

MEAT OUT OF THE EATER;

OR,

HOPES OF UNITY IN AND BY DIVIDED AND DISTRACTED
TIMES:

DISCOVERED IN A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE HONOURABLE
HOUSE OF COMMONS, AT MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,
ON THEIR SOLEMN DAY OF FAST, JUNE 30, 1647.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Honourable HOUSE of COMMONS assembled in Parliament.

THAT which was preached by your command is now published. When the great voice saith, Come up hither, it is an evil modesty to hide among the stuff. In these busy times they are happy to whom God hath vouchsafed the shelter of an obscure privacy; yet, upon a call, we should not consult with our own ease and quiet. The times are violent and blasting, and this poor endeavour is likely to undergo several misconstructions; but, I thank God, I am learning to pass through good report and evil report, 2 Cor. vi. 8, and to disvalue censure when it seizeth upon me in the way of duty. I have dealt freely and impartially against the miscarriages of both parties, and, happily,¹ my liberty may displease some; others may look upon the things offered here as too low and trivial, and not weighty enough to reach the end of the design. Let them remember the intent of these proposals is only to engage to a further consultation about the matter. The entire discourse were fitter for a treatise than a sermon; and yet something is offered which, by the blessing of God, may be serviceable to reduce men from their violences and extremities to some better temper and moderation. Some possibly may dislike the whole design; spirits now are very keen and exasperated; men think it will be a cooling of their zeal if we should a little take off their edge and sharpness: fire will not be quenched without hissing. To these I shall only profess, that if I know mine heart, I abhor all such moderation and compliances as will not stand with Christian zeal, and may disadvantage truth and religion: whatever become of my own party, I would be faithful and true to that interest. I know that as it is hard to be moderate without danger, so also without sin. Men of middle interests do always displease men, and they should be careful they do not displease God. There are many counterfeits of Christian moderation; a cold, or, at best, a tepid indifferency, lukewarm Christians may easily middle it. Carnally-wise neutrality; it is no wonder to see men that observe the times neither hot nor cold. A doubtful uncertainty; *δίψυχοι* are *ἀκατάστατοι*, double-minded men are unstable, James i. 8, and their compliance is promiscuously dispensed. Some possibly may have so

¹ That is, "haply."—Ed.

much of child and self in them as to mind church-peace only as a taking theme, and speak for it rather from their brain than their heart ; others may (like him in Daniel) deal deceitfully, and press a league that they may become strong with a small people, mind moderation for their own advantage ; some, out of a desire of their carnal ease and quiet, may be against stirs. I foresaw these rocks, desired grace to avoid them ; therefore I hope nothing will be found here to occasion any such prejudice and suspicion against this endeavour. However it speedeth abroad, you were pleased to honour it with acceptance, and to do something upon it, which I hope you will revive again when it shall comport with the times. I shall desire God to guide you in that and other your great affairs. The Wonderful Counsellor be with you in all your straits, make you understanding men of the season, careful to apply apt remedies to the distempers of it.

So prayeth your meanest servant in the Lord's work,

THOMAS MANTON.

MEAT OUT OF THE EATER.

In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.—
ZECH. XIV. 9, latter part.

THE whole chapter, but chiefly the context immediately preceding, is spent in the description of a wonderful day, which, ver. 7, is said to be one day; that is, one entire period and joint of providence; for, in the manner of prophetic speech, days are many times put for years, or most usually for such whole entire dispensations and periods of providence as continue without interruption and eminent alteration, though perhaps for many years; for a day, being the natural distinction of time (those of years, hours, and months are artificial) most observed and used by the Hebrews in their computes, and that only space of time which continueth without visible alteration, is very properly used in this case. Thus why day. But then, ver. 9, it is called 'the day of the Lord;' it is called so because of the glorious appearances of Christ in his power and sovereignty, and because, I suppose, the evening of the day here spoken of will end with the coming of the Lord, and all his saints with him, in glory to judge the world. This day is described, ver. 6, 7:—

1. By its beginning and progress.

2. By its end and close.

1. Its beginning and progress for a long while is dubiously interchangeable: 'The light shall neither be clear nor dark; it shall be neither day nor night;' that is, there shall be a sad conflict between truth and error, misery and happiness (for they are often expressed by light and darkness in scripture), and such a mutual vicissitude and alternate succession of each to other, that a man cannot tell which shall have the upper hand. All the comfort is, this day is 'known to the Lord;' that is, cometh by his appointment, and hath a special mark and seal of providence upon it; and but one day, a providence of the shortest size, sad and short, an uncertain day, a day known to the Lord—and but one day.

2. For the evening and close of it, it is said, 'in the evening it shall be light;' that is, peaceably glorious: truth shall gain upon error, happiness upon misery, and all former distractions and miseries shall be hushed and gone, for it is light as comfortable and as much day as

you would have it. The comfort and happiness of this glorious evening is set forth in three things:—

[1.] The propagation of the gospel.

[2.] The reign of Christ.

[3.] The unity of the churches.

[1.] The gospel shall be propagated and the knowledge of it diffused far and near; that is implied in the 8th verse: 'Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem towards the former and latter sea,' &c.; that is, gospel refreshments, the doctrine and knowledge of Jesus Christ, together with plenty of gifts and graces, shall be diffused and scattered abroad among all nations, who are here hinted at in those expressions of the former and latter sea, which allude to the watery borders of Palestina, which were the Lake of Sodom and the Mediterranean. Now it is usual in the scriptures to set out the evangelical church by terms proper to the Jewish border.

[2.] The next privilege of those times is in the beginning of the 9th verse, 'And the Lord shall be king over all the earth.' Why! you will say, the Lord is so always; Christ was long since inaugurated into the kingdom, and hath for many ages actually administered it in the world. But the meaning is, he shall show himself to be king, he shall be known to be king; it is not spoken in regard of right or actual administration, but in regard of sense and apprehension. He will show it partly by his providence and his own dispensations, partly by doctrinal discoveries in the church; men shall more distinctly 'hold of the head,' Col. ii. 18; Phil. ii. 10, 11; partly in the adoration and acknowledgments of men; 'every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue and language call him Lord;' all shall ascribe to him sovereignty; 'the Lord shall be king,' and, it is added, 'over all the earth;' not only over a few churches, but over all nations. Christ will show himself in the largeness of his power, not only as 'king of saints,' Rev. xv. 3, but as 'king of nations,' Jer. x. 9; as 'head to the church,' but yet so as 'over all things,' Eph. i. 22; ruling both with his golden sceptre and also his iron mace. This will be the state and happiness of those times; you will see Christ upon his throne in all his royalty and glory.

[3.] The next privilege is the unity of the churches: in the words of the text, *The Lord shall be one, and his name one.*

By this view we have found the words to be the third privilege of the glorious evening. Observe in them:—

(1.) The time, *in that day.*

(2.) The blessing, which is unity, *The Lord shall be one, and his name one.* Which words do hint—

(1st.) The cause of this unity, there shall be *one Lord*, a joint subscription and submission to Jesus Christ.

(2d.) The measure of it, *one name*, such a unity and conspiring together in the worship of Christ, that all names and badges of distinction shall be taken away.

This resolution of the text doth somewhat open it to you. But let us go upon the words more expressly and directly.

In that day; that is, the day spoken of ver. 1, described ver. 6, 7. What this day is, is somewhat doubted. Most grant it cannot be taken properly, as if all these things could be transacted in the space

of twenty-four hours, though indeed some be so fond as to interpret all these things in the rigour of the letter ; but what is intended then ?

I shall only mention the most probable opinions. Some refer it to the first times of Christianity and the dawns of the gospel in the world ; but sure that is a mistake, for it must be such a day whose morning is miserably troublous, whose evening is eminently glorious, which will hardly agree to those times. Others refer it to the day of judgment ; but though the evening of this day hath no end till then, yet I conceive that is not intended, for these happinesses here mentioned—of the propagation of the gospel, the acknowledgment of Christ's sovereignty, and the peace of the churches, &c.—though rare and high privileges, yet are somewhat lower than those dispensations which Christ will give out at the day of judgment. Others refer them to the times of the calling of the Jews, and the church's recovery from the apostasy and defection of Antichrist ; some more yet more particularly to the destruction of the last enemies, and those secrets about Gog and Magog. For the present, because I drive at other things, I shall forbear the thorough disquisition of this matter, and shall only generally and safely refer the words to some latter providences, probably the times most nearly preceding the day of judgment ; for I conceive this text is exactly parallel to those promises that are everywhere in scripture said to be fulfilled in the latter days, and speak of so much glory and sweetness as then shall be exhibited and dispensed to the world ; therefore, if we will know what this day is, let us know what is intended in that expression, 'the latter days.' It is used either :—

1. More largely, for all that efflux of time and succession of ages between Christ's ascension and his second coming to judge the world. All that time in scripture is looked upon as the latter days, for so the times immediately after Christ are expressly called, Acts ii. 15 ; and I remember the apostle Paul calleth his times 'the ends of the world,' 1 Cor. x. 11 ; the reason of which expressions is, because after Christ's ascension there is no change of dispensations, as there was before, from the law natural to the law of tables, and from the law of tables to the gospel ; but now beyond this time there is nothing but the everlasting state : 'There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin,' Heb. x. 26, no other ways of salvation to be expected beyond the gospel ; this is the largest sense, which not being noted, hath occasioned some mistakes.

2. More strictly for that space of time that immediately precedeth the world's ruin, and that is to be considered in its morning and evening.

[1.] In its morning or former part, which is everywhere in scripture made to be of a dismal and doubtful appearance, and therefore do we so often hear of the evil of the latter times—days full of delusion and desolation, a world of delusion and error there is then : 1 Tim. iv. 1, 'The Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter days, men shall depart from the faith, and give heed to seducing spirits.' God hath expressly foretold what will be the fate of those times. So for desolation, 2 Tim. iii. 1 'In the latter times there shall come hard or perilous times,' *καῖροι χάλεποι*, times of great difficulty and distress.

