckoned as one of the first and foundation-principles of the gospel. (Heb. vi. 1.) And certainly principles are positively necessary, undeniable, and indispensable truths. *Contra principia negantem non est disputandum*; "He is to be declined as mad that denieth principles." So that repentance is the first, chief, and main lesson taught by the gospel; and its call thereunto then must needs be great.

2. *The prime privilege of the gospel is repentance.*—This is the royal gift of our Redeemer Jesus Christ; he is "exalted" and made "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance." The prime grace conveyed unto us by the covenant of grace contained in the gospel, is repentance: the taking away the stony heart, and giving us hearts of flesh; making us to see the evil of our ways and doings. (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) The great errand for which the gospel is sent into the world, is repentance: they that receive the gospel and not repentance by it, shall be upbraided as were Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum, as unworthy so high a favour; (Matt. xi. 21, 23;) nay, they shall have their torments aggravated by the enjoyment, but non-improvement, of so high a favour: "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrhah;" (verses 22, 24;) they never enjoyed a gospel to call to repentance. This is the end of all the promises of God,—to make us "partakers of the divine nature, escaping the corruptions that are in the world through lust." (2 Peter i. 4.) The proposals of glory and happiness are the principles of purity and holiness; we have these great and precious promises, that we may "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

The whole work of the gospel is to carry on and complete repentance; this is the profit to be reaped by every ordinance: the word preached persuades repentance; the sacraments received stir up and seal repentance; the communion of the saints carrieth on the work of repentance: "Exhorting one another daily, lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. iii. 13.) The gospel is the great charter of our privileges purchased by Jesus Christ; and they all run into this,—repentance. This is the benefit by Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension; this is the fruit of the Spirit of adoption; it is a spirit of prayer and mourning over him whom we have pierced. (Zech. xii. 10.) In brief: repentance is the contract of the covenant of grace. The law cannot give it, and the light of nature cannot give it; only the gospel can effect it. The covenant of grace confers on us an access to, and communion with, God as our God, not as we are innocent; for we are guilty of the breach of the first covenant; but as we are penitent, sorrowful for, and turned from, the evil of our ways. So that in this respect we must needs conclude [that] repent-

ance is a grace of great necessity : we reap no benefit, enjoy no privilege of the gospel, but by repentance : the mystery of redemption, Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation, and all the ministrations of the gospel, are in vain to the impenitent.

3. *Most pregnant arguments, persuading to repentance, are proposed in and by the gospel.*—This is light so powerfully convincing, that all others which passed before it are but darkness in comparison of it : whether it be the light of nature, making known sin as it is specific and particular, contrary to certain standing dictates ; not in its contrariety to the image and holiness of God ; and that without any clear and certain way of escape and repentance ;—or the light of the law, which layeth men under full, plain, and clear conviction, even unto self-condemnation ; but coucheth the pardon and possibility of redemption under such dark figures and expressions, that with much difficulty it may direct and provoke repentance. But in the gospel, the Sun of righteousness shines brightly unto conviction and self-condemnation ; nay, unto speedy and cheerful conversion. There is no argument in nature or in the law to enforce repentance, but it is urged in the gospel ; ay, and much more. Doth nature stir up repentance by sin's inconveniency to man's state ? or the law by sin's incongruity to the holy, just, and good command of God ? The gospel doth the same ; nay, and further addeth its inconsistency with that estate into which we are resolved by the redemption of Jesus Christ. And so, it presenteth us with two most pregnant, powerfully convincing, and persuasive arguments unto repentance ; such which no professed religion in the world (itself excepted) doth propound : and they are these :—

- (1.) *The death of Jesus Christ.*
- (2.) *The day of judgment.*

FIRST ARGUMENT TO ENFORCE REPENTANCE.

(1.) The First argument propounded in the gospel to persuade repentance, is, *the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.*—This is an argument potent in operation to every true believer ;—faith doth no sooner touch the hem of its garment, but it cureth ; like the bones of Elisha, quickens the dead man that is but let down into this grave ;—and pregnant in persuasion to every rational soul that is but candid and ingenuous. It is storied of Antonius, the senator of Rome, that he, intending to provoke the people to revenge the death of Cæsar, slain at the senate by Brutus and Cassius, brought out his bloody robe, and cried out, “ Here is the bloody robe of your *quondam* emperor.” Thus the gospel presents to our faith a crucified Christ, and slain Saviour, slain for and by our sins, that we may “ look on him whom we have pierced, and mourn over him ;” (Zech. xii. 10 ;) that we may see him whom our lusts have slain, and be revenged on them by repentance. The contemplations of a crucified Christ cannot but constrain repentance. Mount Calvary is a place of heart-melting to every ingenuous soul that makes it his walk ; for that it presents unto his observation a man—nay, more than a man, a God—under the

most grievous sufferings, not for his own, but the sins of others; exposed unto that sad estate, not by any constraint or necessity, but his own choice, pity, and compassion, in whom he reads these three heart-moving, repentance-provoking considerations; namely,—

(i.) *The great severity of offended justice and fury, provoked by his iniquity.*—Here he seeth the vileness of his sin, and fierceness of God's anger, who would not, nay, in justice could not, spare man without satisfaction: he had said it, and now seeth it executed: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death." (Gen. ii. 17.) Here is furious justice, which falls fearfully on a Surety, a Mediator; and fierce fury, that favours not a Son, an only-begotten Son. Surely sin is heinous, greatly provoking to God, that his displeasure thus rageth: "it is" surely "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," (Heb. x. 31,) who makes the Son of his love thus roar out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46.) O impiety, horrid impiety, that cannot be expiated by any thing but the very heart-blood of God! O fury, fearful fury, that forsakes a Son, (only) become a Surety for sinners! What pensive thoughts must needs arise in the serious observer of this sad spectacle! especially when he proceeds to the next consideration, which is this:—

(ii.) *Great love and pity of a Saviour; who willingly endureth these sad sufferings out of choice, not constraint; for the sins of others, not of himself.*—O unconceivable love, ineffable pity, that we sinned, and he thus suffered! He left glory, to be exposed to shame; he undertakes an atonement and reconciliation between God and man, and endureth infinite fury to effect it. No guile was ever found in his mouth whose soul undergoeth this grief. The debt was ours, and he payeth the utmost mite for us. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" (Isai. liii. 4—6;) and that whilst we were sinners, that slighted and rejected him. Greater love can no man show than to die for his friend; (John xv. 13;) but, behold, here is matchless love! whilst we were yet enemies, Christ gave himself for us. (Rom. v. 8.) These torments we must have endured to eternity, if they had not been inflicted on him.

