

SIN'S ANTIDOTE.

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### NOTE.

'Sin's Antidote' forms No. 25 of the original edition of Saint's Cordials, 1629. It was not given in the other two editions. Its separate title-page will be found below.\*

\* SINNES  
A N T I D O T E.  
IN ONE SERMON.  
Wherein is shewed,

{ *What sinne is.*  
*The misery of it.*  
*How it bindes over to condemnation.*  
*How and in what sense it is said to be remitted.*  
*How Iustice and Mercy joyne in this act of remission of sinnes.*  
*That all the benefits of the new Covenant are given with remission of sins.*  
*That it is possible to attaine unto the knowledge that our sins are remitted.*  
*Lastly, how this knowledge is attained by the spirits threefold conviction.*

Prælucendo Pereo.

VPRIGHTNES HATH BOLDNES.

1 JOHN 1. 9.

*If we confesse our sinnes, hee is faithfull and just to forgive us our sinnes, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousnesse.*

ROM. 3. 19.

*For as by one mans disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

L O N D O N,  
Printed in the yeare 1629.

## SIN'S ANTIDOTE.

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*For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.—MAT. XXVI. 28.*

I HAVE already noted three things in the text.\*

1. The name or title that is here given to the sacrament: it is called 'the blood of the new testament.' I have shewed the reason of it, and how all our good is made over to us by a new covenant which is sealed with the blood of Christ.

2. I have shewed also how this testament is confirmed, ratified, and established by the blood of Christ.

3. I have shewed the fruits and benefits by this covenant thus established, in the extent of it, which we spake of the last day, 'It is shed for many,' where I proved that many shall reap benefit by it; and not few, but many; and again, not all, but many; though many, not all.

Now it remains that we come to the main benefit itself, and that is, *the remission of sins*, which, that you may the better understand and make use of, I will first open the phrase clearly, what is meant by this same 'remission of sins.' Secondly, We will answer some doubts about the sense. Thirdly, We will gather the main conclusion, collect the main point intended, make application of it, and so conclude.

First, for the phrase that is here used, the great benefit that we have by the covenant, and by the blood of Christ, it is remission of sins: 'Shed for many for the remission of sins.' The word in the Greek, ἀφεσον, 'remission,' properly signifieth the sending of a thing back again to the place from whence it was taken; so *remittere* is *retromittere*, to send a thing back again, as old Jacob in his prayer, 'The good Lord be merciful to you, my sons, and give you favour in the sight of the man, that he may send back again that my other son, and Benjamin also,' Gen. xliii. 14; there, to 'remit,' is to send them back again to the house from whence they came.†

So likewise Paul sent Onesimus back again to Philemon, in this sense, when he came away; that is the proper sense of the word, ver. 12. And if it should be taken properly, then to remit sin is to send it back again from

\* The previous Sermon or Sermons have not been preserved.—G.

† Cf. Robinson *sub voce* in Greek, and Freund in Latin.—G.

whence it had its first being and beginning. Satan, the devil, tempted man, it is to send sin back from man to him, from whence it came first. But we need not tie the word so strictly. I say therefore the word is a metaphor, and so here only alludes to that same custom of releasing captives, or of releasing servants that were bound, in the year of jubilee, and the like; to release them from that yoke, bondage, and subjection to which they were tied: and so *remittere* is as much as *relaxare*, so it is used, to release and to free one from a yoke and bondage. \* Thus we have obtained remission of sins, when we are released from that bondage under which sin held us. That you may yet more clearly understand this, you must consider what opposition sin hath—

1. Against God.

2. Against his law.

1. *By discerning of these we shall know what it is to have sin remitted to a man*, howsoever these in the thing are but one and the same. There is no man transgresseth the law, but he sins against God, and there is no man that sins against God, but he transgresseth the law; yet, for doctrine's sake, and for your understandings, we will distinguish them, and shew you what that is that sin doth more directly against the majesty of God; and then what it doth against the law of God, and how it is said to be remitted in both these.

Every sin is an injury and wrong offered to God. Now, when God remits sin, he passeth by the wrong done to himself. In point of his honour and sovereignty, the creature is bound to his Creator, to give all his strength to his service. Now, when a man employs any of his strength, either of soul or body, in the service of anything against God, God is so far wronged, and therefore sometimes God takes this as a dishonour to himself, sometimes he accounts it as a rebellion against himself; so that in sin there is an enmity against God, and a dishonour to God. There is an enmity: so Rom. viii. 7, 'The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God;' and he shews the reason why he calls it enmity against God, 'because it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;' that is, it doth not yield that orderly subjection to God which the creature should to the Creator, that subjection to the Lord that children should shew to their father; and therefore David, when he comes to confess his sins, Ps. li. 4, says, 'Against thee, against thee have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight.' He notes two things there in sin that aggravates it, and makes the sense more grievous, that it was before God, and done in his sight; and then, it was against God, 'Against thee have I sinned, and against thee have I done evil.' So that, when God doth remit sin, he doth as it were forgive that rebellion; he doth not account a man longer a rebel against himself; and though he have rebelled before, and have rebelled never so much, yet now he accounts him as a loyal subject, and now he recounts him a faithful servant, and an obedient child, because his rebellion is pardoned. That is the first thing.

Another thing in sin is, God is dishonoured. Why? 'If I be a father, where is my honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?' saith God in that same Mal. i. 6. He accounts obedience his honour, therefore disobedience is dishonourable to him. 'He that offers me praise, glorifies me,' saith he, 'and to him that orders his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of the Lord,' Ps. l. 23. Now the ordering of a man's conversation, which is an actual and real praising of God, this is a glorifying of God; when a man orders his conversation amiss, when he disorders his

conversation, and walks in a sinful course against the rule and against God, he dishonours God. Now, when God forgives sin, he doth put up all injuries done to his honour, and accounts him now as a man that had never dishonoured him at all. And that is the first thing.

2. Secondly, *Consider sin as it is a breach of the law.* So it is said of sin, 'It is a transgression of the law.' The law is the bond that binds all men; sin leaves a man in this bond. Now the law laps a twofold bond upon a man.

