

MARY'S CHOICE.*

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house, &c.—LUKE X. 38-40.

THIS history is absolute of itself. Christ having despatched business elsewhere, went from place to place to do good, it being his whole aim and office. And now divine providence and holy love directs him to these two women, who formerly had entertained him in heart, and now in their house; yet did he feast them more liberally than they could him. And yet so studious they were in his entertainment, that they fall out in a manner about it. Mary she sat at Jesus's feet, knowing his custom, that his lips did ever drop down sweet-smelling myrrh in his gracious words, as it is Cant. v. 13; and therefore she forgot all other things. But to come to some observations.

First, From the coming of Christ to these women observe, *that where God hath begun grace, he will not discontinue, but will be perfecting of it till the day of the Lord*; directing by his providence continually for their good, and sending his servants the prophets to that end; for God's providence extendeth to the least things, even to the hairs of our head, and to sparrows, Mat. x. 29. The use is to teach us to *endeavour to be fruitful in communion one with another*, if we profess to be led by the same Spirit that Christ is guided with. The lips of the righteous are pleasant, and their tongues are refined silver. *Sometimes the sin of man makes instruction unseasonable*, and to swine it is pity to cast pearls, Mat. vii. 6. And many times *men are deluded with a vain despair of not profiting* by their speech, when no doubt if they did but trust on God in performing such duties, their exhortations or admonitions would take more effect than they

* 'Mary's Choice' forms the last of the four 'Sermons' appended to 'The Saint's Comforts' (see Vol. VI. page 160). Its title-page is as follows:—'Maries Choise. Wherein is laid down some directions how to choose the better part. Comforts for them that have chosen it. Signes whereby we may know we have chosen the better part. By that Faithfull and Reverend Divine, R. Silbes, D.D. and sometimes Preacher to the Honorable Societic of Grayes-Inne. Printed at London by Tho. Cotes and are to be sold by Peter Cole. 1637.' It has distinct pagination, but does not appear to have been published separately. Henry Smith has a fine sermon from the same text and under the same title. Cf. 'Sermons,' 4to, 1675, pp. 149-157 of second division of the volume.—G.

look for, as oftentimes it falls out; for in man there is naturally a desire of good and profit. Sometimes a *spirit of dryness possesseth good men*. Christ had the fulness of the Spirit without measure, men have it according to their measure; and so through multitudes of occasions and businesses are overcome with a dryness, so as they can distil no grace as they should.

Against these we should study and consider beforehand what occasions we are most like to meet with; and study discourse fit for such occasions which we may best profit by. Study for sufficiency, that we may be like full clouds, or as paps that do pain themselves with fulness, till they be eased of their milk.

Secondly, And lament over our deadness, and beg spiritual influence, that may make us willing.

Thirdly, And let all take Christ's example for a pattern, to draw others to heaven, and to be ever busied in our calling.

Fourthly, And we should also imitate Mary; be wise to draw from other men, when they are not disposed to enlarge themselves. The wise man saith he is a fool that regards not the price in the hand of the wise. There is none but excels in one gift or other; and it is part of the honour due to such to take notice of them, and to make use of them; and it is unthankfulness to let such persons go without regard of those gifts. Many no doubt are dead, and their gifts with them, which had men been wise might have saved others much labour and increased knowledge much, if they had been displayed to others. Furthermore, it is said that Mary sat at Jesus's feet, implying her composed and settled demeanour, which helps to a quiet mind and attentive heart; 'but the eyes of a fool are in the corners of the world,' Prov. xvii. 24, which hinders attention. But Martha was troubled about serving. Mark as in this good woman, so in many of her sex, goodness troubled with passion. She chides with Mary. The grounds of it in her were either a mistaking of Christ's disposition, whom she thought looked for much entertainment; though she was therein much deceived, for that Christ came to feast them, not to feast with them. And for this she is gently rebuked of Christ, as if he would have told her that it concerned the glory of God more nearly to receive and take notice of his diffused mercies; and God requires it rather than performance of any outward duty of love to him. But for the words.

