

## Sermon X.

Isaiah i. 16.—“Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil,” &c.

If we would have a sum of pure and undefiled religion, here it is set down in opposition to this people's shadow of religion, that consisted in external ordinances and rites. We think that God should be as well-pleased with our service as we ourselves, therefore we choose his commands which our humour hath no particular antipathy against and refuse others. But the Lord will not be so served: as he will not share with the world, and divide the soul and service of man with creatures, so as mammon should get part, and he his part. No, if we choose the one, we must refuse the other; for so will he not suffer his word and commands to be divided: there must be some universality in respect of the gospel and the law, and a conjunction of these two, or we cannot please him.

If religion do not include the gospel, we are yet upon the old covenant of works, according to which none can be justified. If it do not include the law in the hands of a mediator, then we turn the grace of God unto wantonness. If it shut out Jesus Christ and have no use of him, how can either we or our performances stand or be accepted before his holy eyes? If it exclude the law that Christ came to establish, how can he be pleased with our religion? both of these offer an indignity to the Son of God. The sum, then, of Christian religion is believing and sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience. That is the root and fountain, this is the fruit and stream; justification of our persons, and sanctification of our lives and hearts. This is pure religion and undefiled. And therefore Isaiah says, “Wash you, make you clean,”—cleanse in the only true fountain of Christ's blood. It is not your purifications of the law, your many washings with water and hyssop; it is not the blood of bulls and of goats can purge your consciences from

dead works: they do but purify your flesh, but cannot wash your souls worse defiled. This blood of Jesus Christ is that clean water that he must sprinkle on you, if you would be clean. If you take any other water, any other righteousness but his, and wash thyself therewith, suppose it be snow water that washeth cleanest—thy most exact conversation, yet, he will plunge thee in the mire, till thine own clothes abhor thee, Job ix. 30, 31. Now, when you have washed your persons (ye need not, save to wash your feet, says Christ,)—your daily conversation, reform it in the virtue of that blood, for we are not called “to uncleanness, but unto holiness,” and therefore, “put away the evil of your doings,” &c. God hath put away the guilt of your doings by justification, now put ye away the evil of your doings by sanctification, &c. And if ye would know what sanctification is, “cease to do evil,” do not return to the old puddle to wallow in it. Ye that are cleansed by this blood, O think how unbecoming it is to you to defile yourselves again with those things ye are cleansed from! but now, “learn to do well.” Ye are given up to Christ, ye must be his disciples, and he will teach you. “Learn of me,” saith Christ, (ye need no other law almost but his example, he is a visible and speaking law), yet “seek judgment.” As ye ought to look on my example, so especially ponder that word and rule of practice and behaviour that I have left behind me, and given out as the lawgiver of the redeemed. Have I redeemed you, and should not I be the redeemed and ransomed one's king? Is there any society in the world wants a law, order, and government? Neither must ye who are delivered from bondage, enfranchised and made free indeed. Now, ye should of all men most live by a law. And when ye know that rule, then apply it to your several vocations and callings. Let the magistrate act according to it, and every man according to it. Religion consists not in a general notion, but condescends to our particular practice, to reform it. You see then what we would press upon your consciences. It is true religion that we would have you persuaded unto. All men have

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some kind of religion, even heathens who worship idols, but the true religion respects the true and living God. Now, what is it to worship the true and living God? What is the service of him that may be called religion indeed? Should we be the prescribers of it?<sup>287</sup> No certainly, he must carve solely in that, or else it cannot please him, therefore “to the law and to the testimony,” if ye speak not according to this, and worship not according to this word of God, “it is because there is no light in you.” Ye may have a religion before men pure and undefiled, but if it be not so before God and the Father, I pray you to what purpose is it? I am sure it is all lost labour, nay, it is labour with loss, instead of gain. O that ye were persuaded to look and search the scriptures. Think ye to have eternal life out of them?—and think ye to have eternal life by them, who do not labour to know the way of it set down there? Every one of you hath a different model of religion, according to your fancies and breedings, according as your lusts will suffer you. The rule that the most part walk by is the course and example of the world. Is not this darkness, and gross darkness? Others model their duties according to their ability. They will do all they can do with ease, and without troubling themselves, and they think God may be well pleased with that. I pray you consider and hear the word of the Lord, and law of your God. Hath he set down here the rule and perfect pattern of true religion, and will ye never so much own it, as to examine yours according to it? The scriptures are the touchstone, if you would not have a counterfeit religion deceiving you in the end, when ye have trusted to it, I pray you try it by the word of God. Oh! that this principle were once sunk into your hearts,—I may not walk at random, if I please myself, and satisfy my own will, if that be not also God's will, I shall have neither gain nor comfort of it. His will is manifested in his word,—I will search and find what God hath required of me, for if I be not certain of his will, I may

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<sup>287</sup> [That is, the persons who prescribe or appoint it.—*Ed.*]

be doing all my days, and sweating out my life, and yet lose my pains and toil. I say, this word of the Lord that Isaiah calls to the people to hear, ver. 10, will at length judge you. Your religion will be tried in the day of accounts according to it, not according to your rules and methods ye have prescribed unto yourselves. [409] Now, if ye in the meantime shall judge yourselves, according to another rule, and absolve yourselves, and in the end God shall judge you according to this word, and condemn you, were ye not fools in neglecting this word?

