

THE FIRST TREATISE

Containing Several Arguments For LEAVING SIN AND LIVING HOLILY

It is a very sad, but yet an apparent truth, that there is no creature in the world so merciless and mischievous to itself as man is. For whereas everything naturally desires, or tends to its own preservation, man unweariedly endeavours his own destruction. He becomes his own murderer and executioner, by loving vice, and hating virtue, by forsaking Christ, to follow the world, by poisoning his soul to please his senses, by leaving the safe and pleasant way of holiness, to walk in the dangerous and destructive way of wickedness. Wicked men turn their backs upon God, and are ruled by sin and Satan at their pleasure. Such profane beasts are many. They glory in their shame. Like Sodom, they carried their sin in their foreheads, oathing it, telling of their cheats, how many they have defrauded, and of their whoredoms, how many they have defiled. Alas, they have not so much as one grain of grace in their hearts, nor the least sign of holiness in their lives. Though, by the ministry of the word, they be called upon to be holy, yet the more they are called unto holiness, the further do they run into all sin and wickedness.

Yea, God's own children make but little progress in holiness. The estate of many is a declining estate. They have lost the savouriness of their spirits, and their delight in communion with God. They are weak in resisting temptations to sin, from the devil, the world, and the flesh. They are often overcome by sensuality, pride, worldliness, envy, etc. Their heart is less watched, their tongue less bridled, and their conversation more vain than formerly. What then more needful, than to have before our eyes such arguments, as are most likely to deter us from sin, to prevail with us to loath and leave all our lusts and transgressions, and to walk humbly and holily before God all our days. May the Lord open our eyes, to see the baseness of sin, and sanctify our hearts, that we may never welcome nor embrace it anymore, but may grow holier every day than the other. So living holily, may we die happily, and after death, reign with God gloriously forever.

In order to realize this, let these following considerations sink into our hearts. We must be holy, because the Lord our God is holy. "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). "It is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). God's holiness is the great ground and cause of our holiness, and the motive of all obedience. "Let them praise Thy great and terrible Name, for it is holy" (Psalm 99:3). "Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy" (Psalm 99:9). We are not bound to be essentially

and infinitely holy, as God is holy; yet are we bound to be perfectly holy for our state, as God is holy. Thou callest God Father, and if He be thy Father indeed, thou wilt be like Him in holiness. You will both have the same nature for likeness. Thou readest a Holy Bible, servest an holy God, pretendest to be led by a Holy Spirit. Oh, what shame and trembling then should cover thee, if thou be unholy! Thou pretendest to love God, and why art thou not an imitator of God? Is it not a known saying, likeness makes love? Likeness is the cause of love, and an effect of it. If thou wouldst have God to love thee, thou must labor to be like Him. If thou remain unholy, think with thyself, how can an, infinitely holy God delight in such an unholy wretch, in such an uncomely and loathsome soul, in such a vile abominable sinner? How unfit am I for His love and embracements! If unholy, thou wilt not endure the purity and presence of God, nor will God's purity and presence endure thee.

We must leave sin and live holily, because to sin is very unsuitable work; and very unbecoming to Christians: for (1) Are we not strangers, and therefore to abstain from whatsoever is contrary to holiness? "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11). We are traveling to an higher country, where pure souls breathe in an uninfected air and are partakers of heavenly visions to the full. Oh, do not by living unholily, belie your great and glorious hopes. "Every man that hath this

hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Show yourselves to be the right seed of the woman, by flying from the face of the old serpent, and abhorring his image. Strangers must not be meddlers; oh, meddle not with sin, but put off the old man with his deceitful lusts. Trouble not yourselves with anything that will hinder you in your journey heavenward. You expect a room among the angels, and will you live as slaves in the world? You are in the way to Canaan, why then are you in love with the flesh-pots of Egypt? "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

(2) Are not your relative conditions changed? Once ye were Satan's slaves, now God's servants. Once in darkness, now children of the light. Once the devil's factors, now Christ's followers. Are your relative conditions thus changed, and shall not your work be altered? "Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:5-6). "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:14-15). Is not sin the devil's creature? His old sorceress? And will ye have any communion with it? Oh, ye children of the Most High!

(3) What does baptism into the name of Christ stand for? Why were ye baptized? Was it not for the renunciation of all sin, and the mortification of every lust? "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:2-4). So often as thou hearest thy own name, call to mind the covenant betwixt God and thee in baptism. As God promised on His part to be thy God, so thou promised to forsake His enemies, to dedicate thyself to His service, to obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of thy life. Surely it is a most wretched forgetfulness, to forget thyself to be a Christian. Live holily, because the wicked lives of Christians are far more sinful than the wicked lives of pagans and heathens: for

(1) The sins of pagans are only against natural light; but the sins of Christians, both against natural and supernatural. And to sin, not only against a natural conscience, but an enlightened conscience, is a great aggravation of sin. Was it not an aggravation of Solomon's sin, that "his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice"? (1 Kings 11:9).

