

THE UNPROSPEROUS BUILDER.

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NOTE.

'The Unprosperous Builder' is another of the sermons from 'Evangelical Sacrifices' (4to, 1640). Its separate title-page is given below.* G.

* THE
VNPROSPEROVS
BVILDER.

A Sermon preached upon the 5th of
November, in remembrance of Our
Deliverance from the Papists
Powder-Treason.

BY

The late Learned and Reverend Divine,

RICH. SIBBS:

Doctor in Divinity, M^r. of KATHERINE Hall
in *Cambridge*, and sometimes Preacher
to the Honourable Society of
GRAYES-INNE.

HAB. 2. 12.

*Woe to him that buildeth a Towne with blood, and
establisheth a Citie by Iniquity.*

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THE UNPROSPEROUS BUILDER.

Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and builds this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation of it in his first-born, and in his youngest son set up the gates thereof.—JOSHUA VI. 26.*

THE words are a terrible denunciation of a curse of the man of God Joshua; wherein you have the curse generally set down—'Cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth to build this city Jericho'—and then a specification in particular, wherein the curse stands. The two branches of the curse are these, 'He shall lay the foundation of it in his first-born, and in his youngest son set up the gates thereof.' It shall be with the raising† out of his posterity. So that the text is nothing else but a terrible denunciation, under a curse, of the destruction of the family of that person that should labour to build up Jericho again. I will not speak much of cursing or blessing, being not pertinent to my purpose, only to give a touch of it. As in blessing there are three things considerable, that come near one another,—there is a blessing, a prayer, and a prophecy: the prayer is for a blessing to come; the prophecy is of the certainty of it, that it shall be; the blessing is an efficacious application of the thing to the person; I mean those three, because the one gives light to the other,—so is it likewise in cursing: there is a prayer that God would pour forth his vengeance upon the enemies of the church, and a prophetic prediction that God will do it; and a cursing, when it comes from a qualified person, that is led by a better spirit than his own; for every one is not fit to cast these bolts. Cursing is an efficacious application of the curse to the person; when a man is, as it were, the declarative instrument whereby God works and brings the curse upon the person. So that we must account a curse to be a wondrous deep thing. The persons qualified for cursing or blessing, they are parents, either politic, as magistrates, or parents natural, to curse or bless their children, as we see in Noah,—'Cursed be Ham,' &c., Gen. ix. 25,—or else parents spiritual, whose office it is indeed especially to bless or curse. It is a greater matter than the world takes it for, a blessing or a curse, especially from a spiritual father. The apostles, that were spiritual fathers of the church, they began their epistles with blessings; and so the prophets and patriarchs.

Therefore we should regard the blessing that God gives by his ministers.

* Misprinted '10'.—G.

† Qu. 'razing?'—Ed.

Some are ready to run out before the blessing, as not esteeming either blessing or curse. Luther, a man of great parts and grace, saith of himself, 'That if a man of God should speak anything terrible to him, and denounce anything against him, he knew not how to bear it, it would be so terrible' (a). The Jesuits themselves, amongst the rest one De Lapide, he saith, 'The priest cannot sooner come into the pulpit, but if there be a nobleman there, down he falls, and all look for the blessing of the priest' (b). The devil is always in extremes, either to drive people to superstition, or else to profaneness and atheism; either to regard the blessing of those whom they should not regard, or not to regard any blessing at all; not to regard that good men should pray for them or their children. If the devil can bring men to hell by either extremes, he hath his will. As for the blessing of Rome, we expect it not; and for their curse, we need care no more for it than an armed man needs to care for a headless arrow or for a child's pop-gun.* But those men that come in the name of God, and are qualified with callings to pray and to bless, their prayers and blessings are highly to be esteemed; and so likewise their curses. I would it were more esteemed; it would be a means to convey God's blessing more than it is.

'Cursed be the man before the Lord.'

Take this caution by the way: though Joshua were a man of God, he was a mixed person; he was both a magistrate and, in some sort, a minister. As we say of kings, they are mixed persons, they are keepers of both tables: *custodes utriusque tabulæ*. There is more in the supreme magistrate than is common. Every one must not take upon him to curse upon every motion of the flesh; for here it is not, as one of the ancients saith well, 'the wrath of a man in commotion and fury, but the sentence of a man in a peaceable temper, who is the conveyer of God's curse' (c). It is passive here as well as active.

In the New Testament we are commanded to bless and not to curse. It is a common fault upon every distemper to fall a cursing; and ofttimes it lights, as an arrow shot upwards, upon the head of the curser. We are people of God's blessing, all true believers; and we should delight in blessing. Having felt the blessing of God ourselves upon our souls, we should be moved to blessing, both by way of gratitude to those that are our superiors and have done us good, that God would bless them, and by way of amity and friendship to those that are under us or about us, and by way of mercy to our very enemies. We should pray for and bless our very enemies themselves, as our blessed Saviour prayed for them that cursed him. This should be our ordinary disposition, we should be all for blessing. As for curses, we must take heed that we direct them not against any particular person; we have no such warrant, though the primitive church pronounced a curse against Julian, a notable enemy (d); and St Paul, he cursed Alexander the coppersmith, 2 Tim. iv. 14. But for us this time, the safest way is to pronounce all those curses in the Psalms and elsewhere in Scripture upon the implacable and incorrigible enemies of the church, the whole body of the malignant church, and so we should not err. I will not dwell longer upon this argument, only I thought good to remember you to regard the blessing of those that have the Spirit of God to bless, especially that have a calling to do it; and to take heed of cursing. But to come to the particulars.