The whole will of God concerning your duty may be summed up in two, John hath one of them, 1 John iii. 23, “And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment,” and Paul hath another to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess iv. 3, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” And these two make up this text, so that it unites both gospel and law. The commandment of the law comes forth, and it is found that we have broken and are guilty, that we cannot answer for one of a thousand. The law entering makes sin abound. Our inability, yea, impossibility of obedience is more discovered. Well, then, the gospel proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ for the Saviour of sinners, and commands us, under pain of damnation, to believe in him,—to cast our souls on him, as one able to save, as one who hath obeyed the law for us, so that this command of believing in Christ is answerable to all the breaches of the law, and tends to make them up in Christ. When he proclaimed the law on mount Sinai, with terror, that which ye hear expressed is not his first commandment, which ye are in the first instance to obey, for all these we have broken, but it hath a gospel command in its bosom, it leads to Jesus Christ, and if ye could read the mind of God in it, ye would resolve all these commands which condemn you and curse you, into one command of believing in the Son, that ye may be saved from that condemnation. And if ye obey this command, which is his last command, and most preeminent,

then are the breaches of all the rest made up, the intent of all the rest is fulfilled, though not in your obedience, yet in Christ's, which is better than ours. Believing in Christ presents God with a perfect righteousness, with an obedience even to the death of the cross. When a sinner hears the holy and spiritual sense of the law, and sees it in the light of God's holiness, O how vile must he appear to himself, and how must he abhor himself! What original pollution, what actual pollution, what a fountain within, what uncleanness in streams without, will discover itself! Now, when the most part of men get any sight of this, presently they fall a washing and cleansing themselves, or hiding their filthiness. And what water take they? Their own tears and sorrows, their own resolutions, their own reformatiions. But alas, we are still more plunged in our own filthiness; that is still marked before him, because all that is as foul as that we would have washen away. What garment do men take to hide themselves ordinarily? Is it not their own righteousness? Is it not a skirt of some duty that is spread over transgressions? Do not men think their sins hid, if they can mourn and pray for a time? Their consciences are eased by reflection upon this. But alas, thine iniquity is still marked! Shall filthiness hide filthiness? Thy righteousness is as a vile garment, as a menstruous cloth, (Isa. lxiv. 6.) as well as thine unrighteousness, how then shall it cover thine nakedness? Seeing it is so then, what is the Lord's mind concerning our cleansing? Seeing stretched out hands and many prayers will not do it, what shall I do? The Lord hath showed thee what thou shalt do, and that is, that thou do nothing in relation to that end, that thou shouldst undertake to wash away the least spot by all thy repentance. Yet must thou wash and make clean, and the water is brought new unto you, even the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Wash in this blood, and ye shall be clean. And what is it to wash in this blood? It is to believe in Christ Jesus, to lay hold on the all sufficient virtue of it, to trust our souls to it, as a sufficient ransom for all our sins, to spread

the covering of Christ's righteousness over all our righteousness and unrighteousness, as having both alike need to be hid from his holy eyes. Jesus Christ "came by water and by blood," (1 John v. 6), by water to sanctify, and by blood to justify, by the power and cleansing virtue of the Holy Ghost, to take away sin in the being of it, and by the virtue of his blood, to take away sin in the guilt and condemnation of it.

Now, I conceive he presses a twofold exercise upon them in this washing, and both have relation to the blood of Jesus Christ, to wit repentance and faith. If they be not all one, yet they are in this point inseparably conjoined. Repentance waters and saps the roots of believing, which otherwise would dry up; therefore, instead of outward forms and ceremonies of religion, he presseth them to inward sorrow and contrition of heart for sin, that they might present an acceptable sacrifice to God, "a contrite heart." This is more pleasing than many specious duties of men without, Psal. l. 7, &c. But when I press upon you repentance, do not conceive that we would have it preparatory to faith, that ye should sit down and mourn for your sins for a time, till your hearts be so far humbled, and then ye might come as prepared and fitted to Jesus Christ. This is the mistake of many Christians, which keeps them from solid settling. We find it ordinary, souls making scruples and objections against coming to Jesus Christ, because of want of such preparations, of measures of humiliation and contrition, which they prescribe to themselves, or do behold in others. And so they sit down and apply themselves to such a work, apply their consciences to the law and curse; and they find, instead of softening, hardness, instead of contrition of spirit, more dulness and security; at least they cannot get satisfaction to themselves in that they seek, and thus they hang their head over their impenitent hearts, and lament, not so much that repentance is not, as that they cannot find it in themselves. Alas! there are many diseases in this one malady. If it were embowelled unto you, ye would not believe that such a way were so contradictory