(iii.) *We here see the gracious acceptance we have with God; the great liberty of access to God which is to us afforded.*—The wrath of God, thus poured forth on his Son, is pacified toward sinners; and the covenant of works, being thus accomplished, is abolished; and man, that was at distance from God, draweth nigh unto him; for this crucified Christ was thus lifted up, that he might draw all men unto himself; (John xii. 32;) and is "exalted, to give remission of sin, and repentance," (Acts v. 31,) and to consecrate us "unto himself, a peculiar people." (Titus ii. 14.) These lessons, and every of them,

are written in such legible characters in the death of Jesus Christ, that he that runs may read them; (Hab. ii. 2;) and each of them are pathetic persuasions to repentance. Whilst they are read by any seriously-observant soul, they reflect these serious and pensive thoughts:

“How vile is mine iniquity, that hath provoked so great severity, and exposed my Surety to so much misery! How great peril was my soul in, which is redeemed by so great a price! How dangerous those wounds, which are only cured by the death of the surgeon! How dissonant to holiness and daring to justice is that sin, which, but imputed, exposed the only-begotten Son of God to be deserted by his Father! How fierce that fury, which could not be appeased without suffering! It must needs be ‘fearful to fall into the hands of an angry God;’ (Heb. x. 31;) for how will *he* fume at the servant, that thus frets at his Son! how will *he* tear the principal, that thus tormenteth the Surety! how shall God punish us for our own sins, who is so wrathfully displeased with his Son for other men’s sins! O what shall be the sufferings of the reprobate, if these be the sufferings of his dearly Beloved! Needs must frail man sink under the burden of divine fury, when the God of angels needed the support of an angel. If my repentance will avenge the quarrel of my suffering Saviour, shall I not do it? If repentance will rescue me from wrath to come, shall I not perform it? Had I not better weep a few days here, than in hell for ever? and the rather for that I weep not without cause, nor mourn without hope. The sin was mine, the sorrow my Saviour’s; the transgression mine, the satisfaction my Surety’s. O the depth of his pity, that endured this for mine iniquity! What he endured for a time, I must have endured for ever, if in him the Father had not been ‘well pleased.’ Shall *that* be my delight *which* cost my Surety so dear? Shall I call on the Lord’s name, or be called by the ‘name of Christ,’ and not ‘depart from iniquity?’ (2 Tim. ii. 19.) Was Jesus Christ thus broken for me, and shall not my heart be broken for and from sin? Hath he redeemed me from this wrath to come, and shall he not redeem me from my ‘vain conversation?’ (1 Peter i. 18.) Shall I expect remission, and not accept repentance, through his blood? O what reason have I to return to God, and glorify him with my soul and body which are his! for he bought them at a price, and a dear price, his own blood: he hath consecrated a way of access unto the Father, through the veil of his own flesh; but shall I dare to approach, not ‘having my heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and my body washed with pure water?’ (1 Cor. vi. 20; Heb. x. 20, 22.) He is reconciled: but shall I again rebel? I am healed: shall I again sin? A pardon is to me extended: shall I not receive it with a pensive and prostrate soul?”

Thus then we find that there is much of strength in this argument, even above a thousand arguments, to enforce repentance. If but right reason keep the throne, what reply can be made, or reason rendered, why the call of the gospel should not be obeyed, whilst it pleadeth with so much clearness for our repentance, from the consideration of the death of Christ?

SECOND ARGUMENT TO ENFORCE REPENTANCE.

(2.) But the second argument, urged by the gospel to induce us to repent, is *the day of judgment*.—The former argument doth assault our affections; this, our passions; that the soul may be surrounded with suggestions unto repentance; and if either the one or the other are under the command of right reason, the design of the gospel may not miscarry. The dread of the day of judgment drives the ministers of God to preach and persuade repentance: “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,” saith the apostle; “for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor. v. 10, 11.) This is surely a profitable, proper argument to persuade repentance, which provokes unto the preaching of it; and therefore the same apostle doth, in Acts xvii. 30, 31, urge it: “But now he commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” And this argument is so pregnant and profitable to persuade repentance, that it is urged by John the Baptist: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Bring forth therefore fruit meet for repentance.” Nay, “the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire;” (Matt. iii. 2, 8, 10;) and very often by the Lord Jesus himself. This is so proper an argument to enforce repentance, that it is noted to be set at a distance to the thoughts of the impenitent; they live as having “made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell:” (Isai. xxviii. 15;) [they] put far away this evil day. It is noted that the doctrine which increaseth ungodliness, denieth the resurrection; (2 Tim. ii. 16—18;) and such as walk after their own lusts, are scoffers at the day of judgment. (2 Peter iii. 3, 4.) And it is to be observed, that those in Athens who repented not at Paul’s preaching, mocked when he made mention of the resurrection and last judgment. (Acts xvii. 18.)

But certainly there is much in the day of judgment to move the hardest heart and most stubborn sinner to repentance: the same Spirit which is to convince the world of sin and of righteousness, convinceth also of judgment; (John xvi. 8—11;) for the day of judgment answereth all the sinner’s pleas, whereby he defendeth and encourageth himself in sin; for it assureth of certain detection and conviction of sin. It is a day which alloweth not the least encouragement from secrecy; for therein every man’s deeds must be made manifest, whether they be good or evil; nay, the very secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and sinful thoughts themselves must then be judged. The day of judgment determineth a period to all impiety, and denieth the duration of its props and pillars,—profits and pleasures in the world; determining all the advantages of sin to be, at

the best, but "pleasures of sin for a season;" (Heb. xi. 25;) calling on rich men to "howl and weep," though they live in pleasure on earth. (James v. 1—8.) The day of judgment assureth of the punishment of the wicked. However they escape scot-free in this life, and, by their present power, God's patience, and human strength, they evade and escape many evils which befall the godly; yet they are but reserved to this day of vengeance. (Jude 6.) And this is the day in which the wicked must appear "cursed;" and manifesteth that "it shall not go well with the wicked." (Matt. xxv. 41; Eccles. viii. 13.) This day of judgment is the day of recompence to the righteous, wherein it shall be made manifest, [that] it is not in vain to serve God, or walk mournfully before him. The iniquities of the penitent shall not be found when sought for, but appear blotted out of God's remembrance; for that if there be in the soul any sense of sin, and fear of judgment, this is one eminently-forcible argument to persuade repentance. Shall men continue in sin, which shall, ere long, be laid open to their shame? or pursue the pleasures which shall shortly end in perplexities? and not rather judge themselves, that they may not be judged by the Lord?

Thus then the gospel doth by plain and powerful arguments call unto repentance, and witness its necessity. But yet again:

4. *The most powerful helps conducing to repentance, are afforded by the gospel.*—And thereby it calls most loudly to repentance; leaving us altogether without excuse, and sealing us under inevitable condemnation, in case we do not repent.

