

FOUR DISCOURSES

AGAINST

VICE AND PROFANENESS,

VIZ. AGAINST

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| I. DRUNKENNESS. | III. SABBATH-BREAKING. |
| II. UNCLEANNESS. | IV. PROFANE SPEAKING. |

TO THE READER.

WITHOUT doubt it is possible that a man may be no drunkard or adulterer, no swearer or sabbath-breaker, and yet be for ever ruined by his unmortified pride and passion, his worldliness and covetousness, his secret fraud and injustice, or his infidelity and close impiety; the pharisee in the parable went to his house not justified, though he could say, *I am not as other men are*; yet so great a decay is there of religion, even in the Christian world, and such a prevalency of sin, that it is easy to observe how far it goes toward the gaining a man a fair character among his neighbours, to be able to say of him, that he is free from these vices, as if it were a rare thing to find them that are so.

I hope the matter is not so bad; but it is too plain to be denied, that drunkenness and uncleanness, sabbath-breaking and profane speaking, the sins against which these four plain discourses are levelled, do still very much abound both in city and country, notwithstanding the good and wholesome laws of the land, made pursuant to the laws of God, for the suppressing of them; and both enforced by her Majesty's proclamation, solemnly read at certain times, in the chief places of concourse; and the pious endeavours in many parts of the kingdom, both of magistrates, and of others also in their places, formed into societies for that purpose, to reform the manners of the age. Though their endeavours have not been altogether in vain, yet it is evident the disease is not conquered.

It would be a vanity to think, that such will be reclaimed and reformed by books, as will not be wrought upon by those more sensible methods of conviction; and yet our writing against these sins may be of some use, to give a check to those, who are entering into temptations to them, and who are

therein checked by their own consciences likewise; with which, if we can but seasonably set in, they may be prevailed with to start back in time, before their hearts be hardened.

It may likewise be of use to those who fall under the censure of the law for any of these sins, and are thereby awakened to some degree of consideration, to make the punishment answer the end aimed at, which is nothing else but their reformation; and that would contribute too to the reformation of others. If the rod and reproof together might but give wisdom to the foolish and disobedient, as there would be more joy in heaven, so there would be more benefit on earth, by the example of one sinner that repenteth, than of ninety-nine just persons, that need no repentance.

And we may hope there are some, who through the strength of temptation, and the weakness of resolution, are drawn away by these lusts, and enticed, that yet are willing to be reasoned with, and to read and consider what is said to them; and may more probably be wrought upon by a book, which they may peruse over and over again, than by a sermon which they hear once; and may in this way, by the grace of God, be recovered out of the snares of the devil, and become trophies of Christ's victory over him.

However, such endeavours as these to turn sinners from the error of their ways, though they may not have the desired success, will turn to us for a testimony, that we would have healed them, and they would not be healed. By this and other methods the watchmen give warning, and so deliver their own souls.

What more have we to do, but to be earnest with God in prayer night and day, that the wickedness of the wicked may at length come to an end, and the just be established by a more plentiful pouring out of the Spirit of grace upon us from on high, which would soon turn the wilderness into a fruitful land, and make even the desert to blossom as the rose.

And while we yet see the wicked walk on every side, it is expected from us, that our souls weep in secret for it, that we complain of it to God, that we sigh and cry for the abominations committed among us, and that by a regular and exemplary conversation, conformable to the gospel, we vindicate the honour of our holy religion, and approve ourselves God's faithful witnesses in the places where we live; then shall a mark be set upon us, and we shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, hid either in heaven or under heaven.

MATT. HENRY.

A FRIENDLY ADMONITION

TO

DRUNKARDS AND TIPLERS.

To address ourselves to you (sinners) when you are actually overcome with wine or strong drink, is to cast pearls before swine, that will trample them under their feet, and perhaps will turn again and rend us. You are then as incapable to hear reason, as you are to speak it. It was the prudence of Abigail, that she would not reprove Nabal when he was drunk, 1 Sam. xxv. 36. *They have smitten me, then shalt thou say, and I felt it not,* (Prov. xxiii. 35.) and then to what purpose wast thou smitten?

But I will take it for granted that you are sometimes sober, and allow yourselves liberty to think; and that Nebuchadnezzar's misery is not your chosen happiness, to be continually beasts from one year's end to another. I am willing to hope that sometimes your understanding returns to you; and at such a happy hour, when you are your own men, and masters of your own reason, I heartily wish this paper might fall into your hands, to be read with a serious and unprejudiced eye, and grace with it into your hearts, to enable you to consider your ways, and to turn from the error of them.

And now at length, I beseech you, *show yourselves men, O ye transgressors,* (Isa. xlii. 8.) and let me bespeak one hour's application of mind, and a little impartial consideration, while one, who really wishes you well, attempts to recover you out of the snare you are led captive in. You are, perhaps, many a time thankful to your friend, who helped you when you were drunk, helped you to your houses, helped you to your beds, when you were not able to help yourselves; I beseech you then, count not one your enemy, who would persuade you to such a course of life, as that your own hands may be sufficient for you, and you may not again need their help upon any such occasion.

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The transgressors to whom I address this paper, I shall choose to describe in the express words of scripture, hoping that such a description of them will be not only least exceptionable, but most effectual to discover them to themselves, and to their own consciences; and further I do not desire to discover them; *for I write not these things to shame you,* (unless it be to shame you out of your sin,) *but as my beloved friends, to warn you,* 1 Cor. iv. 14.

Those therefore that I am exhorting in God's name to repent and reform, are such as fall under some of the following characters:

1. Those who inordinately love drink, are hereby admonished. Solomon foretells the misery of him who loves pleasure, that he shall be a poor man, and particularly he who loves wine, Prov. xxi. 17. To use wine or strong drink soberly, and with a moderate delight, as a good creature of God, made for the service and comfort of man, is allowed us; and it is sanctified, as other the good things of this life, by the word of God and prayer, and the pleasure more than doubled to a good man by thanksgiving. But to love wine and strong drink, to set the heart upon it, to let out the desire towards it, for the sake of the pleasure of drinking, and because it is a gratification of the sensual appetite; this is a corrupt and vicious habit, which leads to drunkenness, as it is usually contracted by it.

To drink wine for the stomach's sake is prescribed as a medicine, (1 Tim. v. 23.) but then it is a little wine, for a little, a very little, will serve the necessities and regular desires of nature: but to eat or drink for drunkenness, that is, purely to please the palate, has a brand put upon it by the wise man, (Eccl. x. 17.) where it is made the character of virtuous princes, that (notwithstanding the temptation of dainties and varieties they have about them) they eat in due season, for strength and not for drunkenness.

It is the everlasting reproach of Israel in the wilderness, that when God gave them meat enough for their bodies, that did not content them, though it was bread from heaven, but they asked meat for their lusts, Ps. lxxviii. 18. After the similitude of their transgression do those sin, who are not pleased with that which satisfies the just desires of nature, but they thirst after that which really puts a force upon nature.

This love of the pleasure of drinking is commonly jested with, as a "spark in the throat;" but such a spark it is as must be quenched by true repentance and mortification, or it will break out shortly into such a flame, as will burn to the lowest hell.

2. Those who err through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way, are hereby admonished. Such are complained of by the prophet, (Isa. xxviii. 7.) who though they do not drink so far

as ordinarily to deprive themselves of the common exercise of reason, yet they debauch their own consciences with the love of pleasure ; so that they are unable to make a right judgment of divine things, and especially of their own spiritual state and interest : so losing the exercise of their reason about that for the sake of which they had their reason given them.

Their case is greatly to be lamented, who, by associating with drunkards, and habituating themselves to loose practices, inconsistent with the rules, and destructive to the seeds, of divine life, come to imbibe loose principles concerning God and Christ, and the Scriptures, and their souls, and another world, and entertain rooted prejudices against serious godliness, and a holy life. Thus the strong man armed gets and keeps possession of the heart, and it will be a miracle of free grace, if ever he be dispossessed.

It is sad to see how many form their notions of religion, and settle their rules of living, by their free conversation, as they call it, over a glass of wine ; and for instruction in the most weighty concerns of their souls, they have recourse not to reading, study, prayer, or the serious advice of their grave and pious teachers, but to the panter of their club in the ale-house or tavern ; by this they resolve to steer their course, and they take it for granted they are in the right. These are the oracles they consult, in these schools they choose their education, and so they err through wine ; and in the greatness of their folly wander endlessly.

3. Those who tarry long at the wine are also branded in the Scripture, Prov. xxiii. 30. Those who waste a great many of their precious hours thus idly and unprofitably, so as at the best to serve none of the purposes of the rational, much less of the divine, life. Those, I mean, who spend the best part of every day in piping, and sipping, and chatting over the glass, as if they had nothing else to do in this world, but to please as brutish an appetite of the mere animal life as any it has. They divide their time, perhaps even their sabbath time, between the bed and the bottle, and make tippling the constant business of a worthless, useless life. They do not stand in the market-place, but they sit in a worse place, all the day idle.

These are such as we call sots ; the most insignificant animals under the sun, the unprofitable burthens of the earth, under which it groans : of whom we may truly say, it had been as good for the world if it had never known them ; and they themselves will say shortly, when they come under the fearful doom of the wicked and slothful servant, that it had been better, a thousand times better, if they had never been born : for the time thus spent, thus mispent, will perhaps occasion melancholy reflections upon a death-bed ; it will, however, pass

very ill in the account, in the judgment of the great day.

4. Those who follow strong drink are under a woe, (Isa. v. 11.) *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink : and as another scripture expresses it, They fill themselves with strong drink, Isa. lvi. 12.* These are deliberate drunkards, who are continually seeking opportunities to make themselves drunk ; who follow it as their trade, and are in it as in their element. The desire of excessive drinking will draw them at any time, into any place, among any company, though ever so sordid and so much below them ; it will give them a diversion from the prosecution of any business, though ever so urgent. They are as solicitous in their inquiry "Where are the best liquors ?" as the most industrious tradesman is in inquiring "Where are the best goods, and the best bargains ?" When they awake out of a drunken fit, it is to seek it yet again, Prov. xxiii. 35.

5. Those who are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink, are likewise under a woe, Isa. v. 22. There are those who glory in it as a mighty perfection, that they are able to bear a great deal of strong liquor without sinking under it ; and boast of it as an heroic achievement, that they have made shift to keep their seats, and to keep their feet, when they had laid so many dead drunk under the table. Probably such as these were those drunkards of Ephraim, who wore the crown of pride, the garlands they won by those sort of victories, Isa. xxviii. 1. But it is there threatened, (v. 3.) That those drunkards of Ephraim, with their crown of pride, shall be trodden under foot. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth, that ever any should arrive to such a pitch of impudence in sin, as thus to glory in their shame, and value themselves upon that which is rather the commendation of a brewer's horse, than of a man, to be able to carry a great deal of liquor. But the day is coming, when those who are so well able to bear the cup of drunkenness, will find themselves too weak to bear the cup of trembling.

6. Those who are easily and commonly brought to drink themselves drunk, as the expression is, (1 Kings xvi. 9. and ch. xx. 16.) fall under his reproof. Those, I mean, who though they know their own weakness, the weakness of their heads, and their inability to bear drink, together with the weakness of their hearts, and their inability to resist temptations to this sin, yet are ordinarily drawn into such company as proves a snare to them, and are soon brought to take more than does them good ; the effect whereof is, that their reason is disturbed, their tongues stammer, their feet stumble, and they reel to and fro, and are at their wits' end. They become like the fool, whom Solomon describes, (Eccl. x. 3.) who *when he walketh by the way, his*

wisdom faileth him, and he says to every one he meets, that he is a fool. Those certainly drink to excess, who by drinking lose the government of themselves, and disable their own bodies and minds for their respective offices.

They who are but once surprised into this excess, as Noah was, have reason to lament their own unweariness, and to double their guard for the future; but they who are again and again overcome by it have no cloak for their sin. Wine is such a mocker, that if it thus deceive us once, it is its part, it may be its fault, but if twice, it is our own, wholly our own.

7. Those who make others drink and be drunk, though they themselves may escape being so, are under a woe, (Hab. ii. 15.) *Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, and makes him drunken also.* Those who contrive by urging healths, or other the arts of drunkenness, to force this trade, must doubtless be accountable for all the sin they decoy others into, and the blood of those souls and bodies, which perish thereby, will be required at their hands. Those especially incur guilt, who not only make a jest of drawing an unguarded soul now and then into a particular act of drunkenness, but lay plots to debauch those who were soberly educated and inclined, and to engage them in the course and way of this sin; and triumph in their success herein as glorious victories, boasting how often they have thus quenched the glowing sparks of virtue, and crushed its hopeful seeds. These have arrived at the highest pitch of this wickedness; they are factors for hell, and betray such a malice against God and souls, and such a zeal for the propagating of sin, as is the very constitution of Satan himself.

Having thus described the disease, in the several symptoms and degrees of it, we must next attempt the cure; and that which makes the attempt more difficult, and yet more necessary, is, that the disease is epidemical; the contagion is spread through the nation, and multitudes are tainted with it. It is not here and there one that is thus deprived of his reason, and become distracted at times; if so, hospitals might be built in which to keep them up, and endeavour their relief; but the iniquity abounds in every place. If the honour of temperance were to be carried by the major vote, we have reason to fear that the sober would be out-pollled. Whether the former days were in this respect any whit better than these, I know not; but these are certainly very bad, and the prophet's complaint may too justly be revived, (Isa. xxviii. 8.) *All tables are full of vomit and filthiness, there is no place clean.*

Now as when the pestilence rages in a city, whilst care is taken by the government to confine the infected, that they appear not abroad to spread the infection, it is likewise incumbent upon physicians, to prescribe and publish the best methods they can

think of both of prevention and cure; so, when this brutish vice of drunkenness is grown so very common as it is, it is high time to take the same course with it. It is the duty of magistrates with their power, to restrain and suppress it, that it appear not barefaced. Their sword ought to be a terror to these evil doers; for without doubt a common drunkard is a common nuisance, which the conservators of the public peace ought to take cognizance of. It is also requisite that ministers in their places, as spiritual physicians, should direct people what course to take, and how to manage themselves, that they, who are yet sound, may be preserved from the infection, and they who are sick, who most need the physician, may be recovered.

I must alter the title of this paper, if I should here address myself to the sober, to give them rules for the preserving of their sobriety: Let the fear of God be kept up in the heart; let the flesh be crucified, with all its corrupt affections and lusts; let not the dread and abhorrence of this sin be lessened by the frequent sight of those who indulge themselves in it; but let drunkards, as vile persons, be contemned in their eyes, (Ps. xv. 4.) and let their company be avoided, as much as is possible. Let temperance be a constant pleasure to them, and let them value themselves by it as their honour and reputation; and let its rules be religiously and inviolably observed, and no sensual appetite gratified; but let the body be kept under, and brought into subjection to religion and right reason; and then, I hope, by the grace of God, daily prayed for, and duly improved, he that is sober will be sober still, and will still hold fast his integrity.

But my business at present lies with those who are infected, and already captivated to the power of this lust; whether they be known and open drunkards, who declare their sin as Sodom, and seek not to hide it, or whether they be more close and secret tipplers, who roll it under their tongue as a sweet morsel. O that ye would, both the one and the other, suffer a word of exhortation; and let me beg of you with all earnestness and seriousness, if you have any regard to the eternal God that made you, or to the blessed Jesus that bought you, or to your own precious and immortal souls, that you will break off this sinful course of life you lead; cease to do this evil, and learn to do well. Fain I would persuade those who have been drunk, to be drunk no more; to forsake the foolish and live, and to go in the way of understanding. Though the disease be inveterate and very threatening, yet I would not doubt but, by the grace of God, a cure might be effected, if the diseased were but willing to be made whole.

These sinners must be ranked under two heads, who must be differently dealt with, according as their case differs.

I. There are some drunkards, who justify themselves in the sin, and so go on in it, under the protection of a debauched conscience; and these must be addressed to by way of conviction.

II. There are others, who condemn themselves for it, but not knowing how to disentangle themselves from it, they go on in it, notwithstanding the checks of an accusing conscience; and these must be addressed to by way of counsel and advice.

I. Let me begin with those who wallow in the mire of this sin, and think there is no harm in it; who insist upon their own justification in it; and plead for Baal. They are retained of counsel for this sin, and they confess the fact, that they are often in drink, yet they deny the fault, and with the adulterous woman, wipe their mouth and say, they have done no wickedness, Prov. xxx: 20. They have, if not satisfied, yet silenced, their own consciences, with the corrupt and foolish reasonings of that flesh and blood, which they make their delight and their counsellors. They are ready to ask, Why should not the natural appetite, which we brought into the world with us, be indulged and gratified? And how can the time and estate be better spent than in the service of it? And to show that they can quote Scripture as well as Satan, (Matt. iv. 6.) they will tell you that the fruit of the vine was created to make glad the heart, and in vain was it created, if it be not used for that purpose; you shall not persuade them that that is unlawful (how express soever the divine law is against it) which seems so natural.

They plead also the benefit and advantage of it; for their parts they know no way to ease the cares of this life, and take off the fears of death, but to drown them in good liquor. "What!" (say they) "a man is never merry till he is half drunk; never enjoys himself till he has thus raised himself." And, besides, they take it for granted that there can be no good fellowship with their friends, no free or pleasant conversation, but in the tavern or ale-house, and must either seek it there, or be perpetually melancholy, and never enjoy one another; they cannot, that is, they will not, believe that such a pleasant entertainment and diversion as this should have any evil in it: what if they be drunk, they hope it is no treason; it is past off with a jest, and made a laughing matter the next day, among their companions.

But will you give me leave to ask you, (you that thus palliate the matter,) what if your drinking to excess, and your tipping, should not prove such an innocent harmless thing, as you would make yourselves believe it is? What if all these fig-leaves you sew together, prove too thin and too narrow to cover your shame? Your consciences, which you have so often baffled and brow-beaten, now, perhaps, begin to let you alone, and give you no disturbance; you therefore, with a great deal of security and carelessness, walk in the way of your own heart, and in the

sight of your eyes, and allow yourselves all the looses of a vain and carnal conversation; but what if for all these things God should bring you into judgment? Eccl. xi. 9. What will you do in the day of visitation, when you shall be called to account for all your drunken frolics and excesses? Can you think that these pleas you insist on will stand you in any stead at God's bar, or bring you off in the judgment of the great day? No, they will all be overruled and rejected as frivolous, and you yourselves will be ashamed of your confidence. You now say, that you shall have peace, though you go on to add drunkenness to thirst; you think God will not be so severe upon you as we are, and at the worst you shall fare as well as most of your neighbours, and if you go to hell, God help a great many! But what if this self-flattery prove a self-deceit? What if your making light of the sin makes it really the heavier? What if you come at last within reach of that fearful threatening against the sinner, who thus promises himself impunity in the way of drunkenness? (Deut. xxix. 19, 20.) *The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man.* Is it not better for you to be undeceived in time, than to have this mistake discovered, when it is too late to rectify it? Come, therefore, and let us reason together: you plead that drinking is natural, it is so; but drinking to excess is certainly unnatural. You plead it is pleasant and profitable, but the plea is false, there is no pleasure nor profit in it.

You ask what harm is there in being drunk! What hurt does it do to any body? But will you give me leave to ask you a few questions? and I will appeal to the impartial and unbiassed judgment of your own consciences for an answer to them.

1. Is it no harm to transgress the law of the great God, the God that made you and will judge you? The very law of nature forbids this sin; the heathen condemned it, and cried out shame on it, though it is not expressly forbidden in the law of Moses, (only the use of all wine and strong drink is prohibited to the priests when they went in to minister, (Lev. x. 9.) and to the Nazarites, (Num. vi. 3.) and Christians are spiritual priests and gospel Nazarites) yet it is frequently condemned by the prophets, and many a woe denounced against it, as in the places before quoted. And in the New Testament, which is more immediately our rule, we have many express laws against it. Luke xxi. 34. *Take heed, lest your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness;* and again, (Rom. xii. 13.) *Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness;* and again, (Eph. v. 18.) *Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit;* and again, (1 Thess. v. 7, 8.) *They that be drunk, are drunk in the night, but let us who are of the day be sober.* Are these the commands of God or are they not? If they be,

are they to be quarrelled with, and jested with, or are they to be obeyed? Are they repealed or antiquated, or are they not still in as full force, power, and virtue as ever? Were these sacred laws enacted for the restraining and mortifying of our lusts, and can we think that they should be relaxed and dispensed with in favour of our lusts? No; as long as the carnal mind is enmity to the just and holy God, the holiness and justice of God will be enmity to the carnal mind.

You argue that drunkenness must needs be lawful, because it is grateful to the flesh, and you cannot think that God should be so hard upon you, as to bind you out from that which you have so strong an appetite to; as if God were altogether such a one as yourselves, and as much a friend to the ease and pleasure of the body as you are: thus the sensual lives of Epicures are justified, by the atheistical doctrine of Epicurus. But stay awhile and you shall see this refuge of lies swept away, and shall know whose word shall stand, God's or yours, (Jer. xlv. 28.) *Fools make a mock at sin*; but be not deceived, *God is not mocked*. How light soever you now make of the divine law, and the injunctions of it, you will find to your cost, that if it shall not command you, it will condemn you; if it shall not rule you, it will ruin you; for God will magnify his law and make it honourable, though you vilify it and make it contemptible.

2. Is it no harm to disturb the exercise of your own reason, and to break in upon that? Reason is the crown and glory of the human nature, by the noble powers and faculties of which you are distinguished from, and dignified above, the inferior creatures: this is that which teaches you more than the beasts of the earth, and makes you wiser than the fowls of heaven. This is God's image upon the human soul; and is it no harm to deface that image? It is this spirit of a man, that is the candle of the Lord; and is it no harm to extinguish this candle, or at least for the present to put it into a dark lantern? The inspiration of the Almighty has given us understanding; and will you throw away that gift as not worth your keeping? Is it no harm thus to profane your crown by casting it to the ground, and to undervalue the honour God has put upon you, by putting yourselves upon a level with the beasts?

If, indeed, you have but little value for the sacred ties and honours of religion; yet, is reason become of so small account with you, that you can tamely resign that too, and prostitute it to the tyranny and arbitrary government of a brutish appetite? Hast thou no concern, no jealousy, for the liberty and property of thy own soul; but shall it be contentedly, and without any struggle or regret, sacrificed to a base and imperious lust? Wilt thou sell such a birthright, as that which has so many privileges annexed to it, like profane Esau, for a mess of pot-

tage? Is thy own soul, that precious soul of thine, which is capable of such noble services and enjoyments, so little worth in thy esteem, that thou art so easily persuaded to put thyself out of the possession of it?

By excess of drink the understanding is clouded, that sun in the little world is for the time eclipsed; it has no government of the thoughts, they are all in confusion, and a perfect tumult; no command of the passions, they are in an uproar, and are carried headlong; no command of the tongue, it utters perverse things, (Prov. xxiii. 33.) and the whole soul is for the present incapacitated to perform its offices, *all its foundations are out of course*. This is thy case (man) when thou art drunk; thy wisdom is departed from thee, and folly ascends the throne in thy soul; and is there no harm in this? If a man wound, or maim, or lame his body, or any way disable it for its services, he is justly accounted either a mad man, or a bad man; and is he neither the one nor the other, who does worse than this to his own soul, his nobler and better part? Is not he the worst of robbers, who deprives himself of the use of his reason, and says to that seer, "See not;" who puts out his own eyes, that, Samson-like, he may grind in Satan's prison. Consider (man) *if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* We pity those who are either born idiots, or become mad by disease; yet drunkards, who make themselves little better than idiots and mad, think all the world should envy them their liberty and pleasures: it is such a liberty as is the worst of slavery, such a pleasure as will be bitterness in the end.

Wicked men are often in Scripture compared to brute beasts, and particularly to swine, who wallow in the mire; (2 Pet. ii. 22.) but of all sinners none have more of the resemblance than drunkards have. They say of any other brute creature, that if once it has been intoxicated with any liquor, it will never be brought to drink of that liquor again; only the swine will again and again be drunk with the same liquor; and a thousand pities it is that ever the same should be said of a man, who has so much more to lose by being drunk, than a beast has, and is endowed with so much better powers for the correcting of the appetite than the beasts are. Man being in honour, understands not, abides not, but thus becomes like the beasts that perish. The Lord pity these poor sinners, and show them their folly, that they may pity themselves.

I confess I have often wondered that any, who think themselves in reputation for wisdom and honour, should yield themselves willing captives to this vice, which does so much degrade and diminish a man, and make him mean and despicable. If he that is drunk is in his own imagination as great as a king, yet he is, in the eyes of all wise and sober men, as contemptible as a brute, and in some re-

spects more so ; and his conceit of himself does but make him so much the more ridiculous.

A man may sweep the streets and rake the kennel, and yet have the honour of being a man, while his reason remains with him ; but he who voluntarily drinks himself out of his reason, has resigned his crown, and is so much more vile than a beast, that he becomes one by his own act, and still retains the shape and name of a man. It is an excellent distich of Mr. Herbert's, among other weighty sayings against this sin, in his Church-Porch ;

The drunkard forfeits man, and doth divest
All worldly right, save what he hath by beast.

For this reason the ancient Lacedæmonians, if any man happened to be drunk in their streets, (and they thought none but scoundrels would be so,) they brought their children out to look at him ; not to divert them and make them merry, but that seeing the foolish carriage, and hearing the foolish talk, of a drunken man, they might conceive a loathing of that detestable sin, and might be afraid of ever making such fools of themselves. And verily it is strange by what charms any rational man can be drawn to drunkenness, who has ever seen and observed the motions of a drunken man.

3. Is it no harm to abuse the gifts of God's bounty to you ? If God has created wine to refresh the spirits of men, and has allowed them the sober and moderate use of it, as far as is for their real good ; will you by using it intemperately, pervert the design of the donor, and make that the food and fuel of your lusts, which he gave for the support and comfort of your lives ? What is this but fighting against God with his own weapons ? It is alienating the inheritance of the Lord to his enemies, and suffering the strong man armed to divide his spoils ; it is a traitorous assigning over of the prince's grants to the rebels.

Surely (sinner) thou dost not know, at least thou dost not consider, that God by his providence gives wine and strong drink, and gives them thee : that he makes the earth to yield her increase, and gives thee thy share of it, a large share it may be : and shall this be sacrificed to Baal, to a dunghill god ? Doubtless they do so whose God is their belly, Hos. ii. 8. And is this of thy whoredoms a small matter ? that thou hast taken God's gifts, and used them to his dishonour, and hast made a calf of these spoils of the Egyptians, which ought in gratitude to have been consecrated to the service of the tabernacle ? Justly may God by some judgment or other recover his corn and his wine, for the property is not altered by thy alienation. It aggravated the barbarous idolatry of the bigoted and besotted Jews, in sacrificing their children to Moloch, that they were God's children whom they had born unto him, Ezek. xvi. 20. It likewise aggravates thy sin, that what God gave

thee to serve him with, thou servest the devil and a base lust with.

Know then that thou art but a steward of these things, and thou must very shortly give account of thy stewardship, when thou must be no longer steward. And if this be not wasting thy Lord's goods, I know not what is. Thy account, therefore, unless it be first balanced by repentance and faith, will be given up with grief and not with joy. Strong drink should be given to him who through emptiness is ready to perish, that so it may help to save a life ; not to him who is so full already, that he is ready to vomit, so to destroy a life. Wine should be given, not to them who are of a merry heart, who have more need of a curb to their mirth than a spur, but to them that are of a heavy heart, to revive their drooping spirits : thus Solomon's mother taught him, Prov. xxxi. 6. Those, therefore, who make that the support of corruption, which was intended for the refreshment of nature, pervert that which is right, and must be accountable for the injury : to what purpose is this waste ?

Know also that this abuse of the creatures, is that which makes the whole creation groan, being burthened because of its subjection to vanity, by this means, Rom. viii. 20—22. But when it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, Woe be to that man by whom the offence came. As the stone cries out of the wall, against him who builds his house by iniquity, (Hab. ii. 11.) so the corn and the wine cry against those who make them the instruments of unrighteousness to God's dishonour.