Verse 41, 'And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha.'

These and the ensuing words contain, first, a reproof of Martha; secondly, an instruction of her; thirdly, a justification of Mary, with the reason thereof. In the reproof of Martha, consider the compellation, wherein observe the ingemination,* 'Martha, Martha.' It implies love that Christ bare to her. He calls her gently by her own name. Christ saw in her good mixed with ill, and therefore is not over-sharp or bitter to her. It implies also seriousness; and therefore Christ doubles her name, even as Pharaoh's dreams. Two aiming at one end argueth the thing is sure; and as 'Lord, Lord' in prayer argues vehemency, so he reproveth Martha for her inconsiderateness, and brought her thereby more seriously to ponder what she did. And Christ's example should be a rule to us, namely, in our reproofs, to imitate him who had all the parts of a good reprover.

And, first, we should be sure to reprove out of love to the party, else the proud nature of man will not endure it.

* That is, reduplication. Cf. Richardson *sub voce*.—G.

Secondly, It must be *done in wisdom*; first advise, then speak, else shame will return on us, and the other will be hardened.

Thirdly, It must be with *liberty of speech*. We must conceal nothing; and thus disposed was Christ. In him was the fountain of love and the treasures of wisdom; nay, he was wisdom itself, and he took liberty of speech. Though he was entertained, he doth not therefore sell his liberty; and though we say he that receives a benefit sells his liberty, but it was not so with Christ. Some there are if they give entertainment to a minister, they think they are bound to silence, and not to tell them of anything they see amiss in them; and therefore it was St Paul's wisdom not to take the offered kindness of the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xii. 14, *seq.*, lest he should be engaged to them. These things should be precedents to us, that we should be friends upon no other terms than to speak what is for their good; for some proud persons there are that think none friends but flatterers. Let us take heed of base engagements to such; for Balak will engage Balaam with gifts, if he can win him no other way to his humour. And it is reason that we should maintain this liberty of speech, for friends suffer disgrace for the folly of their friends. He that keeps company with adulterers shall be defamed, and therefore it is reason a man should have liberty of speech to reprove such.

'Thou art careful and troubled about many things.'

Not that Christ mislikes domestic business and hospitality; but by this Christ shews his pity of his* troublesome cares and distractions, which might have been passed over with far less burden to her, and hereby therefore he took occasion to heal her error in judgment, who thought Christ came to be feasted when he came to feast them; as also that he might free her from that hard opinion that she began to carry towards Mary her sister, whom she thought either negligent or proud in not helping her. It is therefore a ground to be supposed, that hospitality becomes both men and women. It is a part of that calling God commits to us, and it is commended to us from the example of Abraham, and the event of it, that he thereby entertained angels into his house, Heb. xiii. 2; and in this place it is implied under the words care and trouble, as if he had said, Thou dost trouble thyself too much, and more than there is need, giving us this lesson,

Doct. That in things that are lawful excess is easy in holy persons, for what more lawful than a calling? What more commendable than hospitality? Yet in this Martha is too much troubled.

The reason is, *because there is little or no fear of sin*; and where there is least fear there is most error; and security breeds neglect, and therefore it is the common plea, for excess in recreations and apparel, is it not lawful? Yes; who denies it? But is there not a mean? Nay, in their calling here may be excess, for there must be measure observed in them, and that is the reason no doubt.

And again, in *lawful things defect in any one circumstance makes the thing ill, though in itself never so good*, and therefore reformation of the state is good, but not by private persons. So here hospitality is good, but not when we should be hearing Christ speak. To a good action there is required not only that the nature of it be good, but that it be well done in every circumstance, for, failing many, one makes it vicious.

Use. And therefore we should have a principal watch over our affections, and that in lawful things; for good meanings do not always justify actions. Christ was crucified, and the martyrs burnt; and the actors in it thought they did

* Qu. 'her'?—Ed.

God good service, and shall this excuse? Peter had a good intent when he would have persuaded Christ from going to Jerusalem, yet received no better thanks than 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' Mat. xvi. 23. Therefore let us look in all our actions, how lawful soever they be, in the matter. It is not enough, but they must be lawfully done, according to the rule of the word of God, else it is sin to the doer, whate'er his intent be.

