

1. Exodus 20:4
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not keep our solemn vow and covenant? we cannot go away from God without the highest perjury, Heb. x. 38. 'If any man draw back,' as a soldier that steals away from his colours, 'my soul shall have no pleasure in him; I will pour vials of wrath on him, and make mine arrows drunk with blood.'

3. None ever had cause to repent of cleaving to God and his service: some have repented that they have made a god of the world. Cardinal Wolsay said, "Had I served my God as faithfully as I have served my king, he would never have left me thus." None ever complained of serving God, it was both their comfort and crown on their death-bed.

OF THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

EXOD. xx. 4. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c.*

IN the first commandment is forbidden the worshipping a false god; in this, the worshipping the true God in a false manner.

1. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.' This forbids not the making an image for civil use, Mat. xxii. 20. 'Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, It is Cæsar's.' But the commandment forbids setting up an image for religious use or worship.

2. 'Nor the likeness of any thing,' &c. All ideas, portraiture, shapes, images of God, whether by effigies or pictures, are here forbidden, Deut. iv. 15. 'Take heed lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make the similitude of any figure.' God is to be adored in the heart, not painted to the eye.

3. 'Thou shalt not bow down to them.' The intent of making images and pictures, is to worship them. No sooner was Nebuchadnezzar's golden image set up, but all the people fell down and worshipped it, Dan. iii. 7. Therefore God forbids the prostrating of ourselves before an idol; so then, the thing prohibited in this commandment is image-worship. To set up an image to represent God, is a debasing of the Deity, it is below God. If one should make images of snakes or spiders, saying he did it to represent his prince, would not the prince take this in high disdain? what greater disparagement to God, than to represent the infinite God by that which is finite: the living God, by that which is without life, and the Maker of all, by a thing which is made?

1. To make a true image of God is impossible. God is a spiritual essence, John iv. 24. and, being a Spirit, he is invisi-

ble, Deut. iv. 15. ‘Ye saw no similitude in the day that the Lord spake with you out of the midst of the fire.’ How can any paint the Deity? can they make an image of that which they never saw? *Quod invisibile est, pingi, non potest*, Amb. “Ye saw no similitude.” It is impossible to make a picture of the soul, or to paint the angels, because they are of a spiritual nature; much less then can we paint God by an image, who is an infinite, uncreated Spirit.

2. To worship God by an image, is both absurd and unlawful.

I. It is absurd and irrational; for, 1. The workman is better than the work, Heb. iii. 3. ‘He who buildeth the house hath more honour than the house.’ If the workman be better than the work, and none bow to the workman, how absurd then is it to bow to the work of his hands? 2. Is it not an absurd thing to bow down to the king’s picture, when the king himself is present? so to bow down to an image of God, when God himself is every-where present.

II. It is unlawful to worship God by an image; for, 1. It is against the homily of the church; it runs thus; ‘The images of God, our Saviour, the Virgin Mary, are of all others the most dangerous; therefore the greatest care ought to be had, that they stand not in temples and churches.’ So that image-worship is contrary to our own homilies, and doth affront the authority of the church of England. 2. Image-worship is expressly against the letter of scripture, Lev. xxvi. 1. ‘Ye shall make no graven image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone, to bow down to it,’ Deut. xvi. 22. ‘Neither shalt thou set up any image which the Lord thy God hateth.’ Psal. xcvi. 7. ‘Confounded be all they that serve graven images.’ Do we think to please God, by doing that which is contrary to his mind, and that which he hath expressly forbidden? 3. Image-worship is against the practice of the saints of old. Josiah, that renowned king, destroyed the groves and images, 2 Kings xxiii. 24. Constantine abrogated the images set up in temples: the Christians destroyed images at Basil, Zurich, Bohemia; when the Roman emperors would have thrust images upon them, they chose rather to die than deflower their virgin-profession by idolatry; they refused to admit any painter or carver into their society, because they would not have any carved statue or image of God: when Seraphion bowed to an idol, the Christians excommunicated him, and delivered him up to Satan.

Use 1. It reproves and condemns the church of Rome, who, from the Alpha of their religion to the Omega, are wholly idolatrous. They make images of God the Father, painting him in their church windows as an old man; and an image of Christ in the crucifix: and, because it is against the letter of this com-

mandment, therefore they sacrilegiously blot out the second commandment out of their catechises, dividing the tenth commandment into two; now this image-worship must needs be very impious and blasphemous, because it is a giving that religious worship to the creature, which is only due to God. It is vain for papists to say, they give God the worship of the heart, and the image only the worship of the body; for the worship of the body is due to God, as well as the worship of the heart: and to give an outward veneration to an image, is to give that adoration to a creature, which only belongs to God, Isa. xlii. 8. ‘ My glory will I not give to another.’

Object. 1. *But the papists say, they do not worship the image, only make use of it as a medium, they worship God by it; Ne imagine quidem Christi in quantum est lignum sculptum, ultra debetor reverentia, Aquinas.*

Ans. 1. Where hath God bidden them worship him by an effigy or spirit? Isa. i. 12. ‘ Who hath required this at your hands?’ The papists cannot say so much as the devil, *Scriptum est*, It is written.

2. The heathens may bring the same argument for their gross idolatry, as the papists do for their image-worship. Who of the heathens were so simple, as to think of gold and silver, or the figure of an ox or elephant, were God? They were only emblems and hieroglyphics to represent him; they did worship the invisible God, by such visible things. To worship God by an image, God takes as done to the image itself.

Object. 2. *But, say the papists, images are lay-men’s books, and they are good to put us in mind of God. One of the popish councils affirmed, that we might learn more by an image, than by a long study of the scriptures.*

Ans. Hab. ii. 18. ‘ What profiteth the graven image, the molten image, and a teacher of lies?’ Is an image a lay-man’s book? See then what lessons this book teacheth; it teacheth lies; it represents God in a visible shape, who is invisible. For the papists to say, they make use of an image to put them in mind of God, is as if a woman should say, she keeps company with another man, to put her in mind of her husband.

Object. 3. *But did not Moses make the image of a brazen serpent? Why then may not images be set up?*

Ans. That was done by God’s special command, Numb. xxi. 8. ‘ Make thee a brazen serpent;’ and there was a special use of it, both literal and spiritual; but what, doth the setting up this image of the brazen serpent justify the setting up of images in churches? what, because Moses did make an image by God’s appointment, may we therefore set up an image of our own devising? because Moses made an image to heal them that were stung, is it lawful therefore to set up images in churches,

to sting them that are whole ? this doth not at all follow. Nay, that very brazen serpent which God himself commanded to be set up, when Israel did look upon it with too much reverence, and began to burn incense to it, Hezekiah defaced that image, and called it, Nehushtan ; and God commended him for so doing, 2 Kings xviii. 4.

Object. 4. *But is not God represented as having hands, and eyes, and ears ? Why then may we not make an image to represent him by, and help our devotion.*

Ans. Though God is pleased to stoop to our weak capacities, and set himself out in scripture by eyes, to signify his omniscien- cy ; and hands to signify his power ; yet it is very absurd, from metaphors and figurative expressions, to bring an argument for images and pictures ; for, by that rule, God may be pictured by the sun and the element of fire, and by a rock ; for God is set forth by these metaphors in scripture : and sure the papists themselves would not like to have such images made of God.

Qu. 1. *If it be not lawful to make the image of God the Father, yet may we not make an image of Christ, who took upon him the nature of man ?*

Ans. No. Epiphanius seeing an image of Christ hanging in a church, brake it in pieces, it is Christ's Godhead, united to his manhood, that makes him to be Christ : therefore, to picture his manhood, when we cannot picture his Godhead, is a sin, because we make him to be but half Christ, we separate what God hath joined, we leave out that which is the chief thing, which makes him to be Christ.

Qu. 2. *But how then shall we conceive of God aright, if we may make no image or resemblance of him ?*

Ans. We must conceive of God spiritually, viz. 1. In his attributes, his holiness, justice, goodness, which are the beams by which his divine nature shines forth. 2. We must conceive of him as he is in Christ, Christ is the ' image of the invisible God,' Col. i. 15. as in the wax we see the print of the seal. Set the eyes of your faith on Christ God-man, John xiv. 9. ' He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.'

