

SERMONS UPON LEVITICUS XIX. 17.

SERMON I.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.—LEV. xix. 17.

I AM to speak to you at this time concerning christian and brotherly reproof. Our first care should be that we are not sinners ourselves; our next, that we partake not of the sins of others; which may not only be by counselling and abetting their evil actions, but also by a faulty connivance and silence, when the glory of God and love to our neighbours' souls do loudly call upon us to mind them of their duty and warn them of their danger. To this end I have made choice of this scripture, 'Thou shalt not hate,' &c. Where take notice—

1. Of the removal of the impediment, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.'

2. An earnest excitement of the duty of reproof, 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour.'

3. A reason to enforce it, 'Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him,' or that thou bear not sin for him.

First, A removal of the impediment or hindrance, 'Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.' Hatred is forbidden when rebuke or reproof is prescribed, for two reasons—

1. Because there is a supposition of wrong done; that is, when any man hath wronged us in anything, let him not nourish hatred or anger in his bosom, lest by abiding there long, it soureth into malice and revenge; rather go and show them the evil that they have done, to bring them to repentance. It is said of Absalom, 2 Sam. xiii. 22, that 'Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad, for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.' Amnon did the wrong, but Absalom reprov'd him not, because he hated him. Implacable malice and desire of revenge is hid under silence and dissimulation: 'He spake neither good nor bad to Amnon,' to wit, of that subject of the rape committed upon his sister; he reprov'd not the fact, that so he might conceal his malice, till he found occasion to put the same in execution; and this is the fashion of all that regard the wrong done to themselves, but not the offence done to God. Well, then, since hatred begets close and cunning dissimulation, till it have a full advantage to put forth itself, it is opposite to reproof; it is as fire

raked under ashes, and reserved till another day. The historian Tacitus observeth it in Tiberius, who being offended by some words spoken in the senate by Haterius and Scaurus, *In Haterium statim invecus, Scaurum cui implacabilis irascebatur, silentio transmittit*—The one he rebuked, the other, whom he implacably hated, he passed by with silence. Therefore God, well knowing the disposition of man, giveth this direction by his servant Moses, ‘Hate not thy brother in thy heart, but rebuke him in any wise.’ So that you see it is meant of hatred, rising of offences principally; wherefore rebuke him, hate him not for such things. Suitable to this is the law of Christ: Luke xvii. 3, ‘Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.’ Do your utmost to reduce any that offendeth, though it be by injuring thee; do not desire revenge, but seek an opportunity to pardon him upon his reformation: Mat. xviii. 15, ‘If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother;’ that is, thy charity must be sure to put off all thoughts of revenge against him; yea, it will oblige thee to use all prudent methods to bring him to a sense of his fault, and the most discreet and gentle ways are first to be essayed. That is the first reason.

2. He that doth not rebuke his brother when he doth anything amiss doth indeed hate him, not love him. There are two things which put us upon reproof—zeal for God’s glory, and love to our neighbour’s soul. There is a defect in our zeal if we do not seek to repair God’s honour when it is wounded by others: Ps. lxxix. 9, ‘The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me.’ Injuries done to God and religion affect us no less nearly than personal wrongs done to ourselves. So there is a defect in our love and charity to others to let them alone in soul-dangers; and therefore reproof, as it is opposed to hatred, so it is opposed also to flattery, which is false and corrupt love: Prov. xxviii. 23, ‘He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue.’ When we are about to reprove others for their faults, we are afraid we shall offend them, and that all friendship will be broken off between us and them, and so are tempted to connive at others’ sinful courses for fear of a rupture and breach with them. Alas! at length, though the party be displeased a little for the present, when he recovereth and cometh to himself again, he will see that you showed him the true friendship, whereas others that connived at or flattered him in his sins, however they sought to please his humour, hated his soul; and they will love you the better for it, because you awaken them out of their sins, that would have been their eternal ruin. It is possible you may enrage a wicked and haughty scorner, but then you have discharged your duty, and freed your own soul. But for others, you get the more favour and thanks, because you have done a true office of love. So that that which you are afraid will be an occasion of breaking off friendship, will prove a means to nourish love: Prov. ix. 8, ‘Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.’ Gain him to a sense of his duty, and he will bless God for thee while he hath a day to live. So Prov. xxvii. 5, 6, ‘Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful

