

SERMON I.

ROM. 9:1. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my Conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.

THE Lord our God is the true God, a God of truth, even truth itself, the first great original and eternal truth, who by the most absolutePage 148perfection of his incomprehensibly blessed Nature is infinitely removed, as from all possibility of being ??? or imposed on by a lie himself, so from all possibility of deceiving or lying to others; and to say (as some daring men of late have done) that God may deceive, if he will, is not only of harsh sound in Christian ears, but to be exploded and execrated; as insinuating, that the glorious Majesty of God might, if he would, and so pleased, cease to be the God of truth, or a true God; Which considering the identification of the Divine Nature and Attributes, is as much as to say, that he might, if he would? cease to be God; As the strength of Israel cannot lie? neither is he a man that he should lie; so he loveth truth in the inward parts; and commandeth men to speak truth every one to his neighbour, and peremptorily, prohibieth all lying, not only all pernicious lying on design to hurt? but also all officious lying, to bring about some good to, or to divert some notable evil from themselves or others; and lying in sport to make others merry, and all emerarious rash lying through customary loosess and???, called (it seems) in the Scripture, the way of lying; And the more that men abhor lying, and love to speak the truth, they

are in so far the ??? like God, and the more unlike the Devil, who abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him, and who when he speaks a lie, speaks it of his own (it's ??? and solely his own and none of God's) for he is a liar, and the father of it: We would therefore watchfully guard against all lying under whatsoever pretext, and look well that we always speak truth, especially when we interpose Conscience, and yet more especially when we appeal to God as witness of the truth of what we say or affirm; According to the practice of the apostle here, who (being one that exercised himself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men) no doubt made conscience always to speak truth, more especially, when he had used any more than ordinary solemn protestation, or attestation, as he doth in these words; ThePage 149scope whereof is, to roll away all ground of stumbling from his Country-men the Jews, and from any others who might think because of some of his discourses concerning them, that he regarded them not, and that he was very indifferent, whether they were saved or perished; and to conciliate their affection and respect to the Doctrine of the Gospel, and to his person for the Gospels, and their own souls sake: In which words we have 1. His assertion concerning the heaviness and sorrow of his heart for them his brethren according to the flesh; Which he sets down first positively, I speak the truth: Then negatively? I lie not, 2dly. The confirmation of the truth of his assertion, which to make it the more solemn, weighty, and convincing, and (if it might be) the more gaining of the Jews, is threefold, 1. It's in Christ,

insinuating thereby that he is a believer in Christ that asserts this truth, and one that draws strength from Christ to enable him to what he asserts and referreth to the honour of Christ as his main end in it, and withall expects God's acceptance of him therein on Christ's account, and for his sake. The 2. is, My Conscience (an upright impartial and tender thing, when right) bearing me witness as to the truth of what I assert. The 3. is, in the Holy Ghost, That is. it is affirmed by one who hath an enlightened and habitually sanctified Conscience by the Holy Ghost: by one who is acted by him, and in a sanctified frame for the present; Nay, by one infallibly guided and inspired by the Holy Ghost as his Pen-man in writing this as a piece and passage of Divine Scripture.

I shall not here speak particularly to all the points of Doctrine that might be deduced from these words, but to such only as make for clearing the purpose that we have in hand, and that is, the particular influence that Conscience hath on a man in the time of his acting, and the particular respect that he ought to have to his Conscience in carrying it along with him in his actions, Yet we shall passingly point at, and little more? than namePage 150some general Observations, and then come to the particulars that we mainly aim at.

And 1. We Observe this, That a man's Conscience is some way different from himself, as in some respect (to speak so) another Partie, I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, my Conscience also bearing me witness; I and me is one thing, and Conscience, as it were another, and the

Holy Ghost a third; all which he joins together, yet so as he makes them different Parties: Conscience, I say, considered as Conscience, and more especially, as it's renewed, well informed, and tender in the exercise of its duty, differs from the man himself. 1. In respect of it's place of more direct and immediat subjection to God himself, as it's Master, to receive i's orders from him; whereas the man is more directly and immediately subject to Conscience, by which, as his Deputy, God rules him. 2ly. In respect of it's office, viz. To dictat to man what he should do, and what he should not do, and that according to the light that it hath from God in his revealed Will and Word; Whereas man is not to dictat to his Conscience, but to obey it's dictats in o far as they agree with God's revealed Will and Word. 3ly. In that by it's office also, it is to tell the man that he should direct all his actions to the right end, viz. The glory of God; For it's office is not only to dictat our way, but to injoin to us our end; Man hath not a power or liberty allowed to him to propose to himself, what end he pleaseth, such as Profit, Pleasure, or Credit, as his main end, but is obliged to eye the Glory of God as such; Which Conscience, by virtue of it's office, and acting i's part aright (though, alace it often proves defective therein, being corrupted and defiled by sin) enjoins him to do. 4ly. In respect of the different considerations and sense of things; it will often he displeased, accuse and condemn, when the man himself will be well pleased; It will judge a thing unworthy to be intertained, which the man will judge worthy ??? etertaining. And so Conscience is to be

considered, thoughPage 151having it's ??? in man, yet in many respects? as some way different from him, and ???, as it were to him, and set over him (as ??? hinted before) to be a Guardian, witness, ??? or sensor, to take notice o him in all his actions and carriage.

Let no man then (as the Use of i) think that ever he is, or can be alone, so long as he hath a Conscience within him, for he hath still something to testify for, or against him; to reprove him for what is wrong, and to commend him for that which is right? And though many poor wretches are readie to think, and ??? to fancy themselves to be quiet, and well, when they bli, or cerize, or bribe thei Conscience, yet it will be found to be still waiting on them, and watching them is all they do.

2ly. Observe, That Conscience is a most divine thing? therefore Paul taketh it to be more impartial then himself; and joins it with the Holy Ghost in testifying; if it were not in some respect, a more divine thing th the man himself, such weight would not be laid on it, and it's Testimony; And if we look to these things (hinted at in the foregoing Observation) viz. to the immediat Master of it, God; to the Rul that it walketh by, his Will revealed in his Word; to the end it directs to. or enjoins, the honour of God; and to the whole way of of it's considering, and judging of things, not only as pleasant, or externally profitable to us, but mainly as pleasing to God, and for his honour, as conducing to the advancing of ??? with him, or Conformity to him; It's most divine. The Use teacheth us to lay more weight on Conscience as

spiritual, and as that which taketh up things better, and is a far better dicerner and judge of things then we ou selves are.

3ly. Observ, That the attesting of Conscience is a most grave, important, and solemn thing, buines of highest concernment, and such as ought to be ??? great weight with others; It's so mide use of here; yea t's Testimony is some way to have weight with us, and to bePage 152respected as the Testimony of Christ himself, and of the Holy Ghost; Therefore it's here joined with them in its Testimony; and it cannot be otherwayes, God being (as was said before) the immediat Master of it, and it being so divine a thing; none can attest Conscience, but they must needs attest God with it.

The Use is, To teach us to be more wary in attesting Conscience in a light and trivial way; It's in Scripture Language an attesting Christ, and the Holy Ghost; and when ever we dar not appeal to them as Witnesses, we would beware of appealing to, or of attesting Conscience, or taking it to be a Witnes.