'Cursed be the man before the Lord.'

* Misprinted 'pot.'—G.

That is, let him be cursed indeed. That that is done before the Lord is truly and solemnly done. This was a solemn curse, a heavy curse, and it did truly light upon him. And let him be cursed before the Lord, however the world bless him; as a man cannot do such a thing as to build a city, but the world will commend a man for doing such a thing, but it is no matter for the world's commendation, if a man set upon a cursed cause. So much for the phrase, 'Cursed be the man before the Lord;' that is, he is truly and solemnly cursed, and cursed before the Lord, though men bless him.

'That riseth and builds this city Jericho.'

That is the cause why he should be cursed, because he would build that city that God would have to be a perpetual monument of his justice. Why would not God have Jericho built again?

1. God would not have it built up, partly *because he would have it a perpetual remembrance of his goodness and merciful dealing with his people, passing over Jordan, and coming freshly into Canaan*; for we are all subject to forget. Therefore it is good to have days set apart for remembrance and somewhat to put us in mind, as they had many things in old time to help memory. If this city had been built again, the memory of it would have been forgotten; but lying all waste and desolate, the passengers by would ask the cause—as God speaks of his own people,—What is the reason that this city lies thus?—and then it would give them occasion of speaking of the mercy of God to his people. And likewise it would give occasion to speak of the justice of God against the idolatrous inhabitants, whose sins were grown ripe. God foretold in Genesis that the sins of the Amorites was not yet ripe; but now their sins were ripe, they were idolaters.

2. And likewise *it was dedicated to God as the first-fruits*. Being one of the chief mother cities of the land, it was dedicate and consecrated to God as a thing severed; it was to be for ever severed from common use. There are two ways of severing things from common use: one by way of destruction, as here the city of Jericho; another by way of dedication, as the gold of Jericho. God would have this city severed from common use, as a perpetual monument and remembrance of his mercy and justice.

3. And likewise he would have it never built up again, *for terror to the rest of the inhabitants*; for usually great conquerors set up some terrible example of justice to terrify others. Now, this being one of the first cities after their passing over Jordan, God would have the destruction of it to strike terror, together with this sentence of a curse, upon all that should build it again for ever.

4. And then that this terrible sentence might be a means *to draw others to come in to God's people to join with them, and submit, and prevent their destruction*, seeing how terribly God had dealt with Jericho. Many such reasons may be probably alleged; but the main reason of reasons, that must settle our consciences, *God would have it so*. Joshua he was but God's trumpet and God's instrument to denounce this curse, 'Cursed be the man before the Lord that shall build up this city Jericho.' We must rest in that. I will go over the words, and then make application afterwards to the occasion.

I come to the specification of the curse, wherein it stands: 'He shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born.'

If any man will be so venturous to build it up again, as one Hiel did, in 1 Kings xvi. 34, if any man will be so audacious, he shall do it with the

peril of the life of his first-begotten; and if he will not desist then, he shall finish the gates of it, he shall make an end of it, with the death of his younger son. It is God's custom to denounce a threatening of a curse before he execute it. It is a part of God's mercy and of his blessing, that he will curse only in the threatening; for therefore he curseth, that he might not execute it; and therefore he threateneth, that he might not smite; and when he smites, he smites that he might not destroy; and when he kills the body, it is that he might not destroy the soul; as 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'Therefore some of you are weak, and sick, and some sleep, that you might not be condemned with the world.' Thus God is merciful, even till it comes to the last upshot, that men by their rebellions provoke him. God's mercy strives with the sins of men. Mark here the degrees of it: first, God threatens the curse, 'Cursed be the man;' and then in the particulars, he begins with the eldest son. First, there is a threatening; and when the execution comes, he takes not all his sons away at once, but begins with the eldest; and if that will not do, he goes to the youngest.

This carriage of God, even in his threatenings, it should put us in mind of God's mercy, and likewise it should move us to meet God presently, before any peremptory decree be come forth, as we shall see afterward; for if we leave not sinning, God will never leave punishing. He might have desisted in the death of his first son; but if that will not be, God will strike him in his youngest son, and sweep away all between; for so we must understand it, that both elder, and younger, and all should die.

Now for the judgment itself.

'He shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born.'

