

## WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF HER CHILDREN.

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*For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.—MAT. XI. 18, 19.*

IN this context Christ had likened the people of the generation in which he lived to boys playing in the streets, and personating (as children are given to imitate what they have seen in elder persons) sometimes festivities, acting the part of a musician, but their fellows danced not; sometimes funerals, acting the part of the mourning women who were to weep for the dead, cry, Ah, my brother! but they upbraided their fellows, that they would do nothing as they should, neither follow them in their mirth nor sadness. So the people of that generation, whatsoever messages God sent unto them, they accepted them not and obeyed them not. Some great exceptions they had still to the messengers employed. One kind of exception they have to John, and the quite contrary to Jesus; and so they are not pleased, neither full nor fasting, as we say. Their censure of John was that he was an hypochondriac, or a frantic fellow; the devil was in him that he was so austere. But Christ, that was gentle and affable, they censure him as a loose person, or favourer of such. 'For John came neither eating and drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, A man gluttonous, and a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.'

In the words three things are observable:—

1. The different form and course of life wherein John and Christ appeared.

2. Their censures both of John and Jesus.

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced.

1. The different course of life wherein John and Christ appeared. 'John came neither eating nor drinking;' that is, lived in a strict austere course of life, not after the ordinary diet of men; for we read he had his raiment of camels' hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey. But the Son of man came eating and drinking; that is, using the ordinary diet of men, and eating promiscuously with all company, in a more free use of the creatures, taking the fare as he found it, and conversing with all sorts

of men in a familiar course of life; sometimes with publicans, as Zaccheus; sometimes with pharisees, as Simon, Luke vii. He observed no such abstinency, but ate meats indifferently. Sometimes he had nothing but barley-bread and water; sometimes he was at feasts, and using wine, and conversed with men indifferently.

2. Their censures both of John and Jesus. John 'hath a devil;' that is, he is a person possessed, out of his wits: for the Jews ascribed all distempers to the devil. And of Christ their censure was that he was 'a glutton, and a friend of publicans and sinners.'

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced, 'but wisdom is justified of her children.' This last clause needeth opening, that we may know what is wisdom, who are her children, and how they justify it.

[1.] By wisdom is meant the doctrine of the gospel, called elsewhere, 'The counsel of God,' as appeareth by the parallel place, Luke vii. 29, 30, 'And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' The gospel is called wisdom, because it is the result of God's eternal wisdom. The doctrine of Christ crucified is called, 'the wisdom of God,' 1 Cor. i. 24; and again, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery.'

[2.] The children of wisdom are the professors of it. It is an Hebraism; as 'children of wrath,' 'children of light,' 'children of this world,' &c.—the professors and followers of the gospel. Wisdom hath her children: all are not alike indisposed; some are begotten to God by the doctrine of grace.

[3.] Justified. As this is opposed to crimination, so to justify is the work of an advocate. As it is opposed to condemnation, so it is the work of a judge. Wisdom's children will bear witness to their faith, or the doctrine of God, by their profession and godly life and ready obedience, and exalt it as much as others decry it, and every way manifest that they hold it for good and right.

Many points might be observed hence, as—

1. That God sendeth forth his servants with divers dispositions; some more austere in life, others more social in their carriage; some sad and mournful, others cheerful and pleasant; some more thundering in doctrine, others more gently inducing people to repentance. Since God maketh use of variety of gifts and tempers, let us observe this wisdom, not bring all to the law of some admired instance and example. As there is a difference of stomachs, some for meats baked or roasted, others for boiled, so God fits his servants severally to do good, as the persons they are to treat with need.

2. That men are qualified according to the dispensation wherein God useth them. John, as a preacher of repentance, was austere; Christ, as a giver of pardon, mild and affable. John was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, and therefore to imitate him in his course of life. He was sent forth to raise and awaken a sleepy world besotted in security. But Christ, who was to come with the glad tidings of salvation, and to call sinners to grace and pardon, chose to appear in a meek, sweet, and social way of converse, that his benignity

in drawing the most grievous sinners to himself might thereby be manifested.

3. That men are apt to complain, quarrel, and except against what is done by God, and whatsoever methods are used to reduce them to a sense of their duty. Both John and Jesus were sent by God, but men have ever somewhat to say: John is too rough and austere, and Christ too sociable and familiar with sinners. They dislike the severity of the one, and the free converse of the other. So in other cases, old men, they say, dote, young men are too rash; some they find fault with because they are so facile and easy; with others, because they are obscure and deep. People are always unsatisfied.

4. That neither the severity of the law, nor the glad tidings of salvation, will of themselves work upon men, unless God set in by his Spirit: for both the dispensation of John and Jesus was without its effect.

5. Though some obstinately refuse the gospel, yet others accept of it, and live accordingly. Wisdom hath her children, who justify and defend her ways as much as others impugn and oppose them, Acts xvii. 34. God seldom lighteth a candle but he hath some lost groat to seek.

All these points might be profitably insisted on, but I shall make use of this text to give you this observation:—

That Jesus Christ, when he came to set up the gospel, did not tie himself to a wilderness-life of austerity in total abstinence from common meat and wine, as John the Baptist did, and as they thought that he that professed extraordinary sanctity should have done.

In the prosecution of this point I shall use this method:—

1. I shall show you that the censures of the two things disliked in Christ were not just.

2. Give you the reasons why he lived and chose this form and sort of life.

3. The profitable observations that we may build thereon.

1. That the censures of the two things disliked in Christ were not just. The two things disliked in Christ were:—

[1.] His diet.

[2.] His company.

[1.] His diet. He 'came eating and drinking:' he did eat and drink as other men, but with great piety, and with great temperance and sobriety. His piety was remarkable: John vi. 11, 'And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed them among the disciples;' and ver. 23, 'Nigh unto the place where they had eaten bread, after the Lord gave thanks.' All our refreshments should be sanctified; they are great mercies, though ordinary. They come down from heaven, and direct us to seek the blessing thence, from whence we have the comforts themselves. Though we have but slender provisions, we should be thankful; Christ gave thanks for five barley-loaves and two fishes. Mark, here he doth not mention the miracle, but the thanksgiving. Christ had expressed himself in such a way as made deep impression on the standers-by, and would fully convince us that the blessing of all enjoyments is in God's hand.

