

SERMONS UPON LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

SERMON I.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

It hath been a question whether this is a parable or a history. A parable, surely, for otherwise many incongruities would be asserted ; for it supposeth body and soul already in hell : ver. 23, ‘ And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment.’ And it would suppose charity, and care of conversion of others in hell, therefore it is not a history. The scope of this parable is to teach us three lessons—

1. To show that the godly poor are blessed, and the unmerciful rich are in everlasting torments. *Desideravit guttam, qui non dedit micam*—He desired a drop of water that would not give a bit of bread.

2. The irreversible estate of the damned : ver. 26, ‘ Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.’

3. That the direction of the holy scriptures is the only means to escape these torments.

This latter is represented in a dialogue between Dives and Abraham. Dives would have one sent from the dead to his father’s house, supposing that would work on them to repent. Christ’s parables do impersonate our thoughts ; we always dislike the present dispensation which God useth to reclaim us, and would have extraordinary means, and then we presume we should believe and repent ; these are our thoughts. But Abraham thinketh otherwise, or rather Christ, who is the author of the parable : ‘ If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.’

By ‘ Moses and the prophets ’ are meant the whole scriptures of the Old Testament and the New. These are mentioned because these only were then written and received by the Jews ; and these include the rest, the same truth being carried on in all the books, though more explicit in the latter.

Doct. That the word of God is a more conducive means to persuade us to repentance than if one should come from the dead.

There are two ways of proof of this doctrine, and therefore let us see what may be said for and against one coming from the dead.

First, If one coming from the dead be presumed to be a more effectual means to bring men to repentance and conversion to God, it must be either because he can bring a more necessary doctrine, or could urge better arguments, and more persuasively, or propound these truths with more certainty, or could by his own strength convey a power with his words, or rationally expect a greater concomitancy and co-operation of grace than is ordinarily dispensed by the word. One or other of these things it must be, or else the conceit is vain and frivolous. But now, proceeding from one consideration to another, I shall show you that the word of God hath clearly the pre-eminence, and is a far more accommodate instrument to work upon the hearts of men than any extraordinary dispensation whatsoever.

1. One coming from the dead, angel or man, cannot bring a doctrine more necessary, there being in the scriptures sufficient direction about the way to true happiness, for which we have not only express testimony, but apparent reason and sensible experience.

[1.] Express testimony, which should sway with christians : 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' A man of God, or minister of the gospel, thoroughly furnished, hath from the scriptures full out enough to guide man to the enjoyment of God ; nothing is wanting for information as to doctrine, conviction, arguments of quickening or exhortation, for instruction or directions concerning the whole duty of man. And—

[2.] Apparent reason. If God be a sufficient teacher of divine things, and if we suppose him willing to inform the creatures (neither of which can be denied without blasphemy), then surely, supposing the scriptures to be the word of God, as all christians do, and in this debate it is fit we should suppose, then certainly we have enough in the scriptures, and need not that the rest of the dead should be discomposed that there may be a fit messenger found out to invite us to return to God. If it need proof, who can teach us the way to blessedness more than the blessed God ? Ps. cxix. 12, 'Blessed art thou, O Lord ; teach me thy statutes.' Who more willing to show man what is good than the good God ? Ps. cxix. 6, 8, 'Thou art good, and doest good ; teach me thy statutes.' The blessed God needeth not to envy us the perfection of knowledge, as the devil insinuated : Gen. iii. 5, 'God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' Wherein is his happiness lessened by our perfection ? And the good God, who is so full of goodness and love to mankind, would give us a sufficient direction, especially since his Son appeared in human nature, and became his messenger. Would God reveal himself to any one from the dead, yea, to an angel, more than to his own Son ? Or could he see, feel, or hear more than God hath made known to Christ ? or be presumed to have a greater charity to mankind than the Lord hath, whose creatures they are ? No, no ; it cannot be : 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good,' Micah vi. 8. Abide by that, and thou hast enough.

But let us confirm it. Compare the provisions of the word with your own necessities. What ! would you have a rule ? Then see if

you have it not in the holy scriptures: Titus ii. 11, 12, 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' By 'the grace of God' is meant the gospel; and what doth the gospel teach us? To 'live soberly, righteously, and godly;' to enjoy God, to live with man, and the government of ourselves. We have enough if we have all this. But we have all this in as ample manner as heart can wish for, and therefore he that cometh from the dead must either preach the same doctrine, and then it is needless and superfluous, or contrary things, and then how shall we believe him, who are forewarned? Gal. i. 8, 'But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' Christ enters a caution against them.