are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.' Open rebuke is when we plainly, and sometimes sharply, convince men of their errors or sins they lie in; this is better than hidden love, for that is of no use and profit to us. He that reduceth me into the way when I go astray, and plucketh me out of the fire and water when I am in danger to be drowned or burned, though he break an arm or leg; he that cureth my disease, though by a sharp and troublesome medicine, doth me a greater benefit than he that professeth great love to me, and lets me alone to perish, and will not reach an hand to pluck me out, out of tenderness, as loath to trouble me. That is called hidden love that doth not make itself known by the offices of love and friendship, or for fear of offence will not warn a man of his danger; it is indeed true hatred. The next verse is to the same purpose. It may be my friend wounds me, as the physician lets me bleed to cure my fever; he doth it in faithfulness. A sharp reproof is there called 'a wound,' but it is the faithfulness of my friend, not done out of rancour or malice, with a desire to shame and reproach me; it is intended for my good; but 'the kisses of an enemy,' or one that hateth me and my soul, 'are deceitful.' By 'kisses' are meant the pretences of great love to us, as Joab kissed Amasa, and stabbed him, 2 Sam. xx. 9, 10; and Judas kissed Christ, and betrayed him, Mat. xxvi. 48, 49. Alas! this love is but deceitful, whilst it betrayeth your souls. That this is true love appeareth also, because thus God dealeth himself with his own children: Prov. iii. 12, 'For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.' God loveth his children dearly, but yet will not let them perish in their sins, therefore sometimes he useth a smart discipline towards them. Satan seeketh to lull them asleep by the delights of the flesh, but God awakeneth them by the sharp corrections and rebukes of his providence. I will but add David's expression, which showeth what thoughts he had of a sharp reproof wisely administered: Ps. cxli. 5, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.' David, perceiving what mischief those unhappy flatterers that Saul had about him had procured to him, beggeth of God as a great blessing that he might have such godly and faithful friends about him as would never consent to any wrong deed of his, and would not only dissent, but dissuade him from it, yea, reprove him, and rebuke him sharply, if need were; which sort of friendly smiting would be a most acceptable good turn as could be performed to him. Surely he that truly hateth sin loveth to be freely dealt withal, and reprov'd and admonish'd of it. It may be the reproof is as a wound to the flesh, which is proud and impatient of contradiction; but it is the fruit of love unfeigned; and when we are in our right wits, it should be as a precious oil, which they were wont to pour on the head, both for health, and cheering, and gladness.

Secondly, The exhortation itself, 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour.' Here is—(1.) The object; (2.) The act.

1. The object, thy neighbour and brother. Here the question will be the same that was put to Christ: Luke x. 29, 'Who is my neighbour?' Christ answereth him by a parable, and showeth him that every one that stood in need of his charity, he is the object of thy

compassion and mercy. So in this piece of charity, by 'brother' and 'neighbour' is meant any other man, though he be to thee as a Jew to a Samaritan, upon terms of the greatest separation and hostility towards thee. So our Lord teacheth elsewhere: Mat. v. 43, 44, 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.' Offices of love must be extended to all, even to aliens and enemies; therefore for this case am I to reprove an infidel or one of a false religion?

We answer briefly, as the apostle, Gal. vi. 10, 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith.'

[1.] By the law of charity I owe this office of love to all, for I should bring home as many to God as possibly I can. Neither age, nor sex, nor any condition of life doth deprive them of the benefit, nor exempt me from my duty to them. Unbelievers are our neighbours, and to be loved with a true love; besides *φιλαδελφία*, 'Love of the brethren,' *ἀγάπη*, 'love' is required of christians: 2 Peter i. 7, 'Add to brotherly-kindness charity.' And therefore they must not be excluded from the common act and office of charity that belongeth to all men as men. Spiritual alms is no more restrained than bodily. Now upon occasion we are bound to relieve the worst in their great necessity, and none have such great necessity of being reduced as infidels, for they are further from God and more gone astray than others, and therefore most need information and warning of the danger they are in. An unbeliever may reprove a believer; so on the contrary: Gen. xx. 16, 'And Abimelech said unto Sarah, Behold, I have given to thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee, and with all other: thus was she reprov'd.' This heathen king reprov'd her, because she wore not a veil, as wives are wont to do, but dissembled, and thereby she was in danger of being ensnared, and giving occasion of these mischiefs; as if he should say, Acknowledge freely hereafter that he is thy husband, and cover thy face in token that thou art a married woman, and that consequently he is the shield and defence of thy chastity; let it be a lesson and warning to thee to be more circumspect hereafter.

[2.] This is chiefly to be done to christians, and those who are members of the same church, for in a chief respect they are to be reckoned brother and neighbour. They have a nearer brotherly conjunction with us than others, and the precept of brotherly correction introduceth that discipline which is to be used in the church for ever: Mat. xviii. 15-17, 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican;' that is, thy fellow christian, he is first to be admonished privately, without putting him to any shame or reproach, and if he mend upon such admonition,

there is an end. It is comfort enough to you to be an happy instrument of his repentance. But if that first method succeed not, other courses must be taken; and the case is to be brought before the christian church, ver. 17, that it receive no damage by wilful and obstinate offenders; so that reproof doth mostly concern the scandalous sins of a brother or professed believer.

[3.] Among christians, some are more nearly related to us, either by the bonds of natural kindred or special friendship, as those of our family, and with whom we have familiar converse. We know not the estate of those who are at a distance, but those within the sphere of our commerce we are more particularly concerned in; as the apostle says as to corporal relief: 1 Tim. v. 8, 'If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' They act quite contrary to the laws of Christ. So here, they that are of the same family, we are bound in a special manner to seek their good and welfare, because, besides the common bond of christian charity, there is a special tie of kindred and relation, and also because this nearness and relation giveth an opportunity of frequent commerce, and opportunity is one of the talents which we are to account for.