His temperance and sobriety is observable; five barley-loaves and two fishes were carried about, as the standing provision for himself and family, Luke ix. 13. Christ's provision is such as may teach sobriety and contentment with a mean condition unto all. At another time he beggeth a draught of water to quench his thirst, John iv. 7. And therefore the exceptions against his diet were not just.

[2.] Against his company. They accused him of eating with publicans and sinners in the text. So Luke xv. 2, 'This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them;' because He went to them as a physician to heal their souls, Luke v. 30. He conversed with the meanest, and refused not familiarity with the poorest and worst, as was needful for their cure. The pharisees thought it to be against all decorum that he would speak and converse with all sorts of people, publicans and harlots not excepted; but Christ coming to save all sorts of people, it was necessary that he should converse with all sorts of people.

2. The reasons why he lived and chose this sort of life.

[1.] Because he would not place religion in outward austerities and observances. Men superstitiously appoint to themselves unnecessary tasks, and forbid themselves many lawful things, and this they call by the name of holiness. When Satan, who is usually a libertine, pretendeth to be a saint, he will be stricter than Christ himself; as the pharisees were in the choice of their company and outward observances. Christ foresaw this spirit would be working in the world: 'Touch not, taste not, handle not, after the commandments and doctrines of men,' Col. ii. 21, 22. That men were apt to place religion in a simple abstinence from the common comforts of life, under a pretence of more than ordinary mortification: neither eat, nor taste, nor touch. Over-doing in externals is usually an undoing in religion: the quaker's spirit and the monkish spirit is an apocryphal and bastard sort of holiness, a spirit that suiteth not with the temper of the gospel and the example of Christ.

[2.] Christ would live a strict, but sociable and charitable life, and did not observe the laws of proud pharisaical separation, but spent his time in doing good, and healing all manner of bodily diseases, and instructing the souls of men upon all occasions. There is a disposition in men, by a foolish singularity, to stand aloof from others. The prophet toucheth it, Isa. lxxv. 5, 'They said, stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou.' Some then, though impure and profane, would seem holier than others, and counted all unclean and polluted beside themselves. This spirit rested in the pharisees in Christ's time: Luke v. 30, 'The scribes and pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?' So Luke vii. 39, 'If this man had been a prophet, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.' And afterwards the whole people of the Jews were possessed with this spirit, and would not endure that any should converse with the Gentiles, as fearing to be defiled by them. Now Jesus Christ would not countenance this inclosing spirit; coming to do good to all, he would converse with all.

3. Jesus Christ coming into the world, as to redeem us to God, so

to set us an example, would take up that course of life which was most imitable by all sorts of persons, and calculated, as for the honour of God, so for the benefit of human society. He intended his religion not only for recluses and votaries, but for men of all conditions, professions, and employments, and therefore would not fright us from religion by affected austerities, but invite us to it by a sanctified converse with all kind of companies; and no man now can excuse himself, saying that he cannot imitate the form of Christ's living, since it is competent to all kind of persons, even those who are not shut up, but whose callings engage them to be abroad in the world; for it is religion that puts us upon the discharge of all duties to God and man. The sum of it is comprised in the love of God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves. We love all, even enemies, with that common love which is due to humanity, and all that fear God with a special love. Now this may be exercised in the shop better than in the cloister and solitudes, and wherever we go we may go about doing good; and this may be done by all sorts of persons, princes and peasants, noblemen or tradesmen, as well as ministers and people of a more retired life.

[4.] Coming into the world, to set up the kingdom of God, it was fit his form of life should suit with the nature of that kingdom. John Baptist telleth them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand;' and Christ himself, that the kingdom of God was come, and was among them. Now what is the nature of this kingdom of God? The apostle telleth you that 'The kingdom of God standeth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,' Rom. xiv. 17. There are two expositions of that place, and both equally probable; the one more general, the other more limited and restrained to the context: more general, that righteousness is taken for all new obedience, and peace for peace of conscience, resulting from the rectitude of our actions; and joy in the Holy Ghost, for that supernatural comfort which the Holy Ghost puts into our hearts, by reflecting upon our privileges in Christ, and the hopes of the world to come. Now Christianity consists not in eating, or not eating such or such meats, or such kind of observances, but in solid godliness, or in the practice of Christian graces and virtues. The more limited sense is, that by righteousness is meant just dealings; by peace, a peaceable, harmless, inoffensive sort of living; by joy in the Holy Ghost, a delight to do good to one another; to advance and build up one another in godliness, not dividing, hating, excommunicating, censuring one another for lesser things and mere rituals, but pleasing our neighbour to edification: Rom. xv. 2, and 1 Cor. x. 31-33, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God: give no offence, neither to Jews nor Gentiles, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.' This meek, holy, charitable converse to the glory of God, without offence and scandal, is that which promoteth God's kingdom; and this would Christ teach us in his own form and course of life, conversing in a sanctified manner with all sorts of persons to their profit and benefit.