1. A bond of duty;

2. A bond of misery; if he shall neglect and fail in his duty.

(1.) The first is, *a bond of duty*, that is, a bond of obedience. Every man is bound by the law to obedience, to obey God according to that will which he hath manifested and revealed in his law. Now when a man fails, the bond is forfeited, he remains now under this bond, to expect all the danger that will follow upon the neglect of obedience; and therefore sin is called a debt: 'Forgive us our debts,' Mat. vi. 12. So that when God forgives a man's sins, he deals with him as a merciful creditor doth with his debtor, that though he were indebted to him, yet when he forgives him, he accounts it as if he were not in debt; and him, as if he had paid all, and there remains no more reckonings between them: so that God releases the bond now in respect of obedience, in the first sense, that is, in respect of that obedience, that should have been performed in time past; as it is, Rom. iii. 25, 'he is our reconciliation through faith in his blood, to declare the righteousness of God in the remission of the sins that are past;' that is, those sins that were committed before, they are now forgiven, and a man is acquitted even from that obedience that is due to the law for the time past. That is the first thing, that whereas he failed in the breach and transgression of the law, his disobedience is not imputed, it is not accounted, and he remains as if he had obeyed the law for the time past, though he had not obeyed it all.

(2.) But then, secondly, *there is something wherein a man is bound for the time to come*; that is, he is bound now to the curse of the law: 'Cursed is every one that continues not in all that is written in the law to do it,' Gal. iii. 10. Now when God remits sin, he frees a man from that curse; all that should have followed upon his neglect or failing in his obedience, 'He hath freed us from the curse of the law,' saith the apostle, 'inasmuch as he was made a curse for us,' Gal. iii. 13. So that, put all this together, and you now see what it is to have sin remitted. It is, for a man to be released and freed from all that guilt under which he was held, by which he was bound over to judgment for dishonour done to the majesty and glory of God; for rebellion against the sovereignty of God, for transgressing the law of God, and that curse under which he was bound; he is freed from all, so that God beholds a man now as one that had not at all dishonoured himself, or rebelled against him; God looks upon a man now, as a man that had not transgressed his law, or been under the curse and censure of the law in any point. So that you see there is a perfect and total forgiving and passing by of all sin, and a releasing of a man of the punishment of sin. When a man obtains this favour, to have his sins remitted him, this is that we call remission of sins. But now for the sense, there be two questions that must be answered.

*Quest. 1.* The first is, *Whether this remission of sins be all the benefit we have in this new covenant by the blood of Christ?* So it seems to be here, as if there were no other benefit but this: 'This is the blood of the new

testament, shed for many, for the remission of sins.' There he names nothing but remission of sins.

*Ans. 1.* I answer, This is not all the benefit, though this include all the rest, and therefore it is only named. You shall find sometimes that this is left out: Jer. xxxi. 14, 'This shall be the covenant,' saith the Lord, 'that I will make with them; I will be their God, and I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me:' and there is no mention of remission of sins there. There sanctification is mentioned without justification; here again remission of sins is mentioned without the working of fear in their hearts; here is justification without sanctification, and so in that place of the Acts, x. 43.

*Ans. 2.* Secondly, We are said to be 'baptized for the washing away of sins.' There the washing away of sins is put for all the rest.

Sometimes again you shall have them both mentioned: and so in Jer. xxxi. 32, 'This shall be the covenant that I will make with thee, in those days,' saith God: 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people; I will forgive their iniquities, and give them a new heart, and I will take away their heart of stone, and give them an heart of flesh,' &c. Here is all put together now; sin remitted, and the new heart given, and all expressed and mentioned in the new covenant.

*Quest. 2.* How comes it then that remission of sins is here put for the rest?

*Ans. 1.* I answer, first, Because that this is the first mercy; and, secondly, This is the chiefest mercy, and the chiefest benefit in the new covenant, and therefore it is put for all the rest, by a figure usual in the Scriptures.

(1.) First, I say, it is that which God first doth, it is the first mercy which he shews. It is no hoping that he will bestow any gift on a man, until he receive him to favour. All those other gifts, those gifts of grace, they follow the gracious accepting of a man. First, God receives the person of a man, accepts him to favour, and then he bestows upon him all those gifts that are bequeathed by Christ in this testament. A king first receives a rebel to favour, forgives him his offence before he bestow any honour, any other privilege upon him. Now, because this is the first, therefore it is put for the rest, the rest follow it.

(2.) Then, secondly, because this is the chief, and so it includes all the rest under it; for, if this be once obtained, if this favour be once bestowed on a man, that God have forgiven him his sins, then he gives him everything else. So the apostle, Rom. v. 9, 10, saith he, 'If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more now, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.' If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of Christ, that is the first thing; and the greatest of all the great works of mercy was to remove and take away the impediments, the obstacles, the blocks that lay in the way. Sin, the conscience of sin, to purge the conscience from that, to forgive all that which laid a man open to the wrath of God, this is the greatest work; if this be done, it is an easy matter to obtain all the rest. And this may be noted the rather for the comfort of weak Christians, that doubt so much of strength of grace to subdue any corruption, for assistance and grace to persevere in an holy course. Hath God done the first work? Hath he forgiven thy sins? All the rest are less works than this; it is a less mercy, after sin is forgiven, to increase grace, to continue grace, to subdue corruption, and the rest; all will follow upon this, they are all included

under this : therefore, I say, let a man make sure this to himself, first, that he hath forgiveness of sins, and then from thence let him raise arguments to strengthen his faith, and to encourage himself in asking another mercy at the hands of God ; and so in any outward thing, in any outward want, distress, or difficulty, if God have done the greater, he hath forgiven thy sins. You know the apostle reasons from the giving of Christ, ' If he have given us his Son, with him he will give us all things,' Rom. viii. 32. Now the first and greatest gift, in the Son, it is this, to have our sins forgiven, and therefore he will certainly give all the rest with it ; if a man can make good this one thing to his soul, all the rest will follow upon it. So much for the second question.