(2) The sins of pagans may have fairer excuses than others; they may plead in another sense than the apostle. How can we call on Him, of whom we have not heard? And how shall we hear without a preacher? (Rom. 10:14). The sun, moon, and stars were but dumb preachers. Had we, O God, heard the joyful sound, we would have received it gladly. We never knew that thy Son was crucified, for had we known it, we would have believed in Him. We would have taken Him for our rightful Sovereign, and obeyed His laws; but what will ye pretend? Can ye say, ye never heard of heaven and hell? Never heard of faith, repentance, and remission of sins preached? Never heard a strict and circumspect course of life pressed upon you? Did ye not know that drunkenness, cursing, etc. were sins? That piety, sobriety, and righteousness was your duty? Why then do ye the one, and leave the other undone? Surely, if heathens shall be damned, wicked Christians cannot think to be saved.

(3) The sins of heathens bring not so much dishonour to God and Christ, as our sins do. We pretend greater holiness than they, and shall our holiness better than theirs, as if the death and resurrection of Christ was not able to make us live more holily, than the foundation of civility and morality among them? What scandal and reproach this brings to Christ. "The Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Rom. 2:24). What! Hath the gospel no more efficacy than a pagan's ethics, or a Turkish Koran? Devout Salvian brings in the pagans

insultingly over the Christians, whose lives were not agreeable to their knowledge. Both Christ and His law are scandalized by us: behold, this is the common report of pagans concerning us. Where is this catholic law which they believe? Where are those precepts of piety and chastity which they learn? They read the gospel, and yet are unclean; they hear the apostles, and frequent sermons, and yet are drunkards. They follow Christ, and yet are thieves. They lead a wicked life, and yet boast that they have a righteous law. It is altogether false (say the heathens) that they learn good things, and retain the rules of an holy law, for if these things which they learn were good, they then would be good themselves. Thus we who would be accounted Christians, do bring our God, our religion, and our profession into contempt, if our lives be not answerable to our knowledge.

I would to God that everyone of us would take this into his consideration, so that, at length, we may be careful to adorn our holy religion with an holy and circumspect life and conversation. The love of God in giving His Son for us, should forcibly overcome us to live holily. "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). What moved God to give His Son, but His own grace and love? That pure love, that lodged in His bosom from all eternity. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John

3:16). If like Gideon, He had had threescore and ten sons, it had still been much to part with one of them. Oh, but it was His only Son. Jacob rent his clothes, and went mourning many days, for losing one son of twelve (Gen. 37:34). Even an harlot pitied the fruit of her womb (1 Kings 3:26). But God gave the only Son of His love, and doth not this eternal and astonishing love teach us to deny ungodliness, etc.? I denied not, saith the Lord, My Son a suffering body for thy sake. I denied not His precious blood. The consolations of the Spirit, and the joys of the higher world — I was sore of nothing, but exposed all for thy sake. Oh, deny not thy sins a sacrifice unto Me, but give them up to be condemned and crucified, and to be nailed to the cross of Christ, that they may languish and give up the ghost. I crave nothing of thee that thou can not easily deny. It is not thy estate, thy life, or thy little ones I require. Nothing, but what thou can well spare; nothing, but what is better parted with than kept. Nothing, but what, if it were never required at thy hands, yet were it thy wisdom and happiness to reject: even thy base, vile, scarlet lusts. That sin may die in thee, and thou may live to God.

Oh, what will prevail with us to leave sin, and live holily, if love does not? Shall the consideration of death, or heaven, or hell move us? And shall not the consideration of Christ's wonderful love move us much more? Death is certain, saith one. It may come suddenly, and will come certainly; therefore, I will avoid sin, and serve God. I

care not so much for death, saith another. It is but parting soul and body for a season. Oh, but I fear hell-torments, the worm that never dies, and the fire that never shall be quenched! Therefore I will leave sin, and live holily. I hope, saith a third, for the joys of heaven: that I shall live though I die; and that I shall eat and drink at Christ's table in His celestial kingdom. Therefore I will reject the fawning pleasures of sin, that would beguile me of the pleasures of heaven. Oh, but Christ loved me, saith a fourth, and gave Himself for me, that He might redeem me from all iniquity. And this love of Christ constraineth me, that I dare not, I will not sin. This is the best motive. Holiness will not hinder you, but bring a blessing upon you, in your private and particular callings. Say not, I shall suffer loss, by leaving my worldly concerns to mind religion. Suppose your estate suffered, and your body fared the worse by it; yet, sure I am, the cumberings and carings of worldlings bring them more grief, than religious duties bring loss to you. Say not, "My affairs and employments in the world are so great, and so many, that I cannot spare time." The more and greater thy affairs are, the more need to mind religion, lest thy heart be swallowed up of thy affairs.