to the gospel. For, first, ye who are so, have this principle in your hearts, which is the foundation of it: I cannot come to Christ so unclean, I must be a little washen ere I come, the most gross uncleanness and hardness of my heart must be taken away, and so I shall be accepted. Alas, what derogation is this to the blessed Saviour! What absurdity is it! I am too unclean to come to the fountain, I must be a little purged before I come to this fountain that cleanseth from all sin. I pray you, why was the fountain opened? Was it not for sin and uncleanness? And this thou sayest by interpretation, if I were so and so humbled, then I might come, and be worthy to come; when the want of such a measure debars thee as unworthy, doth not the having of it in thy estimation make thee worthy? And so ye come with a present in your hand to Jesus Christ, with a price and reward to him who gives freely. Again, thou deniest Christ to be the only fountain of all grace, and so it is most dishonourable to him. If thou would have repentance before thou come to him, where shalt thou have it? Wilt thou find it in thy heart, which is desperately wicked? Wilt thou seek it of God, and not seek it in the mediator Jesus Christ? God out of a mediator will not hear thee. In a word, there is both extreme sin and extreme folly in this way: great sin, because it contradicts the tenor of the gospel, it dishonours the Lord Jesus, the exalted Prince, as if he were not the fountain of all grace; it is contrary both to the freedom of his grace, and to the fulness of it also. It is great folly, for thou leavest the living fountain, and goest seeking water in a wilderness; thou leavest the garden where all herbs grow, and wanderest abroad to the wild mountains; and because thou canst not find what thou seekest, thou sittest down and weepst beside it. Repentance is in Christ, and no repentance so pleasing to God as the mournings and relentings of a pardoned sinner; but thou seekest it far from him, yea, refuseth him for want of that which thou mayest have by choosing him. Therefore we declare this unto you, that whatever ye be, whatever ye want, if ye think ye

stand in need of Jesus Christ, embrace him. If ye be exceeding vile in your own eyes, and cannot get repentance as ye would to cleanse yourselves, here is the fountain opened, and ready to wash in. Yet this we must tell you, that no sinner can believe but he that repents,<sup>288</sup> not because repentance is required as a preparation to give a man a warrant and right to believe,—I know [411] no ground of faith but our necessity, and the Lord's promise and command unto us,—but because no soul can truly fly into Jesus Christ to escape sin's guilt, but he that desires to be delivered from sin itself; and therefore the most part of you fancy a faith which you have not, because there is no possibility that men will come out of themselves, till they be pressed out by discovered sin and misery within. Your woulds and wishes after Christ and salvation, that many of you have, are not the real exercises of your soul's flying unto him for salvation. If ye did indeed turn into Jesus Christ, your hearts would turn the back upon sin, and

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Baillie gives this account of Blair, “Truly, I bear that man record that in all his English voyages, in many passages of the Assembly, private and public, he contributed as much to the pacifying of our differences as any, and much more than many.” *Journals and Letters*, vol. i. p. 306.—*Ed.*]

<sup>288</sup> [“The longer I live in the world the less fond am I of that divinity that stand upon quirks and subtilties. What should drive us upon determining whether faith or repentance goes first? What valuable ends or purposes in religion can it serve to promote? What edification can it give to an audience to dispute learnedly about a point of this nature?... I cannot but heartily approve what Mr Robert Blair, an eminent light of this church now in glory, said upon the question in hand. He told his people from the pulpit, that it was a very needless one. 'Tis just (said he,) as if you should ask me, when we are to walk, which foot should we lift first. If we should walk to purpose we must make use of both limbs; and so despatched the thorny question. I wish we may all imitate the wisdom of that great and good man. Is it not sufficient for us to declare that both are necessary, without determining the nice point of priority and posteriority?” (*Essay on Gospel and Legal Preaching*, by a Minister of the Church of Scotland, pp. 22, 23. Edin. 1723.) “Mr. Robert Blair, born in Irvine, was first a Regent in the College of Glasgow, at which time he was licensed to preach the gospel, and was from the beginning zealous for truth and piety.” (*Livingston's Memorable Characteristics*, p. 73) Mr. Blair died in 1666 in the



these sins ye seek remission of. Now, all the desire that many men have of Christ, is this,—I would fain have his salvation, if I might keep my sin; I would gladly be delivered from the guilt of sin, if he would let me keep still the sin. But will Christ make any such bargain?