4ly. Observe, That there is a great difference among Consciences; for these words, My conscience beareth me witnes in the holy Ghost, imports two things, 1. His attesting his Conscience not simply, but as it's sanctified by the Spirit. 2ly. It not only imports Sanctification in the habit of it, but in it's exercise also; for he knew that a man's attesting of his meer natural Conscience is not of such value, it being a thing that may be easily deluded, and go wrong; but sayeth he, I attest my conscience in

the holy Ghost, and as acted by him; There is a difference betwixt a renewed, and unrenewed Conscience; and a difference betwixt a pure Conscience and a defiled one, To the pure (sayeth the apostle, Tit. 1:15.) all things are pure, but to them that are defiled, and unbelieving, is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience? is defiled; Paul's appealing his Conscience, is as it's opposit to such a Conscience; There is also an evil and a good Conscience, as these words lately spoken of, 1 Pet. 3:21 The answer of a good conscience toward God, clear; There is likewise a cauterized Conscience, and a tender Conscience: yea, there is some difference of Consciences among Believers themselves; some Consciences are weak, some strong; some are sleepy, some waking, some are secure, some in the lively exercise of the Grace of God, and acted by the Spirit, according to the will of God; and this is the Conscience meant here.

Page 153 Use, This Difference would be well observed, for it will not be the Testimony of every Conscience that will bear a man through it must be the Testimony of a Conscience sanctified, and in that particular acted by the Holy Ghost.

5ly. Observe, That there is no Testimony of a Conscience that can be satisfying, but the Testimony of a Conscience sanctified, and in a sanctified frame; therefore he thinks it not enough to say, My conscience beareth me witness, but he addeth, in the Holy Ghost; And in that passage, 1 Pet. 3:21. It's not the answer of Conscience simply, but

the answer of a good conscience, of a waking, tender, spiritual, and well enlightned Conscience, that satisfieth.

Use, Therefore ere men lay much weight on the testimony of their Conscience, they would first put it o proof? and see that it be the Testimony of a sanctified Conscience, and in a sanctified frame; if a man be not of some credit, his Testimony will not be of much weight in any matter; it is even so with Conscience, as to it's Testimony.

6ly. Observe, That sometimes, and in some Cases, Believers may very warrantably attest their Conscience, and appeal to it's Testimony; some Believers in the old Testament, and some in the new have done it: Tho (as we said before) the attesting of Conscience be a very grave and solemn thing, and would not be used at all times, and in all cases, yet at some times, and in some cases, it may be warrantably used, when rightly gone about: I shall name Three or Four Considerations, or Cases from the Text, for clearing of it. 1. Conscience may be attested, when the matter that we assert, requireth such a solemn attesting of it; And these things concur here to clear, that the matter wherein he attesteth his Conscience, is such, For, 1. It is a thing that concerneth God's Glory not a little, that his Servant and Messenger is not walking according to the flesh, 2. It tendeth to the edification of others; for if he had not removedPage 154the prejudice that the Iews had at him, it might have marred their receiving the Truth from his mouth. 3. It tendeth to his own vindication, in as far as it tendeth to the former two

ends, and he will not suffer any blot to ly here. 4. That which he asserteth, is a thing not obvious, and could not well be otherwayes made out; and in this so great and grave a matter, he spares not to attest God, and his own Conscience. 2. Consider the manner of his proceeding; It's spoken in the sight of God gravely and soberly, I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not, my conscience bearing me witnes in the holy ghost; He doth not rashly, and abruptly break out in it, as many do. 3ly. Consider, that he is most clear in the thing, ere he attest his Conscience, he was sure that it was no lie, and that he had no mixture of untruth in it; yea, he is so clear that he dar swear it, and take Christ, and the Holy Ghost to witnes in it: When men dar not attest God in a matter, they should not attest their own Conscience in it, except they think that God will say one thing, and their Conscience another, which is contrary to the nature of Conscience; Men will say manythings lightly, supposing them to be true that they will be loath to attest their Conscience in, until they be very clear, and sure that they are true. 4ly. Add this Consideration, that it is done, when he is in a holy spiritual and lively frame, My conscience (sayeth he) bearing me witnes in the holy Ghost; To attest Conscience in a carnal frame, is as unsuitable, as to rush in rashly, and unmannerly before a grave Judge, to crave a Sentence from him; If our frame be not right, Conscience will never speak out an approving Testimony to us in that particular which we assert, and attest it in; For though, as to the matter it be

true, and no lie, yet as to our circumstantiated attesting of it in so ill a frame, it will not approve us.

7ly. In the general, Observe, That Conscience it's Testimony, when warrantably made use of, is a thing very useful, refreshing, and comfortable to a Believer; Page 155 There is nothing readily, that more comforts him in a strait? it's a singularly good back-friend; Therefore, when Paul hath few other friends, he maketh use of this, and findeth much peace and comfort from it; And hence he sayth, 2 Corinthians 1:12. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, and so forth. To clear this in a word further: it is in these Three Cases exceeding useful, 1. In the Case of Reproach, I have (sayeth Paul, Acts 23:1.) lived in all good conscience before God untill this day; And 2 Tim: 1:3. I thank God whom I serve with pure conscience from my fore-fathers. 2ly. In the case of some notable Cross, when Christians are brought very low, in a great measure outwardly afflicted, or under great persecution; This is (says? the apostle, 1 Pet. 2:19, 20.) thank worthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully; for what glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well and suffer for it, and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 3ly. It's useful and comfortable as to our own peace in the case of Challenges for guilt, it silenceth, and shoulders out all Challenges, and giveth holy boldness; If our hearts (or Consciences) condemn us not (says Iohn 1. Ep. Chap 3. v. 21.) then have we confidence towards God.

The Use serves to teach us to be much in love with such a way, as we may have the Testimony of a good Conscience in it; and to be much in love with such a Conscience, as may give us such a comfortable Testimony in all our straits and difficulties.

More particularly, we shall speak to that which we mainly aim at, in these Four or Five Observations; Consider then first, What Paul is about here, he is asserting a truth, viz. That he was in great heaviness for his brethren, and kinsmen according to the flesh? And he attests his Conscience that it was so, and that he was honest, and sincere in asserting it; Whence Observe, That there is no action of a man's Life, but Conscience hath a concern in it, and hath something to say to him concerning it; if it were but the speaking of a word, let be the doing of any business, Conscience hath always something to say for him, or against him; So that we may confidently say, there is no action of so little moment, in thought, word or deed; as, whither a man be called to do, or forbear, to speak, or to be silent, but in all these, Conscience hath a sense and consideration of it, and a Testimony to give for, or against the man about it. I am not now speaking of things sinful, or unlawful on the matter, but of such things as on the matter are lawful; As when a man speaketh truth; whither he speaketh it truly, and with an honest intention or not, Therefore when Paul is speaking a truth here, he looks to his Conscience, and hearkens what it sayeth: Put these Four together, and ye will find it clear, that a sanctified Conscience, in a sanctified and good Frame, will always