The gospel affords the fulness of knowledge for the enforcement of repentance.—Ignorance and unbelief, those bars and locks of impenitency, are broken open. The gospel opens the blind eyes, and turns us from darkness to light; makes all men, from the least to the greatest, to know the God that is offended to be a God of jealousy, that will not endure iniquity; he is a consuming fire to the hypocrite in Zion: the law that is violated is "just, holy, and good;" (Rom. vii. 12;) the guilt contracted is so contrary and provoking to justice, that in it there is no possibility of approach to God; that therefore Christ is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance" before "remission of sin." Repentance is a free gift, conferred by the covenant of grace, signified and sealed in baptism; Christ Jesus the donor. We need but ask and have. The death of Jesus, the efficient cause of repentance,—it is wrought by union with the same; so that the gospel makes us to see the necessity, nature, next way, method, and order of repentance. We cannot now plead [that] we knew not what it was to repent, where or how to gain repentance, or that there was so great a need of it.

The gospel helps us to the Spirit that worketh repentance.—The ministry of the gospel is the ministry of the Spirit. This awakeneth the most sleepy conscience, and shaketh the most rocky heart. This makes Herod hear John gladly, and the Jews to rejoice in his light. (Mark vi. 20; John v. 35.) This makes Felix himself to tremble, (Acts xxiv. 25,) and Simon Magus to fall down like lightning. None can con-

tinue impenitent under the gospel, but by quenching the Spirit, grieving the Spirit, nay, with rage resisting the Spirit, and counting themselves unworthy of salvation. (Acts xiii. 46; vii. 51.) The great work of the gospel is, to send forth the Spirit to convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; (John xvi. 8—11;) and the Spirit by the gospel works conviction, unto very opposition with rage, and violence, and malicious attempts to extinguish its light, and destroy the ministers that publish it, if it do not convince unto conversion and repentance. Hence the sin unpardonable, constituted (say some, but, I am sure, completed) by impenitency, is called “blasphemy against the Spirit,” (Matt. xii. 31,) for and by reason of its spite and rage against the gospel.

We see, then, that the gospel teacheth repentance as its main doctrine, offereth repentance as its prime privilege, urgeth repentance as its chief duty, and enforceth repentance as its only end; and so loudly calleth unto repentance, that we are bound to the obedience of the gospel as the last of Divine instructions, and after which we must expect no direction to our happiness; but this must stand as the high aggravation of impenitency, as a sin against the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ, the death, sufferings, resurrection of the Son of God, the covenant and Spirit of grace. Repentance is absolutely and indispensably necessary.

So that in order to the anticipation of divine fury, and answer of the call of the gospel, we see the necessity of repentance: and this is the Second general head propounded; which give me leave to dismiss with a brief but plain rebuke and blame unto the sinful demeanour and carriage of men in the world, demonstrating an *insensibility of this indispensable necessity of repentance*; and it consists in two things; namely, the *contempt* and *neglect* of repentance.

FIRST NOTE OF INSENSIBILITY OF REPENTANCE.

(I.) The sinful carriage of men, evidencing their insensibility of its necessity, is *the contempt of repentance*.—Whereby men scoff at repentance, despising all calls thereunto; scorning it as a base and contemptible melancholy humour, below the spirit of men. They live like men in covenant with hell, and at an agreement with the grave; who need no repentance, and therefore make their hearts hard, and necks stiff; become obdurate and rebellious to all calls to repentance; approve themselves a scornful people; nay, scoffers at the doctrine of the gospel, and day of judgment, which calls them to repentance. In the haughtiness of their spirits, they,

1. *Disesteem the mercies and common providences of God, which should lead them to repentance*.—They say not in their hearts, “Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth to us the appointed weeks of the harvest;” (Jer. v. 24;) but despise the patience and long-sufferance of God, which should lead them to repentance.

2. *Decline, nay, despise the word of God, when preaching repentance*.—They will not “hearken to the sound of the trumpet;” (Jer. vi.

17;) [they] have "line upon line," yet will not hear; (Isai. xxviii. 13;) nay, "pull away the shoulder, and stop their ear, lest they should hear." (Zech. vii. 11.)

3. *Disregard the judgments of God, denounced or inflicted upon others for their warning.*—All that God doeth to treacherous Israel never affects or frightens "treacherous Judah" to make her return. (Jer. iii. 10.) The falling of the tower of Siloam, and Pilate's mingling the blood of men with sacrifices, may occasion censorious thoughts, ("These were worse sinners than others,") but never any serious reflections,—"that unless we repent, we must all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 1—5.) Obdurate children never relent at their brethren's correction; nay, when threatened themselves, they bless themselves in their heart, and say, "We shall see no evil, though we go on 'to add drunkenness to thirst.'" (Deut. xxix. 19.) By their stubbornness they tire and stay God's correcting hand, with a "Why should you be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." (Isai. i. 5.)

4. *Are desperate and daring in their impiety.*—Sinning with a high hand and brasen face, with utmost resolution: "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." (Isai. lvi. 12.) Are not ashamed when they commit abomination; nor can they blush. (Jer. vi. 15.) They "sin as Sodom," not so much as seeking to hide their iniquity; (Isai. iii. 9;) out-facing vengeance, out-daring heaven, out-vying hell; (Isai. xxviii. 15;) deriding judgments denounced, because deferred, with, "O watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" (Isai. xxi. 11;) "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Peter iii. 4;) nay, blasphemously saying, "God is such an one as ourselves." (Psalm l. 21.) And "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," their "heart is fully set in them" to work wickedness. (Eccles. viii. 11.) So that they do every way demonstrate a contempt of repentance; and are so far from owning a necessity of it, that they deem it vain and vile, and so witness themselves to be "desperately wicked," wedded to their lusts, and sold to work wickedness; who will not hear of parting from impiety, though on hope of pardon, or fear of hell; and so justly called "a stubborn people." [They are] *deeply disingenuous.*—Despising all dictates of self-preservation, and escape of everlasting woe; the deepest discoveries of Divine wisdom, which prescribeth repentance as man's remedy; the displayings of Divine affection, soliciting repentance to prevent their ruin; and so are foolish. [They are] *dolefully self-destructive.*—Denying the way of their safety, and defying a God of power and jealousy to arise in his wrath against them; and so aggravating their sorrow with an "I would have healed thee, but thou wouldest not be healed; thy destruction is of thyself, O Israel." (Hosea vii. 1; xiii. 9.)

SECOND NOTE OF INSENSIBILITY OF REPENTANCE.

(II.) But the second sinful carriage of men, evidencing their insensibility of the necessity thereof, is *the neglect of repentance.*—These

men own it as a duty to be done, and remedy to be used, and dare not admit any contemptible thoughts of it ; yet they are slack unto and slightly in the performance of it. And of these there be three sorts.

FIRST SORT OF NEGLECTERS OF REPENTANCE.