Are not the affairs of a kingdom more, and greater, than those of an household? And yet David, had the affairs of a kingdom to look after, made religion his chief care. Say not, "My children must be educated and provided for." What! will you lose salvation, and damn your souls, to

gather an estate, and to provide a portion for them? Provide for them a portion in God's Name: but especially let God be their Portion forever. Give them pious education and an holy example. Is it not more comfortable to see children, in their parent's lifetime, just heirs of their parents' graces, than to see them, when parents are dead, heirs of their parents unjust gains? Oh remember, that providing for your children's bodies, will not answer the damning of your own soul. Your present welfare lies in divorcing sin and living holily. Were there no commandment from heaven to leave sin, yet should you leave it, because it is the ulcer that sits on a creature's heart, and robs him of all true contentment and sound joy. Suppose no torment, no horror did follow sin hereafter; yet it disquiets and torments for the present. Oh the secret gnawings and pulls that envy, and pride, and covetousness give a man's soul. Oh, what a sweet life leads the contented and quiet spirited Christian when God and he are both of a mind! Compare him with the fretful and discontented, who would be always correcting God's providence, and vex themselves daily with crosses to no purpose. Oh, what peace and comfort crowns the heart of the godly! Oh, what outward miseries and inward horror fall upon the wicked!

Besides, sin is the soul's disease, a burning fever; it blinds the mind, hardens the heart, enthral's the will, defiles the conscience, deadens the affection, and hurls the whole man into confusion. It brings more evils, external

and internal, for the present, than either tongue can speak or heart can think. Shall it not be divorced? Holiness is the way to the enjoyment of all visible blessings. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Who hath not seen or heard, how large revenues, riches, and estates, have been wasted by vice and wickedness? There is a secret consuming cancer in the wicked man's estate; a worm in the gourd. Some men's wealth melts away, but how does this come about? Alas, it is banished by impiety. "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store" (Deut. 28:16-17). Oh but, "All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field" (Deut. 28:2-3).

Thus the Lord puts a difference between the godly and the wicked, as He did between the Egyptians and the Israelites (Exodus 11:7). Will holiness bring disgrace? No. "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and the honour, and life" (Prov. 22:4). Will holiness bring poverty and want? No. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:19). "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" (Psalm 34:10). See

Job 22:21-30. God will be the godly mans gold and silver. Many of the godly have fuller treasure, and more riches than ever they enjoyed in their unregenerate condition. Who ever lost by serving God? Sin and the world have made many a beggar, but never did God and Christ, for in their worst and poorest condition, the godly are rich. "As dying, and behold we live: as chastened, and not killed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as poor, yet making many rich: as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:9-10), all things in hope and all things in the promise. God s people are possessors of Him that possesseth all. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Christian, when thou art about to die, gather up thy accounts, and see how much thou hast laid out for God, and how much He hath rewarded thee. Thou must needs confess that God is not behind-hand with thee as thy debtor, should He deny thee heaven. Look on Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Jehoshaphat, Job, David, etc. I grant, a good man may suffer hardships and scarcity, but it is not due to his godliness, but because of some unmortified corruption, idleness, indiscretion, voluptuousness, or the like. He that lives wickedly is self-condemned:

(1) Condemned in his own conscience. What Saint Paul said of the heretic, in Titus 3:11, may be said of every wicked man, he is condemned of himself. "Happy is he

that condemneth not himself in that thing which he allows" (Rom. 14:22). But wicked men condemn themselves in that thing which they allow. Ask even the grossest and most profane wretch in a country, Is it not excellent and desirable to live holily, to beware of open impiety, and resist Satan's temptations, to be pure, and holy, and chaste, and temperate? Yea, without question, will he say, it is very good. And yet he will hate what he hath commended, and do what he hath condemned. He will hate sanctity, and act wickedly. He says, he detests wickedness; but his own wickedness he detests not.

(2) He is condemned by his profession, because his most holy faith is contradicted by an unholy life. Baptism, wherein he gave his name to Christ, engageth him to obey Christ as his Lord; but though he was baptized into the name of Christ, yet he obeyeth Him not. His profession is sacred, but his practice is sinful. The one is pure, the other impure. Now could any but dumb idols, stocks and stones, live without sense and shame of this contradiction? He is condemned in conscience, and condemned by profession. There is no true comfort outside of the ways of holiness. All earthly contentments are dead, bitter and inconstant. No course gives such solid foundation for comfort as an holy course. A worldly course does not, for the worldling is filled and fed from day to day with vexing cares, and tormenting thoughts, and in a time of common calamity and affliction, he is cast down. His

