

my soul is defiled, I pollute all I touch. O purge me with hyssop, let Christ's blood sprinkle me, let the Holy Ghost come upon me and anoint me. O make me evangelically pure, that I may be translated to heaven, and placed among the cherubims, where I shall be as holy as thou wouldst have me to be, and as happy as I can desire to be."

OF THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 15. *Thou shalt not steal.*

As the holiness of God sets himself against uncleanness, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery;' so the justice of God sets him against rapine and robbery, 'Thou shalt not steal.' The thing forbidden in the commandment, is meddling with another man's property, 'Thou shalt not steal.' The civil lawyers define, *furtum*, stealth or theft, to be "the laying hands unjustly on that which is another's;" the invading another's right.

Qu. 1. *Whence doth theft arise?*

Ans. 1. The internal causes are, (1.) Unbelief. A man hath an high distrust of God's providence: 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?' Ps. lxxviii. 19. So saith the unbeliever, Can God spread a table for me? No, he cannot. Therefore he is resolved, he will spread a table for himself, but it shall be of other men's cost, and both first and second course shall be served in with stolen goods. (2.) Covetousness. The Greek word for covetousness signifies "an immoderate desire of getting:" this is the root of theft. A man covets more than his own, and this itch of covetousness makes him scratch what he can from another. Achan's covetous humour made him steal the wedge of gold, which wedge did cleave afunder his soul from God, Joshua vii. 21.

2. The external cause of theft, is, Satan's solicitation: Judas was a thief, John xii. 6. How came he to be a thief? 'Satan entered into him,' John xiii. 27. The devil is the great master-thief, he robbed us of our coat of innocency, and he persuades men to take up his trade: he tells men how bravely they shall live by thieving, and how they may catch an estate. And as Eve listened to the serpent's voice, so do they; and, as birds of prey, live upon spoil and rapine.

Qu. 2. *How many sorts of thefts are there?*

Ans. I. There is stealing from God; and so they are thieves who rob any part of God's day from him—'Remember to keep holy the sabbath day.'—Not a part of the day only, but the

whole day must be dedicated to God. And lest any should forget this, the Lord hath prefixed a *memento*, 'remember.' Therefore to cut God short, and after morning sacrifice, to spend the other part of the sabbath in vanity and pleasure: this is 'spiritual thievery,' 'tis to rob God of his due: and the very heathens will rise up in judgment against such Christians; for the heathens (as Macrobius notes) did observe a whole day to their false gods.

II. There is a stealing from others, 1st, A stealing away their souls: and so heretics are thieves: by robbing men of the truth, they rob them of their souls. 2^{dly}, A stealing away their money and goods from them: and under this head of stealing away others money, there may be several arraigned for thieves.

(1.) The high-way thief, who takes a purse, contrary to the letter of this commandment, Lev. xix. 13. 'Thou shalt not rob thy neighbour.' Mark. x. 19. 'Do not steal.' This is not the violence which takes the 'kingdom of heaven,' Mat. xi. 12.

(2.) The house-thief, who purloins and filcheth out of his master's cash, or steals his wares and drugs. The apostle saith, 'Some have entertained angels into their houses unawares,' Heb. xiii. 2. But many masters have entertained thieves into their houses unawares. The house-thief is an hypocrite, as well as a thief; he hath demure looks, and pretends he is helping his master, when he only helps to rob him.

(3.) The thief that shrouds himself under law, as the unjust attorney or lawyer, who prevaricates and deals falsely with his client. This is to steal from the client. By deceit and prevarication the lawyer robs the client of his land, and may be the means to ruin his family; he is no better than a thief in God's account.

(4.) The church-thief or pluralist, who holds several benefices, but seldom or never preacheth to the people: he gets the golden fleece, but lets his flock starve, Ezek. xxxiv. 2. 'Wo be to the shepherds of Israel:' v. 8. 'They feed themselves, and feed not my flock.' These ministers will be indicted for thieves at God's bar.

(5.) The *shop-thief*, he steals in selling. (1.) Who useth false weights and measures; and so steals from others what is their due. Amos v. 8. 'Who makes the ephah small.' The ephah was a measure the Jews used in selling; they made the ephah small, gave scant measure, which was plain stealing, Hof. xii. 7. 'The balances of deceit are in his hand.' Men by making their weights lighter, make their accounts heavier. (2.) He steals in selling, who puts excessive prices on his commodities. He takes thrice as much for a commodity as it cost him, or as it is worth: to over-reach others in selling, is to steal men's

money from them, Lev. xix. 13. 'Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him.' To defraud him is to rob him; this over-reaching others in selling (which is a cunning way of stealing) is both against law and gospel. 1. It is against the law of God, Lev. xxv. 14. 'If thou sell ought to thy neighbour, ye shall not oppress one another.' And, 2. Against gospel, 1 Theff. iv. 6. 'Let no man go beyond, or defraud his brother.' It is stealing.