4. Is it no harm to endanger the health and life of your own bodies ? Let us reason with you from a topic that is very sensible, and try what impression that will make. The Lord is for the body, and he would have you to be for it too in a regular way ; but while you indulge its brutish appetites, you prejudice its true interest, and by advancing it to the power of a master, you really abuse it worse than a slave.

Consider then how many are the dangers you are imminently exposed to, when you are drunk, and incapable of self-preservation ; your souls are continually in your hands, but never more so than when the liquor is in your heads. That foolish proverb, which passes current, as an answer to this argument, that drunken people catch no harm, is convicted of falsehood by frequent instances to the contrary. How often do we hear of those to whom, being in drink, a fall down stairs, or off a house, or into a shallow water, has been fatal, and (which is a dreadful thought) has sent them drunk out of the world, under the black and heavy charge of being self-murderers ! And not only so, but has hastened them to the judgment immediately after death, without giving them time to cry, *Lord have mercy upon me !* So great a death do drunkards often die, a sudden death, a

violent death, a death in their sin, and a death to which they themselves are highly accessory. And shall this consideration sway nothing with you? Do the perils of the wars and the seas keep you upon dry ground, and in a land of peace, and shall not the perils of drunkenness prevail to keep you sober? Dare you put your lives in your hand for the service of sin, and at the same time put yourselves out of God's protection? To say you have often been drunk, and yet never got any hurt, and therefore you will venture still, is such a contempt of the patience and forbearance of God, as will certainly treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, except you repent.

But besides this danger which you run your own bodies into by this sin, consider further the real wrong and prejudice that is done to them by every act of drunkenness. It is a sin that does violence to nature, and overcharges the heart; drunkenness is a present sickness, a present distemper and disorder. You will own you take more than does you good, and when it is so much more, how can it choose but to do you hurt? And why must those bodies of yours, which are so fearfully and wonderfully made, which were made to be instruments of righteousness, and temples of the Holy Ghost, be thus basely abused? Why must those vessels, which should be possessed in sanctification and honour, be thus unsanctified and dishonoured? that curious structure made a sink and a swine-sty? Shall that which has been washed in the waters of baptism, and so dedicated to the service of the sanctuary, thus wallow in the mire of sin, and be alienated to the slavery of Satan? *Shall the shield of the mighty be thus vilely cast away and prostituted, as though it had not been anointed with oil?* 2 Sam. i. 21.

Art thou not told what will be in the end hereof? If the sorrow of the world slays its thousands; this mirth of the world, running into these excesses, slays its ten thousands. And art thou so much in love with woe, (man,) so fond of sorrow, and redness of eyes, and wounds without cause, so well pleased with all the instances of a dying life and a lingering death, that thou wilt sell thy soul, and all thy happiness in the other world, to purchase all these miseries and calamities in this world?

You who drive a trade of drunkenness, if I thought you were capable of looking a little way before you, I would desire you to foresee, for without a spirit of prophecy it is easy to foretell, the threatening and fatal diseases, which by every debauch you are preparing matter for. Are there not a great many instances, and those melancholy ones, daily before your eyes, of persons who have drunk themselves into dropsies, consumptions, and other diseases, which have soon carried them off in the midst of their days, and have sent many a green and flourishing head, in the flower of youth, unpitied to the grave? And is the honour of being a martyr

to Bacchus, or at least a faithful confessor to his shrine, so valuable, so desirable, that you are willing to be at the expense of your all, to purchase it? Those are unwise, unthinking prodigals indeed, who can sell their health and strength so shamefully cheap; and they have indeed made their belly their god, their supreme god, who have prevailed with themselves, not only to let out their blood as the worshippers of Baal, or to burn their children, as the worshippers of Moloch, but voluntarily to sacrifice their own lives at its altar; and by resolutely persisting in these paths of death, even to bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of that altar. There needs no faith, nor is there much occasion to appeal to reason; sense itself, one would think, were enough to make this argument cogent: for surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.

I entreat you therefore, for the sake of your own bodies, which you pretend to be indulgent of, that you will break off this destructive course of life. Have you no regard to their ease, and health, and safety, and honour, and life? Will you disorder, and defile, and destroy your own selves, after we have so often cried unto you with a loud voice, as St. Paul to the jailer, when he had his sword at his own breast, *Do yourselves no harm?* Be not your own murderers. Why (man) there is death in the cup, there is poison in the glass, of which thou drinkest immoderately. Thou dost not think how fatal the consequences of thy drunken surfeits may prove; but I desire thee to consider this one thing, while thou canst not but have (if conscience be awake) a most uncomfortable prospect of another world, it is certain thou hast no reason to hasten thy departure out of this world.

5. Is it no harm to waste and mispend precious time? If we would but seriously consider for what great and excellent purposes time is appointed us and continued to us, we should reckon that an enemy to us which robs us of it, and alienates it from the intentions for which it was designed us. Nothing does this more than tippling; nor are there any who are worse husbands of their time than those who tarry long at the wine. Therefore when the apostle had minded us to *redeem the time*, (Eph. v. 16.) he presently adds, (v. 18.) *and be not drunk*.

Time is a talent that must shortly be accounted for; a price put into the hand to get wisdom; but what account will they give of it who spend, not only hours, but days and nights, in this folly? They sit sitting in the ale-house or tavern day after day, because they know not how otherwise to pass away their time. Pass away the time (man)! why, thou wouldst see thy time pass away fast enough, if thou wert but sensible what work thou hast to do, which is yet undone, and which, if it be never done, thou art undone for ever; and thou wouldst rather con-

trive how to recover the time that is past away, by a close and vigorous application to the great business of life, than how to lavish away the few remaining minutes, in that which is opposite and destructive to thy great and true interests.

Believe it (sirs) you have an eternal God to serve, an immortal soul to save, an everlasting state to provide for, and it is no time to trifle. So much of the stock of life, the quick stock, is spent, and so little of the work of life done, that you must not think of spare hours; you have none to spare for the service of sin, who have already lost so many that should have been spent in the service of God. Yet a little while is this light with you, and you know not what you do, while you waste it in the *works of darkness*.

Judge within yourselves; do not you think that the time which you spend in drinking and tippling, might be much better spent in reading the word of God, and meditating upon it, and in prayer and acts of devotion in their season? But you leave no room for these, or next to none; and one of the proper times for them, which is the evening of the day, is the time you ordinarily spend in this service of the flesh. Or if your untoward hearts would snuff at the religious exercises that are drawn out to any length, and say, *Behold what a weariness is it!* yet, might not you better spend your time in reading and profitable conversation with wise and sober people, for the cultivating and improving yourselves in useful knowledge? Have you not a calling to attend, a family to take care of, children to educate? And do not these press urgently for the time you idle away? Or if not these, might not your time be better spent in doing good to your neighbours, and serving your generation some way or other, according to the will of God? You might find work enough to do, if you had but a heart to it, which would be fruit abounding to your comfort in the day of reckoning; while the unprofitable talk, and idle words, spent over your cups, will come against you, when they must all be accounted for in the day of judgment.

Thou sayst, that they are but vain words, that it is better to spend thy time thus than spend it as many do, in doing mischief to their neighbours, and creating trouble and vexation to all about them; you thank God you do nobody any hurt: but others spending their time worse, will be far from justifying or excusing you in spending it ill, while there are so many ways of spending it well, and much better than you do: may you be allowed to bury your talents, because others waste theirs?

Let those therefore who tarry long at the wine, and sit at it, as they say, consider how in the mean time their souls are neglected, and become like the *field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding*; their families are neglected, and

they leave them as the ostrich leaves her eggs in the earth, forgetting that the foot may crush them; they are hardened against their young ones, as though they were not theirs, because they are deprived of wisdom, Job xxxix. 14, &c. The duties of their callings are neglected, and the duties of God's worship in their closets and families neglected too, and, in short, they live in the world to no good purpose at all; the good which they should do, they do it not; the business they were made for, they mind it not; the time that should be spent in serving God and doing good, is thrown away upon the flesh and the lust thereof.

Think how bitter the reflection upon this will be when you come to die, if your consciences be not seared: then you will wish you had those hours again which you wasted in unprofitable talk, and, perhaps, will cry in vain (as one did) "Call back time, call back time." A thousand worlds for an inch of time, to be spent in making your peace with God, and sure work for your souls. What would damned sinners in hell give for a few of those minutes in a state of probation, which you are now so lavish of. You may now, if you be wise, redeem time, but you cannot then recall it.

6. Is it no harm to misemploy your estates, and the gain of your callings, and to take the most effectual course to bring yourselves and yours to want and beggary? Perhaps you have much to spend, and can gratify this sensual appetite, without doing any considerable damage to your estate; but then will you consider that your estates are not your own, to be spent as you please; no, you are but stewards of them, and are accountable to God for them. If you thus waste them, you waste your Lord's goods, and pervert the design of giving them to you; your families, which you ought to provide for, according to your rank, are robbed; the poor are defrauded, for the more you spend upon your own lusts, the less you have to give for the supply of their wants; the commonwealth is injured, for that which should be expended for the encouragement of honest labour, which would enrich the nation, is wasted in the support of idleness and luxury, which impoverish the nation.

But there are many that have but little to spend, and that little shall be spent in the ale-house, so that at last they spend their all there. Solomon's observation is confirmed by daily experience, that *he that loves pleasure shall be a poor man*, (Prov. xxi. 17.) and that *the drunkard shall come to poverty*, Prov. xxiii. 21. Have we not seen many a fair patrimony sacrificed to this brutish lust? Many a portion we have known spent, many a house and field sold, and many a good estate mortgaged and made away, to maintain an idle drunken sot in his excess of riot. Many a gentleman we have heard of, and many a farmer, and many a tradesman, who

have been reduced to rags and beggary, brought to a morsel of bread, and perhaps lodged at last in a prison, and it was drunkenness that brought them to it. *One sinner destroys much good*, Eccl. ix. 18. And is there no harm in all this? no sin? no shame?

How amazing is the power which the god of this world has over the children of disobedience! The Lord that bought them, cannot persuade them to expose themselves to a little loss, hardship, and reproach, in his service, though they shall be abundantly recompensed for it another day. But Satan, their sworn enemy, can prevail with them for the serving of him and of his lusts, to ruin themselves in both worlds; so wretchedly are they led captive by him at his will.

But think how very dismal and insupportable those calamities will be, which you thus bring upon yourselves, by your own sin and folly. The devil's poor are the most miserable, and yet the least commiserated of any poor whatsoever. What wilt thou have to comfort thyself with, when thou art brought into straits by thy own wickedness? what wilt thou do in such a day of visitation? when the remembrance of what thou hast mispent, will grate upon thee? when thy lusts will continue craving, and thou wilt not have that plenty of fuel for them which thou hast had? but especially when divine consolations, the only support of an afflicted state, shall be denied thee? *Awake ye drunkards, and weep and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth*, Joel i. 5.

7. Is it no harm to unfit yourselves for the duties of God's worship, and to put yourselves out of a capacity to perform them? Dare you go to bed at night without solemn prayer? Dare you sleep from under God's protection? and can you see yourselves under that protection, if you do not by prayer commit yourselves to it? Can you expect the mercies of the night, when you have not penitently asked pardon for the sins of the day, nor given God thanks for the favours you have received? and can this be done, when your hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and you scarcely know where you are, or what you say? Dare you venture to speak to God, when you are not able to speak sense to a man like yourselves?

When the evening has been spent in the ale-house or tavern, and in immoderate drinking there, the evening worship, not only in the family, but in secret, will be either wholly omitted, or miserably performed, so that it were better let alone. Either there will be no evening sacrifice at all, or (which is worse) it will be the sacrifice of fools, the torn, and the lame, and the sick, and an affront to God rather than a service of him. Pretend not to address your God, when you are in such a condition, that it would be rudeness to address your governor.

8. Is it no harm to lay yourselves open to Satan's temptations, and to make yourselves an easy prey to them? By this sin you expose yourselves to many other sins, and disable yourselves to discern or resist the most dangerous assaults of Satan. Is mocking a sin? Is rage a sin? Behold, *wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging*, Prov. xx. 1. The drunkard's bench is commonly the seat of the scornful; and David was the song of the drunkards. Is strife and contention a sin? Are wounds given without cause a sin? these are the practices of them who tarry long at the wine, Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. Drunken frays, and those sometimes ending in barbarous murders, are the common products of that, which, yet, will be called good fellowship. When reason is sunk and drowned, rage and passion will ride admiral; and when men have drunk themselves out of the possession of their own souls, no wonder if the devil (who is too watchful an enemy to lose any advantages against us) soon get possession of them, and oftentimes cast them into the fire and into the water. Are chambering and wantonness sins? These are the companions of rioting and drunkenness, Rom. xiii. 13.

What mischief may not that man do, who neither knows nor cares what he does, neither fears God nor regards man, nor has any conduct or government of himself? Yet this inability will be no excuse for the sin that you are thus betrayed into, because it is a self-created inability. Be not deceived; a man's offence will never be his defence, nor will one sin serve for a cloak to another. He who sins when he is drunk, must repent when he is sober or do worse.

You who think that it is but a little sin to be drunk, yet, dread it because it may be the inlet of great sins. I knew one who was effectually reclaimed from this sin of drunkenness, by being once in danger of killing a man when he was drunk, the horror of which, when he came to himself, made such an impression upon him, as proved a happy occasion of his conversion: I wish others would in like manner consider it and be wise.

9. Is it no harm to make yourselves obnoxious to God's wrath and curse in the other world? You have fair warning given you, and are cautioned to take heed of deceiving yourselves with a fancy to the contrary, *drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. If God be true they shall not, for so it is written, (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.) and thy case is miserable, when it is come to this dilemma, that either God must be false, or thou must be damned. If heaven be not thy portion, hell will, unless thou repent and reform in time.

Assure yourselves (sinners) heaven is no place for beasts and self-made fools. Has God need of madmen? The word of God has said it, and all the world cannot unsay it; *If ye live after the flesh ye shall die*, die eternally, (Rom. viii. 13.) *thine end*

is destruction if thy god be thy belly, Phil. iii. 19. Nothing that defiles shall enter into the New Jerusalem; no, hell is the proper receptacle of unclean spirits.

When you are serious, (if ever you can persuade yourselves to be so,) heaven and hell will not be looked upon as jesting matters; for a few years certainly will, nay, a few hours possibly may, demonstrate the reality of those invisible things, which now you make so light of: *Behold the Judge standeth before the door.*

Now lay all this together, and then tell me whether drunkenness be indeed an innocent diversion, a harmless entertainment, or at worst but a venial sin, which will be pardoned of course though it be still persisted in? No, I hope by this time the thing appears to you in other colours, and you will grant that those, who make a mock at this sin, are like the madman, who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and yet says, "Am not I in sport?"

II. We are in the next place to apply ourselves to those who are convinced in some measure, that their drunkenness is their sin, and a dangerous one, at least their own consciences sometimes tell them so; but they know not how to leave it off, it is become so habitual to them that they are perfectly captivated and overcome by it.

Is this thy case, sinner? Wouldst thou then be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God? God in his infinite mercy deliver thee! And O that I could say something to pluck thee as a brand out of this burning! This paper comes to call upon thee to repent, and amend thy ways and doings, which, certainly, are not right. But who can call loud enough to awaken drunkards? Their sin takes away their heart, it blinds their understandings, perverts their judgments, and bribes their consciences, so that they cannot weigh things in an even balance; *they drink and forget the law*, Prov. xxxi. 5. Strike them and they are not sick, beat them and they feel it not, Prov. xxiii. 35. And is it possible to convince and reclaim such? We cannot do it; but if God himself will take the work into his own hands, and by his grace do wonderfully, who knows what good may be effected? To him, therefore, we commit the success of this endeavour, and will try to put you into the right method of cure.

If then you be willing to be cleansed from this pollution, you will thankfully take the following directions, not as the commands of a taskmaster, who would insult over you, but as the prescriptions of a faithful physician, who consults your good.

1. Indulge not an excuse for this sin. There is no sin so sinful, so shameful, but the wicked wit of sinners has found out some fig-leaves or other to cover it with; and if you are fond of the fig-leaves, it is a sign that you are in love with the sin, and it

is your own iniquity. While the word of God says so much to aggravate it, you confront that, and put a cheat upon your own souls, if you are industrious to extenuate it.

Custom will not excuse you in it; neither your own custom, nor the custom of the place you live in; there can be no prescription pleaded for a thing in itself evil. If this has been thy way and thy manner from thy youth up, thou hast the more reason to be humbled and ashamed; but know, that a sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. To say, "I have long used myself to this course of life, and therefore I must be excused, if I go on in it;" is to say in effect, "I have long been walking in the way that leads to hell, and therefore I will go on to the end of it." The longer you have persisted in this sin, the more reason there is why the time past of your life should suffice that you have thus wrought the will of the Gentiles, walking in excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. Custom is sin (I know) is a great bar to conversion, and renders it extremely difficult; but it is such a bar as must be broken, or you are undone.

Nor will it excuse you that you are drawn in by your wicked companions: it is your fault to choose such for your companions, who have fellowship with sin, and those for your friends, who are enemies to your souls. But how bad soever your companions are, you are then tempted, when you are *drawn aside of your own lust and enticed*, Jam. i. 14. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it; and thy partners in sin shall be thy partners in ruin; *Bind them in bundles to burn them.*

Your calling will not excuse you, whatever it is; That is not a calling for a Christian, which will not be followed without sin, or unavoidable and invincible temptation; and, therefore, if thou canst not otherwise leave thy sin, leave thy calling, and choose another more safe and innocent: it cannot be dearer to thee than a right eye or a right hand, which must be plucked out and cut off, if it become sin to thee. But are there not some of the same calling who preserve their sobriety, and will be witnesses against thee? If thy calling be laborious, and require more refreshment and diversion than others, wilt thou, therefore, disfit thyself for it by overcharging thy heart?

Never go about to palliate this sin; say not, it is but being a little merry, it is but being somewhat too free in keeping company, it hurts nobody, and therefore what needs so much ado about it? This is agreeing with your corruptions against your convictions, and taking part with the house of Saul against the house of David. But by thus diminishing our sins we deceive ourselves; for God will not stand to our definitions and distinctions: we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth.

2. Persuade yourselves to consider. If you would

but be subject to the great and fundamental law of consideration, I cannot think that you would ever rebel against the royal law of temperance and sobriety, which effectually secure both the prerogative of the prince in thy soul, that is, thy reason, and the liberty of the subject, that is, thy inferior faculties.

Consider what thou art; a rational creature, do not dethrone thy reason; a noble creature, do not stain thy honour. Thou art an embodied spirit; let not the interests of the spirit, by which thou art akin to the upper world, be crushed and ruined by the tyranny of the body, which is of the earth earthy.

Consider who made thee. The eternal God gave thee that noble and excellent being, and did he give it thee to be thus abused? Is this to answer the ends of thy creation, and to do that which thou camest into the world for? Is this to serve and honour thy Creator, who made thee for himself, to show forth his praise? Thou canst not think it is.

Consider whom thou servest by this sensual course of life thou livest. The devil is the master thou obeyest; he it is who puts the cup of drunkenness into thy hand, and bids thee drink it, and laughs at thee when thou art overcome by it; and wilt thou please the devil thy worst enemy, rather than God the best friend?

Consider that thou art a Christian, a baptized Christian; and by these evil practices of thine, thou reproachest that worthy name by which thou art called, and forfeitest all the honours and privileges of thy Christianity. What? A Christian, and yet a tippler! a sot! Called a brother, and yet a drunkard! 1 Cor. v. 11. What an absurdity is this! Dost thou partake of the *cup of the Lord*, and yet partake of the *cup of devils*? Canst thou think to compound light and darkness, or to maintain a fellowship both with Christ and Belial? It cannot be; if thou treat thy Christianity thus disdainfully, thou dost in effect renounce it, and shalt be for ever abandoned by it. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is not for kings to drink wine*, Prov. xxxi. 4. So it is not for Christians: it is not for the professors of that holy religion, to make themselves slaves to a base lust; it is not for them who have tasted the wine of God's consolations, and hope to drink it new in the kingdom of the Father, to put their mouths out of taste to it, by the sordid pleasures of drunkenness.

Consider how near death and eternity are, how uncertain the time of thy continuance here below is, and how certain thy removal very shortly to an unchangeable world is; and what if death should surprise thee the next time that thou art drunk, as it did Amnon when his heart was merry with wine? Darest thou go to judgment in such a condition? *Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, when the righteous God shall come to deal with thee?* Thou sayest, *Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be*

merry; but what if God should say to thee, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*, Luke xii. 19, 20.

Couldst thou but see with an eye of faith, as Belshazzar did with an eye of sense, in the midst of his drunken frolics, the handwriting upon the wall determining thy fatal doom, surely it would frighten thee from this vitious course, and make thee pretend pleasures of it sapless and insipid to thee. And believe it, those mystical characters upon Belshazzar's wall are more applicable to thee than thou art aware, (Dan. v. 25.) *Mene, Tekel, Peres*, may be rendered *death, judgment, hell*. The two first are very easy, *Mene, numbered*, for thy days upon earth will very shortly be *numbered, and finished*; *Tekel, weighed*, after death we must be weighed in the balance of God's judgment, and drunkards, I am sure, will be found too light. And the third is not much forced, *Peres, divided*, for damned sinners are cut asunder, (Matt. xxiv. 51.) their kingdom is for ever separated from them; and if there be an allusion to the Persians, they are to be looked upon as the executioners of the doom, and hell is the execution of the sentence of the great day: angels both good and bad employed as executioners. Now consider this, ye that forget God.

3. Humble yourselves greatly before God for your former excesses. While after a debauch or drunken fit, which your consciences reproach you for the sin and folly of, you can make all whole again, with a cold, *Lord have mercy upon me*, and can forgive yourselves, before you have any good reason to think that God has forgiven you, no wonder if you easily return to the sin again; and, therefore, deep sorrow is made necessary in repentance, as a means to im-bitter the sin, and so to prevent a relapse.

Be convinced of the evil of this sin, apply it to your own guilt, and charge it home upon your conscience, in the heinous nature of it, and all its aggravating circumstances, which make it exceeding sinful; be pricked to the heart at the remembrance of it, and say, *So foolish have I been and ignorant, yea, I have been as a beast, and worse, before thee*, Ps. lxxiii. 22. *Surely I am more brutish than any man*, Prov. xxx. 2. What a fool have I been, to hazard the life of my soul, for the gratifying of the lusts of my flesh! And for the pleasing of a brutish appetite, to unchristian and unman myself, and so to pawn and forfeit all I have, and all I hope for, that is valuable and honourable! For these things I have reason to weep, and let my eye, my eye run down with tears day and night. As a sword in my bones is the remembrance of my folly herein, and the just reproaches of a guilty wounded conscience: if God be not merciful to me in Christ, I am undone for ever, this iniquity will be my ruin.

They who have conceived such a horror as this of the sin, and of the fatal consequences of it, and

have felt the pain and smart of it in their souls, will not be easily decoyed into it again. *The burnt child dreads the fire.*

4. Pray earnestly to God for his grace. The divine power can cure the most obstinate and inveterate disease, and can conquer and change the most depraved and vitious habits. You find by sad experience that you cannot keep nor govern yourselves; commit yourselves therefore, by prayer, to the protection and government of that grace, which alone is sufficient for you.

Pray for grace to enable you to discern, resist, and vanquish all temptations to this sin, that you may never be surprised into it by the suddenness of the temptation, nor overcome by the strength of it. You pray every day that you may not be led into temptation, but delivered from evil. If this be the sin that most easily besets you, level your prayers against it particularly, "Lord, lead me not into this temptation, but deliver me from this evil."

Pray for grace likewise, effectual grace, to mortify and subdue all inward inclinations to this sin, and to work in you a holy aversion and antipathy to it; pray that the axe may be laid to the root of bitterness, and that, not only these polluted streams may be closed up, but the corrupt fountain dried up. Nothing is too hard for the grace of God to do, nor shall that grace be denied to those who in sincerity seek it, with a resolution to submit to it.

5. Take up a firm and steadfast resolution, in the strength of divine grace, against this sin, and all appearances of it, and approaches to it. Will you be persuaded to resolve this day, that you will never be drunk again, never sit to drink unseasonably, nor ever drink immoderately; that you will never by drinking distemper your bodies, or disturb your minds, or unfit yourselves for the service of God; that you will never keep improper hours, nor be in the ale-house or tavern when you should be about business, or worshipping God with your families; and that you will never suffer your free conversation with your friends, to indispose you for, or divert you from, your communion with your God.

Be peremptory and at a point in these resolutions; and let not a secret inclination, either to the drink, or to the company, make your resolutions weak or wavering; but as the people said in general with an air of resolution, *Nay, but we will serve the Lord*, Josh. xxiv. 21. so do you say in particular, "Nay, but I will be sober;" I am resolved by the grace of God I will. Do not resolve, as you say children do, that you will never be drunk again till the next time; *Be not deceived, God will not be mocked.*

You would take up an invincible resolution, grounded upon an antipathy against the cup, if you knew there were poison in it; and would drink with a great deal of caution, if you were sure that you should be hanged if you were drunk; and will you

not be as solicitous not to exceed, when you are told that the drunkard's feet go down to death, eternal death, and his steps take hold on hell.

Let your resolution be very solemn, and contrive all the ways you can to make it strong and binding, and to remind conscience of it, that these bonds may never be broken asunder, nor these cords cast from you. And it will be your wisdom to renew this resolution, with a fresh dependence on divine grace, when you see yourselves entering into any particular temptation.

6. Industriously avoid the place and company that insnare you. If you would have no fellowship with the sin, you must have no unnecessary fellowship with those who practise it, but keep at a distance from them, that you may keep out of harm's way. Enter not into the path of the wicked, lest you be drawn to walk in that path; *avoid it therefore, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away*, Prov. iv. 14, 15.

You may think the company good innocent company, pleasant, and diverting, and obliging to you; but be it what it will, it is no company for you if you cannot keep sober in it. Think not that your easiness, and good nature, and complaisance to your friends, will excuse your continuing in that society, which you find ordinarily draws you to sin; or that your engagement to the company can weaken your obligations to your God. Art thou linked with a drunken club, know *that thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, and do this now, my son, deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter*, Prov. vi. 2, 3, 5.

Go to thy companions, and tell them thou findest it impossible to preserve thy virtue in their company, and that therefore thou art resolved to take leave of them. Tell them that thou canst not look upon those as thy friends who entice thee to sin, and that thou wouldst rather lose their society and good will, than lose thy God and thy soul. Be deaf to their allurements, and be above their reproaches; say as David, (Ps. cxix. 115.) *Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God*, and I cannot keep in with you and keep in with God too.

7. Look not upon the wine when it is red. This is a scripture caution, Prov. xxiii. 31. Take heed of the beginnings of this sin, and do not entertain a pleasant thought of it. Crush the first risings of the irregular appetite toward wine and strong drink, and when you find you begin to love them, then try whether you have learned the first lesson in the school of Christ, which is, to deny yourselves.

Watch against all advances toward this sin, let the experience you have had of your own weakness make you very cautious and jealous over yourselves. Be afraid of every thing that borders upon drunkenness, and leads toward it insensibly. He that will

always venture as far as he may, will sometimes ere he is aware be drawn further.

When the wine gives its colour in the cup, and moves itself aright, be blind and deaf to all its smiles and charms, remembering what follows there; *but at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?*

8. Abhor all those drunken ceremonies, which force this cursed trade; such as drinking healths by measure; with an obligation upon the company to keep the round in pledging them. What a brutish senseless thing is it for men to offer violence to nature, and covet to make beasts, not only of themselves but of one another; what pleasure, what profit, what honour can there be in this? Surely nothing but sin for sin's sake.

The law of the Persians will shame and condemn the practice of many who are called Christians; for in the court of a prince, an arbitrary prince, yet the *drinking was according to the law, none did compel, for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house*, Esth. i. 8. Let all who wish well to sobriety do what they can, in their places, to put these arts of propagating vice out of countenance, and to run them down.

If you find you cannot govern yourselves, engage some friend or relation to govern you. If, after the most vigorous resistances and resolutions you have made, you still find yourselves baffled and foiled, think it not a disparagement to you to call in help, and pray the aid of your neighbours. You would do so if your house were on fire, and will you not do so when your souls are so?