face waxes pale; his mind is amazed and his heart trembles. His cares and fears devour all his joy whereas the godly man is careful for nothing and rejoices in tribulation. He takes a providential and moderate care, but not an unbelieving and excessive thoughtfulness. He walks by faith, not by sense; he trusts in God in the midst of want, and finds faith and trust an universal remedy for trouble. No way is so full of pleasantness as the ways of holiness. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17). The paths of sin are void of peace, but great peace have they, who keep God's law (Gal. 6:16). What peace, what joy like that of a good conscience, in a time of affliction! When old age creeps up on a man, death approaches, and eternity prevents him. Oh, then a world for a good conscience! The sinner's mirth and merriment is downright madness. "I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" (Eccles. 2:2). Christianity will not deprive you of your joy, it will only rectify, moderate, and sanctify the same. I grant, some of God's people are of sad, dark, uncomfortable spirits, but yet I affirm that godliness is not the proper cause of their sadness. And suppose it were, were it not better for a man to suffer qualms, and fits of melancholic sadness all his life, than to suffer hell torments even for one hour? I leave the wicked, when sober and settled in their wits, to judge and determine. The mercies of God engage and bind us unto holiness. Every mercy is a silent sermon, preaching to us the doctrine of holiness. Every blessing is a suitor, wooing us to live holily. "That we

being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75).

God, by His blessings, would allure and invite us unto holiness. Hath not God caused our lot to fall in a pleasant land? Whereas we might have been born in Meshech, or in the tents of Kedar, in a barren land, a land of spiritual drought. Hath He not kept us back from presumptuous, scandalous sins? And, at least from that unrepentable sin against the Holy Ghost? Hath He not kept us safe from deadly dangers? Might not fire have suddenly broken out and laid our houses in ashes? Might not the devil, in the night time, have murdered us and our children in bed? Who was it that bound the devil to his good behaviour, that he did not roar and tear both us and them in pieces? Was it not God? God's outward providential mercies are innumerable. Is it not pure mercy, that thou hast a dwelling house, though but a mean cottage? Thou might have been a vagabond, and run up and down begging thy bread. Is it not pure mercy, that thou hast a spread table, when God might justly have caused thee to have eaten thine own dung? Hast thou an healthful state of body, when others thy betters are crying out from day to day sick, sick? And are not children, which are an heritage from the Lord, multiplied unto thee, and are continued with thee, whilst others are fast burying their dead? Is it not pure mercy, that thou hast sufficient riches, and a soft

bed, when Christ Himself lived in poverty, and had nowhere to lay His weary head? Hast thou not liberty and plenty of ordinances, burning and shining lights, while others have not the gospel preached to them, but live and die in gross darkness?

Therefore when thou art tempted to sin, say as Joseph did, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Shall I thus requite the Lord for the innumerable mercies bestowed upon me? Hath He surrounded me with blessings and loaded me with His benefits? Hath He crowned me with lovingkindness, and many rich blessings here; and hath He promised to crown me with eternal blessedness hereafter? And shall I be so unkind and disingenuous as to wrong that God, who hath been so kind to me, and is continually doing me good? Shall I not hear Him calling on me to be holy, who hath so often heard me crying to Him for help? Hath He denied nothing to me, and shall I not deny my lusts for His sake? Is He my friend and benefactor, and shall I do service to His enemy? Hath He honoured me, and shall I dishonour Him? Doth He promise me blessedness, and is a wicked life the way to come to it? Have I tasted and seen that the Lord is good, and shall I continue to do what is evil? Do showers of precious mercies distil on mine head, and shall they all miscarry? Shall I displease and dishonor that high and dreadful Majesty, whose free grace is the well-head and fountain of all these mercies? Or shall I not rather express my thankfulness in such a

manner, as may become the mercies of God? Oh, the mercies of God are a mighty motive to prevent sin and promote holiness.

Therefore, dwell much in your thoughts upon the mercies and love-tokens of God. I read of one, that said, he had but one book, and that book had but two leaves, a white leaf, and a red. Yet he could never read over these two leaves, though he lived many years, and read diligently, so much matter was contained in them. For in the red leaf (he said) were laid down all God's fearful judgments poured out upon sinners who were disobedient and would not be reformed; and in who the white leaf were laid down, all the mercies and favours of God vouchsafed to mankind, either in general or particular. This book remains to this day, and happy is the man who is most careful to exercise therein day and night. All a man's spiritual relations call for holiness. Our relation to duties calls for it. What is our praising God without an holy heart, but blessing of an idol? What good will our prayers do, if we lift not up pure hands without wrath and doubting? What are sacraments and ordinances, but abominations to the eye of God, when profaned by the sins of men? Prayers, praises, sacraments, and ordinances, are holy things, and what should swine and dogs do with such? Our relation to the saints calls for holiness. The saints are called an holy nation, and what are we but withered branches in the vine, masks of saints, and hypocritical counterfeits in the church, without holiness?