There is some proportion between the judgment and the sin. The sin was to raise up a building, a cursed city, contrary to God's will. The punishment is in pulling down a man's own building; for children, according to the Hebrew word, are the building, the pillars of the house (*e*); and since he would raise up a foundation and building contrary to God's mind, God would pull up his foundation. Cities are said to have life, and to grow, and to have their pitch, and then to die like men; and, indeed, they do: observing only a proportion of time, they are of longer continuance, but otherwise cities live and grow and die and have their period as men have.* Now he that would give life to a city, that God would have buried in its own ruins, God would have his sons die; he would have his sons as it were buried under the ruins of that city that he would build in spite of God, that would give life to that city that was cursed. Ofttimes we may read our very sins in our punishments, there is some proportion. But to go on to the particulars.

'He shall lay the foundation in his first-born.'

A heavy judgment, because the first-born, as you know he saith of Reuben, he was his strength; and he was king and priest in the family. The first-born had a double portion, he was redeemed with a greater price, as we see in Moses's law, than other sons. It was a heavy judgment to have his first-born smitten in this fashion, to be taken away.

If any ask why God was so severe, that he did not punish Hiel in himself, but take away his children, it may seem against reason.

But we must not dispute with God, for we must know that God hath the supreme power of life and death.

* Cf. Dr Vaughan's 'Ages of Great Cities,' wherein this truth is eloquently illustrated and enforced.—G.

Then we must know again that children are part of their parents; God punisheth the parents in their children, and it is a heavier punishment oft-times in their esteem than in themselves, for they think to live and continue in their children. Now when they see their children took away it is worse than death. Men oft-times live to see things worse than death, as those that see their children killed before them, as Zedekiah and Mauritius, the emperor, for indeed it is a death oft (*f*); a man dies in every child. This man he died in his eldest son, and he died in his youngest son; he died in regard of the apprehension of death. It was more sharp in apprehension than when he died himself. So it is a heavy judgment to be stricken in our children. God, when he will punish, he punisheth oft-times in posterity; as we see it was the most terrible judgment of all upon Pharaoh, that in his first-born; God drew them all to let Israel go out, when 'he smote their first-born.' It is a heavy judgment for a man to be stricken in his first-born, either when they are dissolute, and debauched, and lawless, for God hath judgments for the soul as well as for the body, or else when they are taken out of the world.

But, thirdly, which is very likely another reason that moved God,—that we may justify God in all our sentence that we give of him,—he took them away, because they imitated their father in ill; and God hath a liberty to strike when he will, when there is cause; and whom he will, he will spare for so many generations.

Quest. You will say, Why doth he light on such a generation? and why not on such a place?

Ans. It is his liberty and prerogative, when all deserve it; and he lights upon one and not upon another. We must not quarrel with God, but leave him to his liberty. It is a part of his prerogative, 'Who art thou, O man, that disputest?' Rom. ix. 20. Why God, when all are equally sinners, strikes one and not another; why he executes judgments in one age and not in another; there may be reasons given of it; but it is a mystery that must not be disputed. But I cannot stand on these things.

'He shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son set up the gates thereof.'

This terrible sentence we see executed in 1 Kings xvi. 34. In Ahab's time, there was one so venturous as to build Jericho again. There is an accent* to be set upon that, that it was in Ahab's time. Hiel would needs build Jericho again; and why should he build it? Hiel no doubt saw it a wondrous commodious place to found a city, being near to Jordan. And then he saw and considered that it was accounted a famous thing to be founder of a city. And then no doubt he thought that Ahab would not only permit him to do it, but [it] would gratify him: wicked Ahab, which had sold himself to work wickedness; that was an abominable idolater himself, and countenanced idolatry, and had set up the false worship of Baal. It was likely enough in his time that Jericho should be built; and therefore, no doubt but he did it partly to insinuate himself with Ahab. And to shew how little he cared for Joshua's or Jehovah's threatening, as usually such impudent persons that are grown up with greatness, that have sold themselves to be naught,† that have put off all humanity and modesty, they are fittest to carry wicked and desperate causes, being agreeable to them. So this wicked person was a fit man to do this, and he thought to please Ahab by it.

Man is a strange creature, especially in greatness of riches or place, &c.

* That is, 'emphasis'.—G.

† That is, 'naughty' = wicked.—G.

A piece of earth that will be puffed up, if he have flatterers and sycophants about him, and a proud heart withal, he will forget, and dare the God of heaven, and trample under foot all threatenings and menaces whatsoever. As this wicked Hiel, rather than he will miss of his will, he will break through thick and thin, and redeem the fulfilling of his will with the loss of his own soul, and of his children, his first-born, and his last and all. *Mens mihi pro regno*; let a man be happy in his will, he cares not for all the world. If he may have his will, let all go upon heaps. This is the nature of man. One would think that this threatening might have scared a man that had loved himself, or his posterity. But nothing would keep him, he would venture upon it, as we see in that place, 1 Kings xvi. 34. Thus we have passed over the words.

To come to handle the words by way of analogy, how they may agree to other things by way of proportion, and in a spiritual mystical sense.

There are divers degrees of men that venture upon curses, and therefore grow to be cursed themselves. Even as this man ventured upon the building of Jericho, so there be many that do the like in a proportionable kind. I shall name some few.