Fix upon some discreet and serious friends; some such you may find, who heartily wish well to the prosperity of your souls, and would gladly contribute their best assistance to it. Beg of them to watch over you, to have an eye to you, and to warn you when you are entering into this temptation. Desire them, when there is occasion, to limit your drinking, and to control your expenses, and put it in their power to do so. Entreat them to fetch you from your drunken companions, though it be to your shame, rather than leave you with them, which will be to your ruin. When you are in your right mind, bespeak those about you, that they give you no more drink than they see does you good, though you call for it; and assure them, that though they may have your drunken reproach, yet, they shall have your sober thanks, for so doing; and when you come to yourselves make your words good.

Say not that it is below you thus to put yourselves under government, as if you were infants or idiots; for to be drunk is much more below you, and thereby you render yourselves more mean than either infants or idiots.

Lastly, See that there be a living principle of true

grace in your hearts, and that will effectually fortify you against all temptations to this sin. Let but wisdom, heavenly wisdom, enter into thy heart. Let it have the innermost and uppermost place there, and it will keep thee from this way of the evil man, Prov. ii. 10, 12. The law of God in Christ written in the heart, and the love of God in Christ shed abroad there, would arm you against this temptation, and quench all his fiery darts.

When the apostle had cautioned us not to walk in rioting and drunkenness, (Rom. xiii. 13.) to make that caution effectual, he adds, *But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*, v. 14. Submit to the grace of Christ, conform to the law of Christ, follow the example of Christ, and thus make good your baptismal covenant, by which you did in profession put on Christ, and then you will be well principled and well guarded against all these temptations. Study the cross of Christ, the riches of his love, and the design of his gospel, and then surely, being called by his name, you will not dare so directly to contradict the designs of his gospel, nor sound gratefully to spurn at the bowels of his love, and spit in the face of it.

And in another place we find, when the apostle had warned us not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, he immediately subjoins, *But be filled with the Spirit*, (Eph. v. 18.) plainly intimating, that the best defence against drunkenness, is to lay our souls under the sanctifying operations of the blessed Spirit of grace, and to fill ourselves with spiritual things. This is the sovereign remedy for the cure of this disease, and the most powerful antidote for the prevention of it, (Gal. v. 16.) *Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*. An experimental taste of the spiritual pleasures of serious godliness, and a believing foretaste of the eternal pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore, would enable us to look upon all sensual pleasures and delights with a holy loathing and disdain.

And now (sinners) is the point yet gained, or is it not? What issue have we brought it to at last? What shall be the result of this debate, and what the conclusion of the whole matter?

Are there any of these sinners in Sion, who through grace are now at length become willing that religion and reason should reform them and rule them? Are there any who now, at least in this their day, will begin to understand the things that belong to their peace, and to be wise for themselves? Are there any who are weary of the toil and shame of an intemperate life, and are resolved to try the true and noble delights of a sober religious conversation? *The Lord keep it always in the imagination of the thought of the heart, and establish their way before him*.

But to those who, after all, hate to be reformed, I must conclude with this word, and God by his grace

make it an awakening word ! If all the fair warnings given you shall still be slighted, if you will set at nought all our counsel, and will none of our reproof, but say you shall have peace, though you go on to add drunkenness to thirst, know this, that when the cup of the Lord's wrath poured out without mixture shall be put into your hands, and shall be to you a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, this will greatly aggravate your condemnation, that your blood will be upon your own heads, your watchmen, by giving you warning, having delivered their souls.

A WORD OF ADVICE

TO THE

WANTON AND UNCLEAN.

Of all gross sinners, none lie more hid from the eye of the world, and yet none more open to their own consciences, than those we are now dealing with, and endeavouring the reformation of. For though the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, and he is very solicitous to draw a veil over his lewdness, yet the works of the flesh are manifest, that is, manifestly bad, and such as the sinner's own heart cannot but disallow : though they are works of darkness, yet they cannot avoid the discovery of that light, that *candle of the Lord*.

The apostle tells us, that the works of the flesh which are thus manifest, are these ; *Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness*, (Gal. v. 19.) in short, all seventh-commandment sins, which are not to be named among Christians but with the greatest abhorrence and detestation. Nor are they to be treated of, but with purity and caution, and a strict and careful watch over our own hearts, lest sin should take occasion by the commandment : they are as thorns, which cannot be taken with hands ; but the man who shall touch them, in order to the removal of them, must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear, 2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7.

And it were to be wished that there were no need to name them, no need to discourse of them ; it is a kennel which one cannot take any delight to rake in ; but while this iniquity abounds, as it does in all places, while so much of it comes to light, and we have reason to fear there is much more that lies concealed, it must be named ; Jerusalem must be made to know her abomination, and the filthiness that is in her skirts (as the prophet speaks) must be witnessed against, as one of the crying sins of the land, and one of the damning sins of sinners.

The prophet Ezekiel little thought, till God showed him in a vision, the great abominations which the

house of Israel committed, (Ezek. viii. 6.) and afterwards he showed him greater, and yet greater abominations, v. 13, 15. I wish it were not so as to this abomination in our own land, which the day will declare, when God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. We desire not to know these depths of Satan ; we are willingly ignorant of them ; but we earnestly desire that those who are fallen into those depths, and are sinking to the lowest hell, may by the grace of God be effectually recovered, that their everlasting ruin may be prevented in time.

To you then who call yourselves the sons and daughters of pleasure, but whom the word of God calls *children of disobedience*, and *children of wrath*, who live in the fire of lust, and wallow in the filth of whoredom and fornication, even to you is the word of this exhortation sent in God's name, with a kind and sincere design, if possible, to lift you up out of this mire, and to snatch you as brands out of the burning. Assure yourselves nothing is intended but your good. This paper comes not to inform against you, or to expose you to shame or punishment ; but to persuade you to turn from your evil way, that you may live and not die, that you may have everlasting life, and may not be hurt by the second death.

And O that I could now choose out proper words wherewith to reason with you ; and that words of truth might, by the grace of God, be made words of power ! I draw the bow at a venture, not having an eye to any particular person, but God can direct the arrow between the joints of the harness, so that it may pierce the heart of the sinner to his humiliation, and the heart of the sin to its mortification, for the word of God is quick and powerful. God by his Spirit make this word so !

Let me tell you then, who are the sinners to whom this discourse is now addressed,

1. You that make a constant practice of this sin, and give yourselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness, must be put in the front of this black regiment of unclean spirits, which we are now charging, in the name of the Captain of our salvation, who came into the world to conquer and cast out unclean spirits.

If this paper should ever come into the guilty and polluted hands of any of those wretched creatures who have abandoned themselves to a life of whoredoms, who are the devil's sworn slaves and votaries, and who, as factors for hell, and avowed enemies to God and virtue, drive a trade of debauching others and making themselves vile ; those, I mean, who keep houses of uncleanness, those nests of wickedness, or who live in those houses, or who frequent them, or acquaint themselves with them : let such know and consider, that Sodom's doom will infallibly be the lot of all those who thus tread

in Sodom's steps, unless they speedily repent and reform: *Fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup.*

That is a miserable calling which lust only lives by, and which soul and body will certainly be ruined by. That is a miserable service wherein the devil is the master, sin's drudgery is the work, and hell-fire the wages, *for the end of those things is death.* Such houses, and their inhabitants and maintainers, are the scandal of a Christian nation, the pests of the towns and countries where they are, the slaughter-houses of precious souls, the rendezvous of the vilest of creatures; and more frightful habitations of devils, holds of foul spirits, and cages of unclean and hateful birds, than Babylon the great will be when it is fallen, Rev. xviii. 2. Solomon tells us, that such houses are the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death, Prov. vii. 27.

And therefore, as it is the duty of those who have power over them, vigorously to suppress such houses, in which the strong man armed keeps his palace; and the duty of those who have power in them, to alter the property of them, and to put away iniquity, this abominable iniquity, far from their tabernacles; so it is the wisdom of every one, with the greatest dread, caution, and resolution imaginable, to avoid such houses, to shun them as they would a house infected with the plague, and not to come nigh the door of them, or enter into any familiarity with them, upon any colour or pretence whatsoever. It is Solomon's advice, (Prov. v. 8.) *Remove thy way far from her*; he having observed that that unwary young man, who was drawn into the ruining snares of the adulteress, was caught passing through the street near her corner, at an unseasonable time, Prov. vii. 8, 9.

Under this head we must also rank those who, though they do not thus declare their sin as Sodom, yet by their cursed arts of deceiving under the disguise of love and honour, diversion and entertainment, keep up and carry on a more secret, less suspected, trade of debauchery and uncleanness; who (as they are described by the apostle, 2 Pet. ii. 14.) *have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, from this sin, beguiling unstable souls by their wiles, and decoying them gradually, and by steps which seem harmless, into the fatal snare.* These are they who are continually projecting and making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it, out of the road of common prostitutes, and among those who have yet preserved some degrees of innocence and reputation; and the wickedness of these is so much greater than the former, as the methods they take, and the snares they lay, by plays, dances, and other recreations, have a more fatal tendency to the corruption of those, "who" (as one of the proclamations against vice and immorality expresses it) "have been soberly educated, and whose incli-

nations would lead them to the exercise of virtue and piety, did they not daily find such frequent and repeated instances of dissolute living." Let such know, that the sin is never the less sinful for its being carried on with wit and intrigue, and all the plot and management that the playhouse instructs them in; but it is rather so much the worse, as it speaks the more design and deliberation in the tempters, and the more danger to the tempted. The more there is of subtilty in any wickedness, the more there is of Satan in it.

Nor is their guilt and danger much less, who, though they traverse not the ranges of an unbounded lust, yet keep up a cursed league with some one particular person, with whom they live in adultery or fornication, directly contrary to the law of God, or in contempt of his ordinance, and yet flattering themselves with a fancy, that this is of their abominations a small matter. And is it indeed a small matter, for the gratifying of a base lust to live in disobedience to the divine precept, and in defiance of the divine wrath and threatenings? This is a covenant with death which must be broken, and an agreement with hell which must be disannulled, or it will certainly bind over to that judgment which whoremongers and adulterers must expect.

2. You who at any time yield to this temptation, and in any instance suffer yourselves to be overcome by it, must next look upon yourselves as concerned in this call to repentance. I speak to those, who, though they are not arrived to that height of wickedness, nor have so far scared their consciences, as to make a common practice of this wickedness, yet have such favourable thoughts of this sin, and these sinners, as to be drawn into their snare without any great resistance or reluctance, thinking it, though a sin, yet a very excusable one, and which they can easily pardon both to themselves and others. When a fair opportunity offers itself, that they can admit the sin, and yet avoid the shame, they can promise themselves to pass off the guilt with a "Lord, have mercy upon me," or, "God forgive me," and a little regret, when the pleasure is over, they think will atone for the crime, and all will be well.

Such as these have need to be told, that every particular act of this sin is exceeding sinful, that it is highly provoking to God Almighty, contrary to, and destructive of, the spiritual and divine life in the soul, and that it puts the eternal happiness very much to a present doubt and a future hazard. You flatter yourselves that you will commit it but once, and will repent of that. But how can you be sure that it will be truly repented of, when it is but peradventure whether God will give you repentance to recover yourselves out of this snare? The grace of repentance is promised to those who sincerely pray for it, but it is forfeited by those who boldly presume upon it, and venture to sin in expectation of it: and

how can you be sure that you will not relapse into the same sin another time, when, by yielding to one temptation you strengthen the next, give the devil hold of you, and provoke the Holy Spirit to withdraw from you? What Solomon says of strife is true of this sin, *The beginning of it is like the letting forth of water*; therefore it is wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with, that is, never to begin it.

3. You who perhaps keep yourselves from the gross acts of adultery and fornication, but allow yourselves in other instances of lewdness and lasciviousness, must be numbered among those to whom this word of advice and warning is sent. You bless yourselves in your own way, and thank God, with the Pharisee, that you are not adulterers, when at the same time unclean lusts reign in your hearts, are indulged and harboured, lodged and welcomed there. Have you never read of committing adultery in the heart? And is not that heart chargeable therewith which burns continually in an inordinate affection and evil concupiscence? Are not those heart-adulterers who give up themselves to vile affections, and make filthy thoughts and imaginations, unchaste reflections and desires, the constant entertainments and disports of a lewd and vicious fancy.

Those are to be reckoned among the wanton and unclean, out of whose mouth filthy communication daily comes, produced by the unclean lusts that reign in their own hearts, and designed to provoke the like in the hearts of others; whose stinking breath plainly manifests that their inwards, their very vitals, are corrupted. No subject is so grateful to them, so pleasing, as this, nor any discourse so agreeable as that which is offensive to chaste ears. These are unclean, their speech betrays them. No song, no story, no jest entertains them so as a lewd one does, nor can they laugh at any thing with so much pleasure as that which they ought to blush at. These plainly show that the unclean spirit is upon the throne in their souls; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Those also must be numbered with the unclean, whose wanton carriage, lascivious dalliances, are upon all occasions their delight, and the fuel that feeds the fire of lust in their hearts, (I should call it the fire of hell,) and keeps it burning.

Now these are the sinners we would endeavour to reform, and reduce into subjection to the sacred laws of chastity and modesty; and we should hope, by the grace of God, to do them some good, if they would but be persuaded to hear reason, and not desperately to resolve against a change of their way. When you are called (as you are at this time in God's name) to return and repent, I beseech you be willing to take it into your consideration, and do not say, as they did who hated to be reformed, (Jer. xviii. 12.) *There is no hope, no, for we will walk after our own devices.*

Admit a parley then; enter into a treaty, and let us see whether we cannot propose such inducements as shall overcome you, and prevail with you to surrender to the Lord Jesus (your Lord and ours) that heart which has long been garrisoned against him by the unclean spirit.

Shall I ask thee seriously, Wouldst thou not be helped? Wouldst thou not be healed? Wouldst thou not be made whole? Wouldst thou not be made clean? Wouldst thou not have this devil, this unclean devil, dispossessed, which oftentimes casts thee into the fire of sin, and often into the water of sorrow for it? Tell me, wouldst thou not exchange the filthy sordid pleasures of a carnal, sensual life, for the pure, rational, and divine pleasures of a spiritual, heavenly life?

If you be indeed in this good mind, will you be convinced of the great evil of this sin? And will you be put into a way to break off from it? These are the two things I shall endeavour in this address to you, and I am willing to hope the attempt shall not be altogether in vain; the Lord choose out words for me wherewith to reason with you!

I. I shall endeavour to convince you of the evil of this sin of uncleanness. Till the mistakes of the judgment are rectified, the errors of the life will never be reformed. Here, therefore, we must begin: and God by his grace begin here! The carnal mind suggests to you the pleasures of it, tells you that *stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant*, Prov. ix. 17. That this pleasure is present and certain, but that the hurt of it is future and doubtful: but that you may not be cheated into your own ruin by this fallacy, I shall not question but to make it out to you, that the hurt of it is not at all doubtful, but of unquestionable certainty, nor only future, but so much present, that, if you will weigh things in an even balance, you will find the evil of it to be infinitely greater than the good of it, and that therefore our exhortations to virtue should have your ears and hearts, and that your ears should be deaf, and your hearts shut, against all temptations to this vice.

This will appear, if you consider both the malignity and guilt there is in this sin, and the misery and wrath that follows after it. They who choose and wear the garment spotted with the flesh, must thus be saved with fear, and plucked with a shriek out of the very fire, Jude 23. If you have any dread either of sin or its punishment, you will acknowledge the evil of wantonness and uncleanness.

1. Consider the malignity and guilt there is in it. It is a sin, an exceeding sinful sin, one of those that are as scarlet and crimson, an abominable thing which the Lord hates.

There is no sin so heinous, so odious, but a resolved custom in it will do much towards the reconciling of the judgment to it, so that either it is

thought no sin at all, or but a little one, an excusable trick of youth : and thus, if it be not justified, yet it is palliated and excused, and a thousand arts used to shift off the conviction of it. And verily the case is bad, and extremely dangerous, when conscience, which should be of counsel for the government to detect and prosecute the sin, is so debauched and vitiated that it is retained on the other side, and becomes an advocate for the sin. *If this light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?* If the judgment be bribed, the judge is so, and the sentence will be accordingly.

Let me, therefore, beg of you to favour the case with an impartial trial ; be willing to hear what we have to say, upon the principles of revelation and right reason, to prove uncleanness to be a sin, and a very great sin. And if we prove in the general that it is a sin, we desire you will do us and yourselves the justice to acknowledge that your uncleanness, and the lasciviousness you allow yourselves in, is a sin, a daring and dangerous transgression of the divine law ; that it is so to be accounted now, and must so be accounted for shortly, whatever you have imagined to the contrary.

Let us then carefully consider the intrinsic evil that there is in adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness, and in the indulgence of these fleshly lusts.

(1.) It is contrary to God, and to his purity and holiness, and, therefore, it is sin, both in its root and in all its branches.

God who governs the world is a Spirit ; you impeach the equity of his dominion, if you, who consist of flesh and spirit, give the pre-eminence to the flesh, and be governed by that ; for the spirit ought to rule, and the body to be in subjection.

God is a holy Spirit ; his holiness is his glory ; it becomes his house and servants for ever to be holy ; you contradict the design of the divine revelation of God's holiness, if you wallow in uncleanness. The more spiritual you are, the more conformable you are to God, but the carnal mind is enmity against him, Rom. viii. 7. Nor is any thing more directly opposite to that divine nature which the saints, through grace, partake of, than the corruption that is in the world through lust, 2 Pet. i. 4. The laws made for the restraint of these fleshly lusts are ratified with this reason, *For I the Lord am holy*, Lev. xix. 2. and xx. 7, 26. For no sin more defaces the image of God's holiness upon the soul than uncleanness, nor renders it more odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God.

When Joseph was tempted to this sin he called it great wickedness, because it was a sin against God, Gen. xxxix. 9. When David had been surprised into this sin, he laid the emphasis of his confession upon this, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned*, Ps. li. 4. As the prodigal son also, when he was re-

turned from his harlots, thus aggravated his folly, *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee*, Luke xv. 18.

And is this nothing with you ? Have you no regard to the God who made you, and maintains you, and will judge you ? Is it nothing to you to be in a state of enmity against him, and war with him ? With what satisfaction can you walk contrary to him whose nature and will are the eternal original and rule of good and right ? Are you his creatures, and dare you be his enemies ? Have you a necessary dependence upon him, and yet dare you persist in an avowed rebellion against him ? Consider this, ye that forget God.

(2.) It thwarts the design of the gospel of Christ. You are Christians, you profess that holy religion which the Lord Jesus came into the world to institute and establish ; you are baptized into the profession of it, and by your baptism you are bound to obey the laws of it, and to answer the intentions of it. The gospel of Christ is a remedial law, and you hope to have remedy by it. It is a charter of privileges, and you hope to be privileged by it ; but how can you expect either remedy or privilege by it, if you will not observe its precepts, nor come up to its conditions ? The gospel will never save you if it shall not rule you.

The design of Christ's coming into the world, was to purify a people to himself, Tit. ii. 14. The design of his gospel, is to cleanse us from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. He has established a religion, which, as far as it has the ascendant, brings all carnal lusts and appetites to be subject to the dictates of right reason, sanctified by the grace of God. Christ suffered in the flesh, that we might die to the flesh, 1 Pet. iv. 1—3. Now uncleanness, as far as that is yielded to, contradicts this design, and supports the works of darkness, and consequently the powers of darkness, in opposition to the interests of the kingdom of light. For, *what communion hath light with darkness?*

We are not dealing with professed pagans, nor with the worshippers of Baal-Peor, who learned of the gods they adored to be vile and unclean ; no, the religion you profess gives us some hold of you ; for it is a pure religion and undefiled ; you are called by the name of the holy Jesus, that great pattern of mortification and purity. You are enlisted under the banner of the cross, and profess to believe in Christ, and him crucified, and to be planted together in the likeness of his death ; but while you live in uncleanness you espouse the opposite cause, you are the devil's soldiers, and fight under his banner, with his weapons, for his interest.

Now Christ and Belial are contrary the one to the other ; in God's name, therefore, I charge you, either to forsake your uncleanness, or (at your peril) to renounce your Christianity. *Aut nomen, aut mores*

muta—Either change your name, or reform your manners; either be what you seem to be, or seem not to be what you are not.

(3.) It grieves the blessed Spirit of God, and always resists the Holy Ghost. As it contradicts the designs of him that was sent by the Father to save us, so it fights against the intentions of him that was sent by the Son to sanctify us, and to carry on his undertaking for us. It forfeits all his comforts, and counterworks his operations.

The fleshly lusts of the old world provoked God to say, "His Spirit should not always strive with them;" Gen. vi. 3. for his motions are quenched by the motions of the flesh. When the apostle cautions us (Eph. iv. 30.) not to grieve the Spirit of God, he tells us, (v. 29.) what grieves him; nothing more than corrupt and filthy communication. That pure and holy Dove will not dwell in a cage of unclean and filthy birds.

Now, if the Spirit of the Lord depart from you, as he did from Saul, if he withdraw his influences and operations from you, you are undone. If he let you alone you are in the suburbs of hell already, abandoned of God, past conviction, past help, past hope, given up to a reprobate mind and vile affections; and this you have reason to fear will be the consequence of your persisting in that which is a constant grief to him. What reason have you to expect the continuance of the Spirit's powers if you yield to the power of the carnal mind, and side with the unclean spirit against him? What have you to do with spiritual comforts, who prefer sensual pleasures before them? If you thus sin against the Spirit, take heed lest you sin away the Spirit.

(4.) It is a great abuse of your own bodies. He who commits fornication, or any other act of uncleanness, sins against his own body, 1 Cor. vi. 18. If self-murder be therefore justly condemned as the worst of murders, because it is against our own bodies, shall not uncleanness for the same reason be an abomination to us? No man, no man in his wits, ever yet hated his own flesh, so as to destroy it, yet multitudes hate it so as to defile it.

Those who indulge the pleasures of their bodies forget the honour of them; and the honour of the body we should be as careful to support and maintain, as to nourish and cherish the life of it. Some people insist more upon honour than upon life itself. This makes seventh-commandment sins their own punishment, and sometimes the punishment of other sins too, that by them sinners dishonour their own bodies, Rom. i. 24. It is as good an argument against adultery as it is against murder, that in the image of God made he man, Gen. ix. 6. Wilt thou deface the image of God, and quite destroy the poor remains of it? Wilt thou pervert the intention of him that made thy body so fearfully and wonderfully, and formed it for himself, to show forth

his praise, the doing of which will be indeed thine own praise.

Man, woman, insist upon thy honour, and preserve it by maintaining thy virtue. Argue thus with thyself, shall that noble structure which was erected for a palace be converted into a swine-stye? That curious frame which was designed to be the tabernacle of the human spirit, and the temple of the Divine Spirit, shall that become the habitation of unclean spirits? What a base and sordid thing is it to make these bodies *members of a harlot*, which were designed to be *the members of Christ*, as the apostle argues, (1 Cor. vi. 15.) to make them instruments of unrighteousness to the dishonour of God, which he made to be instruments of righteousness to his praise, Rom. vi. 13. The body is for the Lord, for his service, for his glory, and therefore ought not to be for fornication, 1 Cor. vi. 13.

If you have any sense of honour, surely you will not do so vile a thing, as to prostitute that body to the slavery of a base lust which was framed and fitted for the service of God. If you should escape reproach among men for the sin, yet surely you cannot reflect upon yourselves without shame and blushing; and self-reproaches are of all other the most uneasy. Chastity is called *sanctification and honour*, (1 Thess. iv. 4.) for every thing that is unchaste is a profanation both of your holiness and of your honour. You were made but a little lower than the angels, make not yourselves a great deal lower than the brutes.

(5.) It unfits you for communion with God both here, and hereafter. You were made for him that made you, to serve, glorify, and enjoy him; and this is the greatest happiness you are capable of; but by indulging these filthy lusts, you render yourselves utterly incapable either to do any thing for God, or to have any thing to do with him; you quench all the sparks of love to him, and utterly extinguish that holy fire; you root up all the seeds of grace, and kill them with these weeds.

Whoredom takes away the heart, (Hos. iv. 11.) takes it away from God, who has the right to it, and should have the possession of it, and puts it into the hand of his enemy and ours. It takes the heart away from Christ the Redeemer of souls, and gives it to Satan the destroyer of souls; it alienates the affections from every thing that is heavenly and divine, and causes them to cleave to the earth, and to embrace dunghills. It fills the mind with vile and wicked thoughts in holy duties, which render them an abomination to the Lord; for thus polluted bread is offered on his altars. This we find a convinced adulterer reproaching himself for as sensibly as for any thing, (Prov. v. 14.) *I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly.*

These unclean lusts are the corruption of all the faculties of the soul. They are the blindness of the

understanding, the debauchery of the conscience, the alienation of the soul from its felicity, and the obstruction of all its intercourse with heaven. For what communion has light with darkness, the father of lights with the works of darkness? What fellowship can there be between the holy God and an unclean and filthy heart? 2 Cor. vi. 14.

(6.) It is a sin not only against God and yourselves, but against your neighbour also. The seventh commandment is therefore one of the laws of the second table; and the apostle makes it the first of those commandments which are comprehended in this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, Rom. xiii. 9.

Consider this, sinner; if thou thyself be under the sacred ties and bonds of marriage, every act of uncleanness is downright perjury, it is a violation of the covenant of thy God, and a breach of the marriage vow; it is a great injury to thy yoke-fellow, whose thou art by solemn contract, who ought to be dearer to thee than any other person whatsoever, and to whom thou hast promised to be faithful. Darest thou deal treacherously with her who is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant? Mal. ii. 14. or with him who is the guide of thy youth, and that ought to be to thee for a covering of the eyes? Prov. ii. 17. and Gen. xx. 16. Is the marriage covenant nothing with thee? Is it nothing to thee, that thou art guilty of the greatest injustice that can be to one whom thou oughtest to be not only just but kind to? and to do a wrong which thou canst never by any restitution make amends for? Though thy injured yoke-fellow may perhaps know nothing of the injury done, yet the righteous God knows it, and will certainly avenge it.

If thou thyself be single, but the person with whom thou committest lewdness is in the married state, thou contractest the same guilt, by being injurious to the yoke-fellow of another; a crime of so heinous a nature, that besides the prohibition of it in the letter of the seventh commandment, the very desire of this forbidden fruit is expressly restrained by the tenth commandment, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*.

Yet this is not all; the greatest injury of all is done to the precious soul of that person who is thy partner in the sin, and whom thou courtest, or consentest to. Know, sinner, that thou perishest not alone in thy iniquity; but, as if it were a light thing for thee to defile and destroy thy own soul, thou art accessory to the pollution and ruin of another soul, a precious soul, more worth than all the world. If thou be the tempter, thy guilt is double, thou art not only a sinner, but a Satan, a child of the devil, (Acts xiii. 10.) an agent and factor for him, who, not content to be himself a wicked one, goes about continually, seeking to make the children of men wicked like himself. Verily, they are of their father the devil, who thus do his lusts, they bear his image, and they are in his interests, John viii. 44. And if

thou only consent to the temptation, yet besides thy own guilt, thou sharest in the sin of those to whom thou consentest, strengthening their hands, and hardening their hearts in their wicked way. Harken to this, ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship ye pretend to each other is really the greatest enmity that can be? You hurt, you wrong, you ruin one another's souls. O what a stinging reflection will this be hereafter! How many precious souls are you accessory to the murder of? Except a miracle of mercy give you and them repentance, you will die in your iniquity, but their blood will be required at your hands.

God by his grace make these words convincing! Nothing less than almighty grace can make them so, but that can do wondrously.

2. Besides the malignity and guilt that there is in this sin, consider also the mischief and misery that follow after it. If calling it sin will not frighten you from it, we will call it death, and try what that will do; and we do not, either in the one, or in the other, miscall it. It is one of those things for which the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience, Col. iii. 5, 6. And woe to those, ten thousand woes to those upon whom the wrath of God alights and lies!

Let us take a distinct view of some of the dismal, and perhaps fatal, consequences of this sin.