*Quest. 3.* Again, there is another, and that is this, *How can it be said here that this blood is shed for the forgiveness of sins?* It seems somewhat contradictory and opposite one to another ; for, if sins be forgiven, How comes Christ to shed his blood for them ? And if Christ shed his blood for them, How are they said to be forgiven ?

*Ans. 1.* The shedding of Christ's blood supposeth merit. It was by the merit of his death that we obtained this mercy. Now where there is merit, what mercy is there in it ? Forgiveness supposeth a free gift, a free grace ; but where there was such a merit, as was procured by the blood of Christ, what free gift was in it ? These two seem to fight one against another, and therefore we must reconcile them ; for these two may well stand together, remission of sins, and yet the obtaining this by the blood of Christ. To this purpose you must consider in God,

Justice and mercy.

He is exactly just, and exactly merciful. He so shews mercy, as it must be done without injury to his justice. Justice must be fully satisfied, that mercy may be fully and comfortably manifested. Now there is the blood-shedding of Christ to satisfy justice, there is forgiveness of sins to declare mercy ; for that is the common speech of people. Ask them how they hope to be saved ? They will answer, They hope to be saved by the mercy of God. It is upon a mistake, for they do swallow up justice in mercy, as if God could not remain exactly just in shewing mercy ; now tell them again, that God is as perfectly just as he is merciful. Ay, but they hope to find better than so, they hope they shall find mercy.

And therefore know, that there is no man that receives this mercy in the forgiveness of his sins till justice be satisfied even to the utmost. If the justice of God were not fully satisfied, I say, the infinite justice of God in the exact rigour, and in the perfect righteousness of it, if it had not been satisfied to the utmost, it had been impossible that any flesh should have been saved.

*Ans. 2.* And therefore, secondly, consider another thing, and that is, the comparison between Christ and us. Look upon Christ, and there is justice fully satisfied ; look upon us, and there is mercy fully shewed. In us there is no merit, nothing but the guilt of sin ; that if God would receive sinful men to favour, reckon, it must proceed from the tenderness of the bowels of his mercy, from the freeness of his love, by whom we have redemption through his blood, even the remission of our sins in his rich grace in the same, Eph. i. 7, 8 ; it is the tenderness of mercy, and the riches of grace, if he look on us, because there is nothing in us.

Now look upon Christ, who hath indeed satisfied the wrath of God to the utmost, and therefore he is declared to be a Saviour by the resurrection. If Christ should not have remained in the prison, as he was in the

prison of the grave till he had paid the utmost farthing, God had not been just; he was indeed our surety, and there was no possibility of our being released from the debt, unless our surety had paid the utmost farthing. But now therefore, when Christ rose out of the grave, and was now released of the bonds of death, and was freed out of prison, into which he was cast as our surety, it is evident the debt is fully discharged, the creditor is fully satisfied, and now our peace is fully made, because Christ hath purchased us, and therefore in respect of Christ we are said to be bought: 'You are bought with a price, and therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits.' And you are redeemed, saith the apostle; that is, you are bought, 'not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter i. 18. So that there was a price upon the blood of Christ, a value, a worth. Consider the person that shed that blood; it was one that had two natures: he was God, able to satisfy the wrath of an infinite, offended majesty, and therefore it is said that God purchased the church with his blood, Acts xx. 28; that is, because he that purchased the church with his blood was God as well as man. Now by this it comes to pass that his blood was meritorious, of an infinite value, worth, and price, and so he merited the favour of God. It was merited on Christ's part, but not on our part. Every way it is free to us. The gift of Christ is free, for that it comes from the free grace of God. 'To us a child is born, to us a son is given,' Isa. ix. 6. It is a gift, Christ was given, and then the application of Christ to us, the acceptance of us through Christ; this is a gift, and a gift of grace, as the apostle calls it in that same Rom. iv. 4. It is of free grace that God accepts us; he might have chosen others. We know that angels fell, and fell irrecoverably; Christ took not upon him the nature of angels, but he took upon him the seed of Abraham, and so he became a Saviour, not of angels, but of men, Heb. ii. 16. The angels that fell are fallen for ever, but Christ died that he might save men. So that every way it is free. It was free that God gave his Son to this abasement, it was free that God gave his Son for men, it was free that God should give men faith to lay hold upon his Son: 'Through faith you are saved by grace, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,' Eph. ii. 8. So that remission of sins, though it be by the blood of Christ, it is an act of free mercy, an act of mercy whereto God is no way bound, but did it freely of his own love and mere motion, and of his own good pleasure. Thus you have the words opened. I have shewed you what remission is. I have shewed you also how these things stand together, the shedding of Christ's blood, and yet remission of sins by free grace.

Now let us come to the main point intended, and that is this, that

*Doct.* All the benefits that believers have by the new covenant, and so by the death of Christ, they are all of them given them in the remission of their sins. And therefore remission of sins is here put for the whole covenant, for all the privileges of the covenant, because all the rest are given in this and with it. Look what time God forgives a man's sins, at that time he gives him all other things, sanctification, and whatsoever else, as we see at large in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, the Lord speaks there of the intention of his goodness to his people: ver. 26, he shews what he will do, he will cleanse them from all their idols, and forgive all their sins, and then he will give them a new heart, he will cause them to walk in his ways; and then he comes with outward mercies too, as far as shall be good for them; he promiseth them deliverance from their enemies, and other good things, in the rest of the chapter, but all other things come in with remission of sins. A



man that hath his sins forgiven, he hath the other things given with it. This point we are to prove and apply, it is a point of great weight, it is the very key of the gospel, which requires great attention in the hearer, and great care in the speaker; there is much in it, for the very not distinct and clear understanding of this causeth a world of doubts and scruples, and gives advantage to Satan for many temptations, as we shall shew when we come to open certain cases about this.

1. First, We must open the point, and make it appear to be a truth, *that all other privileges and benefits of the new covenant are given to believers in, and with the remission of their sins*, so that a man may conclude, he that hath his sins remitted and forgiven, he hath, and shall have all the rest of the promises of the new covenant; and therefore David, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, saith, 'Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin.' The apostle, Rom. iv., expounding that text in the point of justification, he shews wherein the blessedness of a man consists; that is, in that he may appear before God without his sin, without his filth, without that that makes him abominable to God. And therefore such a man is truly blessed, for he hath with this all that can make him blessed. Look whatsoever a man would have to make up his blessedness, and to prove to his own soul that he is a blessed man, he hath all that here with remission of sins; you know, that other things, sanctification and the rest, are part of our blessedness, and therefore they must go along with this remission of sins. And so in another place of Scripture that speech of the apostle, Acts x. 43, is for us, 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name we have remission of sins.'