God did determine that the Jewish ceremonies should determine and have an end and period. Now, in St Paul's time, there were many that would put life into them, and join them with the gospel. St Paul tells them, 'Christ shall profit you nothing,' Gal. v. 2. Those are they that build Jericho again, that revive and put life into that that God hath determined should never revive again. When the Jewish ceremonies were honourably interred, and laid in their graves, these men would raise them out of their graves again, and so venture upon God's curse, and be excluded from Christ. These are one sort of men that raise Jericho again; and so afterwards in the church, there were those that would build up Jericho, that would still retain Jewish ceremonies, and heathenish in the church, and some at the first with no ill minds. But then afterwards, as Augustine complains, they so pestered the church with Jewish and heathenish ceremonies, that the Jews' condition was better than theirs, for these things should have been buried (*g*). Gerson, that had many good things in him, though he lived in ill times, 'Oh,' saith he, 'good Augustine, dost thou complain of those times? what wouldst thou have said if thou hadst lived now?' (*h*) What is popery but a mass of Jewish and heathenish ceremonies, besides some blasphemies that they have? I speak concerning what they differ from ours, which are decent and orderly. What a mass of ceremonies and fooleries have they, to mislead men that are taken away with fancies to distaste the truth of God, and to have respect to fancies, to outward pomp and gorgeous things, rather than the gospel? These men build up Jericho again, and bury the gospel as much as they can.

There are another sort of men that raise up Jericho, that revive all the heresies that were damned to hell by the ancient Councils. The heresy of Pelagius was damned to hell by the ancient councils. The African councils, divers of them, divers synods, wherein Augustine himself was a party, they condemned Pelagius's heresy.* Are there not men now abroad that will revive these heresies? And there must be expected nothing but a curse where this prevails; for they are opinions cursed by the church of God, that have been led by the Spirit of God heretofore; such opinions, I mean, as speak meanly of the grace of God, as if it were a weak thing, and advance the strength of free-will, and make an idol of that; and so, under

* Cf. Note *j*, Vol. II. page 194.—G.

the commendation, and setting up of nature, are enemies of grace. These are those that build up Jericho.

3. There are a company that build up Jericho likewise, *persons that will venture upon the curse of founders of colleges, &c.*, those that have left statutes, and testaments, and wills, established and sealed them with a curse, as it were, against the breakers of them; yet some make no more bones of breaking these, either statutes or wills, than Samson did of breaking his cords; as if they would venture upon the curse of former times, and persons that very likely were led by the Spirit of God, and could say amen to their curses, as if they were nothing like Hiel, that would venture upon the terrible curse of Joshua; come what would, he would break through all.

4. But the Jericho especially that a world of people go about to build again, *is popery*. How many have ye to build up the walls of Jericho again in this kind? But to make this a little clearer, because the occasion leads to this something, I will be the larger in it.

Quest. How came they to build these walls of Jericho? By what means came this religion that is so opposite to the religion of the Scripture; this religion, that was gathered by the Council of Trent into one sea, as it were, that whosoever drinks of it dies, as it is in the Revelation, xx. 14. How comes this religion? How crept it into the world?

Ans. I could be long to shew that it came by degrees. While the husbandmen slept, then the devil sowed his tares by heretics and such like. It grew by degrees. And then the world was scared and terrified with shows and fancies; as with the succession of Peter, that is a mere fancy; and then they were frighted with excommunications, the terrible sentence of the church. And then again it is a kingdom of darkness, popery is. By little and little they brought in ignorance, not only of the Scriptures, but of other things. They had their prayers in an unknown tongue, forbidding the Scriptures and the like. In the night they might do what they would, when they had put out the candle. When they had buried the knowledge of the word of God they might bring in any heresy; many ways they came in.

Now the preaching of the gospel is the means to pull down these walls of Jericho, it is the going about the walls of Jericho. By the preaching of Luther and others, the walls have fallen, though not utterly; yet notwithstanding, in the last hundred years there hath been a great ruin of popery.

Quest. What means have they now to build the walls again? How they bestir themselves! There is a new sect of Jesuits, that are the spirit of the devil for knowledge and industry. It is a strange project they have now to build up the walls of Jericho again; and three things they have in their project, and these are to set up the pope again, and a catholic king under him, as he is the catholic head of the church, and to set up the Council of Trent in the full vigour. These are the main projects they labour to set up, and so to build Jericho again this way; and what course do they take?

Ans. The devil hath a thousand wiles. I cannot reckon all the instruments of Satan. Who can tell all his wiles? They go about to build the walls of Jericho again among other ways.

By shutting out of all light by their terrible inquisition, a most cruel thing. By the tyranny of this inquisition, they shut out all light of God's truth in all places where popery is established.

Then again they have all Satan's arts to build up Jericho, by slanders

and lies. They labour to estrange the hearts of people what they can against the truth of religion, and therefore they raise all the lies and slanders they can; nay, and they will not suffer so much as a Protestant writer to be named, but the name of such a one, say they, be blotted out. Then they have their *Index Purgatorius*,* to purge all that savour of truth that favour our cause. And then they have their dispensations. And, to cut off other things, for where should I end? indeed their policy is almost endless in this kind; they have the quintessence of their own wit and of Satan's to sharpen them in this kind.

