

A
SERMON OF REPENTANCE,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

HONOURABLE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ASSEMBLED IN PARLIAMENT

AT WESTMINSTER,

AT THEIR LATE SOLEMN FAST FOR THE SETTLING
OF THESE NATIONS,

APRIL 30, 1660.

Tuesday, May 1, 1660.

ORDERED,

That the Thanks of this House be given to Mr. BAXTER, for his great pains in carrying on the work of preaching and prayer, before the House, at Saint Margaret's, Westminster, yesterday, being set apart by this House for a day of fasting and humiliation; and that he be desired to print his sermon, and is to have the same privilege in printing the same that others have had in the like kind, and that Mr. Swinfin do give him notice thereof.

W. JESSOP,

Clerk of the Commons' House of Parliament

TO THE

HONOURABLE THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
ASSEMBLED IN PARLIAMENT.

As your order for my preaching persuadeth me you meant attentively to hear, so your order for my publishing this sermon persuadeth me that you will vouchsafe considerably to read it; (for you would not command me to publish only for others that which was prepared for and suited to yourselves;) which second favour if I may obtain, especially of those that need most to hear the doctrine of repentance, I shall hope that the authority of the heavenly Majesty, the great concernment of the subject, and the evidence of reason, and piercing beams of sacred verity, may yet make a deeper impression on your souls, and promote that necessary work of holiness, the fruits whereof would be effectual remedies to the diseased nations, and would conduce to your own everlasting joy. Shall I think it were presumption for me to hope for so high a reward for so short a labour? Or shall I think it were uncharitableness not to hope for it? That here is nothing but plain English, without any of those ornaments that are by many thought necessary to make such discourses grateful to ingenious, curious auditors, proceeded not only from my present want of advantages for study, (having and using no book but a Bible and a Concordance,) but also from the humbling and serious nature of the work of the day and from my own inclination, less affecting such ornaments in sacred discourses than formerly I have done. It is a very great honour that God and you have put upon me, to conclude so solemn a day of prayer, which was answered the next morning by your speedy, and cheerful, and unanimous acknowledgment of His Majesty's authority. May I have but the second part, to promote your salvation, and the happiness of this land, by your considering and obeying these necessary truths, what greater honour could I expect on earth? Or how could you more oblige me to remain

A daily petitioner to heaven for these mercies,
on your own and the nation's behalf,

RICHARD BAXTER.

SERMON OF REPENTANCE.

EZEK. xxxvi. 31.

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.

THE words are a part of God's prognostics of the Jews' restoration, whose dejection he had before described. Their disease began within, and there God promiseth to work the cure. Their captivity was but the fruit of their voluntary captivity to sin, and their grief of heart was but the fruit of their hardness of heart, and their sharpest suffering of their foul pollutions, and therefore God promiseth a methodical cure, even to take away their old and stony heart, and cleanse them from their filthiness, and so to ease them by the removing of the cause. How far, and when, this promise was to be made good to the Jews, as nationally considered, is a matter that requires a longer disposition than my limited hour will allow, and the decision of that case is needless, as to my present end and work. That this is part of the gospel covenant, and applicable to us believers now, the Holy Ghost, in the epistle to the Hebrews, hath assured us.

The text is the description of the repentance of the people, in which the beginning of their recovery doth consist, and by which the rest must be attained. The evil which they repent of is, in general, all their iniquities, but especially their idolatry, called their abominations. Their repentance is foretold, as it is in the understanding and thoughts, and as in the will and affections. In the former, it is called "remembering their own evil ways." In the latter, it is called "loathing themselves in their own sight, for their iniquities and abominations." Montanus translates it *reprehabetis in vos*; but in c. 20, v. 43, *fastidietis vos*. The same sense is intended by the other versions. When the Septuagint translates it by displeasure, and

the Chaldee by groaning, and the Syriac by the wrinkling of the face, and the Sept., in c. xx. 43, by smiting on the face; the Arabic here perverts the sense by turning all to negatives, ye shall not, &c., yet in c. xx. 43, he turns it by the tearing of the face. I have purposely chosen a text that needs no long explication, that in obedience to the foreseen straits of time I may be excused from that part, and be more on the more necessary. This observation contains the meaning of the text, which, by God's assistance, I shall now insist on, viz.:

The remembering of their own iniquities, and loathing themselves for them, is the sign of a repenting people, and the prognostic of their restoration, so far as deliverance may be here expected.

For the opening of which, observe these things following.

2. It is not all kind of remembering that will prove you penitent. The impenitent remember their sin that they may commit it; they remember it with love, desire, and delight; the heart of the worldling goeth after his airy or earthen idol. The heart of the ambitious feedeth on his vain glory, and the people's breath, and the filthy fornicator is delighted in the thoughts of the object and exercise of his lust. But it is a remembering, 1. From a deep conviction of the evil and odiousness of sin. 2. And with abhorrence and self-loathing. 5. That leadeth to a resolved and vigilant forsaking, that is the proof of true repentance, and the prognostic of a people's restoration.

3. And it is not all self-loathing that will signify true repenting, for there is a self-loathing of the desperate and the damned soul that abhorreth itself, and teareth and tormenteth itself, and cannot be restrained from self-revenge, when it finds that it hath wilfully, foolishly, and obstinately been its own destroyer. But the self-loathing of the truly penitent hath these following properties:

1. It proceedeth from the predominant love of God, whom we have abused and offended. The more we love him, the more we loathe what is contrary to him.

2. It is much excited by the observation and sense of his exceeding mercies, and is conjunct with gratitude.

3. It continueth and increaseth under the greatest assurance of forgiveness, and sense of love, and dieth not when we think we are out of danger.

4. It containeth a loathing of sin as sin, and a love of ho-

liness as such, and not only a love of ease and peace, and a loathing of sin, as the cause of suffering.

5. It resolveth the soul against returning to its former course, and resolveth it for an entire devotedness to God for the time to come.

6. It deeply engageth the penitent in a conflict against the flesh, and maketh him victorious, and setteth him to work in a life of holiness, as his trade and principal business in the world.

7. It bringeth him to a delight in God and holiness, and a delight in himself, so far as he findeth God, and heaven, and holiness within him. He can, with some comfort and content, own himself and his conversation so far as God (victorious against his carnal self) appeareth in him. For as he loveth Christ in the rest of his members, so must he in himself. And this is it that self-loathing doth prepare for.

This must be the self-loathing that must afford you comfort, as a penitent people in the way to restoration.

Where you see it is implied, that materially it containeth these common acts. 1. Accusing and condemning thoughts against ourselves. It is a judging of ourselves, and makes us call ourselves, with Paul, foolish, disobedient, deceived; yea, mad; (as Acts xxvi. 11;) and with David to say, I have done foolishly. (2 Sam. xxiv. 10.) 2. It containeth a deep distaste and displeasure with ourselves, and a heart-rising against ourselves. 3. As also an holy indignation against ourselves, as apprehending that we have played the enemies to ourselves and God. 4. And it possesseth us with grief and trouble at our miscarriages. So that a soul in this condition is sick of itself, and vexed with its self-procured wo.

2. Note also, that when self-loathing proceedeth from mere conviction, and is without the love of God and holiness, it is but the tormentor of the soul, and runs it deeper into sin, provoking men here to destroy their lives; and in hell it is the never-dying worm.