In the next place observe from the translation of the words, which is more exactly thus: 'Thou troublest thyself' (a), and true it is, that we *bring upon ourselves oftentimes more trouble than God lays on us*; and those that have lived any long time, if they advisedly consider of their labours past they shall find they may thank themselves for most of it; and in truth, without God's Spirit, we are self-tormentors, and our error is double in this kind; for either we *pull too great burdens on us, or they being laid on us, we make them too grievous to be borne by our careless laying them on us, or by our unhandsome and unseemly carriage under them*, as it is in ordinary burdens. Those that are skilful can carry a burden with a great deal less pain than another man can that wants skill, though it may be he be the stronger.

Secondly, And another reason hereof is *in our froward pettish natures*. An unmortified nature is like a sore, everything pierces to the quick, besides that it vexeth itself.

Thirdly, *And this is caused partly by too much passion in us, and partly by want of judgment, and ignorance or not remembering the end and issue of them*. Where these causes are, there cannot choose but be such effects. In the darkness everything scares us.

Use 1. Therefore let us take heed of this infirmity and never excuse it, saying, men need not care for me, I trouble none but myself; for thou sinnest against God, and thou art a sinner against the sixth commandment by self-murder in troubling thyself as well as by troubling others.

Use 2. Secondly, *Let us not be over much troubled at troubles*. Poor souls are much troubled this way. If they find but a little dulness of spirit, then they conclude they want grace, they are none of God's children.

Censure *not yourselves, nor vex not yourselves*. It made Jonah almost quarrel with God; and patient Job complain of his mother, of the day, of the night. Alas! what hurt did they him. And if we see others in this estate of censuring, vexing, or troubling themselves, *censure not them rashly*. The children of God are not always alike, nor always in tune; for a calm mind is a grace that God gives according to his good will and pleasure, and it ebbs and flows as he pleaseth. But to proceed; in the next place, observe that *the things of this life, meeting with a nature not mortified, are subject to trouble it*, and the reason is, they are inferior in themselves, empty and vain, giving no content, but bringing vexation, and are subject to mutability, and therefore not able to give the soul content, being of an higher nature, and more constant enduring, and therefore requires comforts and contents suitable, which these things, not able to afford, when they fail, as ever they do, the soul is vexed and offended.

For use thereof we should take notice of the nature of these things, and take heed of *μερίμνας βιωτικάς*, troubling ourselves about the things of this life. For it divides and weakens the soul; and the dividing of a river must weaken the force of the streams; and so Cyrus diverted the streams of Euphrates, and thereby took Babylon.* And the soul, when intent upon one thing, though then it be strong, yet being turned to many things, is

* Cf. note a, Vol. II. p. 248.—G.

much weakened, and the forces thereof scattered. And therefore we should meddle only with things that concern us, and so much with them as is fitting.

Ver. 42, 'But one thing is needful.' Christ doth not only reprove, but he doth instruct. He shews the disease and the remedy, to shew his love, and that his mind was not to gall or vex, but to heal and make peace. And this he doth by way of information, telling her these businesses are full of trouble, and not necessary, and therefore she was not to spend herself in them, but turn her to that one thing which is necessary, *which is to communicate with God in the use of all sanctified means of grace*. It is necessary to come out of our natural estate, and to be settled further into communion with God; and because holy means discovers our misery, opens a remedy, works grace in us to lay hold on Christ, therefore it is necessary also to attend on the means.

Quest. But it may be asked, What, are not meats and drinks, clothes and government in a commonwealth, are not these necessary? Wherefore serve callings? Nay, this whole life is a life of necessities, how then is there but one thing necessary?

Ans. I answer, It is true these things are necessary in their compass and sphere, for this present life, but this life itself is nothing without a better being, and we had better not be than be and not be translated hereafter to a better life, and therefore Christ applies himself to these means, as to that which conducteth us to that better life, which is only absolutely necessary.