have something to say, for, or against a man, in every thing that he goes about; I say, a sanctified Conscience, in a sanctified Frame, because that is the Conscience we are speaking of, and the Conscience that most compleatly dischargeth it's duty. 1 If we consider this, That there is no humane action, but God hath given man a Rule, directing how it shall be ordered, how he shall eat, and how he shall drink, how he shall plow, pray, hear, read, confer, how he shall walk in Company, and out of Company, how he shall go about the Duties of his Calling; and it prescribes the manner of doing these things, as well as the matter; Therefore, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1. It's said, All Scripture is given by divine inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, and for correction, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto every good work: It furnishes him with light and direction? not only in the matter (as said) but in the manner of doing. 2. ???, That a man in all his actions is either walking? according, and agreeably to tat rule, or not, his action is eiber conform or disconform to the Rule, there is not a mid; He either doth according to it, or he dothPage 157not according to it; If he do the action as the word prescribeth, Conscience hath something to say for him; if no, it hath something to say against him. 3. ???, that in all actions as they are one or performed, and as ???, God is either pleased or displeased; If the action be done according to his will, he is pleased: if it be not done according to his will, he is displeased. 4. Conider, That a sanctified Conscience taketh up a man's

actions, and considereth him in them, not according to the matter only; bu also as they are agreeable to the Rule for the manner, principle, motive, and end; and estifieth of them accordingly: So that if God have an interest in all a man's actions, a sanctified Conscience hath also an interest in them: I say, a sanctified Conscience, because it most singly pleaeth God's interest.

This is true also of a natural Conscience according to its light, for even such a Conscience (as it is said, Romans 2:5.) beareth witness, and the Gentiles show the works of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; And there is no natural man, if he take heed to his Conscience, in the doing of any action, but will find Conscience according to its light, speaking either for him, or against him; either acusing or else exusing him? but this is much more to be found in a sanctified Conscience, because it hath much more light, and much more tenderness to act according to that light, and therefore it will find itself much more concerned in the actions of a believer.

The first Use is, for information and instruction in a man's practical point of Religion relating to men's conversation; Most men, ??? think that Conscience is not concerned except in some great things, some papably sinfull things, or some things immediately relating to Religion; and that in all other things they may live as they like, without taking notice of Conscience: But say, and have cleared it? that Conscience hath n ??? and

concern in every action, not only as to putting men toPage 158undertake it, (whereof we spoke before) but also as to their manner of performing the same; It not only puts a man to think, speak, or do? but it's concerned in the manner of his thinking, speaking, and doing; Conscience in every one of these hath somewhat to say, viz. That we are either right or wrong. The reason is? because all a Christian man's actions may be taken up in a two-fold respect, or under a two-fold consideration. 1. In respect of the external action itself, or the matter of it, even though we consider them as indifferent; as whether a man stay at home, or go abroad, eat now, or for bear eating, and so forth. 2. As these actions are Christian, in which respect men are not only to look on the action t self, materally considered, but they are also to look to the rules given to direct them how to walk Christianly in that action; for there are many actions good in themselves, or in the firstrespect that will not be found to be Christianly and religiously good, or good in this second respect; The Christian should love God with all his heart, soul, strength? and mind, Matthew 22:37. He is not his own. he is bought with a price, and therefore should glorifie Go in his body and spirit, which are God's, 1 Corinthians 6:20. hether he eat or drink, or whatever he do, he should do al to the glory of God? 1 Corinthians 10:30. Which three general precepts show that we are not to level our actions as meerly natural mn do, but as it becomes Christians, to level them at his glory, as the great end and scope of them; that to us to live may be Christ, that we may live to him, and glorifie him who hath bought us,

and that from a principle of love to him who hath loved us: Now Conscience cometh not in formally to deal on the first account, that is, as the action is good in itself, or on the matter; There reason and judgement come in rather, and tell when a man doth that which is good or ??? on the matter; But Conscience comes in on the second accoun, and telleth him when his action is done Christianly, ??? wi, in due manner, from a right principle, and to a right ???:Page 159To make this out, it will be needful that we shortly speak a word to these two: 1. We shall show what maketh an action truly Christian and Relgious. 2. We shall show that in all these things that make an action such, Conscience hath something to say to men whether t be so with them.

As for the First, I speak no of the matter of the action, or what maketh it good in that respect, as that it be warantable, and in nothing sinful, as to the matter, such as are aring, drinking, hearing, reading, praying, and so forth.Beside this, there are these Four which must be present, and carefully carried along in every action by the man that would act Christianly, and glorifie God therein; The want of which, or o any of these, will make Conscience to have some-thing to say against him, as ground of Challenge; as the having of them will make Conscience to ay for him, and approve him: The 1. of these is, That a man's action be levelled at an higher end then himself; and that is God's honour, and the fication of others; As for instance, men even in their eating and drinking are not to satisfie themselves, or to gratifie their appetite only, but they are to make their eating and

drinking a mean to prove the honour of God, as the great and ultimate end; sitting down on an our end will furnish a ground of Challenge to the Conscience against the persons. The 2d. is, That it be from a cleanly motive; that not only it be a lawful and good thing which we do, but that it be done out of Conscience to God, and as service to him; for a man may do a good action? and not do it as such; As for instance, one man may give alms, and sin in the doing of it, and another, in giving, may offer an acceptable sacrifice to God; Therefore Christ sayeth, Math. 10:42? and Mark 9:41. Whosoever giveth to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water, in the name as a disciple, viz. Considering him as such, and giving it to him as such a one, or in the name of, and because he elongs to ??? on that account, and under that consideration, and beingPage 160sweyed by that, as his motive, verily he shall in no wayes loss his reward, This two men may suffer both a like unjustly from a churlish Master, or Superiour; The one of whom may have no thanks, nor peace in his sufferings, when the other suffering Christianly, out of Conscience, to God, and in obedience to his Command, that calleth him to it, is accepted and hath peace; This is thank worthy, (sayeth the apostle, 1 Pet. 2:19.) If a man for conscience sake endure grief and suffer wrongfully; So in the love of a Husband to his Wife, and of a Parent to his, or her Child, it's one thing to love on a meer natural account, and another thing to love such a Relation, Christianly, and out of Conscience to God; though the former is not condemned, yet it's this latter that maketh it to be a

consciencious, and acceptable love before God. The 3^d is, That the action be gone about in the right manner, as such a particular action or duty is commanded to be done; As for instance, if it be a word of Instruction, or Admonition given by us to another; that it be given prudently, lovingly, and tenderly; or what ever the action be in reference to others, that our manner of going about it, be such as may adorn the Doctrine of Christ, and make the action to shine the more convincingly to others, because of our suitable way of discharging it; that we may have a Testimony in their Conscience, and may gain them, or further gain them to the love of God, and of godliness: But this cannot be so well instanced in particulars, because several duties require their own suitable way of performing of them. The 4th. thing that must go along, with every Action, is, That it be mixed with Faith, Hebrews 4:2. Not only the Faith of such an Action being good, and lawful in itself, (for that is always presupposed) but these two things here are further requisit. 1. That the Action, or Duty be gone about in the strength of Jesus Christ, so that it may have a Superiour Spiritual principle, to wit, God's strength acting in it, and not our own simply; that croud of witnesses chronicled, Hebrews 11. are said to do all theyPage 161did, this way, viz. By faith, That is not only by Faith? exercised on Christ, for accepting of them, but also by Faith exercised on the strength of Christ, to be born through in the doing of what they did. 2. That not only Faith be exercised for divine strength in doing, and that the doers be denied to their own strength, but that

there be also a resting on Christ, for the acceptation of their Persons and performances; and this is ale requisit, as any of the former; because, though a Person do that which is good in itself, and have all the other requisits to the Action, yet, if there be a falling in this, Conscience will not speak peace; By faith (It's said, Hebrews 11:4, 5. That) Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice then Cain: Both of them offered things that were good, and yet the ones Sacrifice was accepted, and the others rejected; That which made the difference was, that Abel, in his offering, exercised Faith on Christ's Sacrifice, he offered it not as a Satisfaction in itself to God, but with respect to Jesus Christ typified by it, which the other did not; and proportionally there is somewhat required of all these, and more especially of this last in all Actions, to make them truly Religious, and Christian Actions.