3. Note also, that it is themselves that they are said to loathe, because it is ourselves that conscience hath to do with, as witness, and as judge; it is ourselves that are naturally nearest to ourselves, and our own affairs that we are most concerned in. It is ourselves that must have the joy or torment, and therefore it is our own actions and estate that we have first to mind. Though yet, as magistrates, ministers, and neighbours, we must

next mind others, and must loathe iniquity wherever we meet it, and a vile person must be condemned in our eyes, while we honour them that fear the Lord. (Psalm xv. 4.)

And as by nature, so in the commandment, God hath given to every man the first and principal care and charge of himself, and his own salvation, and consequently of his own ways, so that we may with less suspicion loathe ourselves than others, and are more obliged to do it.

4. Note also, that it is not for our troubles, or our disgrace, or our bodily deformities, or infirmities, or for our poverty and want, that penitents are said to loathe themselves, but for their iniquities and abominations. For, 1. This loathing is a kind of justice done upon ourselves, and therefore is exercised, not for mere infelicities, but for crimes. Conscience keepeth in its own court, and meddleth but with moral evils, which we are conscious of. 2. And also it is sin that is loathed by God, and makes the creature loathsome in his eyes; and repentance conformeth the soul to God, and therefore causeth us to loathe as he doth, and on his grounds. And, 3. There is no evil but sin, and that which sin procureth, and therefore it is for sin that the penitent loathes himself.

5. Note also, that it is here implied, that, till repentance, there was none of this remembering of sin, and loathing of themselves. They begin with our conversion, and, as before described, are proper to the truly penitent. For, to consider them distinctly, 1. The deluded soul that is bewitched by its own concupiscence, is so taken up with remembering of his fleshly pleasures, and his alluring objects, and his honours, and his earthly businesses and store, that he hath no mind or room for the remembering of his foolish, odious sin, and the wrong that he is doing to God, and to himself. Death is oblivious, and sleep hath but a distracted ineffectual memory, that stirreth not the busy dreamer from his pillow, nor despatcheth any of the work he dreams of. And the unconverted are asleep, and dead in sin. The crowd of cares and worldly businesses, and the tumultuous noise of foolish sports, and other sensual passions and delights, do take up the minds of the unconverted, and turn them from the observation of the things of greatest everlasting consequence. They have a memory for sin and the flesh, to which they are alive, but not for things spiritual and eternal, to which they are dead. They remember not God himself as God, with any effectual remembrance. God is not in all their thoughts.

(Psal. x. 4.) They live as without him in the world. (Eph. ii. 12.) And if they remember not God, they cannot remember sin as sin, whose malignity lieth in its opposition to the will and holiness of God. They forget themselves, and therefore must needs forget their sinfulness. Alas! they remember not effectually and savingly, what they are, and why they were made, and what they are daily nourished and preserved for, and what business they have to do here in the world. They forget that they have souls to save or lose, that must live in endless joy or torment. You may see by their careless and ungodly lives that they forget it. You may hear by their carnal frothy speech that they forget it. And he that remembereth not himself, remembereth not his own concernments. They forget the end to which they tend. The life which they must live for ever. The matters everlasting, whose greatness and duration, one would think, should so command the mind of man, and take up all his thoughts and cares in despite of all the little trifling matters that would avert them, that we should think almost of nothing else; yet these, even these, that nothing but deadness or madness should make a reasonable creature to forget, are daily forgotten by the unconverted soul, or ineffectually remembered. Many a time have I admired that men of reason are here to-day, and in endless joy or misery to-morrow, should be able to forget such inexpressible concernments! Methinks they should easier forget to rise, or dress themselves, or to eat, or drink, or any thing, than to forget an endless life, which is so undoubtedly certain, and so near. A man that hath a cause to be heard to-morrow, in which his life or honour is concerned, cannot forget it; a wretch that is condemned to die to-morrow, cannot forget it. And yet poor sinners, that are continually uncertain to live an hour, and certain speedily to see the majesty of the Lord, to their unconceivable joy or terror, as sure as now they live on earth, can forget these things for which they have their memory; and which one would think should drown the matters of this world, as the report of a cannon doth a whisper, or as the sun obscureth the poorest glow-worm. O wonderful stupidity of an unrenewed soul! O wonderful folly and distractedness of the ungodly! That ever men can forget, I say again, that they can forget, eternal joy, eternal wo, and the Eternal God, and the place of their eternal, unchangeable abode, when they stand even at the door, and are passing in, and there is but the thin

veil of flesh between them and that amazing sight, that eternal gulf ; and they are daily dying, and even stepping in. O could you keep your honours here for ever ; could you ever wear that gay attire, and gratify your flesh with meats, and drinks, and sports, and lusts ; could you ever keep your rule and dignity, or your earthly life in any state, you had some little poor excuse for not remembering the eternal things, (as a man hath, that preferreth his candle before the sun,) but when death is near and inexorable, and you are sure to die as you are sure to live ; when every man of you that sitteth in these seats to day can say, ' I must shortly be in another world, where all the pomp and pleasure of this world will be forgotten, or remembered but as my sin and folly,' one would think it were impossible for any of you to be ungodly, and to remember the trifles and nothings of the world, while you forget that everlasting all, whose reality, necessity, magnitude, excellency, concernment, and duration are such, as should take up all the powers of your souls, and continually command the service and attendance of your thoughts against all seekers, and contemptible competitors whatsoever. But alas, though you have the greatest helps, (in subservience to these commanding objects,) yet will you not remember the matters which alone deserve remembrance ; sometimes the preachers of the gospel do call on you to remember ; to remember your God, your souls, your Saviour, your ends, and everlasting state, and to remember your misdoings, that you may loathe yourselves, and in returning may find life ; but some either scorn them, or quarrel with them, or sleep under their most serious and importunate solicitations, or carelessly and stupidly give them the hearing, as if they spoke but words of course, or treated about uncertain things, and spoke not to them from the God of heaven, and about the things that every man of you shall very shortly see or feel. Sometimes you are called on by the voice of conscience within, to remember the unreasonableness and evil of your ways ; but conscience is silenced, because it will not be conformable to your lusts. But little do you think what a part your too late awakened conscience hath yet to play, if you give it not a more sober hearing in time. Sometimes the voice of common calamities, and national or local judgments, call on you to remember the evil of your ways ; but that which is spoken to all, or many, doth seem to most of them as spoken unto none. Sometimes the voice of particular judgments, seizing upon your families, persons or estates, doth