Obj. But, it may be urged, is not Christ's righteousness, faith, God's Spirit, more than one; and yet are they not all necessary?

Ans. I answer, though they be diverse, yet they run all to one end. Even as many links make one chain, so all these tend to make a man one, that is a Christian; and therefore a wise soul considers them as one thing, and runs over them all at one view. He considers the word and the Spirit as that which, by working faith in him, brings him to Christ, who brings him to eternal glory; and therefore he doth not hear, to hear, but to be renewed inwardly, and so to have communion with Christ, and to attain to salvation; and therefore the word is called the kingdom of God, the word of reconciliation, of grace, of the kingdom, for by it we are conducted thither; and therefore, Acts xiii. 46, they that did neglect the gospel, which was the power of God to eternal life, are said to neglect eternal life. 'And therefore if we will ever profit by holy means,' consider them as chained to salvation; hear the word, and with it receive the Spirit, and with it faith, with it Christ, with him heaven and happiness. This is the one necessary thing, others are but accessory, and so we should esteem them. What is skill in reasoning, and not to be able to know the subtle sophistry of Satan? And to what purpose is skill in healing of sickness of the body, and to have a soul sick to the death? Tongues* are but the shell of knowledge; what good will deep skill in the law do us, if we be not able to make our title to salvation sure? What profit in ending controversies if we be not able to answer Satan's accusations and quarrels that he picks with us? And the reason is, all these are but for this life, short and uncertain. It would make the best of us ashamed, if we did but consider how little we live to God, or our own comfort, knowing many impertinent † things, and yet are ignorant of this our only main thing, and die before we live as we should. But, for the avoiding hereof, let us carefully observe these directions.

* That is, 'languages,' = learning.—G. † That is, 'things not pertinent.'—G.

And first, *Consider in everything what reference it hath to this one thing*, what reference it hath to grace and glory. So long as we neglect this, the devil cares not what we have, whither we go, in what company we are ; all is one to him.

Secondly, *Carry ourselves respectively according to the necessity of the things that we are to be busied about*, whereof some are more, some less necessary, according as they have more or less good in them. Those that cannot stand with this main one thing, cut them off, for other things that are necessarily required for our well-being in this life, as our daily bread, our callings in these, and the like.

Thirdly, *Take heed of faithless cares, and beg wisdom to despatch business so as they prejudice not the main, and look still how they aim at the main end*. As travellers and warriors do unburden themselves of things less necessary, so let us take heed of entangling ourselves in the cares of this life, 2 Tim. ii. 4. The covetous man labours for riches, others for pleasures, that they may live sensually, wherein they never can come to the degree of that happiness that brutish creatures do, that have them without care and enjoy them without fear ; but for a Christian this is the whole, 'to fear God and keep his commandments,' Eccles. xii. 13.

Fourthly, *In all business we should observe what the main end is, and labour to direct them to that main end*. In baptism, the one thing there, is the covenant ; in funerals, the one thing is a work of charity, to commit the dead body to the ground. Yet in these and such like things, all the time is taken up in ceremonious preparations. In our buildings and dwellings we look for good air, good soil, good neighbours, but where is the main ? Who inquireth what minister have we ? What means of salvation ? 'Tush ! this enters not into their thoughts ; and thus do they invert God's order. So, in bringing up of children, men look to teach them to read and to be fit for the course of life they intend they shall follow, and how to leave them enough to make them rich and great ; but who desires and endeavours to have the image of God engraven in their hearts, and to provide an eternal inheritance for them.

Fifthly, *Every morning we should consider what is most necessary for the day*. Have we renewed our covenant with God and renewed our repentance ? Have we armed ourselves by prayer against all occasions of temptations, and provided to avoid such as are likely to meet with us ? Alas ! how few trouble themselves this way. 'What shall we eat, drink, how shall we spend the time ?' These things take up the minds of most ; how to uphold a short troublesome life. And yet all their care cannot add one inch to their stature, or change the colour of a hair. 'But seek thou the kingdom of God and his righteousness,' this one thing, 'and all other shall be added,' Mat. vi. 33.