2. The act is rebuking or reprovng him for sin, which must be done faithfully, compassionately, and prudently.

[1.] Faithfully; for in the Hebrew it is 'in rebuking thou shalt rebuke;' that is, freely, plainly, soundly reprove him; for doubling of the words in the Hebrew increaseth the sense. We render it, 'Thou shalt in any wise rebuke.' We must sometimes, *ἐλέγχειν ἀποτόμως*. So Titus i. 13, 'Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.' But the end and circumstances must govern the matter, for corrosives are not proper to all wounds and diseases, and a proud censure is not a charitable reproof. Therefore in the general it must be so as it may best obtain its effect.

[2.] With lenity and christian meekness, that it may appear an act of love; not the fruit of passion, but compassion: Gal. vi. 1, 'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.' When we would reclaim and restore such as are surprised with any sin, we must do it in such a manner that they may see our love to them, and that we have a right aim, which is not the reproach and disgrace of the person, but his reformation and amendment. Our indignation against the sin must not transport us, or carry us besides our pity to the person; and there must not appear in it the rigour and severity of censure which proceedeth of pride, but the lenity of love, considering the circumstance of human frailty, and our own proneness to offend if we were in like circumstances. It is our brother's amendment we look after, not to beget in others an ill opinion of him, or a good opinion of ourselves, as if we were singular in holiness and hatred of sin above others; and we must by all means show that our reprovng proceedeth from a zeal for the glory of God, and love to and care of the salvation of our neighbour.

[3.] Prudently. All circumstances must be well weighed, of person, time, and place, occasion, and the temptations to the offence, that all things may be done conveniently, and proportionable to the end: Prov.

xxv. 12, 'As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reproof upon an obedient ear;' that is, wise reproof is a precious jewel, that is not so great an ornament to the ear as a wise seasonable reproof is acceptable to a gracious heart. Reproof is an ear-jewel; now an ear-jewel must not be too weighty and heavy, lest it tear and rend, rather than adorn the ear.

Thirdly, The argument by which this duty is enforced, 'Lest thou bear sin for him;' that is the marginal reading; in the text, 'Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him;' either reading affordeth a strong argument.

1. 'Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him;' that is, not leave him in his sin unreprieved. Sin should be so odious to a gracious heart, that, as we should be careful not to commit it ourselves, so we should not permit it to lie upon others. As we would shake off a spark of fire from their clothes, so we must not suffer any sinful blemish to remain upon their consciences and conversations. God would every way hedge us within our duty; as by mourning for the sins of others he teacheth us penitence for our own, so by reproofing others' sins he teacheth us caution for ourselves: Rom. ii. 1, 'Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.' They that live and go on in these sins, in judging others they condemn themselves.

2. The other reading also offereth a good argument, 'That thou bear not sin for him.' To bear sin is to bear punishment; as Christ is said to 'bear our sins in his body upon the tree,' when he endured the punishment due to our sins, 1 Peter ii. 24. So he that reproveth not sin is said to bear sin for his brother or neighbour, that is, punishment for his sake, because he seeketh not to save a soul from death; as the Lord threateneth, Ezek. iii. 18, 'When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hands.' Others are to answer for it, who have ability and opportunity to reprove. Now we have sins enough of our own, that we need not take on us a new guilt, and be partakers of other men's sins, or bear more for their sakes.

From the whole observe—

Doct. That brotherly reproof is a necessary duty, which all are bound to practise as well as they can.

I. Let us consider the kind of the duty which we are bound to enforce. Reproof and admonition is either authoritative and by way of office, or charitable and by way of general duty.

1. For reproof by way of office we have many scriptures: 2 Tim. iv. 2, 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine;' that is, urge them, press them, call upon them when they are at leisure to hear, and come together for that purpose; or when thou hast any opportunity to fasten anything upon them at other times. Labour still to convince the evil-doers of their wicked courses. This is the continual duty of ministers, and they must mind it *ἐνκάριως, ἀκάριως*, 'in

season, out of season ; both when they have probable opportunities, and when they take occasion, though they find it not ; when the hearers, it may be, think it not so seasonable : the recovery of souls must not be delayed.

2. Reproof by way of general duty, which lieth upon all men that are capable, and have the use of reason. Of this the apostle speaketh, 1 Thes. v. 14, 'Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men.' All these are duties of christian charity, which belong to private believers: *νουθετεῖτε τοὺς ἀτάκτους*, 'Warn them that are unruly.' Reproof is one of these duties: 2 Thes. iii. 15, 'Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,' *νουθετεῖτε*; set his duty in his mind. Again, all christians must contribute their help to preserve the church of Christ from scandal and prejudice ; and therefore, when they see any man forsake his station and his work, they must admonish him of his fault, and never leave till they have reduced him into his proper posture and place again. Now there is a difference between these two duties ; for the one is not only an act of charity, but justice ; the other is an act of charity, and that general duty that we owe to a neighbour as a neighbour. The one is done by a superior, by virtue of his office ; the other is done by an equal towards his equal, or by a superior by virtue of his common relation. The one is done publicly by right dividing the word of truth, and giving every one his portion ; the other is done privately between us and our brother, that we may gain him according to Christ's rule. The one is done by public declaration, and the evidence of truth in their consciences, disapproving their evil deeds : John iii. 20, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.' The other is done by closer application, or personal charge for the sins that we have heard and seen : Gal. ii. 11, 'When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.' The one requireth aptness of gifts, the other only christian prudence and a fervent charity. This latter we have now in hand.