1. *Self-justiciaries*.—Men that are right in their own eyes ; see repentance a needful grace, but not needful unto them. They are honest among men, pay all their own, live civilly among their neighbours, nay, holy toward God. They, Pharisee-like, fast twice a-week, pay tithes, give alms, hear sermons, read scripture, pray, and the like. These pity their profane neighbours, and apply every reproof to them ; but as for themselves, Bellarmine-like, they have no sin to confess. They must strain conscience for some venial sins, that they may pass the form of absolution. These are the whole who would need no physician, and the righteous whom Christ calls not to repentance. (Mark ii. 17.) Until convinced that this, and more than this, is consistent with reprobation, and is not enough to keep a soul from hell, certainly these are, (1.) Ignorant of nature's pollution. (Ezek. xvi. 2 ; Rom. xi. 24, 25.) (2.) Unobservant of the law's exaction, which concludeth all under guilt. (Rom. xi. 32 ; iii. 17.) (3.) Unaffected with the prescribed way of salvation,—repentance and remission. (4.) Insensible of Divine scrutiny and judgment, which they must pass. (Prov. xvi. 2 ; xxi. 2 ; Matt. ix. 13.) (5.) Unacquainted with, and unaccustomed to, or indirect in, the work of self-examination ; altogether strangers at home, or seeing their faces in the false glass of comparison with their vilest neighbours : for otherwise they could not but see repentance absolutely necessary for themselves more than others ; for publicans and harlots will enter into heaven before them. (Matt. xxi. 31.)

SECOND SORT OF NEGLECTERS OF REPENTANCE.

2. *Superficial penitents*.—These see repentance a duty, but deem [that] it needs not much ado ; [that] there is no such necessity of it, as that a man should be taken up with it as his serious business. Therefore they regard not the quality of the act ; but pass themselves as penitentials, with some formal, careless performances, some short sighs or sobs for sin ; trembling, with Felix, at Paul's preaching ; or quivering, with Belshazzar, on sight of God's hand-writing ; (Acts xxiv. 25 ; Dan. v. 5, 6 ;) and casting-off some gross, profane acts, with Alexander or Polemon ; but never strike at the root of sin, and mortify lust, or make a serious return to God ; but show themselves void of the grace and ignorant of the nature of true repentance ; and fall under fallacious hopes of heaven, which, like the hope of a hypocrite, will fail them in the evil day, when they shall be too late convinced, that such is the necessity of repentance, that the matter there cannot be separated from the manner of performance.

THIRD SORT OF NEGLECTERS OF REPENTANCE.

3. *Such as set repentance at a distance, and post it off from time to time.*—These men are, and indeed, by daily subjection to the gospel, cannot but be, convinced [that] repentance is indeed a duty, and exceedingly necessary unto the remission of sins. And, sitting under the word, these men meet with many strong, heart-shaking convictions, which they bid welcome; and unto the truth and goodness of what is required they assent. And their affections work within them; they cannot but sigh on sense of their sad condition, and confess it hath been bad with them; but it shall now be better. They conceive and declare good purposes; but, alas! they prove abortive; like Ephraim's righteousness, an "early dew," soon gone; (Hosea vi. 4;) like the son in the gospel, when called into Christ's vineyard, they answer, "I go, Sir," but go not; (Matt. xxi. 30;) like lingering Austin, pray, but fear [that] God will too soon say "Amen" to their prayer. They protract time, persist in sin, and many times quench the motions of the Spirit within them; suggesting to themselves, [that] though repentance be necessary, it requires no haste. These men do sinfully,

(1.) *Determine their own time.*—Not considering the uncertainty thereof, that they are tenants at the will of another, in the hand of the God of time; who may not give them another time. Sense of repentance should make us say, *Multis annis crastinum non habeo*, ["In many years"] "I have no to-morrow."

(2.) *Deem grace to be within the reach of man's arm.*—They think they can repent when they list; not considering [that] it is God's gift; so that they may enjoy their time, but not repent. Were it at men's command, what disingenuity is it to defer repentance! but in this case it is grand presumption.

(3.) *Do what in them lieth to quench the Spirit.*—Stifling convictions, disobeying persuasions, deadening affection. The Spirit will not move for ever. (Gen. vi. 3.)

(4.) *Disesteem grace and holiness.*—Accounting it the shame of strength, and burden of youth; thinking repentance the work of old age and weakness, and the quality of fools.

(5.) *Deaden the hopes of their friends.*—Who know not how to determine their eternal estate; are indeed cheered in their pensive posture in sickness and at death, if it be not too late to be true; on which account they are constrained to check their hopes, and dare make no conclusion; but say, as Austin in the like case, *Non dico, Damnabitur; non dico, Salvabitur; sed tu dum sanus es penitentiam age*,* "Repent in health."

(6.) *Make difficult repentance.*—Undertaking that in infirm age, which requireth the utmost of strength; nay, rendering sin by its custom natural and obdurate. "Can the Ethiopian change his colour?" then they that are accustomed to sin may repent. (Jer.

* "I do not say, He will be damned; and I do not say, He will be saved; but let it be thy care, while in good health, to repent."—EDIT.

xiii. 23.) Sickness employeth the whole man, and shutteth out all list or leisure to repent.

(7.) *They are in danger dolefully to out-date the day of grace.*—God doth manifest grace's beauty, and magnify the necessity of repentance, by limiting its time: "To-day if ye will hear his voice," well and good; if not, he will "swear in his wrath" [that] you "shall not enter into his rest." (Heb. iii. 7, 11.) If the day of grace be once expired, repentance may be sought with tears, but not obtained; and then the pleasures of sin will be shortening; conscience will grow clamorous, and torment with an expectation of fiery indignation to be revealed from heaven; lamenting too late, "O that I had known, in that my day, the things which concern my peace, which are now hid from mine eyes!" (Luke xix. 42.)

Such as in time will not, when it is too late shall, see that repentance is the one thing necessary of man's life, is even of absolute necessity.

THE NOTES AND CHARACTERS OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

III. I have laid before you the first two general things considerable; namely, the *nature* and *necessity* of repentance; wherein I have been longer than intention; but shall be more brief in the two remaining. I pass then to the third thing propounded; namely, *the notes and characters of true repentance*. And concerning this, I might return back to the description of repentance, and make that an examination of the truth of your repentance; but I will leave that to your own private meditations, and only examine your repentance by the characters propounded by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" (2 Cor. vii. 11;) in which we have two remarkable notes and characters of true repentance:—

(I.) First. *The general nature of it,—godly sorrow.*

(II.) Secondly. *The concomitants thereof,—care, fear, &c.*

FIRST MARK OF REPENTANCE.

(I.) The first note or mark of repentance is *godly sorrow*.—I have before noted sorrow to be essential to repentance: God never calls to repentance, but he calls to weeping; or promiseth repentance, but he promiseth a spirit of mourning. Excellently well saith an eminent minister of this city: "God hath tied sin and sorrow together with adamantine chains."* A woman may as soon look to be delivered of a child in a dream, as a man to repent without sorrow. Sorrow is indeed the daughter of sin; but God hath made the daughter a means to destroy the mother. You must not look to dance with the devil all day, and sup with Christ at night; to lie in Delilah's lap all your lives, and go to Abraham's bosom when you die. To the merry Greeks, and boon companions of the world, repentance seems mad-

* MR. CALAMY'S "Sermon before the House of Commons," October 22nd, 1644.

ness, because it calls for mourning; for wheresoever there is true repentance, there must, there will, be sorrow for sin. This sorrow must be godly sorrow "after a godly sort:" (2 Cor. vii. 11;) it is *λυπη κατα Θεου*, "sorrow according to God:" godly *in its Author, occasion, object, end and effects.*

It must be godly sorrow *in its Author.*—Springing from God, and God alone; the working of natural passions by a supernatural power and principle; a spirit of mourning, even the Spirit of God melting and making the hard heart to mourn; a rock relenting on the stroke of God's rod: the stony heart is taken away, and a heart of flesh given, by the Lord. This sorrow is God's gift from Golgotha. The death of the Son, of the Son of God, depresseth in us all joy and comfort. Nature is no author, though an actor, in this grief.