If this blood only wash from sin, O how many lie in their sins, and wallow in their filthiness! “There is a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness,” Prov. xxx. 12. O that ye believed this! If ye be not now washed, eternity shall find you unclean, and woe to the soul that enters eternity with all the pollution of its sins: can such a soul enter into the high and holy place, the clean city? No, certainly; it must be without among the dogs and swine, it must be kept in darkness for ever. It is, then, of great importance that ye be washen from your filthiness. Now, I ask you, is it so or not? Are ye made clean and washen from the guilt of your sins? Every one of you almost will say so and think so; and yet says the scripture, “There is a generation pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed.” Is there a generation such? Is there any such? Oh! then, think it is possible you may be mistaken in the opinion of your own cleanness. Do any conceive themselves pardoned, and yet are not so? Think it is possible you may have deceived yourselves, especially since ye have never examined it. But are there so many so, a whole generation,—the most part of men? Then, as you love your souls, try, for it is certain that the most part of you must be deceived. Is there a generation in the visible church not washen, and yet every one thinks himself clean? Then certainly the most part are in a great delusion. Will ye then once examine whether or not ye be deluded with them? It shall be your peace

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73d year of his age. (See *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, the first part written by himself, p. 128, Edin. 1754.) Mr. James Durham, Minister of the High Church of Glasgow, a short time before his death, intrusted to him the publication of his “*Dying Man's Testament to the Church of Scotland, or a Treatise concerning Scandal*,” to which Mr. Blair wrote a preface. Principal

to know it, while it may be amended. But how comes it to pass, that so many hearing of the gospel, and lying near this fountain, are not cleansed? I think certainly, because they will not have a thorough cleansing, they get none at all. All men would love Christ's blood well to pardon sin, but who will accept of the water to sanctify them from sin? But Christ came with both. Shall this blood be spent upon numbers of you, who have no respect to it, but would still wallow in your filthiness? Would ye have God pardoning these sins ye never throughly resolved to quit? But how is it that so many men are clean in their own eyes, and yet not washed? I think indeed, the reason of it is, they make a kind of washing, which they apprehend sufficient, and yet know not the true fountain. We find men taking much soap and nitre, when convinced of sin, or charged with it, and thereupon soon absolving themselves. If ye ask their grounds, they will tell you, they repent and are sorry for it; they purpose to make amends, and they think amendment a good compensation for the past wrong. They will, it may be, vow to drink no more for a year after they have been drunk; they will confess their sin in public, and all this they do without having any thought of Jesus Christ, or the end of his coming, and can absolve themselves from such grounds, though in the mean time Christ come not so much as in their mind; and therefore are they not really washed. All thy righteousness is unclean before God, and thy repentances defile thee: and yet because of some such duties, though deceivest thyself, and are clean in thine own eyes. These have some beauty in thy eyes, and thou puttest them between thy filthiness and thy eye, and so conceivest that thou art clean. I think a reason also, why many men are clean in their own eyes, and conceive that God hath pardoned their sin, is because they have forgotten it. It is not recent in their memory, and makes no present wound in their conscience: and therefore, they apprehend God such as themselves,—they think he hath forgotten about it also. But oh! how terrible shall it be, when God brings to remembrance, and

sets our sins in order before us! Ye think God cares not for your sins, that he forgives them before thee, and thou shalt know they are still marked before him.

Ye who have washen in this blood, ye may rejoice, for it shall make you clean every whit. Your iniquities that so defiled you, shall not be found. O the precious virtue of that blood that can purge away a soul's spots! All the art of men and angels could not reach this. This redemption and cleansing was precious, and would have ceased for ever; but this blood is the ransom, this blood cleanseth, and so perfectly, that it shall not appear, not only to men's eyes, but also God's piercing eye. Sinners, quit your own righteousness,—why defile ye yourselves more? When your eyes are opened, ye will find it so. Here is washing; apply yourselves to this fountain; and if ye do indeed so; if ye expect cleansing from Jesus Christ, I pray you return not to the puddle. Ye are not washen from sin, to sin more, and defile yourselves more; if ye think ye have liberty to do so, ye have no part in this blood.

# Sermon XI.

Isaiah i. 16.—“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil,” &c.

There are two evils in sin,—one is the nature of it, another the fruit and sad effect of it. In itself it is filthiness, and contrary to God's holiness; an abasing of the immortal soul; a spot in the face of the Lord of the creatures, that hath far debased him under them all. Though it be so unnatural to us, yet it is now in our fallen estate become, as it were, natural, so that men agree with it, as if it were sunk and drunk into the very soul of man. The other is guilt and desert of punishment and obligation to it. All men hate this, but they cannot hold it off. They eat the tree and fruit of death, they must eat death also: they must have the wages of sin, who have wrought for it. Now, the gospel hath found a remedy for lost man in Jesus Christ; he comes in the gospel with a twofold blessing, a twofold virtue, a pardoning virtue and a sanctifying virtue, “water and blood,” 1 John v. 6. He comes to forgive sin, and to subdue sin; to remove the guilt of it, and then the self<sup>289</sup> of it. God's appointment had inseparably joined them; and Christ came not to dissolve the law, but to establish it. If he had taken away the punishment, and left the sin in its being, he had weakened the law and the prophets. That conjunction of sin and wrath, which is both by divine appointment, and suitable also unto their own natures, must stand, that divine justice may be entire; and therefore, he that comes to redeem us from the curse of the law, hath also this commission to redeem from sin and all transgressions of the law, Rom. xi. 26, and Gal. iii. 13. He that turns away the wrath of God from men, turns also ungodliness from them which provoked his wrath; and so he is a complete redeemer, and a complete redeemer he had not been

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<sup>289</sup> [Or, sin itself.—*Ed.*]