II. The arguments by which we are to enforce it ; which are needful in this case, because men are so apt to bear with sin, both in themselves and others ; and this duty is of so great use, that Satan seeketh to hinder it with all his power ; and so hard to be done rightly, that most men quite omit it.

1. I shall prove it from the law of nature, which teacheth me to love my neighbour as myself ; and therefore conscience bindeth me to reduce those into the right way who are gone out of it ; this is the obliging internal cause. We ourselves by a regular will, having erred, would be glad to be reduced, and set into the right way again : Jer. viii. 4, 'Thus saith the Lord, Shall they fall, and not arise ? shall they turn away, and not return ?' Is any man so absurd, heedless, and witless, that when he hath gotten a fall, will lie still, and not essay to get up again ? or that hath been unwittingly out of the way, and will not desire to come into it again, and be willing to receive direction from those that would set him right ? Now this being a dictate of nature, produced by God himself by his prophet, to aggravate their apostasy, who having fallen by their sin, refused to rise and return, holdeth good

also to others, whom we are to love as ourselves. And therefore, when they are fallen, we must help them to rise again; and when they are turned away, we must help them to return. This is so natural, that the very birds and beasts desire to return to their proper places in their natural and appointed time when they have wandered; as the prophet speaketh of the stork, turtle, and crane: ver. 7, 'Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming.' Now, from that reciprocal obligation that is between men and the law of nature, we are bound to reprove our brother; as we desire it, and expect it from them, to be set right when we are wrong, we are to pay the same debt of love to them again. The argument holdeth *a fortiori*, because in spiritual things the danger is greater, the good to be procured is greater, the evil to be feared greater. Yea, this argument is the stronger, because it holdeth good concerning the ox and ass; not only of our own neighbour, but of our enemy; as Exod. xxiii. 4, 'If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again;' and Deut. xxii. 1, 'Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox, or his sheep, go astray, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt in any case bring them again to thy brother.' Surely hereby God would teach every man not to look on his own things only, but to love and do good to other men. This duty required towards beasts is much more towards men: Ezek. xxxiv. 4, 'Ye have not brought again that which was driven away, and ye have not sought that which was lost.' We are all like sheep going astray, and have need of one another's help. Mark, there are two precepts in Deut. xxii. 1—a prohibition, not to hide, and a commandment, to restore; so that they are doubly guilty that are not affected with other men's sins, or do not seek to reform them.

2. It is a duty because positively commanded by God; so that unless we will be guilty of flat disobedience, we ought to mind it. God bindeth all men to reprove their erring brother and neighbour, keeping the rules of prudence, justice, and charity. Now that God hath commanded this, many of the scriptures cited before prove: Mat. xviii. 15, 'If thy brother offend thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee;' which is to be understood not only of offences done to us, but to be extended to all wilful crimes of which we see him guilty; for zeal for God should prevail with us as much as injuries done to ourselves; and it is not angry reproach, but christian admonition that we press you to: 1 Thes. v. 14, 'Warn them that are unruly;' 2 Thes. iii. 15, 'Admonish him as a brother.' So Rom. xv. 14, 'I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another.' So Prov. xxv. 8-10, 'Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, and discover not a secret to another, lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.' All these expressions concern brotherly reproof, debating matters in case of offence and injury real or supposed. If we presently run to law, without using previous gentle methods of taking up matters among ourselves, we run a great hazard, both of loss and infamy. Better end it by friendly composition than running to the judge, where, by many un-

happy representations, a righteous cause may be oppressed. But for the common duty of christians, see Eph. v. 11, 'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.' The word *μᾶλλον* 'rather,' doth not lessen our duty, but enforce it. *Ἐλέγχειν δεῖ*, saith Chrysostom, we ought to reprove. We shall not be excused before God unless we do our duty. So Jude 22, 23, 'And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.'

SERMON II.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart : thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him—LEV. XIX. 17.

THIRDLY, Consider how far it bindeth.

[1.] Intensively, as to the value of the precept. It is not an arbitrary direction, which we may omit or observe at pleasure, but a necessary precept, which we must obey.

(1.) From the danger we incur. We are under danger of sin, and bearing punishment for them whom we reprove not; and the punishment of sin is eternal death, if it be omitted out of a culpable negligence. Eternal life and eternal death is in the case; there is no doubt of superiors, who by justice and office are bound to reprove, as well as by the law of common love and charity: Ezek. xxxiii. 6, 'His blood will I require at the watchman's hands.' But even private persons may bear sin for others.