[5.] Because Christ would not gratify human wisdom: as he would

not gratify sense by choosing a pompous life, so he would not gratify human wisdom by choosing an austere life. There are two sorts of men in the world who are not of God—the men of the world and the saints of this world. The men of the world are brutish sensualists, who are all for pomp and glory. Christ would not gratify these, but came meek and poor, to teach us humility, self-denial, and contentation: Mat. xi. 29, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' He did not bustle in the world for respect and honour; his complaints of his enemies, and his answers to them, were full of meekness, and stood not to abase himself for the Father's glory and men's good: so he did not gratify the men of the world. The saints of this world are such as are strict in outward observances, in eating or not eating, in marrying or not marrying, in forbearing such company, in such a number and tale of devotions, in abstaining from such lawiul things; these things the apostle saith 'have a show of wisdom,' Col. ii. 23. The world is mightily taken with bodily exercise and outward strictness. As the men of the world love to pamper the body, so the saints of this world needlessly afflict and dishonour the body; this hath a show, and nothing but a show: but Christ would not gratify these neither. He used a free, but a holy life, and so was censured and traduced as a wine-bibber and a glutton, to teach his followers to be contented to be 'judged according to men in the flesh, and live to God in the spirit,' 1 Peter iv. 6. He came to preach, and to give inward regeneration and renovation. To show the proper way of mortification, which is not by a severity of life, but by deadening the mind to the esteem of the world. That kind of life which consists in outward rigours hath some honour and reputation in the world, and maketh a fair show in the flesh; but he would teach us the life which consists in faith, holiness, sobriety, humility of mind, charity, obedience to God, joy in the spirit, and comfort of the promises, which the world liketh not so well. Outward and rigorous observances are more plausible, but the power of godliness, and a true sense of the world to come, the world hateth.

[6.] To show us the true nature of mortification, which consists not in a bare abstinence and shameful retreat from temptations, but in a spirit fortified against them; not in a monkish discontent with the world, but a holy contempt of it when we most freely use it; and in bridling and governing the appetite and desire, rather than in scrupulous refraining from the object itself; in a using of the world, but not abusing of it, 1 Cor. vii. 31; not so much scrupling the comforts of the present life, as a valuing and esteeming the comforts of a better life; prizing more the Christian vow than any by-laws of our own. The apostle telleth us, 1 Tim. iv. 8, that 'bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable to all things.' Abstinence from daily meats, wines, marriage, is an act of self-denial, but a very small one; for all the good it doth is to tame the members of the body, and its external motions and actions, without sanctifying the heart and inward part, as a lively faith, fear, and love of God doth. The profit of bodily exercise is little in comparison of inward piety, which is necessary to a comfortable life here, and a blessed hereafter.

*Thirdly,* The observations which we may build thereon.

1. We may observe the humanity, goodness, and kindness of that religion which we profess, both with respect to ourselves and others.

[1.] Ourselves. Man consists of a body and a soul, and hath respects for either, else he were unnatural. The body, indeed, we are apt to overprize, and therefore we need not a spur but a bridle for our affections to the bodily life; and therefore religion, in the precepts of it, interposeth by way of restraint rather than exhortation: Titus ii. 12, 'That we should live soberly,' &c.; and Rom. xiii. 14, 'Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Do not cherish carnal desires. The apostle telleth you, 'No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it,' Eph. v. 29. Our usual fault is an excessive pampering of the flesh. Some have hated their own souls, at least, by consequence and interpretation; therefore we dare not let loose the reins, and give either encouragement or allowance to men to indulge their carnal desires; yet, to avoid prejudice, we must grant what may be granted, for men are apt to think that religion is a sour thing, and abridges them of all the comforts of their lives. No; besides the rich comforts it provideth for the soul, it alloweth and forbiddeth not so much sensitive pleasure as tendeth to the holiness of the soul, and furthereth us in God's service. It rebuketh and forbiddeth nothing but what really may be a snare to us; it considereth all things, meats, drinks, marriage, wealth, honours, and dignities of the present world, as they have respect to God and a better world, and as they help and hinder us in the pleasing God and seeking immortality.

[2.] With respect to others. The spirit of our religion may be known by the example of our dearest Lord. It is not a proud, disdainful spirit, that refuseth the company of the meanest and worst, so we may do them good. He came to save sinners, and conversed with sinners. He came to redress the miseries of mankind, and went up and down doing good; though his familiarities were with the most godly, yet he disdained not the company of others. And surely his religion, where it prevaieth in the hearts of any, it causes them not only to deal justly with all, but to love all, all mankind, with a love of benevolence; it maketh us to long for the good of their souls, and desirous also to do good to the bodies of those that are in need. It is said, indeed, Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' But we must distinguish of the hatred of abomination, and the hatred of enmity. We hate our sinful neighbour, as we must ourselves much more, in opposition to the love of complacency, but not in opposition to the love of benevolence; so we must neither hate ourselves, nor our neighbour, no, nor our enemy. The business of your lives must be, to do good to all, especially to the household of faith. God's natural image is on all men, his spiritual image on his saints; and we must love God in all his creatures, especially in his children. This is true religion, consecrated by our Lord's example.

2. We may observe, that an external holiness, which consisteth in an outside strictness, without that faith, love, charity, hope, usefulness, and activity which is the very soul and life of Christianity, usually puffeth up men with a vain conceit of their own righteousness, and a censuring and a despising of others. This text showeth us both the

spirit of pharisaism and the spirit of Christianity. The pharisees, who abounded in outward observances, censured Christ for his free converses, and disdained those sinners whom he invited to a better life, Luke xviii. 9-12; and they were ignorant of true wisdom, which is justified, embraced, and received by all her children. Learn, then, that an unruly, fierce, censorious spirit, which is only borne up by external advantages, is not the right spirit of the gospel. True religion maketh men humble and low in their own eyes, acquainteth them with their desert, sin, and misery, and maketh them pitiful and compassionate to others, and more ready to help them than to censure them, and to use all ways and means to do them good.

3. The main observation is this,—That a free life, guided by a holy wisdom, is the most sanctified life, and bringeth most honour to God, and is most useful to others.

Here I shall show you:—

1. Wherein lieth this free life, guided by holy wisdom.

2. How it is the most sanctified life.

1. Wherein lieth this free life, guided by holy wisdom. It is said of Enoch, Gen. v. 22, That he ‘walked with God, and begat sons and daughters;’ that is, dedicated himself to God’s service, and lived in most strict holiness. And there you see the use of a conjugal life in its purity may stand with the strictest rules of holiness. So for worldly affairs, when the course of our calling engageth us in them, it is not using of the world, but over-using is the fault, 1 Cor. vii. 31. So for the comforts of this life: Ps. lxii. 10, ‘If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.’ The business is not to withdraw them away, but to withdraw the affection. So for the lawful delights, there are two extremes,—clogging and retrenching our liberty with outward burdensome observances, or abusing our liberty to wantonness: Gal. v. 13, ‘Ye are called to liberty, only use not your liberty as an occasion to the flesh.’ Corrupt nature venteth itself both ways; either by superstitious rigours, or by breaking all bonds, and enlarging itself according to the licentiousness of the flesh. Meat, drink, apparel, are in their own nature indifferent; neither must superstition work upon them, nor profaneness; and in the mean between both lieth godliness.