They deal as the magicians of Egypt. When Moses came to do wonders, they imitated him in all the rest, except in one. So they strengthen themselves much in imitating the Protestants. We labour to build the walls of Jerusalem, they imitate us in building the walls of Jericho. We preach to shake off drowsiness, and they fall a preaching. We print, and they print. We publish books of devotion; they go beyond us. We set out books of martyrology (*i*), to shew the cruelty of them, and they have lost much by that. Hereupon they do so too, and aggravate things, and add their own lies. So by imitating our proceedings, wherein we have gained upon them, they, like the Egyptian magicians, do the like, and God hardens their hearts, as he did Pharaoh's, by the magicians.

Again, by labouring to make divisions between kings and their subjects, what they can in those places where their religion hath not obtained ground. That they may get a party they cherish division like the devil; they divide and rule.

It was Julian's policy to provide that no Christian should bear any office in the wars, to be captain, &c. So if the Jesuits and papists may have their will, no man that is opposite to them shall have any place. Those that shall have the place to manage offices, and such like, shall be those that incline to them. This they bring to pass if they can, and so for captains in the wars, &c. As Julian the apostate, he cared not for Judaism, but did what he did out of spite to the Christians; so in the most of their plots thus they work one way or other. I say there is no end of their plots, only it is good to know them; for so we may the better prevent them.

Quest. How shall the building up of Jericho be stopped, seeing they go about it so? And indeed they have built much of late years, and have raised up their walls very high, and labour what they can to stop the building of Jerusalem!

Ans. 1. The way to stop this Jericho, that it never go up again, is the *judicious knowledge of popery*; that it is a religion contrary to the blessed truth of God. God hath left us his testament, his will, wherein he hath bequeathed us all the good that we can challenge from him. Now this religion is contrary to our Father's will, and they know it well enough, and therefore they build their courses upon men's devices, and not upon divine truth. They know if people come to know the Testament, that they should lose, and therefore they labour to suppress knowledge, and extinguish it; we should labour to know the controversial truths between us and them, and to have the knowledge of the Scriptures; for knowledge is a notable means to strengthen us; there are none that know popery that will be deceived by it.

2. And then, together with the knowledge of their tenets, to know their courses, and practices, and policy. In 2 Tim. iii. 9, 'They shall prevail

* That is, 'Expurgatorius' = Index of Prohibited Books. Cf. Mendham.—G.

no longer,' saith Saint Paul, 'for their madness shall be made manifest.' Why shall they not prevail any longer? Their madness shall be manifest. So that the manifesting of the madness of men is the cause why they shall prevail no longer. It were good to know all their undermining tricks, and all the policy of the Jesuits and papists, that lay their trains afar off, that they may be the less seen. As the spider gets into a corner, that she appear not, so themselves will not appear, but they draw women, and other licentious persons, and they have greater than them too. So they lay their trains afar off, that they may have their will. It is good to know their devilish practices, that so their diabolical madness may be manifest, that so they may prevail no longer; for undoubtedly, if their courses were laid open, there is no man that loves his own safety, and the safety of the kingdom, but would hate them.

3. Another way to stop the building of Jericho is *to have young ones instructed*. I would parents would have more care of catechising, and others in their places would have more care of grounding young ones in the grounds of religion. Popery labours to overthrow that. For the worshipping of images it is directly against the second commandment, and they are so guilty of it that they take it away in some of their books. The younger sort, that are the hope of the succeeding church, should be well grounded in religion. That that is right will discover that that is crooked. It would make them impregnable against all popish solicitations.

The neglect of this is the cause why many gentlemen, and of the nobility [apostatize]. The neglect of their education by those that should overlook them hath made them fit for Jesuits and priests to work on, having ripe wits otherwise. And all because of the atheism of those that have neglected their breeding, and filled their heads with other vanities; it hath been the ruin of many families in this kingdom. Therefore it is good to season younger years with the knowledge of the grounds of religion.

4. And in all the dark corners of the land *to set up lights that may shine*; for these owls fly in the dark. They cannot endure the light of the gospel by any means. They see the breath of God's mouth is too hot for them; and they must be consumed at length by that, by the preaching of the gospel. Not with the sword, but with the sword of Christ's mouth, Antichrist must especially be consumed. And they know this by experience. Therefore they labour underhand. They will not be seen in it, but oft-times others are instruments more than they are aware, to stop the preaching of the gospel by all the policy they can.

5. Again, as I said before, popery is a kingdom of darkness, and nothing will undo it but light; therefore we should labour *to cherish all good learning*. It is a notable means to assist against popery. Julian knew that well enough. Therefore he would not suffer parents to send their children to school, but to be brought up in ignorance. And so papists would have a neglect of learning that might help this way.

6. And because they labour to reign in division, *let us labour to unite ourselves, and not break upon small matters, but to join together with one shoulder, as one man, against that malignant generation*, and mark those among us that are the causes of division; as the apostle saith, 'Mark them, they serve not Christ, but their own bellies,' Philip. iii. 19; they serve their own turns that reign in division. Let us labour as much as may be if we will join strongly against the enemies of God and his church, to unite our forces together, and not to entertain slight matters of breach one from another.