2. Better arguments cannot be urged, nor more persuasively. The gospel is 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24; and surely God knoweth all the wards of the lock, and what kind of keys will fit the heart of man. He hath laid forth the riches of wisdom and grace upon this blessed design, and hence it is that we have such mysterious doctrines, such dreadful threatenings, such sweet promises, such strong obligations from the death and incarnation of the Son of God, from the example of Christ, which doth secure our direction and encourage our practice. Out of what rock was man hewn if all this will not work upon him? What must God do? provide a better heaven, a hotter hell, another Son to die for us? or a more forcible and encouraging example than that of Jesus Christ? What is the matter that the wicked sinner will not be allured and made tame, charm the charmer never so wisely? What do we need more to move us? Shall God pipe to you in a sweeter strain than that of gospel grace or gospel promises? Is the giving himself and his Christ a price too cheap to purchase your hearts? or must he thunder to you in a more dreadful accent than the horrors of everlasting darkness? Are these but poor and mean scarecrows to tell you of a pit without a bottom, of a worm that never dieth, of a fire that shall never be quenched? Or what is the matter that the sinner stirreth not? Is the scripture a dead letter? and needeth it to be actuated and enforced by a living voice? God hath provided us apostles and prophets to write scriptures, so pastors and teachers to explain and apply scriptures: Eph. iv. 11, 'He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers;' men who are concerned as well as ourselves, the value of whose credit we know by their faithfulness in other things, that have the same temptations, affections, and necessities as we have; men with whom we may more familiarly converse, and with less fright, than with one from the dead. Oh! but one that cometh from the dead is supposed to testify his own sight and knowledge, and so to speak more feelingly. And have not God's messengers some experience? Cannot they say, We declare to you the things which we have seen and heard and felt? Have they not been scorched by the spirit of conviction, tasted comfort, felt a change in their own hearts? What can any messenger from the dead say that hath not been told you over again and again a thousand times? Would he say that all

shall die?—that you see with your eyes. That presently after death cometh judgment?—that you pretend to believe already. That the torments of hell are terrible and insupportable?—this God hath told you over and over; and ‘if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater,’ 1 John v. 9. That you must repent and be converted?—this is that that is sounded in your ears every day. Therefore we are better provided already than to need the horror of an apparition or a warning from one among the dead.

3. It is not because he could propound these truths with more certainty, for these things are already propounded to our understandings, and we have sensible confirmation.

[1.] They are propounded to our understandings with a fair and full credibility. The holy scriptures have in themselves a self-evidencing light, by which they make it out to the consciences of men that they are of God. Everything that hath passed the hand of God discovereth its author; all God’s works have his signature and impression upon them, which is legible and visible to every attentive beholder: Rom. i. 20, ‘For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse;’ Ps. xix. 1, ‘The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.’ Not a pile of grass but sheweth its maker—*Præsentem refert qualibet herba Deum*; and surely his word, which he ‘hath magnified above all his name,’ Ps. cxxxviii. 2, is not altogether without such an impress and stamp of God upon it, therein being revealed things most worthy of the truth, wisdom, goodness, and holiness of God, and suitable to that wisdom and truth that is in us, so far as there is any in us. What shall I speak of the most satisfactory way of reconciliation with God, the fairest draught of moral perfection, far beyond all that which is of mere human recommendation? Here is no dead fly in this box of ointment, but all pure and holy, without mixture; nothing so accommodate to the necessities of man, and fit to bring us to the enjoyment of that which the reasonable nature aimeth at. What shall I speak of the majesty of the style, the genuine simplicity of the narrations, the harmony of the parts, the sublimity of the doctrines, the impartiality and purity of the precepts, the overflow of God’s love in the promises, the glorious rewards, the certainty of the prophecies?—all which are so many innate characters and evidences of the divine authority of these writings, by which they clearly insinuate themselves with wonderful force and power into the consciences of men: 2 Cor. iv. 2, ‘But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.’ There was an evidence in the truth itself preached by the apostles, so there is in the word written by the apostle, for the voice could add nothing to it, and the writing take nothing from it. A man of art and judgment discovereth himself in every book he writeth. Aristotle’s writings show him a person of great knowledge. Can a book have God for its author, and have nothing to discover its author? It is unreasonable. Masters in writing or painting show their hand; the scripture doth not stand or fall to the

courtesies of man. Well, then, if these things be so (as certainly they are so), we have more certainty by the word itself than possibly we can have by a messenger from the dead, yea, or a voice from heaven, for it hath such a signature of God upon it that we need go no further: 2 Peter i. 18, 19, 'And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount, who have also *βεβαίωτερον λόγον*, a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' What greater confirmation could the apostles expect than that voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?' Mat. xvii. 5. Yet Peter who heard that voice telleth us that comparatively we have greater security from and by the written word; not in itself, but as it is given in evidence to us, so that there is no compare between it and one from the dead.

[2.] We have sensible confirmations. We are wrought upon by sense. Now is not ordinarily the word as sensibly confirmed to us as it would be by a vision or apparition from the dead?

(1.) There is the holiness of professors: 1 Cor. xiv. 25, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth;' 1 Peter iv. 4, 'Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.' Is it not more wonder to see a living man that hath not divested himself of the interests and concerns of flesh and blood to deny himself for things to come, than to hear a tale from a dead man?

(2.) There is the constancy of the martyrs, that have ratified this truth with the loss of their dearest concerns: Rev. xii. 11, 'And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.' It is possible a man may suffer for a false religion, and sacrifice a stout body to a stubborn mind. But is there no true gold because there hath been some counterfeit coin? The devil's martyrs have not been so many for number, nor for temper and quality, so holy, so wise, so meek, as the champions of the truth. The christian religion can show you persons of all ages, young and old; of all sexes, men and women; of all conditions of life, noble and of low degree; of all qualities, learned and unlearned. (See Sermons on John xvii.)

(3.) Then there is the inward feeling of God's children; they find a power in the word, convincing, changing, comforting, fortifying their hearts. These can speak of what they hear, feel, and taste, as well as one that cometh from the dead. They have answerable impressions on their hearts: Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts;' 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.' All this stamped upon the heart in legible characters. A true christian is the lively transcript of his religion; the scriptures are the original, and every believer is the copy; it is gone over again in his heart.