2. How it is the most sanctified life.

[1.] Partly because it suiteth with the example of Christ. He came, as to expiate our offences, so to give us an example: 1 Peter ii. 21, ‘Leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps;’ and 1 John ii. 6, ‘Walk as he walked.’ It is high presumption to aim at an imitation of Christ in those acts of his which he did for satisfying the Father’s justice or proving his deity; yea, it is impossible to imitate him in those. Yet in actions moral we are bound to imitate him, and in actions indifferent, not to suffer our liberty to be straitened, but to govern circumstances according to that holy wisdom. Christ retired not from the society of men, but used the greatest freedom in a holy way.

[2.] Because there is more true grace in being dead to the temptation, than to retreat from the temptation. A Christian is not to go out of the world, neither by a voluntary death, John xvii. 15, nor by an unnecessary sequestration of ourselves from business and the affairs



which God calleth us to, 1 Cor. vii. 20, 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called;' but to be crucified to the world, Gal. vi. 14,—that is, grace to withdraw our hearts from the world, while we converse in it and with it. Many real Christians, when they hear us press mortification and deadness to the world, think they must leave their callings, or abate of their necessary activity in their callings. Alas! in the shop, a man may keep himself unspotted from the world, as well as in the closet; in a court, as well as in a cell. We read of saints in Nero's household, Phil. iv. 22. He was a great persecutor, yet some saints could live there, within his gates: there were some professors of the gospel. So Rev. ii. 13, 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.' In the sorest and thickest of temptations a Christian may maintain his integrity. In short, our way to heaven lieth through the world; and though, if I be left to my choice, I should choose that course of life in which there are least temptations, yet when God, by the posture of our temporal interest, or the course of our education, or the nature of my employment and usefulness, hath determined me to a life more incident to a throng of temptations, I may the better venture upon them, and must not leave my service for supposed snares. Affectation of privacy may be a slothful retreat from public business, and it is more glorious to beat an enemy than to fly from him; and grace is seen in overcoming rather than in shunning difficulties.

Well, then, learn from the whole, that true mortification consists in a change of the frame of heart; in a resolution against the baits of sense, rather than removing our presence from them; in being not of the world, though we are in the world; not in casting away our enjoyments, but in an equal mind in all conditions, James i. 9, 10: that to be poor in abundance, humble in high places, temperate and godly in the freest course of life, is to imitate the life of Christ: that then we are properly mortified, when our esteem, value, and affection is mortified: that grace showeth itself more in choice than in necessity; in an abstinence from the delights of the flesh when we have them, rather than when we want them: that we may follow our business and yet be godly: that the overcharging of the heart is the great evil that we should beware of: that we may use company, but not to partake of their sins; yea, to make them better, and to purify them by our example.

I now proceed to the last clause: *But wisdom is justified of her children.*

We have observed:—

1. The different form and course of life wherein John and Jesus appeared.

2. Their censures of both.

3. The receiving of the gospel by the unprejudiced.

In this last observe:—

[1.] The exceptive particle, *but*. Though undeserved censures are cast upon the ways of God, yet at length there is a wisdom found in them. Ignorant men mistake them, carnal men slight them, the pro-

fane snuff at them, few or none entertain them with that respect they ought to do, yet this wisdom will not want advocates.

[2.] The thing spoken of, *wisdom*. By wisdom is meant the doctrine of the gospel, called elsewhere the counsel of God, as appeareth by the parallel place, Luke vii. 29, 30, 'And all the people that heard him justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.' The gospel method of salvation is there called the counsel of God, because it is the counsel he giveth men for their good; as here wisdom, because it is the result of God's eternal wisdom and decrees. And elsewhere the doctrine of Christ crucified is called 'the wisdom of God;' and again, 1 Cor. ii. 7, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery.'

[3.] What is said of it, or how it is used; it is *justified*. Justification is a relative word: as it is opposed to crimination, so to justify is the work of an advocate; as to condemnation, so it is the work of a judge. The children of wisdom discharge both parts, chiefly the first; they bear witness to their faith, or the doctrine of God concerning salvation by Christ, by their profession and godly life and ready obedience, and exalt it so much as others deery it, and every way manifest they hold it for good and right; only, this pleading is real, not by word but deed: *Sapientia non querit vocis, testimonium sed operum*, saith Hierom. Divine wisdom is justified more by works than by a verbal plea. Wisdom's children bear her instructions, follow her directions and institutes, and with diligence observe the way of salvation prescribed by God, though others slight it; and so justify it against the exceptions and reproaches of the carnal world.

[4.] Of whom: *of her children*. The children of wisdom are the professors of it; those who are begotten by God by the word of truth, James i. 18, and are willing to attain the end by the ways and means wherein God affordeth it. These are Wisdom's children, begotten, bred up, and instructed by her; it is an Hebraism, as 'children of wrath,' 'children of light,' 'children of this world,' and the like; the professors and followers of the gospel.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

That the wisdom of God, leading men to salvation, in the ways and means pointed out in the gospel, is and should be justified of all the sincere professors of it.

In managing this point, I shall show you:—

*First*, What is the wisdom of God in the way of salvation prescribed by the gospel.

*Secondly*, That this wisdom is despised, slighted, and contradicted by the carnal world, and why.

*Thirdly*, How and why it must be justified by the sincere professors of the gospel.