Now, For the 2d. Particular, viz. That in all these things, that make an Action to be truly Religious, Conscience hath somewhat to say, and hath an interest, and concern, to testifie for, or against the man; I shall instance this in Sixorts of Actions, to which all a man's Actions (I mean that are properly human Actions, or rationally deliberat Actions) may be reduced, as to so many general heads. The First sort is, natural Actions, as Eating, Drinking, Sleeping, and so forth. In which (what ever many think to the contrary) Conscience hath an interest, because they require the proposing of God's Glory as their end; and he hath prescribed a way how to go about them aright. The 2d.Sort, Is Civil Actions, as men's being exercised in this or that lawful Employment, Trade,

Calling, or Occupation; and here Conscience hath an interest; for it is said, that the plowing of the wicked is sin; Which, when gone about, after the right manner by the Believer, is service to God, as well as his praying. The 3d. Sort is Moral Actions, such as are done from a principle of moral honesty; As for instance, when a man bargaineth, and maketh a promise, anen such and such things to be performed by him; to keep his word, which is morally good, yet is it not truly, Religiously and Christianly good, except it be done in obedience to the command of God, and with respect to his honour; And here also Conscience hath interest; for as a man cometh short of these things requisit, for making it a truly Religious, or Christian Action, it will challenge and accuse in so far, and when they are present, it will excuse, and commend him. The 4th. Sort is, External Duties of Religion; What is it, I pray, that makes the difference betwixt Formal and Hypocritical Service, and Worship? and that which is accepted as service to God? Is it not, that one person performs such Duties conscionably and Christianly according to the Rules prescribed anent the right performing of them, and another not? The 5th. Sort is, Inward Duties (or Graces) such as Repentance, Faith, Love? Hope, and so forth. of all which there are Counterfits, some things very like them, which yet are not indeed these: Conscience hath here likewayes a concern, and makes a difference; As suppose two men are orty for Sin, and we ma suppose them to be someway alike, or equally sorrowful; and yet the sorrow of the one, is accounted the Grace of

Repentance, and the others not, because of the want of the requisits of Gospel, or gracious sorrow, or sorrow after a godly ort, as the apostle calls it, 2 Corinthians 7. v. 11. So in the exercise of other Graces; where Conscience will challenge. and accue, or excue, and approve accordingly. The 6th. Sort of Actions are passive (to speak so) or Sufferings, wherein Conscience hath a concern, and tells the man that he should suffer, as a Christian from such a principle, and for such ends; which he through Grace endeavouring to do, Conscience speaksPage 163peace to him; And though another man suffer the same very things, yet he may want that testimony, because he wants the grounds of it, his sufferings being destitute of the requisite qualifications: And therefore we would never think a thing to be of so little moment, that Conscience hath no concern in it, we cannot do, speak, think, nor look, but Conscience hath some-thing to say of that deed, word, thought, or look, as it is circumstantiat; either to accuse, if not as it ought to be, or to excuse and approve, if right, as to its requisits.

The 2d. Use is for trial of a sanctified Conscience in a sanctified frame, and for differencing it from another Conscience that is not so; a sanctified Conscience, and in a sanctified frame, is alwayes meddling with all the man's actions, not only when he is praying, hearing, reading, or conferring o a spiritual purpose, but also when he is buying or selling, eating or drinking, speaking or keeping silent, abroad or at home, alone or in company, and so forth. It is very like that Paul had said many? things when he was a Pharisee, that his

Conscience medled not much with; but now being a serious Christian, he cannot speak, nor write, but his Conscience medles with it; In a word, a sanctified Conscience is alwayes going along with a man, is still with him, and letting him know that it is with him, and a sanctified man will needs have, and loves to have his Conscience constantly with him; The word Conscience in the Original is significant, and says this much, that when it is right, the Christian and it are joined together; Whereas an unsanctified man parts company (as it were) with his Conscience, he loves not to take it, he will not take it with him, it is a burden to him, he would ain be rid of its company; and it often refuseth to go along with him; It's never the worst Conscience that is often meddling, providing it be owned and listned to when it medleth; a sanctified Conscience medleth, 1. Constantly. 2. It medleth in all sorts of things, it puts the man when he hath spoken to search his heart, whether he thought as hePage 164said. 3. It speaks in the Holy Ghost, according to the mind of God? and interests itself, on God's account, cleanly, spiritually, and impartially, without all by-respect to the man.

The 3d? Use, is for reproof to these that misken Conscience, and take none at all, or but very little notice of it in the most part of their life; Ah! How few are they that think and believe that Conscience is concerned in all their words and actions: And as for thoughts they are looked on by such as free, and therefore they never look, what it says of them, and so spoil themselves of it's testimony, and lose their labour in not respecting it.

The 4th. Use is of Exhortation; and we would seriously exhort you all to amend this great fault reprov'd, viz. the misregarding of Conscience, and to respect Conscience in every thing, and to regard it more in your going out and coming in, in solitude and society, in every thing ye do, suffer not yourselves to be cheated into a groundless apprehension, that any of your actions, even the commonest, as circumstantiat, are of so little moment, that Conscience hath no concern in them; And if it hath, then I beseech you, take heed what: it says, and whether it testifies for or against you; and do not think that Conscience is officious, and medles in a business that concerneth it not, except ye think that there are some parts of your life that should not at all be religious, but that you are left in them to live as you list: It's oft-times our fault that we limit Conscience to this and that particular action that is of some considerable concernment, and some way shut it out as having no concern in these of lesser moment; And many, alace! shoulder it out from the tract of their life; and current of their actions; O! let this by any means be amended.

SERMON II.

ROM. 9:1. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my Conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.

CHRistians who have such a vigilant and constant attendant as Conscience waiting on them, had much need of watchfulness, that they may be kept in some suitableness of frame for intertaining that companion; Conscience its work, is not only to be advising and deliberating what is to be done, but also to be waiting on when it comes to the acting and performing of what it hath been advising to; and it is indeed no less practise to carry Conscience along in the performing of duty, then it is in taking some pains to consult it, and advise with it at the undertaking thereof, so as we may be answerable to Conscience as to both; oft-times some pains will be taken in deliberating and advising with Conscience what and when we should do, when we will exceedingly relent in taking it along with us in the performance: Whence it frequently comes to pass, that we lose the peace we gained in advising with Conscience at our undertaking the action, by not carrying it along with us in performing: This is the thing which we proposed to be spoken to from this verse, viz. The influence? that Conscience hath on men's acting, and the respect that they ought to have to it, not only before they undertake any action, but in, and along the performing of it. The last Doctrine we spoke to from it was, that there is not any action of a man's life, but Conscience is concernedPage 166in it, and hath

something to say concerning it, for or against him; If it were but the speaking of a word, or the asserting of any truth; as we see in this instance of Paul, his Conscience beareth him witness, it hath some-thing to say to him anent his doing it; We cleared this in several, yea rather in all sorts of actions that men have to perform; There being none of them of so little moment, so extrinsick, or so indifferent, but in the performing of them, Conscience ought to be carried along, as having some-what to say for, or against the performer. We shall now add some four or five Observations more from the words; And the first (which we may either take as an Use of the former, or as a distinct Observation by itself) is this;