Now the prophets gave witness concerning Christ of many other things besides remission of sins. That we have in his name, that we have by him, but all other things come with this, and therefore he would have them chiefly to mark, that that which all the prophets would have the church to understand to be the great benefit they have by Christ, is the remission of sins. They all join in this, that this is the general benefit, as it were, the great gift of all, that supposeth and includeth all the rest in it, that 'whosoever believes in him shall have remission of sins;' 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their sins.' God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, a marvellous great mercy! This consists in this, that their sins were not imputed. Ay, but there are many other things that a Christian would desire besides this; for what man that hath, in truth, his sins forgiven, that hath his faith working by love, by love to Christ, but he would desire also, that as his sins past might be pardoned, so he might walk before God in newness of life; and therefore that is that which David so much prayed for: 'Oh that my ways were so direct, that I might keep thy statutes,' Ps. cxix. 5. Now we have this into the bargain, we have this into the agreement, as it were, in with the rest, that our sins are not imputed. When this is granted we have this also with it, that they shall not condemn, as we see, Rom. viii. 1, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;' there is no condemnation to them. This is a great mercy, and this is one mercy that we have by Christ; but this is not all, for, saith he, 'they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;' to shew that this walking after the Spirit, it is a thing that the Spirit of grace works in them, that is given to them by Christ; for 'the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ hath freed me from the law of

sin and of death.' So that now you see plainly there is something else given when sin is not imputed, and so a man is free from condemnation; all the rest comes in with it; that the law of the Spirit of life frees us from the law of sin and of death, and so by degrees perfects holiness and sanctification with it; and so in divers other places of Scripture I might allege for this purpose, but I intend not to dwell upon it. I will make it appear to you by some reasons, and so come to the uses. You see it is so, you shall see also it will be so, and it must be so when we have remission of sins, when this great mercy is bestowed on a man, that his sins are forgiven, all the rest are given with it.

*Reasons.* 1. The first reason is taken *from the nature of sin.* Consider that if sin be taken away once, that which hinders all our good is taken away, as Isa. lix. 1, 2, it is said, 'The hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot help; nor his ear is not deaf, that he cannot hear: but your sins separate between you and your God, and hide his face and keep good things from you.' Good things are kept from us when God's face is hid from us. That which keeps good things from us, it is sin; saith the prophet, 'your sins separate between you and your God;' take away that now, take away sin that makes the separation, break down that partition wall, break down this distance between God and us, that keeps us from God, that we have not that access unto his presence, and keeps God from us, that there is not this free influence, as it were, of grace upon us. I say, take away that, and then a man is settled in all the other benefits, whatsoever comes by communion with God. Therefore this is the first thing, that remission of sins pulls down the wall, and brings a man into communion with God. Now by communion with God we have all good, we have all in him, all from him. There is no good denied to man when God hath received him to favour, and God never denies his favour to a man when he hath forgiven him his sins; for indeed that is the great act of his love, the great act of his favour and goodness, that he forgives sins to a man; that is the first thing.

2. Again, secondly, it will appear yet further, if you consider *the entireness of Christ, his perfectness.* How perfect a Saviour he is in every way! He is the head of the church, able to fill all his members, to fill the whole body, and therefore the church is called 'the fulness of Christ, that fills all in all, that fills all things,' Eph. i. 23. There would be some emptiness in a Christian if Christ should not fill the heart of man, fill the desires of the soul, if he should not also give something else with remission of sin. And therefore, 1 Cor. i. 30, saith the apostle, 'He is made to us of God the Father, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.' He is an entire perfect Saviour every way; he is made redemption to us; he is made, besides that, righteousness to us; besides that, he is made sanctification to us; besides that, he is made wisdom to us. Mark, if a man would have redemption, it is Christ; 'By him we have redemption, even forgiveness of sins,' saith the text. Now a man that hath redemption in Christ, that hath forgiveness of sins, he hath other things with it. He hath wisdom by Christ too, righteousness by Christ, and sanctification by Christ too. And so he hath everything, because he is an entire and perfect Saviour. And that is the second reason.

3. There is a third reason, and that is this, it is taken from *the chaining and tying of all the privileges of the new covenant together.* They are inseparably knit; they may be distinguished, but they are not divided; they are in the same subject. Where God gives one, he gives all; and there-

fore, Rom. viii. 30, it is said, 'Whom he predestinated, them also he called; and whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them also he glorified.' They go all together. If a man be a justified person, he is effectually called too; if he be effectually called, he was predestinated, and he shall be glorified. So that now there are many links in the chain, when all are joined together. If a man pull but one part of it, he takes all; they all follow, they are all chained together. The privileges of the new covenant they are coupled together. In the new covenant God doth not say, I will do this *or* thus, and so speak of them disjunctively; he will do one *or* another. I will give you a new heart, *or* I will forgive you your sins, *or* you shall be my people. He doth not do so; but the new covenant delivers them coupled so, that they are linked together; 'You shall be my people, *and* I will forgive you your sins, *and* I will give you a new heart,' &c., Ezek. xxxvi. 26. They are all joined together, and coupled together, and may not be divided asunder. If God give remission of sins, the rest goes with it, for they are coupled together in that grant, in the main grant; that is, in the covenant of grace itself. Thus then the point is opened and proved: I come to make some use of it. This is a point of great weight; the greatest work is to bring it home to the hearts of Christians.

The first use we will make of it shall be for instruction and exhortation, and we will come after to comfort, and to resolve certain cases, if time serve. The cases are many, and rise from mistake of the covenant.