(4.) Those that have no experience of this have a secret fear of the

power of the word : John iii. 20, ' For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' He will not come to the light because he is afraid of the majesty of God shining forth in the scriptures. Men dare not muse upon and seriously consider the doctrine therein contained. Atheism lieth in the heart, the seat of desires : Ps. xiv. 1, ' The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' Men question the word, because they would not have it true ; they are willing to indulge their lusts, and therefore they are afraid of the word that forbiddeth them ; as Ahab was loath to hear Michajah, because he prophesied evil. Strong lust maketh us incredulous. A malefactor desireth to destroy the records and evidences that are against him.

(5.) There are also outward effects of the power of the word ; its propagation throughout all the world within thirty years or thereabout ; The doctrine itself, contrary to nature ; it doth not court the senses nor woo the flesh ; it doth not make offers of splendour of life or pleasures and profits, but biddeth us deny these things and expect troubles. The drift of it is to teach men to row against the stream of flesh and blood, to renounce our lusts, deny our interests. And this was done by a few fishermen, who had no long sword, no public interest or authority to back them, and that in the face of the learned world, when all civil disciplines were in their *ἄκμῃ* and height. The word prevailed against ancient customs ; the ark was to be set up in the temple that was already occupied and possessed by Dagon.

(6.) Then consider the many sensible effects of the word, as the accomplishment of prophecies, promises, threatenings, and answer of prayers. God's providence is a comment upon scripture. It is an authentic register, and infallible prognostication and calendar. We need not have one come from the dead to tell the truth of it ; it is fulfilled before our eyes every day.

4. Or else they can convey a power, or expect that God will co-operate more with their report than with the holy scriptures. Surely they are finite creatures though passed out of this life. Nothing can convert and turn the heart of man but the infinite power of God ; all the angels in heaven cannot pluck one sinner out of the state of nature. We read one angel could destroy one hundred and eighty-five thousand in Sennacherib's host, 1 Kings xix. 35 ; but all the angels cannot convert one soul.

But will God co-operate ? Alas ! when all prejudices are removed, men are nothing the better till the Lord puts in his grace. The Jews suppose Moses and the prophets to be of God ; they were confirmed by notable miracles, the fame of which continue among them. But the matter is about God's efficacy. But now God concurrereth with his instituted course ; common means of God's appointing have a singular efficacy annexed ; as reading, Acts viii. 32, hearing, Mark iv. 24, meditation, Acts xvii. 11. Christ died to sanctify ordinances, Eph. v. 26 ; and there if ever shall we meet with the power and grace of God.

Secondly, Against it. There are more rational prejudices that lie against any other way than this way that God hath taken. As to instance in the matter in hand.

1. It is no mean scruple about the lawfulness of hearkening to one that should come from the dead, since they are out of the sphere of our commerce, and it is a disparagement to the great doctor of the church. Against consulting with the dead, see Deut. xviii. 10-12, with 14, 15, 'There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer; for all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. For these nations which thou shalt possess hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do. The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.' It would make religion ridiculous, like a story of hobgoblins and bugbears, wherewith we fright children, or like the fond superstitions of the heathens, that held the world under the servility and bondage of scrupulous fears.

2. It is not so sure a way. How could we trust or believe any one that should bring a message from the dead, since impostors are so rife? Satan can turn himself into an angel of light. What security can we have against delusions? how miserably we may be deceived by stories from the dead is to be seen in popery. Therefore it is a favour that we have such a sure rule: Gal. i. 8, 'But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' We shall never be free from evil designs.

3. It is not so effectual a course as some think. The great doctor of the church arose from the dead, which was confirmed by five hundred witnesses; nothing so credible, and yet they would not believe and repent for all that. The Jews would not believe Lazarus, when, after he had been four days dead, he was raised up again.

4. It is not so familiar a way, and therefore not so fit to instil faith, and reduce men to God's purpose by degrees, as the written word, to which we may have recourse without affrightment, and that at all times. This spirit must be supposed to appear but rarely; for if it were frequent, and settled into a constant converse, the way would be contemned. But here we may view and review the counsel of God in our most deliberate and serious thoughts, and by searching come to know the mind of God. Faith groweth in a rational way: Acts xvii. 11, 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.'

Use 1. Information.

1. That man is apt to indent with God about believing and repenting upon terms of his own making: Mat. xxvii. 42, 'If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him;' Ps. lxxviii. 19, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?' Mat. iv. 3, 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' Many require miracles or new apostles, that maketh them turn seekers; or a testimony from the dead, a spirit or a vision,

and that maketh them turn atheists; or an infallible interpreter, that should solve all questions, or excuse them from the pains of study and prayer, and that maketh them turn papists. Thus foolishly would we give laws to heaven, and prescribe to God how he shall reveal his mind to men. God will not always give sensible confirmation.

2. There lie more prejudices by far against any way of our devising than against the course which God hath instituted for the furthering of our repentance. Man is an ill caterer for himself. The people slighted Moses, and would hear God himself speak; but when he thundered upon the Mount, then they say, let us no more hear the voice of God, for then we shall die: Exod. xx. 19, 'And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' All God's institutions are full of reason, and if we had eyes to see it, we could not be better provided for.