Use 2. Take heed of idolatry, viz. image-worship : our nature is prone to this sin, as dry wood to take fire ; and indeed, what needs so many words in the commandment, ' Thou shalt not make any graven image, or the likeness of any thing in heaven, earth, water,' sun, moon, stars, male, female fish ; ' thou shalt not bow down to them : ' I say, what needed so many words, but shew how subject we are to this sin of false worship ? it concerns us therefore to resist this sin. Where the tide is apt to run with greater force, there we had need to make the banks higher and stronger, the plague of idolatry is very infectious, Psal. cvi. 35, 36. ' They were mingled among the heathens,

and served their idols.' It is my advice to you to avoid all occasions of this sin.

1. Come not into the company of idolatrous papists, dare not to live under the same roof with them: you run into the devil's mouth. John the divine would not be in the bath where Cerinthus the heretic was.

2. Go not into their chapels to see their crucifixes, or hear mass: as the looking on an harlot draws to idolatry, so the looking on the popish gilded picture may draw to idolatry. Some care not though they go and see their idol-worship: indeed, a vagrant that hath nothing to lose, cares not though he goes among thieves; such as have no goodness in them, care not into what idolatrous places they come, or what temptations they cast themselves upon: but you who have a treasure about you, good principles, take heed the popish priests do not rob you of your principles, and defile you with their images.

3. Dare not to join in marriage with image-worshippers. Solomon, tho' a man of wisdom, yet his idolatrous wives drew away his heart from God. The people of Israel entered into an oath and curse, that they would not give their daughters in marriage to the idolaters, Nehem. x. 30. For a protestant and papist to marry, is to be unequally yoked, 2 Cor. vi. 14. and there is more danger that the papist will corrupt the protestant, than hope that the protestant will convert the papist. Mingle wine and vinegar, the vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine will sweeten the vinegar.

4. Avoid superstition, which is a bridge leads over to Rome. Superstition is the bringing in any ceremony, fancy, or innovation into God's worship, which he never appointed. This is very provoking to God, because it reflects much upon his honour, as if he were not wise enough to appoint the manner of his own worship. God hates all strange fire to be offered in his temple, Lev. x. 1. A ceremony may in time bring to a crucifix. They who contend for the cross in baptism, why may they not as well have the oil, salt, and cream, the one being as ancient as the other? such as are for altar-worship, they who will bow to the east, may in time bow to the host. Take heed of all occasions of idolatry; idolatry is devilish-worship, Psal. cvi. 37. and if you search through the whole bible, there is no one sin that God hath more followed with plagues, than idolatry; the Jews have a saying, that in every evil that befalls them there is *uncia aurei vituli*, an ounce of the golden calf in it. Hell is a place for idolaters, Rev. xxii. 15. 'For without are idolaters.' Senefius calls the devil a rejoicer at idols, because the image-worshippers help to fill hell. That you may be preserved from idolatry and image-worship.

1. Get good principles, that you may be able to oppose the

gainfayer. Whence doth the popifh religion get ground? not from the goodnefs of their caufe, but from the ignorance of their people.

2. Get love to God. The wife that loves her husband is fafe from the idolater; and the foul that loves Chrift is fafe from the idolater.

3. Pray that God will keep you. Tho' it is true, there is nothing in an image to tempt (for if we pray to an image, it cannot hear, and if we pray to God by an image, he will not hear: I fay, there's nothing to tempt) yet we know not our own hearts, or how foon we may be drawn to vanity, if God leaves us: therefore pray that you be not enticed by falfe worship, or receive the mark of the beaft in your right hand or forehead, Pray, Pf. cxix. 117. 'Hold thou me up, and I fhall be fafe.' Lord, let me neither miftake my way for want of light, nor leave the true way for want of courage.

2. Let us blefs God, who hath given us the knowledge of his truth; that we have tafted the honey of his word, and our eyes are enlightened. Blefs him that he hath fhewn us the pattern of his houfe, the right mode of worship; that he hath difcovered to us the forgery and blafphemy of the Romifh religion. Let us pray, that God will preferve pure ordinances, and powerful preaching among us: idolatry came in at firft by the want of good preaching; then the people began to have golden images, when they had wooden priefts.

EXOD. XX. 5. *For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, vifiting the iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children unto the third and fourth Generation of them that hate me.*

I. 'I THE Lord thy God am a jealous God.' The firft reafon why Ifrael muft not worship graven images, is, becaufe the Lord is a jealous God, Exod. xxxiv. 14. 'The Lord whole name is *Jehovah*, is a jealous God.' Jealoufy is taken in a good fenfe, and fo God is jealous for his people. 2. In a bad fenfe, and fo God is jealous of his people.

1. In a good fenfe, and fo God is jealous for his people, Zech. i. 14. 'Thus faith the Lord I am jealous for Jerufalem, and for Zion, with a great jealoufy.' God hath a dear affection for his people, they are his *Hephzibah*, or delight, Ifa. lxii. 4. The apple of his eye, Zech. ii. 8. 'To exprefs how dear they are to him, and how tender he is of them, *Nihil charius pupilla oculi*, Drufius. They are his fpoufe, adorned with jewels of grace; they lie near to his heart. He is jealous for his fpoufe, therefore he will be avenged on them who go to

wrong her, Isa. xliii. 13. 'The Lord shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; he shall roar, he shall prevail against his enemies.' What is done to the saints, God takes as done to himself, 2 Kings xix. 22. and the Lord will undo all them that afflict Zion, Zeph. iii. 19. 'I will undo all that afflict thee.' 2. Jealousy is taken in a bad sense, and so God is jealous of his people: and so it is taken in this commandment, 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.' I am jealous lest you should go after false gods, or worship the true God in a false manner; lest you defile your virgin-profession by images. God will have his spouse to keep close to him, and not go after other lovers, Hos. iii. 3. 'Thou shalt not be for another man.' God cannot bear a corival: our conjugal love, viz. a love joined with adoration and worship, must be given only to God.

Use 1. Let us give God no just cause to be jealous. A good wife will be so discreet and chaste, as to give her husband no just occasion of jealousy. Let us avoid all sin, especially this sin of idolatry, or image-worship; it is heinous, after we have entered into a marriage-covenant with God, now to prostitute ourselves to an image. Idolatry is spiritual adultery, and God is a jealous God, he will avenge it: image-worship makes God abhor a people, Psal. lxxviii. 58. 'They moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.' Image-worship enrageth God, Prov. vi. 34. 'Jealousy is the rage of a man;' it makes God divorce a people, Hos. ii. 2. 'Plead with your mother, plead; for she is not my wife.' Cant. viii. 6. 'Jealousy is cruel as the grave.' As the grave devours men's bodies, so God will devour image-worshippers.

Use 2. If God be a jealous God, let it be a word to such whose friends are popish idolaters, and they are hated by their friends, because they are of a different religion, and perhaps they cut off their maintenance from them. O remember, God is a jealous God; better move your parents to hatred, than move God to jealousy; their anger cannot do you so much hurt as God's; if they will not provide for you, God will, Psal. xxvii. 10. 'When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'

II. The second reason against image-worship, 'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.' There is a twofold visiting. 1. There is God's visiting in mercy, Gen. i. 25. 'God will surely visit you;' that is he will bring you into the land of Canaan, the type of heaven. Thus God hath visited us with the sun-beams of his favour; he hath made us swim in a sea of mercy; this is an happy visitation. 2. There is God's visiting in anger, Jer. v. 9. 'Shall I not visit for these things?' that is, God's visiting with the rod: and,

Iſa. x. 3. 'What will ye do in the day of viſitation?' that is, in the day when God ſhall viſit with his judgments. Thus God's viſiting is taken here, in this commandment, 'viſiting iniquity,' that is, puniſhing iniquity. Obſerve here three things:

Obſerve 1. That ſin makes God viſit; 'Viſiting iniquity.' Sin is the cauſe why God viſits with ſickneſs, poverty, Pſal. lxxxix. 31, 32. 'If they break my commandments; then will I viſit their tranſgreſſions with the rod.' Sin twiſts the cords which pinch us; ſin creates all our troubles, it is the gall in our cup, and the gravel in our bread; *Flagitium et flagellum, ſunt ſicut acus et ſpum.* Sin is the Trojan horſe, the phæton, that ſets all on fire; it is the womb of our ſorrows, and the grave of our comfort. God viſits for ſin.