call on you to remember the evil of your ways ; and one would think the rod should make you hear. And yet you most disregardfully go on, or are only frightened into a few good purposes and promises, that die when health and prosperity revive. Sometimes God joineth all these together, and pleadeth both by word and rod, and addeth also the inward pleadings of his Spirit ; he sets your sins in order before you, (Psalm l. 21,) and expositulateth with you the cause of his abused love, despised sovereignty, and provoked justice ; and asketh the poor sinner, ' Hast thou done well to waste thy life in vanity, to serve thy flesh, to forget thy God, thy soul, thy happiness ; and to thrust his services into corners, and give him but the odious leavings of the flesh ? ' But these pleas of God cannot be heard. O horrible impiety ! By his own creatures ; by reasonable creatures (that would scorn to be called fools or madmen) the God of heaven cannot be heard ! The brutish, passionate, furious sinners will not remember. They will not remember what they have done, and with whom it is that they have to do, and what God thinks and saith of men in their condition ; and whither it is that the flesh will lead them ; and what will be the fruit and end of all their lusts and vanities ; and how they will look back on all at last ; and whether an holy or a sensual life will be sweetest to a dying man ; and what judgment it is that they will all be of, in the controversy between the flesh and Spirit, at the latter end. Though they have life, and time, and reason for their uses, we cannot entreat them to consider of these things in time. If our lives lay on it, as their salvation, which is more, lieth on it, we cannot entreat them. If we should kneel to them, and with tears beseech them, but once a day, or once a week, to bestow one hour in serious consideration of their latter end, and the everlasting state of saints and sinners, and of the equity of the holy ways of God, and the iniquity of their own, we cannot prevail with them. Till the God of heaven doth overrule them we cannot prevail. The witness that we are forced to bear is sad ; it is sad to us ; but it will be sadder to these rebels that shall one day know that God will not be outfaced ; and that they may sooner shake the stable earth, and darken the sun by their reproaches, than outbrave the Judge of all the world, or by all their cavils, wranglings, or scorns, escape the hands of his revenging justice.

But if ever the Lord will save these souls, he will bring their misdoings to their remembrance. He will make them think of

that which they were so loath to think on.. You cannot now abide these troubling and severe meditations ; the thoughts of God, and heaven, and hell ; the thoughts of your sins, and of your duties, are melancholy, unwelcome thoughts to you ; but O that you could foreknow the thoughts that you shall have of all these things ! even the proudest, scornful, hardened sinner, that heareth me this day, shall shortly have such a remembrance, as will make him wonder at his present blockishness. O when the irresistible power of heaven shall open all your sins before you, and command you to remember them, and to remember the time, and place, and persons, and all the circumstances of them, what a change will it make upon the most stout or stubborn of the sons of men ; what a difference will there then be between that trembling, self-tormenting soul, and the same that now in his gallantry can make light of all these things, and call the messenger of Christ who warneth him, a puritan, or a doating fool ! Your memories now are somewhat subject to your wills ; and if you will not think of your own, your chief, your everlasting concernments, you may choose. If you will choose rather to employ your noble souls on beastly lusts, and waste your thoughts on things of nought, you may take your course, and chase a feather with a childish world, till, overtaking it, you see you have lost your labour. But when justice takes the work in hand, your thoughts shall be no more subject to your wills ; you shall then remember that which you are full loath to remember, and would give a world that you could forget. O then one cup of the waters of oblivion would be of inestimable value to the damned ! O what would they not give that they could but forget the time they lost, the mercy they abused, the grace which they refused, the holy servants of Christ whom they despised, the wilful sins which they committed, and the many duties which they wilfully omitted ! I have often thought of their case when I have dealt with melancholy or despairing persons. If I advised them to cast away such thoughts, and turn their minds to other things, they tell me they cannot ; it is not in their power ; and I have long found that I may almost as well persuade a broken head to give over aching. But when the holy God shall purposely pour out the vials of his wrath on the consciences of the ungodly, and open the books, and show them all that ever they have done, with all the aggravations, how then shall these worms be able to resist ?

And now I beseech you all, consider, is it not better to re-

member your sins on earth, than in hell? Before your physician, than before your Judge? For your cure, than for your torment? Give me leave, then, before I go any further, to address myself to you as the messenger of the Lord, with this importunate request, both as you stand here in your private, and in your public capacities. In the name of the God of heaven, I charge you, remember the lives that you have led! remember what you have been doing in the world! remember how you have spent your time! and whether, indeed, it is God that you have been serving, and heaven that you have been seeking, and holiness and righteousness that you have been practising in the world till now! Are your sins so small, so venial, so few, that you can find no employment on them for your memories? or is the offending of the Eternal God so slight and safe a thing as not to need your consideration? God forbid you should have such atheistical conceits! Surely God made not his laws for nought; nor doth he make such a stir by his word, and messengers, and providences, against an harmless thing; nor doth he threaten hell to men for small, indifferent matters; nor did Christ need to have died, and done all that he hath done, to cure a small and safe disease. Surely that which the God of heaven is pleased to threaten with everlasting punishment, the greatest of you all should vouchsafe to think on, and with greatest fear and soberness to remember.

It is a pitiful thing, that with men, with gentlemen, with professed Christians, God's matters, and their own matters, their greatest matters, should seem unworthy to be thought on; when they have thoughts for their honours, and their lands, and friends; and thoughts for their children, their servants, and provision; and thoughts for their horses, and their dogs, and sports. Is God and heaven less worthy than these? are death and judgment matters of less moment? Gentlemen, you would take it ill to have your wisdom undervalued, and your reason questioned; for your honour's sake do not make it contemptible yourselves in the eyes of all that are truly wise. It is the nobleness of objects that most ennobles your faculties, and the baseness of objects doth debase them. If brutish objects be your employment and delight, do I need to tell you what you make yourselves? If you would be noble indeed, let God and everlasting glory be the object of your faculties; if you would be great, then dwell on greatest things; if you would be high, then seek the things that are above, and not the sordid things of

earth, (Col. iii. 1—3,) and if you would be safe, look after the enemies of your peace; and as you had thoughts of sin that led you to commit it, entertain the thoughts that would lead you to abhor it. O that I might have but the grant of this reasonable request from you, that among all your thoughts you would bestow now and then an hour in the serious thoughts of your misdoings, and soberly in your retirement between God and your souls remember the paths that you have trod; and whether you have lived for the work for which you were created! One sober hour of such employment might be the happiest hour that ever you spent, and give you more comfort at your final hour, than all the former hours of your life; and might lead you into that new and holy life, which you may review with everlasting comfort.

Truly, gentlemen, I have long observed that Satan's advantage lieth so much on the brutish side, and that the work of man's conversion is so much carried on by God's exciting of our reason; and that the misery of the ungodly is, that they have reason in faculty, and not in use, in the greatest things, that I persuade you to this duty with the greater hopes: if the Lord will but persuade you to retire from vanity, and soberly exercise your reason, and consider your ways, and say, what have we done? And what is it that God would have us do? And what shall we wish we had done at last? I say, could you now be but prevailed with to bestow as many hours on this work, as you have cast away in idleness, or worse, I should not doubt but I should shortly see the faces of many of you in heaven that have been recovered by the use of this advice. It is a thousand pities, that men that are thought wise enough to be entrusted with the public safety, and to be the physicians of a broken state, should have any among them that are untrusty to their God, and have not the reason to remember their misdoings, and prevent the danger of their immortal souls. Will you sit all day here to find out the remedy of a diseased land; and will you not be entreated by God or man to sit down one hour, and find out the disease of, and remedy for, your own souls? Are those men likely to take care of the happiness of so many thousands, that will still be so careless of themselves? Once more therefore, I entreat you, remember your misdoings, lest God remember them: and bless the Lord that called you this day, by the voice of mercy, to remember them upon terms of faith and hope. Remembered they must be, first or last. And

believe it, this is far unlike the sad remembrance at judgment, and in the place of wo and desperation.