(1.) Uncleanness wastes the body. He that commits fornication sins against his own body, not only by putting a dishonour upon it, and prostituting it to a base and scandalous service, but by contributing to the consumption and destruction of it. If you have any regard to your own bodies (the pleasing of the vitious appetites of which is the utmost the tempter can pretend to) you will surely avoid that sin which threatens so much mischief to them. Shall the fundamental law of self-preservation have no command over you, nor influence upon you?

Have you no dread of those pains and loathsome sicknesses which are commonly the products of these abominations? The righteous God, by a disease not known in the world till these latter ages, has stigmatized very many who have given themselves over to uncleanness, and has set them forth as monuments of his justice; in them the Scripture has been fulfilled, that *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*, if men will not. Multitudes have been made to mourn at the last, (though I doubt very few have been brought to repentance by it,) when their flesh and their body have been consumed, and they have rotted above ground, Prov. v. 11.

The bones of many an old fornicator are full of the sins of his youth, which will *lie down with him in the dust*, as Zophar speaks, Job xx. 11. Yea, and many in the midst of their days become the devil's martyrs, and after they have long been racked and tortured with grievous pains, end a miserable life in a more

miserable death, and fall unpitied sacrifices to their own lusts. The word of God has said it, and all the world cannot unsay it, *He that defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy*, 1 Cor. iii. 17.

(2.) It wars against the soul, the better, the immortal part of the man. Fleshly lusts, though they appear in the soft and charming guise of courtiers, yet really they are warriors, they are enemies, they are in arms against us; they are rebels, enemies in our own bosoms, and therefore the more dangerous; the apostle tells us, (1 Pet. ii. 11.) they *war against the soul*, they lay siege to it, batter it, and threaten the ruin of it.

How many precious souls have been undone by these enemies! They disturb the peace of the soul, and make it subject to continual frights and alarms, which fill it with secret terrors night and day. They waste the wealth of the soul, as soldiers that make havoc of all that is good for any thing in the countries they ravage and plunder. They obstruct the administration of all government in the soul; reason loses its dominion and conduct; conscience loses all its power and influence, it is not heard, it is not heeded; these base lusts put all into tumult and disorder.

And is thy soul, that precious soul of thine, nothing to thee? Darest thou thus neglect it, thus expose it, thus suffer it to be wasted and overrun by the enemy? Dost thou not know that thou must very shortly give an account of it to him that made it, and made thee the keeper of it? And an uncomfortable account thou wilt give, if thou thus resign it to Satan, and yield it as his easy prey. The serpent could not beguile thee but by thy own fault.

(3.) It is reproachful to the name. An incurable wound and dishonour is got by it, Prov. vi. 33. Though there may be other sins as provoking to God, and as mischievous to the soul, yet there is none so scandalous among men as this is. *It is a shame even to speak of these things*, Eph. v. 12.

And is this nothing to you? Have you no value for a good name, nor any care to preserve an interest in the esteem of wise and sober people? Can you contentedly be looked upon as slaves and willing captives to a sordid lust, and to lie under a stain and brand of perpetual infamy and disgrace? Is it nothing to you what people think or say of you, when they speak evil of you truly, and your own consciences know a great deal more and worse than they say? Is it nothing to you for good people to be ashamed of you, as fit only for the society of those who are altogether such as yourselves? Is it nothing for you to bring such a blot upon your reputation as will stick to it when you are dead and gone?

Or if your own names be of such small account with you, yet have you no regard to the name of Christ, that worthy name by which you are called? If you have made, and still make, a personal profes-

sion of relation to Christ, and call yourselves by the name of Jacob, the scandal of your sin goes further than your own names, it is a reproach to God himself, and to the Lord Jesus. The name of God and his doctrine is blasphemed through you. What shall pagans and Mahometans, atheists and deists, make of Christianity, if those who profess that holy religion, act worse than heathens? What will they say of Christ and his gospel, if those who, by their baptism, profess to follow Christ, and believe his gospel, live impure, unholy lives, contrary to the sacred character of both? Surely then the old reproach of our Master will be again renewed, *This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them*, and you who have occasioned it will bear this iniquity. The apostle in God's name directs us, *If any man that is called a brother, called a Christian, be a fornicator*, with such a one we must *not so much as eat*, that we may testify the utmost abhorrence and detestation of those who thus name the name of Christ, and yet allow themselves in this iniquity, 1 Cor. v. 11.

(4.) It is ruining to the estate. The prodigal son who spent his living on harlots at last was reduced to husks, and became fellow-commoner with the swine. Many a one has been brought to a morsel of bread by means of a whorish woman, in our days, as well as in Solomon's, Prov. vi. 26. Almost every place and every year can produce fresh instances of the wastefulness and expensiveness of these fleshly lusts. Many have so outspent themselves and their patrimony in these lewd and dissolute courses, that they have worn out the latter end of their days in miserable poverty, and, perhaps, ended them at last in a prison. So that if a careless world would take warning, others also might see and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

As there is a direct tendency in the sin itself to the impoverishing of men, for it spends that upon the devil which should be spent upon the man, so it provokes the righteous God to entail a curse upon the house and family, which will undoubtedly sink and ruin it. Holy Job says concerning this sin, and he seems to speak the sense of the patriarchal age, that it was a heinous crime, and an iniquity proper to be punished by the judges, as it was under the law of Moses. But if they, out of a contempt of other people's guilt, or consciousness of their own, should leave the sin unpunished, yet God would take the work into his own hands, and it should be *a fire consuming to destruction, which would eat out all the increase*, Job xxxi. 11, 12.

(5.) It is dreadful to the conscience, if ever it be awake. Know this, (sinner,) that though now thou makest a light matter of this sin, and thy conscience altogether holds its peace concerning it, yet if ever God open thy eyes to see the error of thy ways, and set thy sins in order before thee, thy uncleanness will appear above all the rest exceeding sinful, and

the remembrance of it will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. Solomon himself, in the reflection, found it more bitter than death, (Eccl. vii. 26.) and more terrible; and so wilt thou, if God have mercy in store for thee, and set home the conviction of it upon thy soul, making thee to know thy abominations, and to see them in their own colours and consequences.

O the horror and amazement thou wilt then be filled with! Then the sin which thou madest a sport of will sit heavy; though the iniquity was sweet in thy mouth, and rolled under thy tongue as a pleasant morsel, it will then be as the gall of asps, and the reflection upon it will perhaps make thee a terror to thyself, and to all about thee: how canst thou be otherwise, if the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against thee? Thou wilt then loathe thyself and abhor thyself, and call thyself fool a thousand times, for venturing upon counterfeit and transient pleasures, which thou seest and feelest attended with real and remaining pains.

Think (sinner) when thou art tempted to this sin, think seriously what will come of it: the best that can come of it is, that thou wilt repent of it, and this thou presumest upon; but dost thou know what it is to repent? That it is to be filled with grief, and shame, and fear, to see thyself under the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, and upon the brink of hell, and to be under all the terrors that may be supposed to arise from hence. And is repentance a thing to be bought so dear? Or, *What fruit will you then have of these things whereof you are now ashamed?*

(6.) It is damning to eternity, if it be not repented of in time. It is a sin which shuts the sinner out of heaven. The Scripture speaks expressly, more than once, that *they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 21. Nothing that defiles must enter into the New Jerusalem, that holy city. Heaven indeed would be no heaven to these impure polluted souls; nor will the holy God take those to be near him and with him for ever, who chose to set themselves at such a distance from him, and engaged themselves in opposition to him here.

And if thy sin shut thee out of heaven, I need not tell thee where it will shut thee up; but the word of God tells thee, that the abominable, and particularly the whoremongers, shall have their part in the lake that burns eternally with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, Rev. xxi. 8. The filthy Sodomites, who gave themselves over to fornication, suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, and are set forth for an example to all who should afterwards in like manner live ungodly, Jude 7. There is a special reservation of this kind of sinners to the judgment of the great day, because, commonly, they escape punishment from men; for when all

sinners are bound over to that judgment, it is added, *Chiefly they that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness*, 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10.

Let no man deceive you with vain words, as if God would not be so severe with sinners as his word says he will. Is he not a God of truth, faithful to his threatenings as well as to his promises? Is he not a righteous Governor, the God to whom vengeance belongs? And canst thou think that he will suffer his law to be violated, and the authority of it ridiculed, his gospel to be slighted, and the grace of it trampled upon, and never reckon for all these indignities done him? No, sinner, thou art mistaken if thou think him altogether such an one as thyself.

Say not then, "I shall have peace though I go on," for that is to contradict God, who has said, *There is no peace to the wicked*: neither say thou, "I will repent of it hereafter, though I go on in it for a while;" for that is to contradict thyself, since the same reason that there is for thy repenting hereafter holds for thy repenting now. Do not then by a daring presumption run thyself upon an endless despair.

Now, consider this ye that forget God, consider it seriously, and be persuaded to break off this wicked course of life you lead.

Consider that an unclean conversation is a certain sign and evidence of a graceless heart; it manifests the prevalence and predominance of the corrupt nature, and that the unclean spirit is upon the throne. And if thou live and die graceless, thou art undone for ever.

Consider also that it is a very dangerous thing to sin against the warnings and checks of conscience. Few go on in this sin without disturbance sometimes from their own consciences, which say, *O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates*. Take heed of baffling your own consciences, and of rushing as Balaam upon this sword's point, lest you provoke God to sear your consciences, and to give you up to your own hearts' lusts, and so to seal you unto condemnation. When men deal with their consciences as the Sodomites dealt with Lot, press hard upon them, and will not allow them to be reprovers and judges, (Gen. xix. 9.) Sodom's plagues are not far off; *Fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest*.

Consider also that an outward profession of religion is so far from excusing, that really it aggravates, these abominations; it now aggravates the guilt of the sin, and will shortly aggravate the ruin of the sinner. *Be sure your sin will find you out*, though perhaps your neighbours do not.

II. If you be in some measure convinced of the evil of this sin, I would now put you in a way to break off from it; and God, by his grace, put you into the right way! Perhaps, by this time, some of these sinners, these sinners against their own souls, may be so sick of their disease as to be glad of a physician;

and desirous of a cure. You that are enslaved to these filthy lusts, and under the power of them, that labour in these fires, like Israel in Egypt, do you not sigh, as they did, by reason of the bondage? Are you not weary of serving divers lusts, and pleasures, those unreasonable task-masters, and suffering at the same time the frequent lashes of an accusing conscience, that just avenger under God? Are you never brought to wish that you were disentangled out of the snare you are in, and that you could live a virtuous and a religious life, as you see some do who have the comfort and honour of so doing? Do you never blush to think of the abominable lusts you are under the dominion of? Nor ever tremble to think of the bottomless pit you are upon the brink of?

Know (sinner) that the God of heaven thinks the time long that thou continuest in thine uncleanness. See how he expostulates with filthy sinners, (Jer. xiii. 27.) *Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?* And dost thou not think it long enough? May not the time past suffice that thou hast walked in lasciviousness? 1 Pet. iv. 3. Is thy conscience seared? Is thy heart quite hardened? Are darts, God's darts, counted as stubble before thee, and canst thou with the leviathan, laugh at the shaking of this spear? Job xli. 29. Shall no considerations influence thee? Shall neither reason nor religion sway with thee? If they may be calmly and impartially heard, I dare say thou wouldst be prevailed with to break off this vile and wicked course of life, and wouldst thankfully submit to the method of cure, though the operations necessary to the cure may be difficult and displeasing to flesh and blood.

Would you then be cleansed from this leprosy, this noisome and dangerous disease? Observe these directions;

1. Heartily repent of all the uncleanness you have been guilty of, and be deeply humbled for it before the Lord this day. Rest not in a bare disgust and dislike of the sin, as if that would amount to repentance; Amnon hated Tamar, when he had satisfied his brutish lust, and, yet, was far from being a true penitent: no, it is necessary that you experience in your own souls a very great and deep sorrow for the sin, and that you reflect upon it with the highest regret and remorse imaginable.

Think of the affront that you have offered to the holy God, the guilt and stain you have brought upon your own souls; think of the folly and filthiness of it. Think what you have lost and forfeited by it, the favour of God, the grace of Christ, and the joys of heaven; think what you have deserved and exposed yourselves to by it, temporal, spiritual, and eternal judgments. Think of these things till you are pricked to the heart, and in bitterness for the sin, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born; and contract such an habitual indignation

against the sin, and yourselves because of it, that you may be pained upon every remembrance of it, and may even loathe yourselves because of it.

They that can easily forgive themselves upon a slight and superficial repentance, and flatter themselves with a conceit that God has thereupon forgiven them, will easily be brought to yield to the next temptation; it is therefore necessary that you take pains with your own hearts, to work upon them the powerful influence of those considerations which are proper to open springs of godly sorrow there, and to keep them ever flowing.

After David had been but once guilty of uncleanness, he went mourning from day to day for it. The sin was ever before him, Ps. li. 3. The remembrance of it broke his bones, (v. 8.) and was to him as a heavy burthen, too heavy even for him to bear, Ps. xxxviii. 4—6. Solomon confesses that he had found it more bitter than death, and calls it not a trick of youth, or an excusable slip of human frailty, but the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness, Eccl. vii. 25, 26. Imitate these great penitents. Lay a load upon yourselves, and lie in the dust before God in penitential tears. Let the sin be a terror to you in the reflection upon what is past, and then it will not appear such a pleasure to you as formerly, in the next temptation. Thus the quarrel with it must begin with true remorse and godly sorrow for our former folly, and then it is to be hoped the quarrel will be irreconcilable.

Perhaps it will help to melt and break the hard and stony heart, if you humbly confess your guilt, not only to God but to your minister, or to some Christian friend, especially if the offence has been made public, and has proved a scandal: the Scripture prescribes this method of cure, (Jam. v. 16.) *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.* That you may effectually humble yourselves, it will be of use for you to shame yourselves; you have not been ashamed to sin, be not ashamed to repent, for next to the credit of an innocent is that of a penitent. Do then as the convinced leper under the law, Lev. xiii. 45. Put thyself into his place and posture, and cry with sorrow and self-loathing, *Unclean, unclean.*

2. Take up a full resolution, by the grace of God, now to break off this vitious course of life, and never to return to it again. Faint purposes will not serve for the disentangling of you from the strong cords of this iniquity; they will but deceive you and betray you to the tempter. Wishing is but trifling; it is not enough to say "I hope I shall never be guilty of this sin again, surely I shall never again be such a fool as I have been;" but you must say, "In the strength of God I am firmly resolved I never will." If these fleshly lusts be indeed your enemies, as certainly they are dangerous enemies, you must carry on a war against them with vigour. Feeble efforts

will never repel the strong assaults of this temptation: you must be stedfastly resolved against it. Say not, "If I make a resolution I doubt I shall break it;" that is to yield to Satan: but, "I will make a resolution, and I trust in God I shall never break it;" this is to resist the devil, and if we do this faithfully he will flee from us.

There have been instances of those who, by the assistance of divine grace, have conquered and subdued habits that were extremely vicious, and have been wonderfully changed in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their lives; and the same grace that wrought mightily in them shall be sufficient for you, if you pray for it, improve it, and do not rebel against it. Argue the case with yourselves, reason with your own hearts upon it, and let the result be a settled resolution to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, that you may perfect holiness in the fear of God, 2 Cor. vii. 1.

What can hinder but that you should speedily come up to a firm resolution in this matter? Swear this to the Lord, and vow it to the mighty God of Jacob, that you will never, never more have fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness; that you will never return again to this folly. Bind your souls with a solemn bond to this purpose, bind them fast, for they are apt to fly off. Let every Christian in this sense vow chastity, and call God to witness that you are sincere in it.

3. Let the fear of God rule in your hearts. You believe there is a God, you dare not deny it, you dare not question it; and do you not know that this God sees you, and is acquainted with all your ways; that he will judge you, and call you to an account for all your works? Do you not know that his eye is always upon you, and that all the hidden works of darkness are open before him?

Be persuaded, therefore, to set the Lord always before you; and dare not to do that in his sight and presence, which you would not dare to do in the sight and presence of a worm of the earth like yourselves. When none else sees, take heed, God sees.

A living principle of grace in your hearts will purify and cleanse them, and then the streams will not be thus muddy and polluted. Cast salt, the salt of grace, into these springs, and then the waters will be healed. Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good. Stand in awe of God's unspotted purity, his tremendous majesty, and his strict and unerring justice; and say, How dare I live such a life as this in a constant contempt of God's authority, and rebellion against his justice? "How dare I provoke a God of almighty power to jealousy? Am I stronger than he?" None cast off modesty till they have cast off the fear of God, and are resolved to live without him. If you have the fear of God before

your eyes, you will say as Joseph did, whenever you are insulted by any temptations of this kind, *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?*

4. Stand upon your guard against the first appearance of this evil, and all approaches towards it. Take heed of every thing that leads to uncleanness, that looks like it, or looks towards it. If you would be innocent from the great transgression, allow not yourselves in lesser transgressions of this kind. The unwary fly often fools away her life by playing about the candle. Those sports and dalliances which seem harmless may introduce the greatest mischiefs, as the little thief thrust in at the window opens the door to the great ones. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus* — *Men arrive not at first to the highest pitch of this wickedness*, but gradually, and by indulgences less criminal, come to the vilest enormities. The way of this sin is down hill, a man cannot easily stop himself; one unclean thought, word, or action, draws on another, strengthens the corruptions by gratifying them, weakens the convictions by baffling them, and so the unthinking sinner goes from bad to worse: so like to the letting forth of water is the beginning of this sin; therefore, if you love your souls, meddle not with it.

Dread a snake under the green grass, and take heed where you tread. Fear this enemy, and come not within his borders. Watch that you enter not into this temptation, for it will be no easy matter to make a retreat. Do as holy Job did, make a covenant with your eyes (the common inlets of this sin) that you may not admit, much less entertain, any wanton and unchaste desires, Job xxxi. 1. If you would not be burnt, do not take fire into your bosom, nor go upon hot coals, it is Solomon's comparison, Prov. vi. 27, 28. Crush this cockatrice in the egg, lest the fruit of it be a fiery flying serpent. Pluck up this root of bitterness as soon as it puts forth, lest it spring up and trouble you, and thereby you and many more be defiled, Heb. xii. 15.

5. Be quick and peremptory in your resistance of temptations to this sin. Stand not to parley with them, nor ever listen to terms of surrender. Eve was half betrayed when she entered into discourse with the serpent, and was willing to hear what he had to say.

Arguments enough there are against this sin, and very convincing, cogent ones; your sober thoughts have many a time represented them to you in their evidence and demonstration. Be satisfied then, and look upon the case to be so plain that there needs not a dispute upon it: there are no probabilities, nothing but fallacies, on the side of the temptation. And yet, such is the weakness, deceitfulness, and desperate wickedness of your own hearts, that you may be imposed upon ere you are aware, if you admit of a debate concerning it, and recommit the resolves you have made.

Therefore, whenever you are solicited to this sin, startle at the thought of it, with the utmost abhorrence and detestation imaginable. Say as Peter, (Acts x. 14.) *Not so, for nothing unclean hath come into my mouth.* Say as David in another case, (1 Chron. xi. 19.) *My God, forbid it me, that I should do this thing!* Say as our Saviour has taught us to say, when the tempter assaults us, *Get thee hence, Satan,* Matt. iv. 10. The Lord rebuke this unclean spirit, so that it may not be suffered to speak; the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke it. Let the very temptation be to you as a thorn in the flesh, a pain and a terror, and not a pleasure. You who have fallen into this sin have found, by sad experience, how dangerous it is to venture too far; therefore, dread the thoughts of reasoning with indifference, concerning that which, being confessedly most unreasonable, must be gainsaid with a severe resolution. As he who will dispute whether there be a God or no, must be hissed at in the schools, and not argued with, so must he who will question whether he should keep the law of God, in so plain a case, or break it.

6. Keep at a distance from the tempter. If there be any particular person that you are in special danger of being ensnared by, avoid that person as you would avoid one that you were in danger of being infected by with the plague, though otherwise dear to you.

The wise man's advice, or rather the wise God's command, is, *Remove thy way far from the house,* (Prov. v. 8.) much more far from the man, the woman, who, under the colour of love and friendship, would allure you, with the devil's baits, into the devil's nets. This seems to be in part intended in that command which our Saviour has given us, to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, which offends us, Matt. v. 29, 30. and again, Matt. xviii. 8, 9. Though the person be dear to us, and could be as ill spared as a right eye, or a right hand, yet resolve upon a separation. This was Joseph's wisdom, that he would not be alone in the house with his mistress, when he perceived her vile designs, Gen. xxxix. 10, 11. When we thrust ourselves into temptation, we put ourselves out of God's protection, for he has promised to keep us in all our ways, and not otherwise. Presume not too near the danger, in the strength of your own resolutions, that hitherto you will go and no further, lest you be found tempting the devil to tempt you, and so become your own betrayers. If you would be kept from harm keep out of harm's way.

This caution must go further than the particular person you are in danger of being ensnared by; you must carefully avoid the places of temptation to this sin. As the plays have many of them, in this degenerate age, been plainly designed to teach the arts of debauchery, and not only to palliate this wicked-

ness as a jest, but to recommend it as the accomplishment of a finished gentlemen, so the playhouses have been the rendezvous of these sinners, where the plays have been indeed acted. There those are mustered and disciplined, who having in their baptism renounced "the pomps and vanities of this world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh," and listed themselves under the banner of the cross, now in effect disclaim their baptism, return to those pomps and vanities, (by which were originally meant the plays,) and embrace these fleshly lusts, and engage themselves to fight manfully against virtue and religion, and all that is sacred, and to continue the devil's faithful servants and soldiers to their lives' end. And are these persons fit for you to associate with? Are these places fit for you to be found in? No, if thou love thy soul, if thou wouldst preserve thy purity, peace, and honour, come not nigh the door of that house; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away.

7. Think much of death and hell. Sinners of this kind must be saved with fear, that is, they must be frightened out of their sin, pulled out of the fire with a friendly violence. We must not, we dare not, prophesy smooth things to you; we prophesy deceit if we do. O that these sinners in Sion were afraid! O that fearfulness might surprise them! Let your hearts meditate terror, the terrors of the Lord, which from the word of God we desire to set before you, not to frighten you out of your wits, but to frighten you out of your sins. And it is better to be saved with fear, than that you should be damned yourselves without fear.

Death is the king of terrors; O that it might appear so terrible to you as to cool the courage you take in a sinful way! Sirs, you are dying creatures, your days upon earth are to be but few; and, perhaps, you are shortening the days of this life, and hastening the day of your death, by this lewd and vicious course of life you live. But O what a dismal change will death make when it comes! A dismal change, when the charming eyes (as they now call them) which give the wanton glances, shall sink and fall, and be closed up; when the countenance that is now proud of its skin-deep beauty shall gather blackness, and become ghastly; when the body that is now pampered and indulged, and such provision made for it, shall become a loathsome carcass. O let the thoughts of the pains and agonies of a death-bed, and the darkness and terror of a bed in the grave, be an effectual damp and check to all the forbidden pleasures of the bed of uncleanness! It would be thought unaccountably absurd, and would be imputed to a very high degree of hardness and scaredness, if a malefactor condemned to die, and the warrant signed for his execution to-morrow, should so far forget the dreadful pomp of it, as to spend the night in wanton sport and revelling, in

mirth and laughter. And are you sure that you shall live till to-morrow? *This night*, perhaps, your soul may be required of you. And O what a terror will death be if it surprise you while you go on in this sinful way!

But this is not all; after death will be the judgment, a strict and particular judgment, into which God will bring every secret thing; and after judgment, the fire of hell will certainly be the portion of all those who live and die in this sin: if God be true it will. Our Saviour thunders hell and damnation against this sin, and you may assure yourselves he is in earnest: he has told us that if we do not mortify these corrupt dispositions, our whole body shall be cast into hell, Matt. v. 29, 30.

Lay your ears by faith to the gates of hell, and hear the doleful shrieks and out-cries of multitudes who lived as securely in this sin as you do, and said they should have peace though they went on, and are now paying dear for all their brutish pleasures, in an eternity of ceaseless and remediless torments. The prophet speaks of it as a very sad change, which approaching judgments in this world would make with the daughters of Sion, when there should be *instead of a girdle a rent*, and *instead of well set hair, baldness*, Isa. iii. 24.

But much more dreadful and amazing will the change be, when, instead of the cup of fornication, wherewith these besotted sinners are now intoxicated, the righteous God, who has said he will judge whoremongers and adulterers, shall put into their hands a cup of fury, a cup of trembling, a cup of fire and brimstone. Instead of music and songs of mirth, there shall be *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*. Instead of a bed of down shall be a bed of flames. Instead of the amorous society of them that wear soft clothing, there shall be the company of devils and damned spirits. Let a holy fear of this be a damp to all carnal mirth, and an effectual check to all forbidden pleasures. *Who among you can dwell with devouring fire, who can inhabit everlasting burnings?*

8. Lift up your hearts in prayer to God for strength and grace to enable you to mortify fleshly lusts, and to resist every temptation to this sin. Prayer is a principal part of that armour of God which we are to put on, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. It is that which girds on all the rest, and fetches in that Spirit from on high, which alone makes our armour impenetrable, and us invulnerable, Eph vi. 18.

Let it be your daily prayer to Almighty God, that he would lead you out of this temptation which assaults you so frequently, so vigorously; that he would deliver you from this evil, this sin which most easily besets you. Pray against your own iniquity, which has so often, and so long, had dominion over you. O pray earnestly that the power of divine grace may

be greatly magnified and glorified in the suppressing and extirpating those vicious habits, which have hitherto seemed inveterate and obstinate to the methods of grace. Go and complain to Christ for thyself, as some did for their relations when he was here on earth, *Have mercy on me, thou Son of David*, my soul is *grievously vexed with an unclean spirit*; Lord, dispossess him, cast him out. *This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*; add fasting therefore to thy prayers, and thou shalt not seek in vain.

Whenever you find yourselves entering into this temptation, *Watch and pray*. Lift up your hearts to God in such an ejaculation as that of Nehemiah in another case, *Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands*; strengthen them for this conflict, that I may come off a conqueror. Some of the ancients thought that the thorn in the flesh which St. Paul complained of was a violent temptation to uncleanness, a *messenger of Satan* (for so all such temptations are) which buffeted him; and it was so far from pleasing him that it pained him, and was as a sword in his bones. But by prayer, instant and importunate prayer, he prevailed for grace sufficient, 2 Cor. xii. 7—9. And if we come in faith on the same errand, we need not fear but we shall speed as he did.

9. Bring the body into subjection by abstinence and labour. Luxury and idleness are often the unhappy incentives and causes of this sin. Sodom was made a very sink of uncleanness by fulness of bread (not plenty, but the abuse of plenty) and abundance of idleness, Ezek. xvi. 49. What Solomon says of a servant is true of the body: *He that delicately brings it up from a child, shall have it become his son*, nay, his master, his taskmaster, *at the length*, Prov. xxix. 21. They that do not deny themselves in other things, will find it the more difficult to deny themselves in this.

Corporal austerities and mortifications, though merit is not to be placed in them, nor will they of themselves, without the grace of God, gain us a victory; yet they are excellent means to subdue lust, and to bring the body into a good temper, that it may be more manageable by religion and right reason. If you cannot drive out this enemy by storm, try to starve him out, by denying yourselves the use even of those lawful things, which through the infirmity of the flesh may prove a snare to you. Pamper not the body with varieties and dainties, lest it grow wanton, but use yourselves to deny yourselves, so shall it become easy to you.

Live not in sloth; for when you have nothing to do, the devil will quickly find you something to do. Standing waters gather filth, while running streams keep pure. Be always employing yourselves in some good business, and then perhaps you will find it as effectual an answer to a temptation, to say "I have no leisure," as to say "I have no leave." Love not the bed of idleness, lest it turn into the bed of lust.

10. Do not keep the devil's counsel. This treason is in effect quashed when it is discovered, and the devices of it will be brought to nought, if they be but brought to light, for it is an evil that hates the light and seeks the shade as much as any other. Does this sin then most easily beset you? Is it violent and importunate in its assaults? If you have a friend who is fit to make a confidant of, it may do well to open your case to such a friend who will deal faithfully with you, and will help you by prayer and suitable advice, and, it may be, speak some word in season.