*Use 1.* First, for exhortation and instruction, and that shall be to persuade every one, if they would make themselves happy in the enjoying of all things that are good, what course they should take for it. *Get this, their sins forgiven.* Let that be the first thing. If a man would make all comfort sure to himself, let him make this sure first to himself, that his sins are forgiven him. Therefore I beseech you consider this, and take it to heart, that we may persuade you to get the knowledge of the remission of your sins. We persuade you not to anything that is impossible or unnecessary. It is a thing that may be had, and it is a thing that is necessary you should have, if you will have any good. Make this first sure to thyself, that thy sin is pardoned.

I. I say, first, *it is possible.* It is that which the papists deny, and that which others question, and which natural reason is against; and therefore, because it is a point of faith, the Scripture is more large in it, and we must be more express in clearing of it, to make it appear to you that it is possible that a man may have the knowledge that his sins are forgiven him; that he may not only conclude that sins are forgiven to some, or, it may be, I may hope that my sins shall be forgiven to me; but he may conclude resolutely that my sins are forgiven me, and as truly and as certainly, and more certainly, than if an angel from heaven should tell a man so. A man would think when an angel shall come and tell Cornelius that his prayers and alms-deeds were accepted, there could be no certainer knowledge than that. When an angel shall come and tell Daniel that he was a man greatly beloved, there could not be more certainty of it by any means. All that Dives required was but that one might arise from the dead, that his brethren might certainly know the things in another world. But we will make it appear to you that there is a way to make it more certain to us than the voice of any that should rise from the dead, or the report of an angel. Men have been deluded by apparitions, and Satan may transform himself into an angel of light; but this way of making it known to a man's self that

his sins are forgiven cannot deceive him, as we shall now shew to you. But that there is such a certainty,

(1.) First, Else how is it possible that the servants of God should have peace of conscience till a man may know that his sins are actually pardoned him? But to settle a man's conscience in quiet and in peace there must be an act in the court of heaven; and somewhat must be done in the court of conscience. Something Christ doth in heaven with God his Father, and something like that he doth in the heart of a man, he makes peace with God his Father for us. Now God is reconciled to a man; then again he doth by his Spirit give to a man the knowledge of this reconciliation with God by clear evidences out of the word, and then a man is at rest, then a man is at peace, and therefore a man may know it. Suppose a malefactor had a pardon granted in the court, as long as he knows not of it, he is full of trouble still, when it is brought home to his chamber, to his lodging, to the prison, or wheresoever he is, now he hath peace. The soul of a man is not at peace till the pardon be brought home to the consistory, to his chamber, to a man's own conscience. Now where there is one of these manifested evidently to him, that he may read it, and take notice of it, then he is at peace. Now it is possible for a man to have peace in this life: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ.' It was not only Paul's case that he had peace with God, but it was the case of the believing Romans, and therefore he joins the rest with himself, 'We being justified by faith, have peace with God.'

(2.) Again, it appears a man may know that his sins are pardoned by another thing, else how could a man pray for the pardon of sin? We are bound to pray for it; but what we ask we must ask in faith, and waver not, James i. 5, and whatsoever you ask, believe it shall be granted, and it shall be done to you, Mark xi. 24. A man must pray in faith; in praying for the particular thing, faith applies it to a man's self, applies it to his own soul, not in a wavering, suspending, doubtful manner, but that upon knowledge: 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' There is a knowledge in faith; that is, such a knowledge as is grounded upon divine revelation, upon the truth of the word, whereupon faith looks, which, when a man knows and applies, now he hath peace; by this he knows that his sins are pardoned.

(3.) Again, to what use else is the sacrament, if it be not to make known to a man the forgiveness of sins? for that same giving to every particular man with the intent of it, to remember me, as Christ speaks, that which Christ did, as the end of it, that he died for sinners, and died for those particular sinners to whom he offereth himself, to whom he is given in the sacrament. All this is but to bring the knowledge and application of this forgiveness of sins to my own self.

(4.) Again, other of God's servants have known the forgiveness of their sins, that their sins have been forgiven, why may not we also? Doth the Spirit of God work diversely in the saints? did he work one way in David and another way in us? did he work one way in Paul and another way in us? It will appear otherwise: Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I said, I will confess against myself my sins,' saith David; 'and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.' David knew it was forgiven.

Ay, may some man say, David did it by some extraordinary revelation.

No, saith he; 'for this shall every one that is godly seek to thee,' &c. For this shall 'every man;' it is every man's case as well as mine, and they shall seek it the same way that I have done, that they may obtain the

same mercy that I have found. And so the apostle Paul saith, I was a persecutor, and a blasphemer, and an oppressor, but I was received to mercy; Paul knew he was received to mercy.

Ay, but Paul might know it by some extraordinary revelation.

Nay, saith the apostle for the comfort of those that shall believe hereafter to eternal life, 'God hath shewed on me all long-suffering and patience for the comfort of those that hereafter shall believe to eternal life.' This mercy manifested to Paul was for the comfort of others of God's servants that should afterward believe to eternal life. So it is not a thing impossible.

II. Again, secondly, when we persuade you to the knowledge of the forgiveness of your sins, we persuade you *to a thing that is as profitable as possible*; as it is possible to be had, so it is profitable, useful, and necessary for us. When a man will come and ask any mercy at God's hands, how shall he lay a foundation now of hope and faith, that he may speed with God in obtaining it, but in this first, that his sins are forgiven? And therefore it was even David's course, whensoever he came to beg any great mercy at the hands of God, he begins with this confession of sins, to beg pardon for sins. So, Dan. ix. 4, when he comes to beg a mercy for the whole church at the time in those times of sorrow, what course doth he take? First, he confesseth the sins of the church, he begs forgiveness of the sins of the church, as the great hindrances of mercy to the church. And therefore here is the thing, if a man would beg any good thing at the hands of God, begin here first, remove that which hinders. Till sin be done away, there will be hindrances of all our prayers. Every prayer is lost, whatsoever petition a man puts up, he shall never speed and obtain it till his sins be pardoned. Consider in the time of our Saviour Christ, whensoever he would bestow any special mercy upon men,—many came to him in several cases with several diseases,—the first speech of Christ is, 'Thy sins are forgiven;' when he healed their bodies and other particulars, or cast out devils, &c., it went along with this still, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' And therefore, of all things, it is most necessary that we may know how to speed in prayer, that we may know what right we have to come before God, and to make our requests known, that we know that our sins are forgiven and pardoned.