Obſerve 2. One ſpecial ſin God viſits for, is idolatry and image worſhip. 'Viſiting the iniquity of the fathers.' Moſt of God's invenomed arrows have been ſhot among idolaters, Jer. vii. 12. 'Go now into my place which was in Shiloh; where I ſet my name at the firſt, and ſee what I did to it.' God, for Iſrael's idolatry ſuffered their army to be routed, their prieſts ſlain, the ark taken captive; and we never read that the ark returned to Shiloh any more. Jeruſalem was the moſt famous metropolis of the world; there was the temple, Pſal. cxxii. 4. 'Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord.' Yet, for their high places and images, their city was beſieged, and taken by the Chaldean forces, 2 Kings xxv. 4. When images were ſet up in Conſtantinople, the chief ſeat of the Eaſtern empire: this city, which was in the eye of the world impregnable, was taken by the Turks, and many cruelly maſſacred. Then the Turks, in their triumphs, reproached the idolatrous Chriſtians, cauſing an image or crucifix to be carried through the ſtreets in contempt, and throwing dirt upon it cried, "This is the god of the Chriſtians." Here was God's viſitation for their idolatry. God hath ſet ſpecial marks of his wrath upon idolaters: at a place called Eſepotium, there periſhed by an earthquake 350 perſons, while they were offering ſacrifice to idols. Idolatry hath brought miſery upon the Eaſtern churches, it removed the golden candleſticks of Aſia. This iniquity God viſits for.

Obſerve 3. Idolatrous perſons are enemies not only to their own ſouls, but to their children: 'Viſiting the iniquity of the fathers upon their children.' As an idolatrous father entails his land of inheritance, ſo he entails God's anger and curſe upon them. A jealous huſband, finding his wife hath ſtained her integrity, may juſtly caſt her off and her children too, becauſe they are none of his. If the father be a traitor to his prince, no wonder if all the children ſuffer. God may viſit the iniquity of image-worſhippers upon their children.

Qu. *But is it not said, 'Every one shall die for his own sin; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father?' How then doth God say, He 'will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children?'*

Ans. Tho' the son be not damned for his father's sin, yet he may be severely punished, Job xxi. 19. 'God lays up his iniquity for his children;' that is, God lays up the punishment of his iniquity for his children; the child smarts for the father's sin. Jeroboam thought to have established the kingdom by idolatrous worship, but it brought ruin upon him, and all his posterity, 1 Kings xiv. 10. Ahab's idolatry wronged his posterity, they lost the kingdom, and were all beheaded, 2 Kings x. 7. 'They took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons.' There God visited the iniquity of the father upon the children. As a son catcheth an hereditary disease from his father, the stone or gout; so he catcheth misery from him, his father's sin ruins him.

Use 1. If so, then how sad is it to be the child of an idolater? It had been sad to have been one of Gehazi's children, who had leprosy entailed upon them, 2 Kings v. 27. 'The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee and to thy seed for ever.' So it is sad to be a child of an idolater, or image-worshipper: his seed are exposed to God's heavy judgments in this life; 'God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon their children.' Methinks I hear God speak, as, Isa. xiv. 21. 'Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers.'

Use 2. See what a privilege it is to be the children of good parents; the parents are in covenant with God, and God lays up mercy for their posterity, Prov. xx. 7. 'The just man walks in his integrity, his seed are blessed after him.' A religious parent doth not procure wrath, but helps to keep off wrath from his child; he seasons his child with religious principles, he prays down a blessing on his child: he is a loadstone drawing his child to Christ by good counsel and example. O what a privilege is it to be born of godly religious parents! St. Austin saith, that his mother Monica travelled with greater care and pains for his new birth, than for his natural. Wicked idolaters entail misery on their posterity, God 'visits the iniquity of the fathers upon their children:' but religious parents procure a blessing upon their children, God reserves mercy upon their posterity.

III. The third reason against image-worship, *Of them that hate me.* This is a reason against image-worship, 'tis hating God; the papists, who worship God by an image, hate God. Image-worship is a pretended love to God, but God interprets it an hating of him: *Quæ diligit alienum odit sponsum*; She that loves another man, hates her own husband. An image-

lover is a God-hater. Idolaters are said to go a-whoring from God, Ezek. xxxiv. 15. How can they love God? I shall shew that image-worshippers hate God, whatever love they pretend.

1. They who go contrary to God's express will, hate him. God saith, you shall not set up any statue, image nor picture, to represent me; these things I hate, Deut. xvi. 22. 'Neither shalt thou set up any image which the Lord thy God hateth.' Yet the idolater will set up images, and worship them. This God looks upon as an hating of him. How doth that child love his father, who doth all he can to cross him?

2. They who shut the truth out of doors, hate him, because they laboured to shut him out of his father's house, Judges xi.

7. The idolater shuts the truth out of doors; he blots out the second commandment; he makes a shape of the invisible God; he brings a lie into God's worship: which is a clear proof he hates God.

3. Idolaters, tho' they love the false image of God in a picture, yet they hate the true image of God in a believer: they pretend to honour Christ in a crucifix, yet persecute Christ in his members; these hate God.

Use 1. This may confute those who plead for image-worshippers. They are very devout people, they adore images, they set up the crucifix, kiss it, light candles to it: they love God. Nay, but who shall be judge of their love? God saith, they hate him: they give religious adoration to a creature. These hate God, and God hates them; and they shall never live with God, whom God hates: he will never lay such vipers in his bosom; heaven is kept as paradise, with a flaming sword, that they shall not enter in: and Deut. vii. 10. 'He repayeth them that hate him, to their face.' God will shoot all his murdering-pieces among idolaters: all the plagues and curses in the book of God shall befall the idolater: the Lord repays him that hates him to his face.

Use 2. Let it exhort us all to flee from Romish idolatry: let us not be among God-haters, 1 John v. 21. 'Little children keep yourselves from idols.' As you would keep your bodies from adultery, so keep your souls from idolatry. Take heed of images, they are images of jealousy to provoke God to anger; they are damnable: you may as well perish by false devotion, as by real scandal; by image-worship, as drunkennets and whoredom. A man may as well die by poison, as pistol: we may as well go to hell by drinking poison in the Romish cup of fornication, as by being pistolled with gross and scandalous sins. To conclude, 'God is a jealous God,' who will admit of no corival; 'he will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children:' he will entail a plague upon the posterity of idolaters.

He interprets idolaters to be such as hate him; he that is an image-lover, is a God-hater: Therefore keep yourselves pure from Romish idolatry; if you love your souls, keep yourselves from idols.

EXOD. XX. 6. *Shewing Mercy unto Thousands, &c.*

THIS is another argument against image-worship, because such as do not provoke God with their images, he is merciful to them, and will entail mercy upon their posterity; 'shewing mercy to thousands.'

1. Here is the golden sceptre of God's mercy displayed. 2. The persons interested in God's mercy; such as love him, and keep his commandments. 1. The golden sceptre of God's mercy displayed, 'shewing mercy to thousands.' The heathens thought they praised Jupiter enough, when they called him good and great. Both these excellencies meet in God, majesty and mercy. Mercy is that innate propenseness in God to do good to distressed sinners. God shewing mercy, makes his Godhead appear full of glory. When Moses said to God, 'I beseech thee shew me thy glory; I will (saith God) shew mercy,' Exod. xxxiii. 19. His mercy is his glory. Mercy is the name by which God will be known, Exod. xxxiv. 6. 'The Lord passed by, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.' Mercy proceeds primarily, and originally from God; he is called, the 'Father of mercies,' 2 Cor. i. 3. because he begets all those mercies and bowels which are in the creature. Our mercies compared with God's, are scarce so much as a drop to the ocean.