And I beseech you observe here, that it is your own misdoings that you must remember. Had it been only the sins of other men, especially those that differ from you, or have wronged you, or stand against your interest, how easily would the duty have been performed? How little need should I have had to press it with all this importunity? How confident should I be that I could convert the most, if this were the conversion? It grieves my soul to hear how quick and constant, high and low, learned and unlearned, are at this uncharitable, contumelious remembering of the faults of others: how cunningly they can bring in their insinuated accusations: how odiously they can aggravate the smallest faults, where difference causeth them to distaste the person: how ordinarily they judge of actions by the persons, as if any thing were a crime that is done by such as they dislike, and all were virtue that is done by those that fit their humours: how commonly brethren have made it a part of their service of God to speak or write uncharitably of his servants, labouring to destroy the hearer's charity, which had more need, in this unhappy time, of the bellows than the water! How useful it is with the ignorant that cannot reach the truth, and the impious that cannot bear it, to call such heretics that know more than themselves, and to call such precisians, puritans, (or some such name which hell invents as there is occasion,) who dare not be so bad as they! How odious, men pretending to much gravity, learning, and moderation, do labour to make those that are dearer to God; and what an heart they have to widen differences, and make a sea of every lake; and that, perhaps, under pretence of blaming the uncharitableness of others! How far the very sermons and discourses of some learned men are from the common rule of doing as we would be done by: and how loudly they proclaim that such men love not their neighbours as themselves; the most uncharitable words seeming moderate, which they give; and all called intemperate that savoureth not of flattery, which they receive! Were I calling the several exasperated factions now in England to remember the misdoings of their supposed adversaries, what full-mouthed and debasing confessions would they make! What monsters of heresy, and schism, of impiety, treason, and rebellion, of perjury and perfidiousness, would too many make of the faults of others, while they extenuate their

own to almost nothing ! It is a wonder to observe how the case doth alter with the most, when that which was their adversary's case becomes their own. The very prayers of the godly, and their care of their salvation, and the fear of sinning, doth seem their crime in the eyes of some that easily bear the guilt of swearing, drunkenness, sensuality, filthiness, and neglect of duty in themselves, as a tolerable burden.

But if ever God indeed convert you, (though you will pity others, yet) he will teach you to begin at home, and take the beam out of your own eyes, and to cry out, ' I am the miserable sinner.'

And lest these generals seem insufficient for us to confess on such a day as this, and lest yet your memories should need more help, is it not my duty to remind you of some particulars ? which yet I shall not do by way of accusation, but of inquiry. Far be it from me to judge so hardly of you, that when you come hither to lament your sins you cannot with patience endure to be told of them.

1. Inquire, then, whether there be none among you that live a sensual, careless life, clothed with the best, and faring deliciously every day ? In rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, strife and envying, not putting on Christ, nor walking in the Spirit, but making provision for the flesh, to satisfy the lusts thereof. (Rom. xiii. 13, 14.) Is there none among you that spend your precious time in vanities, that is allowed you to prepare for life eternal ? That have time to waste in compliments, and fruitless talk, and visits, in gaming, and unnecessary recreations, in excessive feasting and entertainments, while God is neglected, and your souls forgotten, and you can never find an hour in a day to make ready for the life which you must live for ever ! Is there none among you that would take the man for a puritan or fanatic that should employ but half so much time for his soul, and in the services of the Lord, as you do in unnecessary sports and pleasures, and pampering your flesh ? Gentlemen, if there be any such among you as you, love your souls, remember your misdoings, and bewail these abominations before the Lord, in this day of your professed humiliation !

2. Inquire whether there be none among you, that, being strangers to the new birth, and to the inward workings of the Spirit of Christ upon the soul, do also distaste a holy life, and make it a matter of your reproach, and pacify your accusing consciences

with a religion made up of mere words, and heartless outside, and so much obedience as your fleshly pleasures will admit, accounting those that go beyond you, especially if they differ from you in your modes and circumstances, to be but a company of proud, pharisaical, self-conceited hypocrites, and those whom you desire to suppress. If there be one such person here, I would entreat him to remember that it is the solemn asseveration of our Judge, that "except a man be converted, and be born again, of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; (John iii. 3—5; Matt. xviii. 3;) that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" (Rom. viii. 9;) that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new;" (2 Cor. v. 17;) that "without holiness none shall see God;" (Heb. xii. 14;) that "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable;" (Jam. iii. 17;) that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit, and in truth;" (John iv. 23, 24;) that "they worship in vain that teach for doctrines the commandments of men;" (Matt. xv. 8, 9;) and that "except your righteousness shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 20.) And I desire you to remember that it is hard to kick against the pricks, and to prosper in rage against the Lord: and that it is better for that man that offendeth one of his little ones to have a millstone fastened to his neck, and to have been cast into the bottom of the sea. (Matt. xviii. 6.) It is a sure and grievous condemnation that waiteth for all that are themselves unholy: but to the haters or despisers of the holy laws and servants of the Lord how much more grievous a punishment is reserved!

3. Inquire also whether there be none among you that let loose your passions on your inferiors, and oppress your poor tenants, and make them groan under the task, or at least do little to relieve the needy, nor study not to serve the Lord with your estates, but sacrifice all to the pleasing of your flesh, unless it be some inconsiderable pittance, or fruitless drops, that are unproportionable to your receivings. If there be any such, let them remember their iniquities, and cry for mercy before the cry of the poor to heaven do bring down vengeance from him that hath promised to hear their cry, and speedily to avenge them. (Luke xviii. 7, 8.)

4. Inquire whether there be none that live the life of Sodom,

in pride, fulness of bread, and idleness; (Ezek. xvi. 49;) and that are not puffed up with their estates and dignities, and are strangers to the humility, meekness, patience, and self-denial of the saints: that ruffle in bravery, and contend more zealously for their honour and pre-eminence, than for the honour and interest of the Lord. For pride of apparel, it was wont to be taken for a childish or a womanish kind of vice, below a man; but it is now observed among the gallants, that (except in spots) the notes of vanity are more legibly written on the hair and dress of a multitude of effeminate males, than on the females; proclaiming to the world that pride, which one would think even pride itself should have concealed; and calling by these signs to the beholders to observe the emptiness of their minds, and how void they are of that inward worth, which is the honour of a Christian, and of a man. It being a marvel to see a man of learning, gravity, wisdom, and the fear of God, appear in such an antic dress.

I have done with the first part, "the remembering of your own evil ways and doings." I beseech you practically go along with me to the next; "The loathing of yourselves in your own eyes, for all your iniquities and abominations."

Every true convert doth thus loathe himself for his iniquities; and when God will restore a punished people upon their repentance he bringeth them to this loathing of themselves.

1. A converted soul hath a new and heavenly light to help him to see those matters of humbling use, which others see not.

2. More particularly, he hath the knowledge of sin, and of himself. He seeth the odious face of sin, and seeth how much his heart and life in his sinful days abounded with it, and how great a measure yet remains.

3. He hath seen by faith the Lord himself; the majesty, the holiness, the jealousy, the goodness of the eternal God whom he hath offended, and therefore must needs abhor himself. (Job xlii. 6.)

4. He hath tasted of God's displeasure against him for his sin already. God himself hath set it home, and awakened his conscience, and held it on, till he hath made him understand that the consuming fire is not to be jested with.

5. He hath seen Christ crucified, and mourned over him. This is the glass that doth most clearly show the ugliness of sin, and here he hath learned to abhor himself.