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otherwise. If he had removed wrath only, and left us under the bondage of sin, it had not been half redemption; “he that commits sin, is the servant of sin.” But this is perfect freedom and liberty, to be made free from sin, for it was sin that subjected us to wrath, and so was the first tyrant and the greatest. The gospel then comes with a joyful sound unto you, but many of you mistake it, and apprehend it to be a doctrine of liberty and peace, and that unto sin; but if it were so, it were no joyful sound. If there were proclaimed a liberty to all men to do as they list, no punishment, no wrath to be feared, I would think that doctrine no glad news, it were but the perpetuating of the bondage of a reasonable soul. But this is glad news,—a delivery and freedom proclaimed in the gospel. From what? Not unto sin, but from sin; and this is to be free indeed. We owe more to Jesus Christ for this, than for redemption from wrath, because sin is a greater evil than wrath; yea, wrath were not so, if sin were not. Therefore he exhorts to wash, and wash so that they may make clean. Take Jesus Christ for justification and sanctification,—employ both the water and the blood that he hath come with. But because all men pretend a willingness to have Christ their Saviour, and their sins pardoned through his blood, who, notwithstanding, hate to be reformed, and would seek no more of Christ: therefore, he branches out that part of the exhortation in several particulars. All men have a general liking of remission of sins, but renouncing of it is to many a hard doctrine. They would be glad that God put their evils out of his sight, by passing them by, and forgetting them; but they will not be at the pains of putting away their evils from his sight; and therefore, the gospel which comprehends these two united, is not really received by many, who pretend to be followers of it. This is his command, that ye believe. Some pretend to obey this, and yet have no regard of that other part of his will, even their sanctification; and therefore their faith is dead, it is a fancy. If ye did indeed believe and receive Christ for pardon of sin, it were not possible but your souls would be engaged and constrained

to endeavour to walk in all well-pleasing. But it is an evident token of one that is not washed from his sin, and believes not in Christ, if he conceive within his heart a greater latitude and liberty to walk after the flesh, and be emboldened to continue in sin, because of his grace and mercy; and yet such are the most part of you. Upon what ground do you delay repentance? Upon what presumption do ye continue in your sins, and put over the serious study of holiness, till a more fit time? Is it not from an apprehension of the grace and mercy of God, that ye think ye may return any time and be accepted, and so ye may in the meantime take as much pleasure in sin as you can, seeing ye may get leave also for God's mercy? I pray you consider, that you have never apprehended God's mercy aright, ye are yet in your sins, and certainly as yet are not washed from them.

“Put away the evil,” &c. When the Spirit convinces a soul, he convinces a man not only of evil doings but of the evil of his doings; not only of sin, but of the sinfulness of sin; and not only of those actions which are in themselves sinful, but also of the iniquity of holy things. I think no man will come to wash in Christ's blood, till this be discovered. If he see much wickedness, many evil doings, yet he will labour to wash away these by his own tears, and repentance, and well-doing. As long as he hath any good actions, as prayers, fasting, and such like, he will cover his evil doings by them; he will spread the skirts of such righteousness over his uncleanness; and when he hath hid it from his own eyes, he apprehends that he hath hid it from God's also. He will wash his bloody hands with many prayers, and thinks they may be clean enough. We see blasphemers of God's name use to join a prayer for forgiveness with their oath and curse, and they never trouble themselves more. O what mocking of God is this! Now, as long as it is thus, there is no employment for the Son of God's blood; they can do their own turn. Men will not come to Christ, because it is the best way, if they see any else beside. None will come till they see it is the

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only way; none can wash in Christ, except they wash all. If ye have any thing that needs not washing, his blood is not for you; his righteousness is not known, when ye establish all, or a part of your own. I fear the most part of you have no employment for Christ; ye have extreme need of him, but ye know it not, for there are many things which ye will not number among your sins,—your prayers, your hearing, reading, singing, public and private worship, giving alms, &c. How many of you were never convinced of any sin in these! Do ye not conceive God is well-pleased with you for them? Your conscience hath convinced you, it may be, of gross sins, as drunkenness, filthiness, swearing, &c. But ye are not convinced for your well doing, ye find not a necessity of a Mediator for these. I think many of you never confessed any such thing, except in a general notion. Alas, how ignorant are men of themselves! We are unclean, how can any thing we do cleanse us? Are not we unclean, and do not our hands touch our own works? Shall not then our own uncleanness defile our good actions, more than they can cleanse us? Hag. ii. 13. The ignorance of this makes men go about to build up their old ruined righteousness, and still seek something in themselves, to make up wants in themselves. Always, when the light of God hath discovered you to yourselves, so that ye can turn your eye nowhere, but uncleanness fills it, though your conversation be blameless in the world, so as men can challenge nothing yet ye have found within and without nothing, but matter of mourning, I say, this is an evidence that the Spirit hath sinned and enlightened thy darkness. Now, when thou hast fled unto Jesus Christ for a covering to thy righteousness, as well as unrighteousness, it remains that thou now put away the evil of thy doings,—put not away thy doings, but the evil of them. We challenge your prayers, services, and public duties, even as the prophet did we declare unto you that God is as ill pleased with them, as your drunkenness, whoring, intemperance, &c. The most part of you are no more acceptable when ye come to the church, than when