*Quest.* But how may I know that? Now I come to the main question, how a man may know that his sins are forgiven in particular.

*Ans.* I answer, *It is known by the testimony of the Spirit.* That which they stand so much upon, which is extraordinary revelation, it is not needful for this business; but yet a revelation from the Spirit is needful, and therefore it is called 'the Spirit of revelation,' Eph. i. 17; that is, the Spirit reveals to a man the things that are given him of God; and the apostle proves strongly that any believer may know the rich privileges of the new covenant, because any believer hath the Spirit; as, 1 Cor. ii. 9, &c., 'The things,' saith he, 'that eye hath not seen, that ear hath not heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man, are they that God hath laid up for those that love him.' What things are these? They are things that are laid up in heaven, though that be not denied; but the chief thing, the meaning there is, the great privileges that we have in the gospel, which God hath prepared for those that love him, and are laid up in the gospel; as in a rich treasury, there they lie; and therefore the promises are called 'precious promises,' because they contain these jewels and pearls, and these spiritual riches of a Christian in them. It is a rich cabinet that

hath rich jewels in it, so they are precious promises that have such precious mercies in them. Thus these are such things as 'eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,' &c.

*Obj.* But some man will say, If no man ever saw them, if no man ever knew them, how shall we ever get the knowledge of them?

*Ans.* But, saith the apostle, 'God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit.' The eye of man, that is, the natural eye of man, can never see them, the natural heart of man can never conceive them, &c., yet, nevertheless, God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; and so he goes on, ver. 14, 'The natural man knows not the things of God, but the spiritual man discerns all things.' Why so? Because the Spirit of God, who now causeth the light of the gospel to shine in his heart, reveals to him those things, that without that light can never be discovered or discerned by any man.

*Quest.* But now the great question is, How the Spirit of God reveals to a man that his sins are pardoned in particular? Every man will doubt of it.

'The same Spirit bears witness with our spirits, that we are the sons of God,' Rom. viii. 16. So there is a witness of the Spirit with the spirit of a man in the heart and conscience of a man, that he is accepted in the sight of God.

*Quest.* Oh, but now how doth the Spirit witness this? and what is the testimony that the Spirit gives of this, or by what way gives he it?

*Ans.* I answer, briefly, by alluding to that expression that you shall find John xvi. 7, 8: 'I will send,' saith Christ, 'the Holy Ghost. And when he is come he shall reprove the world; he shall convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.' He shall convince the world, but of what shall he convince the world? 'Of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they have not believed in me: of righteousness, because I go to the Father: and of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.' I say I allude to that, for there is such a work in this business that now we have in hand, as there is in that convincing the world concerning Christ; I say, there is such a work of the Spirit convincing a man 'of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,' that he may reveal to him the pardon of his sins; there are certain works of the Spirit that we may express by these:

1. First, I say, *He convicts of sin.* The Spirit that testifies to a man that his sins are pardoned him, doth it first by convincing a man of his sins. Now, you know, there is more in conviction than bare discovery. It is a full and thorough discovery of the thing; and not only so, but an effectual discovery, such as works upon the soul; there is not only a light in the understanding, but some heat in the affection and in the will. Now, when the Spirit convinceth a man of sin, here is the first thing now whereby he knows that his sins are pardoned. You shall see this the better in the effects of it, and that is,

(1.) First, *It makes a man to see that there is no sweetness in sin;* it makes a man to find that sin is the greatest burden, the greatest misery, of this life. For that which makes a man delight in sin, is because it is presented to him in false shapes; but now when the Spirit of God comes to manifest sin, to discover sin in its own shape in the soul, and makes a man to look upon it in its own nature, as it is, then he finds it to be the most unprofitable burden that ever he bore in his life. Upon this comes that work upon the heart, which is that oppression of spirit, that a man comes laden and heavy burdened. You know this ever goes with forgiveness of sins: Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all ye that are

laden and heavy burdened, and I will ease you.' That if a man would be eased of his sins he must be laden and heavy burdened first, that is, he must find a need of ease; and when he is laden and heavy burdened, that he may be assured he shall have ease if he come to Christ. That is the first effect.

(2.) Secondly, There is another thing that goes along with this, that sin being discovered thus to a man, *he comes to seek, above all things in the world, to be rid and to be eased of it*; as the apostle in that same 2 Cor. vii. 11 saith, 'Behold, what clearing of yourselves,' &c. He will get to be free from it rather than his life. Now, there is no clearing of a guilty person but by confession; for how shall a malefactor get to be cleared before the judge but by confessing his fault? If he sue for mercy, it may be he may obtain it; but if he stand out till it be proved against him, he will be cast. It fails with men many times, but it never fails with God; and therefore saith David, 'I said, I will confess against myself my sin, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,' Ps. xxxii. 5, 6. So it is said, 'He that confesseth his sins, and forsakes them, shall find mercy,' Prov. xxviii. 13.

(3.) But, thirdly, *it is not a bare confession of sin, that may proceed from common knowledge and illumination; but there goes more in it, and that is, there is a loathing and a detesting of it*. By that the Lord describes the repentance of the people of Israel: Isa. xxx. 22, 'They shall defile the rich idols, and their apparel,' &c.; 'and shall cast them out, and shall say, Get you hence; they shall cast them out as a filthy thing, as a thing that they cannot endure to look on, and to have in their sight.' There is such a loathing of sin in the soul where God intends to forgive that sin.