'And Mary hath chosen the better part,' and yet censured we see by Mary's example. *It is the lot of God's children sometimes to undergo the censures of those that are good*, for their forwardness ; and thus did David's brethren censure David : 'We know the pride of thine heart ; thou art come down to see the battle,' 1 Sam. xvii. 28. But let us be comforted, for as it often falls out that we suffer rebuke with Mary, so we shall have Christ to justify us as she had ; and therefore,

Use. Let us resolve with Saint Paul not to pass for the censure of man, but remember that day when God will justify those that are his. Here we pass through a hidden eclipsed glory, but the time will come that we shall be approved ; and it shall appear then what we are. Let us learn

innocency, that though we undergo their censure yet we may not justly deserve it, and then whatever men do deem of us, we should be encouraged to bear it, in regard our witness is in heaven, in our own hearts, and in the hearts and spirits of good men.

But to proceed : Christ takes Mary's part, and justifies Mary's choice to be the best ; in handling whereof we will lay down, in the first place, some grounds that I will go upon, as first that *there are diversity of parts, and diversity of ranks of good things* ; and of these some concern this life, some concern the other life ; and of either of these God gives to some more, to others less. Some have the goods of this life in plenty, others are endued with the gifts fitting them for a better life, and thus God sets forth his free rule over all creatures, and his free liberty to dispose them as he thinks best ; and God exercises his children in the use of all sorts of things, and in discerning of things that differ.

A second ground is that there is a spirit of discretion planted in man, *to discern of the difference of things*, and this he is enabled to by the word especially, for man hath not this wisdom of himself.

Thirdly, *The best things in our minds must challenge the chiefest choice and first place in allowing them, then trying them, and lastly choosing them.* The good part here meant is *grace and glory*. This is that which Mary chose, to hear Christ speak for the strengthening of the graces in her, and that thereby she might assure her salvation to herself ; and grace is good, because it makes us good. Outward things are snares, and makes us worse, but grace commends us to God. All other things are temporal, and death buries them, but grace and glory are in extent equal to our souls, extending to all eternity. Grace and the fruits thereof is our own ; all other things are not ours. Grace brings us to the greatest good, and advanceth us to the true nobility of sons and heirs of God, and grace makes us truly wise. It makes us wise to salvation ; it makes us truly rich with such riches as we cannot lose. Grace is so good, it makes ill things good, so as afflictions with the word and grace are better than all the pleasures in Pharaoh's court in Moses's esteem, Heb. xi. 25. Seeing it is thus, *let us be animated by this example of Mary* ; and to that end, first, *beg the Spirit of revelation* to open our eyes to see the high prize of our calling, the happiness thereof ; and to get a sense and taste of the pleasures thereof, that we may judge by our own experience. For the meanest Christian out of experience knows this to be the good part ; and this it is which the apostle prays for, Philip i. 10, that the Philippians may approve the things that are excellent. The word signifies in all sense and feeling, to approve the things that are excellent, or do differ (*b*).

Secondly, Let us *endeavour to balance things, by laying and comparing them together.* For comparison gives lustre ; and thus shall we see the difference and the excellency of some things above others, and the sooner be able to choose. Thus did David ; and the effect thereof was this, 'I have seen an end of all created perfection, but thy commandments are exceeding broad or large,' Ps. exix. 96.

Thirdly, *Labour for spiritual discretion to discern of particulars.* This is as it were the steward to all actions, teaching what to cut off, what to add. In all particular affairs of this life, what time and what place fitteth best, tells what company, what life, what way is the best. And when we have done this,

Fourthly, Proceed on *and make this choice.* If we do not choose it only, but stumble upon it, as it were, it is no thank to us. Though it be the fashion

now-a-days ; men read the word, and go to church ; why ? Not that they have, by balancing and the spirit of discretion, made choice of this as the best part, but they were bred up in it ; and they went with company, and custom hath drawn them to it ; they happen on good duties it may be against their wills ; and this is the reason of those many apostates that fall off to embrace this present world, as Demas did, 2 Tim. iv. 10 ; for they not being grounded, must needs waver in temptation.