ye go to the tavern,—your praying and cursing is almost all one. What shall we do then, say ye? Shalt we pray no more, and hear no more? No, say I, put not away your prayers and ordinances, but put away the evil of them from before his sight. Rather multiply your doings, but destroy the evil and iniquity of your doings. And there is one evil or two above all, that makes them hateful to him: ye trust too much in them. Here is the iniquity, the idol of jealousy set up: ye make your doings your righteousness, and in that notion they are abomination. There is nothing makes your worship of God so hateful as this, ye think so much of it, and justify yourself by it, and then God knows what it is that ye so magnify, and make the ground of your claim to salvation. It is even an empty ceremony, a shadow without substance, a body without a soul. You speak and look and hear, you exercise some outward senses but no inward affection, and what should that be to him, who is a Spirit?

They did not observe the iniquity of their holy things, and therefore are they marked by him—they are in his sight. They did not see so many faults in their prayers and services, they wondered why God did chide them so much, but God marks what we miss, he remembers when we forget. We cover ourselves with a wall of external duties, and think to hide all the rottenness of our hearts, but it will not be hid from him, before whom hell hath no covering. All hearts are open and naked before him. Your secret sins are in the light of his countenance. Men hear you pray, see you present at worship, they know no more, at least they see no more, nay, but the formality of thy worship, the wanderings of thy mind are in his sight. And, O how excellent a rule of walking were this, to do all in his sight and presence! O that ye were persuaded in your hearts of his all seeing, all searching eye, and all knowing mind! Would ye not be more solicitous and anxious anent the frame of your hearts, than the liberty of your speech or external gesture? O how would men retire within themselves, to fashion their spirits before this all searching and



all knowing Spirit! If ye do not observe the evils of your hearts and ways, they are in his sight, and this will spoil all acceptance of the good of them. If ye observe the evils of your well doing, and bring these also to the fountain to wash them, and be about this earnest endeavour of perfecting holiness, of perfecting well doings in the power and fear of God, then certainly he will not set your sins in the light of his countenance, the good of your way shall come before him, and the evil of it Christ shall take away.

“Cease to do evil,” &c. These are the two legs a Christian walks on, if he want any of them, he is lame and cannot go equally,—ceasing from evil, and doing good, nay, they are so united, that the one cannot subsist without the other. If a man do not cease from evil and his former lusts, he cannot do well, or perfect holiness. There are many different dispositions and conditions of men, there are generally one of two. Some have a kind of abstinence from many gross sins and are called civil honest men,—they can abide an inquest and censure of all their neighbours, they can say no ill of them. But alas, there is as little good to be said; he drinks not, swears not, whores not, steals not. Nay, but what doth he well? Alas, the world cannot tell what he doth, for he prays not in secret, nor in his family,—he is void of some offences towards men, but there are many duties called to, towards both God and men, he is a stranger to. He oppresses not the poor, nay, but he is not charitable either to give to them, he defrauds no man, but whom helps he by his means? Again, there are others, they will boast of some things done, they pray, they keep the church well, they do many good turns, and yet for all that, they do not cease to do evil. They were drunkards, so they are, they can swear for all their prayers, are given to contention, to lying, to filthiness, &c. Now, I say, neither of these religions is pure and undefiled. Religion is a thorough and entire change, it is like a new creation, that must destroy the first subject, to get place for that which is to come. It is a putting off old garments,

to put on new, the putting off an old form and engraven image, to make place for a new engraving. Men do not put a seal above a seal, but deface the old, and so put on the new, men do not put new clothes upon the old, but put the old off, and so they have place for the new. Religion must have a naked man. Godliness is a new suit, that will not go on upon so many lusts, no, no, it is more meet and more conformed unto the inwards of the soul than so. The cold must go out as the heat comes in. Many men do not change their garments, but mend them, put some new pieces unto them. They retain their old lusts, their heart idols, and they will add unto these a patch of some external obedience, but alas, is this godliness? Hypocrisy will be content of a mixture,—sin is the harlot, whose heart could endure to see the child parted. It can give God a part, to get leave to brook the most part; sin will give God liberty to take some of the outward man, if it keep the heart and soul. But God will not reckon on these terms, he will have all the man or nothing, for he is the righteous owner. True godliness cannot mix so, but false and counterfeit may do it well. Other men, again, possibly uncliothe themselves of some practices, but they put on new clothing, they reform some passages for fear of censure, or shame, or such like. They are found, it may be, blameless, either because so educated, or their disposition is against particular gross sins, but they are not clothed upon with holiness and well doing, and so they are but naked and bare in God's sight, not beautiful. They have swept their house, and some devil put out or kept out, but because the good Spirit enters not, ordinarily seven worse enter again into such men.