6. He hath foreseen, by faith, the end of sin, and the doleful

recompense of the ungodly ; his faith beholdeth the misery of damned souls, and the glory which sinners cast away. He heareth them beforehand repenting, and lamenting, and crying out of their former folly, and wishing in vain that all this were to do again, and that they might once more be tried with another life, and resolving then how holily, how self-denyingly they would live ! He knows that if sin had had its way he had been plunged into this hellish misery himself ; and therefore he must needs loathe himself for his iniquities.

7. Moreover, the true convert hath had the liveliest taste of mercy, of the blood of Christ, of the offers and covenant of grace, of reprieving mercy, of pardoning mercy, of healing and preserving mercy, and of the unspeakable mercy contained in the promise of everlasting life ; and to find that he hath sinned against all this mercy doth constrain him to abhor himself.

8. And it is only the true convert that hath a new and holy nature, contrary to sin ; and, therefore, as a man that hath the leprosy doth loathe himself because his nature is contrary to his disease, so is it (though operating in a freer way) with a converted soul as to the leprosy of sin. Oh ! how he loathes the remnants of his pride and passion ; his excessive cares, desires, and fears ; the backwardness of his soul to God and heaven ! Sin is to the new nature of every true believer, as the food of a swine to the stomach of a man ; if he have eaten it, he hath no rest until he hath vomited it up ; and then when he looketh on his vomit, he loatheth himself to think how long he kept such filth within him ; and that yet in the bottom there is some remains.

9. The true convert is one that is much at home, his heart is the vineyard which he is daily dressing, his work is ordinarily about it, and, therefore, he is acquainted with those secret sins, and daily failings, which ungodly men that are strangers to themselves do not observe, though they have them in dominion.

10. Lastly, a serious Christian is a workman of the Lord's, and daily busy at the exercise of his graces, and, therefore, hath occasion to observe his weaknesses, and failings, and from sad experience is forced to abhor himself.

But with careless unrenewed souls it is not so ; some of them may have a mild, ingenuous disposition, and the knowledge of their unworthiness ; and customarily they will confess such sins as are small disgrace to them, or cannot be hid ; or under the terrible gripes of conscience, in the hour of distress, and at the approach of death, they will do more ; and abhor themselves,

perhaps, as Judas did ; or make a constrained confession through the power of fear ; but so far are they from this loathing of themselves for all their iniquities, that sin is to them as their element, their food, their nature, and their friend.

And now, honourable, worthy, and beloved auditors, it is my duty to inquire, and to provoke you to inquire, whether the representative body of the Commons of England, and each man of you in particular, be thus affected to yourselves or not. It concerns you to inquire of it, as you love your souls, and love not to see the death marks of impenitency on them. It concerneth us to inquire of it, as we love you and the nation, and would fain see the marks of God's return in mercy to us, in your self-loathing and return to God. Let conscience speak as before the Lord that sees your hearts, and will shortly judge you, have you had such a sight of your natural and actual sin and misery, of your neglect of God, your contempt of heaven, your loss of precious, hasty time, your worldly, fleshly, sensual lives, and your omission of the great and holy works which you were made for? Have you had such a sight and sense of these as hath filled your souls with shame and sorrow? and caused you in tears, or hearty grief, to lament your sinful, careless lives, before the Lord. Do you loathe yourselves for all this, as being vile in your own eyes, and each man say, 'What a wretch was I! what an unreasonable, self-hating wretch, to do all this against myself! what an unnatural wretch! what a monster of rebellion and ingratitude, to do all this against the Lord of love and mercy! what a deceived, foolish wretch, to prefer the pleasing of my lusts and senses, a pleasure that perisheth in the fruition, and is past as soon as it is received, before the manly pleasures of the saints, and before the soul's delight in God, and before the unspeakable everlasting pleasures! Was there any comparison between the brutish pleasures of the flesh, and the spiritual delights of a believing soul, in looking to the endless pleasure which we shall have with all the saints and angels in the glorious presence of the Lord? Was God and glory worth no more, than to be cast aside for satiating of an unsatisfiable flesh and fancy, and to be sold for a harlot, for a forbidden cup, for a little air of popular applause, or for a burdensome load of wealth and power, for so short a time? Where is now the gain and pleasure of all my former sins? What have they left but a sting behind them? How near is the time when my departing soul must look back on all the pleasures and profits that ever I enjoyed, as a dream when

one awaketh ; as delusory vanities, that have done all for me that ever they will do, and all is but to bring my flesh unto corruption, (Gal. vi. 8,) and my soul to this distressing grief and fear ? and then I must sing and laugh no more ! I must brave it out in pride no more ! I must know the pleasures of the flesh no more ! but be levelled with the poorest, and my body laid in loathsome darkness, and my soul appear before that God whom I so wilfully refused to obey and honour. O wretch that I am ! where was my understanding, when I played so boldly with the flames of hell, the wrath of God, the poison of sin ! when God stood by and yet I sinned ! when conscience did rebuke me, and yet I sinned ! when heaven or hell were hard at hand, and yet I sinned ! when, to please my God, and save my soul, I would not forbear a filthy lust, or forbidden vanity of no worth ! when I would not be persuaded to a holy, heavenly, watchful life, though all my hopes of heaven lay on it ! I am ashamed of myself ; I am confounded in the remembrance of my wilful, self-destroying folly ! I loathe myself for all my abominations ; O that I had lived in beggary and rags when I lived in sin ! And O that I had lived with God in a prison, or in a wilderness, when I refused a holy, heavenly life, for the love of a deceitful world ! Will the Lord pardon what is past, I am resolved through his grace to do so no more, but to loathe that filth that I took for pleasure, and to abhor that sin that I made my sport, and to die to the glory and riches of the world, which I made my idol ; and to live entirely to that God that I did so long ago and so unworthily neglect ; and to seek that treasure, that kingdom, that delight, that will fully satisfy my expectation, and answer all my care and labour, with such infinite advantage. Holiness or nothing shall be my work and life, and heaven or nothing shall be my portion and felicity.

These are the thoughts, the affections, the breathing of every regenerate, gracious soul. For your souls' sake inquire now, is it thus with you ? Or have you thus returned with self-loathing to the Lord, and firmly engaged your souls to him at your entrance into a holy life ? I must be plain with you, gentlemen, or I shall be unfaithful ; and I must deal closely with you, or I cannot deal honestly and truly with you. As sure as you live, yea, as sure as the word of God is true, you must all be such converted men, and loathe yourselves for your iniquities, or be condemned as impenitent to everlasting fire. To hide this from you is but to deceive you, and that in a matter of a thou-