*First*, What is the wisdom of God in the way of salvation prescribed by the gospel? The sum of the gospel is this: that all those who, by true repentance and faith, do forsake the flesh, the world, and the devil, and give themselves up to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as their creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, shall find God as a father, taking them for his reconciled children, and for Christ's sake pardoning their sins, and by his Spirit giving them his grace; and, if they per-

severe in this course, will finally glorify them, and bestow upon them everlasting happiness; but will condemn the unbelievers, impenitent, and ungodly to everlasting punishment. That this is the sum of the gospel appeareth by Mark xvi. 15, 16: 'Go, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;'—where you have all the Christian religion laid before you in one short view and prospect. It concerneth either the end or the means.

1. The end. The apostle telleth you that God 'hath brought life and immortality to light in the gospel,' 2 Tim. i. 10; or clearly discovered a happiness and a misery in the world to come.

2. The means. He hath pointed out a sure way for obtaining the one and avoiding the other. As to the means, Christian religion is considerable, either as to the entrance or the progress of it. Our Lord telleth us, Mat. vii. 14, 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.' He speaketh of a gate and a way. The gate noteth the entrance; the way, the progress therein. In other scriptures we read of making covenant with God, and keeping covenant with God: the covenant must not only be made, but kept. So again we read of dedication and use; of devotedness to God, and faithfulness to him; of our purpose and progress, choice and course; all which expressions tend to the same effect.

[1.] As to the way of entering into covenant with God, there is required:—

(1.) True repentance and faith: 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts xx. 21. Repentance respects God as our end, and faith respects Christ as Mediator, as the only way of returning to God, from whom we have strayed by our own folly and sin.

(2.) In the exercise of this repentance and faith, there must be a forsaking the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a giving up ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. For the former, there are three great enemies to God and us—the devil, the world, and the flesh; reckoned up, Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, after the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.' There all your enemies appear abreast: the devil as the grand deceiver and principle of all wickedness; the world with its pleasures, honours, and profits, as the bait by which the devil would deceive us, and steal away our hearts from God, and divert us from looking after the one thing necessary; the flesh, as the corrupt inclination in us, which entertaineth and closeth with these temptations, to the neglect of God, and wrong of our own souls. This is importunate to be pleased, and is the proper internal cause of all our mischief; for every man is enticed and drawn away by his own lusts. Now these must be renounced before we can return to God by Jesus Christ; for, as Joshua told the Israelites, so must we say to all of you: Josh. xxiv. 23, 'Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.'

First, There must be a renouncing of our idols before our hearts can incline unto the true God. We must be turned from Satan to God, Acts xx. 18. And the world must be renounced, Titus ii. 12: 'Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts.' And we must not look upon ourselves as debtors to the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. viii. 10. God will have no copartners and competitors in our hearts.

And then the second part, in exercising of our faith and repentance, is giving up ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Spirit, as our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. And therefore in baptism, which is our first entrance and initiation into the Christian religion, we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Mat. xxviii. 19, which implieth a dedication and giving up ourselves to them, according to their personal relations. To the Father, as our creator, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him, and be happy in his love as dear children. To Christ as our Redeemer, to free us from the guilt of sin and the wrath of God. To the Holy Ghost, to guide and sanctify us, and comfort us with the sense of our present interest in God's love, and the hopes of future glory.

[2.] As to our progress and perseverance, which is our walking in the narrow way, three things are required; and that—

(1.) As to the enemies of God and our souls. As there is a renouncing required at first, so at length there is requisite an overcoming the devil, the world, and the flesh: Rev. ii. 7, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' We overcome the devil when we keep up our resistance, and stand out against his batteries and assaults: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist stedfast in the faith.' We overcome the world when the terrors and allurements of it have less force and influence upon us: 1 John v. 4, 5, 'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith: who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' and Gal. vi. 14, 'But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' We overcome and subdue the flesh when we have 'crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,' Gal. v. 24; when we get the mastery over the passions and affections thereof; and though we be sometimes foiled, yet the drift and bent of our lives is for God and our salvation.

(2.) As to God, to whom we have devoted ourselves. We must love him above all, and not put him off with what the flesh can spare, or the world will allow, or the devil will suffer us to go on contentedly with; but we must serve him sincerely, 'in holiness and righteousness all our days,' Luke i. 75. The love and patient service of our Creator is our great and daily work.

(3.) As to our end. We must live in the hope of the coming of Christ and our everlasting glory: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,' and Jude, ver. 21, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.'

Well, then, as we did at first thankfully accept of our recovery by Christ, and did at first renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and consented to follow his direction, and use his means in order to our final happiness, so we must still persevere in this mind and resolution, till our glory come in hand. This is God's wisdom.

*Secondly,* Let us now see how this counsel of God is entertained by the carnal world. It is there despised, slighted, and contradicted. The world is a distracted world; some neglect God's counsel and never lay it to heart: Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' and Mat. xxii. 5, 'But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.' Some laugh at these things, and make a holy and heavenly life the matter of their scorn and derision: Luke xvi. 14, 'The pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him;' and Acts xvii. 32, 'Some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter; howbeit, certain men clave unto him and believed.' There are others who fasten odious reproaches on the godly. And though the Christian religion be so holy and innocent in its design, so agreeable to the nature of God and man, so well contrived to remedy our miseries, and to secure our true and proper happiness, yet the strictness of it is distasted by the world. By the profane, who have nothing to excuse their wickedness, it is counted hypocrisy: 'As deceivers, yet true,' 2 Cor. vi. 8; because they cannot condemn the life, they judge the heart. By them who affect the vanities of the world, and have a passionate love for the pleasures and honours thereof; because the generality of the world are of that mind, they brand it with the imputation of foolish singularity. And the carnal politicians, because it was never yet so well with the world, but some things which God requireth are discountenanced, they tax it of disobedience, and they counted Paul as a mover of sedition, Acts xxv. 5; and because the operations of grace are above the line of nature, others tax it of fanaticism and enthusiasm. Atheists, who are all for demonstrations of sense, sight, and present things, because Christianity mainly inviteth to things spiritual and heavenly, and to live upon the hopes of an unseen world that is yet to come, they judge it to be a foppery, or mere imposture, or needless superstition. Though both the hopes and precepts of religion carry a marvellous compliance with right reason, yet none of these things move them. Lastly, There are others that malign, oppose, and oppugn holiness. There is an everlasting enmity between the two seeds, as between the wolf and the lamb, the raven and the dove; the world will love its own, and hate those that go a contrary course, John xv. 19; 'And as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now,' Gal. iv. 29; and so it will be to the end of the world. When the powers of the world give any rest, yet the carnal seed will be mocking and scoffing, and bringing God's holy ways into contempt, branding them with censures and calumnies. The reasons of this are partly because men are drunk with the delusions of the flesh, and so cannot judge of spiritual things; partly to excuse themselves. Men will be quarrelling at religion when they have no mind to practise it, and dispute away duties when they are unwilling to perform them; partly, they take occasion from the failings of God's