It is godly *in its occasion.*—Divine offence rather than human loss, sin not smart, is the ground, reason, occasion of it. It is most in *their hearts, who*, in respect of the world, have least cause to mourn. It is not for loss of wife, children, goods, or credit, but breach of Divine law. Its complaint is not, "I am undone;" but, "God is offended, the law violated, Christ is dishonoured." It is more for deformity, than deserved misery; for extinguished holiness, than miseries to be endured: a mourning for sin as sin, as it is *offensivum Deo, aversivum a Deo*, "an act of disobedience, an act of unkindness." It is dolour to God: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." (Psalm li. 4.) The soul's unlikeness to God unlocks its passion. The utmost of perplexities cannot abate its joys, if God appear well-pleased; nor the highest of enjoyments silence its sorrow, whilst God stands offended.

It is godly *in its object.*—It is sorrow "toward God;" (Acts xx. 21;) a "lamenting after the Lord;" (1 Sam. vii. 2;) a looking unto Christ, and mourning over him whom we have pierced. (Zech. xii. 10.) As a man runs with bleared eyes to the party offended;—"O, sir, I have offended, wronged you: will you forgive me?"—so penitent David runs to God, and with remorse crieth, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned;" (Psalm li. 4;) and the Prodigal crieth to his father, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee." (Luke xv. 18.) In days of affliction and atonement, Israel assembled, and mourned before the Lord. Penitent Ephraim crieth, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised." (Jer. xxxi. 18.) This sorrow speaks not in the ears of men, but God; it is not open and seen to the world, but secret, serious, "toward God."

It is godly *in its end and effects.*—It is expressed to God, that God may be enjoyed. This sorrow speaks unto God the vindication of his justice: "That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." (Psalm li. 4.) It is not a mourning of murmuration, but of justification: "Wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Lam. iii. 39.) It is a sorrow that sets a lustre on the least mercy: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." (Lam. iii. 22.) "We are less than the least of his mercies," is its

language. (Gen. xxxii. 10.) This sorrow is of submission: "I have sinned: let the Lord do what seemeth him good." (1 Sam. iii. 18.) It lies prostrate at the feet of God for mercy, and resigned into the will of God: "Wherein I have done amiss, show it me: I will do so no more;" (Job xxxiv. 32;) and so devotes itself unto God, to suffer or do his will. Its outcry is, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) It is every way godly sorrow.

This is the first mark of repentance.

SECOND MARK OF REPENTANCE.

(II.) The second note or character followeth upon it, and is *the concomitants*: some call them "adjuncts, properties, effects;" but I shall only say, *inseparable concomitants of this godly sorrow*. And these are seven in number.

FIRST CONCOMITANT OF GODLY SORROW.

First. *Care*.—By some rendered "study;" in the original, *σπουδη*, which, as Cicero rendereth, is, "a very earnest application of a man unto something with great delight;" and, as interpreters render, it signifieth "serious intention of mind, and speedy, sedulous execution of hand." So that it stands opposite to security and slothfulness, and intends to note the diligence and dexterity of the soul, in a shunning and avoiding [of] sin, and setting against all occasions and temptations thereunto; and studying the will of God, making it his "meditation night and day;" (Psalm i. 2;) and having in all things respect unto it, as the rule of his life and conversation. So that the very anxiety of his spirit is to shake off and avoid his sin, to subdue and weaken his lusts, to stand against temptations unto evil: for "whoever repenteth," saith Ambrose, "is careful not to sin again." * He is made whole, he would sin no more; but, with all care, caution, circumspection, and vigilancy, strive against corruption, and study to know and to do the will of God; with the church at Ephesus, to remember from whence we are fallen, and do our first works; or the church of Sardis, to awake and watch; not to be slothful in business, and secure against sin, until surprised therewithal. (Rev. ii. 5; iii. 1.)

SECOND CONCOMITANT OF GODLY SORROW.

Secondly. *Clearing of ourselves*.—*Απολογιαν*, "an apology, or answer by way of defence unto the calumnies of an accuser;" which is not done by denial of guilt, and excuse of sin, but by confession; for, saith St. Ambrose, "repentance hath no excuse but confession." † This is a humble deprecation of divine judgment, and silencing of "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. xii. 10) by self-condemnation. The true penitent doth judge himself with shame and sorrow, that he may not be judged by the Lord; he is ready to aggravate all, not extenuate any, [of] his sins; only finds an acquittance from them

* *Qui pœnitet, sollicitus est ne peccet*.—AMBROSIUS, in text.

† *Pœnitentia non habet excusationem, nisi confessionem*.—Idem.

in the blood of Christ, and concludes not against the charge of the accuser, and clamour of his own conscience: "I was an extortioner, a drunkard, an adulterer, a blasphemers; but I am washed, I am sanctified, I am justified." (1 Cor. vi. 9—11.) Repentance rendereth guilt as if it had never been, and so becomes the soul's apology.

THIRD CONCOMITANT OF GODLY SORROW.

Thirdly. *Indignation*.—*Αγανακτησιον*, "wrath unto grief;" the rising of the very stomach with rage, and a being angry unto very sickness again. It is only used in this one text of scripture, as it hath sin for its object; but in reference to other things, it expresseth the very height of anger, fretting unto fuming. Thus the rage of the ruler of the synagogue, on a conceived breach of the sabbath, is expressed in Luke xiii. 14. Religious wrath is the hottest; it will make a meek Moses break the very tables of the Lord. Thus the discontent of envy is expressed in Mark x. 41: the disciples' stomach rose against James and John. So that it here imports the turning of the unquiet passions of the soul wholly against sin; a fretting and fuming at ourselves for sin; a hating and being ashamed of ourselves for sin. This wrath breaks out in a penitent David into disgraceful speeches against himself: "So foolish was I, and ignorant," when distrust prevailed on him; (Psalm lxxiii. 22;) and, "I have done very foolishly," when he sinned in numbering the people: (2 Sam. xxiv. 10:) nay, breaks into disgraceful demeanour toward sin; as impenitent Israel, to the defiling [of] the graven images of silver, and the ornaments of their golden idols; and casting them out with contempt, as a menstruous garment; and an angry rejection of them, with a "Get you hence." (Isai. xxx. 22.) So that sin is the object of hatred, scorn, rage, reproach, and contumely, and ground of grief and shame, to the penitent: the soul cannot think of sin without stomachization, heart-rising, and reddening of face: he is indeed "angry, and sins not:" (Eph. iv. 26:) the whole of whole anger runs out against sin.