There is a great moment<sup>290</sup> of persuasion in this order of the exhortation, “Wash you,” and then, “put away the evil of your doings,” and “cease to do evil.” Do not continue in your former customs. It is strange, how contrary our hearts are to God, we

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<sup>290</sup> [That is, *power* of persuasion.—*Ed.*]

use to turn grace unto wantonness, we use to take more liberty to sin, when we conceive we are pardoned. But I do not know any more strong and constraining persuasion to forsake sin, than the consideration of the forgiving of it might yield. O what an inducement and grand argument to renouncing of evils, is the consideration of the remission of them! This is even that ye are now called unto, who have fled to Jesus to escape wrath what should ye be taken up with, in all the world but this,—to live to him henceforth, who died for us,—to forsake our own old way, and that from the constraining principle of love to him, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. O that ye would enforce your own hearts with such a thought, when there are any solicitations to sin, to former lusts! Should I, that am dead to sin, live any longer therein? Rom. vi. 2. Should I who am washed from such pollutions, return again to the pollutions of the world? Should I again defile myself, who am cleansed by so precious blood, and forget him that washed me? Should I return with the dog to the vomit, and with the sow to the puddle? God forbid I pray you consider. If you be Christians indeed, give a proof of it. What hath Jesus Christ done for you? He hath given himself, his own precious blood, a ransom for us, will ye not give up yourselves to him? Will not ye give him your sins and lusts, which are not yourself, but enemies to yourself? Will not ye put away these ills, that he came into this world to destroy? Art thou a Christian, and are there yet so many sins, and works of the devil reigning in thee, and set up in God's sight?

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What an inconsistency is this! If thou be his follower, thou must put these away. Give them a bill of divorcement, never to turn again. Many a man parts with his sin, because it leaves him, he puts it not away, temptation goes, and occasion goes away, but the root of it abides within him. Many men have particular jars with their corruptions, but they reconcile again, as differences between married persons. They do not arise<sup>291</sup> to hate their sin

<sup>291</sup> [This is the word in the first Edition. It would seem to have been substituted

in its sinful nature. But if thou hate it, then put it away. And who would not hate that which Christ so hated, that he came to destroy it? 1 John iii. 5. What a great indignity must it be to the gospel, to make that the ground of living in sin, which is pressed, in it, as the grand persuasion to forsake it? Seeing we are washed from the guilt of it, O let us not love to keep the stain and filth of it! Why are we washen? Was it not Christ's great intendment and purpose, to purify to himself a holy people? We are washen from the guilt of our sins, and is it to defile again? Is it not rather to keep ourselves henceforth clean, that we may be presented holy and unblameable in his sight,—that we may seek to be as like heaven as may be. But who ceases to do these evils, that he says are pardoned? Who puts away the evil of these doings, the guilt whereof he thinks God hath put away? Could ye find in your hearts to entertain those evils so familiarly, to pour out your souls unto them, if that peace of God were indeed spoken unto you? Would not the reflex of his love prove more constraining on your hearts? Were it possible, that if ye did indeed consider, that your lusts cost Christ a dear price to shed his blood, that your pleasures made his soul heavy to death, and that he hath laid down his life to ransom you from hell, were it possible, I say, that ye would live still in these lusts, and choose these pleasures of sin, which were so bitter to our Lord Jesus? I beseech you be not deceived,—if ye love the puddle still, that ye cannot live out of it, do not say that ye are washed. Ye may have washen yourselves with soap and nitre, but the blood of Christ hath not cleansed; for, if that blood sprinkled your conscience once, to give you an answer to all challenges, it could not but send forth streams to purify the heart, and so the whole man. The blood and water might be joined, the justifying Saviour, and the sanctifying Spirit, for both these are in this gospel washing, 1 Cor vi. 11, 1 John v. 6. “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood.” Not by water

only, but by blood also, and I say, not by blood only, but by water also. The very purpose of forgiveness is not to lay a foundation for more sin, but that men may sin no more, but break off their sins. It is indeed impossible for a man to amend his ways, till he be pardoned, for his sin stands betwixt him and God. God is a consuming fire—the guilt of it hinders all meeting of the soul with God, at least all influence from him. But when an open door is made in Christ, that men may come and treat with God, notwithstanding of rebellions, and have the curse relaxed, O how may he go about his duty comfortably! Am I escaped from hell, why should I any more walk in the way to it? And now he hath the Spirit given for the asking. There are some cessations from sin, that are not real forsakings of it, and ceasings from it. You know men will abstain from eating for a season, that they may be made ripe for it at another time. Some do not cease from sin, but delay it only, they put it not away, but put it off only for another time, till a fitter occasion and opportunity. And this is so far from ceasing from it, that it is rather a deliberate choice of it, and election of conveniency for it. There may be some pure and simple ceasings from sin, mere abstinence, or rather mere absence of sin for a season, that is not ceasing from doing evil. The Christian's ceasing hath much action in it. It is such a ceasing from doing evil, that it is a putting away of evil, it hath a soul and spirit joined in that cessation. Sin requires violence to put it out where it hath haunted,—it is an intruding guest, and a usurping guest. It comes in first as a supplicant and beggar, prays for a little lodging for a night, and promises to be gone. The temptation speaks but for a little time, even the present time, for a little one,—it seeks but little at first, lest it be denied, but if once it be received into the soul, it presently becomes master, and can command its own time, and its abode. Then ye will not so easily put it out as ye could hold it out, for it is now joined with that wicked, desperate party within you, the heart, and these united forces are too strong for you. According as a lust is