Qu. What are the qualifications?

Ans. 1. The spring of mercy which God shews, is free and spontaneous. To set up merit is to destroy mercy: nothing can deserve mercy nor force it; we cannot deserve mercy because of our enmity, nor force it: we may force God to punish us, not to love us, Hos. xiv. 3. 'I will love them freely.' Every link in the golden chain of salvation is wrought and interwoven with free grace. Election is free, Eph. i. 4. 'He hath chosen us in him according to the good pleasure of his will.' Justification is free, Rom. iii. 24. 'Being justified freely by his grace.' Say not then, I am unworthy; for mercy is free. If God should shew mercy only to such as deserve it, he must shew mercy to none at all.

2. The mercy God shews is powerful: how powerful is that mercy, which softens an heart of stone? Mercy changed Mary Magdalen's heart, out of whom seven devils were cast: she who

was an inflexible adamant, mercy made her a weeping penitent. God's mercy works sweetly, yet irresistibly ; it allures, yet conquers. The law may terrify, mercy doth mollify. Of what sovereign power and efficacy is that mercy which subdues the pride and enmity of the heart, and beats off those chains of sin in which the soul is held !

3. The mercy which God shews is super-abundant, Exod. xxxiv. 6. ' Abundant in goodness, shewing mercy to thousands.' God visits iniquity only to the third and fourth generation, Exod. xx. 5. but he shews mercy to a thousand generations. The Lord hath treasures of mercy lying by, therefore he is said to be ' plenteous in mercy,' Psal. lxxxvi. 5. and ' rich in mercy,' Eph. ii. 4. The vial of God's wrath doth but drop, but the fountain of his mercy runs. The sun is not so full of light, as God is of love.

- God hath mercy, *First*, Of all dimensions ; he hath depth of mercy, it reacheth as low as sinners ; and height of mercy, it reacheth above the clouds.

Secondly, God hath mercies for all seasons : mercies for the night, he gives sleep ; nay, sometimes he gives a song in the night, Psal. xlii. 8. And he hath mercies for the morning, Lam. iii. 3. ' His compassions are fresh every morning.'

Thirdly, God hath mercies for all sorts. Mercies for the poor, 1 Sam. ii. 8. ' He raiseth the poor out of the dust ;' mercies for the prisoner, Psal. lxxix. 33. ' He despiseth not his prisoners :' Mercies for the dejected, Isa. liv. 8. ' In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee.' God hath old mercies, Psal. xxv. 6. ' Thy mercies have been ever of old :' and new mercies, Psal. xl. 3. ' He hath put a new song in my mouth.' Every time we draw our breath, we suck in mercy : God hath mercies under heaven, and those we taste of ; and mercies in heaven, and those we hope for. Thus God's mercies are super-abundant.

4. The mercy God shews is abiding, Ps. ciii. 16. ' The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.' God's anger to his children lasts but a while, Ps. ciii. 9. but his mercy lasts for ever. God's mercy is not like the widow's oil, which ran a while and then ceased, 2 Kings iv. 6. Overflowing, ever flowing. God's mercy, as it is without bounds, so without bottom, Ps. cxxxvi. ' His mercy endures for ever.' God never cuts off the entail of mercy from the elect.

Qu. 2. *How many ways is God said to shew mercy ?*

Ans. 1. We are all living monuments of God's mercy. God shews mercy to us in daily supplying us. 1. He supplies us with health : health is the sauce which makes our life relish sweeter. How would they prize this mercy, who are chained to a sick-bed ? 2. God supplies us with provisions, Gen. xlviii.

15. 'The God who hath fed me all my days.' Mercy spreads our tables, it carves us every bit of bread we eat; we never drink but in the golden cup of mercy.

2. God shews mercy in lengthening out our gospel-liberties, 1 Cor. xvi. 9. 'There are many adversaries; many would stop the waters of the sanctuary, that they should not run: we enjoy the sweet seasons of grace, we hear joyful sounds, we see the goings of God in his sanctuary, we enjoy sabbath after sabbath; the manna of the word yet falls about our tents, when in divers parts of the land they have no manna. Here is God shewing mercy to us; he spins out our forfeited liberties.

3. God shews mercy to us, in preventing many evils from invading us, Pl. iii. 3. 'Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me.' God hath restrained the wrath of men, and been a screen between us and danger: when the destroying angel hath been abroad, and shot his deadly arrow of pestilence, God hath kept off the arrow that it hath not come near us.

4. God shews mercy in delivering us, 2 Tim. iv. 17. 'And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.' viz. Nero. God hath restored us from the grave. May we not write the writing of Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 9. 'When he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness?' When we thought the sun of our life had been setting, God hath made it return to its former brightness.

5. God shews mercy, in restraining us from sin: lusts within, are worse than lions without. The greatest sign of God's anger, is to give men up to their sins, Psal. lxxxix. 12. 'So I gave them up to the lusts of their own hearts;' let them sin themselves to hell: but God hath laid the bridle of restraining grace upon us. As God said to Abimelech, Gen. xx. 6. 'I withheld thee from sinning against me;' so God withheld us from those exorbitancies which might have made us a prey to Satan, and a terror to ourselves.

6. God shews mercy, in guiding and directing us. Is it not a mercy for one that is out of the way to have a guide? *First*, There is a providential guiding: God guides our affairs for us, chalks out a way he would have us to walk in; he resolves our doubts, unties our knots, appoints the bounds of our habitation, Acts xvii. 26. *Secondly*, A spiritual guiding, Psal. lxxiii. 24. 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.' As Israel had a pillar of fire to go before them, so God guides us with the oracles of his word, and the conduct of his Spirit. He guides our head, keeps us from error; and he guides our feet, keeps us from scandal. O what mercy is it to have God to be our guide and pilot! Psal. xxxi. 3. 'For thy name's sake lead me and guide me.'

7. God shews mercy in correcting us. God is angry in love ; he smites that he may save. God's rod is not a rod of iron to break us, but a fatherly rod to humble us, Heb. xii. 10. ' He, for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.' Either God will mortify some corruption, or exercise some grace. Is there not mercy in this? Every cross, to a child of God, is like Paul's cross wind, which, tho' it broke the ship, it brought Paul to shore upon the broken pieces, Acts xxvii. 44.

8. God shews mercy in pardoning us, Mic. vii. 18. ' Who is a god like thee, that pardonest iniquity?' 'Tis mercy to feed us, rich mercy to pardon us: this mercy is spun out of the bowels of free grace ; this is enough to make a sick man well, Isa. xxxiii. 24. ' The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.' Pardon of sin is a mercy of the first magnitude, God seals the sinner's pardon with a kiss. This made David put on his best clothes, and anoint himself: his child newly dead, and God had told him the sword should not depart from his house, yet now he falls anointing himself ; the reason was, God had sent him his pardon by the prophet Nathan, 2 Sam. iii. 12, 13. ' The Lord hath put away thy sin.' Pardon is the only fit remedy for a troubled conscience: what can give ease to a wounded spirit, but pardoning mercy? Offer him the honours and pleasures of the world ; 'tis as if you bring flowers and music to one that is condemned.

Q. *How may I know my sins are pardoned.*

Ans. Where God removes the guilt, he breaks the power of sin, Mic. vii. 19. ' He will have compassion, he will subdue our iniquities.' With pardoning love God gives subduing grace.

9. God shews his mercy in sanctifying us, Lev. xx. 8. ' I am the Lord that sanctify you.' This is the partaking of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. God's spirit is a spirit of consecration, though it sanctify us but in part, yet in every part, 1 Thess. v. 23. This is such a mercy that God cannot give it in anger ; if we are sanctified, then we are elected, 2 Thess. ii. 13. ' God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification.' This doth *disponere ad cætum* ; it prepares for happiness, as the seed prepares for harvest. When the virgins had been anointed and perfumed, then they were to stand before the king, Esth. ii. 12. so, when we have had the anointing of God, then we shall stand before the King of heaven.