[2.] In its evening or latter part, which is bright and glorious, and

therefore do we so much hear of the goodness of the latter days ; as Hosea iii. 5, 'They shall make haste to fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.' So of safety ; 'no provoking briar,' 'no pricking thorn,' Ezek. xxviii. 24. So also Isa. ii. 1, 'The mountain of God, above all mountains, in the latter days;' that is, above the reach of opposition and violence. Look, as there is a morning light that goeth before the sunshine, so there are some streaks of glory, and times grow better and better as they draw nearer and nearer to the great day of the Lord. I have done with that expression, *in that day*.

2. The next is *there shall be one Lord*. Hitherto there have been divers lords. The heathens had their several deities, the Turks their Mahomet, the Jews their imaginary Messiah, the Papists their lord the Pope. Many nations do not as yet call Christ Lord : 'Other lords have dominion over them,' Isa. xxvi. 13. But then Jesus Christ shall be the person acknowledged ; he shall be acknowledged alone, he shall be acknowledged as Lord. All this is included in the expression, that Christ alone shall be spoken of, invocated, and adored in all the churches ; they shall be subjected to him as the only king, and guided by him as the 'only shepherd,' Ezek. xxxiv. 23 ; hold of him as the only head, and stand to his appointment as the only lawgiver, James iv. 12. And, indeed, here is the ground of all ; for it is unity of religion that begetteth unity of affection ; the one Lord causeth the one name. When men have one king, give themselves up to the will of Christ, and have one shepherd, guided by the spirit of Christ, and have one lawgiver, are willing their opinions should stand or fall at the appointments of Christ, then will there be a sweet and happy agreement.

3. The last clause to be examined is that, *his name one*. At first I conceived the meaning to be that men should look only at one power and dignity whereby to endear themselves to the respects of God, and thought the expression parallel to these scriptures : Acts iv. 12, 'That there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved,' but only by Jesus Christ, this is the one name ; or that, Phil. ii. 10, 'That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.' But considering it more seriously, I saw the necessity of another sense, for this is but the result and effect of the former phrase. Now it seems to be added for the greater emphasis and aggravation of the mercy, that there should be not only one Lord, but one name ; therefore, what is intended ? There are divers acceptions of the name of God in scripture. That which I conceive most proper is, when it is taken for worship, the way of our religion and profession ; as Micah iv. 5, 'All people will walk every one in the name of his God, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever ;' that is, several people have their several distinct ways of worship and profession, and the reason why the scripture useth this word in this matter is because men are called and named after the way of their worship and profession ; thus the holy worshippers are called Christians from Christ, and Mahometans from Mahomet, &c. ; and, among Christians, men are called according to their distinct way and chief opinion, as Papists, Socinians, Arminians, &c. Well, then, it is promised here that there shall be one name ; that is, as one Lord, so one way of worship and badge of distinction. We see now, and we may bewail it, that among

the holy people there are distinct names, as Lutherans, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Independents; but then all these shall vanish and be no more heard of; the whole family shall be named Christians from Christ. And, indeed, this is no mean blessing; the devil gets great advantage by names, and, therefore, his instruments are busy this way, inventing such as may either tend to contempt and derision,¹ as Chrestians of old, Puritans of late; or to tumult and division, as those names amongst us under which the members of Christ sadly gather into bodies and parties.

I have done with the explication; I come to the points, they are two:—

Doct. 1. That in the latter days there shall be great unity in the church of God.

Doct. 2. That this unity shall spring from their acknowledging of the right Lord and the right way.

Purity is the ground of this unity. I shall at this time discuss the first point, that in the latter days there shall be great unity and agreement. The main confirmation of the point lieth in promises, for that is the assurance we have of it; however, I shall forbear to heap up scriptures together. You will find many in this discussion reduced to their proper place and heads.

The reasons are these:—

1. Because this will suit best with the quiet and happy estate of those times; God will usher in the glorious and everlasting estate by some preparative degrees; the latter times are more blessed times, 'former things are to be done away,' Rev. xxi. That is, the former kind of dispensations and providences. Many promises there are which hint the great peace and rest that shall then be in the church. Now that could not be if there were divisions and distinctions; they would produce factions, and factions wars and contentions, and the contentions desolations: Amos vii. 4, 'The fire devoured the great deep;' that is, contention brought desolation upon places and countries that are most populous. Public differences will end in public disturbances; this is all we can look for in such cases; and therefore, if there were not unity, how could the other promises be fulfilled?—such as these: Isa. xxxiii. 20, 'Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be taken down; the stakes thereof shall not be removed, nor the cords broken.' It is spoken of the church in the times of the gospel, whose state hitherto hath been most disturbed and perplexed, like the ark upon the waves. It may be there hath been some relaxation and short breathing time, as it is said, Rev. viii. 1, 'There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour;' a little respite given to the church in Constantine's beginning, till Licinius (because not equally prayed for and honoured by the Christians with Constantine) raised a new persecution then; and so at other times there hath been silence for the space of half an hour, but then the miseries returned again with violence enough. Only in the latter days is Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a fixed tent; then there are not such uncertain happiness, and such interchangeable removes. So Ezek. xxviii. 24, 'And there shall be no more any pricking thorn,

¹ 'Ipsium nomen perperam a vobis pronunciatum Christianus.'—*Tertull. in Apol.*, cap. cccx.

nor any provoking briar of all that are round about her.' God hath promised to take away all provocation and molestation, and whatever is grievous; therefore all the cause of its difference and disagreement. Differences in religion stir up the greatest violences and most deadly hatred; that which should restrain and bridle our passions is the fuel of them. As long as there is difference in religion and worship there will be disturbances, and there cannot be that quiet and happy security which the promises do generally annex to those times.

2. Because God will then make some visible provision against the scandal of dissensions: the glory of Christ hath been mightily darkened by them; no such stone of stumbling and rock of offence to the world as the contrariety of opinions and great differences that have been among Christians. Observe and you will find it always to be the great prejudice against Christianity in the primitive times. Sozomen saith, many would turn Christians, but they were always discouraged by that dissonancy of doctrines and opinions that were amongst them.¹ And so Chrysostom speaketh of a certain Ethnick that came unto him and told him, I would become a Christian, but there is such variety of sects among you that I cannot anchor upon anything as certain in your religion.² Certainly nothing begets atheism so much as this. Men have suspected the gospel because there hath been such differences and strife about it, it makes them doubt of all to see distinct factions making the word of God ductile and pliable to so many several purposes. Therefore now a universal unity would much vindicate and recover the glory of Christ out of the hands of such a scandal, and be an excellent provision for the credit of Christianity. To this end Christ prayeth and urgeth this very argument to his Father: John xvii. 23, 'Let them all be one;' and again, 'Let them be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me;' as if he had said, Father! thou knowest how easily the world do take up any prejudice against my doctrine; now, if there should be division among my worshippers, they will think the gospel a fable, religion but a device. Oh! let them be perfect in one, that the world may know and own me for the true Messiah. Should we go to our own experiences, this we find amongst ourselves, that religion never lost its awe so much as now. God was terrible in his holy places, in the assemblies of his saints, and in the lives of his holy people, the gravity and the strictness of their conversation had a majesty with it, and did dart reverence and awe into the hearts of men; but now all this glory and power is lost, and religion is looked upon but as an empty pretence and covert to some designs. It is said, Acts iv. 32, 33, 'The multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul,' and then the truths of Christ 'had power,' and 'great grace fell upon them.' Christianity hath more lustre when there is such a common consent and sweet brotherly accord. The truths of God have their power, and the servants of God their grace with them.

¹ Πολλοὺς χριστιανίζεν ἀπέτρεπεν ἡ διαφωνία τῶν δογμάτων.

² 'Venit Gentilis quidam et dicit, Vellem fieri Christianus, sed nescio cui parti adhaeream; multe enim sunt inter vos pugnae, seditiones et tumultus: nescio quod dogma eligam, quod preferam, singuli enim dicunt, Ego verum dico. Hanc obcausam ridiculo facti sumus et Gentilibus et Judæis, dum ecclesia in mille partes scinditur.' &c.—*Chrys. in Epist. ad Galat.*, cap. i.

Well, then, the scandal being so great, the prayer of Christ so urgent, God will at one time or another do somewhat eminently and visibly to right the honour of Jesus Christ, and to recover the lustre of Christianity and our glorious profession; for I take this for granted, that, at some special times, God will roll away the reproach of every imminent scandal that hath been cast upon Christ and religion. And because God loveth, like the good householder, to bring forth the best wine at last, it hath not been done hitherto, but is reserved for the latter days; for, indeed, you shall find that all the latter providences are but so many vindications and clearings of Christ from the former scandals of the world; as for the scandal of meanness hitherto, 'not many noble, not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are called.' Christ's company hath been despicable and poor, but now, in the latter days, it is everywhere promised that 'kings shall bring their glory into the church,' that they 'shall hold their mouths' at Christ, Isa. lii. 15; that is, with silence and reverence receive his commands; and the like everywhere. So for the scandal of persecution, it is everywhere declared that in the latter days the enemies shall be the subjected party, glad to 'take hold of the skirt of a Jew,' Zech. viii.; 'Bow to the soles of their feet,' Isa. lx.; the magistrates shall call the inhabitants of Jerusalem their strength; and the like elsewhere. So, again, the church hath been under the abasure of reproaches; but God hath promised a vindication in the latter days, that he will 'establish Zion a praise throughout the earth,' 'set it as a royal diadem,' Isa. lxii. 3, with the 7th; that 'he will give them praise in the land of their shame,' Zeph. iii., proportionably to their abasures that they shall have glory. So for paucity and fewness, which is another scandal, there are promises of the gospel's being propagated, of the flowing out of living waters, of the flying in of converts like 'doves to the windows,' Isa. lx., and the like. So in this present case, because of the variance of the people of Christ under former dispensations, there are promises of special unity and sweet accord in the latter days, of one Lord and one King, of one Shepherd, 'one Head,' Hosea i. 11; 'of one shoulder,' Zeph. iii. 9; and that God will make Jew and Gentile, and all that fear him, to lie down together in peace and safety, and to be all called by one name.