Fifthly, In the next place, when we have made this choice, *we must resolve with a deliberate resolution to stand by this choice.* It is not enough to make an offer, or to cheapen, as we say, but come with resolution to buy, to choose. So David, Ps. cxix. 30, 31, 'I have chosen the way of truth, and have stuck to thy statutes ;' and ver. 57, 'I have said,' that is, set down with myself, 'that I would keep thy words :' for the will rules in our souls. If we be good, our will is good. There are many wicked men that understand and are persuaded what is best ; but for want of this resolution and will they never make this determinate choice ; and many rail at good men and persecute them. Let such know that God will not take men by chance. If they choose the worst part, they must look for to reap the fruit of their choice. Assuredly God will not bring any to heaven, but such as have chosen it here, as the best part before they die ; and therefore it is no matter what the world think or speak. Let us take up that notable resolution of Joshua, 'I and my house will serve the Lord,' Josh. xxiv. 15.

If we go alone it is no shame ; but to such as should accompany us, let them flout at us, and call us singular. If there be any way to heaven, the straightest,* and hardest, and least frequented is the right way. Let them take the delightful frequented broad way. Let us with Mary choose the better part. Though our choice be singular, it is Mary's choice. And take this as a sign that we are in the right way with Mary, if with her we still desire more and more growth in grace and knowledge, and never think that we know enough, that we are good enough, or faithful enough, and diligent enough in our ways.

Sixthly, In the next place, *come we often, and sit at Christ's feet*, as Mary here came to the ministry. 'He that heareth you heareth me,' saith Christ. Live under a powerful plain ministry.

Lastly, *Labour to draw on others* to this choice. By so much the more earnest endeavour, by how much the more we have been a means to draw them to ill heretofore, and this will seal up all the rest, it being a sure sign of our perfect and sincere choice.

'Which shall not be taken away from her.'

The best things are diversely commended unto us, and here that good part is commended by the continuance, that it shall be ours for ever. The means indeed shall end, for that time must come when Christ shall be all in all, but the fruit of them shall continue for ever in eternal glory ; for hereby have we interest in the covenant, and the promises which are for ever assured to us, and the marriage between Christ and his church is an everlasting knot. We are an immortal seed. The image of God in our souls lasts for ever, and cannot be blotted out.

Secondly, *Our choosing this good part is an evidence God hath chosen us ;* and once chosen, ever chosen. Our actions are but reflex. He chose us, loved us, knows us, and therefore we choose, love, and know him ; and these being the gifts of God to us, are without repentance on his part. And who can take this part from us ? God will not, for he is unchange-

* Qu. 'straitest' ?—ED.

able. Enemies cannot, for, as Christ said, 'My Father is greater than all,' John x. 29, and Christ is Lord of hell and death. 'What shall separate us? Not life nor death, principalities nor powers,' Eph. i. 21. Nothing can be able to separate. By grace are we kept to salvation, 'and by the power of God,' 1 Pet. i. 5; so as we shall not depart from him,' Jer. xxxii. 40. 'The peace of God preserves us,' Philip. iv. 7; and this *should comfort us and establish us*. We may lose wealth, friends, honours, health, by death. Those that have this 'good part' cannot lose it in all the changes that possibly can happen.

This also *may justify a Christian in his labours*. It is for the best part, that is everlasting, that which will accompany him in death. The wicked men of this world they labour and spend themselves in getting that which, as far as they know, the next hour they may be constrained to part with. They vex themselves with care in getting, with care in keeping, and with vexing grief in the parting from them.