10. God shews mercy in hearing our prayers, Ps. iv. 1. ' Have mercy upon me and hear my prayer.' Is it not a favour when a man puts up a petition to the king, and hath it granted? when we pray for pardon, adoption the sense of God's love, to have God give a gracious answer ; what a signal mercy is this? God may sometimes delay an answer ; when he

will not deny. You do not presently throw a musician money, because you love to hear his music: God loves the music of prayer, therefore doth not presently let us hear from him; but, in due season he will give an answer of peace, Psal. lxxvi. 20. 'Blessed be God who hath not turned away my prayer nor his mercy from me.' If God doth not turn away our prayer, then he doth not turn away his mercy.

11. God shews mercy in saving us, Titus iii. 5. 'According to his mercy he saved us.' This is the top-stone of mercy, and it is laid in heaven. Now mercy displays itself in all its orient colours; now mercy is mercy indeed, when God shall perfectly refine us from all the lees and dregs of corruption. Our bodies shall be made like Christ's glorious body, and our souls like the angels. Saving mercy is crowning mercy: it is not only to be freed from hell, but enthroned in a kingdom. In this life we do rather desire God than enjoy him; but what rich mercy will it be to be fully possessed of God, to see his smiling face, and to have God lay us in his bosom? This will fill us with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' Ps. xlvii. 15. 'I shall be satisfied, when I wake, with thy likeness.'

Uſe 1. As an argument against despair, see what a great encouragement here is to serve God; he shews mercy to thousands. Who would not be willing to serve a prince who is given to mercy and clemency? God is represented with a rainbow round about him, Rev. iv. 3. an emblem of his mercy. Acts of severity are rather forced from God: justice is his strange work, Isa. xxviii. 21. Therefore the disciples, who are not said to wonder at the other miracles of Christ, yet did wonder when the fig-tree was cursed and withered, because it was not Christ's manner to put forth acts of severity. God is said to delight in mercy, Micah vii. 18. Justice is God's left-hand, mercy is his right-hand; God useth his right-hand most; he is more used to mercy than to justice *pronier est Deus ad parcendum quam ad puniendum*. God is said to be slow to anger, Ps. ciii. 8. but ready to forgive, Ps. lxxxvi. 5. This may encourage us to serve God. What argument will prevail, if mercy will not? Were God all justice, it might fright us from him, but his mercy may be a load-stone to draw us to him.

Uſe 2. Branch 1. Hope in God's mercies, Ps. cxlvii. 11. 'The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy.' God counts it his glory to be scattering pardons among men.

Object. *But I have been a great sinner, and sure there is no mercy for me.*

Ans. No, not if thou goest on in sin, and art so resolved: but, if thou wilt break off thy sins, the golden sceptre of mercy shall be held forth to thee, Isa. lv. 7. 'Let the wicked forsake his

way, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him,' And Christ's blood is 'a fountain set open for sin and uncleanness,' Zech. xiii. 1. Mercy doth more overflow in God, than sin in us; God's mercy can drown great sins, as the sea covers great rocks. Some of those Jews, who had their hands imbrued in Christ's blood, were saved by that blood: God loves to magnify his goodness, to display the trophies of free grace, and to set up his mercy above you, in spite of sin: therefore hope in God's mercy.

Branch 2. If God shew mercy to thousands, labour to know that this mercy is for you, Psal. lix. 17. 'He is the God of my mercy.' A man that was ready to drown, saw a rainbow; saith he, what am I the better, though God will drown the world, if I drown? so, what are we the better God is merciful, if we perish; let us labour to know God's special mercy is for us.

Q. How shall we know it belongs to us?

Ans. 1. If we put an high value and estimation upon God's mercy: God will not throw away his mercy on them that slight it: we prize health, but we prize adopting mercy above it. 'This is a diamond in the ring, it outshines all other comforts.

2. If we are fearers of God, we have a reverend awe upon us; we tremble at sin, and flee from it, as Moses did from his rod turned into a serpent, Luke i. 50. 'His mercy is on them that fear him.'

3. If we take sanctuary in God's mercy, we trust in it, Psal. lii. 8. As a man is saved by catching hold of a cable; God's mercy is a great cable let down from heaven to us; now taking fast hold of this cable by faith, we are saved, Pl. lii. 8. 'I trust in the mercy of God for ever.' As a man trusteth in his life and goods in a garrison, so we trust our souls in God's mercy.

Q. What shall we do to get a share in God's special mercy?

Ans. 1. If we would have mercy, it must be through Christ; out of Christ no mercy is to be had. We read in the old law, *First*, None might come into the holy of holies, where the mercy-seat stood, but the high-priest, signifying, we have nothing to do with mercy, but through Christ our high-priest. *2dly*, The high-priest might not come near the mercy-seat without blood, Lev. xvi. 14. to shew that we have no right to mercy, but through the expiatory sacrifice of Christ's blood. *3dly*, The high-priest might not, upon pain of death, come near the mercy-seat without incense, Lev. xvi. 13. No mercy from God without the incense of Christ's intercession: so that if we would have mercy, we must get a part in Christ. Mercy swims to us through Christ's blood,

2. If we would have mercy, we must pray for it, Pf. lxxxv. 7. 'Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation,' Pf. xxv. 16. 'Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me.' Lord, put me not off with common mercy; give me not only mercy to feed and clothe me, but mercy to pardon me; not only sparing mercy, but saving mercy. Lord, give me the cream of thy mercies; let me have mercy and loving-kindness, Pf. ciii. 4. 'Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy.' Be earnest suitors for mercy; let your wants quicken your importunity: then we pray most fervently, when we pray most feelingly.

Exod. xx. 6. *Of them that love me.*

1. GOD's mercy is for them that love him. Love is a grace that shines and sparkles in God's eye, as the precious stone did upon Aaron's breast-plate. Love is an holy expansion or enlargement of soul, whereby it is carried with delight after God, as the chief good; so Aquinas defines love, *Complacencia amantis in amato*: love is a complacential delighting in God, as in our treasure: love is the soul of religion; 'tis a grace highly momentous. If we had knowledge as the angels, or faith of miracles, yet without love it would profit nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Love is the first and great commandment,' Matth. xxii. 38. It is so, because, if this be wanting, there can be no religion in the heart; there can be no faith, for faith works by love, Gal. v. 6. All is but pageantry, or a devout compliment.

2. Because love doth meliorate and sweeten all the duties of religion; it makes them savoury meat, else God cares not to taste of them.

3. It is the first and great commandment, in respect of the excellency of this grace. Love is the queen of the graces; it outshines all the other, as the sun the lesser planets. In some respect it is more excellent than faith; tho' in one sense faith be more excellent, *virtute unionis*, as it unites us to Christ; faith puts upon us the embroidered robe of Christ's righteousness, which is a brighter robe than any of the angels wear: yet in another sense love is more excellent, *respectu durationis*, in respect of the continuance of it; it is the most durable grace: faith and hope will shortly cease, but love will remain. When all the other graces like Rachel, shall die in travel, love shall revive. The other graces are in the nature of a lease, only for term of life; love is a freehold, it continues for ever. Thus love carries away the garland from all the other graces, it is the

most long-lived grace, it is a bud of eternity; this grace alone shall accompany us in heaven.

Qu. 1. *How must our love to God be qualified?*

Ans. 2. Love to God must be pure and genuine, he must be loved chiefly for himself; this the schoolmen call *amor amicitiae*. We must love God, not only for his benefits, but for those intrinsic excellencies wherewith he is crowned: we must love God not only for the good which flows from him, but the good which is in him. True love is not mercenary; a soul that is deeply in love with God, needs not to be hired with rewards: he cannot but love God for the beauty of his holiness: not but that it is lawful to look at God's benefits; Moses had an eye to the recompence of reward, Heb. xi. 26. but we must not love God only for his benefits, for then it is not love of God but self-love.