3. The misery of these times doth seem to enforce the greater unity. I take this for the manner and course of heaven, to work one contrary out of another, by the greatest distractions to make way for unity and order. It is said, Ps. xviii. 11, 'He hath made darkness his secret place.' God's counsels are always carried under the covert of darkness; usually, when he intendeth the greatest flourishing, he worketh the greatest desolation in the earth; and when unity, he suffereth the greatest distraction (for what grounds I shall tell you by and by); hence is it that we do so often hear of the misery of the latter times, and yet again of the blessedness of the latter times; hard times, and happy times, miserable in the beginning, happy in the end and issue. Hell is let loose in the latter times: 'they shall give heed to seducing spirits;' and heaven is opened in the latter times: there shall be great light and rare love. When there is such a conflict and contestation between light and darkness, the light will be the clearer

afterwards, and the more doubtful the day is, the more glorious will the evening be; for this, I say, is the law and the course of divine dispensations, after the greatest distractions to bring forth the greatest harmony, and the most blessed sweetness and accord; therefore, there being in the latter days such eminent and visible distraction, by the proportions of heaven there will be eminent and visible unity. Of this, more by and by.

To application.

Use 1, of consolation. For consolation to all them that wait or care for the consolation of Israel. Many are ready to faint and stagger at the distractions of the times: Judges v. 15, 'For the divisions or breaches of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart,' or, as the original will bear it, 'great impressions.' These things, indeed, do sadly work with a gracious spirit; the enemies warm themselves by these sparkles, and rejoice over the fire that devoureth the great deep; others, whose hearts are bathed and steeped in pleasures, or cumbered with worldly cares, have not a due sense of the times, and are not enough affected with them; but now, for the people of God, external miseries are not so bad to them, and do not so nearly reach a gospel spirit as differences in religion. Oh! it is very sad to see the roses of the valleys become pricking thorns, and saints in pretence to be devils in practice to one another, the sheep of Christ's own fold to be like the bulls of Bashan, goring and wounding each other; and would our hearts were more affected with it! But here is comfort; God foresaw how troublous and distracted the morning of the latter days would be, and therefore, that we might not be dismayed, hath given us many a comfortable promise to support our hearts under such providences. When God framed the world there was nothing but confusion; you do not know what God can extract out of a chaos. Two things I shall urge upon you to set home this comfort:—

1. Consider your hopes.

2. Know the reason of such providences.

1. Consider your hopes; your times are not to be measured and valued by appearances; it least of all becometh a Christian to observe the clouds: Rom. viii. 24, 'Hope that is seen is not hope;' that is, those that would hope are not to judge by the present face of things, but by the promises. Teach your faith to see things that cannot be seen, beauty in distractions, unity and order in violence and division: faith is exercised not when you get water out of the fountain, but out of the rock; when you make the eater give you meat, devouring differences yield comfort and hope. It is better to look to a sure word than to an uncertain providence. See what a promise you have, Isa. xi. 6-8, 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw with the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den,' &c. I will not undertake to assign a sense to every particular expression; only in the general note, God will effect it,

though there be no more hopes than to see lion and lamb, leopard and kid come together, and to persuade natures that are most fierce and contrary unto a peaceable and friendly cohabitation.

2. Know the reason of such providences. Men are perplexed when they do not know the reason of things; fear seizes upon us in the dark: Judges vi. 13, 'If the Lord be with us, why is all this evil befallen us?' They did not know the reason of the matter, and therefore were troubled at it. If there be such promises of unity, why are there such sad things befallen us? such great breaches and distractions, the ball of contention bandied from one to another, clouds gathering every day thicker and blacker? You will think this is but an ill time to look for unity, such general consent and agreement. Alas! you err, not knowing the reason of your providences; God useth to bring in unity and order by confusions. There are divers reasons for it: I shall name three, which may encourage hope in the saddest times:—

[1.] God doth not love to let the creature look to the end of his designs, and skill the way of his providences; therefore, he will try them by casting a veil upon his work, and hiding his glory in a cloud: Isa. xlv. 15, 'Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour.' He meant to be a Saviour, but they should know no such thing, a Saviour under a veil, a hidden Saviour. Providences are so disposed as if he meant to do quite otherwise; so Isa. xlviii. 7, 'They are created now, not from the beginning, lest thou shouldst say, I knew them.' God speaketh concerning the matter of Babylon and the ruin of that empire, which should be effected so strangely that none should see which way providence tended, or say, Now I know what God will do. God loveth to hide the particular way and path of his providence, so that your times shall seem not to have the least connection or respect to your hopes; it is so in all his dealings; see John xi. 6. Jesus loved Lazarus, and when he heard he was sick, he abode two days; little love in that, to stand still when there was need of help; yet that stay was for the advantage of the miracle and commendation of his love. So John ii.; when Christ meant to give them wine he calleth for water-pots; for God will not have you look to the way and end of his counsels; *Deus sum non sequax*, as Luther seemed to hear God speak to him when he complained of some cross providences. The creatures are not to teach God how to effectuate his promises; there is encouragement enough to wait, even when the face of things doth most lour upon your expectations.

[2.] Because God will show you a point of divine skill, to make poison become your preservative, and your ruin your establishment; he will unite you by your divisions, gather you by your own scatterings. Judas's treason was called *felix scelus*, a happy wickedness, because it occasioned Christ's death. Many times God maketh contentions happy in their issue and result, and though for the present their influence is very deadly to religion, yet their effect is confirmation to the truth, and, in the end, God's people are brought more firmly and sweetly to close with one another and their God. The noise of axe and hammers doth but square stones for the temple, that they may lie the more evenly in the buildings. Usually we find that religious controversies (like the knocking of flints) yield more light, and, by the providence

of God, occasion more sincere love. Before we had but a negative affection to truth, and might rather be said not to hate than to love it. Every vulgar and low spirit will love truth when it is honoured and advantaged with common consent: true affections are ravished with the beauty of truth, and have some positive ground for which they can love truths; yea, and the more when they are suspected and questioned, for then they shine with the greater lustre, as being able to endure contradiction, and as being more strongly vindicated and asserted. Thus, you know, trees shaken are the more firmly rooted, and dislocated joints, if well set again, prove the stronger, as in the point of assurance. After doubtings, the soul doth most sweetly and closely repose itself in the bosom of Christ, so outwardly the more smoke there is in the temple, the greater glory afterward. In times of common consent men keep together as those that are bound with a chain; but in times of difference and dissenting, God's people are at one with God and one another upon higher motives, and love truth for its own sake, it being, as I said, more cleared and vindicated. I have often wondered at that inference of the people of God, Micah iv. 5, 'All people will every one of them walk in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.' That which is a scandal to the world, is to them a motive and engagement to firmness in the truth and union with one another. There are different ways and persuasions in the world, therefore let us the more cleave together in the right way; the variety that was abroad made them more at one. So at that of David, Ps. cxix. 126, 127, 'They have made void thy law, therefore do I love thy commandments above gold.' When the ways of God are questioned, nay, disannulled, exploded with contempt and scorn, the more precious to a gracious heart: therefore do I love them, saith David; that was the very motive of his affection, ver. 127.

[3.] Because God loveth to bestow blessings when the creatures most want them, to give them the greatest unity after the greatest distractions, that their blessings may be according to the rate and degree of their miseries and abasement. God, I say, loveth to make 'consolations abound,' 2 Cor. i. 5, in the very degree of sufferings, and therefore you may bear up in the greatest breaches. When God meant them Canaan, he would first give them enough of the wilderness, enough to carry some proportion with the future happiness: Deut. ii. 3, 'Ye have compassed this mountain long enough, turn you northward.' They had been thirty-nine years compassing Mount Seir; it might have been done in so many weeks or days, but the pillar of the cloud never went before them till now. God may make you fetch compass enough about this mountain, keep you in the wilderness of distractions, ere you can see providence before you leading of you into better times. You shall see the people of God in the wilderness did plead the equity of this rule and course of heaven: Ps. xc. 15, 'Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.' It was the prayer of Moses in the desert, let Canaan countervail the wilderness. The longer in the distractions, the more abundance of honey and milk shall we find in that good land, more flowings of grace, larger discoveries of the mind of God.

Well, then, be sensible of the evil of the times, but with comfort in the Lord, and hope in the promises.

Object. But you will say, These are generals that concern the whole church : especially at such a season, what do you say to our distempers and distractions ?

Sol. Though the part followeth the reason of the whole, and God's dispensations are alike to both the catholic and particular churches, so that what is said of the whole may be applied to a part, as many times, on the contrary, promises made to particular persons are reputed as catholic and of a more universal use, and so applied to the whole, yet I shall speak a little more expressly to our own case.

Much may be spoken in this matter about the cause and cure of our distempers, the danger of the times and the hopes. But because this would engage to too large a digression, and the discourse will rather be managed and carried on by rational conjectures than sure and theological grounds, therefore I shall wait for a more convenient season, and but a little touch upon matters that otherwise would challenge an accurate discussion.