It may be of use to shame yourselves out of the danger of being overcome, by confessing your weakness, and obliging yourselves to confess your wickedness, if, in any instance, you should be overcome. You had better shame yourselves to a faithful friend that will pity you and help you, than let the sin get head, and not only shame you in this world before men who will insult over you, but fill your face with everlasting shame and contempt.

If you think these methods of cure too difficult, and call these directions "hard sayings which cannot be borne," you have reason to fear that you are not yet thoroughly convinced of the danger of your disease, nor truly desirous to be made whole. If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing for the cure of a bodily sickness, wouldst thou not have done it? how much more when for thy spiritual cure he only says to thee, *Wash and be clean*?

And now (sinner) must I close this paper and leave thee as I found thee? Will he that is filthy resolve to be filthy still? And will he that is unclean be unclean still? God forbid: shall neither the terrors of the Lord startle thee and awaken thee out of thy security in this sinful way? Nor his goodness win upon thee to lead thee to repentance? Wilt thou make thy condition desperate by adhering to that desperate resolve, *There is no hope, no, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go*, Jer. ii. 25. Is religion a jest, and reason a sham, and the arguments fetched from the word of God, and the sober sense of all mankind, but rant and banter? Shall all that has been said be turned off with a flout, and converted into sport and ridicule? Yet know that thy unbelief cannot make the wrath and curse of God of none effect. Though thou lovest to slumber, yet thy damnation slumbers not.

If, after all, thou dost indeed prefer the gratification of a base lust before the favour of God, and the pleasures of wisdom's ways; if thou dost indeed choose the puddle water of sensual delights rather than the pure water of life, and the wine of divine consolations; if thou wilt rather expose thyself to all the just reproaches of thy own conscience now, and to all the miseries of the damned for ever, than submit thyself to the restraint and conduct of virtue and religion; know then, that *God also will choose*

thy delusions, and they will be thy eternal destruction: *So shall thy doom be, thou thyself hast decided it.*

A SERIOUS ADDRESS

TO THOSE WHO

PROFANE THE LORD'S DAY.

THOSE I reckon guilty of profaning the Lord's day, and to them in the name of God direct this paper, who neglect the appointed work of that day, and who violate the prescribed rest of that day.

1. It is a profanation of the Lord's day, and a breach of the law of it, to neglect and omit the proper duty and business of that day, which is, the immediate service and worship of our God. If we leave undone that which on this day ought to be done, we are transgressors, for omissions are sins, and must come into judgment.

That the eternal God is to be solemnly and religiously adored by the children of men, and that we are all bound, by acts of piety and devotion, to give unto him the glory due unto his name, and pay our homage to him, none will question, who really believe that there is a God, who is a being infinitely perfect and blessed, and the fountain of all being and blessedness, our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor, on whom we have a necessary and constant dependence, and to whom we lie under the highest obligations imaginable. Never did reasonable creatures speak more unreasonably, than they did who said, *What is the Almighty that we should serve him?* Job xxi. 15.

Something of this work ought to be done every day; no day must pass without some solemn acts of religious worship, both morning and evening; when we address ourselves to the work of the day, and when we compose ourselves to the rest of the night, we ought actually to acknowledge God, both by our prayers and praises, as our Protector, Guide, and Benefactor. *Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work*; and is this no part of our work? Is it not the most needful and excellent work we have to do? Those who live without daily worship live without God in the world. As God allows us time for works of necessity and mercy out of his day; so we ought to allow time for works of piety and devotion out of our days, else we are not only undutiful, but very ungrateful.

But besides the morning and evening sacrifice, which the duty of every day requires, the wisdom of God, for the preserving and securing of divine worship in the world, has instituted and appointed a particular time for the special solemnities of it,

which is one day in seven. The body of a seventh day, that is, the working hours of it, are by this institution appointed to be spent in the acts of religion and devotion, as the other days of the week are intended for secular business, and the works of our particular calling.

Now this instrumental part of religion, (give me leave to call it so,) though it be not equally necessary with the essentials of it, the love of God, and faith in Christ, yet it is undoubtedly necessary, both as a duty in obedience to the divine law, which requires us thus to consecrate a seventh day to the services of religion, and as a means of keeping up communion with God in holy ordinances, and preparing ourselves, by his grace, for the vision and fruition of him. It is so necessary, that revealed religion, and with it all religion, would in all probability have been lost and forgotten long ere this, if it had not been kept up by the observation of sabbaths.

Now, forasmuch as it is the work of the Lord's day to worship God, not only in public solemn assemblies, which we ought conscientiously to attend upon both the former and the latter part of the day, but in secret and in our families, morning, evening, and at noon, those do, certainly, profane the day, who do not spend the best part of it, and much more those who scarce spend any part of it, in pious exercises; either not attending on them at all, or with such a constant and allowed carelessness and indifference, as discovers a great contempt of the God they pretend to honour.

Those profane this sacred day, who waste the precious hours of its morning in sleep and sloth, and proud and needless dressing, and the rest of the day in idle chat and perfect sauntering, as if sabbath time hung upon their hands, and they knew not what to do with it, nor how to idle it away, and pass it off fast enough, till they have that which is their heart's desire, *When will the sabbath be gone?*

Such as these, how innocent soever they may think themselves, are to be counted sabbath-breakers, who instead of keeping the sabbath day lose it, and throw it away, and wilfully suffer it to run waste; and instead of sanctifying it, and advancing it above other times, vilify it, and make it the most idle, insignificant, and unprofitable day of the week; for the days that are spent in worldly business serve to some purpose, but this, that should be spent in the business of religion, being trifled away, and the work of it undone, serves to no purpose.

2. It is a profanation of the Lord's day, to violate and break in upon the holy rest of that day, and to do that from which we are bound up and restrained by the law of the day, in order to our more close application to that which is the work of the day. On that day we are to rest both from those worldly employments of our particular callings, which on other days are our duty, and the work of

the day, and from those sports and recreations which on other days are lawful, as the entertainment of our spare hours, and the preparatives for our busy ones; from both we are to rest on the Lord's day; for certainly carnal pleasure is as great an enemy to spiritual joy as the sorrow of the world is, and sport is as inconsistent with the sabbath rest as labour is.

Rest from worldly business on the sabbath day was under the Old Testament more primarily required as a duty, and a great stress laid upon it, according to the nature of that dispensation; to all the purposes of this rest we are not now so strictly tied up as the Jews then were: but it is still secondarily requisite as a means, in order to the due performance of the work of the day; and so far it is a duty.

Then, when the more solemn worship of God was appropriated to one place, where the ark was, the place which God chose to put his name there, which the people were appointed generally to attend but thrice a year, the rest of those, who were at a distance, was required and accepted as a tacit joining with the temple service on the sabbath day; by a strict cessation from other work, they testified an implicit concurrence in that work. But now, under the gospel, we are not so confined to one place as they then were; it is God's will that men pray every where, and that in every place the spiritual incense be offered; we have now larger opportunities and better helps for doing the work, and enjoying the comforts, of that day than they then had; and therefore, now the bare rest from worldly labour is not in itself so much a sanctification of the sabbath as it was then. Yet we cannot think ourselves less obliged than they were to rest from worldly employments and recreation, as far as that rest will contribute to our attendance on the work of the day, with more solemnity, and with greater freedom and closeness of application, and without distinction.

Those, therefore, undoubtedly profane the Lord's day, who absent themselves from the public worship of God, either the former or the latter part of the day, that they may underhand follow their callings, settle their accounts, drive bargains, push on journeys, make visits, or the like, unless when the occasion is urgent, and mercy comes to take place of sacrifice.

Yet, not they only are guilty of the breach of the sabbath rest, who spend that part of the day, which we call "church time," in worldly employments and recreations; but they also who spend the time before, between, and after public worship, so as either to intrench upon that full scope of time, that they ought to take on that day, for their secret and family worship, and to abridge themselves of that, or so as to unfit themselves and put themselves out of frame for holy duties, or obstruct their profiting by them, do violate the sabbath rest. Works of ne-

cessity (which yet ought not to be a self-created necessity) we are allowed time for, the body must be fed, and clothed, and rested, that it may be fit to serve the soul in the service of God on this day. But no more of the time than is convenient for these must be alienated from the business of the day; if it be, we break in upon the appointed rest.

Those who go to their shops, and exercise their trades openly or secretly on the Lord's day, thereby show that they mind the world more than God, and that they are more solicitous for the meat that perishes, than for that which endures to eternal life; and those who go to the ale-house, or follow their sports, and divert themselves or others with idle walking and talking, show that they mind the flesh more than God, and that they are wholly taken up with the mere animal life, and wretchedly estranged from the principles, powers, and pleasures of the spiritual and divine life.

If any pretend that they can perform the work of the Lord's day well enough, though they do not observe the rest of the day, they suppose themselves wiser than God, who has instituted the sabbath rest in order to the better and more solemn management of the sabbath work, both public and private.

We find now who are chargeable with the sin of profaning the Lord's day; let the conscience of every one that is guilty herein deal faithfully with him in the reading of this, and say, *Thou art the man*; thou art the man, the woman that maketh the day of the Lord either a day of idleness, or a day of worldly business, and dost not spend it in the service of God and communion with him. Either thou dost not diligently attend the public worship in its season, or but one part of the day, or without any just cause stayest at home, or walkest abroad, when thou shouldst be in the holy convocation; or, if thou go to church for fashion sake, thou thinkest when that service is over thou hast no more to do, and dost not spend the remaining part of the day as thou oughtest, in prayer, reading, meditation, and other religious exercises, alone and with thy family. God's time, which is devoted to him, and should be employed for him, thou givest to the world, and thy worldly business, or (which is perhaps more common) to the body, and to the ease and pleasure of it, and to the entertainments of a vain and foolish conversation. Art thou verily guilty in these or any of these things? This paper comes with an humble request to thee, that thou wouldest consider thy ways and amend them. •

This is one of those sins which the public attempts for the reformation of manners at this day are levelled against, at least in some instances of it; and justly, for the profanation of God's sabbaths, which he is very jealous for the honour of, is a sin, that brings judgments upon a land, perhaps, as soon as any other. It is a sin that *kindles fires in the gates*

of Jerusalem, (Jer. xvii. 27.) a sin that *brings yet more wrath upon Israel*, Neh. xiii. 17, 18. And, therefore, all who wish well to the public peace, and those, especially, who are intrusted with the preservation of it, are concerned in interest, as well as duty, to take care of the due sanctification of the sabbath, as far as it falls within their cognizance, so that whatever guilt of this kind particular persons may contract, it may not become national.

Now in our dealing with this sin, as we have this advantage, that we are not struggling with the violent impetus of a particular lust, appetite, or passion, which is commonly deaf to reason and expostulation; so, on the other hand, we labour under this difficulty, that they who are guilty of this sin, are commonly more ready to insist upon their own justification, than any other sort of sinners. It is a way that seems right, and they who walk in it say, *They have done no wickedness*; and not only so, but they are forward to censure and condemn those who allow not themselves the same latitude, as needlessly and superstitiously precise.

I should transgress the designed limits of this paper, if I should enter into the dispute concerning the perpetual obligation of the fourth commandment, which (as to the substance of it, the keeping of one day in seven holy to God) is I hope no dispute with us, since we are all agreed to pray to God to *show mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law*.

I shall therefore only in a few lines (that I may hasten to what I principally intend) endeavour to make out the divine appointment of the Christian sabbath, as a day of holy rest in order to holy work, by these three steps:

(1.) It appears by the light of nature, that there must be some such day observed. If God is to be worshipped by us solemnly and in comfort, there must be some fixed and stated times for the doing of it, the designation of which is necessary both to preserve the thing itself, and to put a solemnity upon it.

The Gentiles had days set apart to the honour of their gods, which they spent accordingly, in rest from worldly labour, and, by the solemnities of their religion, looking upon those as peculiar days, distinguished from and dignified above other days. Does not even nature teach men thus to own God the Lord of time, and to constitute opportunities for the public solemn worship of him? Now, if all people will thus walk in the name of their god, should not we walk in like manner in the name of the Lord our God? Mic. iv. 5.

(2.) It appears by the Old Testament, that one day in seven should be thus religiously observed. It is plain that a sabbath was instituted from the beginning, it was a positive institution in paradise, as marriage was; the former necessary to the preserving of the church and sacred fellowship, as the

latter to the support of families and human fellowship, Gen. ii. 2, 3. When the Scripture says expressly there, *that God rested on the seventh day*, and that *he blessed and sanctified it because he so rested*; we wrest the Scripture, if we suppose it recorded there as a thing done long after. By this management the plainest evidence of Scripture may be turned off and evaded. To suppose that sabbaths were not kept in the patriarchal age, because no mention is made of them in the history of that age, is absurd; since we have a record of the institution of the sabbath in the beginning, and an account of the religious observation of a sabbath, before the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, viz. when the manna was given, Exod. xvi. 23, 26. As at the first planting of religion in the world, so now at the revival of it out of its ruins in Egypt, one of the first things taken care of is the sabbath, and it is spoken of, not as a new institution, but as an old law, which, when Moses had notified the day to them, (they having lost their reckoning in Egypt,) they are sharply rebuked for the violation of, v. 28. *How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?*

The first word of the fourth commandment, *Remember the sabbath day*, plainly shows that it was the revival of an old commandment, which had been forgotten, viz. That one day in seven should be sanctified to God. It is the solemn declaration of an ancient institution, and is of perpetual obligation, that the seventh day, not the seventh from the creation, which in the revolution of so many ages, we cannot be infallibly certain of, but the seventh day, after six days worldly labour, is the *sabbath of the Lord our God*, and is so to be sanctified. And though God rested the seventh day from the creation, yet in the fourth commandment it is not said he blessed the seventh day, but he blessed the sabbath day, or a sabbath day, (in that proportion of time,) and sanctified it: and this part of the blessing of Abraham's seed comes upon the Gentiles through faith.

Very much stress was laid, in the times of the Old Testament, upon the observation of the sabbath, more than on any institution purely ceremonial: and the Old-Testament prophecies, that point at gospel times, make it part of the description of converted strangers, that they make conscience of keeping the sabbath from polluting it, Isa. lvi. 6.

(3.) It appears by the New Testament, that the first day of the week should be observed and sanctified as a Christian sabbath. It is evident to any who read the New Testament without prejudice,

[1.] That a weekly sabbath is to be religiously observed in the Christian church. We not only find no repeal of the fourth commandment, in the New Testament, nor any reason for the repeal of it; but on the contrary we find it expounded by our Saviour, and vindicated from the corrupt glosses of

the Scribes and Pharisees, who, as in other things they were profanely loose, so in this they were superstitiously strict. Several occasions Christ took to show that works of necessity and mercy are no violations of the sabbath rest; as Luke xiii. 14. John v. 18; ix. 14. and especially Matt. xii. 1, &c. Had the law of the fourth commandment been to expire presently, our Saviour would not have been so careful to explain it; but it is plain he designed to settle a point, which would afterwards be of use to his church, and to teach us, that our Christian sabbath, though it is under the direction of the fourth commandment, yet, it is not under the arbitrary injunctions of the Jewish elders.

Our Saviour has likewise told us, that the sabbath was made for men, and not for the Jews only; and that he himself was *Lord of the sabbath day*, that is, that it should be in a special manner his day, and devoted to him. He likewise supposed the continuance of a sabbath, to be so religiously observed by his disciples, at the very time of the destruction of Jerusalem, which put a final period to all the peculiarities of the Jewish economy, that he bids them pray that their then flight might not be in the winter, nor on the sabbath day, Matt. xxiv. 20. And the apostle (Heb. iv. 9.) plainly speaks of a sabbath, or day of rest, which believers have now under the gospel, like that day of rest which God instituted, when he had finished the work of creation.

[2.] It is likewise evident, that the day which the Christian church has in all ages observed, and does still, which is commonly reckoned the first day of the week, is the day which it is the will of Christ we should observe as our Christian sabbath. It is certain that the apostles were authorized and appointed to teach the churches of Christ those things pertaining to the kingdom of God, wherein he had instructed them; the Spirit was poured out upon them to enable them rightly and duly to execute their commission, so as to answer all the great ends of it. Now it is plain that the apostles and first Christians did religiously observe the first day of the week, as the day of their solemn assemblies for divine worship, (Acts xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2,) and that with a regard to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This they called, *The Lord's day*, (Rev. i. 10.) as a day that answers all the intentions of a weekly sabbath; as such it has been received and observed by the churches of Christ. *It is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it*, Ps. cxviii. 24.

What there was in the Old-Testament sabbath which was typical, has had and will have its accomplishment in the spiritual and eternal rest of true believers; but that which was the main scope of the fourth commandment, that the seventh day, after six days' labour, should be kept holy to God, remains still in full force. But now, under the New

Testament, a greater stress is laid upon the holy work of the day, than upon the holy rest, and upon the rest, only in order to the work, and worship, and the ends of it. When the church was in its infancy and childhood, it was dealt with accordingly ; a bodily rest was then mainly insisted on, as the sanctification of the sabbath, which was so called because it was a day of rest, for so sabbath signifies. But now, under the gospel, the church is grown up to full age, and, therefore, now more notice is taken of the business to which the day is devoted ; viz. joy in God, (Ps. cxviii. 24.) communion with Christ, (John xx. 19, 26.) and with the Spirit, (Rev. i. 10.) and with our fellow-Christians, Acts xx. 7. And as to the rest, this general rule is to be observed, that nothing be done to derogate from the solemnity and honour of the day, and to lay it common with other days, nor any thing to divert us from, or distract us in, any part of the work of the day. Yet, still it is not improper to call it the Christian sabbath, because it is a day of rest from the world, and rest in God.

Having thus endeavoured to set this matter in a true and convincing light, I come now to reason the case a little with the consciences of those who make light of the Lord's day. Those I mean who spend it, or any part of it, in idleness, sport, tippling, or secular business, and turn their backs upon the public worship of God in religious assemblies ; or, if not that, yet, either wholly neglect, or very carelessly and superficially perform, their secret and family worship. And O that I could offer something now, which by the grace of God might help to convince and awaken such !

I will take it for granted (sirs) that you have not abandoned religion, that you are not desirous to disengage yourselves from its sacred bonds, nor willing to disclaim its joys and hopes ; you are not arrived to that desperate resolution of living without God in the world ; no, it is not come to that with you. You have not renounced the Christian faith, nor abjured your baptismal covenant, nor by searing your consciences, as with a hot iron, marked them for the devil and hell ; what I shall say, will have little influence upon those who are of such a character as this. But to you, *O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men*, not to such incarnate devils : I speak to those, who, I hope, have some sense of religion, and of whose consciences God has still some hold.

Give me leave, therefore, to recommend to your serious consideration the two great intentions and designs of the Lord's day, which are (as far as lies in you) defeated and frustrated by your profanation of it, and your constant neglect of the duties of it.

The Lord's day was appointed to be kept holy and religiously observed,

I. For the glory and honour of God ;

II. For the good and happiness of man. So that all those who profane the Lord's day, do a great dishonour to God to whom it is dedicated, and no less an injury to themselves, for whose benefit and comfort it was intended.

I. In profaning the Lord's day you sin against heaven, and put a daring affront upon the divine authority and grace. Here let me speak boldly, let me speak warmly, as an advocate for God. I beseech you consider seriously what I have to say, and give me your patient hearing while I reason with you.

You are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and it is your honour and privilege that you are so ; you say you adhere to it, and you would not for all the world be unbaptized, nor renounce your Christian name. Suffer me then a little to expostulate with you upon the acknowledged principles of your baptism, which, I think, you are not true to, while you continue to profane the Lord's day as you do.

1. Have you no regard to the Eternal God, even the Father, that made you and all the world ? The sabbath was first ordained to be celebrated by the reasonable creatures in this lower world (for in the upper world they keep an everlasting sabbath) to the honour of the great Creator, as a standing memorial of the finishing of the work of creation ; that in the observance of it we may give him praise for the wonders we see in all the creatures, and may give him thanks for the favours and comforts we receive by them. This is specified in the fourth commandment, as the ground of that ancient institution, which bore date before the entrance of sin into the world.

The author and spring of all the movements of time justly claims to be the Lord of time, and he has wisely appointed one day in seven to be consecrated to him, as an acknowledgment that he is so, and that our times are both from his hand and in his hand. And dare you sacrilegiously rob him of this tribute, and demand to have even this also, as well as the rest of the days of the week, at your own disposal, to be given away to the world and the flesh ?

Consider (sirs) you are God's creatures, and the work of his hands ; you are his reasonable creatures, the priests of the visible creation, the collectors of his praises, to gather them in from the inferior creatures, which do all praise him objectively, and to pay them in by actual adorations. For this noble purpose you were endued with noble powers, those of reason ; you were taught more than the beasts of the earth, and were made wiser than the fowls of heaven. All the supports and comforts of your lives are likewise the creatures of God's power, and the gifts of his providence ; so that you are bound both in duty and gratitude to serve and praise him. And dare you then prostitute that time

to the world and the flesh, which is consecrated to the honour of your great Lord, the author of your beings, the protector of your lives, and the giver of all your comforts? You do thus in effect say to the Almighty, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*, like those impudent sinners, Job xxi. 14. *And do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish creatures and unwise? O faithless creatures and unjust?*

In your idle walks on the Lord's day, and the diversion you take abroad, while you find your own pleasure in them, I wonder how you can look either to the heavens above, or the earth beneath, or the ornaments of either, and not be ashamed to think, that when they observe their time of serving you, and contributing to your comfort, in the proper season of the day, the proper season of the year, according to the law of their Creator, you do not observe your time of serving God, and contributing to his praise, according to the law given you, but are playing abroad when you should be praying at home. The sun does the work of the day in its day, but you do not. The stork in the heavens knows her appointed time, and comes in her season to wait upon you; but you observe not the time God has appointed for your approaches to him. To say, can we not meditate, and praise our Creator, like Isaac, in the fields as well as in our closets, is no good reply to this reproof, unless your own hearts can witness for you, that indeed you do so, which I fear they cannot; for your walks are plainly chosen, to befriend your diversion by society, not to befriend your devotion by solitude.

When you spend any part of the Lord's day in the ale-house or tavern, do not the good creatures of God, which there you abuse, upbraid you with the basest ingratitude, that when you have been receiving the comfort of those gifts of God's bounty, the rest of the days of the week, you grudge to spend the Lord's day in humble and thankful acknowledgments of the goodness of God to the whole creation, and to you in particular. Do all God's works praise him every day, and will you think much this day, to join with his saints in blessing him? Ps. cxlv. 10.

Was it the will of God that his glorious rest from the work of creation, wherein the Eternal Mind took a complacency in the copies of its own wisdom, and the products of its own power, should be thus commemorated here on earth, by a holy rest every seventh day from worldly employments, while it is continually celebrated in heaven, by those blessed spirits there, who rest not day nor night from praising him? And will you in effect tell him to his face, that it does not deserve such a frequent and solemn commemoration? And is the will and law of the eternal God nothing with you? Is his authority and honour of so small account in your eyes? Shall the

service of the flesh, to which you are not debtors, be preferred before the service of your God, to whom you are infinitely indebted?

You have your lives from God, your bodies, your souls, all your powers, and all your comforts, and therefore you ought to be his subjects, and to pay him tribute; you are his tenants, and must not withhold his rent: this is his tribute, this is his rent. Sabbath time is demanded as his part of your time; let this then that is his due be justly and faithfully paid him in full: for *will a man rob God?* Your receivings from him are rich and constant; grudge him not these poor returns in their season.

2. Have you no regard to the Lord Jesus who redeemed you, and who gave his life a ransom for many? The New-Testament sabbath, being observed on the first day of the week, is without doubt designed particularly for the honour of Christ, and to be celebrated as an abiding memorial of his resurrection from the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and our accepted surety; for, as by dying he paid our debt, for he was delivered for our offences, so by his resurrection he took our acquittance, for he was raised again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. The advancement of that despised stone to be the head of the corner, was that which made this day remarkable, (Ps. cxviii. 22, 24.) and they who despise this dignified, distinguished day, do in effect still trample upon that exalted stone. It is for the Redeemer's sake that it is called, *The Lord's day*, an honourable title, and we ought to call it so, that we may show we look upon it as *holy of the Lord and honourable*, and may so honour it. It bears Christ's image, and his superscription; we ought, therefore, to render to him the things that are his.

You are called Christians; you profess relation to the blessed Jesus; you are baptized into his name, and wear his livery, and you say you hope to be saved by him; you are enrolled among his followers, and you have in his house, and within his walls, a place and a name; and can you find in your hearts, so treacherously, and so very disingenuously, to alienate from him any part of that time which he claims a special property in? Shall he to whom you owe your all, be defrauded of that little which he demands from you? You name Christ's name, you do well; but you contradict yourselves, and will be found liars and dissemblers, if you dare to profane his day, and grudge to spend it in his service to his praise.

Let me beg of you seriously to consider how much you are indebted to the Redeemer; from what a bondage, to what a liberty, and at what an expense, you were redeemed; think what were the kind intentions of the Redeemer's love, and what the blessed fruits of his undertaking; and you will see that you owe him even your own selves, all you are, all you

have, all you can do, all little enough, and too little; and will you then grudge him the whole of his own day, which is instituted in remembrance of that blessed work, for which we are so much indebted, and should be ever studying what we shall render?

As the Old-Testament sabbath was appointed to be a solemn memorial, not so much of the work of creation itself, as of the finishing of it; so the Christian sabbath was appointed, to preserve in remembrance Christ's resurrection, which gave the finishing stroke to his undertaking on earth. Now consider, if he had not finished his undertaking, what had become of us; if he had left it, no other could have taken it up; if he that laid the foundation-stone, as the author of our faith, had not brought forth the top-stone, as the finisher of it, we had been undone, for ever undone. Unworthy therefore, for ever unworthy, art thou of an interest in and benefit by this undertaking, if really thou make so light a matter as thou seemest to do of that weekly solemnity in which the remembrance of it is celebrated, not only for the advancing of the Redeemer's honour, but for the advancing of the Redeemer's designs and interests.

Let me therefore with all earnestness beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, if you have any regard to the sweet and blessed name of Jesus, into which you were baptized; that name which is above every name, and which is as ointment poured forth; that name which is your strong tower, and your best plea for the best blessings; have a conscientious regard to that day which bears his name. As ever you hope to see the face of Christ with comfort, and expect he shall stand your friend, in the day of your extremity, testify your veneration for him now, by a veneration for his day, and dare not to break in upon that sacred rest, which is instituted to his honour, nor trifle away any of those precious hours, which he expects and requires should be employed in his service.

Shall we think one day in seven too much, when eternity itself will be too little, to be spent in the joyful contemplations, and thankful praises, of the height and depth, the length and breadth, of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Do the holy angels attend the Redeemer with their constant adorations, and praise him without intermission? and shall we who are more immediately interested in, and benefited by, his undertaking, convert to other purposes any of those few hours of the week which are consecrated to his praise? Is our Lord Jesus continually appearing in heaven for us, always mindful of our concerns there, and shall we make thus light of his glory, and care so little to appear before him, and before the world, for him? Might but the love of Christ command us, and that love constrain us, surely we should love the Lord's day,

for his sake whose day it is, would bid it welcome, and call it a delight.

3. Have you no regard to the blessed Spirit of grace, into whose name also you were baptized, and in honour of whom the Christian sabbath is celebrated? The first day of the week was observed by the disciples as a day of solemn meeting, from the very day that Christ rose, for we find them together again that day seven-night, probably by his appointment, John xx. 26. The day of Pentecost that year fell on the first day of the week, and on that day they were together in a solemn meeting, all with one accord in one place, when the Spirit descended upon them, Acts ii. 1, &c.

Now the pouring out of the Spirit was the great promise of the New Testament, as the incarnation of Christ was of the Old Testament, and was a gift to the church no less necessary and valuable than the resurrection of Christ. He rose to carry on the good work in us, without which we could have no benefit by his mediation. The influences and operations of the Spirit are as necessary to our salvation, as the satisfaction and intercession of the Son. When Christ rose he retired to heaven, to receive his kingdom and to prepare ours; but when he sent the Spirit, he did in effect return to his church on earth; for thus the want of his bodily presence was supplied, abundantly to the advantage of his disciples. It was expedient for us that he should go away, that he might send the Comforter, John xvi. 7.