sand times greater moment than your lives. Perhaps I could have made shift, instead of such serious admonitions, to have wasted this hour in flashy oratory, and neat expressions, and ornaments of reading, and other things that are the too common matters of ostentation with men that preach God's word in jest, and believe not what they are persuading others to believe. Or if you think I could not, I am indifferent, as not much affecting the honour of being able to offend the Lord, and wrong your souls, by dallying with holy things. Flattery in these things of soul concernment is a selfish villany, that hath but a very short reward, and those that are pleased with it to-day, may curse the flatterer for ever. Again, therefore, let me tell you that which I think you will confess, that it is not your greatness, not your high looks, not the gallantry of your spirits that scorns to be thus humbled, that will serve your turn when God shall deal with you, or save your carcasses from rottenness and dust, or your guilty souls from the wrath of the Almighty. Nor is it your contempt of the threatenings of the Lord, and your stupid neglect, or scorning at the message, that will endure when the sudden, irresistible light shall come in upon you, and convinee you, or you shall see and feel what now you refuse to believe! Nor is it your outside, hypocritical religion, made up of mere words, or ceremonies, and giving your souls but the leavings of the flesh, and making God an underling to the world, that will do any more to save your souls than the picture of a feast to feed your bodies. Nor is it the stiffest conceits that you shall be saved in an unconverted state, or that you are sanctified when you are not, that will do any more to keep you from damnation than a conceit that you shall never die will do to keep you here for ever. Gentlemen, though you are all here in health and dignity, and honour, to day, how little a while is it, alas! how little, until you shall be every man in heaven or hell! Unless you are infidels you dare not deny it. And it is only Christ and a holy life that is your way to heaven; and only sin, and the neglect of Christ and holiness, that can undo you. Look, therefore, upon sin as you should look on that which would cast you into hell, and is daily undermining all your hopes. O that this honourable assembly could know it in some measure as it shall be shortly known! and judge of it as men do, when time is past, and delusions vanished, and all men are awakened from their fleshly dreams, and their naked souls have seen the Lord! O

then what laws would you make against sin ! How speedily would you join your strength against it as against the only enemy of your peace, and as against a fire in your houses, or a plague that were broken out upon the city where you are ! O then how zealously would you all concur to promote the interest of holiness in the land, and studiously encourage the servants of the Lord ! How severely would you deal with those, that by making a mock of godliness, do hinder the salvation of the people's souls ? How carefully would you help the labourers that are sent to guide men in the holy path ! and yourselves would go before the nation as an example of penitent self loathing for your sins, and hearty conversion to the Lord ! Is this your duty now ? or is it not ? If you cannot deny it, I warn you from the Lord do not neglect it ; and do not by your disobedience to a convinced conscience prepare for a tormenting conscience. If you know your Master's will, and do it not, you shall be beaten with many stripes.

And your public capacity and work doth make your repentance and holiness needful to others as well as to yourselves. Had we none to govern us, but such as entirely subject themselves to the government of Christ ; and none to make us laws, but such as have his law transcribed upon their hearts, O what a happy people should we be ! Men are unlikely to make strict laws against the vices which they love and live in ; or if they make them, they are more unlikely to execute them. We can expect no great help against drunkenness, swearing, gaming, filthiness, and profaneness, from men that love these abominations so well, as that they will rather part with God and their salvation than they will let them go. All men are born with a serpentine malice and enmity against the seed of Christ, which is rooted in their very natures. Custom in sin increaseth this to malignity ; and it is only renewed grace that doth overcome it. If, therefore, there should be any among our rulers that are not cured of this mortal malady, what friendship can be expected from them to the cause and servants of the Lord ? If you are all the children of God yourselves, and heaven be your end, and holiness your delight and business, it will then be your principal care to encourage it, and help the people to the happiness that you have found yourselves. But if in any the original (increased) enmity to God and godliness prevail, we can expect no better (ordinarily) from such, than that they oppose the holiness which they hate, and do their worst to make us miserable. But wo

to him that striveth against his Maker. Shall the thorns and briars be set in battle against the consuming fire and prevail? (Isaiah xxvii. 4, 5.) Oh! therefore, for the nation's sake, begin at home, and cast away the sins which you would have the nation cast away! All men can say, that ministers must teach by their lives, as well as by their doctrines; (and wo to them that do not!) and must not magistrates as well govern by their lives, as by their laws? Will you make laws which you would not have men obey? Or would you have the people to be better than yourselves? Or can you expect to be obeyed by others, when you will not obey the God of heaven and earth yourselves? We beseech you, therefore, for the sake of a poor distressed land, let our recovery begin with you. God looks so much at the rulers of a nation in his dealings with them, that ordinarily it goes with the people as their rulers are. Until David had numbered the people, God would not let out his wrath upon them, though it was they that were the great offenders. If we see our representative body begin in loathing themselves for all their iniquities, and turning to the Lord with all their hearts, we should yet believe that he is returning to us, and will do us good after all our provocations. Truly, gentlemen, it is much from you that we must fetch our comfortable or sad prognostics of the life or death of this diseased land. Whatever you do, I know that it shall go well with the righteous; but for the happiness or misery of the nation in general it is you that are our best prognostication. If you repent yourselves, and become a holy people to the Lord, it promiseth us deliverance; but if you harden your hearts, and prove despisers of God and holiness, it is like to be our temporal, and sure to be your eternal undoing, if saving grace do not prevent it.

And I must needs tell you, that if you be not brought to loathe yourselves, it is not because there is no loathsome matter in you. Did you see your inside you could not forbear it. As I think it would somewhat abate the pride of the most curious gallants, if they did but see what a heap of phlegm, and filth, and dung, (and perhaps crawling worms,) there is within them; much more should it make you loathe yourselves if you saw those sins that are a thousand times more odious. And to instigate you hereunto, let me further reason with you.

1. You can easily loathe an enemy; and who hath been a greater enemy to any of you than yourselves? Another may injure you; but no man can everlastingly undo you, but yourselves.

2. You abhor him that kills your dearest friends ; and it is you by your sins that have put to death the Lord of life .

3. Who is it but yourselves that hath robbed you of so much precious time, and so much precious fruit of ordinances, and of all the mercies of the Lord ?

4. Who is it but yourselves that hath brought you under God's displeasure ? Poverty could not have made him loathe you, nor anything besides your sins.

5. Who wounded conscience, and hath raised all your doubts and fears ? Was it not your sinful selves ?

6. Who is it but yourselves that hath brought you so near the gulf of misery, and endangered your eternal peace ?

7. Consider the loathsome nature of your sins, and how then can you choose but loathe yourselves ?

1. It is the creature's rebellion or disobedience against the Absolute Universal Sovereign.

2. It is the deformity of God's noblest creature here on earth, and the abusing of the most noble faculties.

3. It is a stain so deep that nothing can wash out but the blood of Christ. The flood that drowned a world of sinners did not wash away their sins. The fire that consumed the Sodomites did not consume their sins. Hell itself can never end it, and, therefore, shall have no end itself. It dieth not with you when you die ; though churchyards are the guiltiest spots of ground, they do not bury and hide our sin.

4. The church must loathe it, and must cast out the sinner as loathsome, if he remain impenitent ; and none of the servants of the Lord must have any friendship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

5. God himself doth loathe the creature for sin, and for nothing else but sin, " My soul loathed them ;" (Zech. xi. 8;) " When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and daughters ;" (Deut. xxxii. 19;) " My soul shall abhor you ;" (Lev. xxvi. 30;) " When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel ;" (Psalm lxxviii. 59;) " He abhorred his very sanctuary ;" (Lam. ii. 7;) " For he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." (Hab. i. 13.) In a word, it is the sentence of God himself, that a " wicked man is loathsome and cometh to shame," (Prov. xiii. 5,) so that you see what abundant cause of self-abhorrence is among us.

But we are much afraid of God's departure, when we see how common self-love is in the world, and how rare this penitent self-loathing is.