people, though there is no reason why they should do so. An art should not be condemned for the workman's want of skill; but they do so. If Christians be serious to any degree of sadness, then religion is counted an uncomfortable thing, it mopeeth them. If there be any differences among God's people, because of their several degrees of light, oh, then there are so many sects, and factions, and controversies about religion, they suspect all, and are true to none. If any creep into the holy profession, and pollute it with their scandals, then all strictness in religion is but a pretence and imposture. If men be strict, and would avoid every ordinary failing incident to mankind, then they are more nice than wise, and this is preciseness and indiscretion. It were endless to rake in this puddle, and to reckon up all the cavils and exceptions which naughty men commence against the ways of God.

*Thirdly*, How and why it must be justified by the sincere professors of the gospel.

1. How?

I answer—Three ways:—

[1.] It must be approved and received by themselves. It is wisdom's children that can only justify wisdom; they that have entertained it, felt the power and force of it in their own hearts; yea, their very receiving is a justifying; they show the clamourings of the world do not move them: therefore it must be approved by us before it can be recommended to others, and approved, not speculatively only, but practically, so as to resolve to follow after salvation in this way. Speculatively, they may approve it that have but *μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως*, Rom. ii. 18, 20: a form of knowledge, and dishonour it in their practices, as ver. 23, 24. Men may justify religion in word, by a bare naked approbation, and soundly vindicate it from the cavils and exceptions of men; but godly men have eyes to see the beauty and excellence of it, and have sincerely accepted it: Acts ii. 41, 'They received the word gladly.' It is good news to a poor guilty conscience to hear of a pardoning God and a merciful and faithful Redeemer, the promise of eternal life, and a sure way how to come to it. They are said to justify God that accepted his counsel, Luke vii. 29, 30. The hearts of God's children are thoroughly possessed with the reality, excellency, and blessedness of this religion; they know and believe the infinite consequence of these things; their faith is a kind of justifying: John iii. 33, 'He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.'

[2.] It must be professed and owned when it is vilified and in contempt and disgrace in the world. We must stand to Christ and his ways, though we stand alone, as Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 10, and not be ashamed of holiness, notwithstanding trouble and contradiction. Christ will be confessed before men, and will be ashamed before God and angels of them who are ashamed of him in the world, and refuse to own him and his ways and truths, only because they are despised and contradicted and discountenanced in the world. Pleading for religion is one of the professing acts: 2 Cor. iv. 13, 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.' As David, when sore afflicted, did confess and avow his confidence in God, so we,

heartily believing and approving the gospel, must make a bold profession of it. The sacraments were ordained for this purpose, for badges of profession. Baptism is a visible entering into covenant with God : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; and he that believeth not shall be damned ;' where not only belief is required, but open profession. Baptism is a badge and a bond ; a badge to distinguish the worshippers of Christ from others, and a bond to bind us to open profession of the name of Christ. The Lord's Supper it is a profession of communion : 1 Cor. x. 16, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?' and ver. 18, 'Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar ?' They that did any part of the sacrifices did eat and drink with God at the altar ; and ver. 20, 21, 'I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils ; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils.' Professing communicating with Christ is not consistent with professing communicating with devils. So prayer and praise is a part of confessing : Rom. x. 10, 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' The first is proved ver. 11, 'For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed ;' the second, ver. 13, 'For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Calling upon the name of the Lord in prayer and praise, it is an open professing act, by which we own God in Christ for our God. So the assembling ourselves together for public worship is a part of this profession, and must not be omitted for fear : Heb. x. 23, with 25, 'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.' How ? ver. 25, 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.' These assemblies were instituted for public converse with God, testifying their union and agreement in the same faith and worship. Indeed, in lesser truths, that fall within the latitude of allowable differences in the church, profession is not always a duty, for in some cases we may have faith to ourselves ; but a denying of God, or being ashamed of him, is always a sin. When called to give an account, we are with boldness to own our profession : Acts iv. 10, 'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole ;' and Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king ; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.'

[3.] This profession must be honoured, and recommended to others, by a holy conversation. But now, what kind of conversation honoureth religion ?

(1.) Such as is carried on with diligence and seriousness. As Noah, Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' They behaved themselves as those that in

earnest believed a flood, when they made such thorough preparation, which was a just reproof to the security and incredulity of the carnal world: when we do as we say, in good earnest make preparation for another world, otherwise religion is but suspected as a vain pretence and empty talk. Then we look after heaven indeed, then we believe it when we do the things that belief bindeth us unto. A carnal man that is all talk and no practice, he doth not religion so much honour in his words as he doth dishonour it in his works. He liveth down his profession, while he seemeth to cry it up: Titus i. 16, 'They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.' Contrary motions are an implicit denial of the faith, 1 Tim. v. 8; but laziness and negligence do also foment and breed atheism; and we carry on the life of godliness coldly and faintly, and so our conversations, which should be a confirmation of the gospel, prove a confutation rather. Those that are disciples in name only, the word of God cometh to them in word only. The careless practiser is as bad as he that is haunted with actual doubts about the truth of Christianity. The troubled doubter mindeth his business, but these never regard it, and do in effect say that Christ and his salvation is not worth the looking after. As it is said of the Israelites, Ps. cvi. 24, 'They despised the good land, they believed not his word.' Those that resolved to give over the pursuit of Canaan are said to doubt of his promise. So they that neglect salvation do not believe the truth of it, Heb. ii. 3, 4; and though they talk high, they secretly propagate their infidelity. The strength of our faith should appear by the diligence of our lives, the seriousness of our endeavours, and the fervour of our duties. Practices do more express the image of our minds than words. The faith that issueth out into works doth most commend itself to others: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'That you may fulfil the work of faith with power; that Christ Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him.' Then is Christ glorified, when you live answerably to your profession, and do by the power of God carry on a holy life upon the encouragements of the promises of the gospel.