Are not the saints above closely allied to the Church of God on earth? Are we not akin to the spirits of just men made perfect? Have we not the same father? The same mother? The same Redeemer? The same Sanctifier and Savior? Who is our Head? Is it not the holy child Jesus? The holy, and just, and righteous One, who is white and ruddy (Cant. v. 10)? He is white for sanctity, purity, and innocency; and ruddy in His sufferings, bloody stripes, gallings, woundings, and crucifixion. Now, must we not be conformed to our Head? Must the Head be of gold, and yet the thighs of brass, and feet of clay? The duties we engage in are holy; the Christians we converse with are holy. Christ our Head is holy; and yet will we be unholy? Holiness will make you blessings to the places where you live. Wicked men are the firebrands of a nation, but good men are as props and pillars to it. St. Paul, indeed, was called a "pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition.. .throughout the world" (Acts 24:5), as if he was no less to be avoided than a man coming out of a pest-house, with running plague-sores. But this was only a malicious slander. The turning of the world upside down, seditions, uproars, tumults, wars, and plagues are the fruits of unholiness, the effects of iniquity. Whereas godliness is gainful, and a whole family and nation hath sometimes fared better for a single godly servant's sake. Witness Laban's family, for the sake of upright and plain-hearted Jacob. Witness also the house of Pharaoh, and the land of Egypt, for Joseph's sake. Witness the many souls in the ship, that had all perished, but for Paul's sake.

Witness the Israelites that had been destroyed, while they wandered and wavered in the wilderness, but for Moses sake.

Therefore be ye holy, that ye also may be props and pillars to the nation, and your names may be fragrant, and dear, and precious to others. Holiness is an excellent help to prolong our days. "That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command thee.. .that thy days may be prolonged" (Deut. 6:2). Religion teacheth temperance. A sober care of the body, and a religious and virtuous course of life, doth naturally tend to the prolonging of our days, and hath very frequently the blessing of health and long life attending upon it.

Objection: Wicked men sometimes live long, and good men die soon.

Answer: 1. Though wicked men sometimes live a long life, yet theirs is not a promised life. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days" (Psalm 55:23). Now every wicked man is a bloody and deceitful man, he is a self-deceiver, and embrues his hands in the blood of his own soul.

2. Though good men sometimes lose life soon, yet firstly, they live in a spiritual, comfortable manner while they live. And secondly, by losing a temporal life, they gain an eternal life; the life which they gain, is infinitely better

than the life which they lose. It is not a hard and difficult thing to live holily, after a man hath obtained a willing mind, and made an entrance into heaven s way. It is not so much want of power to live holily, as want of will that is the cause of so much unholiness. Many pretend they cannot, but the truth is they will not. I would have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not (Matt. 23:37). "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). "Knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth" (Prov. 14:6). Therefore up and be doing! Use an holy violence, an holy accustomedness. If there be only an hearty willingness, and gracious assistance, what will these not do? What difficulties can hinder a resolved and encouraged Christian? There is honey in the carcass of the lion, for such as will not stumble at the cost. There is glory as well as duty, and yet wilt thou say that duty is hard? Be but persuaded of the reward that attends duty, and thou shalt acknowledge that Christ s yoke is easy. Compare the freedom of God's servants, with the service of Satan. Is not Satan's service a terrible task, an intolerable burden, an iron yoke, in comparison to God's service? Is it not easier to tell the truth, than by telling forgeries to bring upon ourselves shame and fear? Is it not easier to employ our thoughts in the service of God, than to waste our estates in satisfying our lusts? A wicked life will arm death with dread and terror. An holy life is always sure to be concluded with a happy death. St. Augustine used to say, that man cannot die ill, that liveth well; and seldom doth

he die well, who lived ill. I grant, a bad life may sometimes be attended with a good death, where there is the interposition of an unfeigned late repentance.

Oh but, *Serapenitentia raro vera*. He who hath lived wickedly, for the most part, laments ruefully when he comes to die. "Alas! Alas," saith he, "the end is now come, the end of all my mirth and jollity, of all mine honors and prosperity. My wife weeps, my children wail, and all my friends are troubled for me, but alas, not one of them will go with me to the judgment seat, to plead for me. Now all my delicious hours are past and gone; all my joys and pleasures, all my mirth and pastimes, are now finished. Where are all my companions, that were wont to laugh with me, and seemed as if they would never have forsaken me? Now they are all gone, and have left me here alone to answer the reckoning for all. None of them will do so much, as to go with me to judgment, or speak one word on my behalf. Oh, fool that I was, not to think of this day sooner, not to change my life sooner! Oh, unfortunate wretch that I am, now I must change whether I will or no! I must change earth for hell, pleasure for pain, light for darkness, and companions for devils. Now I see the difference betwixt the ends of good and evil. Now I see, it is unprofitable service to serve the devil, the world and the flesh. It is no profit to me now, that I have been beautiful, rich, and prosperous upon earth. It is no profit that I have glittered in gold, and borne a great sway in the world. Now I would give all

my estate, all I ever had in the world, yea, mountains of gold and silver, if I had them, but for one mite of true gospel-grace and holiness. But alas, it is not to be bought, and if it were, I have now no time to buy it! Now death is come, I must away, and yet, alas, I know not whither."