That men in the time of their going about anything would advert and take heed to that sense which Conscience hath of their actions; And seing it hath some-thing to say, they would be lending to their ear all along the time of their performing the action, and hear what it saith; As before they undertake, they would advise with Conscience that they be right; so in the time of performance, there would be a reflecting on Conscience, to know its sense of our doing; Paul is now speaking and asserting somewhat, and he reflecteth on his Conscience to hear what it will say, and that he may get its testimony, that he is speaking sincerely; he is not now advising with Conscience, to know what he should do; nor to get its censure of what he hath done; but in the very time of his doing, he reflecteth and taketh notice what it saith; He asserteth that he is speaking truth, and taketh a look into his Conscience, to see if it be not so, that he is indeed

speaking the truth, and truly; Or we may take the Doctrine thus, it is a main piece of a tender walk in a Christian, not only to deliberate with Conscience before he do anything, and when he hath done it, to take its censure if it be rightly done, but also to reflect upon his Conscience in the very time of his doing of it, and to hear what it will say of that which he is nowPage 167a-doing, and of himself in the doing of it, And we conceive that this is one of the main things meant by the testimony of Conscience; When Conscience is put to it in the performance of a duty, to know what it will say concerning the man and his action; for if so be that Conscience hath something to say concerning every duty, for or against the man (as it is, Romans 2:15? Their Conscience bearing them witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another) Then it will clearly follow that it is a main piece of a Christians duty to keep fair with his Conscience here? and to take good heed what it saith, in the very interim and mean time of his performing every action; Yea, it is not only a main piece of a Christians walk, but a main evidence of a tender walk in a Christian, viz. When he doth not only aim to be clear in undertaking a duty, but to carry Conscience along with him, and to know what it saith in following forth the duty. Take these two or three words for clearing it. First, Consider that the right performance of our actions and duties, or the making of them such as they should be, dependeth very much on the nick of our discharging them; so that though a man should deliberat never so well before, if he be in a carnal frame, or have

a selfie end o the time of performance, he will be at a loss of his peace, and much miss his mark; as the apostle hath the word, Philip. 3:13. I press toward the mark; In his aiming at holiness and a good conscience, he levelleth all his actions at that mark, the prize of the high calling of God; I shall make use of this similitude for illustrating it, let a man with a Bow or Musquet levell never so well, or take never so just a visie, if his hand waver in the instant of shooting, he cannot readily hit the mark; Even so, though a man (as I said) deliberat and advise never so well with his Conscience before he do a thing, if in the time of doing, he take not heed tenderly and steddily to it, but fall carnal and selfie in it, he cannot have peace as to the performance of that action. 2dly. Consider that we are soPage 168very tickle in our frame (as the duties of holiness are some way in themselves) and our hearts so unstable, light and frothy, that though we should levell them right just now, yet they will be ready quickly to start aside as a deceitful how upon out hand; It cannot therefore be sufficient ground for the testimony of a good Conscience, to deliberat in undertaking, except a man observe and reflect on his Conscience, and study to carry it along with him in the very time of his acting: Our hearts are like to a distempered Clock or Watch, which being just now set never so right, ere we are aware, it will go wrong; it will point the hour aright now, and within a little it's quite out of course, because there is some defect or fault within, the Wheels not being evenly, or the Ballance not justly poised, or some other such cause; Even so though our heart were in a suitable frame just

now, presently, and ere we turn us about (as it were) it's out of frame, so that we cannot well take our aim from it; It is so very deceitful, that it abides not in frame. 3dly. Consider that unless this reflecting on Conscience, in the time of performing the action, or duty, be, a man will be at a loss of one of these two; He will either be at a loss as to his ober composed and holy frame, and turn carnal, which is frequently and readily incident even to believers, or he will be at a loss as to the confidence, boldness, and peace that he might otherwise have in the performance of such an action or duty; for suppose a person to be in a good frame after he hath resolved on a duty, let it be for instance, speaking to edification, going about Prayer, or the making of some lawful Bargain, or the like; and he hath abundant light and clearness in his call to the thing, yet if he look not to, and reflect not on Conscience in the discharge of that duty, when a challenge cometh on the back of it, as if he had been wrong; he cannot well answer nor repell it; his being right being to him in that case (in some respect) little or no better then if he had been wrong; because he observed not ConsciencePage 169in the time of the action: And this is one great reason, no doubt, why believers have so little positive peace when they have done a good turn, because they do not advert what Conscience says to them, in their going about it; They are hereby also greatly at a lose, as to many sweet experiences of God's kindnesse, and condescending in assisting them, and of their own singleness win at, through Grace in the performing of Duties: and we think also, that Christians

living so much by a negative peace (to speak so) flows much from this ground, viz. Their little reflecting in the time of their doing Duty, (if once they be clear in the thing) whither they be suitably serious, and sincere in it; and so letting the opportunity go by, they are not so thoroughly clear in these things, that are evidences of a positive peace, in doing of such a duty rightly, as they might otherways be?

The First Use, Serves, to give you an evidence, and mark of a tender walk, and of a man that is tender in his walk; he is such a man that will not only ask his Conscience ere he begin an Action, but when he is a doing of it, what it thinketh of it: There are Three things that a tender Christian will reflect upon, in the time of his doing an Action or Duty; 1. He will reflect upon his manner of performing it; whither it be a natural Action, such as Eating and Drinking; a civil Action, such as Buying and Selling; a Religious Action, such as Praying, or hearing, and so forth. He will look that in them all he be single; that his Eating and Drinking be to fit him to serve God; That in his Buying and Selling, he seek not only his own things, but the good of his Neighbour, as well as his own good; That in his Praying, or Hearing, he be sincere, that it be in Faith, and according to the will of God, and so forth. 2ly. He will reflect on himself in the performing of his Actions, that he be in a right frame; that he be tender, and sincere, that some awe of God, and of a good Conscience be on him, that his Spirit be sober and composed, that a carnal frame steal not in upon him, in the time of his doing a warrantable Action, or a

commandedPage 170Duty, because that will marr it. 3dly. He will reflect upon his Conscience, that he may hear what it says of the Action; He will not, as it were, take his Testimony from himself, but Conscience being as a distinct thing, some way from himself, he will hear what it sayeth; As Paul doth here, it is truth which he speaketh, and he speaketh it in the right manner? and yet he taketh a look of his Conscience, if he be doing so in very deed, to wit, sincerely, as in the sight of God; yea more, he taketh the Testimony of his Conscience, if it be not so; And thus here he looketh not to, nor reflecteth on his Conscience, to alter any piece of his way, but to have it's sense of that piece of it; He gathers, that the Action is good from the Word; and he inquires if he be, and collects that he is right, in the performance from his Conscience, testifying according to the Word; so that he will not trust himself, but goeth to Conscience, as being more impartial, to take it's Testimony: The reason then (as I said before) why few Christians have solid peace, is this, if the matter of their Actions be good, and if they can answer their light therein, they reflect but little on their Conscience, in the performing thereof, and therefore want much of the peace and consolation that might otherwise accompany them in their Actions, and when they are done, and over: and this evidence of tendernesse kythes rather, when a man is in the Act, then either before or after; for fear, or awe may make a man seek Light before an Action, and a challenge may put him to reflect, and examine when he hath done; But here mainly lyeth the evidence of sincerity, and tendernesse,

when in every step all along the Action, or Duty so far as is requisit, and humane infirmity will admit, he taketh heed what he is doing: and, as we said the other day, That it was an evidence of a tender Conscience, to be alwayes meddling in every thing that a man doth; So we say now, that it is an evidence of a tender man, to listen and hear what censure his Conscience passeth on him, in performing his Actions?