(2.) Such as is governed by the respects of the other world. When we are patient and joyful under the cross, and full of hope and comfort in great straits, and delight in our work, which the world hateth and discountenanceth, and hope against hope, and live in the promises: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.' Then we justify wisdom, and commend our faith to others. God was angry with Moses and Aaron: Num. xx. 12, 'Because ye believed not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel.' We are not only firmly to believe ourselves, but to sanctify him in the eyes of others; and that is done by the labour of our faith, the patience of our hope, our joyfulness and delight in God when we have but little in hand, and the readiness of our obedience even under deep sufferings. When the Thessalonians had received the word in much assurance and much affliction, and much joy in the Holy Ghost, the apostle telleth, 1 Thes. i. 5-7, 'They were ensamples to all that believed in Achaia and Macedonia,' and from them 'sounded out the word of God to other places.'



Thus we propagate our faith, and commend the truth of God to others. The life of faith is a glorious thing, but the life of sense or reason hath no glory in it, or a life carried on merely upon external probabilities. When we can contemn this world, both the good and evil things of it, in hopes of a better, and part with all that is dear to us in this world upon the conscience of our duty, then we justify wisdom.

(3.) By an exact purity and holiness, or a full conformity to all God's precepts and institutes, and by a faithful discharging all duties to God and men. Every true Christian should be a transcript of his religion: 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit.' An epistle is that wherein a man hath written his mind; our conversations should be religion exemplified, a real sermon: Phil. ii. 16, 'Holding forth the word of life.' The wax hath an impression and stamp left upon it according to what is engraven upon the seal. Then we honour religion when the impression and print of it is left upon our hearts and lives, and we are cast into this mould. More particularly, duties of relations, which are visible and easily observed, justify and honour religion: Titus ii. 10, and 1 Peter ii. 15, 'So is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' These conduce to the good of human societies, are most regarded, and make the ways of God amiable. Thus how wisdom is to be justified.

I now come to show you—

## 2. Why.

[1.] Because of the charge that is put upon us to testify for God, and justify his ways: Isa. xliii. 10, 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord.' They that are most acquainted with God can most witness for him. So wisdom's children can most justify her. They are acquainted with her promises and precepts, and have experience of the virtue and power of them in comforting and changing the heart. A report of a report is a cold thing; they that have felt somewhat in their hearts, that which they have seen and felt they can speak of. The world needeth some witnesses for God, some testimony and preparative inducement to invite them to embrace the ways of God. Miracles served for that use heretofore: Acts v. 32, 'And we are his witnesses of those things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.' And in the place of miracles, there succeeded good conversation, or the wonderful effects of his Spirit. Grace in the heart and lives of his children, this is apt to beget wonder, as miracles did, 1 Peter iv. 4. When they can renounce the lusts which most are mastered by, and grow dead to worldly interests, live in the world above the world, in the flesh contrary to the flesh. A miracle strikes a little wonderment at first, but this sinketh and soaketh to the heart. When men are so strictly holy, so ravishingly heavenly, and bear up upon the hopes and encouragements of the other world, and are so conscientious in all duties to God and man, you show that religion is not a notion or an imagination.

[2.] Wisdom deserveth to be justified by us. What is there in all the Christian religion but what is justifiable, or that we should be ashamed of? Is it the hopes of it? The hopes of it are such as are

fit to be propounded to man, sought after by all the world, but nowhere discovered with such certainty and distinctness as in the gospel. Nothing doth refine and enoble the heart so much as these hopes. The heavenly spirit, that can support itself with the hopes of an unseen glory, is the only true sublime spirit; an earthly spirit is a base spirit, so a sensual, the dregs of mankind. Amongst men, the ambitious, who aspire to crowns and kingdoms, and aim at perpetual fame by their heroic virtues and exploits, are judged persons of far greater gallantry than covetous muckworms or brutish epicures; yet they are poor, base-spirited people in their highest thoughts and designs to that noble and divine spirit which worketh in the breast of those who sincerely and heartily seek heavenly things. For what is the honour of the world to approbation with God, temporal trifles to an everlasting kingdom? Is it the way and means, the first, the terms of settling our souls in the way of faith and repentance? What more rational? Should we return to our creator's service without acknowledging our offence in straying, or humbling ourselves for our errors, and purposing for the future to live in his love and obedience? Or can we expect mercy without returning? Reason will say our case is not compassionate. Or should God quit his law without satisfaction? Or should we not own our benefactor, the person satisfying? Certainly there is nothing more reasonable. So also for new obedience. Therefore wisdom deserveth to be justified by us.

[3.] Those that condemn wisdom, yet do in some measure at the same time justify it. They condemn it with their tongues, but justify it with their consciences: they hate and fear strictness: Mark vi. 20, 'Herod feared John, because he was a just man and a holy, and observed him.' They scoff at it with their tongues, but have a fear of it in their consciences: they revile at it while they live, but what mind are they of when they come to die? Then all will speak well of a holy life, and the strictest obedience to the laws of God: Num. xxiii. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;' and Mat. xxv. 8, 'Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.' Oh that they had a little of that holiness and strictness which they scoffed at, whilst they were pursuing their lusts! How will they desire to die? As carnal and careless sinners, or as mortified saints? They approve it *in thesi*, and condemn it *in hypothesi*. All the opposers and scoffers at godliness, within the pale of the visible church, have the same Bible, baptism, creed, and pretend to believe in the same God and Christ, which they own with those whom they oppose. All the difference is, the one are real Christians, the other are nominal; some profess at large, others practise what they profess; the one have a religion to talk of, the other to live by; they approve it in the form, but hate it in the power. A picture of Christ that is drawn by a painter they like, and the forbidden image of God made by a carver they will reverence and honour, and be zealous for; but the image of God framed by the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, and described in the lives of the heavenly and the sanctified, this they scorn and scoff at.