(4.) Fourthly, There is yet a fourth thing in this conviction of sin, and that is this, *that all the care of a man is how he may free himself from the actual committing of sin*, how he may set himself in a right state again, how he may be right set; as Gal. vi. 1, 'If any be fallen by infirmity, you that are spiritual, set him in joint.' He is now like a man whose bones are out of joint, and he is in pain with it; therefore all his care is how he may be set in joint again, how he may be set into the estate that he was in before; for every time a man commits a sin, the soul is disordered by it, and a man is now much distempered. With that he is forward to commit other sins, he is backward to any good. And now the greatest care of a man is, when God hath thus fitted him by his conviction, by this work of the Spirit convincing him of sin, how to get his sin off, and how to get his soul rid of it; as Isa. i. 16, 18, 'Wash you, make you clean,' saith God; 'take away the evil of your works from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, and learn to do well; and then come and let us reason together: Though your sins were as crimson, they shall be as snow; though they be as scarlet, they shall be as wool.' He doth not mean that he would not at all forgive a man's sins till he have gotten such a victory over all his sins that he shall not at all commit any sin; but the meaning is thus, There should be in the soul such a contention, such a strife against sin, that it may appear that he endeavours nothing so much as to be rid of it. All his care is to be washed, to be made clean, and to have the evil of his works took from the eyes of God. Now, when a man sees the evil of sin, as it is contrary to God's holiness, and contrary to his word, and to his law, &c., seeing the evil of sin in himself, and the effects of it, he hates nothing so much, he strives against nothing so much, he desires not so much to be rid of anything as of sin; that is the first thing.

2. But then, secondly, *there is a conviction of righteousness*: 'He shall convince the world of righteousness;' that is, that a man now, when God hath forgiven him his sins, he is to look up to seek after righteousness. And this is certain, that God forgives no man his sins but by Christ, and through Christ, and for Christ; and he draws the eye of the soul, and the bent and the inclination of the heart, towards Christ; that now a man sets a price upon him, he prizeth him above all things: he prizeth him in his desire, till he may get assurance that he is his; and after he prizeth him in his estimation, walking in Christ, after he hath got assurance. There, I say, is the first thing then, he prizeth Christ before all things, he seeks nothing so much. You see the Lord works this disposition in the church in the Canticles, when the church had sinned by neglecting Christ; and now he withdrew himself from her, what doth she do? She comes and seeks him by the watchmen, and they smite her; she comes to those that kept the tower, and they mock her; she comes to the daughters of Jerusalem, and they slight her husband, him whom her soul loves; she goes on seeking still. This is the case of a Christian after relapse into sin, that he is not set again in his peace and comfort till he be made to prize Christ at an higher rate than before. So likewise he describes the church, Jer. l. 4, thus seeking after Christ: 'They shall go weeping as they go; and shall seek the Lord God, and shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards.' They shall go; their end is to find out God, that God that was in covenant with them; to find out God, and they shall go weeping, and their faces towards Zion. This is the disposition of the soul of that man whose sins shall be forgiven him; he seeks nothing so much as Christ.

Again, he prizeth Christ at so high a rate, having forgiveness, that he will not part with him. The church saith, 'If she could get Christ, she would keep him in the chamber of her mother that brought her forth.' And when she hath him, what is her desire? 'Set me as a seal upon thy hand: for love is strong as death, and jealousy is cruel as the grave. Much water cannot quench love,' Cant. viii. 6, 7. She so loves Christ now, that she will never part with him again, but will continue with him for ever. So we see Mat. xiii. 44, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hid in a field; which when a man hath found, he hides it, and for joy of it he departeth, sells all, and buys it.' When a man hath found Christ, and the benefit of remission of sins by Christ, there is nothing that shall answer Christ in the esteem of his soul. Thus faith works by love, love to Christ; as we see the apostle Paul, Philip. iii. 8, he accounts 'all things as dung in comparison of Christ, that he might be found in him, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ.' So then thus we see every way there is an high esteem of Christ, a seeking of him till he be found, and a keeping with him when a man hath gotten him, in prizing of Christ at a high rate, nothing in comparison of Christ; this now is because he is convinced that there is a righteousness to be had in Christ, and a righteousness that can be had nowhere else but in Christ, and such a righteousness as can make him perfectly righteous. It is the great thing that he desires above all the world, and that is the second thing. The Spirit doth this; as it draws, so it links a man to Christ.

3. There is a third thing, *the conviction of judgment*; such judgment as wherein 'the prince of this world is judged.' That a man falls now in condemning the motions of sin in his heart, and to condemn himself for the actions of sin before. That you may understand these things clearly,



(1.) First, I say, *a man condemns the actions of sin he hath committed; he condemns them and himself for them.* This disposition is in all those whom Christ receives to forgiveness, whom he forgives these sins. 'Thou shalt judge thyself worthy to be cut off,' saith God, 'when I will be reconciled to thee,' Jer. xxxvi. 3. When God will be reconciled to his people, this is one thing, they shall judge themselves worthy to be cut off; and therefore, 1 Cor. xi. 31, 'if you would judge yourselves,' saith he, 'you should not be judged of the Lord.' So that this is that now which frees a man from the judgment of God; when he begins with his own heart, and judgeth himself for sin, he shall not be judged. It shall be judged once; and if a man will not judge himself, God will judge him; but if a man will judge himself, he shall not be judged of the Lord. Now, therefore, you have the conviction of judgment, when a man is now brought to judge himself, that is, to set himself against himself, as a judge sets himself against a malefactor: he arraigns him before him, he brings in evidence against him; he lays upon him the sentence of the law, he condemns him, and takes order that execution be performed upon him. Thus it is when a man sets himself to judge himself: he arraigns himself, he sets himself to a serious consideration before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, who is the judge of the quick and the dead, to consider how the matter stands between God and him, and he brings in evidence against himself, the testimony of his own conscience, the witness of the law; the books that shall be opened then are now opened to prevent that judgment. He looks upon the law, and it shews him what he should have done; he looks upon his conscience, and that shews him what he hath done; and, when he hath thus done, he comes to confess himself guilty; he proceeds now upon this conviction to condemn himself, and to acknowledge that all the curses in the law are due to him, and he wonders that God should bear with such a one as he to live upon the face of the earth thus long; he subscribes to the righteous judgment of God, if he should cast him into hell for his sins, for he judgeth himself worthy to be cut off; he extenuateth not any sin, he lessens not any sin that he hath committed; he desires nothing so much as to feel the weight of it in his heart, that he may indeed see the ugliness of sin more and more, and be brought to be more out of love with it; and thanks any man that will help him to aggravate his sins to himself, and to see the ugliness of them. When he hath done thus, he comes to execution, that is, he comes to that revenge upon himself; there is an indignation against sin, and a revenge upon himself too, because of sin; he judgeth himself unworthy of those liberties that he hath abused, and sometimes he ties and limits himself in those particulars, and denies himself of those things that by reason of his corruption he cannot tell how to use without sin; or otherwise he takes revenge upon himself for particular ills. I say, thus a man judgeth himself for his sins past. That is one thing.