Oh, when death comes, a little grace will be worth all the world! Poor sinner, art not thou tumbling as well as others towards the grave? Every moment of life thou comest near death. Thy strength is but ashes, thy glory but a flower. Thou eatest today of the flesh of fowls and fed beasts, and soon, it may be in two or three months time, thy flesh may be dished out for crawling worms. Oh, it is but one spurn with God's foot, one touch with God's finger, and thou art gone, and whither, oh whither! Thinkest thou art then going without holiness? Catch therefore fleeing time, and make the best of it. Bid farewell to self, and welcome holiness. Abandon vanity, and embrace true piety. So live every day, that thou may not be afraid of the day of death. Thou mayest be wise, and rich, and formal, and yet damned at last, if not holy. For all the wicked shall be turned into hell. And God will wound the hairy scalp of every one that goeth on in His trespasses (Psalm 68:21). Many that are clothed with infamy, and poverty, shall be saved; but none that die in unholiness, can escape hell and damnation. What but everlasting death, is the issue and consequence of a sinful and vicious course of life? "The end of these things is death... The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:21-23), even

eternal death. A death that comprehends in it all those fearful and astonishing miseries, wherewith the wrath of God will afflict and pursue sinners, in another world. "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil" (Rom. 2:8-9).

So that, no matter how quietly a wicked man may pass out of this world, yet unspeakable and intolerable misery will most certainly overtake him at last. Sin is the highway to hell. Those who persevere in sin while they live, cannot escape hell when they die. Such may read their doom, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured Out without mixture into the cup of His indignation" (Rev. 14:10). It is mixed with all stinging ingredients, but unmixed with any relief or temperature of mercy! No tortures so great as fire, and no fire worse than that of brimstone. Yet, the impenitent sinner shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. How did the poor scalded Sodomites run, howling and yelling, and lamenting their pains, when God rained hell out of heaven upon them? How then will poor damned creatures howl and lament their pains, in that lake of fire and brimstone! What can be more horrible than that place, where both soul and body must be crowded into a fiery dungeon, with torments that can neither be avoided nor endured! There the sun, much less

the face of God, never shines! There the eyes shall distil like fountains, and the teeth clatter like armed men, and the mind muse on nothing but sad despair, and that forever! Oh, the bitterness, the multitude, the everlastingness of their pains! Oh, eternity, eternity! Who can comprehend it? After the expiration of millions of years, eternity will not be one minute less. Oh, when eternity is added to extremity, then hell is hell indeed! If dissolute sinners of our age were allowed to have a sight of hell, what a fear and astonishment would it strike into their hearts! How would they weep, yea, bleed for their sins? How constantly would they pray for pardon? How would they rectify their crooked and cursed steps, that they might never come to such a place? How would they loathe and leave sin, which only can endanger them thither?

There is a story of one, that gave a young gallant a curious ring, with a death's head on it, upon this condition, that for a certain time, he should spend one hour every day in looking and thinking upon it. He took the ring in wantonness, but performing the condition with diligence wrought a wonder upon him - so a desperate ruffian became a conscionable Christian. Did a Christian spend but one half hour fixedly every day, in meditating seriously on hell, the sad yet certain consequence of a sinful life, I doubt not, but by God's grace, he would find a blessed alteration, both in his heart and life. Bishop Babington, in his comforting notes upon the book of Exodus, tells us

of an unconcerned woman, who, spending her time in sin, desired her wicked associate, to bestow on her a new gown. When he hesitated, she instantly answered, "Do I desperately cast away both body and soul forever to content thee, and dost thou deny me so so small a request? Henceforward, I am resolved to look to myself better, and to avoid both thee and this wicked life." If she did turn from her wickedness, the denial was made a blessing unto her.

We also read of a covetous father, who raking up riches sinfully, suddenly called for his eldest son and for a chafing-dish of coals, and required his son to put his finger in and burn it off. At first, he thought his father had jested, but in the end, perceiving his settled resolution, he prayed to be excused, for he would not do it. Thereupon the father answered, "Shall I, to make thee a great man in the world, so heap up riches by all unlawful means, that I am sure to burn for it, both body and soul, eternally in hell, and wilt not thou endure the loss of one finger for me? Now I will alter my course, and consider in time that which hereafter cannot be redressed."