Page 171The 2d. Use, is for reproof; Ah! may we not find? but by overly reflections, if we did advise with Conscience at our undertaking of such a work or Duty, that yet in the time of doing it, there was but little reflecting on our Conscience, if it did bear us witness of our sincerity in going about it; How many times will Men and Women be found Eating, Drinking, Buying, Selling, Going or Riding a lawful Journey, speaking of a Sermon, and so forth. And yet in these Actions, but seldom, or never looking in, if they have the Testimony of their Conscience, that they are right in their going about of these things? Can this, I pray, speak a tender frame, that is so neglective of Conscience? It is certainly an evidence of an untender Frame in Believers; and where ever it is habitual and regnant, it is an evidence of an evil state; For, if one be a tender Christian, when should his Conscience be tender, if not in the nick of the performance of an Action? For that is the time when he will, or should be levelling, least he miss the mark: and knowing how fickle, and unconstant he is, and that he hath a heart like an unsteady hand; how should he guard against it's levity, and unstableness?

The 3d. Use, Is of Exhortation, to advert more to this Testimony of Conscience, in performing Duties; O! Learn to reflect on yourselves in every thing, and to ask yourselves what ye are doing, that ye may know, if ye be right or wrong; if wrong, that ye may take with it, and be humbled for it; if right, that ye may be comforted in it: We conceive this would be a notable guard to tenderness, and keeping communion with God; and a sovereign help to prevent many sins, and much hipocrisie in our way of doing things; even to be taking exact notice, if we be indeed doing that which we profess to be doing, if we be speaking to Edification, if we be praying in earnest, when we pretend to be praying? and so forth.

2ly. Observe, That when Conscience is well satisfied in a particular Action, or Duty? it can signifie it's sense thereof to the man that performeth it, and speaketh aPage 172good word for him; This is the thing that Paul's Conscience doth here; he is sincere in the thing that he asserts, and it beareth him witness of his sincerity, when he adverteth to it: First, I say, Conscience can signify it's mind and sense of a particular Action, or Duty, if it be well pleased, and can speak a good word for the man; it can signify it's mind at any time, but when it is well pleased, it signifies, it by testifying for the man: And 2ly? I say, That not only does it testify it's satisfaction with the Action, but with every thing in it, when there is a right end, a right motive, and a right manner of performance, when Christ is duely respected in it, and made use of for strength and acceptance. And 3ly. I add

this, If men advert to it, and if it be asked; because it hath something to say alwayes, yet men will not hear, nor know what it sayeth, except they advert well, and reflect, and take good heed to it.

3ly. Observe, That it is very strengthening, confirming, comforting, refreshing, and satisfying to a man in a particular Action, to have the Testimony of his Conscience for him; This beareth Paul through here, amidst all challenges that might have been raised, from seeking of himself, or from following revenge, in what he asserts; There is no such thing, saith he, my Conscience beareth me witnes of the contrary: It's not a man's Action simply, that will give him boldnesse, confidence and comfort; for several persons may concur, in one and the self same good Action on the matter; and yet some may have a good, ??? others an evil Conscience in it, were it but as to a man's thought and opinion of himself; For it's not he that commends himself, but he whom God commends that is approven. When Conscience (I say) beareth witnes for a man, It is a very strengthening, confirming and satisfying thing; The Reasons are, 1. Because Conscience is the more single, and impartial Judge and witnes, and therefore a man may lay the more weight on it. 2ly. Because Conscience speaketh, and beareth witnes with respect to God, and when it testifieth on solidPage 173grounds, it is God's Testimony; Now when a Debate ariseth in a man about any of his Actions, the man himself is the partie arraigned the Challenge, or Tentation, is the party accusing, and Conscience is as the Witnes, or Judge that

decideth, and being un-biased, it beareth Witnes, and passeth the Sentence truly, and impartially; It (as it were) sayeth, it's true, he said such and such a thing, and that sincerely; and I know that his thoughts and intentions were honest; and thus Conscience decides the Debate in his favours, if so be he hath it on his side; and so confirms, and comforts him.

The Use is, To exhort you to lay more weight on Conscience, and on it's Testimony, and less weight on any other thing; for it will not be your good meaning, nor good hopes (as ye use to speak) but a sanctified Conscience, in a sanctified Frame, that will be found fittest to decide in any Action.

4ly. Observe, That the Testimony of Conscience speaking for a man, and his performing of a good Action on the matter, are separable; That is, a man may do that which is good in itself, and yet not have a positive and approbative Testimony from his Conscience concerning it; otherwayes Paul needed not to have attested his Conscience, if he had not known, that Conscience it's Testimony might have been separat from what he speaks; It's well enough known, that he was saying, his heart was grieved for the rejection of the Iews; but the question was, if he had said it honestly and sincerely; and he asserts, that he hath Conscience it's Testimony for that, as a distinct thing: There are but too many proofs of the truth of this Doctrine; are there not many, who speak good words, and do good deeds on the matter, who yet have not a good Conscience in the speaking, and doing

of them? As it's said of Amaziah, 2 Chro. 25:2. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart? So it may be said of many others, that they do that which is good for the matter, but they want the Testimony of a good ConsciencePage 174in the performance of it: This will be further clear if we consider these two things. 1. That there are manythings that concur to make an Action Truly, and Christianly good, such as we spoke of the other day; many care for no more, but that the Action be good for the Matter, but it's moreover requisit, that it be good as to the manner of performance, that it be from a right motive, to a right end, done in Faith, by strength drawn from Christ, and with an eye to acceptance on his account, a corrupt end in Prayer, in coming to the Church to hear, in reading the Word, or in any other Duty, will spoil the Action. 2ly. That there are different Rules to try these by; there is one Rule to regulat us, in the matter of our Actions, and another to regulat our manner of going about them; and a good Conscience looketh to both these Rules; And if anyof the requisit qualifications to the suitable and acceptable performance of them, be absent and wanting, in so far Conscience will withhold it's positive approving Testimony: a good Conscience it's Testimony is like the harmony of a well tuned Instrument; It's one thing to have all the strings on the Instrument, and another thing to have them all in tune; when it is not rightly tuned, though it have on all the strings, it cannot give a sweet, nor harmonious sound; so is it with the Conscience.