2. Love to God must be with all the heart, Mark xii. 20. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' We must not love God a little, give God a drop or two of our love; but the main stream of our love must run after him; the mind must think of God, the will chuse him, the affections pant after him: the true mother would not have the child divided, nor God would not have the heart divided: we must love him with our whole heart. Though we may love the creature, yet it must be a subordinate love: love to God must be highest, as the oil swims above the water.

3. Love to God must be flaming; to love coldly, is all one as not to love. The spouse is said to be *amore percussa*, 'sick of love,' Cant. ii. 5. The Seraphims are so called, from their burning: love turns saints into seraphims, it makes them burn in holy love to God; and 'many waters cannot quench this love.'

Qu. 2. *How may we know whether we love God?*

Ans. 1. He that loves God, desires his sweet presence: lovers cannot be long asunder, they have their fainting fits, they want a sight of the object of their love. A soul deeply in love with God, desires the enjoyment of him in his ordinances, in word, prayer, sacraments. David was ready to faint away and die, when he had not a sight of God, Ps. lxxxiv. 2. 'My soul fainteth for God;' such as care not for ordinances, but say when will the sabbath be over? plainly discover want of love to God.

2. He who loves God, doth not love sin, Ps. xcvi. 10. 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil.' The love of God, and the love of sin, can no more mix together, than iron and clay: every sin loved, strikes at the being of God; but he who loves God, hath an antipathy against sin; he who would part between two lovers, is an hateful person: God, and the believing soul are two lovers; sin comes to part between them, therefore the soul is implacably set against sin. By this try your love to God: how

could Dalilah say she loved Samson, when she entertained correspondence with the Philistines who were his mortal enemies? how can he say he loves God, who loves sin, which is God's enemy?

3. He who loves God, is not much in love with any thing else; his love is very cool to worldly things: his love to God moves as the sun in the firmament, swiftly; his love to the world moves as the sun on the dial, very slow. The love of the world eats out the heart of religion; it choaks good affections, as the earth puts out the fire. The world was a dead thing to Paul, Gal. vi. 4. 'I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me.' In Paul we might see both the picture and pattern of a mortified man: he that loves God, useth the world, but chuseth God; the world is his pension, but God is his portion, Psal. cxix. 57. The world doth busy him, but God doth delight and satisfy him. He saith as David, Psal. xliii. 4. 'God my exceeding joy,' the gladness or cream of my joy.

4. He who loves God cannot live without him. Things we love, we know not how to be without; a man can want music or flowers, but not food; a soul deeply in love with God looks upon himself as undone without him, Pl. cxliii. 7. 'Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like them that go down into the pit.' He saith, as Job, chap. xxx. 28. 'I went mourning without the sun.' I have star-light, I want the Sun of righteousness; I enjoy not the sweet presence of my God. Is God our chief good that we cannot live without? alas, how do they demonstrate they have no love to God, who can make a shift well enough to be without him! let them have but corn and oil, and you shall never hear them complain of the want of God.

5. He who loves God, will be at any pains to get him. What pains doth the merchant take, what hazard doth he run, to have a rich return from the Indies? *Extremos currit mercator ad Indos*. Jacob loved Rachel, and he could endure the heat by day, and the frost by night, that he might enjoy her. A soul that loves God, will take any pains for the fruition of him, Pl. lxiii. 8. 'My soul follows hard after God.' Love is *pondus animae*, Aug. It is as the weight which sets the clock a going. The soul is much in prayer, weeping, fasting; he strives as in agony, that he may obtain him whom his soul loves. Plutarch reports of the Gauls, an ancient people of France, after they had tasted the sweet wine of Italy, they never rested till they had arrived at that country. He who is in love with God, never rests till he hath gotten a part in him, Cant. iii. 2. 'I sought him whom my soul loveth.' How can they say they love God, who are not industrious in the use of means to obtain him? Prov. xix. 24. 'A slothful man hides his hand in his bosom.' These are not in agony, but lethargy: if Christ and salvation would

drop as a ripe fig into his mouth, he could be content to have them; but he is loth to put himself to too much trouble. Doth he love his friend, that will not make a journey to him?

6. He that loves God, prefers him before estate and life. 1. Before estate, Phil. iii. 8. 'For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.' Who that loves a rich jewel, would not part with a flower for it? Galeacius marquis of Vico parted with a fair estate to enjoy God in his pure ordinances: when a jesuit persuaded him to return to his popish religion in Italy, promising him an huge sum of money; saith he, 'Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one day's communion with Jesus Christ, and his holy Spirit.' 2. Before life, Rev. xii. 11. 'They loved not their lives to the death.' Love to God carries the soul above the love of life, and the fear of death.

7. He who loves God, loves his favourites, viz, the saints, 1 John v. 1. *Idem est motus animi in imaginem et rem.* To love a man for his grace, and the more we see of God in him, the more we love him, is the infallible sign of love to God. The wicked pretend to love God, but hate and persecute his image. Doth he love his prince who abuseth his statue, tears his picture? Indeed they seem to shew great reverence to the saints departed; they have a great reverence for St. Paul, and St. Stephen, and St. Luke: they canonize dead saints, but persecute living saints; and do these love God? can it be imagined he should love God, who hates his children because they are like him; if Christ were alive again, he would not escape a second persecution.

8. If we love God, as we cannot but be fearful of dishonouring him (the more a child loves his father, the more he is afraid to displease him) so we weep and mourn when we have offended him. 'Peter went out and wept bitterly,' Matth. xxvi. 75. When Peter thought how dearly Christ loved him, he took him up to the mount where he was transfigured; Christ shewed him the glory of heaven in a vision: now, that he should deny Christ, after he had received such signal tokens of Christ's love, this broke his heart with grief, 'He wept bitterly.' Are our eyes limbecs, dropping tears of grief for sin against God? a blessed evidence of our love to God: and such shall find mercy. 'He shews mercy to thousands of them that love him.'

Use. Let us be lovers of God. We love our food, and shall we not love him that gives it? All the joy we hope for in heaven, is in God; and shall not he who shall be our joy, be our love? It is a saying of St. Austin, *Annon pœna jùtis magna est non amare te?* Is it not punishment enough, Lord, not to love thee? And again, *Animam meam in odio haberem:* I would hate my own soul, if I did not find it loving of God.

Qu. *What are the incentives to provoke and inflame our love to God?*

Ans. 1. God's benefits bestowed on us. A prince who bestows continual favours on a subject, if that subject hath any ingenuity, he cannot but love his prince. God is constantly heaping benefits upon us; 'He fills our hearts with food and gladness,' Acts xiv. 17. As the rock followed Israel, whithersoever they went streams of water out of the rock followed them; so God's blessings follow us every day; we swim in a sea of mercy. The heart is hard, that is not prevailed with by all God's blessings, to love him; *magnus amoris amor*. Kindness works on a brute; the ox knoweth his owner.

2. Love to God would make duties of religion facile and pleasant. I confess to him that hath no love to God, religion must needs be a burden; and I wonder not to hear him say 'What a weariness is it to serve the Lord?' It is like rowing against the tide. But love oils the wheels, it makes duty a pleasure. Why are the angels so swift and winged in God's service, but because they love him? Jacob thought seven years but little, for the love he did bear to Rachel. Love is never weary; he who loves money is not weary of telling it; and he who loves God is not weary of serving him.

3. It is advantageous. There is nothing lost by our love to God, 1 Cor. ii. 9. 'Eye hath not seen, &c. the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Such glorious rewards are laid up for them that love God, 'That (as St. Austin saith) they do not only transcend our reason, but faith itself is not able to comprehend them.' A crown is the highest ensign of worldly glory; and God hath promised a 'crown of life to them that love him,' James i. 12. And it is a never-fading crown, 1 Pet. v. 4.

4. By our loving God, we may know that he loves us, 1 John v. 19. 'We love him, because he first loved us.' If the ice melts, it is because the sun hath shined upon it; if the frozen heart melts in love, it is because the Sun of Righteousness hath shined upon it.