3. God in giving the scriptures hath done more for us than we could imagine, yea, better than we could wish to ourselves. He hath certainly done enough to leave us without excuse. You think if one came from the dead this would be better, but you have more; and therefore, if you be damned, it will not be for want of power, but want of will; you have more than if one came from the dead. Try what you can do with Moses and the prophets. It is a great mercy to have a rule by which all doctrines are to be tried, to have a standard and measure of faith, and that put into writing to preserve it against the weakness of memory and the treachery of evil designs, and that translated into all languages. That we have such a rule, and so thoroughly finished, is a great mercy.

4. That we are apt to betray present advantages by wishes of another dispensation, as that we may have oracles and miracles. It is but a shift to think of other means than God hath provided. They that believe not the word will not believe one that should come from the dead. Extraordinary means will not work upon them upon whom ordinary do not prevail. Whatever dispensation God uses, man is man still: Ps. lxxviii. 22-24, 'They believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation, though he had commanded the clouds from above, and had opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them the corn of heaven.' There were unbelievers and carnal wretches when there were miracles, and so there would be still. Though there were never so sufficient proof yet such is our perverseness, that we shall slight God's counsel. Man is ever at odds with the present dispensation. It is a sign the heart is out of order, or else any doctrine that is of God would set it a-work.

5. Those that like not the message will ever quarrel at the messenger; and when the heart is wanting, something is wanting. We have means enough to believe; it is our own carelessness and obstinacy that we do not: Mat. xi. 18, 19, 'John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.' There is always one exception or another.

6. How credulous we are to fables, and how incredulous as to undoubted truths; spirits and apparitions, these things are regarded by

us, but the testimony of the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures is little regarded.

Use 2. To exhort us to improve the scriptures to repentance. This is the great work.

Here I shall show you—(1.) What repentance is; (2.) What the holy scriptures offer to work us to repentance; (3.) How we may improve these.

I. What repentance is. It is a turning of the whole heart from sin and Satan to serve God in newness of life; or a turning from sin because God hath forbidden it, to that which is good because God hath commanded it. There are in it, as in every action, two terms—*a quo* and *ad quem*.

1. The *terminus a quo*, that from which we are to turn. We turn from something; from sin: Acts viii. 22, 'Repent of this thy wickedness;' ἀπὸ τῆς κακίας, from thy wickedness. From dead works: Heb. vi. 1, 'Repentance from dead works.' And Satan is sometimes made the term from which, because the sinner falleth to his share: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.'

2. The *terminus ad quem*, the term to which we are to turn, that is, to God: Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God;' to the truth: 2 Tim. ii. 25, 'If God peradventure will give them repentance εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας, to the acknowledgment of the truth.' To holiness and newness of life: Rom. vi. 4, 'Even so we also should walk in newness of life.' To life: Acts xi. 18, 'Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.' According to which terms there is a double action required of us—humiliation and reformation; humiliation or compunction, and a due remorse for sin; reformation, or a change of course. Which answereth to the double work of God upon the soul—mortification, or the subduing of sin; vivification, or the infusion of life. So suitably there are aversion from sin and a conversion to God and the things of God; which is expressed by two duties—confession of sin, and entering into covenant with God. Serious confession of sin is mortification acted; entering into covenant with God is vivification acted, or the desire of grace expressed. Confession of sin is required, that a man, laying aside all extenuations, evasions, and excuses, may take shame to himself, giving glory to God. Entering into covenant with God is required that a man may be under a firm obligation of obedience, and be cautious over his own heart and ways; the one respects sin past, the other sin to come.

First, Let us speak of the first act, the *terminus a quo*, turning from sin. Supposing the judgment enlightened and the heart made tender by grace, the work doth mainly discover itself in the affections of fear, shame, grief, and indignation. True humiliation is begun in fear, continued in shame, carried on by sorrow, and endeth in indignation. And so sin is renounced, and the power of it broken. And indeed, whenever we renew our repentance upon special occasions, these are the affections that are to be exercised. They all have a proper ground and consideration to set them at work. (1.) Fear leadeth the rank. That trembleth at the wrath of God and judgment to come; an accusing conscience telling us that we are in a state of damnation. (2.) Shame

looketh upon sin not only as hurtful but filthy and brutish. It is φόβος δικαίου ψύγῳ, a fear of just reproach for the filthiness and folly of sin. (3.) Sorrow looks upon God's goodness and sin's unkindness, lamenting that ever we should lose the favour of such a God as this is, who hath made us, and kept us, and gave his Son to die for mankind; now that we should forfeit his favour! (4.) Indignation is stirred up by the unseemliness and disproportion of sin to the nature of man, much more to grace infused, or that interest we have or would have by Christ. In short, fear looketh upon sin as damning, shame as defiling, sorrow as offensive to God; indignation is misbecoming our present resolutions, hopes, and interests. The guilt of sin causeth fear; the stain, shame; the unkindness, sorrow; the unsuitableness, indignation. By this means did we come to be divorced from sin, and by these means it is daily weakened.

1. The first awakening of the soul is by the sense of the wrath of God, and everlasting woe denounced on impenitent sinners. You have done that which in its own nature deserveth you should suffer eternal torments, and be separated from the Lord, and be cast forth with the devil and his angels. And then the sinner, being under a fear of being condemned, crieth out, Oh! what shall I do to flee from the wrath to come! I am undone and lost unless God help me. I say here the work beginneth; punishment is soonest felt, and the first notion that we have of sin is the guilt of it, which causeth fears and terrors with respect to the wrath that is to ensue. So it is said of those converts, Acts ii. 37, 'That they were pricked at their hearts;' they were troubled about their condition. It requireth a quicker and more tender sense to be sensible of the folly and filthiness of sin. A man that is covered with noisome boils and sores, the first thing that affecteth him is the pain, though he also abhorreth the sight and smell of them. First we tremble at the thought of God's judgments, before we are ashamed of sin or grieve for it. In renewing our repentance this is an ingredient. It is not against the liberty of the gospel to make use of threatenings; we are sluggish, and need all kind of helps.