The Use is, For exhortation to watchful advertance in every thing to Conscience it's Testimony: Seing there are many that do good on the matter, who yet want it's Testimony, it becomes us to be the more watchful to keep a good Conscience; and seing that Conscience it's speaking for a man, and giving him it's approbative Testimony, and his doing that which is good, on the matter, are not only separable, but are often actually separated, the one from the other? not only in natural, but even in regenerat men? as frquent experience puts beyond debate; We had need (I say) to be the more watchful, both as to the matter, and manner of our doing, least we be at a lose of the Testimony of Conscience for us: And none would think it to be asPage 175easie a bussinesse to keep a good Conscience, as to the manner of performing of Duty, as it is to do so, s to the matter of it. How many come to the Church, but without due preparation, and without having a heart ready to hear, what God will say to them, and meddle with with other Duties, without regarding the due manner of performing them? We ight instance it in all these Six Sorts of Actions, we spoke of the other day, in all which there is a propensnes i us naturally, to degenerat, and go beside the Rule; As namely, 1. In natural Actions of Eating and Drinking, or of loving Husband, or Wife, or Children, men may be very carnal, degenerat, and become like very Beasts. 2. In civil Actions? as Buying and Barganing, wherein men ma turn basely covetous, selfie, and seeking their own things, and not the honour of God, no the good and advantage of others. 3ly. In Moral

Actions, as speaking truth, dealing fairly and honestly; wherein men may turn legal, proud and vain, and seek to establish a self-righteousness thereby to themselves. 4. In external Religious Actions, as hearing the Word, Praying, and so forth. Wherein men may turn hypocritical, and formal, having a show without substance, and a form of godliness without the power of it. 5. In inward Duties, as repentance, contentment, and so forth. Wherein men may turn worldly, and carnal, therefore a worldly repentance from fear of punishment, or of shame in the World, or worldly sorrow that causeth death, is spoken of, 2 Corinthians 7. v. 10. So thee is a worldly contentment. 6. In passive actions, or sufferings; some may suffer from inevitable necessity, and have no thanks for it? as it is, 1 Pet. 2:20. We may, from the unstraightnesse of the end, to which; from the unsoundnesse of the principle, from which; from the unsuitableness of the motive by which, duties are done? and several otherways, prejudice ourselves of the approving Testimony of our Conscience; which we would carefully advert to, that we divide not betwixt a good Conscience, and a good Turn, Action, or Duty.

Page 176But it may be Asked here, What is the reason that it is so difficult to keep a good Conscience, and to carry it along with us, in the very interim, mean time, and nick of performing the Action, above, and beyond what it is, either to deliberat and advise with it before we do, or to reflect after we have done?

I Answer, And give these Two or Three Reasons of it; The First whereof, is drawn from the necessary concurrence of so manythings that must go together, in the performance of an Action; Which makes it easier to resolve before doing, or to reflect after doing, then to perform. The 2d. is, Because there is such a ticklenesse in the frame of our hearts, that they are unstable as water, stable in nothing: There are Three distempers of heart that we are subject to, which all hold forth this difficulty, 1. A declining humour (to say so) or distemper, whereby we are given to backslide, or turn aside like a deceitful bow, that keeps bense while the arrow is a drawing, and when it is at, or in the very letting off, starteth aside. 2ly. A levity, and unsetlednesse, even such that the weathercock is not sooner, and more easily whirled about, by the least wind, then we are by the least breathing of the air of Tentation; So that were we just now in a good and suitable frame for Duty, ere we be aware, we fall off; and a good Conscience requireth a composednesse and stayednesse of Frame. 3ly. A rashnesse, and hastinesse, or precipitance, which makes us, that so soon as we are clear in the thing, to rush forward, and to think all is done that is requisite; so that we wait not to carry Conscience along with us, in our performances; which rash precipitant, and hasty humour, or distemper maketh us often miscarry; As David says of himself, Psalm 116? I said in my haste that all men are liars? and I said in my haste, that I am cut off from thy presence, Psalm 31. So Believers often marr the composednesse of their own frame? by their hsteing? and not taking heed to what

Conscience sayeth, while they are in performing Duty; Thus many post, as it were, throughPage 177their Prayers, speaking of many good things in them from light; but not endeavouring to carry Conscience its testimony along with them of their sincerity, they spoil and marr that which was well intended and begun by them. A 4th. ground, reason, or cause of this is, the great difficulty that there is to maintain and keep up a right frame of heart for any considerable time; and a man will never keep a good Conscience along particular duties, if he maintain not a right frame of heart; though a thing good in itself were never so fairly floored (to speak so) and its ground never so well taken up, yet the least bias or rub easily puts it by, and makes it go out: All which should in reason make us study the more watchfulness.

5thly. Observe (which will help to the Use of the former, and is of some affinity with the first particular Observation,) That persons would endeavour to walk in every particular duty or action, so as they may not only advert to what Conscience says of it, but may also carry it along with them in it, and have the positive approving testimony thereof all alongst the doing of it, which may be, though there be not reflecting on it every moment; That is, not only would they before they undertake anything, be clear that it is a warrantable duty (as was marked before) but further when they have done this, they would so carry Conscience along with them in it, as they may have its testimony that they go about it conscientiously: Therefore Paul asketh not only what Conscience says of the action as to its matter, and as to

his sincerity in undertaking it; but he bringeth it out speaking for him while he is doing it, My conscience (saith he) beareth me witness: The reason of the Doctrine is, because it is not enough to hear what Conscience saith, for it may accuse as well as excuse, but we would endeavour to carry so, as we may have a good testimony from it; Which it will not give, nor speak peace to us, if we study not to take it with us all along the action? This is a notable way to curb sin; Page 178 to mortify lusts; to make us accurate in duties; to keep us from posting (to speak so) through our prayers; from scuching through a Chapter of the Bible; and from trifling in other duties; Why? because we have our Conscience to answer to, and its good testimony to wait for; This is that which giveth holy boldness to a Christian, when 1. He knoweth that what he doth is right for the matter. 2. When he taketh good heed to what Conscience faith. And 3. When he hath its good and approbative testimony: And we think that this is much of what that Text, Act 24. v. 16. aims at; and is the main thing a Christian should exercise himself in, even to have the testimony of his Conscience, for him in this, and that, and the other duty, nay in every duty, to have its good testimony, when he beginneth, when he goeth on in it, or in the time of it, and when he hath closed it; This is it (as I have often said) which furnisheth him with holy boldness and confidence, and giveth him much sweet peace and serenity in his mind, that who ever and what ever speak against him, he is at a point that he is right, having the well grounded testimony of his Conscience for it.

But it may be questioned here, How is it possible for a man to carry a testimony of his Conscience along with him in every action? Can he alwayes be reflecting on every word he speaketh, and on every action he putteth his hand unto? For Answer, we would first distinguish betwixt an explicite and actual inquiring at, and reflecting on Conscience, and an implicite and habitual inquiring at, and reflecting on it; and betwixt an explicite and actual, and an implicite and habitual testimony of the Conscience; And then apply it to the particular answer, that then is an explicite testimony of Conscience, when it doth actually, expressly and down-right speak its mind; and that is an actual and explicite reflecting on Conscience, when a man doth indeed expresly and down-right put himself to it to inquire ConsciencesPage 179sense of his action: An implicite and habitual testimony of Conscience is, when Conscience is not alwayes actually, observably, and expressly speaking by a positive approbation; Yet it is so indirectly, virtually, and on the matter, and is ready actually to do so, when put to it. And an implicite and habitual reflecting on Conscience, is, when men are not alwayes actually and expresly asking their Conscience what it saith; When yet they do it implicately, virtually, and on the matter; and are in a readiness to do it actually, when put to it: Which may be illustrated by the similitude made use of before; The habitual and explicite testimony of Conscience, and reflecting on it, is like the putting of an Instrument of Musick in a right Tune, and then we say it's in Tune, though none be playing on it; because it is ready to give

a distinct and harmonious sound, having all the Strings right in tune; an explicate and actual testimony and reflecting, is like a man's striking or playing on the well tuned Instrument, and bringing out actually the just Musical sound, that was habitually in the tuned Instrument before.