Qu. *What means may be used to excite our love to God?*

Ans. 1. Labour to know God aright. The schoolmen say true, *Bonum non amatur, quod non cognoscitur*: we cannot love that which we do not know. God is the most eligible good; all the excellencies which lye scattered in the creature, are united in God: he is *Optimus maximus*. Wisdom, beauty, riches, love, do all concenter in God. How fair was that tulip which had the colours of all tulips in it? all perfections and sweetneses are eminently in God. Did we know God more, and by the eye of faith see his orient beauty, our hearts would be fired with love to him.

2. Make the scriptures familiar to you. St. Austin saith, before his conversion he took no pleasure in scripture, but after conversion it was his chief delight. The book of God discovers God to us, in his holiness, wisdom, veracity and truth : it represents God rich in mercy, incircled with promises. St. Austin calls the scripture a golden epistle, or love-letter, sent from God to us ; by reading this love-letter, we shall be the more enamoured with love to God ; as by reading lascivious books, comedies, romances, &c. lust is provoked.

3. Meditate much of God, and this will be a means to love him, Pf. xxxix. 3. ‘ While I was musing, the fire burned.’ Meditation is the bellows of the affections. Meditate on God’s love in giving us Christ, John iii. 16. ‘ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,’ &c. That God should give Christ to us, and not to the angels that fell ; that the Sun of Righteousness should shine in our horizon ; that he is revealed to us, and not to others ; what wonderful love is this ! Prov. vi. 28. ‘ Who can go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned ?’ Who can meditate on God’s love ? who can tread on these hot coals, and his heart not burn in love to God ? beg an heart to love God, the affection of love is natural, but not the grace of love, Gal. v. 22. ‘ This fire of love is kindled from heaven ; beg that it may burn upon the altar of your heart. Surely this request is pleasing to God, and he will not deny such a prayer, ‘ Lord, give me an heart to love thee.’

Exod. xx. 6. *And keep my Commandments.*

Love and obedience, like two sisters, must go hand in hand : indeed, this is a good evidence of our loving God, John xiv. 21. ‘ If ye love me, keep my commandment.’ *Probatio dilectionis, est exhibitio operis.* ‘ The son that loves his father, will obey him. Obedience pleaseth God, 1 Sam. xv. 22. ‘ To obey is better than sacrifice.’ In sacrifice, only a dead beast is offered ; in obedience, a living soul : in sacrifice, only a part of the fruit is offered ; in obedience, fruit and tree, and all : a man offers himself up to God. ‘ Keep my commandments.’ It is not said, God shews mercy to thousands that know his commandments, but that keep them. The knowing God’s commandments, without keeping them, doth not entitle any to mercy. The commandment is not only a rule of knowledge, but duty. God gives us his commandments, not only as a land-skip to look upon, but as his will and testament, which we are to perform. A good Christian is like the sun which doth not only send forth light, but goes its circuit round the world : so he

hath not only the light of knowledge, but goes its circuit too, and moves in the sphere of obedience.

Qu. *In what manner must we keep God's commandments?*

Ans. 1. Our keeping the commandments must be fiducial. Our obedience to God's commandments must *profluere a fide*, spring from faith; therefore it is called 'the obedience of faith,' Rom. xvi. 26. 'Abel by faith offered up a better sacrifice than Cain,' Heb. xi. 4. Faith is a vital principle, without it all our services are *opera mortua*, dead works, Heb. vi. 1. Faith doth meliorate and sweeten our obedience, and make it come off with a better relish.

Qu. *But why must faith be mixed with obedience to the commandment?*

Ans. Because faith eyes Christ in every duty, and so both the person and offering are accepted. The high priest under the law laid his hand upon the head of the beast slain, which did point to the Messiah, Exod. xxix. 10. So faith, in every duty, lays its hand upon the head of Christ. His blood doth expiate the guilt, and the sweet odours of his intercession perfume our works of obedience, Eph. i. 6. 'He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

2. Our keeping the commandments must be uniform. We must make conscience of one commandment as well as another, Pf. cxix. 6. 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments.' Every commandment hath a *jus divinum*, the same stamp of divine authority upon it; and if I obey one precept because God commands, by the same reason I must obey all. Some obey the commands of the first table, but are careless in the duties of the second; and so, *e contra*. Physicians have a rule, when the body sweats in one part, but is cold in another, it is a sign of a distemper: so when men seem zealous in some duties of religion, but are cold and frozen in another, it is a sign of hypocrisy. We must have respect to all God's commandments.

Qu. *But who can keep all commandments?*

Ans. There is a fulfilling of God's commands, and a keeping of them: though we cannot fulfil all, yet we may be said to keep them in an evangelical sense. We may *facere*, though not *perficere*: we keep the commandments evangelically, 1. Where we make conscience of every command; though we come short in every duty, yet we dare not neglect any duty. 2. Our desire is to keep every commandment, Pf. cxix. 5. 'O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' What we want in strength we make up in will. 3. We grieve that we can do no better; when we fail, we weep; we prefer bills of complaint against ourselves, and judge ourselves for our failings, Rom. vii. 24. 4. We do *elicere conatum*, we endeavour to obey every

commandment, Phil. iii. 14. 'I press toward the mark.' We strive as in agony, and, if it lay in our power, we would fully comport with every commandment. 5. When we fall short, and are unable to come up to the full latitude of the law, we look to Christ's blood to sprinkle our imperfect obedience, and with the grains of his merits cast into the scales to make it pass current; this is an evangelical sense to keep all the commandments; and though it be not to satisfaction, yet it is to acceptance.

3. Our keeping God's commandments must be willing, Isa. i. 19. 'If ye be willing and obedient.' God was for a free-will offering, Deut. xvi. 10. David will run the way of God's commandments, Psal. xix. 32. that is, freely and cheerfully. The lawyers have a canon, adverbs are better than adjectives; it is not the *bonum*, but the *bene*; not the doing much, but the doing well. A musician is not recommended for playing long, but for playing well; it is obeying God willingly is accepted: *virtus nolentium nullum est*; the Lord hates that which is forced, it is rather paying a tax than an offering. Cain served God grudgingly; he brought his sacrifice, not his heart. To obey God's commandments unwillingly, is like the devils who came out of the men possessed, at Christ's command, but with reluctance, and against their will, Matth. viii. 29. *Obedientia præst, and a est non timore pœna, sed amore Dei*; good duties must not be pressed nor beaten out of us, as the waters came out of the rock, when Moses smote it with his rod; but must freely drop from us, as myrrh from the tree, or honey from the comb. If a willing mind be wanting, there wants that flower which should perfume our obedience, and make it a sweet-smelling savour to God. That we may keep God's commandments willingly, let these things be well weighed.

1. Our willingness is more esteemed than our service; therefore David counsels Solomon, not only to serve God, but with a willing mind, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. The will makes sin to be worse, and makes duty to be better. To obey willingly, shews we do it with love; and this crowns all our services.

2. There is that in the law-giver, which may make us willing to obey the commandments, viz. God's indulgencies to us.

(1.) God doth not require the *summum jus*, as absolutely necessary to salvation; he expects not perfect obedience, only requires sincerity. Do but act from a principle of love, and aim at honouring God in your obedience, and it is accepted.

(2.) In the times of the gospel a surety is admitted. The law would not favour us so far; but now God doth so indulge us, that what we cannot do of ourselves, we may do by proxy, 'Jesus Christ is a surety of a better testament.' Heb. vii. 22.

We fall short in every thing, but God looks upon us in our surety; and Christ having fulfilled all righteousness, it is as if we had fulfilled the law in our own persons.

(3.) God gives strength to do what he requires. The law called for obedience; but tho' it required brick, it gave no straw; but in the gospel, God, with his commands, gives power, Ezek. xviii. 31. 'Make ye a new heart.' Alas! it is above our strength, we may as well make a new world, Ezek. xxxvi. 6. 'I will give you a new heart.' God commands us to cleanse ourselves, Isa. i. 16. 'Wash ye, make you clean. But who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean.' Job xiv. 4. Therefore the precept is turned into a promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 'From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.' When the child cannot go, the nurse takes it by the hand, Hof. xi. 3. 'I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms.'