Oh, it is good to meditate often on the wages of sin! I know, such thoughts, and meditations are held as being too melancholy, but it is the way to prevent sin, and consequently destruction. Now is the time to think of these things. The torments of hell are without measure, and the continuance in these torments is without end. The

damned shall be punished in hell, so long as there is a God in heaven; and yet, wilt thou, O Christian, for the pleasure of an hour, incur these everlasting pains? Wilt thou rather lose thy soul, than leave thy sins? Is sin more sweet, than the wrath of God would be bitter? I think the very thought of the end of issue of a wicked life (that the end of these things is death, that tribulation and anguish, far greater than we can imagine, shall be to every soul of man that doth evil), should be more than enough to dishearten any man from a wicked life and to bring him to a better course. Remember, oh man, if thou who bearest the name of Christ, live wickedly, thy hell will be far hotter than the hell of superstitious Pagans! If Turks and Tartars shall be damned, wicked and debauched Christians shall be doubly damned. And believe it, the brick-kilns of Egypt, and Babel's fiery furnace, are but shadows and pictures of pain, if compared with the fiery Tophet. Resolve, therefore henceforward so to live and conduct thyself, that thou may be of the number of those, who shall be accounted worthy to escape all these things, and to stand before the Son of man. Holiness is the only way to happiness. Grace is the only way to glory. No holiness, no heaven. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). Holiness is the highway to that high and holy place. "And an highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness" (Isaiah 35:8). "The pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Heaven is the inheritance of saints (Col. 1:12). No unclean thing can enter into God's kingdom. They who live in those sins which

are the works of the devil, and mock those that are sanctified, shall have no place with God and His glorious angels. Heaven was never prepared for the workers of iniquity. "To sit on My right hand, and on My left... it shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared of My Father" (Matt. 20:23). Who are the blessed royal guests? Men who are gracious and holy. Heaven is no common inn. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom" (Matt. 25:34). Ye that fed Me and clothed Me, ye that visited the fatherless, which is pure religion (James 1:27). A wicked man hath not so much as half a promise of heaven in the whole Bible. The poor man hath a promise (James 2:5), but the wicked man hath none. Oh, thou enemy of gospel holiness, show thy warrant. Why dost thou look for heaven? Thou hast received no promise from God; and if thou hast no promise, thou canst expect no performance.

It may be, at present, thou dost taste some comfort from thy self-flattery; oh, but in the end thou shalt reap the sorrow of thy woeful self-deceit. God is sometimes better than His Word, but never contradicts His Word, which He must do, if the unholy, unhumiliated sinner come to heaven. Heaven begins in holiness, and our expectation of future glory, obligeth us to present sanctity. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things,

be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:13-14). What will move us to holiness, if glory does not? Shall the devil, by showing the fading glory of this world, prevail with thousands to serve him? And shall not Jesus, by showing us the everlasting glory of the world to come, prevail with us to serve Him? Are we called to this glory, and shall we not walk worthy of Him who hath called us to it? (1 Thess. 2:12). Surely the enjoyment of God Himself hereafter, in all His perfections, sufficiency, blessedness, and goodness to us, according to our capacity, should make us study holiness, for how can an impure and filthy soul enjoy God? Alas, there is no suitableness, no fitness in such a soul. The more holy we are, the more we are like the glorified saints. Holiness will be our perfection and delight in Heaven, and shall it not be our desire and study here on earth? Will we rather part with eternal life, than with our lust? Is our sin to be reckoned or compared with heavenly glory? Oh, let us choose an holy life, if we would be happy both in life and death. Let us become the servants of God, and have our fruit unto holiness, if we ever expect that the end shall be everlasting life. God calls us from sin to holiness, which is most reasonable (1 Thess. 4:7). God calls us to follow Him in the way of holiness to eternal glory. The devil calls us to follow him in the way of sin to eternal torments. Now whether it be right that we obey God or the devil, judge ye. "Follow peace with all men and holiness" (Heb. 12:14). Though lions be in the way, and discouragements be multiplied,

though Satan interpose, and corruptions stop our course, we are yet to follow holiness. Who calls us? Is it not He, whose presence and breath is consuming? He who can command us into nothing, and shall not His call be complied with? Must the eternal God become a humble condescending suppliant to man? Majesty and mercy kneel and entreat us to be holy, and yet we live in sin still! What are we called from? Is it not from sin and destruction to purity and salvation? Is it not from Satan to God, from embracing of sensual pleasures, to the pursuing of spirituality? And who can withstand such reasonable entreaties? Our profession of Christianity obligeth us to holiness. Christianity is a matter of free acceptance; it is our own voluntary choice. When we take upon us the Name of Christ, we bind ourselves to leave sin, and live holily. "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Our Christian profession obligeth us to a Christian conversation. What! Will we plow with an ox and an ass together? I mean, will we have the face of a Christian, and yet the life of a heathen! Oh, let us not be almost Christians, lest we be at last almost saved, that is, altogether damned. Oh, let this truth be like the water of jealousy, like fire in our bones, like the archangel's trumpet to awaken us. Thou that possessest Christ art bound to follow Christ, both in inward and outward holiness. Thou hast taken upon thee to be holy in part, and this obligeth