None can be ignorant of the state of the times,—that a spirit of division and delusion is let loose and gone abroad amongst us, so that the pillars of religion are shaken, the most concerning truths questioned, nay, exploded with scorn and contempt ; great agitations there are everywhere, and God only knoweth whereunto they will grow. It is a thing of great advantage and benefit to us to consider the ground and rise of our distempers, and what is the special genius of that spirit of error that worketh amongst us, and so possibly we may come to conceive some hope of the allaying and removal of it. Divers concurring causes there are that help to beget, conceive, bring forth, and midwife such foul productions into the world, and therefore, before I touch upon the hopes, I shall a little reflect upon the rise and growth of our dissentiency and division, and how it came to be thus with us as now it is. We may let pass the general causes, viz., God's providence, who usually maketh the morning of a glorious day misty and dark ; Satan's malice, who, when his own holds are shaken, loveth to ruin all the world together with himself ; the corruptions of embased nature, by which the heart is either weak, and so apt to prostitute itself to the grossest fancies if left by God, or wicked, and so naturally opposite to the truths of God, very willing to blot out those impressions and that sense that we have of them. I say, if we let pass these general causes, we shall find upon an inquiry that thus our evils grew upon us : First, they were hatched by the ignorance, iniquity, and violence of the former times (when things are very bad, men are apt to fly out into the contrary extremities), and began to break out upon this great change, which the former corruptions did even necessitate and enforce ; as usually, you know, great and violent changes occasion great tumults, ill humours in the body discover themselves upon a strain. When God changed his own ordinances, erroneous spirits were busy ; I mean, in the first times of the gospel. When a people begin to innovate, it is a hard matter to keep them within the bounds of any moderation ; and, therefore, it is the policy of the church of

Rome to change nothing, *ne videatur errasse*; reformations are very perilous, especially to corrupt bodies. Here, then, was the occasion, and indeed a sad occasion to many, who, in the extremity of opposition to antichristian ways, obtruded themselves upon as sad or worse inconveniences, going off not only from vain rites, but religion itself; and instead of leaving corruptions, left worship; and, indeed, any other thing could not be expected, if we consider how loose and slack the reins of government have been of late, with what violence and tumult this change was managed, not in the solemn, grave way of conviction and humiliation. Buildings stand whose foundations are laid in those deeps; but otherwise it will be hard to settle things; partly because till the error be rightly stated the truth is not found out; partly because such changes make men lose all awe and reverence in the matter of religion, and so every man digresseth into his own way, and adareth the idol of his own brain. Usually you will find whatever is carried on by scoffs and popular tumults seldom succeedeth well. I confess God loveth to 'pour contempt upon the sons of Levi that are partial in the covenant,' Mal. ii. 9; and, it is his way many times to cause the voice of many waters (*id est*, of the confused multitude) to go before the voice of mighty thunderings, Rev. xix. 6 (*id est*, the regular act of the magistrate, whose sentences and decrees are terrible as thunder); and therefore I do adore the justice of divine providence in causing the former ministry to become base and contemptible before all the people. But, however, I cannot but sadly bewail the mischiefs that abound amongst us by the neglect of men. Though the corruptions of Episcopacy made it justly odious, yet it would have been better it had been disputed down rather than jested down; arguments would have done more good than scoffs, besides the danger of returning to folly. Do but consider the present inconveniences of making so great a change without more public and rational conviction, when things that before were of reverend esteem are of a sudden decried. What is the effect? Why! religion itself is of less esteem; men suspect all can as well scoff out truth as error. Calvin's observation is excellent: he saith that in times of changes there are *lucianici homines qui jocose et per ludibrium garrunt adversus superstitiones papatus, interim nullo tanguntur timore Dei*, &c.—many that are of Lucian's temper, who, by jesting against received rites, insensibly lose all sense and awe of religion, and by scoffing at false gods, come the less to dread the true. Consider and see if the former liberty of tongues and pens hath not begotten that present irreverence and fearlessness that is in the spirits of men against things that undoubtedly are of God. But this is not all; do but consider how many are hardened in their old ways, and prejudiced against the reformers, as if they were men that did *procedere non ad perfectionem sed ad permutationem*, were men given to changes, Prov. xxiv. 21, merely to leave things out of passion and present dislike, or, which is worse, out of self-aims, and are ready to say of them, as Austin said of some one who appeared against the pagans, *non pietate everterunt idola, sed avaritia*—only to divide the spoil; and all this because the grounds, reasons, and necessity of the change have not been publicly enough discovered. And truly it were very well if the loose principles and indirect practices of some did not give occasion to these slanders. All

that I shall further say is this, that to leap out of one way into another, either out of base aims or without due shame and sense of former mis-carriages, will but make our own station the more questionable, for, certainly, self-respects have no majesty with them; and though we be in the right, yet having a wrong heart, God recompenseth into our own bosoms the very measure of our dealing with others. We now have found the great occasion of the spreading of those evils amongst us which were hatched under the iniquity of the former times, and possibly led alone as the last reserve against endeavours of reformation, and now meeting with a people capable of such impressions, who love to wander, Jer. xiv. 10, they are the more easily diffused and propagated. Some are ensnared by their own pride and foolish singularity; others by discontent, base aims, unworthy reflections upon their honour, profits, &c.; most by a spirit of opposition against the ministry: God hath set us out to be men of contention to the whole earth, Jer. xv. 10. Those that are *censores morum*, whose office is to tax public abuses, will be looked upon as men of strife. We might justly suspect ourselves if this were not the portion of our cup. This spirit certainly acteth many: enemies will snarl when the great voice biddeth the witnesses come up hither, Rev. xi. 12. Surely some do behold their late ascension and glory with envy and indignation, others possibly may be led by a desire of being somebody in the world. Simon Magus would be *τις μέγας*, Acts viii. 9; there is a natural itch and desire after mastership in Israel. James checketh it, James iii. 1, 'My brethren, be not many masters: we naturally affect the honour of this chair: some bottles will burst if they have not vent, Job xxxii. 19. Tertullian observeth that this was the reason why divers went over to the Gnostics and the opposite parties in his time:¹ young men, and men otherwise unfit, presently commenced into some esteem and mastership. Thus you see different menaced by different spirits, and all one way or another increasing the distractions of the times, which, being thus occasioned and diffused, are supported and kept up by factions and parties, men severally prosecuting their cross designs without any regard to the truth and advantage of religion; and if any party be opposed and discountenanced, their delusion is the more strong by a supposal of persecution; for, by comparing their state with the state of the people of God, who suffered under the fury of former times, their prejudices are increased, and they think it can be no less than religion, and truth of zeal for the glory of God, to expose themselves to so many hazards; and they do the more confidently believe it, because God's witnesses have mostly prophesied in sackcloth; and hitherto Christ hath appeared for the most part against the worship and customs of nations. John saith Christ came into the world, 1 John iii. 8, *ἵνα ἀναλύσῃ*, to unravel Satan's webs: he hath been indeed acting the demolishing rather than the adstructive part; but therefore they go away with erroneous mistakes, as if he would never build, establish, and set up, and as if the kings of the earth should never bring in their

¹ 'Nusquam citius proficitur quam in castris rebellium, nunc neophytos collocant, nunc sæculo obstrictos, nunc apostatas nostros, ut gloria eos obligent quos veritate non possunt.' —*Tertul. lib. de Prescrip. Adversus Hæreticos*, cap. xli.

glory to the church, and martyrs were made so more by the blood and suffering than by the cause.¹

Thus I have touched upon the causes and state of the present distempers. Much more might be said upon this subject, but now I was only willing to point at the heads of things. But you will say, Then what hopes? I answer—Our wound is grievous, but not incurable; many things there are to encourage us to keep silence, and wait upon God till he ordain better things for us. Let me speak a word or two on this matter. Consider, then, errors usually are not long-lived; the next age declareth the folly of them: 1 Cor. iii. 13, ‘The day shall declare it.’ Time will show what is stubble and hay, though men have high thoughts of it for the present. We raise so much dust by the heat of our contentions that our eyes are blinded, the glory of truth darkened; but things will clear up again: we wonder at the contests of former ages, and so will they at ours. ‘When God cometh into his holy temple, all the earth will keep silence,’ Hab. ii. 20. The nearer we approach to Antichrist’s ruin, God will give out more light, Rev. xviii. Babylon fell when the earth was enlightened with the angel’s glory. Light will increase towards the perfect day; and as light increaseth, so doth love; that great unity, spoken of before, is when there shall be more knowledge, for that is the reason rendered, Isa. xi. 9, ‘For the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the world as the waters cover the sea.’ And then, again, the devil usually overacts himself by appearing in some odious delusion, no longer as an angel of light, but as a foul fiend, in such direct opposition to Christ that all good men loathe him. Usually when God maketh any great change, things come to an extremity and excess of corruption. The Arians prevailed for a long time, but being so detestably vicious and insolently cruel, they ruined their own cause. Or else Satan runneth himself out of breath in some civil commotions.

The Remonstrants in the Low Countries quite overturned their cause when they began to raise tumults and troubles everywhere; so those under the conduct of Munster, in Germany, did but run themselves violently, like the Gadarenes’ swine, Mat. viii. 32, upon their own ruin and destruction. Usually when Satan hath such great wrath, his time is but short, Rev. xii. 12. God delighteth mightily to ruin him by the violence of his own endeavours.

Use 2, for exhortation. It serveth to exhort and press you to hasten and set on these hopes. Promises do not exclude action, but engage to it. Hope keepeth up endeavours; what you do in this kind will not be in vain in the Lord. The promises hold forth unity; strive after it.

1. By prayers.

2. By endeavours.

1. By prayers. When things are otherwise irremediable, here is the last refuge: Ps. cxxii. 6, ‘Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love it.’ If you love it, that is the least you can do, to mourn over the matter to God; indeed sometimes it is all that we can do. Learned Perkins² said of his times, *Non sunt ista litigandi tem-*

¹ ‘Non sanguis sed causa facit martyrem.’