1. Do they loathe themselves that on every occasion are contending for their honour, and exalting themselves, and venturing their very souls, to be highest in the world for a little while?

2. Do they loathe themselves that are readier to justify all their sins, or at least to extenuate them, than humbly confess them?

3. Do they loathe themselves for all their sins that cannot endure to be reproved, but loathe their friends and the ministers of Christ that tell them of their loathsomeness?

4. Do they loathe themselves that take their pride itself for manhood, and christian humility for baseness, and brokenness of heart for whining hypocrisy or folly, and call them a company of priest-ridden fools that lament their sin, and ease their souls by free confession? Is the ruffling bravery of this city, and the strange attire, the haughty carriage, the feasting, idleness, and pomp, the marks of such as loathe themselves for all their abominations? Why then was fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes, the badge of such in ancient times?

5. Do they loathe themselves for all their sins, who loathe those that will not do as they, and speak reproachfully of such as run not with them to the same excess of riot, (1 Peter iv. 4,) and count them precisians that dare not spit in the face of Christ, by wilful sinning as venturously and madly as themselves?

6. Or do they loathe themselves for all their sins, that love their sins even better than their God, and will not by all the obtestations, and commands, and entreaties of the Lord, be persuaded to forsake them? How far all these are from this self-loathing, and how far that nation is from happiness, where the rulers or inhabitants are such, is easy to conjecture.

I should have minded you what sins of the land must be remembered, and loathed, if we would have peace and healing. But as the glass forbids me, so alas, as the sins of Sodom, they declare themselves. Though through the great mercy of the Lord, the body of this nation, and the sober part, have not been guilty of that covenant-breaking, perfidiousness, treason, sedition, disobedience, self-exalting, and turbulency, as some have been, and as ignorant foreigners through the calumnies of malicious adversaries may possibly believe; yet must it be for a lamentation through all generations, that any of those who went out from us have contracted the guilt of such abominations, and occasioned the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; and that any in the pride or simplicity of their hearts have

followed the conduct of jesuitical seducers, they know not whither or to what.

That profaneness aboundeth on the other side, and drunkenness, swearing, fornication, lasciviousness, idleness, pride, and covetousness, doth still survive the ministers that have wasted themselves against them, and the labours of faithful magistrates to this day! And that the two extremes of heresy and profaneness do increase each other; and while they talk against each other, they harden one another, and both afflict the church of Christ. But especially wo to England for that crying sin, *the scorning of a holy life*, if a wonder of mercy do not save us. That people, professing the christian religion, should storn the diligent practice of that religion which themselves profess! That obedience to the God of heaven, that imitation of the example of our Saviour, who came from heaven to teach us holiness, should not only be neglected, unreasonably and impiously neglected, but also by a transcendent impious madness should be made a matter of reproach! That the Holy Ghost, into whose name, as the Sanctifier, these men were themselves baptised, should not only be resisted, but his sanctifying work be made a scorn! That it should be made a matter of derision for a man to prefer his soul before his body, and heaven before earth, and God before a transitory world, and to use his reason in that for which it was principally given him, and not to be wilfully mad in a case where madness will undo him unto all eternity! Judge, as you are men, whether hell itself is like much to exceed such horrid wickedness! And whether it be not an astonishing wonder that ever a reasonable soul should be brought to such a height of abomination! That they that profess to believe the holy catholic Church, and the communion of saints, should deride the holiness of the church, and the saints, and their communion! That they that pray for the hallowing of God's name, the coming of his kingdom, and the doing of his will, even as it is done in heaven, should make a mock at all this that they pray for! How much further, think you, is it possible for wicked souls to go on sinning? Is it not the God of heaven himself that they make a scorn of? Is not holiness his image? Did not he make the law that doth command it; professing that none shall see his face without it? (Heb. xii. 14.) O sinful nation! O people laden with iniquity! Repent, repent speedily, and with self-loathing, repent of this inhuman crime, lest God should take away your glory, and enter himself into judgment

with you, and plead against you the scorn that you have cast upon the Creator, the Saviour, the Sanctifier, to whom you were engaged in your baptismal vows ! Lest when he plagueth and condemneth you, he say, "Why persecuted you me?" (Acts ix. 4.) "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Read Prov. i. 20, to the end. When Israel mocked the messengers of the Lord, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, his wrath arose against his people till there was no remedy ; (2 Chron. xxvi. 16 ;) and O that you who are the physicians of this diseased land would specially call them to repentance for this, and help them against it for the time to come !

Having called you first to remember your misdoings, and, secondly, to loathe yourselves in your own eyes for them, I must add a third, that you stop not here, but proceed to reformation, or else all the rest is but hypocrisy. And here it is that I most earnestly entreat this honourable assembly for their best assistance. O make not the forementioned sins your own, lest your hear from God, "quod minus crimine, quam absolute peccatum est." Though England hath been used to cry loud for liberty, let them not have liberty to abuse their Maker, and to damn their souls, if you can hinder it. "Optimus est reipublicæ status, ubi nulla libertas deest, nisi licentia pereundi," as Nero was once told by his unsuccessful tutor. Use not men to a liberty of scorning the laws of God, lest you teach them to scorn yours ; for can you expect to be better used than God. And "cui plus licet quam par est, plus vult quam licet." (Gell. i. 17., c. 14.) We have all seen the evils of liberty to be wanton in religion. Is it not worse to have liberty to deride religion ? If men shall have leave to go quietly to hell themselves, let them not have leave to mock poor souls from heaven. The suffering to the sound in faith is as nothing ; for what is the foaming rage of madmen to be regarded ? But that in England God should be so provoked, and souls so hindered from the paths of life, that whoever will be converted and saved must be made a laughing stock, which carnal minds cannot endure ; this is the mischief which we deprecate.

The eyes of the nation, and of the christian world, are much upon you, some high in hopes, some deep in fears, some waiting in dubious expectations for the issue of your counsels. Great expectations, in deep necessities, should awake you to the greatest care and diligence. Though I would not, by omit-

ting any necessary directions or admonitions to you, invite the world to think that I speak to such as cannot endure to hear, and that so honourable an assembly doth call the ministers of Christ to do those works of their proper office, which yet they will be offended if they do, yet had I rather err in the defective part than by excess, and therefore shall not presume to be too particular. Only in general, in the name of Christ, and on the behalf of a trembling, yet hoping nation, I most earnestly beseech and warn you, that you own and promote the power and practice of Godliness in the land, and that as God, whose ministers you are, (Rom. xiii. 4,) is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, (Heb. xi. 6,) and hath made this a principal article of our faith, so you would imitate your absolute Lord, and honour them that fear the Lord, and encourage them that diligently seek him. And may I not freely tell you that God should have the precedency? And that you must first seek his kingdom, and the righteousness thereof, and he will facilitate all the rest of your work. Surely no powers on earth should be offended, that the God from whom, and for whom, and through whom, they have what they have, is preferred before them, when they should own no interest but his, and what is subservient to it. I have long thought that pretences of a necessity of beginning with our own affairs, hath frustrated our hopes from many parliaments already; and I am sure that by delays, the enemies of our peace have got advantage to cross our ends and attain their own. Our calamities begun in differences about religion, and still that is the wound that most needs closing. And if that were done, how easily, I dare confidently speak it, would the generality of sober, godly people, be agreed in things civil, and become the strength and glory of the sovereign, under God. And though, with grief and shame, we see this work so long undone, (may we hope that God hath reserved it to this season,) yet I have the confidence to profess, that, as the exalting of one party, by the ejection and persecuting of the rest, is the sinful way to your dishonour and our ruin, so the terms on which the differing parties most considerable among us may safely, easily, and suddenly unite, are very obvious, and our concord a very easy thing, if the prudent and moderate might be the guides, and selfish interests and passion did not set us at a further distance than our principles have done. And to show you the facility of such an agreement, were it not that such personal