2. There is shame and self-loathing, which ariseth from an apprehension of the odiousness of sin: Ezek. vi. 9, 'They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations;' Job xlii. 6, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' So Ezra ix. 6, 'O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.' They are ashamed to look God in the face, they have dealt so unworthily with him. This is to hate sin as sin, when a man is not only afraid of it, but ashamed of it, as it is against the revealed will of God; not only as it bringeth misery, but as it crosses God's will; not only for the evil after sin, but the evil in sin; that you have polluted your souls, defiled your natures, defaced the image of God, become as a beast before him: Ps. lxxiii. 22, 'So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.' Oh! what a fool I was to turn my back upon God; to imagine that any good could come of sin, which God hateth, and to practise a thing so unbefitting the reasonable nature!

3. Sorrow and lamentation to the Lord, which ariseth from a thought of the Lord's goodness and sin's unkindness: Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;'

Luke vii. 47, she wept much because 'she loved much.' Sin will affect the heart most when the wrong done to God is considered, who never showed any backwardness to our good, but who gave his Son to die for us. He made us at first, and how soon can he take from us that which he hath given us. He hath obliged us with a multitude of benefits: Isa. i. 3, 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me;' Rom. ii. 4, 'Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' And shall we use all these as weapons of unrighteousness! food, raiment, peace, plenty? Ah! but his Christ above all! Oh! never any sinned as I have done. The devil sinned, but Christ never died for him, as he did for me. Judas sinned, but he was never pardoned, as I have been. Achan sinned, but he had not that light and knowledge of the gospel that I have had; he did not live under such means as I have enjoyed. We content ourselves with a hasty sigh. Oh! but it is a deep sorrow that is required, and an active pungent grief, 'rending the heart,' Joel ii. 13; 'Afflicting the soul,' Lev. xvi. 29; Mat. xxvi. 75, 'Peter wept bitterly.' When we are touched with a sense of our unkindness to God, we shall mourn.

4. Indignation, which is an act of our hatred against sin, hatred quickened into a zeal against it. Indignation is the soul's expulsive faculty, when we heartily renounce it, as unsuitable to our present resolutions, professions, and hopes: Isa. xxx. 22, 'Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto them, Get ye hence.' So Hosea xiv. 8, 'Ephraim shall say, What have I any more to do with idols?' The soul saith first when it is convinced, Oh! what have I done? and then, What shall I do? and then, What have I any more to do? If a christian did remember what he is and what he hopeth for, these questions would be more rife with him. Repentance is not a bare purpose to leave sin, but to leave it with a hatred and deep displeasure against it.

SERMON II.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.—LUKE XVI. 30, 31.

SECONDLY, I now proceed to the next term, which is the *terminus ad quem*, turning to God, which is done in two things—

1. A settled purpose and solemn dedication of ourselves to his use and service, which is a resolution taken up upon debates of conscience: Luke xv. 17, 18, 'And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger; I will arise and go to my father.' First he came to himself, then I will go to my father. This ariseth out of a sense of

God's mercy in Christ: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' Lord, accept me for thine; and is the fruit of supernatural grace: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;' and is accompanied with shame that God so long hath been kept out of his right: 1 Peter iv. 3, 'For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries;' and a purpose to serve him with all our might.

2. It is seconded by a real performance: Mat. iii. 8, 'Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance;' Acts xxvi. 20, 'That they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.' Without these he is a liar, and deceiveth his own soul, if the heart be not more watchful over itself, afraid to offend God, and grieve his Spirit, more tender of the least sin, more careful to please God in all things, more close at work in the business of eternal life. These are fruits worthy of repentance; this is that *περισσόν τι*, that which we do more than carnal hypocrites, fruits suitable to the power of grace working in us, and to our professions of respect to God. This is the sum of the doctrine of repentance.

II. What doth the scripture offer to persuade us to this work?

1. It clearly layeth down the absolute and indispensable necessity of it in grown persons, or such as are come to years of discretion: Acts iii. 19, 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;' Luke xiii. 5, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;' Ezek. xxxiii. 11, 'Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' One way or the other, turn or die: it is no mootpoint or matter of controversy. There are many controversies about other things, but in this all is clear. Many will say, There is such a doubtfulness, that every one bringeth scripture, and maketh a nose of wax of it, ductile and pliable to his own fancy. But in points of absolute duty it is fully clear, and in the marks of one that shall go to heaven or to hell, especially in the doctrine of repentance. Make use of the scriptures, and practise conscientiously according to your light, and God will clear up his mind to you. By study and prayer and practice you will come to an increase of knowledge: John vii. 17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.'