7. And with these let us join *our prayers to God, and our thanksgiving*. We are not thankful enough that God hath brought us out of the kingdom of darkness ; not only out of the darkness of sin and Satan, but from the darkness of popery. We have not been thankful to God for that deliverance in Queen Elizabeth's time, out of the Egyptian darkness, and the deliverance in our late king's time, and deliverances in later times, we are not thankful enough. And we begin to shew it in not making much of religion, and growing in further and further obedience of religion. Is this our thankfulness to God ? What, doth religion hurt us ? Are we not beholden to God for our religion, and to religion for our peace and deliverance ? Hath not God witnessed the truth of our religion from heaven by deliverances ? Hath not God been with us strangely by the confusion of the plots of others. And how do we requite it ? By growing to a lukewarm temper. A lukewarm temper is odious in the sight of God. 'I would thou wert hot or cold,' saith Christ, Rev. iii. 15. The best religion in the world is odious if it be cold. God will not endure us to join the ark and Dagon, Christ and Belial. Certainly, if we do, God will spue us all out. It will be the confusion of the church and state, and yet this is the thankfulness that we give to God for the gospel of peace, that we have been so much beholden to him for.

Therefore it is good to take occasions, as we have one ministered this day, to call to mind the former dealing of God to us, in the gunpowder treason and other deliverances, which we have had several occasions upon this day to speak of. And, to come nearer ourselves, let us stir up our hearts to thankfulness, which is the main end of this day, and among the rest for our gracious prince, that God hath delivered him as the three children in the fiery furnace (*j*). They were kept and preserved untouched of the fire ; so God hath preserved him in the fiery furnace. The not being thankful for these things will be a means for God to lay us open to his and our enemies. Therefore let us make use of this day especially to stir us up to thankfulness. To go on.

8. For the building of the walls of Jericho what should I speak of popery and the like ? *We should labour to overthrow that Jericho*. All of us have vowed in baptism to fight against the world, and the devil, and the main enemy of all that is within us, that is, our flesh. We could not be hurt by them. We betray ourselves, as Samson betrayed himself to Delilah. Those that are baptized, and especially that have renewed their vows by solemn fasting, and renewed their covenant in taking the communion, as there are none of us all but have vowed against our corruptions and sins in baptism, and have renewed their solemn vows in the communion and in public fasting. Well, when we go about to strengthen our corruptions, and the corruptions of the times in the places where we live, what do we go about ? To build the walls of Jericho again. What do we go about, but to strengthen that that God hath cursed ? There is nothing under heaven so cursed as this corruption of ours, that is the cause of all the curses of the creatures, of all the curses that ever were, or shall be, even to the last curse : 'Go, ye cursed, to eternal destruction,' Mat. xxv. 41. This pride, and sensuality, and secret atheism and infidelity that we cherish, and love more than our own souls, this is that that many go about to build, and oppose all the ways that are used to pull down Jericho, and hate nothing so heartily as the motions of God's Spirit, and the means that God's Spirit hath sanctified to pull down these walls of Jericho.

Must not this be a cursed endeavour, when we go about to build that

that we ourselves have vowed to pull down? when we go about to raise that that we have formerly destroyed by our own vows? As Saint Paul saith, Gal. ii. 18, 'If I again build the things I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.' Indeed, when we go about to build the things that we have vowed their destruction, we make ourselves transgressors.

Let us take notice of the wondrous poison and rebellion of the corruption of our hearts in this kind. Hath not the Lord threatened curse upon curse against many particular sins? 'Cursed is the man that calls evil good, and good evil,' Isa. v. 20. Have we not many that do so? In Deuteronomy there is curse upon curse to those that mislead others, xxvii. 16, *et alibi*. And in the New Testament there is curse upon curse; St Paul threateneth that such and such shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, 1st Cor. vi. 9, 10. Yet, notwithstanding the curse, we go about to build Jericho again, to set up that that God hath pronounced a curse upon.

We cry out against popery, and well we may, when the Scripture directs curses against their particular opinions, as where it saith, 'If an angel from heaven shall teach other doctrine, let him be accursed,' Gal. i. 8. The Council of Trent hath cursed those that say traditions are not of equal authority with the Scriptures, and so they set curse against curse. We wonder at them that they are not afraid of the curse of God, nay, to counter-curse God as it were; when he curseth disobedience, to curse the practice of obedience to him. And then there is a curse to those that shall add or take away from the Scripture. St John seals the whole Scripture with a curse: 'Cursed is he that adds, or takes away,' &c., Rev. xxii. 18. Now they add to the Scripture that that is no scripture; and they take away what they list, as the second commandment and the cup in the sacrament. I say we wonder at them, that they will run upon the curses, that they will be stricken through with so many curses, more than Absalom with javelins, or Achan with stones: 'Cursed is he that worshipeth graven images,' Deut. xxvii. 15; besides particular things that are cursed in Scripture. We wonder at them that they are so desperately blind to run on. But are not we as ill? Are there not many curses in the Scripture, and denunciations of being excluded from the kingdom of God, against the courses that are taken by many men? And yet we venture on it. Will a negative religion bring any man to heaven, to say he is no papist, nor no schismatic? No. Certainly therefore profane persons that maintain corruptions, and abuses, and abominations, against the light of conscience, and nature, and Scriptures, they raise up Jericho again and they are under a curse.