² Perkinsius Epist. ad Leot. Harm. Bibl.

pora, sed orandi—prayers are fitter for these times than disputes. Carnal zeal may put us upon disputes; it is true zeal that puts us upon prayer, when we are so tenderly affected for God's glory as that, in that respect, we can go and mourn over the matter to him. When Luther thought to redress the evils of his times, one told him, *Abi in cellam et dic, Miserere nostri*—go and cry, Lord, have mercy upon us. Truly things seem past help and cure: I but go and urge the matter to God; that which is marvellous in our eyes, Zech. viii. 6, is not so in his; a man goeth most cheerfully to the throne of grace when he hath the encouragement of a particular promise. Here is a promise not only to the case but to the times, 'In that day there shall be one Lord, and one name;' and that you may not think it a casual promise and comfortable word that dropped out of the mouth of God unawares, you shall see it is a blessing full in the eye of the general covenant; for it is very observable that when the tenor of the covenant is expressed, unity is made one of the chief blessings of it: Jer. xxxii. 39, 'I will give them one heart and one way for the good of them, and of their children after them.' Mark, he saith in the former verse that he will be their God, and they shall be his people, which is the form of the covenant; and then he undertaketh to give them one heart and one way, union in opinion and union in affections: so Ezek. xix. 11, 'I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them.' It is a main branch of the covenant to give them one heart, a heart united to God, and so to one another. Urge God then with his own promise and covenant; be instant and earnest with him: 2 Thes. iii. 16, 'The Lord of peace give you peace always, by all means;' the Lord of peace, God that loveth it, God that worketh it; and the latter phrases, *always* and *by all means*, note the vehemency and intentness of his desires. One way or another, let God find out a means to ordain peace for you. For your encouragement consider, you do not only pray, but Christ prayeth with you; Christ intercedeth with the Father for the same thing: John xvii. 21, 'That they may be all one, and that they may be perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me.' That prayer is but the copy of his continual intercession. He knoweth what a scandal it is to his name, &c., and therefore he saith, Let them be one. Now, this is a great comfort when Christ prayeth for the same thing for which you pray; he is worthy to be heard though you be not; God will not refuse him that speaketh in heaven, however he dealeth with poor crawling worms on earth.

2. By endeavours. Follow hard after it. I shall speak here to the people in general, then to the ministry, and then shall be bold to lay two or three considerations at the feet of this honourable assembly to help on this work.

First, To the people. Oh! that all of us would now mind the things of peace and holiness in these distracted times: 'The great house is smitten with clefts, and the little house with breaches,' Amos vi. 11. There are divisions in cities, divisions in families, divisions in councils, divisions in the kingdom, and yet few healers of the breaches. We are already at a great distance, and yet we do *in alia omnia ire*, seek to go farther off from one another. Some make it a

piece of their religion and zeal to dissent and be otherwise minded. Christ saith love shall wax cold in the latter days, Mat. xxiv. 12; the context showeth it is meant of this dispensative love. Ludolfus said, the world was at first destroyed with water for the heat of lusts; but it will be destroyed with fire for the coldness of love.¹ Oh! that we could stir you up to endeavour peace and reconciliation. The first work is the people's; things are most managed according to your love and hatred. Herod could do nothing to John for fear of the people, and it is said of others they could not do what they would because of the people. Oh! therefore, come, as the people did to John, and say, What shall we do?

Truly much is to be done by you. I shall touch upon a few things. Besides reconciling yourselves to God, which is the best way to make others be at peace with you, and is to be heeded in a chief place; for when you are at one with God, he will give you the one heart, and one way with other of his people: all agreement ariseth from that oneness with God and Christ; but, I say, besides this general rule, let me entreat you to mind these things.

[1.] Let every one of us mortify such ill affections as may any way engage us to a disturbance and vexatious bitterness. Ill affections do as often divide us as ill opinions; wars come from our lusts, James iv. 1; distempered spirits occasion distracted times. It is observed that when there was strife among the Philippians, the apostle doth not state the controversies, but giveth rules against pride and vainglory and self-seeking, Phil. ii. 3, 4. There are many evils in the heart of man. I shall instance in these: There is an itch of novelty; naturally we adore things that are new; they flocked about Paul because they supposed him a setter forth of new gods, Acts xvii. Seneca observeth right, *Homini ingenitum est magis nova quam magna mirari*—men admire a glaring meteor and comet more than they do the glorious sun. So pride; that will make a man singular. There is a holy singularity: Prov. xxx. 31, the going of the he-goat is comely; that is, as he walketh before the flock. Thus to be a leading man in religion is honourable, but pride puts a man upon an evil singularity, Col. ii. 18, 'intruding himself into things not seen, being puffed up with his own fleshly mind.' It puts men upon ungrounded conceits, quintessential extracts, foolish niceties. So envy; that begets an evil eye upon each others' renown and esteem: therefore, when God would reconcile Ephraim and Judah, he would take away their envy: 'And Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim,' Isa. xi. 13. So revenge and discontent. Porphyry and Julian, two bitter enemies, receiving injuries from the church, became atheists. The devil worketh upon stomach and discontent, thoughts of disrespect. So there is self-seeking: men care not what they do so they may accommodate their own ends; they 'speak perverse things to draw disciples after them,' Acts xx. 30. Some men love to be in the head of a train, and therefore, if God's truths will not serve their ends, they can easily baulk them. So self-conceit; men make idols of their own conceptions, love an opinion *non quia veram sed quia suam*, not because it is true, but theirs; they are angry because others dissent from them, not from

¹ Ludolfus de Vita Christi, lib. ii. cap. 87.

Christ; as appeareth plainly, because those that know little or nothing of the mind of Christ make most bitter and loud outcries against errors. Men are passionate in their own cause, and would have every one embrace their fancies: pray, what is the spring of all your disputes? Self, or Christ's glory? I cannot go over all the corruptions; only you see from small sparkles a great fire is kindled; that which goeth up in thin exhalations descendeth in great showers; that which is at first but a lust, a vain desire, a corrupt working in your own hearts, is at length a tumult and combustion in a church or state. Therefore, in the general, note that a mortified spirit is the most peaceable.

[2.] Keep yourselves pure from ill opinions. You must as carefully avoid an error in judgment as a vice in conversation; many dally with errors, not considering the danger of them. Oh! consider, God hateth filthiness of the spirit as well as filthiness of the flesh, and a vain mind is as great a judgment as vile affections, Rom. i. 26, 28: Yea, certainly, to the public, errors are more dangerous than vices, for vices and gross sins are more against natural awe and shame, and so less spreading, and though we yield to sin in ourselves, yet we do not love it in others; and so among persons openly vicious there is nothing to allure and draw into a faction or party. Therefore be cautious and wary, if not for your own soul, yet for the common peace; as Tertullian said to Scapula, *Si non vis tibi parcere, parce Carthagini*. So, if you will not pity yourselves, pity England; a man would be careful of being accessory to a kingdom's or a church's ruin; where the influence of an action is so public, you had need proceed with good deliberation and advice. However, that I may not in this point seem to press too hard upon any one party, let me discover the extremities on both hands. There are two evils abroad—easy credulity and stubborn prejudice,¹ and both of them increase the differences, whilst some men's judgments are forestalled by a tradition, others seduced by an invention; therefore it is good to take the mean between both, which is the course the apostle prescribeth, 1 Thes. v. 21, 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good;' prove all things, that we reject not truth by over-much prejudice; hold fast that which is good, that we close not with error by over-much credulity. You owe so much to everything that pretendeth to God as to consider it. When Ehud told Eglon, 'I have a message from God, he arose out of his seat,' Judges iii. 20. I say, you owe so much reverence to everything that challengeth descent from heaven as to weigh the claim. I do the rather urge this, because the adversaries of Christianity have been always those that have least inquired into it. Tertullian observeth it of the enemies of the truth in his days, *volentes audire quod auditum damnare non possent*—they would not hear that which they had a mind to hate.² God, that gave man reason, never intended that he should take up love or hatred by chance; therefore it is good to try things. Sometimes a man may meet with an angel unawares, Heb. xiii. 2; only, on the other hand, remember I persuade you to a

¹ 'Inter juvenile judicium et senile prejudicium omnis veritas corrumpitur.'

² Vide Tertullianum hoc fusius et eleganter persequentem sub initio Apologetici adversus Gentes.

serious search, not to an easy credulity, not to play with opinions as if there were no hurt in them, but to examine them in the fear of God, to call in the help of the Spirit, and to use all the outward helps God hath left to the church. The priest's lips are to preserve knowledge; and the apostle saith, Eph. iv. 12, 14, that 'God hath given pastors and teachers, that we be no more tossed about with every wind of doctrine.' That is a help which God hath provided against this evil, and it is presumptuous arrogance to despise it.

[3.] Do not appropriate Christ to any one party or sort of professors. The apostle reproveth those that said, 'I am of Christ,' as well as those that said, 'I am of Paul,' 1 Cor. i. 13. Those that spake as if Christ were only theirs, they were accounted a faction too. Jude wrote in times of division and delusion, and he calleth the salvation a 'common salvation,' Jude's Epistle, ver. 3; mine, and yours, and theirs too. Men should not speak as if they only were holy, they only were saints, and all others but the world at the best, but civil and convinced men. Nothing enrageth more than to confine Christ to an opinion, as if all religion did begin and end with it. Naturally we are apt to do so; we envy the commonness of Christian privileges; but it should not be so among the Lord's people. There were differences at Corinth, but how doth Paul write to them? 1 Cor. i. 2, 'To the saints at Corinth, and to all that call on the name of Jesus Christ, theirs and ours.' Mark that clause, 'theirs and ours;' he checketh this natural envy in us which would impale and inclose the free Christ, the common salvation. It was an expression Tertullian used of some in his time, *illic ipsum esse est promereri*—it was religion enough to be one of them.¹ Oh! certainly this is not Christian. We must own that of God that we see in them, though they do not every way come up to our mind. We prize a jewel in a toad's head; how much more should we love grace in brethren whose blemish is only some petty dissent. Christ loved the young man, Mark x. 21, for the moral good that was in him; and I remember, in another place, he checketh his disciples for prohibiting one to do miracles in his name, because he did not follow them. It is in Mark ix. 38-40, where he speaketh expressly to this very case; it is most Christian to own the work of the Spirit everywhere, wheresoever we find it.