(2.) Because of the good which cometh thereby, which is the glory of God and the gaining of our brother: Mat. xviii. 15, 'Thou hast gained thy brother.' And the gaining of another's soul is no small advantage; this will be your crown and rejoicing in the day of the Lord. To enforce both, consider that text, Prov. xxiv. 11, 12, 'If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain: if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?' Here is a work of charity, delivering the innocent from temporal death. The sin is a sin of omission; every man is bound to do what he can to save his neighbour from imminent destruction. It is our duty not to be silent and see him perish; with a safe conscience we cannot do so; it is against the light of nature and all honesty to use tergiversation in this case, when we have probability to help it; and will not this hold good in the case of brotherly reproof, when thou seest thy neighbour likely to perish, and be undone for ever? The same charity that bindeth us to deliver him from temporal death will much more bind us to deliver him from eternal death: Heb. iii. 12, 13, 'Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' Not only in you your-

selves, but 'in any of you,' as will be clear in the remedy prescribed : 'But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' This is a work of christian charity, which we owe to one another as christian brethren. But see how God answereth the excuse, 'If thou sayest, Behold we knew it not.' They knew not the danger or innocency of the person. Can you answer so to God? 'Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider?' &c. He will be judge whether you love your brother, yea or no? whether this pretence be cowardice or mere ignorance?

[2.] How far the obligation reacheth extensively. It bindeth all; for all are to be able: Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of God dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another;' and Rom. xv. 14, 'I am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.' There are several relations between christians, but all are bound to reprove. Some are superiors, some are inferiors; superiors are bound in point of justice; inferiors in point of charity. Superiors that have charge of souls are much more bound to reprove than others; God's threatenings against them are more grievous if they neglect this duty of love. The watchman must not spare. Yea, they are bound though it be with the danger of their lives; as Mat. x. 16, 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' John the Baptist reprov'd Herod, though it cost him his life, Mark vi. 27. And the reason is, they have a double tie and bond upon them, as their office and relation, besides the common bond of charity.

But now whether inferiors are bound to reprove those that are over them?

Yes, certainly; for David, a king, did receive with meekness a reproof not only from Nathan, a prophet, but from Abigail, a woman, 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33; and Job produceth it as a proof of his integrity that he despised not the cause of his man-servant, or of his maid-servant, when they contended with him, Job xxxi. 13. Certainly we owe this duty to superiors, as their danger is greater. To save a private person is not so much as to do good to one that shineth in a higher sphere. Well, then, we are bound to reprove all whom we are bound to love, whether superiors or inferiors. But then to superiors we are to use great modesty: 1 Tim. v. 1, 'Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren.' It should be rather an exhortation and entreaty than a reproof. So princes and magistrates, who are subject to errors and miscarriages, may with humility and wisdom be admonished; as Naaman's servant: 2 Kings v. 13, 'My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith, Wash and be clean?' Dan. iv. 27, 'Wherefore O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee;' and Col. iv. 17, 'Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.'

But yet this is still a generality. If every one be bound to reprove all, and all every one, when shall we know that this duty is to be put in act?

Ans. The admonisher should have a calling to it through some relation between him and the offender. So we may find it in all kind of relations; a minister or prophet, as Nathan reproveth David, 2 Sam. xii. 1; as a counsellor, Joab reproveth him: 2 Sam. xix. 5, 6, 'Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which have saved thy life;' a yoke-fellow, as the husband the wife: Job ii. 10, 'Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.' The wife the husband, as Abigail to Nabal: 1 Sam. xxv. 37, 'And it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of his head, and his wife had told him these things, his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.' A son, as Jonathan to Saul: 1 Sam. xix. 4, 'And Jonathan spake good of David to Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he hath not sinned against thee;' a servant admonisheth a prince, 2 Kings v. 13; a subject, so Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 27; a friend to his friend: Prov. xxvii. 6, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend.' Yea, a stranger travelling by the way, and seeing his fellow-traveller sin, or sitting at the same table, it is a call, because he is then in his company, and there is the sin committed; for so Christ proveth the Samaritan was a neighbour to the Jew, when he lighted upon him, Luke x. 29. So that the duty, though it universally obligeth, yet it is not unpracticable; there is something giveth us the occasion.

4. It is recommended. When, besides the precept, there is a commendation, it showeth the value of a duty. Now God not only commandeth, but commendeth to us both the giving and taking a reproof, and that upon the highest and most pressing motives.

[1.] Let us see how the giving a reproof is recommended to us as a means to increase knowledge: Prov. xix. 25, 'Reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge;' that is, profit in the fear of the Lord. Yea, as a means to convey life: Prov. vi. 23, 'And reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' They are a means to reduce men to God and eternal happiness; and it is called saving a soul from death: James v. 19, 20, 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' So Prov. xxiv. 25, 'But to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon him;' that is, all will pray for him, whereas they curse and detest flatterers. Many such promises there are.

[2.] Taking a reproof is commended: Eccles. vii. 5, 'It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.' It saddens the heart for the present, yet it is more wholesome and beneficial than vain mirth, that puts us off from seriousness in soul-dangers, and feedeth our lusts and corruptions. So Prov. xiii. 18, 'Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction, but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.' A headstrong wicked man bringeth himself to beggary and shame, but he that taketh counsel betimes soon wipeth off the stain of his miscarriages. So see two proverbs together: Prov. xv. 31, 32, 'The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise: he that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul; but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.'

The one is a slight careless person, that despiseth God and his salvation ; but the other giveth a token of a wise and tractable disposition. So Prov. xvii. 10, 'A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.' Correction doth more good than correction. Now when God doth argue and persuade, and not only interpose his authority, surely this is a duty of importance, which we should make conscience of.