matters are much liable to misinterpretations, I should tell you, that the late reverend Primate of Ireland consented, in less than half an hour's debate, to five or six propositions which I offered him, as sufficient for the concord of the moderate Episcopal and Presbyterians, without forsaking the principles of their parties. O that the Lord would yet show so much mercy to a sinful nation, as to put it into your hearts to promote but the practice of those christian principles which we are all agreed in! I hope there is no controversy among us whether God should be obeyed, and hell avoided, and heaven first sought, and Scripture be the rule and test of our religion, and sin abhorred and cast out. O that you would but further the practice of this with all your might! We crave not of you any lordship or dominion, nor riches, nor interest in your temporal affairs; we had rather see a law to exclude all ecclesiastics from all power of force. The God of heaven that will judge you and us will be a righteous judge betwixt us, whether we crave any thing unreasonable at your hands. These are the sum of our requests: 1. That holiness may be encouraged, and the overspreading profaneness of this nation effectually kept down. 2. That an able, diligent ministry may be encouraged, and not corrupted by temporal power. 3. That discipline may be seriously promoted, and ministers no more hindered by magistrates in the exercise of their office than physicians and schoolmasters are in theirs, seeing it is but a government like theirs, consisting in the liberty of conscionably managing the works of our own office that we expect. Give us but leave to labour in Christ's vineyard with such encouragement as the necessity of obstinate souls requireth, and we will ask no more. You have less cause to restrain us from discipline than from preaching. For it is a more flesh-displeasing work that we are hardlier brought to. I foretel you that you shut out me, and all that are of my mind, if you would force us to administer sacraments without discipline, and without the conduct of our own discretion, to whom the magistrate appoints it, as if a physician must give no physic but by your prescript. The antidisiplinarian magistrate I could as resolutely suffer under as the superstitious, it being worse to cast out discipline, than to err in the circumstances of it. The question is not, whether bishops or no, but whether discipline or none? And whether enough to use it? 4. We earnestly request that scripture sufficiency, as the test of our re-

ligion, and only universal law of Christ, may be maintained, and that nothing unnecessary may be imposed as necessary, nor the church's unity laid on that which will not bear it, nor ever did. O that we might but have leave to serve God only as Christ hath commanded us, and to go to heaven in the same way as the apostles did! These are our desires, and whether they are reasonable, God will judge.

Give first to God the things that are God's, and then give Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. Let your wisdom be first pure, and then peaceable. Not but that we are resolved to be loyal to sovereignty, though you deny us all these. Whatever malicious men pretend, that is not, nor shall not, be our difference. I have proved more publicly, when it was more dangerous to publish it, that the generality of the orthodox, sober ministers, and godly people of this nation, did never consent to king-killing, and resisting sovereign power, nor to the change of the ancient government of this land, but abhorred the pride and ambition that attempted it. I again repeat it, the blood of some, the imprisonment and displacing of others, the banishment or flight of others, and the detestations and public protestations of more; the oft-declared sense of England, and the wars and sad estate of Scotland, have all declared before the world, to the shame of calumniators, that the generality of the orthodox, sober protestants of these nations, have been true to their allegiance, and detesters of unfaithfulness and ambition in subjects, and resisters of heresy and schism in the church, and of anarchy and democratical confusions in the commonwealth. And though the land hath ringed with complaints and threatenings against myself, for publishing a little of the mixture of jesuitical and familistical contrivances, for taking down together our government and religion, and setting up new ones for the introduction of popery, infidelity, and heresy, yet I am assured that there is much more of this confederacy for the all-seeing God to discover in time, to the shame of papists, that cannot be content to write themselves for the killing of kings when the pope hath once excommunicated them, and by the decrees of a general council at the Lateran, to depose princes that will extirpate such as the pope calls heretics, and absolve all their subjects from their fidelity and allegiance, but they must also creep into the councils and armies of protestants, and taking the advantage of successes and ambition, withdraw men at once from their religion and

allegiance, that they may cheat the world into a belief that treasons are the fruits of the protestant profession, when these masked jugglers have come by night, and sown and cherished these Romish tares. As a papist must cease to be a papist if he will be truly and fully loyal to his sovereign, (as I am ready to prove against any adversary,) so a protestant must so far cease to be a protestant, before he can be disloyal. For Rom. 13. is part of the rule of his religion. Unhappily there hath been a difference among us which is the higher power, when those that have their shares in the sovereignty are divided, but whether we should be subject to the higher power, is no question with us.

Gentlemen, I have nothing to ask of you for myself, nor any of my brethren, as for themselves, but that you will be friends to serious preaching and holy living, and will not ensnare our consciences with any unscriptural inventions of men. This I would beg of you as on my knees: 1. As for the sake of Christ, whose cause and people it is that I am pleading for. 2. For the sake of thousands of poor souls in this land, whose salvation or damnation will be much promoted by you. 3. For the sake of thousands of the dear servants of the Lord, whose eyes are waiting to see what God will do by your hands. 4. For your own sakes, who are undone if you dash yourselves on the rock you should build on, and set against the holy God, and turn the cries of his servants to heaven for deliverance from you. (Luke xviii. 8.) If you stumble on Christ, he will break you in pieces; but if he fall upon you, he will grind you to powder. 5. For the sake of your posterity, that they may not be bred up in ignorance or ungodliness. 6. For the honour of the nation and yourselves, that you turn by all the suspicions and fears that are raised in the land. 7. For the honour of sound doctrine and church-government, that you may not bring schism into greater credit than now you have brought it to deserved shame. For if you frown on godliness under pretence of uniformity in unnecessary things, and make times worse than when libertinism and schism so prevailed, the people will look back with groans, and say, 'What happy times did we once see!' And so will honour schism, and libertinism, and usurpation, through your oppression. 8. Lastly, I beg this of you, for the honour of sovereignty, and the nation's peace. A prince of a holy people is most honourable. The interest of holiness is Christ's own. Happy is that prince that espous-

eth this, and subjecteth all his own unto it. (See Psalm i. 1, 2, and cl., and xv. 4.) It is the conscionable, prudent, godly people of the land, that must be the glory and strength of their lawful sovereign. Their prayers will serve him better than the hideous oaths and curses of the profane. Wo to the rulers that set themselves against the interest of Christ and holiness ! (Read Psalm ii. ;) or that make snares for their consciences, that they may persecute them as disobedients, who are desirous to obey their rulers in subordination to the Lord. (See Dan. iii., and vi. 5, 10, 13.) I have dealt plainly with you, and told you the very truth. If God have now a blessing for you and us, you will obey it, but if you refuse, then look to yourselves, and answer it if you can. I am sure, in spite of earth and hell, it shall go well with them that live by faith.