[4.] Never serve a faction or party to the prejudice and detriment of truth and religion. Men cry up badges of distinction, and so divide Christ into different bodies and parties: 1 Cor. iii. 4, 'I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos, and I am of Cephas;' and so every one serveth the party upon which his interest hangeth, and hence come state broils and divisions, and discontent and quarrelling with one another, even to the apparent prejudice of religion; all acts of communion and brotherhood are forborne, and men merely condemn and oppose things because asserted or agitated by the opposite faction, blindly admire all that their own party doth, yea, and will rather give up religion and all for a prey to the enemy than lay aside their mutual animosities. Thus Eusebius witnesseth that there was great siding one against another, pastor against pastor, and people against people, some engaged in this faction, some in that, till the brethren of

¹ Tertull. lib. de Præscript adversus Hæreticos, cap. xli.

the camp brought in Diocletian's persecution, which devoured them all. Nay, when it cometh to this, they are so sworn to their own faction and party, that they will defend the apparent and open enemies of Jesus Christ, and so as they may strengthen themselves in the lesser differences, they will hazard the main principles; as Meletius, who formerly suffered for religion, being discontented with Petrus Alexandrinus (though his difference with the church was but small), joined with the Arians, and his Meletians with him. Oh! it is sad when men, to support their own interest and faction, will call in the open enemies of Christ to their aid, and cover them under their buckler. We have an eminent instance in scripture of this matter in Acts xxiii. 6, &c.; they looked upon Paul as a damnable blasphemer, but when once he pretended to the Pharisees, as, indeed, in the point of the resurrection he held with them, then 'We find no fault in this man; but if a spirit or angel have spoken to him,' &c. Many things might be spoken under this head, for, indeed, it proveth fatal to religion when once we cry up names, and those names beget parties, for then men look only to the accommodating of their own faction, though it be to the hazard of religion and public welfare.

[5.] As far as truth and conscience will give leave, there should be a profession of brotherhood, a condescension and yielding to one another in love, a walking together, or, at least, a Christian forbearance: Eph. iv. 2, 'With long-suffering forbearing one another in love;' the strong are to forbear the weak, and the weak the strong, to suffer them a little to walk up to their measures of knowledge; so Phil. iii. 15, 16, 'Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God will reveal even the same to you; nevertheless, whereunto we have obtained, let us walk together by the same rule, mind the same thing.' Every one hath not the same measure of grace nor degree of light; as long as they hold of the head we cannot forsake their communion. The apostle speaketh those words last quoted in reference to the controversies of those times; every one could not see so far into them as others could, as how far the law was to be left and the Mosaical rites discontinued; therefore, the apostle's rule is, that they should walk together, go sweetly together as far as they could, and those that were grown and had most light (whom he calleth perfect) he wisheth to be thus minded, to act according to their light, but not to discourage others in their weak beginnings; and for the other sort he wisheth them to wait upon God without murmuring and contention, and they would find their hearts directed into the same truths and ways. This is the rule, you see, in such cases; but now the misery amongst us is, we keep a proud and contemptuous distance, and do not yield, not only as far as religion, but as far as our own private principles would give leave. We do not walk together in the Lord, and therefore doth Christianity suffer such loss everywhere, for we cannot be helpful to one another's faith.

[6.] Abstain from reproaches and undue provocations, and dispense all civil respects with meekness. I put two rules together: our differences do not only unchristian us, but unman us many times: Gal. v. 15, 'If ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye do not consume one another.' The apostle useth such words as are proper to beasts, for

indeed such violence is brutish : God hath armed the beasts with teeth and claws, but man with reason and judgment ; to smite with the hand is beneath a man, and to smite with the tongue beneath a Christian ; and yet how often is it found that Christians are guilty of both ! The controversies between them degenerate into carnal strifes and debates, and are no more religious but personal, because of those mutual revilings, base and low reflections upon the name and credit of each other ; every one will excuse himself for not being first in the transgression. But revenge doth not differ from injury, but only in the order ; one is first, the other second.¹ It was no excuse to Adam that Eve was first in the transgression : Christ ' being reviled, reviled not again,' 1 Peter ii. 23. It is no shame to be overcome in such an act ; patient sufferings carry more majesty with them than carnal replies and defences ; and therefore, though provoked, forbear reproaches. The other part of the rule is, that all civil respects must be dispensed with all meekness and sweetness. Strangeness, and distance, and incivilities do enrage ; we are bid ' to have peace with all men, if possible,' Rom. xii. 18. To pursue all honest ways and means, if possible, noteth it must not be by any indirect course, otherwise we may try the utmost ; for damnable heretics, and such as raze the foundation, there are other rules ; we cannot, with safety, bid them God speed : 2 John 10, ' If he do not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, nor bid him God speed.' John, the disciple of love, persuadeth to such strangeness in such a case ; so the prophet telleth Jehoram, that were it not for Jehoshaphat, he would ' not look towards him, nor see him,' 2 Kings iii. 14. So when Cerinthus came into the bath at Ephesus, John went away : ' Let us go hence. *Hic est Cerinthus, hostis veritatis*—here is Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth,' he having denied the Godhead of Christ. So Marcion, who denied Christ, the resurrection, in effect the whole New Testament, when he came glavering to Polycarpus with a *Non agnoscis nos?*—Dost thou not know me ? It was answered by him—*Agnosco te primogenitum diaboli*—I know thee to be the devil's first-born. In these extreme cases, the servants of God have been thus austere ; but in errors besides the foundation, and of a lesser consequence, the other rule taketh place, and you will find that meekness and sweetness of converse gaineth much.

More might be said, but I forbear. Oh ! that that which is spoken were a little considered. None have more engagements to love than Christians ; none have been more exemplary in love than Christians. Once it was said, *Aspice ut se mutuo diligunt Christiani*—see how the Christians love one another² ; but, alas ! a little after it was said by a heathen : There are no beasts so mischievous to men as Christians are to one another.³ Oh ! it is too often too true.

Secondly, Because of the publicness of the auditory I shall be bold to speak a word or two to my brethren in the ministry, and those

¹ ' Qui referre injuriam nititur, eum ipsum a quo læsus est gemit imitari; ita qui malum imitatur bonus esse nullo pacto potest.'—*Lactant. de Vero Cultu*, lib. vi. cap 18.

² Tertul. in Apol., cap. 39.

³ ' Nulle infestæ hominibus bestię ut sunt sibi ferales plerumque Christiani.'—*Ammia. Marcelli*, lib ii. cap. 2.

who are to deal publicly in these matters ; they may do much to the calming of the times. We are ambassadors of the Prince of peace ; it will ill become us to be men of violence. Oh ! that the Lord would dispose of our hearts to think of healing the breaches ; the reproaches cast upon us are a hint from God to press us to the more care. I hope I shall not take too much upon me if I commend something out of the scriptures to myself and brethren. Admonitions are not accusations, and when God giveth a call, it is not too much peremptoriness to admonish : by the bowels of Christ let me entreat you to mind a few things.

1. Beware of passion in your own interests ; though they may be much shaken and endamaged in the present controversies, yet self-denying patience will be the best way to settle them : the injury to us may be great, but the injury to truth is greater ; we must approve our faithfulness in afflictions as well as doctrine. It is an excellent place that of the apostle Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 3, ' Giving no offence, but approving ourselves as the ministers of Christ in necessities and distresses.' Mark, that we are to show ourselves ministers of Christ in furthering the gospel by our necessities ; and sometimes it is a duty to depart from our just rights. Therefore be not too passionate in and for your own interests. The hint is not needless : Christ's disciples, being too sensible of their own contempt, called for fire from heaven, Luke ix. 54, 55. A tenderness of our own interests may soon raise us into an undue heat and rage, and in a mistake of our spirits, we may think that a coal from the altar which indeed is but taken from some common hearth. The false church hath been more zealous for interests than truths. Luther might have been more quiet, if he had not declaimed against the triple crown and the monks' bellies. Our conveniences should learn to give place to the advantage of truth. It is said of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, Mat. xii. 19, that ' he shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets,' *i. e.*, he shall not keep a-bustling and astir for worldly glory and great matters in this life ; and truly we should learn of him. Paul would not take maintenance, because the false teachers pretended they would preach the gospel freely : 2 Cor. xi. 12, ' But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion, that wherein they glory they may be found even as we.' It seemeth that some, as now, to get credit and entrance, would take no relief from the churches ; now, saith Paul, though I have a right, I will not make use of it, that I may not, through their glorying in this matter, disadvantage my endeavours in the gospel. Our esteem, credit, authority, must all be sacrificed upon the interest and advantage of truth. Nazianzen, in his orations and verses, doth often profess his desires of laying down his bishopric and all his church honours for the peace of the church. In one place, I remember, above all, he tells them of Constantinople, that rather than he would any way be guilty of the least concurrence to their distractions, he should count it a high mercy to go aside and spend the rest of his days in obscure silence, for he had learned to prefer Christ above all :—

‘ Οὐ γὰρ ἰησὺς γενόμεν μόνος θράσους ἀσπιδίουτης,
Οὐδ’ ἔλεγον Χριστοῦ ἄλλο τι πρόσθε φέρειν,

Ἄλλὰ τὰ μὲν λήθης κεύθει βυθός, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε
Ἔνθεν ἀφορμηθεῖς, τέρψομαι ἀτρεμῆ.¹

A good resolution and worthy to be imitated.