In the next place, this *should content them that are poor and despised in this world*. If they have chosen this good part, they have that which will make them amiable in God's eyes; and this riches shall no man be able to take from them; and hereafter their enemies shall be ashamed, when they shall see these poor contemned ones to reign with Christ as princes a thousand years for evermore, and when they shall see those that were the rich men here to howl in perpetual misery. And therefore the consideration of this *should encourage us to set ourselves upon the best things*, and give no liberty to our consciences to rest till we have found that we have made this good choice; give our souls no rest till we have made an habitation for the God of Jacob in our hearts. In death we all look for comfort. Is it a time then to look for a choice? No. Men may shew a desire to repent, but few do it in earnest. They then send for ministers, but it is in fear. Few such ever die with comfort. However God in his mercy dispose of them, it must not be thus. If we look for comfort in death, we should now get oil in our lamps, now get the means of salvation; be at charges for it; spare no cost or labour. It will quit our cost, and we shall find it. Use prayers privately by ourselves with our families; care not for the jesting of men. He that shall judge the 'quick and the dead' will justify us in that day, and will give us that good part that shall never be taken from us. But how shall we know whether we have chosen this good part? I answer, we may gather divers signs from what hath been said; as first, our affections and esteem will testify what is of greatest esteem with us, and beareth the highest place in our hearts. That thing we have chosen; and therefore, if we love the means of grace principally, if we can say, with David, 'that we love God's testimonies above silver and gold,' Ps. xix. 10, and admire at the value of them, oh! how wonderful are thy commandments! how sweet! how do I love thy law! as if we count the feet beautiful of the messengers of peace, and the communion of saints sweet, this is a sign we have made this choice. Otherwise, if we count basely of the ministry, of the saints as of vile persons fit for scorn, whenas they are 'precious in God's eyes,' Ps. cxvi. 15, whatever we say, we are proud, empty, and vain persons. Peter was of another mind, John vi. 68; and let not men think, because Christ is in heaven, they go not from him when they turn from the word, for Christ saith, 'He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me,' Luke x. 16. And because he would honour his ministers' and apostles' doctrine, he did accompany it with a more large portion of his Spirit working effectually than his own

immediate ministry, as appeareth by the multitudes that his apostles did convert at one sermon. In the next place, *examine we ourselves if we be willing to part with anything for the means of salvation*; for if we love anything, and choose it, rather than we will part with that we will part with anything. If we love the pearl, we will sell all to gain it. Far from the humour of some, that will sell the pearl, sell the word, sell the care of the souls of men, to men of corrupt conversation for filthy lucre.

Thirdly, If we have made this choice, *we will have confidence to justify it against all depravers*.* Michal's scorn cannot put David out of conceit with his dancing before the ark of God: 'I will be more vile than thus,' said he, 2 Sam. vi. 22. In vain we think to scorn usurers out [of] their trade. No. They find it is sweet. Their purse comforts them against all scorns. Thus it is with the child of God. Let men scorn, censure, rebuke, they comfort themselves; as Job, 'their witness is on high,' Job xvi. 19, and that makes them not pass for men's censure.

In the next place, if we *find that when all things fail us, we do retire ourselves to this as our stay, that our good part shall not be taken away, nor ever will fail*; and thus David, Ps. lxxiii. 26, 'My flesh and heart fail, but thou, Lord, art my portion for ever;' and make that use of it that David did: 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' As a man robbed of all his money, if his jewels be saved, he solaceth himself in them; and as Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 3, if we can appeal to God in witness of our sincerity, 'Lord, remember how I have lived, how I have served thee in uprightness.' Then shall we find the comfort of this will never be taken away from us, else if we cannot thus appeal to God, we may call and cry to him but he will give us but a comfortless answer: 'Go to the gods which you have chosen,' Judges x. 14, let the world help you, let pleasures and riches deliver you; you would not choose me while I gave you all blessings of life and health, now, 'Go, ye cursed,' Mat. xxv. 41.

* That is, 'undervaluers.'—G.

NOTES.

(a) P. 294.—'Observe from the translation of the words, which is more exactly thus, "Thou troublest thyself."' The original is, *Μάρθα, Μάρθα, μεριμνήεις και τυβάζεις περι πολλά*, = 'art anxious and confused.'

(b) P. 297.—'The word signifies, in all sense and feeling, to approve the things that are excellent, or do differ.' The verb is *δοκιμάζω*, = to prove, test, assay. Cf. Bishop Ellicott *in loco*. G.