3. There is that in God's commandments, which may make us willing; they are not burdensome.

1st, For a Christian (so far as he is regenerate) consents to God's commands, Rom. vii. 16. 'I consent to the law that it is good.' What is done with consent, is no burden; if a virgin gives her consent the match goes on cheerfully; if a subject consent to his prince's laws (as seeing the equity and rationality of them) then they are not irksome. A regenerate person in his judgment approves, and in his will consents to God's commandments, therefore they are not burdensome.

2^{dly}, God's commandments are sweetened with joy and peace. Cicero questions whether that can properly be called a burden, which one carries with delight and pleasure; *Utrum onus appellatur quod laetitia fertur*. If a man carries a bag of money given him, it is heavy, but the delight takes off the burden. When God gives inward joy, that makes the commandments delightful, Isa. lvi. 7. 'I will make them joyful in my house of prayer.' Joy is like oil to the wheels, which makes a Christian run in the way of God's commandments, so that it is not burdensome.

3^{dly}, God's commandments are advantageous. 1. The commandments are preventive of evil; a curb bit to check us from sin. What mischiefs would we not run into, if we had not afflictions to humble us, and the commandments to restrain us? God's commandments are to keep us within bounds; the yoke keeps the beast from straggling: we are to be thankful to God for precepts: had not he set his commandments as an hedge or bar in our way, we might have run to hell and never stopt.

2. There is nothing in the commandments but what is for our good; Deut. x. 13. 'To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee for thy good.'

1. God commands us to read his word; and what hurt is in this? God bespangles the word with promises; as if a father should bid his son read his last will and testament, wherein he makes over a fair estate to him. 2. God bids us pray: and he tells us, if we ask, 'it shall be given,' Matth. vii. 7. Ask power against sin, ask salvation, and it shall be given. If you had a friend should say, "Come when you will to me, I will supply you with money," would you think it a trouble to visit that friend often; 3. God commands us to fear him, Lev. xxv. 43. 'But fear thy God.' And there is honey in the mouth of this command, Luke i. 50. 'His mercy is upon them that fear him.' 4. God commands us to believe, and why so? 'Believe, and ye shall be saved,' Acts xvi. 31. Salvation is the crown set upon the head of faith: good reason then we obey God's commands willingly; they are for our good, they are not so much our duty as our privilege.

3. God's commandments are ornamental; *Omnia quae praestari jubet Deus, non onerant nos sed ornant*: Salvian. God's commandments do not burden us, but adorn us. It is an honour to be employed in a king's service; and so to be employed in God's, 'by whom kings reign.' To walk in God's commandments, proclaims us to be wise, Deut. iv. 5, 6. 'Behold I have taught you statutes; keep, therefore, and do them: for this is your wisdom.' And to be wise is an honour; I may say of every commandment of God, as Prov. iv. 9. 'It shall give to thy head an ornament of grace.'

4. The commands of God are infinitely better than the commands of sin, these are intolerable. Let a man be under the command of any lust, how doth he tire himself? What hazards doth he run to the endangering his health and soul, that he may satisfy his lust? Jer. ix. 5. 'They weary themselves to commit iniquity.' And, are not God's commandments more equal, facile, pleasant, than the commands of sin? Chrysostom saith true, "To act virtue is easier than to act vice." Temperance is less troublesome than drunkenness; meekness is less troublesome than passion and envy. There is more difficulty in the contrivement and pursuit of a wicked design, than in obeying the commandments of God. Hence a sinner is said to travail with iniquity, Psal. vii. 14. A woman while she is in travail, is in pain, to shew what pain and trouble a wicked man hath in bringing forth sin. Many have gone with more pains to hell, than others have to heaven. This may make us obey the commandments willingly.

5. Willingness in obedience makes us resemble the angels. The cherubims, types representing the angels, are described with wings displayed, to shew how ready the angels are to serve God. God no sooner speaks the word, but they are ambitious

to obey; how are they ravished with joy, while they are praising God! In heaven we shall be as the angels; by our willingness to obey God's commandments, we shall be like them here. This is what we pray for, that God's will may be done by us on earth, as it is in heaven. Is it not done willingly there? We must keep God's commandments constantly, Psal. cxvi. 3. 'Blessed is he that doth righteousness at all times.' Our obedience to the command must be as the fire of the altar, which never went out, Lev. xiii. 6. It must be as the motion of the pulse always beating. The wind blows off the fruit, our fruits of obedience must not be blown off by the wind of persecution, John xv. 16. 'I have chosen you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.'

Use. It reproves them who live in a wilful breach of God's commandments, in malice, uncleanness, intemperance; they walk antipodes to the commandment. To live in a wilful breach of the commandment is,

1st, Against reason. Are we able to stand it out against God? 1 Cor. x. 22. 'Do we provoke the Lord? are we stronger than he?' Can we measure arms with God? can impotency stand against omnipotency? A sinner, in acting sin, acts against reason.

2^{dly}, It is against equity. We have our being from God; and, is it not equal we should obey him who gives us our being? we have all our subsistence from God; and is it not fitting, that as God gives us our allowance, we should give him our allegiance? If a general gives his soldier pay, he is to march at his command; so that to live in the breach of his commands, is against equity.

3^{dly}, It is against nature. Every creature in its kind obeys God's laws: 1. Animate creatures obey him; God spake to the fish, and it set Jonah a shore, Jonah ii. 10. 2. Inanimate creatures; the wind and the sea obey him, Mark iv. 41. The very stones, if God gave them a commission, will cry out against the sins of men, Hab. ii. 11. 'The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it:' none disobey God but man and the devil; and can we find none to join with else?

4^{thly}, It is against kindness. How many mercies have we to allure us to obey! Miracles of mercy; therefore the apostle joins these two together, disobedient and unthankful, 2 Tim. iii. 2. and this dyes a sin of a crimson colour. And, as the sin is great, (for it is a contempt of God, a hanging out of the flag of defiance against God, and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft) so the punishment will be proportionable; such cut themselves off from mercy. God's mercy is for them that keep his commandments, but no mercy for them that live in a wilful breach

of them. All God's judgments set themselves in battle-array against the disobedient. (1.) Temporal judgments, Lev. xxvi. 15, 16. (2.) Eternal. 'Christ comes in flames of fire, to take vengeance on them that obey not,' 2 Theff. i. 8. Such as break the golden chain of God's commands, God hath iron chains to hold them; chains of darkness, in which the devils are held, Jude 6. As long as there is eternity, God hath time enough to reckon with all the wilful breakers of his commandments.

Qu. *How shall we do to keep God's commandments?*

Ans. Beg the Spirit of God. We cannot do it in our own strength; 'The Spirit must work in us both to will and to do,' Phil. ii. 13. When the loadstone draws, the iron moves; when God's Spirit draws, then we run in the way of God's commandments.

OF THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

EXOD. xx. 7. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

THIS commandment has two parts: *First*, A negative expressed, That we must not take God's name in vain, viz. Cast any reflection and dishonour on God's name. *Secondly*, An affirmative implied, That we should have a care to reverence and honour his name; but that I shall speak to more fully, when I come to the first petition in the Lord's prayer, 'Hallowed be thy name.' I shall now speak of the negative expressed in this commandment, or the prohibition 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' The tongue is an unruly member, all the parts and organs of the body are defiled with sin, as every branch of wormwood is bitter; 'But the tongue is full of deadly poison,' James iii. 8. There is no one member of the body doth more break forth into God's dishonour, than the tongue; therefore this commandment is a bridle for the tongue, it is to bind the tongue to its good behaviour; 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; and this prohibition is backed with a strong reason, 'For the Lord will not hold him guiltless:' that is, he will not hold him innocent. Men of place and eminency take it heinously to have their names abused, and will inflict heavy penalties on the offenders. 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain;' God looks upon him as a criminal person, and he will severely punish him. Well then, the thing to be insist-