2. Press doctrines of Christ, and the main things of religion. Some men love to live in the fire, and to handle the red-hot questions of the age with passion and acrimony; but, alas! this doth no good. Zuinglius was once asked by a friend, *Cur non contra pontificios?*—why he was not more keen against the Papists, and preached not oftener against them? He answered, he would first plant the fear of God, and then men would be for the cause of God. To gain men to a party before they be gained to God is not so warrantable, and to press zeal in some particular ways doth but produce blind fury, which undoeth all. Tertullian² noteth it as a miscarriage of the heretics in his time, that they were more for gaining men to a party than Christianity. Suppose you press the truth, yet Christ telleth us that ‘wisdom is justified of her children,’ Mat. xi. 19. God’s own people are most zealous for God’s truths: Jude 4, ‘They turn the grace of our God into wantonness.’ Sense of interest begetteth the purest, freest zeal for God. The intent of our ministry is not that we should gain men to the support of our faction and party, but to Christ and Christianity. Other differences would be allayed were it not that we do so often revive them by unseasonable agitations; and, indeed, for the lesser differences, they were better wholly laid aside than so often stirred. Calvin, after his return to Geneva, would never contend about the business of wafer-cakes, for which he was at first cast out; though he altered not his mind in it, yet would never publicly contend in that matter, only many times modestly suggested what he thought was the better way.³

3. When you deal with the errors of the time (for certainly that is necessary; we must stablish our hearers ‘in the present truth,’ 2 Peter i. 12), do it with a great deal of caution and wariness. Though I would not prescribe, yet give me leave humbly to offer three things, which possibly may prevent some abuses:—

[1.] Beware of loose flings and general declamations against errors and heresies; these do but exulcerate minds, prejudice our testimony, and much hinder it from being received. This is a miscarriage on both sides: men urge their ways in loose flings, conceited nicks, and implications, general outcries of one side against superstitious anti-christianism and the men of the world (words soon spoken); on the other side, against errors, new lights, and new opinions. The word worketh most when it is most particular and demonstrative: thunder at a distance doth not so much startle me as a clap in my own zenith. It is good to go by way of particular proof and argument against opinions; prove them to be errors, and then call them so; otherwise loose and general invectives will make but superficial impressions. It is very observable that when James had proved that conceit of God’s being the author of sin to be an error, then he said, James i. 16, ‘Err not, my beloved brethren;’

¹ Nazian. in Carmine 12 ad Constantinopolitanos.

² ‘Hoc hæreticorum negotium est, non ethnicos convertendi, sed nostros evertendi; nostra suffodiunt, sua ædificant.’—*Tertull. lib. de Præscript. adversus Hæreticos*, cap. 42.

³ ‘De quo postea restitutus nunquam contendendum putavit, minime tamen dissimulans quid alioquin esset probaturus.’—*Beza in Vita Calvini*.

he first disputeth and then dissuadeth. It is very observable too, Mat. xxiii. from the 13th to the 33d ver., that our Saviour never denounceth a woe against the Pharisees, but he presently rendereth a reason for it: 'Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye devour widows' houses,' &c.; 'Woe, for ye shut the kingdom of God,' &c. Usually ungrounded zeal stayeth in generals, and ordinarily it is out of deceit or weakness.

[2.] Deal herein with all soberness and meekness. We should do what we can to remove prejudices; men drink in truths when they are sweetly propounded; God was in the still voice; the small rain falleth sweetly upon the tender grass; men presently engage themselves to a fervour and heat, and that marreth all; it is but as oil to the flames. I remember a speech of Darius, when one of the soldiers of the camp railed against Alexander, he telleth him, I kept you to fight against Alexander, not to rail against him: those arrows of bitter words are not the weapons of our warfare. Passion showeth we are angry more against the person than the error; too often it maketh us forsake the main controversy and go on upon a wrong scent. One saith, He that speaketh to kings must speak *ῥήμασι βυσσίνοις*, with silken words: he that speaketh to dissenters had need make his speech as smooth and soft as may be. I am sure it is agreeable to the apostle's advice, 'In meekness instruct those that oppose themselves,' 2 Tim. ii. 25. And in the same place he showeth that the servants of God must be gentle and patient.

[3.] Take heed of aggravating and greatening matters, making them of more importance than indeed they are; former ages were possessed with this spirit, every lesser dissent and mistake was made a heresy or error in the faith, as appeareth by their catalogues.

Tertullian had but spoken two or three words in favour of Montanus, and the priests of Rome presently cried him up for a Montanist, and accordingly dealt with him, *quo protinus offensus* (saith he that wrote his life)¹ *prorsus in Montani partes transivit*. I confess it is good to be watchful to dash Babylon's brats, and take the little foxes, Cant. ii. 15, *i.e.*, to oppose the first and modest appearances of error: the party last amongst us began with words, and would have brought in things. Therefore, I say, it is good to be watchful; however this will not justify rough dealing with those that vary from us but in an expression, and straining everything to the worst sense and most odious consequences, that it may appear to be heretical. Christ's own words were mistaken and wrested into a sense which he would not own; he said he would destroy the temple in three days, John ii. 19. He meant it of his body, they accused him of the same words; and yet they are called false witnesses, Mat. xxvi. 61, who accused him of it, because they wrested it to another sense, applying it to the material temple. Many have a faculty of turning Eloi into Elias, molehills into mountains, making men offenders for a word, and by false glosses causing innocent things to seem odious.

[4.] Let me entreat you to improve your interests for brotherly and friendly collations; public conferences cannot be had without tumult, and there is a prejudice against public sermons; and, again, private disputes are more for victory than truth; usually there is more of strife

¹ Pamelius in Vita Tertulliani.

than love in them. Tertullian¹ saith of his private disputation with a Jew, Both drew out their reasonings, and, through the heat of contention, both went away unsatisfied. But now, if there were meetings instituted for the propounding of things rather by way of case than controversy, and matters were carried not so much in a disputative way, but by way of friendly collation and loving discourse, it would much conduce to the ending of our differences; certainly, where such meetings have been set up and wisely ordered, much good hath come by them. If we could allure Christians, the lot of whose dwellings is disposed among our churches, into these conferences, we should find them of much avail. I conceive much might be said out of scripture for them; certainly we do not come together so often as we should, to 'comfort ourselves with the mutual faith of one another,' Rom. i. 11, 12. I believe that *ἐπισυναγωγὴν* spoken of Heb. x. 25, will infer some other meeting besides the public assembly. This benefit you would find by such a course, that your own would be established, others would be less violent. If brought to these friendly consultations, haply it may be a business that may engage you to much labour and self-denial; but that should not sway with a Christian minister, whose work is not ended with an hour's discourse in the pulpit. We are very often calling for power to punish heretics; but let us sadly smite upon the thigh, and consider if any of us in private have improved those loving courses to gain them that have been in our power. Luther hath a pretty saying: *Igne caritatis comburendi sunt hæretici*—you talk of burning heretics, burn them first in the fire of love, or, at least, burn them with the fire of the Spirit. The apostle speaketh of 'trying the work by fire,' 1 Cor. iii. 13. Rational and friendly conviction will do much, at least it will beget a sweet and brotherly correspondence, and it is to be hoped we shall find more meekness where things are not carried in the way of a set disputation.

I have done with my address to the ministry.

Thirdly, Give me leave to speak a word to yourselves, not as if I would prescribe to you, but only humbly offer two or three considerations to your thoughts. It may be I may not show so much discretion in it, yet, if I do affection, I have my aim, which is not so much to direct you, as to draw you into a consultation about these matters; and therefore I humbly propose the business to your care. Think of the church's unity; you have covenanted to endeavour that 'the Lord be one, and his name one.' Consider, civil peace depends much upon church peace; religion is called so *a religando*, it being the greatest bond to link men together; contrary opinions in religion usually cause much alienation of affection, and great disturbances in the commonwealth. Therefore this matter appertaineth to you in reference to unity. I humbly desire:—

1. That you would seriously do your utmost to draw things to an agreement. You have appointed a committee of accommodation already: we do not know what is done; suppose you tried once again. When the Remonstrants troubled the churches of the Low Countries, there were often collations, and they did select men once and again

¹ 'Alternis vicibus contentioso fune uterque diem in vesperam traximus, obstrepentibus etiam quibusdam spectantibus singulorum nubilo quodam veritas obumbrabatur.'

and again to consider how to compose the differences.¹ It is true, those endeavours did not succeed, because those meetings were made up of the most violent sticklers; and the Arminians, by the means of Utenbogardus, had the secret encouragement and countenance of some of the magistrates, that nothing should be done to their disservice and disadvantage, and so both parties strove to make the best of their opinion and faction. But now, if you would be pleased to try once again, God knows what will be the success. I suppose there can be no danger in trying. Call some men together, whose eminency for the power of godliness will make the matter the more venerable, entertained with the more reverence and awe. When the people smell self and interest in any endeavours, they have the less majesty with them. Call men through age and experience versed in such a work, men of a moderate and sober spirit, who prefer the interest of religion before that of a party. Blessed be God, England doth not want such! Call them together to think of ways of reconciliation. Though many thirst and pant after it, yet cannot effect it, being but private men, and so not so much regarded, and in bodies and assemblies they cannot so well drive it on. Men of middle interests, being always suspected, have a prejudice upon their endeavours; and, indeed, good men cannot be imagined to be so without all touch and sense of their own particular opinion, as not to dispute, stickle, and engage for it in such bodies and assemblies. But now, if such were called together by your authority, to make it their only work to provide for the advantage of religion, and to compose the differences, possibly, and by the blessing of God, much good might be done. However, you will manifest that you have not been wanting to your duty; and therefore weigh it in your thoughts.

2. That you would quicken your ministers and elders, in their provincial and classical meetings, by some charge and command to think of ways how best to gain and deal with dissensions. The matter is not below the care of a Christian magistrate. Histories tell us how Constantine did beseech his bishops to an agreement, oversee their counsels, travail in the peace of the churches. Socrates saith he was affected with the schisms of the church as his own calamity.² Well, then, if you would be pleased to quicken them by your command, and enable them by your authority to find out and to act in such ways as may tend to the ending of the differences and controversies, much good might be done. I humbly conceive the true nature and intent of such meetings is not altogether or chiefly to give laws authoritatively to the particular churches, as to consider how to compose differences that do arise in them; and it were sad if the mint and cummin were preferred above the weighty works, and the chief of their care were spent either in trivial disputes, or in making rules for their own rather than in studying all brotherly ways of gaining those that differ, and healing the breaches of the church. This, I say, were sad indeed; the true intent and nature of these meetings being to give satisfaction, and to carry things with more clearness of demonstration, and to give out the sense of the church in matters

¹ See the History of the Council of Dort in the Preface to the Reformed Churches.

² See Socrates' Eccles. Hist., lib. i. cap. 7, in the Greek, *et alius passim*.

of difficulty : for, indeed, the less of a court and the more of a council they have in them the better ; therefore, if you would command and chiefly commend these things of unity to their care and debates, some hope might arise that way.