one with a man's heart, or hath nearer connection with his heart and soul, it is the worse to put away: for, will ye drive a man from himself? It is the cutting off a right hand, or plucking out of a right eye. To make a man cease from such evils, requires that a stronger power be within him than is in the world. Men may cease for a time, for want of occasions or temptations to sin, when there is no active principle in them, restraining or keeping their souls from such sins as appear after, when no sooner is occasion offered, but they run as the horse to his course, or the stone falleth downward,—they receive fire as easily as dry stubble. That is not Christian ceasing, which is that which the soul argues itself into, from grounds of the gospel. Should I, who am dead to sin, live any longer therein? This is a principle of cessation, and this is true liberty,—when the soul can abstain from present temptations upon such grounds and persuasions of the gospel, then it is really above itself and above the world, then hath it that true victory. Many men cease only from sin, because sin ceases from them, they have not left it, but it hath left them. The old man thinks himself a changed man, because he wallows not in the lusts of the flesh, as in his youth. But, alas! no thanks to him for that, he hath not ceased from his lusts. But temptations to him, or power and ability in him to follow them hath ceased,—there is no change in his spirit within, for he can talk of his former sins with pleasure, he continues in other evils as bad, but more suitable to his age. In a word, he is so inwardly, that if he were in his body, and occasions offering as before, he would be just the same. Some, again, cease from some evils, from some principles, but, alas! they are no Christian principles. What restrains the multitude of civilians from gross scandals? Is it any thing but affectation of a good name and report in the world? Is it not fear of reproach or censure? Is it not because possibly they have no particular inclination to such evils? And yet there are many other evils of the heart as evil though more subtile, that they please themselves in, as pride, covetousness,

malice, envy, ambition, &c. What shall all your abstinence be accounted of, when it is not love to Jesus Christ, or hatred of sin, that principles it? It is not the outward abstinence that will commend you such it is, as the principles of it are. And these only are the true Christian principles of mortification,—love of Jesus Christ, which constrains men to live no more to themselves, but to be new creatures, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; and hatred of sin in its nature as sin a Christian should have a mortal hatred of it, as his mortal enemy. It is not Christianity to abstain from some fleshly lusts, if ye consider them not as your soul's enemies, 1 Peter ii. 11. “Ye that love the Lord hate evil,” Psal. xcvi. 10. These are chained together. David's hatred was a soul-hatred, an abhorrency, Psal. cxix. 163, “I hate and abhor lying.” It is like the natural antipathies that are among creatures, the soul hates not only the person of it, but the nature of it also. Men often hate sin, only as it is circumstantiated, but Christian hatred is a hatred of the nature, like the deadly feuds, which are enmities against the kind and name. “I will put enmity between thy seed,” &c. It is a “perfect hatred,” Psal. cxxxix. 22. And so it cannot endure any sin, because all is contrary to God's holiness and offensive to his Spirit. I would think it easier to forsake all evil, and cease from doing any evil, I mean, presumptuously, with a willing mind and endeavour, than indeed to forsake one, for as long as ye entertain so many lusts like it, they shall make way for it. It were easier to keep the whole commandments in an evangelical sense, than indeed to keep any one, for all of them help another, and subsist they cannot one without another, so that ye take a foolish course, who go about particular reformations. Ye scandalous sinners profess that ye will amend the particular fault ye are guilty of, and, in the mean time, you take no heed to your souls and lives, therefore it shall be either in vain, or not acceptable. How pleasant a life would Christians have, if they would indeed be persuaded to be altogether Christians! The halving of it neither pleaseth God nor delights you, it keeps

you but in continual torment between God and Baal. Your own lusts usurp over you, and that of Christ in you challenges the supremacy, so ye are as men under two masters, each striving for the place, and were it not better to be under one settled government? If there be any tenderness of God in your hearts, or light in your consciences, they cannot but testify against your lusts, these strange lords. Your lusts, again, they drive you on against your conscience; thus ye are divided and tormented betwixt two,—your own conscience and affections. You have thus the pain of religion, and know not the true pleasure of it. You are marred in the pleasures of sin, conscience and the love of God is a worm to eat that gourd. It is gall and vinegar mixed in with them. Were it not more wisdom to be either one thing or another? If ye will have the pleasures of sin for a season, take them wholly, and renounce God, and see if your heart can endure that. If your heart cannot condescend to that, I pray you renounce them wholly, and ye shall find more exquisite and sure pleasures in godliness, at his right hand. O what a noble entertainment hath the soul in God; the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost is a kingdom indeed! [418]