thee to be holy in all. As he that believes one fundamental article is bound to believe all fundamental points, so he that obeyeth God in one practical duty, is bound to obey all. As for example, suppose thou being a professor of Christianity, comest to the Lord 's house upon His blessed day. Now I tell thee thou art the greatest self-condemned man in the world, if thou do not also cast by all profaneness, and make religion thy chief business, both at home and abroad. For upon the same ground thou comest to Christ, upon that same ground thou shouldst pray with thy family, educate thy children christianly, live strictly, and do all that is required. "He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill; Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (James 2:11). Thou that out of conscience, and from the command of God doest one thing, ought likewise to do all. The same law, the same God, and the same authority that binds thee to one, binds thee to another. If thou endeavor not to obey God in all, thou obeyest Him sincerely or not at all. A Christian that endeavors not to be strict, exact, circumspect, and holy in practice shall never by me be called a Christian. Your virtue and piety will profit your posterity after you. It will help to keep wrath from your children, and to procure a blessing upon them. This is that which God cannot forget, neither will He forget His goodness sake. "Shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments" (Ex. 20:6). "Oh that there were such an heart in them that they would fear Me, and keep

all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and their children for ever" (Deut. 5:29); 1 Kings 6:34). "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Prov. 20:7).

According as we demean ourselves towards God (saith an ancient writer) we entail a lasting blessing, or a great curse upon our children. As wicked parents entail God's anger and curse upon their posterity, so God reserves mercy for the posterity of the godly. He will be good, even to thousands of their seed, who diligently serve Him. Lo, here is the fruit of your prayers and tears, of your hearing God's Word, and leading your lives according to the sacred rules thereof. This sealeth up the Lord's favor not only to yourselves, but to your children after you. I beseech you, Christians, think seriously of all this, and as you would ever wish well to your own souls, as to their dear pledges, that are as your own heart, be afraid to offend God. And be constantly careful to lead your lives according to the rules of His most Holy Word. If God hath irresistibly and effectually called thee, amongst those few, very few called ones, whom He hath chosen for Himself, let this engage thee to be holy yet more and more. Did not the Spirit of grace knock at thy door with infinite holy motions, before thou condescended to open? Thou refused to obey, until He called, not a third time, as to Samuel, but many an hundred times. As Lot was loath to depart out of Sodom, till the angels laid hold upon his hand, and brought him forth; so thou was loath

to leave thy sins, and sinful companions, till the hand of the Lord laid hold upon thine heart. God's arbitrary and free grace called thee and left others. Oh, how should this make thee to admire God's love, and to strive for God's holiness! When God took thee, He left others; he passed by thousands and ten thousands in the world, and left them in their impenitency and carnal security under the bondage and vassalage of Satan. Consider, how few there are that shall be saved, in comparison of the multitude that shall be eternally destroyed. Consider that God should call thee with an holy calling, and bring thee in to be one of that little flock, that is under the care of the good Shepherd Jesus Christ. If thou should be chosen and singled out from the rest, when they are left in a state of sin to perish eternally, what astonishing distinguishing mercy is this! How should this engage thee to be eminently holy. Was thou called in thy younger years? Oh, be holy in all manner of conversation for a requital of God's love that suffered thee not to stab thy soul to old age.

It is a greater mercy to be called at the first, or third, than at the eleventh hour; to be called in thine infancy and early days, than in the afternoon, and evening, and twilight of thine age. Being early called, thou never made such sad shipwrecks, never involved thyself in such gross wickedness as others have done. Thou hast had long trial of the sweetness of holiness, therefore follow after it still. Was thou called of later times? Labor to

make requital for the many hours, days, and years, thou lost before thou was acquainted with God. Surely holiness becomes thee forever. Oh, be holy, ye old disciples, for your time to gather grace in will not be long. Oh, be holy, ye young converts, for ye want liveliness, strength, and vigour in the way and work of the Lord. Your experiences are but short; some tastings you have had, oh, but desire more, for the more holiness you have, the more sweetness you shall find. The richest wine lies in the lowest cellar. Hath Christ come and laid Him down under thy roof? Oh, be pure and holy that thou vex not His righteous soul. Oh, how should thou please Him, who hath so highly honoured and advanced thee! If a peasant's daughter were married to a prince, would she put on her old rags, or eat her old country diet again? Christ the Prince of Peace hath married thee to Himself, and appointed thee a rich jointure. Wilt not thou forever lay aside the filthy garments of sin, and slight those husks on which thou fed before? It may be that thou art so poor, that of thine own thou hast nowhere to lay thine head, and it is certain thou possessest not one foot of land that is thine own for ever. Yet art thou an heir, a child, dearly beloved, both by God and angels. This honour have all the saints. Once thou wast a great, a filthy sinner; oh, be holy, for Christ hath washed thee in His blood, justified thee by His righteousness, and sanctified thee by His Spirit, even when thou wast filthy to look upon. Moses once married a Blackamoor, David had vile men for his soldiers, and Christ had publicans, harlots, and sinners

for His companions. So God chose thee when thou had little morality, little ingenuity, or natural goodness. Thou art of the number of those few that shall be saved, and so strongly bound to be eminently holy.