3. That you would take care that ministers put out for scandal may not be so easily taken in again. Against those that are humbly penitent and modestly ingenuous, no man would open his mouth ; but for the others, I am persuaded they are, and will be, a great means of our troubles ; partly as they occasion no small offence to the godly ; the dead body of Amasa in the way to discourage the people of the Lord from going on to union and accord ; the sons of Eli, that cause many to abhor the offering of the Lord : partly as those that are very apt to be the cinifloes that will blow up the coals of strife amongst us. The first stirs about religion in the Low Countries were occasioned by the ministers of the old leaven, whom they were fain to take in out of necessity in that scarcity of ministers, and to allow some of them, because of their parts, in eminent places. The story nameth Wiggerus, Coelhaasius, and others, who kindled those sparks of trouble, which afterwards were blown up by James Arminius into a great flame.¹ Many observe that the Jesuits go over to the Lutherans and foment differences between them and the Reformed ; and truly we may fear their influence ; men that have the old malice and a new irritation will stir in a way of revenge. The Lord guide you ! I am sorry to hear the complaints that are abroad.

4. In the liberty that you give, use great caution. Some things you may be forced to bear with for a time ; take heed of endangering the truth of God ; you ought to be tender of Christ's little ones ; woe to those that offend them, Mat. xviii. But you ought to be more tender of Christ's truths ; you owe somewhat to Christ's saints and servants, but, I say again, more to his truths. It is somewhat unheard of that these two should come in contest and competition. However, you will find Christ more jealous of his ways than of his servants, of his truths than of his saints. It is truth makes saints : John xvii. 27, 'Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth ;' and husbandmen are ever more careful of their seed-corn than of the increase ; and, besides, we may be deceived in saints—we do not know hearts ; but we cannot so easily in truths, because there is a sure standard to measure them by. Therefore, take heed of doing anything against truth. It is a good old caution, *In veste varietas sit scissura non sit*—though there be divers colours, yet let there be no rent in the church's coat. I will not take upon me to state the matter ; what liberty you may give, and how far. Perhaps that may be unseasonable. However it will not, I hope, be too much presumption to present you with the most obvious miscarriages of magistrates in this matter. Three sorts of men there are in the world, and concerning every one of them we may say, 'The way of peace they have not known,' Rom. iii. 17.

¹ 'Amabilem Belgicarum Ecclesiarum pacem atque harmoniam perturbare conati sunt olim nonnulli, qui deserto Papismo, sed fermento ejus nondum plene expurgato ad ecclesias nostras transierant, earundemque ministerio in prima illa ministrorum inopia adnoti fuerant, Casperus Coelhasius Leidæ, Hermanus Herbertus Goudæ et Dordrecti,' &c.—*Vide Historiam. Syn. Dord. in Praef. ad Ecclesias sub initio.*

[1.] Some are of a preposterous zeal in lesser differences, and are all for extremity and violence towards those from whom they differ in the least degree and circumstances. Most of the censures inflicted by the late bishops were because of ceremonies, things not weighty in any regard, no, not in their own esteem. Some men breathe out nothing but rage and threatenings upon the least dissent.

I remember I have read of Joab, David's general, that when his teacher had falsely vowelled one word in the Hebrew, he slew him; the place was that charge to destroy *Zechar*. He read it *Zachar*, the *males* of Amalek.¹ It is good to preserve truth, but small distempers will not need so violent a cure. It is as if a man should fire a house to destroy the mice in it. Union is good, but rigorous enforcements, especially in trifles, and things that lie far from the heart of religion, are not so warrantable. Paul is everywhere most zealous against errors; there is never an epistle of his but hath somewhat against them; however, none more earnest than he to bring circumcision and uncircumcision to a profession of brotherhood.

[2.] Some are for medleys and compounds of religion, as if that would be peace. Thus Charles V. thought to please all by that wicked book called the Interim; it did a great deal of harm, and did not any way heal the difference. Many of late amongst us, and in other reformed churches, endeavoured to blend us and Rome, Babylon and Zion, together. God hateth those *iniquos syncretismos*, profane mixtures and intermistical designs. Unity consists in an agreement in the truth, not in a coagulation of errors. Strings that are in tune must not be stirred, others must be set up to them. The disobedient must be brought up to the wisdom of the just, not that brought down to them, Luke i. 17. When the 'language is pure' the shoulder is one, Zeph. iii. 9. Little hopes of agreement till you set up pure doctrine, unmixed discipline. The new cloth set upon the old will make the rent the greater. The world thinks the less purity the more unity, but it is otherwise. All the troubles are because iron will not mix with clay, God's ways with man's inventions.

[3.] Some drive at a promiscuous leave and toleration of all opinions and differences, though never so contrary to truth, as if this were the best way to bring things to any peace and quiet. Oh! consider how great a prejudice this is to religion. This is the very way that Julian, the apostate, took to destroy it. Socrates Scholasticus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and others that write of him, say that, to ruin religion, he would equally tolerate and countenance all parties. I shall but take notice of what one saith,² that he was thoroughly set upon this, as knowing it to be the ready way to bring all to naught; and, indeed, it was not only the policy of this subtle adversary, but of all the enemies of truth, as the margin will inform you.³ And, indeed, where it doth not destroy religion, it doth embase it, partly

¹ The remembrance of Amalek, Deut. xxv. 19.—Ed.

² 'Quod agebat ideo obstinate, ut dissentientem augente licentia non timeret minantem postea plebem,' &c.—*Petrus Morcutinus in Præfat. in Juliani miso-pugionem.*

³ 'Passim cum omnibus miscent, nihil enim interest illis licet diversa tractantibus dum ad unius veritatis expugnationem expirent.'—*Ter. lib. de Præscrip. Adversus Hæret.*, cap. 41.

because men content themselves in having made a better choice than others about them ; partly because men spend all the heat and first-born of their strength and zeal in the contentions, and let practice go. Certainly there would be but little security to truth and its followers where there is such a promiscuous toleration. Where men are godly they cannot be so easily amassed into one body and confederacy with persons erroneous ; they being bound up by conscience, and having religion on their sides, are not so flexible, and then the others cannot so well agree with them, for two different errors can better agree and cotton among themselves than one error and the nearest truth. Darkness and darkness can better agree than light and darkness : always you will find it, men hate the nearest truth as being that light by which their deeds are reprov'd. The Eunomians and the Arians, though they held different errors (the one denied the Godhead of the Son, the other of the Spirit), could better agree with one another than with the orthodox. The Pharisees and Herodians, though of different principles (the one being for, the other against the liberty of the Jews), yet both could conspire together to entrap Christ. Gebal and Ammon and Amalek could better accord with one another than with Zion. In such a case truth would be worst provided for ; always under fears of some Sicilian vespers or a Saint Bartholomew's matins, some sudden eruption of violent counsels and dangers hatched against it.

Thus I have been bold to commend a few things unto you. God direct your hearts to all seasonable counsels, for his glory and the church's good !

Object. But you will say, This a work of time. What is to be done to avoid the danger of the present distractions ?

Sol. I answer—That question is to be put to God, not man : Ps. xi. 3, ' If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do,' *i.e.* if religion, laws, authority, and all have lost their awe, what can they do ? The answer is in the next verse : ' God is in the holy temple,' *i.e.*, there is a God above, one in heaven, go to him. I suppose you are met this day, as those at Ahava, to seek a right way, Ezra. viii. 21 ; when we are at a loss and past the help of means, the address may be the better made to God.

2. If you go to God, you must go to him in his own way. How is that ? You shall see Job xxxiv. 31, ' Surely it is meet to be said to God, I have borne the chastisement of mine iniquity ; I will offend no more.' This is meet for you to be said to God, to come before him with humiliation and reformation.

[1.] With humiliation. Sadly reflect upon your miscarriages. I would not willingly declaim upon that theme ; too many do. It is natural to us to speak evil of dignities : envy would blast eminency. Some are mad upon idols ; they will blemish you, for you have vexed them. Others are burdened with payments, and they will say, ' The former times were better than these,' Eccles. vii. 10. Haply Solomon relateth to his own times. They complain of Solomon's yokes, though occasioned by the temple work in those days. Some affect the repute of bold men ; it feeds the humour of the times to lay things to your charge. The Lord make others more sober, and you more humble ! It is your duty to smite upon the thigh. Surely there is a cause,

when there were such great distractions that they groped like a blind man, and could not find the way. They said, 'Our iniquities are with us; as for our transgressions, we know them,' Isa. lix. 10-12. When those that speak tremblings are little feared, surely there is some offence, Hosea xiii. 1. Commune with your own hearts; guilt works best when it results from your own consciences; being represented from without; it irritateth; sweetly arising from within, it humbleth. What is the matter then? Have you dealt with God so faithfully, with the people so kindly, as you should? Have grievances been redressed, justice executed, the glory of God's house provided for? I remember a story in Plutarch of Demetrius, king of Macedonia,¹ who, when his subjects tendered their petitions to him of having their grievances redressed, he cast them into a river: afterward Seleucus the Great came with an army against him; not a man would stir; he was taken prisoner, and deprived of his kingdom. People will bear anything rather than neglects of justice. Consider these things. Come with humiliation.

[2.] Come with purposes of reformation: 'I will do so no more.' Do your first works if you would recover your lost glory. You know by what insinuations Absalom stole away the hearts of the people; by those of justice and kindness. He kissed them. He did *perjicere oscula, adorare vulgus*, as the historian saith of Otho; and you know he said, 2 Sam. xv. 4, Oh! that I were a judge in the land, then I would do them justice; and it would be sad if corruptions be found in you when distractions are upon you. It is said of the assembly of 'the gods,' that had not done justice to the afflicted, nor defended the poor widow and fatherless, Ps. lxxxii. 5, 'That they know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness, though the foundations of the land be out of course;' they continued in perverting justice and right, though God ruined the commonwealth and plucked it asunder. Oh! let it be never said of you; it shall be my prayer to God for you.

¹ Plutarchus in Vita Demetrii.