[4.] If we do not justify religion, we justify the world. It must needs be so, for these two are opposites, the carnal world and wisdom:

the carnal world must be condemned, and religion justified, or religion will be condemned and the world justified. Some condemn the world: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' Some justify the world, as Israel justified Sodom: Ezek. xvi. 51, 'But thou hast multiplied thy abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.' Their sin seemeth more excusable; you either upbraid their security and carelessness, or countenance it by your own practice; your seriousness is a real rebuke to the carnal world; your working out your salvation in fear and trembling upbraideth their security and carelessness; your rejoicing in God condemneth their carnal delight. When you are troubled about a vain thought, and are watchful against a light word, you condemn them for their looseness and wallowing in all filthiness: but if not, you justify the world, and harden the wicked in their prejudices, and cause them to hold up their course with the greater pretence. When you are wrathful, proud, sensual, turbulent, self-seeking, you are an occasion of stumbling unto them. Cyprian, in his book *DE DUPLICI MARTYRIO*, bringeth in the heathens thus speaking:—*Ecce qui jactant se redemptos à tyrannide Sathane, qui predicant se mortuos mundo, nihilo minus vincuntur à cupiditatibus suis, quam nos quos dicunt teneri sub regno Sathane. Quid prodest illis baptismus, quid prodest Spiritus Sanctus, cujus arbitrio dicunt se temperari? &c.*—'Behold those that boast themselves to be redeemed from the tyranny of the devil, to be dead to the world, to have crucified the flesh: they are overcome by their base and brutish lusts, even as we are, whom they account to be still under the kingdom of the devil. What doth their baptism profit them? what the Holy Ghost, whose direction they profess to live by? Why should we trouble ourselves about changing our course, which is as good as theirs?' So in Salvian's time, the heathens were wont to upbraid the Christians thus: *Ubi est Catholica lex quam credunt? Ubi sunt pietatis, et castitatis exempla que discunt? Evangelia legunt et impudici sunt. Apostolos audiunt, et inebriantur, Christum sequuntur, et capiunt, &c.*—'They talk of a holy Christ, and yet are unjust, unclean, wrathful, covetous; of a meek patient Christ, and yet are rapacious and violent; of holy apostles, and yet are impure in their conversations.' Our author goeth on thus: *Sancta à Christianis fierent, si Sancta Christus docuisset; aestimari à cultoribus potest iste qui colitur, quomodo bonus magister, cujus tam malos esse videmus discipulos?*—'If their Christ were a holy, meek Christ, they would be better,' &c. And as carnal men now speak, For all their godliness and religion that they talk of, our life, and course, and dealings are as good, and honest, and justifiable as theirs.' Thus the wicked are justified in their way.

[5.] Christ will one day justify all his sincere followers before men, and angels, and devils: Luke xii. 8, 'Whosoever shall confess me, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God.' Let us justify his ways, and he will justify us, and our faith at length shall be found to praise, and glory, and honour. Christ will then wipe off

all the aspersions which be cast upon the children of wisdom for godliness-sake, as faction, pride, singularity, hypocrisy; and that which was branded with such ignominious titles, will then be found to be the very wisdom of God.

[6.] Because of the necessity of justifying wisdom in the times we live in. It is said, 2 Peter iii. 3, 'In the last time there shall come scoffers and mockers, walking after their own lusts.' The last days shall be full of these profane scoffers. While truths were new, and the exercises of the Christian religion lovely, there was great concord and seriousness amongst the professors of the gospel, and then profane scoffers were rare and unrequent. Before men's senses were benumbed with the customary use of religious duties, the notions of God were fresh and lively upon their hearts; but afterwards, when the profession of Christianity grew into a form and national interest, and men were rather made Christians by the chance of their birth than choice and rational convictions, then the church was much pestered with this kind of cattle. Especially now are they rife among us, who live in the dregs of Christianity, when men are grown weary of the name of Christ, and the ancient severity and strictness is much lost, and the memory of those miracles and wonderful effects by which our religion was confirmed is almost worn out, or else questioned by men of subtle wits and a prostituted conscience. Therefore now mockers and men of atheistical spirits swarm everywhere, and it concerneth wisdom's children to justify it, and to maintain its former vigour and power.

The use that we may make is double:—

1. To the enemies of wisdom. Judge not of a holy life, and those that profess it, at a distance and by hearsay, but try. We are not afraid to come to the bar with our enemies: John vii. 24, 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' If men would not be blinded with visible appearance, and the mask of passion, prejudice, and interest, and condemn the people of God as they are represented in a false mirror; judge and spare not, and where you find the true spirit of Christianity, take all leave, we desire no other trial; but speak not against things you know not. Try, and judge as you find, where is the deepest sense of the other world, where the most careful preparation to get thither, the joy of faith, the love of holiness. If Christianity will allow that worldly pomp, that vanity and liberty, which others take, then judge the servants of the Lord as guilty of a foolish niceness, preciseness, and singularity; but if we be baptized into these things, and unquestionably and indispensably bound to them, either renounce your baptism, or forbear your censures, or rather choose this clear and pure way to everlasting glory. If you will not stand to God's word, stand to your own sober moods. We will make you yourselves judges, when you are serious and best able to judge of things, not in your passion, when lusts are stirring. When you are entering the confines of eternity, when conscience is likely to speak truth to you, you will wish then you were one of those poor godly men whom now you count proud, humorous, and factious.

2. To the children of wisdom. Do not scandalise the holy ways of God, but justify them; be neither ashamed of them, nor a shame to them; till the ancient strictness be revived, wisdom will never be justified.