5. If God hath given directions about it, it is unquestionably a duty belonging to us ; for directions suppose the duty, and show that God would not have it miscarry in our hands. As when God directeth to pray, he supposeth prayer ; when God directeth to hear, he supposeth hearing ; so when he directeth to reprove, he supposeth reproof to be a duty. Now the word of God doth everywhere abound with these directions : as with what lenity and meekness we should reprove : 2 Cor. ii. 4, 'For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears ; not that you should be grieved, but that you may know the love which I have more abundantly unto you ;' Gal. vi. 1, 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' What difference we should make of faults. Gnats and camels : Mat. xxiii. 24, 'Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.' Of persons : Jude 22, 23, 'And of some have compassion, making a difference ; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.'

6. The duty is necessary to prevent a sin, such as detraction, censure, and backbiting. It is the usual fashion of the world to change a duty into a sin ; it should be the care of God's people to change a sin into a duty : Eph. v. 4, 'Not foolish talking or jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.' So do not speak of them that sin, but to them ; do not judge, but reprove.

7. That without which no society can be maintained, no relation faithfully improved, certainly is an unquestionable duty ; but so is reproof. No society can be maintained, for faults will arise, the injured will vent themselves in passion or reproof ; now which conduceth to the welfare of human society ? And for relations, how can I be faithful to God in them unless I take advantage of this nearness and frequency of converse for spiritual use ? Even good men will miscarry : if we be privy to it, must we hold our peace ? Well, then, observe the reasonableness of God's ordinance.

III. What is reproof ? It is an act of charity or mercy, by which we seek by fit discourse to draw our brother from sin to his duty.

1. It is an act of charity and mercy, not of pride and vainglory : James iii. 1, 'My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.' No ; it is not an act of mastery or rash judging, but of mercy towards our brother in his spiritual misery, as he hath rendered himself obnoxious to God's wrath.

2. The means it useth is fit discourse, not correction and chastening, but correction or rebuke. It must be dispensed in most wholesome ways, such as may be most fit to gain a sinner and heal his soul. To some we must use more tenderness, but more sharpness to others. In general, we reprove from God's word : Col. iii. 16, 'Let the word of

Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another ;' that the offender may see God reproving him rather than man ; as Christ reproved the pharisees with mere words of scripture : Mat. xv. 7-9, 'Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouths, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me : but in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' The reproof must be insinuated as the matter requireth, either by exhortation, admonition, or caution.

3. The end, not to shame him, but to gain him from sin to his duty. If the man be good, to set him in joint again : Gal. vi. 1, 'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' If carnal, to take this occasion to turn him from sin to holiness, or to save his soul from death : James v. 19, 20, 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.'

IV. Let us see when this duty bindeth or bindeth not ; for it being an affirmative precept, it doth not bind at all times, but as circumstantiated. Affirmative precepts, *non ligant ad semper*, do not always bind, as negative precepts do, for evil actions are never lawful. Affirmative precepts bind only when time and place and other circumstances concur ; and then the omission is faulty.

The question then is, at what times and in what circumstances this duty bindeth ?

1. It bindeth not if I do not certainly or probably know the sin of my neighbour ; for reproof by way of charge must be upon an apparent crime ; as Gal. ii. 11, 'But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed ;' 1 Cor. v. 1, 'It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the gentiles ; that one should have his father's wife ;' 1 Cor. i. 11, 'For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.' Mark the grounds ; he goeth upon certain knowledge, public fame, and valuable testimony : 'It is commonly reported,' and 'it is declared by the house of Chloe.' Faults that we reprove must be certainly known and evident ; we may not reprove upon bare suspicion, for 'charity thinketh no evil,' 1 Cor. xiii. 5 ; nor upon an uncertain hearsay : Isa. xi. 3, 'Neither reprove after the hearing of his ears ;' not upon flying report, or forged stories, or the censures of any.

But here we must distinguish between the reproof of a public and private person and a bosom friend.

[1.] Mere private persons are not bound to use inquisition themselves, nor are they to be too suspicious, and credulously give ear to slanders. If private persons were bound to search and find out faults that they may reprove them, the obligation were intolerable, the number of sinners being so innumerable as they are, and a man could hardly avoid the imputation of a busybody and whisperer. Therefore it is a good rule of Austin, Do not seek out what thou mayest reprove, but

seek to mend what thou dost reprove. Therefore private men are not bound to search and find out faults. The knowledge of another's sin is not *scientia juris*, which all are bound to have, but *scientia facti*, which none are bound to but those to whom the particular care of others' souls doth belong by office; for *par in pares non habet imperium*—equals have no power over one another. The fault must be known either by certain knowledge or common fame, when you see your brother sinning.

[2.] A superior and bosom friend may go upon suspicion, but then his reproof must be rather by way of caution than charge, and by virtue of special friendship, that as no guilt, so no blame may rest upon his friend. A superior is to search out the matter.

2. Not if he hath repented already; for to upbraid men with past sins is to rake in the filth which God hath covered. The elder brother said, Luke xv. 30, 'As soon as this thy son is come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.' There is a difference between the correction of a superior and the reproof of a neighbour. The correction of a magistrate respects the common good or the example of others; and therefore, whether the man repent or no, he may be corrected and punished for his faults, and he must patiently endure the punishment; but brotherly reproof respects the private good of the party admonished or reprov'd, to remove the fault, not to inflict punishment; the end is obtained if thou hast gained thy brother.