Let me ask any one why Christ came?* The apostle saith, and they will be ready to say, 'To dissolve the cursed works of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8. It should seem by many, notwithstanding, especially at these times, that he came to establish the works of the devil; for what good we do in the ministry, in three quarters of a year, it is almost undone in one quarter. At the time when we pretend great honour to Christ, we live as if he came to build up the cursed wall of hell; to break loose all. Whereas he came to destroy the works of the devil: 'He came to redeem us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life,' Luke i. 75. He came to redeem us from our vain conversation. Nay, many live as if he came to give liberty to all conversation. Is not this to raise Jericho? to raise a fort for Satan to enter into our souls and keep possession in us? to beat out God

* In margin here, 'Application concerning the feast of the nativity.'—G.

and his Spirit? to fight against our known salvation, when we rear up courses contrary to Christ's coming in the flesh, and to the end of Christ's dying for us, which was to free us from our vain conversation, and to redeem us from the world, that we should not be led as slaves to the customs of the world?

Therefore let us consider what we do, what our course of life is. If it be a proceeding, and edification, and building up ourselves more and more to heaven, a growing in knowledge and in holy obedience to the divine truths we know; if it be a pulling down of sin more and more, a going further and further out of the kingdom of darkness, and a setting ourselves at a gracious liberty to serve God; oh it is a happy thing if it be so! If our life be a taking part with Christ, and his Spirit, and his ministry, to grow in grace and piety, oh it is an excellent thing when we grow better the longer we live in the world, and this cursed Jericho, the corruption of nature, which, if we cherish, will be the cause of an eternal curse after, if it go down, and we ruin it more and more, and we suffer the word to beat down the forts of Satan, those strong imaginations, &c. But if our life be nothing else but a living answerable to our lusts; that as we are dead and cursed by nature, so we make ourselves twice dead, a hundred times dead by sin, and bring curse upon curse by our sinful conversation, we are then under God's broad seal cursed. We are all born accursed, till we get out of the state of nature; to free us from which Christ became a curse. If we get not out of this, but go on and feed our vanity and corruption, what will be the end of it but an eternal curse afterwards? Therefore let us consider what we do, when we maintain and cherish corruptions and abuses in ourselves and others. We build that that God hath cursed; we build that that we have vowed against ourselves.

And how will God take this at the hour of death? Thou that art a careless, drowsy hearer of the word of God, and a liver contrary to the word of God, how will God take this at thee, at the hour of death, when thy conscience will tell thee that thy life hath been a practice of sin, a strengthening of corruption? The 'old Adam' that thou hast cherished, it will stare and look on thee with so hideous a look that it will drive you to despair; for conscience will tell thee that thy life hath been a strengthening of pride, of vanity, of covetousness, and of other sins. Thy whole life hath been such; and now when thou shouldst look for comfort, then thy corruptions, which thou shouldst have subdued, they are grown to that pitch that they will bring thee to despair, without the extraordinary mercy of God to awaken thy heart by repentance. Why therefore should we strengthen that that is a curse and will make us cursed too? and will make the time to come terrible to us, the hour of death and the day of judgment? How shall men think to hold up their faces and heads at the day of judgment, whose lives have been nothing else but a yielding to their own corruption of nature, and the corruptions and vanities of the times and places they have lived in? that have never had the courage to plead for God; that have been fierce against God: 'Who ever was fierce against God, and prospered?' Job ix. 4. When men make their whole life fierce against God, against the admonitions of his word and Spirit, and their whole life is nothing but a practice of sin, how can they think of death and judgment without terror!

Now, it were wisdom for us to carry ourselves so in our lives and conversations, that the time to come may not be terrible, but comfortable to think of; that we may lift up our heads with joy when we think of death

and judgment. But when we do nothing but build Jericho, when we raise up sin, that we should ruin more and more, what will the end of this be, but despair here and destruction in the world to come?

You may shake off the menaces and threatenings of the ministers, as Hiel shook off Joshua's. He was an austere, singular man, and it is a long time since Jericho was cast down, and God hath forgotten. Hath he so? He found that God had not forgotten; so there are many that think that words are but wind of men, opposite to such and such things. But, though our words may be shaken off now, and the word of God now in the preaching may be shook off, yet it will not when it comes to execution. When we propound the curse of God against sinful courses, you may shake off that curse; but when Christ from heaven shall come to judge the quick and the dead, and say, 'Go, ye cursed,' that were born cursed, that have lived cursed, that have maintained a cursed opposition to blessed courses, that have not built up your own salvation, but your corruptions, you that loved cursing, 'Go, ye cursed, to hell-fire, with the devil and his angels for ever,' Mat. xxv. 41. Will you shake off that? No, no! Howsoever our ministerial entreaties may be shaken off, yet when God shall come to judge the quick and the dead, that eternal threatening shall not be shaken off. Therefore, I beseech you, consider not so much what we say now, but what God will make good then. 'What we bind on earth,' out of the warrant of God's book, 'shall be bound in heaven,' Mat. xvi. 19, and God will say Amen to that we say agreeable to his word.