To the descent of the Spirit we owe those gifts of tongues, which spread the gospel to distant nations, and to ours among the rest; and those inspired writings which propagated the gospel to after ages, and will perpetuate it to the end of time. Without this the earth, even within the church's pale, had been still a wilderness and a barren land; for it is only the pouring out of the Spirit upon us from on high, that turns the wilderness into a fruitful field, Isa. xxxii. 15. To the gift of the Holy Ghost is owing the conviction of conscience, the regeneration of the soul, its progress and advances in holiness, and all those consolations of God, which are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage: had not the Spirit been given to apply the redemption, we had never been the better for Christ's purchase of it.

Now it is in remembrance of these gifts given to men, after the Redeemer was ascended on high, that we celebrate the Lord's day; and therefore, to the right sanctification of it, it is necessary that we be in the Spirit, (Rev. i. 10.) that is, that we compose ourselves into a spiritual frame, and submit ourselves to the Spirit's workings. The greatest honour we can do to the Spirit, is to walk after the Spirit. We then give glory to the Holy Ghost, when we diligently attend to that word, which was given by his inspiration, and lay our souls under the commanding power and influence of it; when we pray in the

Holy Ghost, under the conduct of the spirit of adoption, teaching us to cry, Abba, Father; and when we carefully hearken to the checks, and follow the dictates, of a well-informed conscience. Thus the sabbath must be sanctified to the praise of the Blessed Spirit.

And is it nothing to you who profane the Lord's day, that thereby you reflect dishonour upon the Eternal Spirit, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and who with the Father and the Son, together is and ought to be worshipped and glorified on the Lord's day? You struggle against him who is given to strive with you for your good; you check your Monitor, you resist your Sanctifier, and grieve your Comforter.

Do you not indeed think it worth your while to spend so many hours every week, as the working part of the Lord's day amounts to, in the joyful, thankful commemoration of so great a blessing bestowed upon the church, which still remains a real benefit to all its ministers, and to all its members, and is the quickening root of all their fruitfulness and flourishing?

It was on the first day of the first week of time, that the Blessed Spirit moved upon the face of the waters to produce a world, a world of beauty and plenty, out of confusion and emptiness; and it was upon the first day of another week, that he descended on the apostles, and inspired them to produce a church; justly, therefore, is the first day of the week consecrated to the honour of that divine person, to whom we owe both our being, and our new-being, in order to our well-being. Profane not then that which is thus sanctified, to the praise of the great Sanctifier. How can you expect the comfort of his sacred influences, if thus you violate and break in upon his sacred interests? Our Saviour speaks of an affront put upon the Holy Ghost as more criminal, more dangerous, and of more fatal consequence to the sinner, than an affront put upon the Lord Jesus himself, Matt. xii. 31, 32. Not as if every sin against the Holy Ghost contracted the indelible stain of an unpardonable sin, God forbid! but it is intimated that there is a peculiar malignity and provocation in those sins, which put a slight upon the Blessed Spirit, as this certainly does, which not only profanes the time which is sacred to his honour, but neglects the opportunity of receiving his promised gifts, in the way of instituted ordinances.

If there be, therefore, any fellowship of the Spirit, value it, improve it, be not strangers to it. As ever you look for any comfort from the Holy Ghost, living or dying, here or hereafter, call it not a task, and a burthen, and a weariness, to separate yourselves from the world one day in a week, to an attendance upon the Spirit, that you may give honour to him, and may receive grace and comfort from him; but rejoice in those stated opportunities, not only of

professing, but of improving, your faith in the Holy Ghost.

You see (brethren) how great and honourable, how holy and reverend, these names are by which we plead with you, and beseech you not to profane the Lord's day. I am willing to hope, that in what you do, you intend not an affront to the eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; you still honour God with your lips, and call yourselves by his name; but whether you intend it so or no, you see it is with good reason so interpreted. Every contempt of the day of the Lord is, if not designedly, yet constructively, a contempt of him who is the Lord of the day; and so he will resent it, and reckon for it, for in the matters of his worship the Lord whose name is *Jealous* is a *jealous God*. I beseech you, therefore, (brethren,) for the sake of the blessed God, whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve, and to whom you are accountable, if you have any respect to the honour of his name, and the interests of his kingdom, and desire of his favour and grace, or any dread of his wrath and curse, *Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, for it is the sabbath of the Lord your God*. Do not alienate to the world and the flesh any of those precious minutes, which he challenges a special property in; but by a double care and diligence for the future, endeavour to make restitution of those which by your neglects hitherto you have embezzled. God fills up your time with mercy, look upon yourselves, therefore, as bound in gratitude to fill up his time with duty; so shall God have the praise, and you the comfort.

II. In profaning the Lord's day, you sin against your own souls, and throw away that good and benefit, which is designed both to others and to yourselves by the institution of it. Our Saviour has told us that *the sabbath was made for man*, and it is reckoned among the favours God showed to his Israel, that he made known unto them his holy sabbath, Neh. ix. 14. And if the Old-Testament sabbath was so great a privilege, much more is our Christian sabbath so, for the New Testament begins with a proclamation of good-will toward men. If the ministration of death was glorious, much more the ministration of the Spirit. We solicit you for your own good, and beg of you to consider for what ends the Lord's day was appointed in your favours, and if you will but consult yourselves, and the comfort of your own souls, you will study to comply with the intentions of it; if thou be wise herein, thou shalt be wise for thyself.

1. The Lord's day was appointed for the benefit of the church and Christian societies. It was wisely designed, that by the religious observance of that day, and a visible difference made between it and other days, a face of religion and godliness might be kept up, and a profession of Christianity maintained, published, and propagated. This is the show

of that substance; and though the show without the substance, the form of godliness without the power of it, will not avail particular persons that rest in it; yet, it is for the advantage of the church in general, and helps to support it in the world.

It would have been hard for all Christian churches, by a common consent among themselves only, to have agreed upon such a badge and token of the communion of saints, as the solemnizing of the Lord's day is; and therefore the wisdom of the church's head and lawgiver has appointed it. Thus still the sabbath is a sign, a distinguishing sign, as it was to Israel of old, *Exod. xxxi. 13*. In the primitive times, when a Christian was examined by the heathen judges, *Hast thou kept the Lord's day?* His answer was, *I am a Christian*; intimating, that being a Christian he durst not do otherwise. By this might all men know who were Christ's disciples; it was one of the badges of their profession; so that in sanctifying the Lord's day, we testify our relation to, and concurrence with, all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Since all Christians cannot possibly meet in one and the same place, by meeting thus on one and the same day, and that the Lord's day, they testify their communion with each other in faith, hope, and love, and that though they are many, yet they are one. Those, therefore, who violate and profane the Lord's day, do as much as lies in them to thwart and defeat this intention.

I beseech you consider it seriously, you are baptized into the great body, and by virtue of that you are called Christians, and it is your honour; but unworthy, for ever unworthy, are you of that honour, while you manifestly do disservice to the Christian name and cause, stain the beauty of its profession, stop the progress of its interest, and endanger the cutting off of the entail of it, by putting the Lord's day upon a level with other days, and in effect, trampling upon it as a common thing: hereby you pluck up some of the best ranges of the church's pale, and lay all in common. Take away the conscience of sabbath sanctification, and you open a gap, at which all religion quickly runs out, and an inundation of wickedness breaks in of course; they who make no difference between God's day and other days, will not long make any difference between God's name and other names, and between God's book and other books. If sabbaths be generally neglected, Bibles, and ministers, and other institutions, will not be duly prized; and if these hedges of religion be broken down, religion itself will soon become an easy prey to the boar of the wood, and the wild beast of the forest.

And is it nothing to you whether the Lord Jesus has a church in the world or no? and whether his religion has a place and an interest among men or no? Are you indeed in confederacy with those who

have said, "Come and let us cut off the Christian religion, that the name of it may be no more in remembrance," *Ps. lxxxiii. 3, 4*. Certainly, if all should make as light of the Lord's day as you do, it would come to this in a little time; the light of the gospel would be put out, its coal would be quenched, and there would remain to it neither root nor branch. If these outworks be betrayed to the enemy, the main forts cannot long be maintained; but the gates of hell will prevail against the church.

Let me, therefore, beg of you for the church's sake, as you value its being and welfare, its continuance and prosperity in the world, if you have any regard to its bleeding cause, to its dying interests, and would help to revive it, do what you can to support the honour of the Lord's day. Let not Sion's friends deal treacherously with her, nor betray her to those who seek her ruin; let them not join with her enemies in mocking at her sabbaths; for if those fall into contempt, and the sanctification of them be disused, she soon sits solitary, becomes as a widow, and all her beauty is departed from her. I refer to those complaints, *Lam. i. 1, 2, 6, 7*. You would willingly see the good of Jerusalem, and religion in a flourishing state; help then to maintain the honour of God's sabbaths, and thereby show before the churches your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ.

2. The Lord's day was appointed for the weaning of us from this present world, and the taking off of our affections from the things of it, by giving a stop and pause once a week to our secular pursuits; and we lose this benefit of it if we neglect it, and violate the appointed rest of that day. It is certain that much of the power of godliness lies in our living above the world, and being dead to it; those are Christians indeed who look upon the things that are seen with a holy indifference and contempt, as those who know their felicity and portion, lie in the things that are not seen.

But it would be very hard, and even impossible, to attain to this heavenly mind, if we were to be constantly in the crowd and hurry of worldly employments and recreations, and in an uninterrupted converse with the things of sense and time: if every day were to be entirely for the world, without any intermission, every thought and intent of the heart will be for it too, and the whole soul will be plunged and lost in it.

And, therefore, he who knows our frame, and that we are, in mind as well as body, dust, apt to move toward the dust of this earth, and to mingle with it; he who knows where we dwell, even where Satan's seat is, the prince of this world, (*Rev. ii. 13*) has wisely and graciously appointed us some rest from our worldly pursuits. His providence has appointed us the natural rest of every evening, which calls us in from our work and labour, and gives us some at-

vantageous minutes (if we have but wisdom to improve them) for retirement into ourselves; and reflection upon ourselves, for communing with our own hearts, and meditating on God and his word. But this is not all; his grace has also provided for us the instituted rest of every sabbath, which gives us a longer breathing time; that while our hands rest from the business of the world, our minds may rest from the cares of it, and so we may be saved from the inordinate love of it.

Six days thou shalt labour and do all thy work, all that work that must be done for the body thou carriest about with thee, that that may be supported, and for the world thou livest in, that thou mayst pass comfortably through it; but thou must shortly put off this body, and bid adieu to this world; and therefore, one day in seven thou shalt rest from this work and labour, and lay it aside, that thou mayst recall thy thoughts and affections from the world and the body; and so learn to sit loose to them, and by these frequent acts confirm the habit of heavenly-mindedness. By our weekly retirements from the world, it will be made the more easy to us always to live above the world, as those who are strangers and sojourners in it.

And do you not find (sirs) that there is need of such pauses, such parentheses, as these? Do you not find the world encroaching upon you, and gaining ground in your hearts? Do you not experience the insinuating nature of these present things, even of care and toil about them, which are strangely bewitching; and that by constant converse with the things of the earth, we grow in love with them and become earthly? And will you not then take the advantage which this institution gives you, to recover the ground you lose all the week, by a total cessation of worldly business on the Lord's day? By a close application of yourselves to the proper business and pleasure of the Lord's day, you will find yourselves so well employed, and so well entertained by your religion, that you will look with a holy contempt upon the employments and entertainments of the world.

Let me add under this head, that your accustoming of yourselves to a strict retirement from the world on the Lord's day, will make your final removal out of it at death more easy and less formidable. Brethren, you are dying, your souls are continually in your hands; death will shortly seal up your hands, it will cut off all your purposes, and put a full stop to all your pursuits; yet a little while, and the place that knows you will know you no more; yet a little while, and you must bid an eternal farewell to your houses and lands, your farms and merchandise, and this will be a hard task, if you never knew what it was to intermit these cares and pleasures. If you will not think it worth your while to leave them at the bottom of the hill, while you go up to worship,

with a purpose to return to them again, as Abraham; (Gen. xxii. 5.) what a difficulty will it be to you to leave them, not to return to them again! You cannot find in your hearts to keep from your shops or sports, to lay aside your worldly business and diversions, one day in seven; how then will you persuade yourselves willingly to quit all at death? which yet you must do, whether you will or no. We must forsake these things shortly; to prepare us for which, it is good for us, at least as often as God hath appointed us, to forget them now, and lay aside the thoughts of them. If we would make a virtue of the necessity we shall be under of leaving the world when we die, let us make a necessity of the virtue of retiring from the world, and putting off the care and business of it, every Lord's day.

3. The Lord's day was appointed for our communion and fellowship with God, with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, and we are enemies to ourselves, if we neglect to improve it for this purpose; we are on that day not only called off from the world, but called up into the *holiest*, into which, by the blood of Jesus, we have access with humble boldness. We are invited from on high, *Come up hither*, to the highest degrees of comfort and honour that man on earth is capable of, and will you choose to tarry below, to converse with earthly things, when you are invited to a conversation with things heavenly and divine? How much soever this may seem a paradox to those who are strangers to the life of God, and to the power of godliness, all who are serious and devout know what it is.

This is a day in which we are with all humility to make visits to God, and with all reverence and observance to receive visits from him; to hear what he speaks to us out of his word, and to speak to him by prayer. This is the proper conversation of that day, for this it was instituted and intended; and, therefore, to spend it in idle visits, and in impertinent talk, either foolish in itself, and which would be culpable any day, or, at least, in that which is foreign to the business of this day, is to put a great slight upon God Almighty, and upon the provision he has made for our communion with him. It is as if a prince, or some great or wise man, should invite you into his company, offer to entertain you with the most pleasant and edifying discourse, and appoint a time and place for the interview, and you should leave him, and turn your back upon him, to go and talk with some idle beggar or buffoon at the door. Would not this justly be construed an intolerable affront? Would you not blush to think that you should ever be guilty of such a piece of rudeness? Would you not expect to be forbidden the house and presence of the person you had thus slighted? Yet you do ten thousand times worse than this, when you trifle away that day in common conversation and business, which God has appointed you to spend in

communion with himself, according as your opportunities are.

The whole life of a Christian ought to be a life of communion with God; our eyes must be ever toward the Lord, we must walk with him, and set him always before us, and in all our ways we must acknowledge him. Now, in order to the keeping up of this habitual regard to God, wherein consists so much of the power of godliness, it is requisite that we be frequent and constant at stated times in the solemn acts of devotion. We contract an acquaintance with our friends, and an affection for them, by being often in their company, interchanging knowledge and love: thus our acquaintance with God is cultivated by religious worship, and without that it withers and dies, and comes to nothing. The divine life is supported and maintained by the receiving and digesting of the bread of life, and no otherwise.

Communion with God is in short this: it is to admit into our minds the discoveries God has been pleased to make of himself, and of his will and grace, and to dwell upon them in our thoughts, and to make returns of agreeable affections and motions of soul suited to those discoveries. It is to delight ourselves in the pleasing contemplation of the beauty, bounty, and benignity of our God, and to employ ourselves in the pious exercises of faith, love, and resignation to him, and in the joyful praises of his name.

And is one day in seven too much to be spent in such work as this? Or shall we break in upon the bounds which the divine law has set about that mountain, on which God has promised to come down, —and lay it in common with the wilderness? Should we not rather wish that every day were a sabbath day, and that we might always dwell in God's house, with them who are there still praising him?

If we did indeed love God, as we ought, with all our heart and soul, we would not say, when we have been attending upon him two or three hours in public worship, now we have sure done enough for this day, when we are invited, encouraged, and appointed still to continue our communion with him, still to feast upon his holy word, and repeat our addresses at the throne of his grace in our closets and families. Would we be so soon weary of an intimate conversation with a friend we love and take pleasure in? No, with such a friend we contrive how to prolong the time of conversation, and when the hours of sitting together are expired, we stand together, and, as those who are loth to part, bid often farewell, and we add to this a walk together for further discourses. *Is this thy kindness to thy friend*, and wilt thou say of communion with thy God, *Behold what a weariness is it?* and contrive excuses to contract it, to break it off, or cut it short?

Reading the Holy Bible and other good books,

repetition, catechising, singing psalms, praying, praising, profitable discourse; these are the exercises which, if they meet with a heart piously and devoutly affected toward God, will furnish us with such a pleasing variety of good works, to fill up those hours of the Lord's day which are not spent in public worship, or in works of necessity and mercy, and will turn so much to our advantage, that we shall complain of nothing so much as the speedy returns of the sabbath evening, and the shadows thereof. Did we call the sabbath a delight, as we ought, and the work of it a pleasure; we would be ready to say, *Sun, stand thou still upon this Gibeon*; let the day be prolonged, and the minutes of it doubled, for *it is good to be here*, here let us *make tabernacles*: or rather let us endeavour, by the grace of God, to do a double work in a single day, and long to be there where we shall spend an everlasting sabbath in communion with God, a sabbath that will have no night at the end of it, nor any week-day to come after it.

You who trifle away sabbath time, I beseech you consider this seriously; *Seemeth it a small thing to you, that the God of Israel has separated you to bring you near to himself?* That he has not only admitted you into covenant, but invited you into communion with himself? And is this a favour that must go a begging with you, and that after all the court it makes to you, you will not be persuaded to accept of? And shall the conversation of a vain companion in an ale-house or tavern, the entertainments of a coffee-house, or an idle walk into the fields, be preferred before the honour and pleasure of communion with God in Christ? And will you indeed choose these broken cisterns rather than the fountain of living waters; these lying vanities rather than your own mercies? God in mercy open your eyes and show you your folly! Would David rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness? and will you rather be door-keepers, slaves, and drudges, in the tents of wickedness, than dwell in liberty, ease, and honour in the house of your God?

O that I could now prevail with you to look upon it as your main business on the Lord's day, from the beginning to the end of the day, to converse with God, and to mind it accordingly. If God will condescend to meet with you in your secret, as well as public, addresses to him, and has appointed you a set time for them, be not you so rude to him, and so unjust to yourselves, as to neglect them, or make but a short and slighting business of them.

4. The Lord's day was appointed for our furtherance and increase in holiness, and the carrying on of the work of sanctification in us; in the due performance of the work of the Lord's day, and the due observance of its rest. In order thereunto there is not only the pleasure of maintaining communion

with God, but the real benefit of increasing our conformity to him. This profit we shall have, if we pray to him, and keep his ordinances; while thus we behold the glory of the Lord, we are through grace changed into the same image. By worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness, we come to be partakers of his holiness, and so the beauty of the Lord our God is upon us. And is it not worth while to oblige ourselves to the strictest and most careful observance of the Lord's day, in prospect of those advantages by it?

The sabbath day is a market day, a harvest day for the soul; it is an opportunity,—it is time fitted for the doing of that which cannot be done at all, or not so well done, at another time: now, if this day be suffered to run waste, and other business minded than that which is the proper work of the day, our souls cannot but be miserably impoverished and neglected, and the vineyards, we are made keepers of, cannot but be like the field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding. While you make no conscience of keeping the sabbath day, and improving the precious minutes of it, no wonder that you are ignorant in the things of God, fools, or at least but babes in knowledge, for that is the time of getting understanding; no wonder that your lusts and corruptions are so strong as they are, and you so unable to resist Satan's temptations, your graces so weak, and you so unready to every good word and work; for when you should be furnishing yourselves with what is needful for the support of your spiritual life, and the carrying on of your spiritual warfare, you are doing something else, that is not only foreign and impertinent, but prejudicial and inconsistent.

Solomon has long since pronounced it, not only as the sentence of a wise king, but of a righteous God, that he who sleeps or plays in harvest, is a *son that causeth shame*, and when he *begs in winter, he shall have nothing*. This is your character, and this, if you do not repent and amend your doings, will be your case. If at last you perish eternally, under the power of a vain and carnal mind, and go down to hell in impenitence and unbelief, your contempt and profanation of the Lord's day will greatly aggravate your condemnation; because your due improvement of that sacred day would have been a means to prevent your coming to that place of torment, without a messenger sent to you from the dead.

Sirs, it is better to think of this now, when lost sabbaths may be redeemed by an after care and diligence, than remember it in the bottomless pit, when the reflection upon it will but pour oil into the flames, and it will be too late to retrieve the precious hours that you are now so prodigal of. O what a cutting, what a killing, remembrance will it be hereafter, to think, if I had spent that time on the

Lord's day in reading and meditation, in prayer and praise, and the study of the Scriptures, and other religious exercises, public, private, and secret, which I spent in tippling, or sporting, or working at my calling, or in idle or unprofitable conversation, I might have got that knowledge and grace, and kept up that communion with God, which would not only have prevented my misery in this land of darkness, but would have prepared me for the inheritance of the saints in light! If I had been as eager to get wisdom, as I was to get wealth, and as solicitous and industrious to please God, as I was to gratify my own sensual appetite, and to recommend myself to a vain world, I might have been eternally happy, and equal to the angels of light, who am now likely to be for ever miserable, a companion with devils, and a sharer with them in their endless pains and horrors.

Then, O then, thou wouldst give a thousand worlds, if thou hadst them, for one of those days of the Son of man thou art now so prodigal of. But the impassable gulph between thee and that grace which is now offered thee, will then be immovably fixed, the bridge of mercy will then be drawn, and the door of hope will be shut for ever. Sabbaths cannot then be recalled, nor will the offers of life be made thee any more; now God calls and thou wilt not hear, then thou shalt call and he will not hear. Thou art now called once a week to rest; to rest from the world, and rest in God; but thou callest even this rest a weariness, and snuffest at it; justly, therefore, will he swear in his wrath, that thou shalt never enter into that rest of which this is a type, and if thou be shut out from it, thy condition will be for ever restless. Surely thy heart is desperately hardened, if this consideration make no impression on thee.

5. The Lord's day was appointed to be an earnest and sign of our everlasting rest; the rest that remains for the people of God. It is intended to remind us of heaven, to fit us for heaven, and to give some comfortable pledges and foretastes of the joys and glories of that blessed state, to all those who have their conversation in heaven, and their affections set upon things above. These are the days of heaven, and if heaven be an everlasting sabbath, surely sabbaths are a heaven upon earth, in them *the tabernacle of God is with men*.

And have you no value for eternal life, (sirs,) no concern about it? Is heaven nothing to you, or not worth the thinking of? Do you indeed despise the pleasant land, and prefer Egypt's garlic and onions before Canaan's milk and honey, and a mess of pottage before such a birthright and the privileges of it? Your profanation and contempt of the Lord's day plainly says that you do so, and according to your choice you shall have your lot, *so shall your doom be*.

You say you hope to be saved ; but what ground have you for those hopes, while you plainly show that you neglect this great salvation, by your neglect to commemorate Christ's resurrection, by which it was wrought out, and your neglect to improve the means of grace, by which you are prepared for it ? If you had indeed any good hope of eternal life, you would not think much to spend one day in seven, in the joyful contemplation of it, and in getting yourselves ready for it.

You say you hope to go to heaven ; but what pleasure can you take in the expectations of an everlasting sabbath, and of the employments and enjoyments of that world, when you are so soon weary of these short sabbaths, which are types of that, and are ready to say, *When will they be gone?* What pleasure can it be to you to be for ever with the Lord, to whom it is a pain and a penance to be an hour or two with him now ? What happiness will it be to you to dwell in his house, and to be still praising him in heaven, who, by your good-will, would be never praising him on earth, but grudge the few minutes that are so employed ? Heaven will not be heaven to a sabbath-breaker, for there is no idle company, no vain sports, no foolish mirth or unprofitable chat, there ; and these are his delights now, which he prefers before that communion with God, which is both the work and bliss of that world. All who shall go to heaven hereafter, begin their heaven now ; as in other things, so, particularly, in their cheerful conscientious observance of the Lord's day.

And now lay all this together, and then tell me if there be not a great deal of reason why you should keep holy the sabbath day, *call it a delight, holy of the Lord*, and therefore truly honourable, and why you should therefore honour and sanctify him on that day ; not doing your own ways but his ; not finding your own pleasure, but aiming to please God ; not speaking your own words as on other days, but speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Isa. lvi. 13.

Can the entanglements of custom, company, carnal pleasure, or worldly profit, be more powerful with you than all those sacred cords and bonds ? Can the pleasing of a customer, the obliging of a friend, much less the gratifying of a base lust, balance the displeasing of God, the dishonouring of Christ, and the wronging of your own souls ? I beseech you to consider it seriously, and be wise for yourselves.

After these considerations which I have urged, surely I need not insist upon any other. I am confident, the reigning love of God in your hearts, and a

deep and serious concern about your precious souls and their eternal welfare, will furnish you with considerations sufficient to oblige you to as much strictness and care in the sanctification of the Lord's day, as the word of God requires, and as is necessary to answer the intentions of the institution : and more than this we do not insist on. Think much of that of the Pharisees, which though blasphemously misapplied to the Saviour, was grounded upon a great truth ; *This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day*, John ix. 16.

Will it be to any purpose to suggest this further consideration to you ; That the way to prosper in your affairs all the week, and to have the blessing of God upon you in them, is to make conscience of the Lord's day ? That truly great and good man, the Lord Chief Justice Hale, writes very solemnly to his children ; " I have found by a strict and diligent observation, that a due observance of the duties of the Lord's day hath ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of my time, and the week that hath been so begun hath been blessed and prosperous to me ; and on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful and unhappy to my own secular employments the week following. This I write, (saith he,) not lightly or inconsiderately, but upon long and sound observation and experience."^a

Shall I remind you how much it will be for your credit with all wise and good people ? Those who honour God he will honour. Shall I tell you with what comfort you may lie down at night in the close of a sabbath, after you have carefully done the work of the day in its day ? Yea, *thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet*. Especially, think how sweet and easy your reflections upon well spent sabbaths will be when you come to die, and with what pleasure you will then look forward upon the everlasting sabbath you hope to keep within the veil.

Wonder not that I am thus earnest with you in this matter ; I see how much depends upon it, and I persuade as one who desires and hopes to prevail with you ; let me not be disappointed, as you value the glory of your Creator, the honour of your Redeemer, and your own comfort and happiness in both worlds. I beseech you, *Remember the sabbath day*, the Christian sabbath, *to keep it holy*. Most certainly true that saying is, which I have somewhere met with ; *That the stream of all religion runs either deep or shallow, according as the banks of the sabbath are kept up or neglected*.

^a Lord Hale's Contemplations, vol. I. p. 323.

A CHECK

TO AN

UNGOVERNED TONGUE.

THE criminal we are now dealing with, is pronounced by an inspired writer, *An unruly evil, full of deadly poison*, (James iii. 8.) and, which is a very great discouragement to any attempt for the reformation of it, it is there said, *That the tongue can no man tame*: not that it is impossible for men to govern their own tongues, but it is extremely difficult, and next to impossible, to reclaim and reform the extravagances of other people's tongues. And yet, though no man can tame this unruly evil, doubtless, the almighty grace of God can. With *men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible*; even this. And that grace, though not tied to any methods in its operations, yet, ordinarily, makes use of the endeavours of men, as means to accomplish and effect its purposes.

Against this Goliath, therefore, we go forth to battle, though armed only with a sling and a stone, in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom it hath defied; leaving the success of the attempt to him who made man's mouth, and is alone able to new-make it, as he certainly does, wherever he gives a new heart.

And we will first mention particularly the most common and daring extravagances of an ungoverned tongue, and severally show the evil of them; designing and endeavouring thereby to confirm the innocent, and, especially, to reform the guilty: and then we will, in some general directions, offer something toward the cure of these epidemical diseases. And God grant that this labour may not be altogether in vain!

I. Profane swearing is one of the common transgressions, or rebellions rather, of an ungoverned, ill-governed tongue. A sin so common, that in most places it is become the vulgar dialect of all sorts of persons, with whose poisonous breath the air itself seems to be infected; and yet a sin so exceeding sinful, that the tongue is therein set against the heavens, (Ps. lxxiii. 9.) insults over and tramples upon that which is most sacred and honourable.