(6.) The *Ujurer*, who takes of others even to extortion: he seems to help another by letting him have money in his necessity, but gets him into bonds, and sucks out his very blood and marrow. I read of a woman whom Satan had bound, Luke xiii. 16. And truly he is almost in as bad a condition whom the usurer hath bound: the oppressing usurer is a robber. An usurer once asked a prodigal, when he would leave spending? Saith the prodigal, then I will leave spending what is my own, when thou leavest off stealing from others. Zaccheus was an extortioner, and after his conversion he made restitution, Luke xix. 8. He thought all he got by extortion was theft.

(7.) The *feoffe* in trust, who hath the orphan's estate committed to him: he is deputed to be his guardian, and manage his estate for him; and he curtails the estate, and gets a fleece out of it for himself, and wrongs the orphan. This is a thief: this is worse than taking a purse, because he betrays his trust, which is the highest piece of treachery and injustice.

(8.) The borrower, who borrows money from others with an intention never to pay them again. Pf. xxxvii. 21. 'The wicked borroweth and payeth not again.' What is it but thievery to take money and goods from others, and not restore them again? The prophet Elisha bade the widow sell her roil, and pay her debts, and then live upon the rest, 2 Kings iv. 7.

(9.) The last sort of theft is, the receiver of stolen goods. The receiver if he be not the principal, yet he is accessory to the theft, and the law makes him guilty. The thief steals the money, and the receiver holds the sack to put it in. The root would die if it were not watered, and thievery would cease if it were not encouraged by the receiver. I am apt to think, he who doth not scruple to take stolen goods into his house, would as little scruple to take a purse.

Qu. *What are the aggravations of this sin of stealing?*

Ans. 1. To steal when one has no need. To be a rich thief.

2. To steal sacrilegiously. To devour things set apart to holy uses, Prov. xx. 25. 'It is a snare to the man which devoureth that which is holy.' Such an one was Dionysius, who robbed the temple, and took away the silver vessels.

3. To commit the sin of theft against checks of conscience,

and examples of God's justice ; this is like the dye to the wool, it doth dye the sin of a crimson colour.

4. To rob the widow and orphan, Exod. xxii. 22. 'Ye shall not afflict the widow or fatherless;' *peccatam clamans*; 'If they cry unto me, I will surely hear them.'

5. To rob the poor: How did David disdain that the rich man should take away the poor man's lamb! 'As the Lord liveth, he shall surely die,' 2 Sam. xii. 5. What is the inclosing of commons, but a robbing of the poor?

III. There is a stealing from a man's self. A man may be a thief to himself.

Qu. *How so?*

Ans. 1. By niggardlines. The niggard is a thief; he steals from himself, in that he doth not allow himself what is fitting. He thinks that lost which is bestowed upon himself: he robs himself of necessaries, Eccl. vi. 2. 'A man to whom God hath given riches, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.' He gluts his chest, and starves his belly: He is like the ass that is loaded with gold, but feeds upon thistles: He robs himself of that which God allows him. This is indeed to be punished with riches: To have an estate, and want an heart to take the comfort of it, this man is a thief to himself.

2. A man may be a thief to himself, and rob himself by prodigality, viz. wasting his estate. The prodigal lavisheth gold out of the bag; he is like Crates the philosopher, who threw his gold into the sea. The prodigal boils a great estate to nothing: this is to be a thief to a man's self, to spend away that estate from himself, which might conduce to the comfort of life.

3. He is a thief to himself, by idleness, when he mispends his time. To spend one's hours in pleasure and vanity, this is to rob himself, of that precious time which God hath given him to work out salvation. Time is a rich commodity, because on the well-spending this present time, an happy eternity depends. He that spends his time idly and vainly, is a thief to himself; he robs himself of his golden seasons, and, by consequence of salvation.

4. A man may be a thief to himself, by suretiship, Prov. xxii. 26. 'Be thou not one of them that are sureties for debt.' The creditor comes upon the surety for the debt, and so by paying another's debt he is a thief to himself, he undoes himself. Let not any man say, he should have been counted unkind, if he had not entered into bonds for his friend: better thy friend count thee unkind, than all men count thee unwise. Lend another what you can spare; nay, give him if he needs, but never be a surety: it is no wisdom for a man so to help another, as to undo himself. This is to rob himself and his family.