2. It doth not only call for repentance, but a speedy repentance: Heb. iii. 7, 8, 'Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts;' Joel ii. 12, 'Therefore also now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart.' God standeth upon *now*. If the season were not determined, yet the nature of the thing would bear it. A necessary work, that is to be once done, should not be left to uncertainties. But because men are loose and arbitrary, and think they may make use of repentance at their leisure, therefore the scripture is as peremptory for the time as for the thing:

‘Now, and to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’ As soon as you are convinced of your sinful estate. Why not now? Sin is such an evil that you cannot be rid of it too soon. Sin is as a poison in the bowels, a fire in a building. Now who will say, We will get an antidote next week? or quench the fire hereafter? Sin is a wound, and shall we let it alone till it fester and rankle? No wound so dangerous as that which destroyeth body and soul; no fire so dreadful as the wrath of God; no poison so hurtful as that of sin; it robbeth us of eternal life. God hath not given us leave for a day, nor for a moment. If a man were banished by proclamation, and it were death whoever should entertain and harbour him after ten days, till the time were out there were no danger; but God saith *now*. ‘When we are in any trouble, we cannot brook any delay: Ps. cii. 2, ‘In the day when I call, answer me speedily.’ We must have a present answer; and shall God stand waiting when there is danger of his dishonour? Therefore now while it is to-day turn unto God. To-morrow is a very uncertain thing. Besides if you were certain of to-morrow, it is folly to lie under the wrath of God any longer. If really you are convinced of a sinful state, why do you not repent and return to God now? In every sinful action thou art laying thy soul at pawn, and one sin more may fill up the measure of your iniquity. Besides, every day will make you more unfit to turn to God; and it is base self-love to think of indulging the flesh longer, provided at length you can be saved.

3. The scripture showeth the profit of it.

[1.] What a remedy it is against sin: Ezek. xviii. 30, ‘Repent, and turn yourselves from your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.’ Every man is a sinner, but every man shall not die by sin. There is in sin *reatus, culpa, pœna, macula*. (1.) *Reatus*, the guilt that is blotted out: Acts iii. 19, ‘Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.’ Sin is written in two books, one in God’s keeping, the other in our own. He doth not say that we may blot out our sins out of God’s book; that is not the debtor’s, but the creditor’s work to cross the book: Isa. xliii. 25, ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. There is a handwriting against us, but it is blotted out when we repent. Our own book is the book of conscience: Heb. x. 22, ‘Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.’ The worm of conscience gnaws us till we repent, then the Spirit blotteth it out of our hearts. (2.) *Macula*, the stain; the more a man sinneth, the more he is inclined to sin, as a brand that hath been once in the fire is apt to take fire again. We lose tenderness by every act of sin, and the smart of repentance is a means to kill the sin, as breaking up the fallow ground doth destroy the weeds: Jer. iv. 3, ‘Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.’ (3.) *Culpa*, the blame. God will not upbraid us with former sins: Mark xvi. 7, ‘Go tell my disciples and Peter.’ It is judged in one court already; not a word of Peter’s miscarriage: Tell him, I am risen. (4.) *Pœna*, the punishment; that is done away by repentance; we may look for days of refreshment.

[2.] The comfort it will bring. God hath comforts for his mourners:

Mat. v. 4, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Never such sweet revivings as after godly sorrow: 2 Cor. vii. 10, 'For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation never to be repented of.' Many have repented of their carnal mirth, but never any of their godly sorrow; you will never curse the day of your new birth.

4. The scripture offereth grace and help of God to work this in us: Ezek. xi. 19, 20, 'I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.' Men will say they cannot repent; come and wait upon God, and he will give you to repent: Acts xi. 18, 'Then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.' God doth not only give occasions of repentance, time of repentance, means of repentance, but power to repent, yea, repentance itself: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' So that if we would turn wrangling into prayer, and bemoan ourselves, and say, Jer. xxxi. 18, 'Turn us, O Lord! and we shall be turned.' If we would follow him close, we need not be discouraged.

5. The scripture layeth down powerful arguments to quicken us to repentance, which have a marvellous tendency and influence that way. I shall single out three—The death of Christ, the day of judgment, and the torments of hell.

First, The death of Christ. A serious consideration of the death of Christ will further humiliation and reformation.

[1.] Humiliation.

(1.) Here is the highest instance of the love of God, and the purest fountain of tears is God's love. Mary wept much, because much was forgiven her. Nothing thaweth the heart more than the warm beams of mercy. Wrath causeth sorrow to flow like water out of a still by the force of fire; but love gently melteth the heart, and causeth it to run out at the eyes in a flood and stream of tears. Here is the highest instance of God's love. Christ is the greatest gift that ever he gave the world. When he gave us life, and breath, and all things, though he gave them to us, yet he gave us nothing from himself; but now out of his bosom he gave us Christ, that is love: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son.' It cannot be told, it can only be wondered at: Rom. v. 8, 'But God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' So great a person for such vile creatures! How can an ingenuous heart think of this! I have sinned against God that gave his Christ: I have grieved his Spirit, that loved me, and died for me. Saul had a hard heart, and yet he wept when David told him how he had spared him when it was in his power to kill him, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. Had God done no more for us but spared us, that should melt us; but he commended his love that Christ died for us.

(2.) Here is the truest spectacle of sin; for all that was done to Christ, sin did it. What could men or devils do? Men could do nothing: John xviii. 6, 'As soon as he said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.' Poor dust and ashes swooned

at the breath of his mouth. Not devils; he could cast them out with a word. Not God's justice; that hath no place against innocency. No; it was we, not Judas, nor Pilate, nor the Romans, nor the Jews, but we that have pierced him: Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.' This will give us the truest spectacle of sin. The old world was a sad spectacle, but that is no wonder; a filthy world to be washed with a deluge. Sodom was another sad spectacle; hell was rained out of heaven; but it is no wonder to see combustible matter burn. But Christ was a green tree, the Son of God, holy and undefiled, who was made sin only by a voluntary susception; but when he was made sin, God spared him not. Now the heinousness of sin appeareth—(1.) In the value of the sacrifice; (2.) The extremity of his sufferings.