FOURTH CONCOMITANT OF GODLY SORROW.

Fourthly. *Fear*.—A rare companion of wrath, but always of care. The truly penitent are of a trembling and timorous spirit: and no marvel; for "the burnt child dreads the fire;" they have paid dear for past guilt, and may well beware to fall again. The whole work of repentance is expressed to be "a fear of the Lord and his goodness." (Hosea iii. 5.) The fear of the Lord is the only fence against temptations unto sin. Here note that this fear is a *fear of sense*: affecting us with the evil [which] sin procureth, and dreadful judgments of God by it deserved; trembling at the word of threatening;—a *fear of reverence*: awfully apprehending the holiness and majesty of God, and that vast disproportion and disparity between God and us; sorrowfully crying, "How shall dust and ashes, polluted man, come nigh to a holy and glorious Majesty?"—and a *fear of diligence and vigilancy*: watching and warring against sin, that it may not

surprise us by the difficulty of our state and distempers of our soul. And thus the penitent "worketh out his own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. ii. 12.) But it is not a fear of diffidence and despondency, of distrust and despair, which, deadening all hope of prevalency, dulleth all diligence, discourageth vigilancy and industry, and at length driveth to self-destruction. The fear of repentance springs from sense of mercy, and is spurred with the confidence of success, being assured [that] "it is God that worketh" in the soul "to will and to do," and will perfect what he hath begun. (Phil. i. 6; ii. 13.)

FIFTH CONCOMITANT OF GODLY SORROW.

Fifthly. *Vehement desire*.—*Επιποθῆσιν*. "a desire of fervency, that can admit of no delay," saith Dr. Slater: "of diligence and activity," say the Greek critics, "which puts-on with industry and violence." The sour sauce of godly sorrow doth ever sharpen the appetite of holy desire. The hunted hart thirsteth for the water; the sin-wearied soul, for Christ. It is a desire to be wholly rid of sin; and therefore breaks out into complaints against the remainders of sin in the soul: as Paul: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24:) the death of nature, and day of judgment, are desired and delightful, because the destruction and discharge of sin. It is also a desire of all sin-subduing and grace-strengthening administrations: they that by repentance have once "tasted that the Lord is good," do "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word." (1 Peter ii. 2, 3.) This desire is vehement against all difficulties and discouragements; running out with all fervent diligence for obtainment, and bitter complaints for want; finding no satiety without its very object.

SIXTH CONCOMITANT OF GODLY SORROW.

Sixthly. *Zeal*.—An affection compounded of love and anger; and is the edge of our desire; enforcing all means, and encountering all difficulties and opposition, to our end. This is that whereby the penitent persists in his godly sorrow under all checks and diversions; and persevereth in his course of mortification against all opposition of the world, or his corrupt self; fighting against what hinders, and flinging off all incumbances, and following heaven with force and violence; (Matt. xi. 12;) [so] that, if it were possible, it would draw all men with it. But, however, it beareth down all before it, and never showeth the strength that is in these godly streams, till stopped by some temptation; but then it roareth and swelleth, and overfloweth its banks, that all men may see [that] the penitent is full of the Holy Ghost. And this is always a note of repentance: "Be zealous, and repent," is Christ's own call. (Rev. iii. 19.) Sorrow must not be for sin as if we minded not to part with it; but must manifest our fullness of resolution to be rid of it, whatever it costs us.

SEVENTH CONCOMITANT OF GODLY SORROW.

Seventhly. *Revenge*.—The due result of zeal. By zeal we are carried with that vigour, that the world concludes us mad for God and for religion; (Acts xxvi. 24;) especially when our indignation boils into revenge upon ourselves for our sins by self-castigations; not of our body, with whips and scourges, as do the Papists; but by the abatement of lust, which stirreth in us; buffeting the flesh, and “bringing it into subjection,” (1 Cor. ix. 27,) giving it the blue eye, a blot in the face, as the Greek word *ὑπωπιαζω* signifieth; withdrawing those lawful comforts which make it to wax wanton. As Hilarion, when he felt his lusts wax big, and strong, and wanton, provoking to filthiness: *Ego faciam, aselle, ut non calcitres*: “I will by abstinence keep this ass from kicking.” And our Henry the Second, being inclined to incontinency, prayed to God that he might rather have a constant weak body, than so strong lusts. This is that which carrieth the penitent to wreak his quarrel on the occasion and instruments of his impiety: as the daughters of Israel, in dedicating their looking-glasses, by which they had offended, unto the service of the temple; (Exod. xxxviii. 8;) and as did the Ephesians,—burn their books “before all men;” (Acts xix. 19;) as holy Cranmer,—thrust his right hand, which subscribed his recantation, first into the fire, revengefully crying out, “This unworthy right hand!” as long as he could speak. And this revenge leads them to satisfaction for offences done, either by public confession unto open shame, or ready restitution: as Zacchæus, threefold [fourfold] to the injury done; as penitent Bradford, that parted with his whole estate to satisfy the wrong done by one dash of his pen when a servant. So that revenge worketh all the disgrace, dishonour, disadvantage, and destruction that is possible against sin.

Thus then you have here the notes and characters of repentance, laid down by the apostle; the best looking-glass that can be, by which to dress your penitent souls. Let it be to every of us an use of examination; and clearly convince us, that if we be strangers to sorrow, or our sorrow be to the world, not toward God, “godly sorrow,” (2 Cor. vii. 10,) we have not repented: never let us think of celebrating a celestial passover without these sour herbs. (Exod. xii. 8.) Again: if under our sorrow we continue careless of required duty; clamorous by continued guilt on the conscience; fearless of common danger and deserved misery by the increase of sin; foolishly pitiful toward our lusts, to be rebuked with rage; faint in our desires to be rid of sin; lukewarm in our work of mortification; or indulgent to our lusts, not striking home, whilst we smite at sin; we are not the subjects of true gospel-repentance; for these must always accompany it.

THE NEXT WAY AND MEANS TO GAIN REPENTANCE.

IV. Having laid before you the characters of true repentance, I shall proceed very briefly to propound the fourth and last general head to be considered; namely, *the next way and means to gain*

repentance. And herein I shall not insist on the method and order of procuring repentance, which is hinted to you before; or the lets and hinderances of repentance which are to be removed,—this would tire your patience, on which I have already too much trespassed; but I shall only give you some special directions, which you must observe, and carefully practise, if ever you will obtain repentance; as,

FIRST HELP TO REPENTANCE.