Use I. It confutes the doctrine of community, that all things are common, and one man hath a right to another's estate. The scripture confutes it, Deut. xxiii. 25. 'When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, thou shalt not move a sickle into thy neighbour's corn.' Propriety must be observed: God hath set this eighth commandment as a hedge about a man's estate, and this hedge cannot be broken without sin. If all things be common, then there is no stealth, and so this commandment were in vain.

Use II. It reproves such as live upon stealing. Instead of living by faith, they live by their shifts. The apostle exhorteth, that 'every man eat his own bread,' 2 Theff. iii. 12. The thief doth not eat of his own bread, but of another's. If there be any who are guilty of this sin, let them labour to recover out of the snare of the devil, by repentance, and let them shew their repentance by restitution. *Non remittitur peccatum nisi restituatur ablatum*, Aug. "Without restitution, no remission." Luke xix. 8. 'If I have taken away any thing from any man unjustly, I restore him fourfold.' It may suffice to restore ill-gotten goods by one's own hand, or by proxy. Better a thousand times restore goods unlawfully gotten, than to stuff one's pillow with thorns, and have guilt trouble one's conscience upon a death-bed.

Use III. Exhort. To all to take heed of this sin of thieving; it is a sin against the light of nature. Some may go to excuse this sin: hear the thief's plea; it is a coarse wool will take no dye, and a bad sin indeed that hath no excuse. "I am (saith one) grown low in the world, and trading is bad, and I have no other way to a livelihood."

Ans. 1. This shews a great distrust of God, as if he could not provide for thee without thy sin. 2. This shews sin is gotten to a great height, that, because a man is grown low in the world, therefore he will, *Acheronta movere*, go to the devil for a livelihood. Abraham would not have it said, that 'the king of Sodom had made him rich,' Gen. xiv. 22. O let it never be said, that the devil hath made thee rich! 3. Thou oughtest not to undertake any action which thou canst not pray for a blessing upon: but, if thou livest on thieving, thou canst not pray for a blessing upon stolen goods; therefore take heed of this sin, *lucrum in acru, damnum in conscientia*, Aug. Take heed of getting the world with the loss of heaven. To dissuade all from this horrid sin, consider,

(1.) Thieves are the caterpillars of the earth, enemies to civil society.

(2.) God hates them. In the law, the Cormorant was unclean, Lev. xi. 17. because a thievish, devouring creature, a bird of prey; by which God shewed his hatred of this sin.

(3.) The thief is a terror to himself, he is always in fear, Pf. liii. 5. 'There were they in great fear;' true of the thief. Guilt breeds fear: if he hear but the shaking of a tree, his heart shakes. It is said of Catiline, he was afraid of every noise. If a briar doth but take hold of a thief's garment, he is afraid it is the officer to apprehend him; and fear hath 'torment in it,' 1 John iv. 18.

(4.) The judgments that follow this sin, 'Achan the thief was stoned to death,' Joshua vii. and Zech. v. 2. 'What seeft thou? And I said, a flying roll,' verse 3. 'This is the curse that goeth over the face of the earth; I will bring it forth, saith the Lord, and it shall enter into the house of the thief.' Fabius, a Roman censor, condemned his own son to die for theft. Thieves die with ignominy, the ladder is their preferment: and there is a worse thing than death, while they rob others of money, they rob themselves of salvation.

Qu. *What is to be done to avoid stealing?*

Ans. 1. Live in a calling, Eph. iv. 28. 'Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands,' &c. Such as stand idle, the devil hires them, and puts them to the pilfering trade. An idle person tempts the devil to tempt him.

2. Be content with the estate God hath given you, Heb. xiii. 5. 'Be content with such things as ye have.' Theft is the daughter of avarice: study contentment. Believe that condition best, God hath carved out to you. God can bless that little meal in the barrel. We shall not need these things long, we shall carry nothing out of the world with us but our winding sheet. If we have but enough to bear our charges to heaven, it is sufficient.



OF THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 16. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*

THE tongue, which at first was made to be an organ of God's praise, is now become an instrument of unrighteousness. This commandment binds the tongue to its good behaviour; God hath set two fences to keep in the tongue, the teeth and lips: and this commandment is a third fence set about it, that it should not break forth into evil; 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.' This commandment hath a prohibitory, and a mandatory part: the first is set down in plain words, the other is clearly implied.