But yet here is an exception; if we have good cause to suspect his repentance is not thorough and sincere, or if he be in danger of a relapse into the sin again.

3. If it be evident he shall do no good by his reproof; for all means are required in order to the end. Therefore when there is no appearance of doing good at all, or that our reproof will be profitable or attain its proper end, we are not bound in such a case. Ministerial reproof must be given though there be no hope: Ezek. ii. 5, 'And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are a rebellious house, yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.' The waters of the sanctuary must flow, whether men drink of them or no. But in private reproof we are bound while there is hope, and while they are not incorrigible. Yet there is this exception; every attempt must not discourage us, nor every reproach and scorn make us give over the cause as remediless; but we must reprove, and reprove again, as long as we have any hopes of reducing them into the right way: 2 Peter i. 13, 'Wherefore I will not be negligent,' saith the apostle Peter, 'to put you always in remembrance of these things.' Let us do our duty, and trust God with the event. Those that for the present do storm and rage may afterwards come to themselves again, especially if God stirreth us up by the secret motions of his Spirit to continue our endeavours: Acts xvii. 16, Paul's 'spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.' Impulse of spirit doth determine circumstances of known duty though it doth not constitute new duties.

4. When the party is likely to be the worse, rather than better, if he be reprov'd: Prov. ix. 7, 'He that reproveth a scorner getteth to him-

self shame, and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot,' if it provoketh them to rail. So Mat. vii. 6, 'Give not holy things to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.' Some are so wedded to their sins, that God's providence calleth upon us to let them alone. No good statue can be made of crooked or knotty timber; a vicious stomach turneth all things into choler; rain maketh a spongy marsh ground the worse; blowing increaseth the fire; a dunghill stinketh the worse the more it is stirred. Some are contemptuous and scornful; their corruptions are irritated by seeking to restrain them. Therefore if he sinneth the more grievously, that is a worse inconveniency than the reproof can bring good. Yet we must take heed that we do not censure people to be such without a cause; the reasons for our omission of such a necessary duty must be clear and sure, such as we can urge and avouch before God himself. We must not put by the duty upon slight conjectures, but still remember that God seeth and will consider it. It is very notable that cautions against rash judging are given before the direction of not casting pearls before swine and dogs: Mat. vii. 1, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'

5. When it will be rationally presumed that he will amend without our reproof. As alms ought not to be given to one that is indeed in poverty, when we know there are those that will plentifully relieve him, so in the case of reproof, when neither by ourselves, nor by the help of any other, a man is likely to be awakened, then we are bound to reprove him, or procure another that may do it more successfully; for some are capable to manage it with more wisdom than ourselves. I confess this must be taken cautiously. A general presumption that another will do his office doth not absolve us *in foro conscientie*, because this duty ariseth not from any voluntary contract or paction between men and men, but from the law of God, our supreme governor and judge, binding every one; and therefore we must do our own duty, and not think to be discharged by the zeal and diligence of others. And besides, a presumption that others will do it may cause it wholly to fall to the ground; as, Luke x. 33, the good Samaritan had not been absolved from uncharitableness if he had presumed that the priest and Levite would relieve the distressed man, or, if not they, that some other of his countrymen that came that way, and were nearer to him by nation and blood, and more charitable than the former, that they would relieve him; but he neither minded the one nor the other, but performed his duty; he saw a miserable spectacle, one wounded with thieves, 'and he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him,' ver. 33, 34. So here. The papists indeed make this limitation, *Nisi probabiliter presumatur aliunde nacturum, qui eum corripiat*—Except he probably presume that another will reprove him; but this presumption must be evident and rational, not probable only; and where I am privy to it, and know it, and procure it, and know how much better he is able to manage it than myself, then I am not to take it out of his hands, or when others are present whose gifts and office more oblige them to it.

6. When he doth expect a better opportunity, his omission is not

faulty for the present; for all things must be gone about in their season: Eccles. iii. 7, 'There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;' and in another place, because 'to every man there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him,' Eccles. viii. 6-8. He speaketh of the misery men contract upon themselves by disproving public disorders, especially in great persons, princes, and potentates. Therefore certainly it concerneth us to take a fit season; not when a man is drunk; as Abigail told Nabal not a word when the wine was in his head, 1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37; not when they are in the heat of passion, for then they are not capable of discerning right and reason: James i. 20, 'For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;' therefore opportunity and conveniency of circumstances must be considered and improved. Yet here is caution still; we must not adjourn it too far. Life is short, and sin groweth: Heb. iii. 13, 'Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' And it must be done at length; if we have long waited for a season, and cannot find it, we must make it, and break a rule of civil prudence rather than violate conscience; for civilities must not prescribe to religion.

7. If it be uncertain whether that which you reprove for be a sin, as suppose some kind of games or sports, which are questionable, because usually they do hurt, engross time, and enchant the mind, and are as the *excelsa mundi*, the high places of the world, that have a strange blast and judgment of God upon them, though we cannot say that for the nature of them they are utterly unlawful. What shall we do in this case? Many weak people are importunate to have others reprov'd for these things; but if once we give way to this, it looketh like an itch of reproving; and if we reprove for doubtful matters, men fly from our reproof for what is clear and open. Yet we may hold an argument, and prudently debate things, and discourse about them; but take heed you do not hinder yourselves in matters that are of more weighty importance.