(1st.) In the value of the sacrifice. Nothing could expiate sin but the blood, and shame, and agonies of the Son of God. A man would have thought that a word of Christ's mouth would have pacified God; but so great was the offence, that though he cried with strong cries, God would not hear him till he had endured his wrath. Christ prayed, Mat. xxvi. 39, 'O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' But God would not bate him a farthing. If you would know sin, go to Golgotha.

(2d.) The extremity of his sufferings. His outward sufferings were much. If you consider the majesty of his person, he was the great God, that filled heaven and earth with his glory, and yet was sold for thirty pence, the price of a slave. His back was mangled with whips, his body nailed to the cross, he was scorned in all his offices, a variety of sorrow was poured in by the conduit of every sense—seeing, smelling, tasting, hearing, and feeling. If you consider the excellency of his constitution, his body, being framed by the Holy Ghost, was of a more exact temper, his senses more lively; they that enjoy life in a higher measure than others, the more delicate the sense, the higher the pain; the back of a slave is not so sensible of strokes as of one that is nicely and tenderly bred. His senses were kept lively and in their full vigour; he refused the stupefying cup that was given to him. He kept his strength to the last; this appeared by his strong cry when he gave up the ghost; Luke xxiii. 46, 'And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.' But what is this to what is inward, the agonies of his soul under the curse and wrath of God due for sin, his desertion of the Father. It is more to see the sun eclipsed than to see a candle put out. He complained that 'his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,' Mat. xxvi. 38. His soul dwelt with God in a personal union. Christ knew how to value his Father's wrath; he had an excellent judgment and tender affections. When he sweat drops of curdled blood, he needed support from an angel. Now put all these circumstances together, and see if sin be a light thing.

Object. But many think this lesseneth sorrow. Christ hath endured so much, what need they be troubled?

Ans. (1.) These know not what faith and love meaneth. Can a man love Christ, and not mourn for that which was the cause of his sufferings? Thou art the man that laid all this upon Christ. (2.)

Slight thoughts of sin are a disparagement of Christ's sufferings: you make nothing of that which cost him so dear. (3.) Christ's death doth not nullify our duty in this kind, but ratify it. He died not only to expiate the guilt of sin, but also to show the heinousness of it. God might have taken another course. This for humiliation.

[2.] As to reformation. The death of Christ furthereth this—

(1.) By way of obligation: Gal. ii. 20, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' The great argument that quickeneth us to the spiritual life is that it is a thing pleasing and acceptable to him. If we knew anything pleasing and acceptable to a man that had redeemed us out of a miserable thralldom, we would do it. They are unthankful wretches that dare to deny Christ anything.

(2.) By way of purchase. Our liberty from sin was bought at a dear rate; not with silver and gold. You disparage your redeemer and seek to put him to shame, if you live in sin, for you go about to make void the purchase, and to overturn the whole business which Christ hath been establishing with so great a cost. He paid dear for that grace which you slight; you tie the bonds which he came to loosen.

(3) By way of conformity to the purity of our sacrifice. He was without spot and blemish. A carnal christian dishonoureth his head, and puts him to an open shame, as if the church were but a sanctuary for naughty men, and christianity a design to make us less careful and holy. What a spotted Christ do we hold forth to the world! We are to look upon Christ crucified so as to be crucified with him.

Secondly, The day of judgment. The serious consideration of that day is an help to repentance: Acts xvii. 30, 31, 'He hath commanded all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness.' As hell worketh on fear, so this on shame. It helpeth humiliation and reformation.

[1.] Humiliation. It is a means to prevent the shame of that day; if we do not call sin to mind, God will call it to mind: Ps. l. 21, 'I will set thy sins in order before thee.' The book of conscience shall be opened, and not only ours, but God's book too. Now it will cost us grief to look upon our sins, then grief with desperation; terms of grace are ended, and we can have no hope. A sinner now blots the book that is in his own keeping, but then he cannot. We will not own the convictions of the word when it showeth our face, but then, Jude 15, 'He will convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds that they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' Confession now is neglected, but then all shall be brought to light out of our own reins: 1 Cor. iv. 5, 'Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God.' Let us take shame before it be imposed on us. Sins repented of will not be mentioned to our confusion, but only to the glorifying of the riches of the Lord's grace. They that repent, their sins shall be then blotted out: Acts iii. 19, 'Repent and be converted, that your sins

may be blotted out when the days of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'

[2.] Reformation. It includeth faith and obedience. (1.) Faith. Let us get our discharge before that day cometh; then we shall have boldness: 1 John ii. 28, 'And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' The members of Christ's mystical body need not be afraid of Christ's judgment; their advocate shall be their judge; their hearts are sprinkled with his blood, as the door-posts against the destroying angel. They that are not careful to be found in Christ, surely they do not believe that God will make inquisition for sinners. Is the day of judgment a fable? Scripture and conscience saith the contrary. Or are we innocent? Or hath God provided another way than Christ? (2.) Obedience. Everything is written, and must be reviewed. If things were forgotten as soon as we forget them, we need not revise our acts or be so careful of our conversation. Oh! but we must come to an account: James ii. 12, 'So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty;' Ps. i. 5, 'Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.' What a shameful story will there be produced against careless sinners! All the business of our lives is to stand in the great congregation, and to appear with confidence. Would a man give way to vain thoughts if he knew he were to give an account? or to vain discourse if he thought every idle word would be brought to judgment? or to carnal actions, though never so secret, if he thought that all these would come to a review? or neglect the duties of his calling if he knew he were to give an account of his stewardship? or be unmerciful to the poor if he did think of, Have you fed? have you clothed? or that he should be examined upon these questions?