The malignity of this sin lies especially in the prostituting of that solemn appeal, which by an oath is made, to God's knowledge and justice, to the most impertinent and trivial purposes. Devout and religious swearing, when we are duly called to be sworn, is an ordinance of God, whereby we give unto him the glory due unto his name, as an omniscient, true, and righteous God. Profane swearing is a scornful and insolent contempt of that ordinance, treading it under foot, as a common thing, and

thereby doing despite to him, for whose honour it is intended. It is a sacrilegious alienating of those forms of speech which are consecrated to the glory of God, and turning them to a profane and wicked use; like Belshazzar's polluting the vessels of the temple, by gracing his drunken revels with them, which filled the measure of his iniquity. It is trifling and jesting with that, which in its own nature is awful and reverend, and which ought at all times to be treated and attended to with the greatest seriousness.

Some accustom themselves wholly to this language of hell; all their discourse is corrupted by it. They cannot talk with you about business, nor tell you a story, nor give you an answer to the most common question, but almost every other word must be an oath. It is so familiar to them, that it passes altogether unregarded; charge them with it, and they will tell you in the next breath, they do not know that they swore.

Others, with whom it is not altogether so common, yet think it no harm now and then, when they are in a passion, or speak earnestly, or when they are in company with those to whom they know it is agreeable, to "rap out an oath," (as they call it,) and perhaps, to multiply oaths; and by these frequent acts, at length they contract a habit, and become as bad as the worst. It may be, some swear under pretence of gaining credit, nobody will believe them unless they swear what they say; and I know no wise man will believe them the sooner for it; for he that can dispense with the sin of profane swearing, which he gets nothing by, I fear will not boggle much at the sin of wilful lying; especially, when any thing is to be got by it. Others swear under pretence of striking an awe upon their inferiors, nobody will fear them unless they swear at them; that is, they would rather be dreaded and shunned, as roaring lions and ranging bears, than respected and honoured as wise, sober, and religious men, who make conscience of what they say and do, even when they are ever so much provoked.

And there are many who are such hearty well-wishers to this sin, that though they have not yet learned to swear distinctly, and in plain English, for fear of the censure, either of the law, or of their friends, or of their own consciences, yet they venture to lisp this language, and have the Sibboleth of an oath, upon every occasion, at their tongue's end. Though it be not swearing at large, and in express terms, it is the abridgment of it; it is swearing in short-hand. They have learnt to contract wicked words, and to disguise them by half words, which, as they have the resemblance of profane swearing, take rise from it, and border upon it; are bad words, and at the best, are idle words, for which they must give account in the judgment; and being more than yea, yea, and nay, nay, more than bare affirmations

and negations, they come of evil, Mat. v. 37. No wise man will say he knows not what, or that which has no sense at all; and no good man will say that which he knows has the appearance of evil, and borders upon a bad sense.

And now, O that this paper might seasonably fall into the hands of the swearer, the common swearer, and the more cautious one, and might (by the blessing of God) be an effectual and happy means to convince and reform both the one and the other, before the flying roll which carries the curse (which we read of as the swearer's doom, Zech. v. 3, 4.) come into their houses, or, which is worse, into their souls, to consume them: that is a roll which cannot be slighted and thrown by, as I suppose this paper will.

You ask sometimes what evil there is in swearing? Why so much ado should be made about a common form of speech, and a man made an offender for a word? You plead, that it hurts nobody, words are but wind.

But you will not say so, if you can but be persuaded seriously to weigh the following considerations, and to fix them in your minds:

1. Consider what an enmity there is, in profane swearing, to the Blessed God, and what an indignity is done by it to his glorious and fearful name. Would it not be justly interpreted a very high affront to a magistrate, though a man like yourselves, if you should send for him in all haste, to keep the peace, to decide a controversy, to seize a criminal, or to do any act of his office; and when he comes, it is all ludicrous, and a jest, and you intend nothing but to make a fool of him, and to expose him and his authority to contempt and ridicule? How would such an intolerable abuse be resented among men, especially if it were often repeated! Yet just such an affront, a daring affront, does the insolent swearer put upon God Almighty; making his truth, justice, and omniscience to attend all the extravagances of an ungoverned passion and an unbridled tongue. And the affront is so much the worse, because it reflects upon his government, profanes his crown, disgraces the throne of his glory, vilifies his judgment-seat, and attempts to make it mean and contemptible, and thereby to render it questionable.

And is there no harm in this? Whence can this proceed but from that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and from a rooted antipathy to him, and to his dominion? To this poisonous fountain the Psalmist traces all these bitter streams, (Ps. cxxxix. 20.) *Thine enemies take thy name in vain.* It cannot be imputed either to the lusts of the flesh, or the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life; this is a forbidden fruit that neither is good for food nor pleasant to the eye, nor at all to be desired to make one wise, or bespeak one so; the sinner is not led to it by the love of pleasure, or the hope of any gain or reward;

it can, therefore, proceed from nothing else but a spirit of contradiction to God Almighty, a contempt of his honour, and a hatred of his government. This sin, as much as any other, seems to have taken occasion from the commandment, and to have put forth itself purposely in defiance of the divine law; so that it may be questioned whether there would have been such a sin as profane swearing, if it had not been prohibited by the third commandment. Now this renders the sin exceeding sinful, and adds rebellion to it; and the swearer being a transgressor without cause, (as the Psalmist speaks, Ps. xxv. 3.) is a sinner without excuse, and sins purely for sinning sake.

This is excellently expressed by our divine poet, Mr. Herbert:

Take not his name, who made thy mouth, in vain,
It gets thee nothing, and hath no excuse:
Lust and wine plead a pleasure, avarice gain,
But the cheap swearer, through his open sluice
Lets his soul run for nought, as little fearing:
Were I an epicure, I could hate swearing.

And thinkest thou this, O man, whoever thou art that thus affrontest the majesty, ridiculest the government, and defiest the judgment, of the eternal God, that thou shalt go unpunished? *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* He is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not see it trampled upon and made a by-word, as it is by every profane swearer. You would resent it, if your names should thus be turned into a proverb, and jested with by every idle fellow; and what then will God do for his great name, which is thus abused? Shall he not visit for these things? Shall not his soul be avenged on such sinners as these? Yes, no doubt, when the day of recompence comes; for, he has said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay. Nemo me impune lacessit*—*No one provokes me with impunity.*

2. Consider what an evidence it is against yourselves, that you have no fear of God before your eyes. Though you should indeed neither fear God nor regard man, yet why should you hang out a sign to give notice of this to every one who passes by? What need you declare your sin as Sodom, and thus publicly proclaim the devil king in your souls? Is it not enough, that you harbour in your hearts a secret enmity to God and godliness, but dare you thus avow the quarrel, and openly wage war with heaven? Dare you thus bid defiance to all that is sacred, and wear the livery of Satan's family? Is it not enough that your hearts are graceless, and you yourselves in the interest of the kingdom of darkness, but you must be industrious to let the world know this? Thy wisdom fails thee, indeed, if (like the fool Solomon describes) when thou walkest by the way, thou thus sayest to every one that thou art a fool, Eccl. x. 3.

Shall I beg of you to consider this a little : You are called Christians ; your baptism, which I take it for granted you have not renounced, entitles you to that worthy name ; you live in an age and place wherein it is your honour to be called by that name ; it will do you neither credit nor kindness to have your Christianity disproved ; nay, you would take it as an affront to have it questioned ; this you would have looked upon as a thing so certain, that " As I am a Christian " must pass for an oath with you, or vehement assertion ; which gives just cause to suspect that you have little value for your Christianity, since you are so willing to pawn it, as you do other sacred things, upon every trifling occasion. But while thus you boast of your Christianity, you do with your own tongues disprove it by your common swearing, and plainly give yourselves and your profession the lie. *Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.* I see not how it is possible that such a daring contempt of God's sovereign authority, and sacred name, as profane swearing (especially where it is commonly used) most certainly is, can consist with the reigning fear and love of God in the heart, and that sincere regard to the glory and honour of God, which are necessary to denominate a man a true Christian.

When Peter was charged with it as a crime, that he was a disciple of Christ, he took this method to make it appear that he was not, he began to curse and to swear, Matt. xxvi. 74. His speech indeed bewrayed him to be a Galilean ; but this manner of speech bewrayed him to be none of the followers of Christ, for none of them used to curse and swear ; all that knew any thing of their Master, and his life and doctrine, would certainly conclude so. When Peter therefore cursed and swore, he did as effectually deny his Master, as when he said, *I know not the man* : these are none of the spots of God's children. It was but once that Peter was thus guilty, and many a bitter tear it cost him ; let none, therefore, make Peter's example an excuse for their swearing, unless they intend, as he did, to signify thereby that they disown Christ, and their Christianity ; and since they are resolved not to be ruled by their religion, they disclaim all hopes of benefit by it. I have that charity for you, as to believe that you will not do this professedly, and, therefore, you should be so just to yourselves, as not to do that which amounts to it, and which is capable of such a construction, and which, the apostle tells us, endangers our falling into condemnation, Jam. v. 12. While there is a possibility of your being heirs of heaven, and of the inheritance of the saints in light, prove not yourselves the children of hell, by your speaking the language of that kingdom of darkness.

3. Consider what an injury it is to those with whom you converse. You think it does no harm to others, because it does not hurt them in their bodies,

goods, or good name ; but is harm done to the souls of others no harm ? Nay, is it not the worst harm you can do them ? If those who hear you swear be wicked, their hearts are hardened by it, and their hands strengthened, that they may not turn from their evil way ; from your poisonous breath they take their infection, and add this to all their other sins. And is it no harm to propagate sin, and to support the devil's interest, as his agents, and factors for hell ? Yes, it is harm to them who are thus, by your means, instructed and confirmed in wickedness ; and you will find it harm to you too, when you shall bear the iniquity of those who by your example are taught and encouraged to swear. To what a height will your account rise, when you shall be to answer for all the sins you have thus been accessory to ! Which, though it aggravate your sin, yet will not excuse those who have learnt this evil from you, nor lessen their account ; for they also shall die in their iniquity.

If they who hear you swear have the fear of God in their hearts, and any concern for his glory, their hearts are grieved, and their hands weakened. It may be, that they have not courage to reprove you for it, but it troubles them, and saddens their spirits, to hear God's name dishonoured, and his sovereignty thus insulted, and to see you thus sell your souls, and all your valuable birthrights, for less than a morsel of meat. It spoils the pleasure of their conversation with you, makes them shy of your company, and, perhaps, dull and uneasy in it ; such an affliction it is to them to hear you swear. When David had mentioned those who take God's name in vain, he immediately adds, *Do I not hate them, am not I grieved because of them ?* Ps. cxxxix. 21. Though now perhaps you make a light matter of this, and rather take a pride and pleasure in thus creating vexation to a good man ; yet, shortly, you will find it had been better that a mill-stone were hanged about your neck, and you cast into the sea, than that you should wilfully offend one of Christ's little ones. They are the words of our Lord Jesus, and we are sure no word of his shall fall to the ground.

Besides this, is it no harm to bring the curse of God into your house, which shall consume it ? Is it no harm to add to the measure of the nation's guilt, and to increase God's controversy with it ? *Because of swearing, the land mourns,* (Jer. xxiii. 10.) the land of your nativity, and is it nothing to you that you contribute to its grief, and to the reproach which this, as other sins, puts upon any people ? Prov. xiv. 34.

4. Consider, how very frivolous all your pleas in defence of this sin are, and how unbecoming one who pretends reason. When your own consciences sometimes rebuke you for it, and admonish you to reform, you shift off these convictions with such

trifling excuses as you would be ashamed to offer in any other case.

I cannot think of more than two things that you can allege in your own defence, and they have neither of them so much as the colour of an excuse; while there is all that intrinsic malignity in the sin which we have already showed you, and God has declared he will not hold you guiltless.

(1.) You urge, that it is what you have been long accustomed to, and you cannot leave it off. But this cannot make it lawful, no, not though the custom were of so early a date, that you were taught to swear, as soon as you were taught to speak; for though we brought sin into the world with us, that does not make it the less sinful; though it be bred in the bone it must be forsaken, or it will be our ruin. If it be absurd to allege a prescription against a record, in human courts, much more to allege it against a divine law. If a thief has been accustomed to stealing, or an assassin to blood and murder, that will be so far from justifying their villainies, that it will justly be accounted the highest aggravation of them.

Nor does it follow, that because thou hast long used thyself to this profane and blasphemous dialect, that it will therefore be impossible to leave it off; if thou wert sure that the next time thou swearest thou shouldst certainly have thy tongue cut out, or thy head struck off, I am confident thou wouldst break off the custom: and is not the wrath of God, and the damnation of hell, infinitely more formidable than any punishment man can inflict? It is indeed difficult for a man to change his language, and requires some care and pains, but by the grace of God duly and diligently improved, even this Ethiopian may be made to change his skin, and this leopard his spots. And if now thou wilt not believe it, thou wilt be convinced of it when it is too late, that it is better a thousand times, to break through the difficulties of a reformation, than to perish eternally in the sin.

Despair not of a cure though the disease be chronic, but apply thyself with resolution to the use of proper means: thou wouldst do so in case of bodily sickness; be as wise for thy soul then. If a diseased appetite has long used itself to trash and dirt, does it therefore follow that it must never be healed? If the prodigal have been long upon the ramble, must he never return to his father's house? Better late than never.

The longer thou hast been accustomed to the sin, the more need thou hast to repent and reform, and that quickly, lest thy heart be hardened, and thy conscience seared; and lest by a judicial sentence of divine wrath, thou be at length given up to thy own heart's lusts, abandoned by the divine grace, and repentance ever hid from thy eyes. God's Spirit is, it may be, now striving with thee, but if thou resist him, he will not always strive.

Let me add this further, to shame you out of this plea, that by persisting in this sin, after you have been plainly told the evil of it, you not only in effect disclaim your religion, but you likewise cast a reproach upon your reason. Nothing can be more absurd, than for a man that pretends to any degree of wisdom, to confess himself so weak, and so incapable of governing himself, as not to be able to forbear a bad word, which he knows *can* do him no service, but will certainly turn to his prejudice. *Remember this, and show yourselves men, men of reason, O ye transgressors,* and allow not yourselves in that which your own sober thoughts cannot but condemn.

(2.) You urge, that it is the fashionable language of the place you live in, and the company you converse with, and therefore you are not willing to leave it off. And if it were so, it is too great a compliment to be willing to go to hell for company. What will you get by herding yourselves with those who shall be bundled for the fire, and by doing as they do who are *treasuring up to themselves wrath, against the day of wrath*? That is an expensive fashion indeed, which we cannot conform to without losing the favour of God and ruining our souls for ever. If that which is fashionable were manifestly prejudicial to your health, and threatening to your life, you would rather be singular than sick; and would you not rather be singular than damned?

But the matter is not so; we will not grant that swearing is the fashionable language of our country, it is only the common language of the fools in Israel, who are the shame and scandal of their country. That which is in its own nature ugly and indecent, and a reproach to mankind, though it may in some places become common, yet cannot be made fashionable. There are those, (thanks be to God,) there are many, who have a deep and sincere reverence for the blessed name of God, who fear an oath, and dare not profane it; there are enough such to save you from the imputation of singularity, and to keep you in countenance, though you distinguish yourselves from the vile herd of common swearers, and take not that imperious liberty of speech which they do, who say, *Our tongues are our own; who is lord over us?*

Is that to be called fashionable, which not only all the godly divines in the nation, of every persuasion, both in their preaching and conversation, witness against, as directly contrary to the law of God; but which has the laws of the land against it too, as an iniquity to be punished by the judge, and those laws enforced and strictly ordered to be put in execution, by her Majesty's most pious proclamations, and these publicly read, both in our churches, and in our courts of justice? Is that to be called fashionable, which is branded with so many marks of public infamy, and which is so frequently and so-

lemnly proclaimed to be a discredit to the kingdom, and a reproach to our holy religion? Shall it be in the power of a few inconsiderate, inconsiderable sots to keep up the reputation of that which all wise, sober, and good men are agreed to run down? Shall that be called fashionable among persons of distinction, which is become most customary with those of the meanest rank and employment, and is the vulgar language of the rakes, and such as are the refuse of the people?

Be persuaded, therefore, to break off all intimate society and conversation with those, who not only do such things, but have pleasure in them that do them; and with David, (Ps. cxix. 63.) be companions with those that fear God and keep his precepts, and then you will find it no hard matter (by the grace of God) to break off this wicked practice, how much soever you have been accustomed to it; and to forbear that language which you know is so provoking to God, so displeasing to all good men, and so destructive to the peace and welfare of your own souls.

Set a double watch before the door of your lips, that you thus offend not. Abstain from all appearances of this sin; avoid temptations to it. If gaming have insnared you in it, either never play at all, or fix it as a principle, that as there is no gain, so there is no game, worth a profane oath. Keep up a dread of the sin, which certainly you will do if you truly repent of it. Tremble to hear others swear. Learn to pray, and then you will not be so apt to swear.

II. Cursing is near akin to profane swearing, is the common companion of it, and is another of the exorbitances of an uncontrolled tongue. Cursing is wishing evil to ourselves or others, absolutely or conditionally; a sin exceeding sinful; as great an instance of the corruption and degeneracy of the human nature, and as sure an evidence of the reigning power of Satan in the soul, as any other whatsoever. Nothing is more naturally the language of hell than this; nay, the devil himself seems to have smothered the curse implied, when he said, (Job i. 11. according to the original,) *If he curse thee not to thy face*; but that which he stifled, his children speak out, wishing themselves confounded and damned, and what not, if such a thing be not so.

To show you the evil of it, I will only recommend two things to your thoughts:

1. Consider, what a brutish piece of madness it is to curse yourselves. If you do it absolutely, it is of the same nature with self-murder; wishing harm to yourselves is in effect doing it; and is a breach of one of the first and great laws of nature, that of self-preservation. If you do it conditionally, it is of the same nature with profane swearing, and incurs the same guilt, with this additional stain, that it is not only a mocking of God's government, by a ludicrous appeal to him, but a defying of his judg-

ment, a challenge to the Almighty to do his worst.

O the daring presumption of these sinners, sinners against their own heads, their own souls! The devils begged of our Saviour, whose power they were not ignorant of, not to torment them before the time; but these presumptuous wretches, as if they thought their judgment lingered, and their damnation slumbered too long, pull vengeance down upon their own heads, and pray to God to damn them; and they need not fear but they shall be heard, for so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it. They challenge the devil to take them, and he is ready enough to seize his prey. But, shall I ask you, are the arrests of devils, and the flames of hell, such delectable things that you should court them? Or are they only the creatures of fancy and imagination, that you should make so light of them? Be not deceived, God's judgment is not a jest, nor hell a sham; if you persist in this impious contempt of divine revelation, you will feel too late what you would not believe in time.

If you have no regard to God, nor any concern for his honour, yet have you no good-will to yourselves, nor any love to your own souls? Is it not enough that you are doing that every day which deserves damnation, but will you be solicitous to demand sentence against yourselves? It is but a moderate curse with you to wish yourselves hanged, yet, I have read of a person of quality in our own nation, who, coming to die upon the gallows for murder, publicly reflected upon it with bitter regret, that he had accustomed himself to that wicked imprecation, "and now" (says he) "I see the Lord is righteous."

But as if this were a small matter, you challenge God to damn you, and the devil to take you: and what if God should say "Amen" to the next curse, and immediately order death to fetch you, and hell to receive you? What if the devils should be ready at the next call, and take you presently? And *can thine heart endure, or thy hands be strong, when God shall deal with thee?* Art thou able to dwell with devouring fire, and to inhabit everlasting burnings? Knowest thou the power of God's anger? Is thy eternal salvation of such small account with thee, that thou art willing to pawn it upon every trifling occasion, and to imprecate the loss of it, if such or such a thing be not so, which it is very possible may prove otherwise? How darest thou thus *provoke the Lord to jealousy*, whilst thou canst not pretend to be *stronger than he*? 1 Cor. x. 22. *Woe unto you that thus desire the day of the Lord!* you know not what you do, for *the day of the Lord*, whatever it is to others, *will be to you darkness, and not light*, Amos v. 18.

2. Consider what diabolical malice it is to curse others. It is the highest degree of hatred, nor can any thing be more contrary than this to the royal

law of love and charity. He who prays to God to damn his neighbour, plainly intimates that he would do it himself if he could; and if he who hates his brother is a murderer, surely he who thus curses him is the worst of murderers, he is *Abaddon—a destroyer*. That tongue is doubtless set on fire of hell, which is for sending every body thither at a word, and which, by cursing men who are made after the similitude of God, would set on fire the whole course of nature, and is an advocate for the devil, that roaring lion which seeks to devour precious souls, Jam. iii. 6, 9. Must the righteous God be summoned to execute thy angry resentments, and called upon to destroy those whom he sent his own Son into the world to save, and to whom he is waiting to be gracious? Because thou art out of humour, must all about thee be sunk and ruined presently? As a madman in his frenzy throws about him firebrands, arrows, and death, so is he who curses his neighbour; nay, perhaps his wife, his child, his friend; and says, "Am not I in passion?" or, "Am not I in sport?" Hast thou no other way of signifying thy displeasure (if it be just) but by the imprecation of evil, the worst of evils, which bear no proportion at all to the offence given?

Put this case close to thy own heart. When thou wishest thy child, or servant, or neighbour hanged, confounded or damned, or sent to the devil, either thou meanest as thou sayest, or not. If thou dost not wish it, (as I charitably hope thou dost not,) thou art guilty of a manifest falsehood, and must own thyself a liar: if thou dost really wish it, (and what wickedness is it that will not enter into the heart of a furious man?) thou canst not but acknowledge thyself guilty of the most barbarous and inhuman malice imaginable. So that every curse proves thee a wilful transgressor, either of the law of truth, or of the law of love, two as sacred laws, and which have as much of the image of the law-maker, as any mankind is bound by.

Consider further, that the curses thou art so liberal of will not hurt those against whom they are levelled; thou dost but show thy ill-will; for *as the bird by wandering, and the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come*, Prov. xxvi. 2. But they will certainly return upon thy own head, to thy confusion, *As he loved cursing so let it come unto him:—into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones*, Ps. cix. 17, 18. They who are called to inherit the blessing, are commanded to *Bless and not to curse*, Rom. xii. 14. Believe it, sirs, curses are edge-tools, which it is dangerous playing with.

In your furious and outrageous cursing of the brute creatures, or that which is inanimate and incapable of the harm you wish it, what is wanting in malice is made up in folly and absurdity; like that which the apostle calls the *madness of Balaam*, when he wished he had his sword to kill his own ass with.

By such silly nonsensical curses as you sometimes throw about in your passion, you make it to appear, that with your religion you put off common sense. You are men, you are rational creatures; speak with reason then, and act with reason, and *be ye not as the horse and the mule, that have no understanding; as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed*.

III. Lying is another of the exorbitances of an ungoverned tongue, and a very pernicious one.

It has been said of some, that though they do not swear yet they will lie; it is to be feared there are those, of whom it is too true; and let them bear their own burthen; but let not those, who would not for a world do either, suffer for the same; nor let swearers think it will in the least excuse their sin, that there are liars who are no swearers. It is certain they are both damning sins, and either of them persisted in will undoubtedly be the ruin of the sinner. But if we may guess at one sin by another, it is more probable, (as I hinted before,) that they who make no conscience of swearing will not stick at lying; and we may charitably hope, unless we know the contrary, that they who dread a profane oath, will be as much afraid of telling a wilful lie.

Let me, therefore, in God's name, seriously apply myself to those who (as the prophet speaks) have *taught their tongue to speak lies*, Jer. ix. 5. For there is an art in it, whether they be such lies as seem to do good, or such as are directly intended to do hurt, or such as are idle, and intended neither for good nor hurt. If they are lies, they are sins against God, and all liars shall have their portion in the bottomless pit, if they repent not; and the nice distinctions with which they think to justify, or at least excuse, themselves, will prove, in the great day, but a refuge of lies, which the hail will sweep away, Isa. xxviii. 17.

1. A few words, one would think, may serve for the conviction and discovery of these sinners. Sure you need not be told what lying is; your own consciences will tell you, if they be not scared, or bribed, or forbidden to deal plainly with you.

In your bargains and contracts if you say that, either for selling the dearer, or buying the cheaper, which you know to be false, it is a lie. Yet how common is it, in the multitude of those words, for the seller to call the commodity good and cheap, and to aver that he gave so much for it, when he knows that it is neither so nor so! And the buyer in his bidding will call that worthless and dear which he has no reason to call so, and will say he can buy it cheaper elsewhere, when he does not know that he can. *It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone away, then he boasteth of a good bargain*, not considering that he was helped to it by a lie, Prov. xx. 14.

In your excuses which you make, either to superiors or equals, if you deny, extenuate, or conceal a fault, by representing a thing otherwise than it was.

though you may gain your point, and not be so much as suspected of falsehood, yet the guilt is never the less. When you are charged with any neglect or injury, you are ready to say you did not know, or did not remember, that which you are conscious to yourselves you did know, and did remember; you plead that you thought or intended so and so, when really you did not think or intend any such thing. These are the common refuges of those who are culpable, because the profession of a man's thoughts and purposes is not easily disproved. But though men cannot convict us of falsehood in those professions, he that searches the heart can. Men may be shammed with a frivolous excuse, but God is not mocked.

In your commendations of yourselves or others, if you give a better character than you know there is cause or ground for; if you boast of a false gift, and represent your abilities, possessions, and performances, to greater advantage than they deserve, and than the truth will bear, though these may pass for innocent hyperboles with those who take the same liberty themselves, yet your own consciences will tell you, if they be faithful, that hereby you add the sin of lying to the sin of pride, than which there are not two sins that God hates more.

In your censures, if you put false constructions upon the words and actions of your neighbours, making a great crime of that which was nothing, or next to nothing, unjustly aggravating faults, and making them worse than really they are, or representing that as certain, which is but suspected and doubtful, much more, if it should prove that you lay to men's charge things that they know not, hereby you involve yourselves in a double guilt, falsehood and uncharitableness.

In your promises, if you engage that you will do so or so, pay such a debt, or finish such a piece of work within such a time, or do such a kindness for your friend, when either you do not at all intend it, or foresee you cannot perform it, or afterward take no care either to fulfil the promise when it is in the power of your hand, or if disabled to do that, in due time to recall it, hereby there is guilt contracted. Either the promise should not have been made, or it should have been kept.

In your common reports, and the stories you tell for discourse sake, and the keeping up of conversation, if you report that as true and certain which you know to be otherwise, and do not make conscience of representing every thing as near as possible to the truth, and to your own sober thoughts, you become transgressors.

2. Sure there need not many words to persuade you to repent of this sin, and carefully to watch against it for the future, and all appearances of it. Consider how contrary it is to God; it is a breach of his law, it is a defacing of his image, for he is the

God of truth; and it exposes us to his wrath, for lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. Consider how conformable it is to the devil, and how much it makes you to resemble him, for he is a liar, and the father of it. It is an injury to your brother, not only to the particular person, who, perhaps, is wronged by it, but to human society in general. And it will be the ruin of your own precious souls, if you persist in it. They who thus do the works of the devil, shall have their portion with the devil and his angels. A lie is soon told, and perhaps as soon forgotten, and a light matter made of it; but the punishment of it will be everlasting, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, out of which there is no redemption.

IV. The common, careless using of the blessed name of God, without due application, is another instance of the ill government of the tongue, which needs a check.

Many who never curse or swear, yet allow themselves in the taking of God's name in vain, and either know not, or consider not, the evil of it, and the dishonour done (though not intended) to God by it. When you use those forms of speech, which are properly expressive of a pious ejaculation, in a light and careless manner, and to any other purpose than their genuine and original signification, which appears by your way of speaking not to be intended, but something else, you profane that which is sacred, and alienate to a common use that which appears to have been dedicated to God, and has holiness to the Lord written on it. To say, "O Lord," when you mean no more but "I am hurt;" and "God knows," when you mean no more but "I do not know;" and "God bless me," when you mean no more but "I am surprised;" and "God help you," when you mean no more but "I pity you," or any the like, is certainly taking the name of the Lord your God in vain, and to no purpose, that is, to no good purpose.