First. *Sit with care, constancy, and conscience under the word of truth, and gospel of grace.*—Repentance, you have already heard, is the great work of the word, and loud call of the gospel. This was the voice of John the Baptist, nay, of Jesus Christ himself, and his apostles. The ministers of the word are the ambassadors of reconciliation, and so preachers of repentance. (2 Cor. v. 18, 19.) Hearing is prescribed of God the way to happiness: “Hear, and your soul shall live.” (Isai. lv. 3.) The preaching of the word is “the power of God unto salvation:” (Rom. i. 16 :) so long as God continueth the word to a people, they are in a possibility of repentance; but “where the vision fails, the people perish.” (Prov. xxix. 18.) If ever God bring the Jews to repentance, it will be by the preaching of the gospel, the lifting up of “the root of Jesse” as “an ensign.” (Isai. xi. 10, 11.) God sealeth up under impenitency by the withdrawing of his word: the removing of the candlestick of the gospel is the saddest doom [that] can be denounced. (Rev. ii. 5.) Refusing to hear is the great reason of impenitency: “My people would not hearken,” is God’s complaint; (Psalm lxxi. 11;) and “We will not hear,” [is] the language of the obstinate. (Jer. vi. 17.) Rejection of the word, pulling away the shoulder, and stopping the ear, [are] the property of a hard heart. (Zech. vii. 11, 12.) Never did Felix fail so much as when, trembling at Paul’s preaching, he sends him away, and would hear no more of that matter; (Acts xxiv. 25;) nor did the Jews fall under final apostasy, until they put the gospel away from them. The very Heathen concludes repentance to be the result of audience and attention:

*Invidus, iracundus, iners, vinosus, amator;
Nemo adeo ferus est qui non mi.escere possit,
Si modò culturae patientem accommodat aurem.*

HORATIUS, *Epistolarum* lib. i. Ep. 1. 38.*

“There is no profaneness but it is curable by patient audience.” As ever you will repent, hear the word, attend unto instruction, abide the heart-shaking convictions of the word. If you slight the ministry of the word, the sound of the trumpet, the call of the gospel, you are sealed up under impenitency: the very cry of the gospel-call to

- “Say, does ambition fire? Some grave discourse,
Thrice read, will calm and stop the fever’s force.
Though envy, passion, sloth, the love of wine,
Or lust inspire, your ear if you resign
To wholesome words, you still may be reclaim’d;
The wildest beasts by discipline are tamed.”—DUNCOMBE’S Translation.

repentance is, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt. xi. 15; xiii. 9, 43.)

SECOND HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Secondly. *Study the nature of God.*—God must be the object of repentance: we must sorrow toward God, return to God; it is a great inducement therefore to know God. Ignorance of God is the mother of impenitency: the times of impenitency are denominated "times of ignorance." (Acts xvii. 30.) This is observed to be the very cause of obduracy: The "Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance which is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Eph. iv. 17, 18.) Ignorance of God was the very principle of Israel's persistence and progress in sin: "They proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord." (Jer. ix. 3, 6.) The devil labours to keep all light out of man's soul, that so he may sleep in sin, and be locked up in impenitency. He hinders the gospel from being preached; if possible, he would blow out the light, and hinder men from hearing, but chiefly from understanding: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) And when God brings to repentance, he breaks these bars of ignorance, he pulls off these scales of blindness, and begins with the understanding. True grace begins always at "the renewing of the mind:" the transforming of the mind to know "the good and acceptable will of God," is the formality of the gospel-grace,—true repentance. (Rom. xii. 2.) And the knowledge of God, being the principle of it, is put for repentance: "They shall know God," (Hosea ii. 20,) and, "God will be known by the Egyptians," (Isai. xix. 21,) are the promises of repentance. There can be no conviction of a contrariety to God, where there is not a right conception of God; and affection must follow apprehension.* How can we fear God or his goodness, if we do not know him? What reason of return to God, when men know not his holiness offended, justice provoked, power irresistible, mercy in pardoning iniquity? It is a seeming fair apology for Pharaoh's obduracy: "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.) The work of the gospel is "to open the blind eyes," in turning "from Satan unto God." (Acts xxvi. 18.) The inquiry of Saul is, first, "Who art thou, Lord?" then, "What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 5, 6.) Did men know who it is they sin against, they never durst be so bold. Study therefore the nature of God: acquaint yourselves with his attributes,—his holiness, power, justice, mercy, and the like. Your souls will never be drawn from sin, or driven into a course of true repentance, until God become your dread.

* *Ignoti nulla cupio.* "There can be no desire for that which is utterly unknown."
—EDIT.

THIRD HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Thirdly. *Sit close to the work of self-scrutiny.*—Be serious in self-examination. No man sits so fast in impiety as the stranger at home; none so soon run upon their ruin as the regardless of their accounts. This is a remedy of God's immediate prescription: "Commune with your own heart upon your bed." (Psalm iv. 4.) "Search and try your ways, and turn unto the Lord." (Lam. iii. 40.) "Judge yourselves." (Matt. vii. 1.) When we approach his table, where we are eminently to act repentance, the whole work of preparation is resolved into self-examination. (1 Cor. xi. 28.) Nay, this is a receipt transmitted to us with a *probatum est* thus by David: "I examined my ways, and turned my feet into thy testimonies." (Psalm cxix. 59.) And when the Prodigal's wits returned to consider his wickedness, he would [run] home to be a servant, where he had been and might have been a son. (Luke xv. 17—19.) God's rod is but a calling us to reckon with our own souls: he never reasons with any by correction that read their own estate in his instructions. You have heard before, that conviction must go before conversion. Man's conscience is a register which will bring to remembrance, and [a] judge that will clearly determine of man's ways. The worst of men, by a short conference with their own soul, would soon see a necessity of repentance. Censure others less, and yourselves more: inquire not into other men's condition so much as your own conversation. Let no day return without accounts. Be serious in self-examination.

FOURTH HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Fourthly. *Sit loose to the world.*—The world is the great pull-back to heaven, and hinderance of repentance. You may observe, [that] the reason [of] the rebellion and impenitency of Ezekiel's hearers was, "Their hearts went after their covetousness;" otherwise they took delight to hear. (Ezek. xxxiii. 31.) That sad sentence, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," was occasioned by a rich man's refusal of Christ's call to repentance. (Matt. xix. 16—24.) Riches choke the work, and lift up the heart too high. Great men in the world think they live above all reproof; for, Tyrus-like, they "set their hearts as the heart of God," (Ezek. xxviii. 6.) and think to live without control. He that loves the world, finds, when called to repentance, [that] he is loath to leave pleasures; it is hard to renounce riches; it cuts deep to despise wife, children, father, mother, friends, and dear relations; (Mark x. 29;) he cannot but be dismayed at reproach and sufferings. Sin is the common property of the world; the things of this world is the recompence of impiety. They that sin highest, ordinarily succeed most; yet this is the great stumbling-stone of the godly: the world makes David almost repent his repentance. (Psalm lxxiii.) They that will follow God, must be strangers to the world: true penitentiaries must be pilgrims in the earth.