Thirdly, The consideration of hell, or the dreadful punishment of sin; for this is the matter in this text. This is useful to think of hell that we may shun it. Presumption is a coward: Mat. iii. 7, 8, 'O generation of vipers! who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.' There is a forced repentance; they that do not weep for their sins for a while here, shall there mourn for ever with a fruitless repentance. It is peace upon earth. What is hell? (1.) There is *pœna damni*, the punishment of loss; a separation from the presence of God, and everlasting exile: 'Depart from me, ye cursed,' Mat. xxv. 41; Luke xiii. 25, 26, 'When once the master of the house is risen, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know ye not whence ye are;' and ver. 28, 'When ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.' When God turned Adam out of paradise, it was sad, but then he clothed him, made him coats of skins. Adam was a rebellious child, and was turned out of doors, but God had a care of him, would not turn him out of doors without his garments, gave him the promise of the seed of the woman, hopes of a better paradise. This is the worst part of hell, to have a glimpse of God, the remembrance of which shall remain with them for ever, and then to be shut out.

Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but not taste it; as a prodigal reduced to rags goeth by the lands and houses he hath sold with a sad heart. (2.) The *pœna sensus*, the punishment of sense, the worm of conscience and the fire of God's wrath. The worm of conscience; the sting of conscience when we think of our folly and imprudence. A man may run away from his conscience now by sleeping, reading, working, drinking, sporting, as Cain built cities and Saul called for music; but in hell there are no such diversions, not a thought free day nor night, but *memoria præteritorum*, the remembrance of what is past, slighted means, abused comforts, wasted time, and *sensus præsentium*, a sense of what is present; the understanding maketh heaven or hell; and *metus futurorum*, a fear of what is to come for ever and ever. O blind fools! that we did not think of these things aforehand. The pleasures of the world for a thousand years will not countervail one minute's torment. And then the fire shall never be quenched: Heb. x. 31, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' Do but make trial, and put your finger in the candle, and see how you can bear it: Isa. xxxiii. 14, 'Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?'

III. How to improve the scriptures to repentance.

1. Believe them as you would an oracle or one from the dead. Consider the authority and veracity of God. The authority of God: God commandeth men to repent; charge the heart in the name of God, as it will answer to him another day. If God had bidden thee do some greater thing, wouldst not thou have done it? Will you contradict your maker? The veracity of God; these things are true. If you had heard a voice from heaven, as Abraham, or had a vision, or a messenger sent out of the other world, you would believe. You would think him to have a very hard heart that is not warned by an oracle or frightened by an apparition. God himself hath spoken in his word, and is not he of credit? You would fly in the face of him that should give you the lie, and will you give the lie to the God of truth? We should be ashamed that the word, which is a greater and surer revelation than oracles or apparitions, should prevail no more with us, and that all those arts of grace which are used in the scriptures do not persuade us to obedience and amendment of life. There is more reason to persuade a rational man that the scriptures are true and worth the heeding, than to persuade him of the truth of any voice from heaven or message by one from the dead. There you are warned that if you are unbelieving, unholy, or uncharitable, you shall go to hell, and as Lot seemed to his sons-in-law 'as one that mocked,' Gen. xix. 14, so we are looked on as if we were in jest, and it were a matter of course to make one another sad by repeating of matters mournful and lamentable. If thou hadst seen a ghost this last night, or a devil had appeared to thee in man's shape, thou wouldst have been terrified; and shall not the threatenings of the word startle thee? So when you are spoken to concerning the joys of heaven, it should not seem *ὡσεὶ λῆπος*, as an idle tale; as it is said, Luke xxiv. 11, 'And their words seemed unto them as idle tales, and they believed them not.' The report of Christ's resurrection was an idle tale. If an angel had told you that within such a compass of years you should be in another world, he would have

been credited ; but you have a more sure word of prophecy ; we tell you the same from God's word, and yet we are not regarded, as the Israelites did not believe the spies.

2. Urge thy heart with it ; recollect yourselves : Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things?' Come to yourselves : Luke xv. 17, 'And when he came to himself.' The prodigal came to himself before he thought of returning to his father : Ps. xxii. 27, 'All the ends of the earth shall remember, and return unto the Lord.' Think with yourselves, Whence am I ? whither am I going ? what have I done in the work of repentance ? what will become of me to all eternity ? Here in the scriptures God himself hath told me what I must look for, and will God deceive me ? Oh ! let me take God's directions for the saving of my soul.

I might take occasion hence to press you to bless God for transmitting such a doctrine to us, and to give you caution not to look after other revelations ; there are none, or, if there were, none can be so certain and so sufficient as this. And whatever is pretended as a message from God, bring it to the scriptures : Isa. viii. 20, 'To the law and to the testimonies ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Some cry up the church ; some the Spirit, in contradiction to the scriptures. Do you take the middle course ; go to the word opened and dispensed in the church, and wait for the Spirit's teaching ; and whatever is pretended, if it be not according to this, there is no light in it ; and if there be no light of knowledge, there will be no light of comfort, and no light of happiness.