Now will you who accustom yourselves to this language consider a little,

1. That it is a great affront to the God of heaven. You hereby make his blessed name a by-word, and put that slight upon it which you would not bear to be put upon your own names. That is a great example which the bishop of Sarum tells us was observed of the honourable Mr. Boyle, that he never mentioned the name of God but with a discernible stop or pause in his discourse, in token of a reverence for that glorious and fearful name, and to leave room for a devout thought. Great and serious things ought to be spoken of with great seriousness, and they are abused if they are prostituted to a common use.

2. That it is certainly a breach of the law of the third commandment, which is very express, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,*

and it is backed with a threatening that *the Lord will not hold them guiltless* that do so, in which certainly more is implied than is expressed; it is supposed that many such will hold themselves guiltless, and think they do no harm, and others will hold them guiltless, but God will severely reckon with them, for he is a jealous God.

3. That it is a great profanation of the holy ordinance of prayer. The better any thing is, the worse it is when it is corrupted. There is nothing better than the devout and serious mention of the name of our God as there is occasion, nothing better than pious addresses to God when the heart goes along with them; but if this degenerate into a mockery, if the dead carcass hereof only is retained, and there is no spirit or life in it, if there be not so much as an outward solemnity and decorum observed, but the manner of using those good words plainly shows and avows it, that there is nothing pious and devout intended by them, it is in effect a banter upon prayer, turns it into burlesque and ridicule, and is exceeding offensive to God and good men.

It will be hard to use those words seriously, when they should be used so, which you have so often used vainly when you should not; and what comfort can you expect in prayer, when you are serious and need the comfort of it, if at other times you use the words of prayer thus lightly and profanely?

And now, shall I prevail with you never to mention the name of God but with seriousness, and in a holy and reverent manner? Say not you have so used yourselves to these expressions that you cannot leave them; resolution, by the grace of God, will change the dialect. Will those ever lose their lives for Christ who will not leave a sinful, inconsiderate word for him? One would think this a small piece of self-denial. Let the fear of God rule in your hearts, and always maintain a holy awe and reverence of him, and then out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak of him with reverence, and will not dare to speak otherwise. The description which the Scripture gives of hypocrites, (Isa. xlviii. 1.) is, that *they make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth*; but the description of true saints is, that *they think on God's name*, Mal. iii. 16. Act with reason, and either think of what you say, or do not say what you do not think of.

V. Scoffing at religion and godliness, and jesting with sacred things, is another of the exorbitances of an ungoverned tongue.

By the commonness of this sin, in this loose and degenerate age of ours, it appears that we live in the dregs of time; for the Scripture speaks expressly that in the last days, those corrupt and perilous times, there should arise *scoffers, walking after their own lusts*, 2 Pet. iii. 3. Profane people, when they set up for wits, think they cannot better show their wit than in endeavouring to justify their profaneness.

To show you the evil of it, consider,

1. The malignant principles whence it flows. When there is in the heart an habitual contempt of divine things, and an antipathy to them, and a reigning enmity to the power of godliness, thus it vents itself, and what is wanting in reason on its side, is made up in jest and banter. When men are resolved not to make themselves serious with the things of God, they will make themselves merry with them, and think they gain their point if they can but turn them off with a jest; as if that, which they are pleased to make the subject of their laughter, were therefore to be looked upon as a just object of contempt. They endeavour to represent the Word of God as a sham, heaven as a fool's paradise, and hell as merely the creature of a disordered imagination, by playing upon them, and turning them into burlesque; thus sporting themselves with their own deceivings; but it will prove like the Philistines' making sport with Samson, what they sport with will prove too strong for them, and their profane mirth will be a prologue to their ruin. *Be ye not mockers lest your bands be made strong*, Isa. xxviii. 22.

2. The mischievous consequences that flow from it. You who thus make a jest of holy things, though you make a light matter of it, ought to consider what you do, and what will be in the end hereof. Think what an affront you hereby put upon the blessed God, imputing folly to infinite wisdom, and vilifying him who is the fountain of honour. Think what an injury you hereby do to religion, and how much you serve the interest of the devil and his kingdom, as those who are retained of counsel in his cause. Seems it a light thing to you, that you are wicked yourselves, but will you do what you can to make others wicked too, that you may, besides your own torments hereafter, share in the torments of all the souls you help to ruin? Think how you will answer it at the great day, and what bitter reflections you will then make upon your daring impieties of this kind, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven to execute judgment upon all, for all their hard speeches spoken against him. It is better to reflect, and repent, and reform now, while there is a possibility of your reconciliation to the God you have provoked, than to be forced to remember it in hell to your utter confusion, in a state of endless and hopeless separation from God.

VI. Scurrilous and reproachful language given to those you have dealings with, or power over, is another exorbitance of an ungoverned tongue.

This is that which our Saviour has told us is a breach of the sixth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*; it is tongue-murder, a sin exceeding sinful, and certainly damning to the sinner if it be not repented of and forsaken; so he has forewarned us, who is to be our Judge. We are sure that his judgment will be according to the truth of his word;

and he has said, (Matt. v. 22.) *Whosoever shall*, in wrath and passion, *say to his brother, Raca*, Thou base, empty fellow, rogue, and rascal, (for *Raca* was used then as those opprobrious names are now,) he that does so *shall be in danger of the council*, that is, shall be exposed to the wrath and curse of the eternal God; and not only so, but if he had his desert should be called to an account for it by the civil magistrate, for it is an iniquity to be punished by the judge. And whosoever shall in like manner say, *Thou fool*; thou reprobate, thou wicked wretch, thou damned confounded fellow, *shall himself be in danger of that hell fire*, to which he so rashly condemns his brother.

Calling foul names, and giving foul language, especially to servants and inferiors, is grown so very common among us, that with those who live at large, and not only *set their mouth against the heavens*, but let their tongue walk at liberty through the earth, (Ps. lxxiii. 9.) it is looked upon as part of the accomplishment of a gentleman to be able to do it blusteringly, and with fluency and variety; and yet, perhaps, there are those of the meanest rank who may vie with them, and can do it with as good a grace.

But how common soever it is, and how much soever countenanced by the practice of some who make a figure, you see it is a sin expressly against the law of Christ, and is certainly included, and perhaps principally intended, in that bitterness and wrath, that clamour and evil speaking, which ought to be put far from us, lest we grieve the Holy Spirit of God, Eph. iv. 30, 31.

You who allow yourselves this liberty of abusing all about you, and of dealing nick-names, and names of reproach, at your pleasure among those you converse with, or have power over; shall I propound two or three things to your serious thoughts?

1. Consider who they are that you thus abuse and trample upon, thus taunt and hector over. Are they not your fellow-creatures, of the same rank of beings with yourselves? Were not you made of the same clay that they were, and as mean as they in your original? Were not they made by the same great and mighty hand that you were, and as honourable as you in their relation to the Father of spirits? This consideration swayed with holy Job to carry it with all possible tenderness and respect, even to his own servant, when he contended with him, (Job xxxi. 15.) *Did not he that made me in the womb make him?* And the same argument is urged in a case not much unlike, (Mal. ii. 10.) *Have we not all one Father? why then do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?*

Perhaps those whom you so readily, and with so great an assurance, call "fools" and "knaves," have as much ingenuity and integrity as yourselves; nay it may be they are every way wiser and better. However, as the apostle argues, (Jam. iii. 9.) they are

made after the similitude of God, they are of that species of creatures which was at first so made; and therefore God is reflected on by the ignominious treatment you give them. If they have natural defects and infirmities of body or mind, which they cannot help, those ought not to be turned to their reproach, for they are as God made them, and he might have made you so. If their condition in the world be mean and despicable, and the distance that Providence has put between you and them seems great, it does not therefore follow that you may give them what language and what usage you please. Though God be high, yet has he respect unto the lowly; much more should you. *He that mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker*, (Prov. xvii. 5.) not only him that made him, but him that made him poor.

The crime is much aggravated if those you thus abuse are pious and good, such as by grace are renewed after the image of God, and made partakers of his holiness, which possibly they may be, and yet not be numbered among either the witty or the wealthy part of mankind. Whatever you may think of yourselves, in comparison with those you thus insult over, a wiser than you, even infinite wisdom itself, has said it once, yea twice, (Prov. xix. 1. and ch. xxviii. 6.) *Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity than he that is perverse in his lips, though he be rich*. Will you then despise those whom God has honoured, and lay those under your feet whom God has laid in his bosom? Dare you put those among the dogs of your flock, whom Christ has put among the lambs of his flock?

2. Consider, that there is no good done by this sort of language, but a great deal of hurt. What desirable end can you propose to yourselves in it? You would be obeyed, you would be feared, and will not the meekness of wisdom command respect a thousand times better than the outrages of folly? It is certain there is nothing you say, which is introduced and accented with this rude and boisterous language, but the same thing might be better said, and to much better purpose, if it were not so pre-faced. Solomon's observation holds true, that *the words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that rules among fools*, Eccl. ix. 17.

Nay, you do a great deal of hurt by using yourselves to such language.

(1.) You disturb and provoke others by it. These grievous words stir up anger; and who knows how long that anger may last, what it may produce, and where it may end? nor how great a matter a little fire of this kind may kindle? Put your souls into their souls' stead whom you thus abuse, and consider if you were in poverty and meanness, and in an inferior relation, how you would like it, and how you could bear it, to be rated and trampled on, and called by so many ill names: and do not

that to others which you would not should be done to you.

(2.) You disgrace and disparage yourselves by it. While you think hereby to keep up your authority, and make yourselves great and formidable, you really prostitute your authority, and render yourselves mean and contemptible, and give just occasion to those you abuse to think as ill of you as you say of them, though they dare not speak it out. You declare plainly, [1.] That you are slaves to your own passions, which is as toilsome and dishonourable a slavery as a man can be in: you say that in the heat of passion, which you yourselves could scarce turn your tongues to if you were sober and calm, and thereby proclaim passion king over you, that great leviathan who is *king over all the children of pride*, Job xli. 34. [2.] That you are not masters of your own reason; your anger is a fit of madness, and for the time your wisdom is departed from you. When in wrath you call others fools, the reproach returns upon your own heads. Some of this foul ill-favoured language you use to give, carries along with it its own conviction of absurdity. You will call him a "dog," whom you see to be a man, and a "bastard," whom you really take to be legitimate: and what sense is there in this? Does this become one who pretends to reason? Blush at it for shame, and resolve never again to make such a fool of thyself.

3. Consider how obnoxious you yourselves are to the righteous judgment of God. If you seriously retire into your own hearts, and impartially reflect upon your own ways, you will find that you have much more reason to reproach yourselves for your provocations against God, than to fall foul upon your servants or others for their defects in their duty to you. We ought to forbear threatening, and to moderate it, (Eph. vi. 9.) for what would become of us if God should enter into judgment with us? When we taunt others for their dullness and folly, their carelessness and forgetfulness, we ought to remember the same things against ourselves, and then we shall only give just and gentle reproofs, and not senseless and furious reproaches. Holy Job restrained himself from the heats of passion, with this consideration, (ch. xxxi. 14.) *What then shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?* Think not that the strength of your passion will be a sufficient excuse for the indecencies of your language. The sin of the heart will never justify the sin of the tongue; but on the contrary, the sin of the tongue will aggravate the sin of the heart. Resolve therefore for the future, whenever your heart is hot within you, that you will keep your mouth as with a bridle.

VII. Lewd, obscene, and filthy talk, is another of the vile exorbitances of an unsanctified, uncontrolled tongue.

It is a thing to be greatly lamented, that this im-

pudent sin, which bids open defiance to virtue and honour, and wages war with them, like a spreading leprosy, stains the beauty of our land, turns a Canaan into a Sodom, and is become an epidemical disease. For the relief of those who are infected with it, and are not incurably unclean, I would in a few words show you the evil of it.

1. Consider what an offence it is to the pure and holy God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the uncleanness of your lips, as well as of your hearts and lives. It is a violation even of the law of nature, which prescribes modesty, and teaches us to blush at every thing that is immodest. The law of Moses provided for the keeping up of this hedge of chastity, and in many instances punished that which broke through this hedge. It was one of the laws of Romulus, (some of the most ancient human laws that are extant,) *Nequis obscena verba facit—Nemo should dare to speak an obscene word*. But (which to us is above all) the law of Christ is very express against all filthiness and foolish talking and jesting, and appoints, that *fornication and all uncleanness should not be once named* among Christians without the greatest abhorrence, Eph. v. 3, 4. And is the law of Christ nothing with you? Can you go so directly contrary to it, and yet hope to prosper? God has told you plainly there, (v. 5.) that such unclean persons have *no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*, and (v. 6.) that *because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience*. And you cannot suppose that the fixed laws of heaven should be dispensed with to gratify your base lusts. The law of Christ shall either rule you or judge you.

2. Consider what an evidence it is against yourselves, that you are possessed by the unclean spirit, and are under his power. Out of the abundance of the filthiness that is in the heart the tongue speaks thus filthily, and from that root of bitterness arises this gall and wormwood. The abominable lewdness that is in the heart, and is harboured and indulged there, boils up in this noisome dross. Stinking breath is a sign of putrid lungs. While you please yourselves and your companions with this dirty language, you do but foam out your own shame, and sport yourselves with your own deceivings. You think you show your wit by it, but indeed you show your wickedness, and declare your sin as Sodom, as those who are not ashamed, and cannot blush. Chastity and modesty have been virtues, are so, and will be so, how much soever they are despised and disdained by the first-rate sinners of the age; and that which is a virtue, is a praise, is an honour; which if you want, yet you need not proclaim that you do so, nor be proud of your shame.

Unclean thoughts may, through the infirmity of the flesh, and for want of watchfulness, come into the minds of those who disallow them, lament them,

and strive against them, knowing that even these thoughts of foolishness are sin: but unclean discourse is much worse, and more exceeding sinful, for thereby you signify your approbation and allowance of those unclean thoughts; you put an "Imprimatur" to them, and consent to the publication of them for the common service of the devil's kingdom.

3. Consider what a great deal of hurt it is likely to do to others. Though this sin does not so immediately reflect upon the blessed name of God as swearing does, and, therefore, has not so much malignity in its nature, yet it does more toward the corrupting of the minds of others, and the propagating of vice and wickedness, than perhaps any other tongue-sin whatsoever, and so is more mischievous in its consequences. Such tinder is the corrupt heart of man to these sparks, that one unclean word to an unguarded soul may be the unhappy occasion of a thousand unclean thoughts, which may produce a world of iniquity. If this root of bitterness thus spring up and sprout forth, thereby many are defiled, (Heb. xii. 15.) more than perhaps you are aware of: and your account in the great day will rise high, if you must be answerable for all that uncleanness which has been spawned in the minds of others by your lewd talk.

Filthy stories, and songs, and jests, are the pestilential breath of hell, which propagates the infection of sin; old Satan's wiles, by which he betrays unwary souls into their own ruin. And those unclean lips which help to lay those snares, are factors for the unclean spirit, and by debauching the minds of others with their vile discourses, perhaps serve the devil's kingdom, and the interests of it, as effectually as those who debauch the bodies of others with their vile adulteries. *Evil communications corrupt good manners.*

If those who hear your lewd talk be not so bad as to be infected by it, certainly they are so good as to be offended at it. He is unfit for civil company, and breaks the law of good manners, who takes a pleasure in saying that which a wise and good man must frown upon, and hear with shame, or with an angry countenance. What Mr. Cowley says of lewd poems, is, with a little alteration, applicable to lewd discourse.

——— 'Tis just,
The speaker blush there where the hearer must.

That discourse is but bad entertainment which occasions either guilt or grief to all that hear it.

Therefore, let all who have accustomed themselves to this language, be persuaded to leave it off, and henceforward to set such a careful watch before the door of your lips, that they never more offend thus with their tongue: and if at any time they think this evil, let them lay their hand upon their mouth,

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(Prov. xxx. 32.) that it go no further. That mirth is dear bought, which is purchased at the expense of the favour of God, the honour of virtue, and the purity and peace of our own consciences. Better lose your jest, than lose all these jewels. Dread the consequences of it, not to others only, but to yourselves. Those who allow themselves in the transgression of the laws of modesty, it is to be feared, will not long be governed by the laws of chastity. The way of sin is down hill.

And let me bespeak all who are well-wishers to religion and virtue, not only to be very cautious themselves never to say any thing that looks like lewdness, or looks toward it, but in all companies to contrive how they may put this vice to the blush, expose it to contempt, and dash it out of countenance. They who would approve themselves strictly modest, must never seem pleased at the hearing of that which is otherwise, nor laugh at an immodest jest or story, lest they should have fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness, which ought to be frowned upon, and reprov'd rather. Let it be seen that you can be merry and wise, merry and modest. Reckon it a burthen to dwell among a people of unclean lips, (Isa. vi. 5.) and pray to God that (according to his promise, Zeph. iii. 9.) he would *turn our people to a pure language*, that we may be fit to *call upon the name of the Lord*.

Having thus mentioned some of the vices of an ungoverned tongue, (especially those that are most common with such as are openly profane,) and given some particular hints of argument against them, I shall now close with some general directions for the reducing of the exorbitant power of an unruly tongue.

1. See that the heart be truly and thoroughly sanctified by the grace of God. If you would have the disease cured, you must lay the axe to the root, and meet it in its causes. The peccant humour within must be purged out, else these eruptions, though they may be checked for a time by external restraints, yet will never be healed. The right method prescribed by the great Physician, is first to *keep the heart with all diligence*, and then by that means to *put away the froward lips*. See Prov. iv. 23, 24. The way to heal the poisonous waters is, like Elisha, (2 Kings ii. 21.) to cast salt into the spring, *Make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good*. It is out of an evil treasure in the heart that evil things are brought; men speak slightly of God, and spitefully of their brethren, because they think so; let but the thoughts be rectified, and the language will be soon reformed.

If the law of holy love to God and your neighbour were written in your hearts, and you were, as you should be, actuated and governed by these as a living commanding principle, you would not dare to offend either the one or the other with your tongue;

that good treasure laid up in the heart would bring forth good things to the use of edifying, which would manifest grace in him that speaks, and minister grace unto the hearers. The fear of God always before your eyes will be an effectual restraint upon you from saying that by which either his name is dishonoured, or his law violated. The grace of God is a *coal from the altar*, which if it touch the tongue, the iniquity of it will be purged away, Isa. vi. 7.

Let the throne of Christ be set up in your hearts, and his love shed abroad there, and then you will not call it a needless preciseness to be thus careful of your words, but a necessary strictness, because by our words we must be justified or condemned. Then you will not call it a task and a slavery to be thus tied up, and to speak by rule, but an honour and a pleasure; for assuredly this blessed change, wrought in the soul by the renewing grace of God, will open such surprising springs of present joy and comfort, as will abundantly balance all the uneasiness which corrupt nature will complain of in these restraints.

2. Solemnly resolve against these and all other tongue-sins. Let holy David's vow be yours, and bind your souls with it this day, *I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue*; and remember, as he does there, that you have said it, that you may not break your promise, Ps. xxxix. 1, 2.

While the result of your convictions is no more but this, that you hope you shall govern your tongues better for the future, and that, for ought you know, you will not swear so much as you have done, and in the mind you are in, you will not speak so many idle filthy words as you have spoken—if this be all, you leave room for Satan to thrust in with his temptations; faint purposes are soon shaken, and prove to no purpose: but when you are come to a point, and without equivocation, or mental reservation, will solemnly promise that by the grace of God you will never swear nor curse any more; you will never take God's name in vain any more; you will never speak a lewd or scurrilous word any more; this fortifies the strong hold against the tempter, who (like Naomi, Ruth i. 18.) when he sees you are stedfastly resolved, will leave off speaking to you.

Renew this resolution every day, especially if you have a prospect of any occasion which will be a more than ordinary temptation to you. Thus set a guard upon the door of your lips, and at some times double your guard, where you find yourselves weakest and most exposed. Try the strength of your resolutions, and do not for shame suffer yourselves to be baffled in them. Only remember to make and renew these resolutions, in a dependence upon the grace of Jesus Christ, which alone is sufficient for you. Peter resolved against a tongue-sin in his own strength, but it failed him, and he was

made ashamed of his confidence; confide therefore in divine strength only.

3. Keep out of the way of bad company. Speech is learned by imitation, and so is corrupt speech. We are apt in discourse to conform to those with whom we do associate; and therefore, if we would keep those commandments of our God which relate to the government of the tongue, we must say to evil doers, *Depart from us*, Ps. cxix. 115. Converse not familiarly, and of choice, with those who accustom themselves to any evil communication, lest you learn their way, lest you learn their words, and get such a snare to your souls as you will not easily disentangle yourselves from.

That dread and terror, and abhorrence of swearing and cursing, and all profane discourse, which all who are virtuously and piously educated, are conscious to themselves of at first, is apt to wear off by frequent and free conversation with those who use such language. It is excused as a slip of the tongue, which does nobody any harm; nay, it is justified as a fashionable ornament of speech; and so by degrees the debauched conscience comes to be reconciled to it, and at last the tongue is taught not only to lisp the same cursed language, but, with a great deal of art and assurance, to speak it plain. Joseph himself, in the court of Egypt, had unawares got the courtier's oath, *By the life of Pharaoh*.

If you love your souls, therefore, be very careful what company you keep; choose to converse familiarly with those of whom you may learn that which is edifying, and by whose discourse and example you may be made wiser and better; and avoid the society of those by whom, without a greater degree of wisdom and watchfulness than you can pretend to, you will certainly get hurt to yourselves. Improper words are sooner learned than unlearned. Therefore, *if sinners entice thee, consent thou not*, (Prov. i. 10.) though they do not say, (as they there, v. 11. *Come, and let us lay wait for blood*,) "*Come, and let us swear and curse, and bid defiance to all that is sacred*;" but palliate the temptation, and make it look very harmless, "*Come, and let us take a glass and be merry over it*." If they be such as are commonly profane and lewd in their discourse, fear a snare in their company, and keep at a distance from it. Walk not in their counsel, stand not in their way, sit not in their seat, Ps. i. 1. Make no friendship with those who make no conscience of their words, and who show that they have no veneration for the blessed name of God. Remember Solomon's advice, (Prov. xiv. 7.) and be ruled by it; *Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge*.

4. Think twice before you speak once. We often speak amiss, because we speak in haste; when that comes out which comes uppermost, what can it be

but froth and dross? Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips, not consulting with himself before he spake, and then he said that which shut him out of Canaan, Ps. cvi. 33. What we speak in haste, we often find cause afterwards to repent of at leisure. David more than once reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, and we have all a great deal of reason to do so. Our second thoughts, if we would take time for them, would correct the errors of the first; and we should not offend with our tongues so often as we do, if we would but consider what we say, before we say it. *The heart of the righteous studieth to answer that which is fit and seasonable, while the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.*

Be sparing of your words, and then you will not have so many bad words to answer for as most have; for, *in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, and divers vanities.* You have often been the worse for speaking, but seldom the worse for keeping silence. Many a thing which you have said, you would have smothered and suppressed if you had but allowed yourselves the liberty of a serious and impartial thought upon it. "Little said, soon amended."

You durst not profane God's blessed name with your unhallowed breath, if you would but think seriously what a God he is whom you thus blaspheme and provoke. You durst not curse yourselves or others if you would but consider the weight of the curse, and what a fearful thing it is to fall under it. You durst not scoff at religion if you did but consider how sacred and honourable it is. Reason in other cases is of use to rectify the mistakes of imagination; use it here then.

5. Have a care to the account that is now kept, and must shortly be given, of all your idle wicked words. You believe the Holy Scriptures, you do well. Now they tell you what will be in the end hereof. The word of God will judge you shortly, therefore, let it rule you now.

Notice is now taken of all you say, whether you are aware of it or no. There is not a word in your tongue, though spoken in haste, and not regarded by you, but God knows it altogether, and a book of remembrance is written. God told the prophet Ezekiel what the people said of him by the walls, and in the doors of their houses, (Ezek. xxxiii. 30.) and he can make a bird of the air to carry the voice of that which is said in the heart, or in the bedchamber, Eccl. x. 20. You think you may curse and swear securely when you are out of the reach of those who would reprove you, or inform against you; and because God for the present keeps silence, you think he is altogether such an one as yourselves, as careless of his government as you are of your duty; but he will reprove you, and set them in order before you, and make it to appear that he kept an exact account of all you said: *Now consider this, ye that*

forget God, (Ps. l. 21.) stand in awe of this, and sin not with your tongues. Take heed, God hears; were you in the presence of some grave men that you had a reverence for, you would have a care what you say, and shall not the presence of the great God strike an awe upon you?

But this is not all, the day is coming when there will be a review; when the books that are written will be opened, and all your profane oaths and curses, and corrupt communications, will be found upon record there, and produced as evidence against you. He that is to be the Judge in that day, has himself expressly told us, (Matt. xii. 36.) *Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;* and if for every idle word, much more for every profane and wicked word. What an account will they have to make, all whose breath was corrupt, till their days were extinct; who always allowed themselves a boundless liberty of speech from under the dominion of religion and right reason, and never took care by repentance, and prayer, and reformation, to empty the measure of guilt they had filled, nor to balance the account in the blood of Christ which cleanses from all sin.

Think not that any profession of religion which you make will excuse you, or stand you in any stead in that day, while you thus contradict it, and give the lie to it, by the extravagances of your tongues. The word of God has laid it down as a certain rule, (Jam. i. 26.) *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain;* and if your religion be vain, it will never bring you to heaven, and then I need not tell you whither your irreligion will bring you.

It will be the eternal doom of those who persisted in their tongue-sins, and would not be reformed, that *their own tongues shall fall upon themselves,* (Ps. lxxiv. 8.) and if they do, they will sink them to the lowest hell, in which the remembrance of all the sins of an ungoverned tongue will be very bitter, and bring oil to the flames. We read of it, as the misery of condemned sinners, that they are tormented in a flame, where they have not a drop of water to cool their tongues. Words are soon spoken, and when they are spoken are soon gone, and yet words spoken against an earthly prince, though repented of, have cost many a man his life; and shall it then be difficult to us to believe, that words spoken against the King of kings, and never repented of, shall exclude men from his kingdom, and lay them for ever under his wrath? It is commonly said, "*Words are but wind,*" but wicked words will prove such a mischievous wind, as will not only keep the soul out of the blessed haven of rest and happiness, but sink it into the gulf of everlasting destruction.

6. Reflect upon it with sorrow and shame, and great regret, if at any time you have, ere you were aware, spoken any wicked word. Keep conscience

tender in this matter, and if, through the surprise of temptation, you any way offend with your tongue, let your heart presently smite you for it, humble yourselves greatly before God for it, pass it not over with a slighty careless, "God forgive me," but be in pain and bitterness at the remembrance of it; abhor yourselves, as holy Job, when he was reflecting upon his tongue-sins, and repent in dust and ashes. If you can easily forgive yourselves what is past, it is to be feared you will easily be brought to do the like again.

Lastly, Pray earnestly to God for his grace, to keep you from sinning with your tongue. Though the tongue be an unruly evil, yet he can tame it who sets bounds to the proud waves of the sea, and once stopped the lions' mouths. To him, therefore, you must apply yourselves by faithful and fervent prayer, and put yourselves under the conduct and custody of his grace, which will be sufficient for you if you seek it, and improve it, and go forth in the strength of it. Let David's prayer be yours daily, (Ps. cxli. 3.) *Set a watch, O Lord, before my*

mouth, keep the door of my lips; for without his assistance we can do nothing. Pray against provocations to these sins, and pray for wisdom wherewith to govern yourselves in the midst of provocations; Watch and pray, that either you may not be led into temptation, or, however, not overcome by it. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God.

And now what shall be the success of this endeavour? Shall all our reasonings with you, in love to your souls, be slighted and laughed at like the foolish banter of your vain companions? Can we not prevail for a reformation of your language, when we plead the honour of God, the law of Christ, the good of your brethren, and the welfare of your own souls, and you have nothing to plead to the contrary but a foolish, wicked custom? *I hope better things, and things that accompany salvation.* Your tongue is your glory, do not turn this glory into shame, but use it as your glory, by honouring God and edifying one another with it; so shall the tongue which is thus accustomed to the language of Canaan, sing Hallelujahs eternally in the New Jerusalem.