Think not light of that we speak, for God will make good every word. He is Jehovah, he will give being to every word. He is not only mercy but justice. We make an idol of him else. And we must fear him in his justice. 'He loves to dwell with such as are of a contrite spirit, that tremble at his word,' Isa. lviii. 15.

It is said of David, that when Uzzah was stricken, he trembled,' 2 Sam. vi. 6. 'Hiel, and such kind of persons, regard not the threatenings of God, but go on and treasure up wrath. It is a sign of a wicked man to hear the menaces and threatenings, and not to tremble. To end all with two places of scripture: Saith Moses, 'He that hears these things, and blesseth himself, my wrath shall smoke against him,' Deut. xxix. 20. God's wrath shall smoke and burn to hell against such a one as blesseth himself, that knows he is cursed under the seal of God, that doth ill, and yet he blesseth himself in doing ill. Therefore, take heed of that, add not that to the rest. God's wrath will smoke against such a one. And you know what St Paul saith: Rom. ii. 5, 'If thou go on and treasure up wrath,' thou buildest Jericho, that thou hast vowed the destruction of. Every time thou takest the communion, thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath. For there will be a day of the manifestation of the just wrath of God, and then these things will be laid to thy charge.'

Let us every one labour to get out of the state of nature, to break off our wicked lives, and to get into Christ the blessed seed, and then we shall be blessed, we shall be made free, free from the curse of nature and of sin. Let us renew our covenants against all sin, and make conscience to be led by the Spirit of Christ, that we may gather sound evidence every day, that we are in Christ, and so out of the curse.

NOTES.

(a) P. 20.—‘Luther, a man of great parts and grace, saith of himself, “That if,”’ &c. The *sentiment* is found in his ‘Table Talk,’ on which cf. note *uu*, Vol. III. p. 533.

(b) P. 20.—‘The Jesuits themselves, amongst the rest one De Lapide, he saith.’ ‘*One De Lapide*’ is somewhat contemptuous for a name so famous as Corneille de la Pierre, commonly called Cornelius à Lapide. His great ‘*Commentarii in Sacram Scripturam*’ (10 vols. folio) is an extraordinary chaos of wisdom and folly. The thing stated *ante* is a commonplace of popery.

(c) P. 20.—‘As one of the ancients saith well, “the wrath of a man,”’ &c. Probably Augustine, but I have failed to trace it.

(d) P. 20.—‘The primitive church pronounced a curse against Julian.’ It needeth not to annotate so familiar a fact in the early conflicts of Christianity; but perhaps it is as well to notice that ‘curse’ is not used technically. There was angry denunciation, yet scarcely excommunication *proper*.

(e) P. 22.—‘Children, according to the Hebrew word, are the building, the pillars of the house.’ The allusion here is not, as at first sight would seem, to ‘first-born’ in the text, but to the general word for children, viz., בְּנִים, and probably also to

the Hebrew word for ‘house,’ בֵּית (quasi בְּנֵית), both which words are derived from the verb בָּנָה, ‘to build.’ So we read the passage, ‘Cursed be the man that riseth up and buildeth (בְּנָה) Jericho;’ as if he said, ‘that riseth up and maketh Jericho to have children and house. That man shall suffer for it, inasmuch as his *children* shall die, and his *house* be left desolate.’

(f) P. 23.—‘As Zedekiah and Mauritius the emperor.’ With respect to Zedekiah, cf. 2 Kings xxv. 7. ‘Mauritius’ is of course Mauricius Flavius Tiberius, one of the greatest of the emperors of Constantinople. Sibbes alludes to the well known fact, that his five sons were murdered in the church of St Antonomus, Chalcedon, while their father was compelled to look on.

(g) P. 24.—‘As Augustine complains, they so pestered,’ &c. Repeatedly in his *De Civitate Dei*, and in his *Controversies*.

(h) P. 24.—‘Gerson . . . saith.’ To distinguish this from other Gersons, it may be stated that Sibbes no doubt refers to John Gerson of Gerson [Charlier], whose writings are numerous. Died 1429.

(i) P. 26.—‘We set out books of martyrology.’ The great martyr-book is that of John Fox; but for others prior and subsequent to Sibbes, cf. Watt’s *Bib. Brit.*, *sub voce*. G.

(j) P. 28.—The reference is to the safe return of Prince Charles, afterwards Charles I., from the visit which he made in company with Buckingham into Spain, whence he returned on the 5th October 1623. His safe return is frequently referred to as a matter of thankfulness by the preachers of the period. There is already published in this Series a sermon preached on that occasion by Samuel Ward (Works, p. 134).