8. When greater loss and damage may come to ourselves by the reproof than benefit to the reprov'd. It is out of question that he that can easily discharge this duty without any considerable inconveniency, and only forbears it out of sloth and pusillanimity, hath the greater sin if he doth it not; for he standeth with God for a trifle. But now if a considerable damage shall redound to myself in discharging this duty, it is of weight in this matter. Our Lord saith, Mat. vii. 6, 'Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.' As suppose there be a danger of your life, having to do with a contemptuous sinner; if I carry my life in my hand, and put it to hazard, there must be many things considered in this case. But now in extreme cases, if our neighbour be in present danger of losing his soul, with the danger of my bodily life I am to do what I can to save his soul. The work is good; the danger, depending upon a future event, is not absolutely certain; God can preserve me. However, it is a part of much self-denial to venture all in God's hands.

9. Public reproof is sometimes, not always necessary. If the sin be public, either as committed in sight before all: 1 Tim. v. 20, 'Them

that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear;’ or as judged by a public judicatory; or if an hidden sin tends to the damage of the community; or a greater hurt follow upon it than the loss of my neighbour’s fame; or if the person have lost all right to fame, or to a good name (as some have forfeited it), I need not stand nicely upon their good name, but in such cases I am to reprove publicly. In other cases the reproof must be private; and the rule is, Mat. xviii. 15, ‘Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.’

Use 1. If we are to reprove others, let us take care that we be innocent ourselves, not culpable, but blameless. They that are faulty themselves cannot reprove others without blushing and great shame. Pull out the beam out of thine own eye. Physician, heal thyself: Mat. vii. 3–5, ‘And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of thy brother’s eye;’ Rom. ii. 21, ‘Thou that sayest a man should not steal, dost thou commit sacrilege?’ The Jews were tender of idolatry after they had smarted in the matter of the golden calf, yet all the latter prophets condemn them for sacrilege and robbing God of his due. If we are faulty ourselves, either in the same kind or worse, we spoil our reproof: Ps. cxli. 5, ‘Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil.’ They may admonish with the greater authority. Others are remotely bound, they nearly; others not without special repentance and humility, acknowledging their own sins, and desiring they may not be examples to harden others. A sinner is not freed from the debt of love, but he is bound humbly to acknowledge his sin, and forsake it, that he may be fit to reprove others.

Use 2. If others be bound to reprove, certainly you are bound to take a reproof. Solomon brings in the wretched sinner, when his sin hath found him out, speaking thus, Prov. v. 12, 13, ‘How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!’ These are the lamentations of one that is ready to perish in his sin. And Prov. x. 17, ‘He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction; but he that hateth reproof, erreth.’ They wander far and wide, that hate to be brought into the right way: Prov. xii. 1, ‘He that hateth reproof is brutish.’ Why? Because he despiseth the great help of mankind, and so is carried away with his base and impetuous desires, and will not hear reason to the contrary: Prov. xiii. 18, ‘Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction; but he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured;’ as unwilling to go on in a wrong course after he seemeth to be engaged in it; and he shall be honoured as one that is prudent: Prov. xv. 5, ‘A fool despiseth his father’s instruction; but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.’ He is wise at the second hand; though not in his first choice, yet in rectifying his ill choice. Nay, Prov. xv. 10, ‘Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way; and he that hateth reproof shall die.’ Better be corrected than die and perish for ever. God’s reproofs and rebukes at the last day

will be very severe and amazing. And ver. 31, 'The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise;' that is, forsaketh the ill company which misled him, and betaketh himself to better guides: Prov. xxix. 1, 'He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' Our case without repentance is desperate; for when we have hardened ourselves in an evil way, the Lord overtakes us with a sudden destruction.

Use 3. It exhorts us to set upon this duty. There is need of it; which will appear if we consider the infirmity of nature, that is to be restrained, a blind mind to be enlightened, a drowsy heart to be awakened, vehemency of passions to be curbed, and great allurements to sin to be withstood. Say not with Cain, Gen. iv. 9, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Thou art so; do it then with love, lest you do the work of an enemy under the vizard of a friend. No hatred or ill end must put you on this business; for when you rebuke sin with sin, you increase it. Again, there is need of it; for it will prevent many evils, as censuring and detraction, and speaking ill of others, and invasion of the ministry. This is one great evil that heretofore hath reigned among us. Many little prattlers, that had no gifts, set up for ministers. This itch would soon be cured if men would mind necessary duties, such as meditation (which is a preaching to themselves), family instruction, and brotherly reproof.

Use 4. Direction to perform this duty. Many graces are necessary hereunto, as zeal for God, love to our neighbour, and courage. Avoid pusillanimity, that you be not hindered by your fears, this is the way to prevail; and if you prevail not, you must mourn and pray; as Lot: 2 Peter ii. 8, 'For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their ungodly deeds;' Jer. xiii. 17, 'But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears.'