Now to apply this particularly in answer to the question, We say, 1. That in three cases an actual and explicate testimony of Conscience, and reflecting on it? is necessary, 1. As to a man's undertaking of any action or duty, that he be clear in it, that it is a duty 2? In reference to the thing when done, because it is that which giveth him peace; for a man's reflecting on Conscience, and its testimony here, is like playing on the Instrument. 3. It's necessary as to a man's stare. But 2. We say an explicate testimony, and actual inquiring at Conscience is not simply necessary alwayes along the action or duty, or it is not simply necessary, that a man actually reflect and have a testimony from his Conscience alwayes, or in all difference of time along the action, though habitually and implicately he ought: for the keeping of a good Conscience, is like to that general Precept spoken of before, anent doing what ever we do to thePage 180glory of God, at the principal end of all our actions; and that is founded on this; Where it is not necessary, that all along the action or duty, in all difference of time, or in every moment (as I just now said) we should have actual and explicate thoughts of this end, viz. God's glory; but if this end be intended in the whole current of our life habitually, and actually in the entry of every particular

action or duty, though there be not actual and explicit thoughts of it alwayes along the action, we may warrantably expect on Christ's account God's approbation, as doing to his glory: So is it here; As when a man undertakes a journey to such a place, It's sufficient before he set out, he actually and explicitly mind that place, and that he do so now and then by the way, and especially if he observe any turning off, or hazard of going out of the way, or if he hath not often gone that way before? though he have not actual thoughts of it all along everystep of the way: But to clear this in a word or two further, we conceive that these three particularly are necessary for keeping a good Conscience, 1. The habitual Testimony of Conscience, that is, that a man's Conscience be alwayes in a readiness to give him a good testimony; Which imports three things. 1. That he be right in the matter of his practice, that it be nothing sinful that he is about. 2. That he be right in the frame of his spirit, spiritual, stayed and composed. 3. That he be carefully watchful to prevent what ever may ma his peace, and to guard against what may distemper and discompose his spirit; and that withal he be studious to keep his Conscience in a good temper or tune (to speak so) that it may be in readiness to give him a testimony when he calls for it: These three are necessary (I say) in every particular action for keeping of a good Conscience, that a man be in a thing that for the matter is right; that he be in a composed and suitable frame; and that he be watchful against anything that may hinder or distemper him in prosecuting that action. 2. Though an explicit

and actual testimony and reflecting, be not alwayes, or
inPage 181all difference of time necessary; yet it would
be frequent? and the more frequent, readily the better;
Though (for instance) in every word of Prayer one
cannot actually reflect on himself, nor look after the
testimony of Conscience; Yet in intervals this may be
win at, and would be endeavoured: It's in this case some
way as it's in reference to that command anent praying
alwayes, or without ceasing, though we cannot pray
alwayes actually, or continually without interruption; nor
are we obliged to do so; yet we should be frequent in it,
and intermix all our actions with short ejaculations to
God, and alwayes keep ourselves in a praying frame: So
though we cannot alwayes be actually putting
Conscience to it, yet frequently we should, and more
especially, if we be about a duty that is more difficult and
tickle; and wherein we are very ready to go wrong, and
so to lay the ground of a challenge; or wherein God's
honour is some? what more then ordinarily concerned. 3.
It's required here, that we seriously endeavour to keep
things right, and be weeding out (as it were) what is
wrong, as we find Conscience hinting to us; for the frame
of our hearts (as hath been said) is very unstable and
fickle, we would therefore be often mending and righting
it; as a man doth with a Watch that is easily distempered,
he often looks to it, and puts it right: Or it is here as it is
with a Pilot who steereth a Vessel that is very easily by
a little wind put by her course, he beareth up closs in the
eye of the wind, and when he finds her never so little off
her course, he steers about again until he set her right; or

to hold us at the former comparison of an Instrument, to preserve which in tune, it must not only be at first tempered to a just and harmonious sound, and struck upon to give out that sound; But when a man hath played a while upon it, he must be tempering and tuning it among hands (to say so) screwing up this and that, and the other Peg, as the strings slack their benfil, else it will not be kept in tune; Even so while we are endeavouringPage 182to keep a good Conscience, some one Peg or other (so to speak) will readily still be a-unfixing, and we would study to bring things back to their right temper, and watching that carnalness creep not in upon us.

The Use of the Doctrine in a word is, partly to reprove for neglect of this walk, partly to exhort to the diligent and tender practice of it, even carefully to advert to Conscience, and to endeavour to be in good terms with it, in performing every action; in eating, drinking, in bargaining, buying, selling, in riding a journey, in hearing, praying, andc, and not only to hear what Conscience hath to say, but to walk so as Conscience may speak good to us? and give us its approving testimony for helping us to keep this good correspondence with our Conscience in all our actions, which hath so great a stroak upon a Christian walk, upon a chearful and solacious Christian walk; we would now add these following directions to those formerly given to the same purpose; The 1. whereof is? That in undertaking of actions or duties, we would be very deliberat, clear and fixed. 2. We would study to walk soberly, and

composedly, and to be always in a good frame; Rashness, precipitancy, hastiness, inadvertency, levity and untenderness, are very cross to these two directions; as is also parting with Conscience as it were in the way, and not bringing it up with us. 3. We would be much in ejaculatory Prayer, frequenting God's Throne much, often darting up blinks unto him, and into our own selves, and our Consciences, intermixing these. 4ly. We would be much in self examination; This is in some respect, the Life of a good Conscience, for where there is not self examination, or reflection, we either are not right, or else know not if we be right, and no thanks to us, if we be not wrong. 5ly. We would study to have an holy indignation at, and a strick watch set against the very first risings of anything, that may in the least offend Conscience; Alace! We oft times observe not our ownPage 183declinings, and fallings from a good Frame; nor the stirrings of some one Lust and Corruption, or another, which would be resisted in the beginning; for the one of these weareth out the other. 6ly. As we would indeavour, if we would have a good Testimony from our Conscience, much singleness and sincerity? in the whole of our walk; and would in every duty, indeavour to be setting ourselves? as in the sight of God, and under his all seeing eye; nothing more marreth the Testimony of Conscience then unsingleness, and nothing contributs more to it then singleness; It's a good word that the apostle hath, 2 Corinthians 2. v. last. We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God speak we in

Christ; Preaching is a good work, yet there were many Preachers that had not a good Testimony from their Conscience, in that good work; but Paul had it; and that which made him to have it, was his sincerity and singleness, that he spoke as before God, in the sight of God, without a biase, or any allowed carnalness in his end: if we could preach, and pray? and live and walk thus in all our Actions, O! What sweet peace should we have, living and dying; and O! what skaith, and prejudice doth our inadvertancy? rashness, and carnal walking work to us? and how much doth it deprive us of the benefit of this Friend, in the time of our need? God help us to amend it.