FIFTH HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Fifthly. *See the shortness of life, and limitation of the day of grace.*—Hopes of long life, and thoughts of repentance at pleasure, help many a soul to hell. Our life, we must consider, is but a bubble, a blast, a shadow; gone, before it well appear; in which there is no certainty. Our time is in God's hand; he hath numbered our days; but to which of us hath he declared the number? Hath he given any man a legible lease of his life? Have the youngest, strongest, most healthful among us an assurance of to-morrow? And doth not eternity depend on the well-husbanding of this uncertain time? Is there any remembrance of God in the grave, or repentance among the dead? Doth not death determine the eternal estate of men? Dives's eyes cannot distil one tear in hell; though he call to Abraham for mitigation of torments, [he] never so much as begs the pardon of sin; no, that is too late. See we not men pensive and sad at the thoughts of death? Chrysostom hath told us, [that] the cause of the fear of death is, "because we live not in the austerity befitting Christianity, but lead delicate and voluptuous lives." Could we make every day our dying day, it would quicken us to repentance. Hilarion never had a to-morrow; and when he comes to die, he hath the comfort of it: "O, my soul, get thee out of this house of clay! What dost thou fear?" *Septuaginta propè annis servivisti Christo et mortem times?* "Hast thou served Christ almost seventy years, and dost thou now fear death?" If we will live for ever, we must die daily; if we will not defer repentance, we must not determine to ourselves any other time than the present.

Again: if we know our time in nature, who knoweth the date of the day of grace? It is a limited day; but the bounds thereof are not published, that to-day, whilst it is called to-day, we may hearken to his voice, lest he swear in his wrath, we shall not enter into his rest. (Heb. iv. 3, 7.) A season of salvation is allotted to the sons of men: the old world had its day, Jerusalem had her day, every of us have our day; but our day of nature may out-date our day of grace. Yet of this we have no assurance; but if so it do, it were better [that] the day of our being had never been; for, the opportunity lost, we are lost for ever. Whilst we enjoy the word, and motions of the Spirit, we have hope; but if ever these cease, we are undone. Let us startle our souls with these sad thoughts: "This may be the last day and hour of my life; but if not, the last day and hour of grace." Would we hear every sermon as the last, it would rouse our souls to repentance.

SIXTH HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Sixthly. *Seriously expect approaching judgment.*—It is an argument to repentance, and very persuasive thereunto, as you have before heard. The thoughts of the last judgment will cool the courage of the profanest sinner, when he seeth the day approach in which his secret sins must be laid open. A severe sentence cannot be respited or

suspended for the least moment, but must be executed with speed, certainty, and severity; the Judge is just, and will then be inexorable. All the shelters of his power, might, policies, riches, honours, by which he staved off reproof, will now be scattered; and fame vain and bootless; the Judge is no respecter of person! a day stored with indignation, which will not be mitigated, but be poured out in full vials. Can the heart but tremble, that is the subject of these thoughts? They that sin with boldness, set the day of judgment at a distance from their soul; but if we will provoke repentance, think, with Jerome, [that] you always hear the trumpet of the last day sounding in your ears, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" Excellent was the stratagem to stir up repentance which is storied of a Christian king of Hungary; who being on a time sad and pensive, his brother, a jolly courtier, would needs know the cause of his sadness. "O brother," said the king, "I have been a great sinner against God; and know not how to die, or to appear before God in judgment." His brother, making a jest of it, said, "These are but melancholy thoughts." The king replied nothing at present. But the custom of the country was, that if the executioner came and sounded a trumpet before any man's door, he was presently led to execution. The king, in the dead time of the night, sends the executioner to sound the trumpet before his brother's door; who, hearing it, and seeing the messenger of death, sprang into the king's presence, beseeching to know in what he had offended. "Alas, brother!" said the king, "you have never offended me; and is the sight of my executioner so dreadful? and shall not I, who have greatly offended, fear to be brought before the judgment-seat of Christ?" a singular cure for jovial contempt of repentance. The sense of judgment is a strong summons to repentance.

SEVENTH HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Seventhly. *Seriously apprehend the possibility, nay, probability, nay, the positive certainty, of pardon.*—I have before told you, [that] repentance is the result of faith. Despair deters duty: hope, in Israel, is the great help to repentance. The law leads to conviction; but the gospel, to conversion. Despair is the devil's lock to impenitency. Look up therefore: see, "there is mercy with the Lord, that he may be feared; and plenteous redemption, that he may be sought unto." (Psalm cxxx. 4, 7.) Apprehend, then, the price of man's sin paid, the justice of God satisfied, the pardon sealed in and by the blood of Christ, and proclaimed in the gospel; so that it is thine with certainty, if received with a prostrate soul, and sued out by serious repentance. Nothing needs to deter: God is reconciled; therefore return unto him.

EIGHTH HELP OF REPENTANCE.

Eighthly. *Soak the heart in the blood of Jesus.*—Take every day a turn of meditation in Mount Calvary; cast thy eyes on a crucified Christ; read the nature of thy sin, the provoked wrath of God, and

passionate loves of a Saviour; it is suppling to the adamantine heart, and suasive to the most obdurate soul. I have before noted its force and efficacy to repentance. Be persuaded daily to contemplate the cross of Christ.

NINTH HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Ninthly. *Speed will much facilitate repentance.*—Sin may be removed before it be settled by custom; but then it is difficult. Youth is pliable to precepts, strong under burdens, dexterous and active in business; when old age is infirm and impotent. The piety of youth is the horror of the devil, the honour of religion, the ease and joy of the soul. Let not sin become customary, if you will ever cast it off; for it will become a second nature. Linger not in what you will be rid of; for the longer you linger, you will be more loath to part. Like Austin's *modò sine modo*, and *paululum quod ibat in longum*; "your anon will never come; and our *little longer in sin* will last for ever," by the good will of nature. Singularly good is the counsel of Basil: "If the thing be honest, keep it to the end; if filthy and hurtful, why dost thou continue in it? Doth any that desires to ease the stomach of choler, increase it by a continued bad and intemperate diet?" If ever you will repent, repent betimes. Late repentance is rarely true, but ever difficult.

TENTH HELP TO REPENTANCE.

Tenthly. *Sue for it at the hands of God.*—Repentance is God's gift, and therefore must be begged; it is Christ's purchase, the covenant's promise, and may be begged with confidence. Jesus Christ is "exalted to give repentance;" therefore go to him in faith. All means are ineffectual without God's blessing. Let therefore prayer enforce all means to this end. Whilst you sit under the word; study the nature of God; examine yourselves; sit loose to the world; see life's brevity, and the limitation of the day of grace; seriously expect the day of judgment; sensibly apprehend a pardon; soak the heart in the blood of Christ; and speed repentance; second all with earnest supplication: say, with Ephraim, "O Lord, turn thou me, and so shall I be turned;" (Jer. xxxi. 18;) so shall your stony heart be taken from you, and you shall possess this necessary grace of repentance in the truth of it; which God of his mercy grant us!