(2.) But now secondly, *he judgeth the prince of this world, as well as himself;* that as he judgeth himself for his actions, so he judgeth all the motions of sin in his heart: that for the present, if any motion be rising from his own corruption, drawing him to a new act of evil, he judgeth and condemneth the sin in his heart, and this is the very original, and the root of that conflict in his soul, this work of the Spirit, a conviction of judgment, that now hath made a man as a judge against himself; and therefore now he sits as a judge doth, to prevent sin by all means; he sets himself against the motions of sin, which was the case of the apostle Paul: Rom. vii. 19, 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.' But what, doth he let

this go on? No, he strives against it, that as the flesh lusteth against the spirit, so the spirit lusteth against the flesh; there is a seed, there is a work of grace striving to work out the corruption in his heart. This is in all the servants of God, in all those whom God bestows this mercy upon of the forgiveness of sins, to condemn the motions of sin, and therefore he sets against them. 'O wretched man!' saith the apostle, 'who shall deliver me from this body of death?' He calls for help as it were against the body of death; he looks about to see if it be possible by any means to get it rooted out. When a man hath a thief gotten into his house, he calls for all his neighbours to help him, that he may take him there; so there is a thief got into the soul, for now sin is not in his heart as a lord, but as a thief, and therefore he calls for help, that seeing it is gotten in, he may get it out again. But this, I say, beloved, is in all the servants of God that shall have remission of sins, there is this conviction of judgment; that is, they are brought to this pass, that now they judge themselves and their sin, and condemn it in themselves. Now, upon this follows reformation and amendment of life, because they judge the prince of this world; they judge all the works of Satan, and all the motions of sin in their hearts; and therefore now they set themselves into a contrary way, to works of obedience, and amendment of life. So the promise is made that, 1 John i. 9, 'If you walk in the light, as he is in the light, the blood of Christ shall cleanse you from all your sins.' Thus you see now how a man may know and prove that his sins are forgiven. Put all this together, and let every man now examine his own heart; I know no man but would desire to partake of the comfort of this doctrine; and I told you already, there is great reason why every man should labour after it, to get the knowledge of this, that his sins are forgiven. We are yet but upon that point, how a man may know that his sins are forgiven. Now for this purpose, I say, consider what hath been said. It is a thing that is revealed to a man by the Spirit of God; the Spirit of God doth manifest in the word those grounds and texts upon which a man may gain this assurance to his soul. Now look on this threefold conviction of the Spirit, whereby it manifests this work, conviction of sin, conviction of righteousness, and conviction of judgment, for they all go together in that heart whose sins are forgiven. I say conviction of sin: first, it makes a man see the loathsomeness of his sin, the ugliness of it; it makes him account it a burden that he would fain be eased of it, and therefore he confesseth it; therefore he sets against it with all his might, and therefore he loathes and detests it. That is the first thing.

Now try yourselves by that, whether you yet apprehend your sins in that manner or no; not for a man to say generally, I am a sinner, &c., and to send forth some few sighs, slight and short, to no purpose, in a cursory and formal manner,—as the manner of many is,—but it is another manner of work. And therefore, I beseech you, consider seriously what is that inward secret work of the Spirit upon the heart; what effects it hath upon the affections of the soul, that is, upon the discovery of the filthiness of sin, to make a man weary of it, to loathe it, to hate it, to desire to be rid of it, to strive against it, to confess it, &c.

Whither hath this consideration sent thee? Hath it made thee to set a greater price upon Christ, and upon the gospel offering Christ unto thee; such a prizing of him as that thou lettest all go to seek him, that is, thou seekest Christ above all things; and if thou hast indeed gotten him, thou wilt not lose the comfort of him, but daily walk in him, that thy life is now

a living in Christ. I beseech you, consider this, the walking of a man that hath received Christ, in the Scripture, is called a walking in Christ: 'As you have received Christ, so walk in him;' and the living of believers is said to be a living in Christ: 'Now I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' Gal. ii. 20; that is, in his whole life he lives to express the virtues of Christ; express Christ in thy life. I beseech you, consider this, that the affections are now set wholly on Christ, and that a man now gives himself to Christ, as a servant to his Lord, to be commanded and to be guided by him. So that nothing now sways in a man, nothing now carries him in his actions so as Christ shall, when he knows what is agreeable to the will of Christ, that shall most of all draw him to perform it. When he knows a thing is contrary to Christ, that shall make him set most of all against it.

Besides this, when he hath done this, there is a conviction of judgment; that now thou art the sharpest judger of thyself for thy sins past, and art the most watchful judger of the motions of sin present. This is thus in every one. I beseech you, take this home with you; consider of it now in the preparation to the sacrament that you are to receive; for the sacrament is a seal, as we shall shew you after, because it seals, as among other things, this, 'forgiveness of sins.' Now, that you may seal this comfort to yourselves, consider that the sacrament is a seal to none but to them that are sealed with the Spirit: 'In whom, after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,' Eph. i. 13. The Spirit, the inward seal, gives virtue to the sacrament, and to everything else that are seals of comfort, and nothing can seal comfort to a man, but the Spirit within, that makes everything effectual for that purpose; and therefore if the Spirit doth it, it doth it by this means; consider of this, therefore, seriously. There be in this divers cases that should be answered for the further opening of it, and for the settling of weak-hearted Christians in a settled estate, and somewhat for the casting off of presumptuous persons that are in the height of their pride, that we may give every one their portion; that the weakest may see against many particular temptations and doubts, that even his sins are forgiven; and that the other should see that they had but a false plea, a false claim all this while to the pardon of sins, when they cannot make it good by the testimony of the Spirit. But the work would be very large, and I have been already more large than I intended.